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# Psychological Tests Used in Child Custody Evaluations

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**Controversy has long surrounded the use of psychological testing in child custody evaluations. The present study explored the current status of psychological testing in these evaluations using a national survey of 198 psychologists. Findings revealed that participants viewed testing as one source among many for data collection, neither under- nor over-valuing its importance. Results also indicated that participants were more discriminating in their test selection, with a greater focus on objective assessment, particularly in the use of parent inventories and rating scales. These findings tend to negate much of the past criticism and reflect closer adherence to APA guidelines. Copyright © 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.**

The role of psychological testing in child custody evaluations is a topic of ongoing controversy. Complaints have revolved around using psychological tests in isolation (Roseby, 1995), over-interpreting test findings or making unsubstantiated assumptions (Brodzinsky, 1993; Heilbrun, 1995; Roseby, 1995), and utilizing tests that are irrelevant to the legal issue (Brodzinsky, 1993; Melton, Petrila, Poythress, & Slobogin, 1997). Brodzinsky (1993) and Melton *et al*. (1997) strongly criticized the routine use of classic IQ and personality tests in child custody evaluations, except where such testing can appropriately address special issues or apparent problems, such as to characterize the parent–child relationship or to determine the severity of a parent's depression and its ensuing impact on the child. Routine administration of such tests, simply for the sake of testing, they argued, is inappropriate. In contrast, proponents of psychological testing contend that it provides objective support for the evaluator's opinions (Gould, 1998; Otto & Butcher, 1995), helps balance bias and potential errors in clinical interviews (Gould, 1998), and provides working hypotheses that can be verified by other data sources

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(Heilbrun, 1995). In the end, the key issues in this controversy appear to be the nature and purpose of testing, rather than its legitimate place in child custody evaluations.

Three previously published studies surveyed the types of test used in child custody evaluations (Ackerman & Ackerman, 1996, 1997; Keilin & Bloom, 1986; LaFortune & Carpenter, 1998). In the earliest study, Keilin and Bloom surveyed 82 mental health professionals, of whom 78.1% were doctoral-level psychologists, 18.3% were psychiatrists, 2.4% were masters-level psychologists, and 1.2% were social workers. About 75% of respondents indicated that they performed psychological testing on children and adults as part of their custody evaluations; however, almost 20% of the respondents were not psychologists and would not typically include testing in the evaluation process. The three most commonly used instruments with adults were (i) Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), (ii) Rorschach, and (iii) Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), whereas, with children they were (i) Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Revised or Third Edition (WISC-R or WISC-III) or Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scale—Fourth Edition (SB), (ii) TAT or Children's Apperception Test (CAT), and (iii) Miscellaneous Projective Drawings. Respondents indicated that these tests took an average two and a half hours to administer. Thus, the findings from this study indicated a reliance on very traditional clinical tests in child custody work.

The American Psychological Association (APA) published its guidelines for child custody evaluations in divorce proceedings in 1994. These guidelines stressed the need for multiple methods of data collection; cautioned against over-interpreting or inappropriately interpreting assessment data in the custody evaluation process; and emphasized the primacy of parenting capacity, the psychological and developmental needs of the child, and the resulting fit in assessing the best psychological interests of the child.

Two years after publication of the guidelines, Ackerman and Ackerman (1996, 1997) replicated the study of Keilin and Bloom (1986) and analyzed the testing practices of 201 doctoral-level psychologists in child custody evaluations. They found that the average time spent on testing had more than doubled (5.2 hours) and was greater than that spent on any other clinical procedure. In this study, the three most commonly used tests with adults were (i) MMPI/MMPI-2, (ii) Rorschach Ink Blot Test, and (iii) Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—Revised (WAIS-R), while with children the preferred tests were (i) an intelligence test (WISC, SB, Kaufman-ABC, or McCarthy); (ii) CAT or TAT; and (iii) Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPSs). Some changes in test preferences were evident. The Ackerman–Schoendorf Scales for Parent Evaluation of Custody (ASPECT) were used by 11% of participants in this study. Further, some parenting inventories, such as the Parenting Stress Index, Parenting Awareness Skills Inventory, and Child Abuse Potential were being used, but on a limited basis, i.e. fewer than 10% of participants. Thus, the findings again suggested that, despite the APA guidelines, psychologists continued to rely heavily on traditional clinical tests in custody evaluations, although some non-traditional instruments, such as parent-oriented inventories, were also being used.

In a study reported one year later by LaFortune and Carpenter (1998), 165 mental health professionals (80% psychologists) from five states were asked to rate

 

test usage on a Likert scale, i.e. one (never) to five (always). Although this method of determining test usage differed from the percentage-of-use method in other surveys, thus making comparisons more difficult, the findings showed some change in test preferences from the two earlier surveys. The MMPI was still the most commonly used test ($M=4.19$) and was also viewed as contributing the most to evaluators' conclusions and recommendations. Other tests and instruments, such as parenting scales ($M=3.28$), drawing tests ($M=3.12$), Millon Multiaxial Personality Inventory (MCMI) ($M=2.82$), and ability testing ($M=2.67$) were common, but not regularly used. The Rorschach ($M=1.92$) and TAT ($M=2.16$) were rarely used. These findings, therefore, suggested less reliance on traditional instruments, except for the MMPI, and increased interest in parenting scales.

While the Ackerman and Ackerman (1996) and LaFortune and Carpenter (1998) surveys, completed during the infancy of the APA guidelines, indicated some change in the types of test evaluators used, both surveys found continued, and in some cases, increasing reliance on psychological testing. The discussion of this trend stimulated publication of numerous books and articles addressing the pros and cons of psychological testing, as well as their appropriate applications in comprehensive child custody evaluations (Clark, 1995; Gould, 1998; Melton *et al.*, 1997). In addition, the literature began to reflect the maturation of the child custody evaluation field and its relevant instruments. Podrygula (1997), for example, advocated for evaluators' movement from first-generation tests, i.e. traditional measures of intelligence, academic functioning, and personality, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales, Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), MMPI-2, and Rorschach, to second-generation instruments, e.g. those specifically developed for child custody evaluations, such as the Parent–Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), Parenting Stress Index (PSI), Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPS), and Perception of Relationship Test (PORT), and third-generation custody batteries, such as the ASPECT and ACCESS.

The impact of changes within the profession, as well as those in testing instruments and in the ongoing debate surrounding the APA guidelines, suggested the need for continuing evaluation of psychologists' testing practices in child custody evaluations. The present study sought to quantify child custody evaluators' testing practices, to identify emerging trends in preferred test selection for such evaluations, and to determine professional compliance with the APA guidelines.

# METHOD

## Participant Identification

The names of custody evaluators who might become participants in the present study were obtained from a variety of sources. An Internet search identified clinical and forensic psychologists nationally. Referral lists, such as that found on the Internet public access site for the American Board of Forensic Psychology and in the Michigan Society of Forensic Psychology referral booklet, were also used. In certain jurisdictions, the Friend of the Court was contacted and asked to provide names of psychologists who performed child custody evaluations. Finally, evaluators

 

known to the second author through conferences, workshops, and other professional activities were contacted.

## Instrument

An eight-page survey was developed, which covered all aspects of child custody practice. Survey sections of particular pertinence in this study included questions concerning time spent performing psychological tests, ranking of the importance of psychological testing compared to other custody evaluation procedures, and determination of the types of psychometric instrument used with adults and children.

## Selection Procedure

Each potential subject was sent a letter explaining the purpose of the study, a blank survey instrument, and stamped return envelope; they were asked to complete the survey and return it. The letter also explained that all information would be analyzed and reported on a group basis to protect individual confidentiality. Results of the study were promised to those who returned an enclosed request form. A second letter and survey was sent to those who had not returned the survey within approximately four weeks.

Of the 563 surveys sent out, 279 were returned (49.55%), with 198 participants fitting the selection criteria, i.e., a masters-or doctoral-level psychologist currently performing child custody evaluations.

## Participant Demographics

Approximately half the study participants were males (51.8%). The average age was 51 years (range, 32–71 years). Ninety-six percent were doctoral-level psychologists (89% Ph.D.s, 7% Psy.D.s, and 4% Ed.D.s) and 4% masters-level psychologists. Almost all were in private practice (92%) and worked in an urban setting (86%). Their average amount of experience in the child custody field was 13.57 years, with a mean of 245 evaluations (median = 120). Eleven percent of the sample held diplomates from the American Board of Forensic Psychology. Participants represented 38 states: 31% were from the West, 16% from the South, 32% from the Midwest, and 15% from the East, with 6% of unspecified geographical location.

# RESULTS

Participants were asked to rank order a list of ten child custody procedures, with one (1) being the most important and ten (10) the least important. On the average, psychological testing of the parents was ranked fourth, behind clinical interview/history with parent, clinical interview with the child, and parent–child observations. Psychological testing of the child was ranked sixth, behind the history of the child via

 

parent interview. Review of documents, collateral contacts with school/doctors, collateral contacts with spouse or relatives, and home visits completed the rankings.

Two sections of the survey assessed whether participants used psychological testing with parents and children. Findings showed that approximately 90% of adults and 60% of children were tested, whereas spouses and significant others were typically tested only 53% and 21% of the time, respectively.

In terms of the amount of time spent testing, participants indicated an average of three hours spent with both parents, two hours with child(ren), and two hours with a spouse or significant other. The time to complete parent–child questionnaires or rating scales averaged about one-and-one-quarter hours.

Table 1 outlines the specific types of test used in custody evaluations as determined in the present study, in Ackerman & Ackerman (1997), and in Keilin & Bloom (1986). The first column for each study represents the percentage of participants who reported using that particular test (i.e. at least once in a custody case). The second column for each study indicates the mean usage rate for each test, i.e., the mean percentage of participants reporting that they normally gave that test.

In the present study, about half of the survey participants reported using IQ tests with children and adults as part of a custody evaluation. However, on average, they reported using such tests in only 30% of their custody cases, which indicates a decline in usage from prior studies. Furthermore, the mode and median in the present study were 10% and 5% for adults, and 5% and 10% for children, respectively. These data suggest, therefore, that IQ tests are no longer as widely used as reported in previous surveys. However, a small subgroup of participants reported that they continue to administer IQ tests to every adult (17%) and every child (14%).

In the present survey, academic tests were found to be given to children more commonly than to adults and were used more selectively than in past studies. The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) was the most commonly used academic measure. Overall, the mean percentage of cases in which academic tests were given has declined compared to past surveys.

Among the adult objective personality tests, the MMPI/MMPI-2 was by far the most frequently used, which reaffirms prior findings (Ackerman & Ackerman, 1997; Keilin & Bloom, 1986; LaFortune & Carpenter, 1998). The MMPI-2 was given in the overwhelming majority of custody cases, with a small number (7%) of participants in the present study continuing to use the original version (MMPI).

Another adult objective personality test, the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory II or III (MCMI), was found to have gained much popularity since the earlier surveys and was the second most commonly used test in the present study. Other objective personality tests, as the 16-Personality Factors and California Personality Inventory, continue to be used on a limited basis.

For adolescent testing, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Adolescent Version (MMPI-A) was the most commonly used objective personality measure, with the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI) reportedly used about half as often. Compared to preferences reported in the Ackerman and Ackerman (1997) study, more participants in the present survey reported using this test, although the mean frequencies were similar.

The Rorschach Ink Blot Test continues to be the most popular adult projective instrument, followed by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Usage and

 

Table 1. Use frequency of specific tests in child custody evaluations

| Tests | Present Study | | A & A (1997)[a] | | K & B (1986)[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % using test | *M*% time used | % using test | *M*% time used | % using test | *M*% time used |
| *Intelligence tests* | | | | | | |
| Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-R/III | 47 | 31 | 43 | 49 | 29 | 67 |
| Child IQ test[c] | 48 | 32 | 58 | 45 | 45 | 85 |
| *Academic tests* | | | | | | |
| Wide Range Achievement Test—R/3—Adult | 10 | 42 | 10 | 78 | — | — |
| Child achievement test[d] | 26 | 37 | 28 | 56 | 21 | 76 |
| *Objective personality tests—adults* | | | | | | |
| Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Original or 2nd Edition | 94 | 88 | 92 | 91 | 71 | 88 |
| Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory II/III | 52 | 73 | 34 | 73 | — | — |
| 16-Personality Factor | 9 | 47 | 8 | 67 | 6 | 60 |
| California Personality Inventory | 3 | 84 | — | — | — | — |
| *Objective personality tests—adolescents* | | | | | | |
| Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Adolescent Version | 43 | 42 | 20 | 49 | — | — |
| Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory | 21 | 36 | 11 | 41 | — | — |
| *Projective personality instruments—adult* | | | | | | |
| Rorschach Ink Blot Test | 44 | 64 | 48 | 64 | 42 | 67 |
| Sentence Completion | 26 | 89 | 22 | 88 | 12 | 76 |
| Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) | 24 | 55 | 29 | 56 | 38 | 67 |
| House–Tree–Person Drawings—Adult | 10 | 80 | 6 | 85 | 4 | 47 |
| Draw-a-Person or Human Figure Drawing | 10 | 80 | — | — | 6 | 81 |
| *Projective personality instruments—children and adolescents* | | | | | | |
| Family Drawing or Kinetic Family Drawing | 45 | 76 | 18 | 87 | 9 | 94 |
| TAT or Children's Apperception Test | 35 | 48 | 37 | 53 | 39 | 75 |
| Draw-a-Person or Human Figure Drawing | 33 | 75 | — | — | 20 | 79 |
| Sentence Completion | 30 | 73 | 29 | 76 | 12 | 71 |
| House–Tree–Person Drawings | 29 | 70 | 19 | 76 | 10 | 83 |
| Robert's Apperception Test | 25 | 43 | 10 | 69 | 9 | 54 |
| Rorschach Ink Blot Test | 23 | 64 | 27 | 48 | 29 | 78 |
| *Rating scales* | | | | | | |
| Child Behavior Checklist | 31 | 70 | 4 | 86 | — | — |
| Conner's Parent Rating Scale | 26 | 43 | 3 | 40 | — | — |
| Personality Inventory for Children—Revised | 13 | 46 | 5 | 70 | — | — |
| Basic Assessment System for Children | 5 | 70 | — | — | — | — |

 

Table 1. (Continued)

| Tests | Present Study | | A & A (1997)[a] | | K & B (1986)[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % using test | *M*% time used | % using test | *M*% time used | % using test | *M*% time used |
| *Parent inventories* | | | | | | |
| Parent–Child Relationship Inventory | 44 | 72 | 11 | 73 | — | — |
| Parenting Stress Index | 41 | 67 | 9 | 39 | — | — |
| Child Abuse Potential Inventory | 21 | 50 | 6 | 46 | — | — |
| Parent Satisfaction Scale | 10 | 63 | — | — | — | — |
| Child Sexual Behavior Inventory | 10 | 23 | — | — | — | — |
| *Selected bricklin instruments* | | | | | | |
| Bricklin Perceptual Scale | 28 | 63 | 35 | 66 | — | — |
| Perception of Relationship Test | 23 | 66 | 16 | 64 | — | — |
| Parent Awareness Skills Survey | 21 | 60 | 8 | 94 | — | — |
| *Custody batteries* | | | | | | |
| Ackerman–Schoendorf Scales for Parent Evaluation of Custody (ASPECT) | 16 | 74 | 11 | 89 | — | — |
| Bricklin's ACCESS | 8 | 71 | — | — | — | — |
| Uniform Child Custody Evaluation System | 9 | 54 | (single respondent) | | — | — |
| *Supplementary tests noted in other category (used >2% of time)* | | | | | | |
| Personality Assessment Inventory | 7 | 80 | — | — | — | — |
| Shipley Institute of Living Scale | 4 | 93 | 5 | 80 | — | — |
| Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—R/III | 3.5 | 43 | — | — | — | — |
| Family Relations Test | 2.5 | 65 | 5 | 65 | 7 | 90 |
| Bender Gestalt Test | 2.5 | 76 | 9 | 82 | 12 | 83 |
| Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory | 2.5 | 45 | — | — | — | — |
| Custody Quotient Test | 2 | 75 | 4 | 57 | — | — |

*Note*: Dashes indicate data were not reported.

[a]From "Custody evaluation practices: A survey of experienced professionals (revisited)" by M.J. Ackerman and M.C. Ackerman, 1997, *Professional Psychology*: *Research and Practice* **28**: 139–140. Copyright 1997 by American Psychological Association. Used with permission.

[b]From "Custody evaluation practices: A survey of experienced professionals" by W.G. Keilin and L.J. Bloom, 1986, *Professional Psychology*: *Research and Practice* **17**: 341. Copyright 1986 by American Psychological Association. Used with permission.

[c]Child intelligence tests include the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (3rd edn.), Stanford—Binet—Fourth Edition, Kaufman ABC, and McCarthy Scales of Cognitive Abilities.

[d]Child's academic tests include Wide Range Achievement Test—Revised or Third Edition, Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Peabody Individual Achievement Test, and Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement.

frequency figures for both tests in the present study were similar to figures in past studies. In the present study, the use of projective drawings was rare with adults. However, with children and adolescents, projective drawing tests such as the Family Drawing or Kinetic Family Drawing (FD/KFD) were popular instruments, with usage and frequency rates markedly higher than in previous studies. The Robert's Apperception Test has also gained popularity, while the Rorschach was found to be the least used projective instrument with children and adolescents.

The most dramatic change in testing practices was the increased use of parent rating scales, with more than a seven fold increase in the number of participants now

 

using these instruments compared to usage rates in earlier surveys. The Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) was the most commonly administered parent rating scale for children, followed by the Conner's Parent Rating Scale.

Further, the percentage of participants using parenting inventories was found to have dramatically increased since the study of Ackerman and Ackerman (1997). It is important to note that these inventories were introduced in the early 1990s, well after the study by Keilin and Bloom (1986). More than 40% of participants reported using the Parent–Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) and Parenting Stress Index (PSI), compared to about 10% in the Ackerman and Ackerman (1997) study. Those who reported using the PCRI and PSI in the present study stated that they routinely administer these tests 52% and 44% of the time, respectively.

Interestingly, study participants reported relatively low usage of some instruments designed specifically for child custody evaluations. For example, use of the Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPS), Perception of Relationship Test (PORT), and Parent Awareness Skills Survey (PASS) was reported by only a quarter of study participants. Although use of the PORT and PASS tests was shown to have increased since the Ackerman and Ackerman (1997) study, use of the BPS declined. The latter may be due to the extreme criticism of the psychometric properties of the instrument (Hagin, 1992; Heinze & Grisso, 1996; Melton *et al.*, 1997; Shaffer, 1992).

Similarly, custody batteries continue to be used on only a limited basis. While the most commonly used battery (or portions thereof) was the Ackerman–Schoendorf Parent Evaluation for Custody Test (ASPECT), only 16% of participants reported using this test. Bricklin's ACCESS and the Uniform Child Custody Evaluation System (UCCES) were used by less than 10% of survey participants, while those using the ACCESS accounted for only 8% of the survey. The Custody Quotient (CQ) Test also was used by only a very small number of participants.

Among the supplementary instruments noted in the "other tests" category, most mentioned was the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), followed by the Shipley Institute of Living Scale. However, neither of these tests was widely used. Use of the Bender Gestalt was found to have declined from previous studies.

## DISCUSSION

The present study indicates that, while psychological testing continues to be widely used by psychologists in child custody evaluations, some interesting changes have occurred. First, participants in the study only ranked psychological testing as moderately important (fourth and sixth) among ten main custody evaluation procedures. Clinical interviews with the parent and child, along with the parent–child observations, were seen as more important. These findings suggest that psychological testing is no longer the primary procedure in custody evaluations; but instead is used to supplement other procedures or to create "working hypotheses," as defined by Heilbrun (1995).

A second trend, which emerged in the present study, was the wide use of objective tests with adults, but projective tests with children. The most popular adult tests were the MMPI-2 and MCMI-II/III. Ninety-two percent of survey participants reported using the MMPI-2, with the overwhelming majority routinely administering this test. This finding was similar to results in the Ackerman and Ackerman

 

study (1996, 1997). However, the present survey showed a dramatic increase in use of the MCMI-II/IIII. The use of the MCMI in a forensic setting, especially the most recent edition of the test (e.g., MCMI-III), is not without controversy. Rogers, Salekin, & Sewell (1999) claim the MCMI-III lacks criterion-related and construct validity for Axis II disorders and fails to meet the Daubert standard. Ackerman (1999) also criticized the MCMI-III, stating it lacks empirical research and exaggerates psychopathology. He also expressed reservations about the MCMI-II, but thought it was a better choice than the MCMI-III (Ackerman, 1999). Another argument surrounding the MCMI is that its normative data are based on a clinical rather than "normal" sample, making its use in custody situations inappropriate. McCann and Dyer (1996) noted, however, that the normative groups for the MCMI-II and III included a significant number of high-conflict couples receiving marital therapy, which makes its use in custody evaluations appropriate. Furthermore, these researchers contend, because the MCMI-II/III provides information about each parent's personality traits and clinical symptoms, which may impact the psychological environment of the child, it is useful in custody cases. Initially, they recommended the use of the MCMI-II (McCann & Dyer, 1996), but later Dyer (1997) encouraged instead the use of the MCMI-III, stating new studies had shown it to be acceptable for forensic work.

With regard to test selection for children, participants in the present study preferred projective techniques, perhaps due to the lack of objective tests for younger populations (<12 years of age). However, reliance on projectives, which often have dubious validity and reliability (Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000), raises serious questions in a forensic setting with meeting the Daubert standard (1993). This is also true in regards to the use of projective testing with adults. The sole exception may be the Rorschach, using Exner's Comprehensive System (1993) for scoring, although ongoing debate continues over its forensic application (Grove & Barden, 1999; McCann, 1998).

The third trend to emerge in the present study is that children are being tested less frequently in child custody evaluations than in the past. The current study indicated that 60% of children were tested, whereas Ackerman and Ackerman (1996, 1997) reported that 92% of children were tested. The figure of Keilin and Bloom (1986) was around 75%. This decline may be due to a couple of factors. First, routine IQ tests are being used less frequently with children, a trend which will be discussed in more detail below. A second factor may be that some projective techniques, such as drawings and story telling, are sometimes given in less formal settings (e.g., rapport building, clinical interview) and might not be viewed as "testing" *per se*. The present study found a dramatic increase in the use of the Child Behavior Checklist and Conner's Parent Rating Scale compared to the Ackerman and Ackerman (1997) study. Increased use of these parent-rating scales, which focus on children's social–emotional functioning, may reduce the perceived need to also directly test the children.

A fourth trend to emerge in the present study is the less frequent use of IQ tests. The mean usage rate of IQ tests with adults and children was around 30%, but had a mode and median usage rate of 10% or less. In contrast, the mean usage of Keilin and Bloom (1986) was 85%, while that of Ackerman and Ackerman (1996, 1997) was 45%. Thus, IQ tests are being used more selectively at this time, which supports the position of Melton *et al.* (1997) and Brodzinsky (1993). As noted above,

 

however, a small subgroup of participants in the present study continues to routinely administer IQ tests to all clients.

A fifth trend to emerge in the present study is the increased use of parent inventories, such as the Parent–Child Relationship Inventory and Parenting Stress Index. Use of both tools has increased markedly since the study by Ackerman and Ackerman (1996, 1997) and indicates an increased interest in parenting measures, the second-generation instruments proposed by Podrygula (1997) as more appropriate for custody evaluations. Other second-generation instruments, such as Bricklin's Parent Awareness Skill Survey and Perception of Relationship Test, have also gained popularity, although not without criticism due to inadequate norms, reliability, and validity (Otto, Eden, & Barcus, 2000). Third-generation instruments, those that integrate second-generation tests into batteries, such as the ASPECT and ACCESS, continue to be used on a limited basis. It is important to note that some of these third-generation batteries, such as the ASPECT, include traditional tests, i.e., the MMPI-2, Rorschach, and Wechsler scales. Furthermore, acceptance of the ASPECT has been hindered by much criticism surrounding its lack of validity and reliability, lack of evidence to show that items are related to parent competence or custody outcome, exclusion of third party interviews in the evaluation process, and averaging ASPECT scores across children in a family (Melton *et al.*, 1997; Heinze & Grisso, 1996; Otto *et al.*, 2000).

With regard to limitations of this study, participants were asked to retrospectively estimate percentages and time frames of test usage, which is less reliable than actual counts. Also, the study did not analyze the circumstances in which particular tests are used, which would be an area for further research. Finally, a third limitation was the sample itself, a group of highly educated and experienced psychologists, whose level of expertise may not accurately reflect the typical child custody evaluator.

In conclusion, the present study suggests that psychologists as a group are becoming more selective and specialized in their administration of tests in child custody evaluations. In general, current practice has eliminated reliance on IQ tests or a single battery of tests, regardless of the type of forensic question or psychological issue. Instead, the increased use of parent rating scales and parenting inventories suggests an increased interest in measuring parenting capacity. In addition, objective tests are now more widely used with adults, probably due to their empirical basis and computer scoring. However, projective instruments, which generally lack adequate psychometric properties, continue to be widely used despite the absence of empirical support. The present study also indicates that testing is now viewed simply as one source among a multiple array of procedures for data collection, with its value neither under- nor over-estimated in importance. Overall, the current use of psychological testing in child custody evaluations has made significant movement towards adhering to the professional parameters set forth in the 1994 APA guidelines for child custody evaluations.

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