

# “Special Narrative Operation PA” How Reality Is Reclassified as “Pseudoscience” — and Ideological Denial Becomes Supposed Science

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Jorge Guerra González  
May 2026

[“Spezielle Narrativoperation EKE“ Wie Realität zur „Pseudowissenschaft“  
erklärt wird – und ideologische Verleugnung zur vermeintlichen  
Wissenschaft]

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# „Special Narrative Operation PA“ How Reality Is Reclassified as “Pseudoscience”

— and Ideological Denial Becomes Supposed Science

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## Summary:

[The article examines the so-called “Special Narrative Operation PA” and explores how ideological discourses attempt to reclassify empirical realities as “pseudoscience.” The focus lies on discursive strategies that systematically delegitimize the experiences of affected children and parents through linguistic reframing and institutional narratives. The author describes the denial of PA as a mechanism of narrative power in which scientific terminology is selectively used to control public perception. Instead of critically evaluating empirical evidence, the existence of such evidence is often denied altogether. The paper combines perspectives from legal psychology, social sciences, and discourse theory. Particular emphasis is placed on the political and institutional instrumentalization of scientific language within family law contexts. The article criticizes the inversion of scientific standards whereby ideological assumptions are presented as objective science. It also highlights social sanctioning mechanisms directed against professionals and affected individuals. Finally, the author advocates scientific openness, methodological integrity, and the protection of pluralistic academic discourse in the interest of child welfare and democratic scientific culture.]

**Key words:** [Parental alienation, pseudoscience; ideological denial; child welfare; discourse power; scientific integrity; parent-child bond; social control]

## Zusammenfassung:

[Der Aufsatz untersucht die sogenannte „Spezielle Narrativoperation EKE“ und analysiert, wie bestimmte ideologische Strömungen versuchen, empirische Realitäten als „Pseudowissenschaft“ zu delegitimieren. Im Mittelpunkt steht die Kritik an diskursiven Strategien, durch die Erfahrungen betroffener Kinder und Eltern systematisch entwertet oder sprachlich umgedeutet werden. Der Beitrag beschreibt die Leugnung des Phänomens EKE als eine Form narrativer Machttechnik, bei der wissenschaftliche Begriffe selektiv genutzt werden, um gesellschaftliche Wahrnehmungen zu steuern. Dabei werde nicht die empirische Evidenz geprüft, sondern ihre Existenz selbst bestritten. Der Autor verbindet rechtspsychologische, sozialwissenschaftliche und diskurstheoretische Perspektiven. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt der Instrumentalisierung wissenschaftlicher Sprache zur politischen und institutionellen Kontrolle von Narrativen im familienrechtlichen Kontext. Der Beitrag kritisiert die Umkehrung wissenschaftlicher Standards, bei der ideologische Vorannahmen als objektive Wissenschaft präsentiert werden. Zudem wird dargestellt, wie soziale Sanktionierungsmechanismen gegen Fachpersonen und Betroffene eingesetzt werden. Abschließend plädiert der Autor für wissenschaftliche Offenheit, methodische Redlichkeit und den Schutz pluraler Forschungsdiskurse im Interesse des Kindeswohls und der demokratischen Wissenschaftskultur.]

**Schlüsselwörter:** [Eltern-Kind-Entremdung; Pseudowissenschaft; ideologische Verleugnung; Kindeswohl; Diskursmacht; wissenschaftliche Integrität; Eltern-Kind-Bindung; soziale Kontrolle]

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# 1. Abstract

This article examines the so-called “Special Narrative Operation PA” as a discursive and ideological mechanism through which empirically observable family dynamics are delegitimized and reframed as “pseudoscience.” The paper argues that certain institutional and academic discourses no longer engage primarily in empirical examination of phenomena such as intentional parent-child bond disruption, but instead seek to control the legitimacy of the narrative itself. Drawing on perspectives from legal psychology, systemic theory, discourse analysis, and social science, the author conceptualizes PA as a form of epistemic and narrative power aimed at regulating socially acceptable interpretations within family law and psychosocial contexts. Particular attention is given to the strategic use of scientific language, selective evidentiary standards, and mechanisms of social and professional exclusion directed at dissenting researchers, practitioners, and affected families. The article further explores the implications of these dynamics for child welfare, judicial practice, and scientific integrity. It concludes by advocating methodological openness, pluralistic academic discourse, and a rigorous evidence-based approach capable of distinguishing ideological positioning from genuine scientific inquiry.

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## 3. Kurzessay

### 3.1 Introduction

In modern democratic societies, science is traditionally regarded as an open space for critical examination, methodological reflection and the acquisition of empirical knowledge. Scientific statements are expected to remain verifiable, falsifiable and accessible to discourse. At the same time, however, the history of science shows that scientific discourses never exist completely detached from social, political and institutional power structures. Particularly in fields with high normative stakes – such as family law, child protection or gender policy debates – there is a regular risk that empirical observations are not primarily assessed on the basis of their evidence, but on the basis of their political or moral compatibility.

This paper analyses the so-called ‘Special Narrative Operation PA. This refers to a discursive strategy through which empirically observable dynamics of intentional parent-child alienation or long-term breakdowns in attachment are not merely subject to scientific criticism, but are fundamentally delegitimised in their legitimacy. A shift in the discourse appears to be characteristic of this: the focus is no longer on the empirical reality of certain dynamics, but on the question of whether the very act of naming them is already considered problematic, ideological or ‘pseudo-scientific’.

The central thesis of this paper is that an epistemic reversal is currently taking place in parts of the international debate: it is no longer empirical complexity that determines the legitimacy of a statement, but its narrative and political compatibility.

### 3.2 Language, War and Narrative Control

The title of this article deliberately refers to the linguistic construction of the Russian designation of the war of aggression against Ukraine as a ‘special military operation’. Of course, it would be inappropriate and factually incorrect to equate family law debates morally with a war of aggression. The structural parallel lies not in the moral dimension, but in the mechanism of narrative control.

Whilst cities were being bombed, children deported and people killed, the linguistic aim was to create the impression that this was not a war. This did not make reality disappear. Bombs remained bombs. The dead remained the dead. Trauma remained trauma. What was to be altered, however, was the socially permissible description of reality.

The more authoritarian systems become, the more this mechanism shifts: it is no longer reality that determines language, but language that determines which reality may still be spoken of publicly. It is precisely this mechanism that is increasingly observable in certain family law and psychosocial debates. Certain terms are made morally taboo, whilst at the same time real psychological dynamics are pushed out of legitimate scientific discourse.

The real danger of such processes lies not merely in scientific narrowing, but in the fact that social institutions begin to align their perceptions more closely with narrative boundaries than with empirical reality.

### 3.3 The confusion between PAS and PA

A central flaw in the current debate lies in the recurring conflation of the concept of ‘Parental Alienation Syndrome’ (PAS) with the much broader empirical phenomenon of parent-child alienation dynamics (Parental Alienation; PA).

Criticism of certain syndrome-oriented models may be scientifically legitimate. However, this by no means implies that the underlying psychological processes do not exist. It is precisely here that a notable logical inconsistency in the current discussion lies.

If one were to apply the same line of reasoning consistently to other areas, an absurd situation would arise. There is no uniform ‘domestic violence syndrome’ that standardises all manifestations and conclusively standardises them medically. Nevertheless, no one would seriously claim that domestic violence does not exist for that reason. The same applies to coercive control, psychological violence or emotional manipulation.

The term ‘syndrome’ essentially describes merely a combination of various symptoms that occur together and form a recognisable pattern. Numerous medical and psychological diagnoses are based on such constellations of symptoms, without it automatically following that all individual manifestations are identical.

Complex attachment and influence dynamics, in particular, often defy simple diagnostic categories. Criticism of a specific model does not, however, negate the empirical reality of observable dynamics: children suddenly reject parents with whom they were previously closely bonded, adopt stereotypical narratives, show little ambivalence and find themselves in severe loyalty conflicts (s. Bernet 2010).

This phenomenon can by no means be regarded as rare or exceptional. On the contrary, it reflects the everyday reality of virtually every family court and all professionals working within this field, particularly in the context of parental disputes concerning custody and parental responsibility for shared children. This reality is undeniable and readily verifiable on an empirical level (s. e.g. Guerra, 2024; Guerra, 2023; Harman et al. 2019; Baker, 2007).

### 3.4 Legal protection despite diagnostic uncertainty

The current debate appears particularly noteworthy from a legal perspective. For centuries, modern legal systems have been based on the assumption that human will is susceptible to influence and requires legal protection under certain conditions.

In German law, numerous provisions explicitly take manipulative influence into account, including Section 123 of the Civil Code (fraud), Section 240 of the Criminal Code (coercion), Section 253 of the Criminal Code (blackmail) and Section 263 of the Criminal Code (fraud). Comparable protective mechanisms exist in Spanish, French and British law. The UK's Serious Crime Act 2015 explicitly recognises coercive control as a relevant form of psychological violence.

A fundamental legal mechanism is decisive here: the law does not make the protection of legal interests contingent upon the existence of a fully standardised syndrome. Duties of care typically apply as soon as there is reliable evidence of harmful dynamics or significant risks.

Precisely for this reason, it seems contradictory that children of all people – who, due to their stage of development, are more vulnerable, dependent and suggestible than adults – should in some cases be subject to a lower standard of protection. If modern legal systems recognise psychological manipulation in adults, it seems inconsistent to rule out comparable dynamics in children across the board.

### 3.5 The child's wishes, the child's best interests and risks of manipulation

The increasing consideration of the child's voice in family court proceedings fundamentally represents a significant advance in modern child protection. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child expressly guarantees the child's right to be heard.

However, the situation becomes problematic where children's statements are hastily interpreted as fully autonomous, uninfluenced and definitive expressions of will. Children's

statements never arise in a social vacuum. Children develop their perspectives within emotional attachment systems. They react to pressure to be loyal, fear, coping mechanisms and the fear of losing attachment.

It is precisely here that one of the greatest structural problems of the current debate lies: voices that fundamentally deny parent-child alienation dynamics indirectly open the door to strategic influence over children. For if every child's rejection is automatically interpreted as the child's authentic will, a potential systemic gateway for manipulation arises.

The system thereby implicitly sends a dangerous message: influence your child long enough – and eventually this very influence will be institutionally legitimised as the 'child's authentic will'.

This is precisely why a child's voice must always be understood in context – not taken at face value alone. A child's will and a child's best interests are not one and the same. A child may subjectively express a will that has objectively arisen under conditions of massive loyalty conflicts, fear or psychological influence. Research in developmental psychology has for decades highlighted the suggestibility and context-dependence of children's statements (Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

This does not mean that children 'lie'. Rather, it means that their statements must be interpreted psychologically and contextualised.

### 3.6 European case law

Article 8 of the ECHR protects the right to respect for family life. The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly emphasised that states have positive obligations to actively protect family relationships and promote reunification, provided that there are no risks to the child's welfare.

In *Pisică v. Republic of Moldova* (2019), the Court held that authorities must take effective and practical measures against the ongoing destruction of family ties. Similar principles can be found in *Ignaccolo-Zenide v. Romania* (2000), *Strand Lobben and Others v. Norway* (2019), *Moog v. Germany* (2016) and *L.D. v. Poland* (2025).

Of particular significance is the repeated emphasis that children's statements must never be considered in isolation. Children react to pressure to form attachments, conflicts of loyalty and emotional dependencies. This is precisely why a purely formal 'hearing of the child' is

often insufficient. Courts and professionals must recognise and contextualise highly complex psychological dynamics of influence and attachment.

### 3.7 Social and economic follow-on costs

The institutional denial of complex dynamics of influence and alienation is not without consequences. In the long term, this results in considerable individual, social and economic costs.

Affected children often show an increased risk of anxiety disorders, depression, psychosomatic complaints, identity uncertainties and later attachment problems (Kelly & Emery, 2003; van Dijk et al., 2020). At the same time, affected parents often suffer from chronic stress, depression, incapacity to work and social isolation.

Added to this are significant follow-on costs for therapeutic care, youth support services, secondary legal proceedings, psychiatric treatment, the development of addictions, and the intergenerational transmission of conflict. Ultimately, society bears these costs collectively.

This is precisely why it seems problematic to treat real psychological dynamics primarily ideologically rather than empirically. The long-term societal costs of ideological denial can be considerably greater than the risks of an open scientific debate.

### 3.8 Scientific integrity and a democratic culture of science

Science fundamentally thrives on pluralistic perspectives, methodological openness and critical discussion. However, as soon as certain fields of research are morally delegitimised in advance, there is a risk of epistemic closure.

The real danger of ideologised systems lies in the fact that reality no longer determines perception; instead, narratives dictate which realities may even be articulated. Scientific integrity, however, demands a willingness to openly examine even uncomfortable or politically sensitive realities.

Children do not need ideological narratives. They need institutions that are prepared to grapple with complex reality. This includes the ability to simultaneously acknowledge that real violence exists, that manipulation exists, that false accusations exist, and that multiple dynamics can occur in parallel.

Methodological openness, interdisciplinary reflection and empirical integrity remain central prerequisites for a democratic culture of science.

### 3.9 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the ‘Special Narrative Operation PA’ points to a fundamental problem in modern discursive societies: the increasing convergence of science, morality and narrative power.

The confusion between PAS and PA, the equating of a failure to recognise the syndrome with the non-existence of psychological dynamics, and the growing tendency to interpret children’s statements without sufficient contextualisation pose considerable risks to children, families and institutions.

Paradoxically, it is precisely those voices that categorically deny parent-child alienation dynamics that may indirectly expand the scope for strategic influence on children. For when dynamics of influence are rendered institutionally invisible, courts and professionals lose key analytical tools for interpreting children’s statements.

Perhaps genuine child protection begins precisely where systems cease to filter reality through an ideological lens. Scientific integrity does not require the moral predetermination of a result, but rather the willingness to tolerate complex reality in all its ambivalence.

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