
Preface

In 1977, while working as a young psychologist in Clinical Services at the Cook County Juvenile Court, the department chair, a psychiatrist, asked me to conduct psychological testing on one of his private cases. The case was a custody evaluation. At that time, I had no clue about custody evaluations, or what he desired. After some discussion, he informed me that he wanted complete psychological testing, including intellectual assessment, as well as objective and projective testing of each parent. Needing the money, I was happy to oblige. He was apparently pleased with my results and asked me several more times to again do psychological testing. I had no idea as to the outcome of these cases. Then, after approximately a year, I received a call from a divorce attorney, asking if I would be willing to be appointed by the court to conduct a custody evaluation; he related that he was impressed by my psychological test analysis on a past case, when my testing had been utilized by the psychiatrist (my boss). I happily agreed, although I realized that I had no formal training. When I looked around for training, I discovered that there was little or nothing available. This was the reality of the late 1970s. Ultimately, the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) was born and guidelines were established. The American Psychological Association (APA) also developed guidelines for forensic evaluations and for custody evaluations. Training eventually emerged through professional meetings and workshops. As one might say, we have come a long way baby.

In the beginning, custody evaluations were often conducted as were other psychological evaluations, with an emphasis on interviewing and psychological testing. Few clinicians observed the child with each parent, and even fewer home observations occurred. Collateral interviews were scant, as was the review of collateral information.

Even when psychological testing was conducted, there were no studies of custody litigants with these instruments. There were initially no specialized instruments to assess parenting. It was many years later that Barry Bricklin developed the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and a plethora of other instruments, and Marc Ackerman developed the ASPECT. More specific instruments such as the Parenting Alliance Measure, the Parent Child Relationship Inventory, the Parenting Stress Index, and others emerged even later.

In the beginning, there were no best interest factors until state courts began to develop them in response to this new field. And there was no consideration

of parental alienation, until Richard Gardner opined about it. In addition, there was almost a general consensus that John Bowlby was correct in espousing the tender years theory where it was assumed that children were singularly attached to their mother. Furthermore, issues of substance abuse, domestic violence, gender differences, and mental illness had only minimal attention in early custody evaluations. Relocation was not a consideration in evaluations and state statutes were not in existence to address mobility. Now, all of these issues are discussed regularly in the professional literature and at professional meetings, and evaluators are expected to consider these factors in their evaluations and recommendations.

This book is an attempt to provide current thinking and research on custody evaluations. Many of the authors are eminent in the field. Barry Bricklin (Weidner University) and Gail Elliott, who have developed numerous instruments widely used by custody evaluators, have contributed a chapter on the various Bricklin scales. Demosthenes Lorandos, editor of the *Handbook of Parental Alienation*, has provided a voluminous chapter on the subject. Kristine Jacquin, dean at the Fielding Institute, has contributed two chapters, including one on the assessment of abuse, and one on relocation evaluations. Daniel Hynan, who has written extensively on child custody issues, offers the latest on parent/child observations. Daniel Loebel, from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, has provided a chapter on collateral interviews and collateral information. Stephen Morewitz, from California State University-East Bay, has written about educational issues in custody, whereas Steve Eichel, a renowned expert on cults, contributed a chapter on this topic. Jay Lebow, from Northwestern University, discusses the role of family therapy in relationship to custody issues, while the Honorable Judge Donna-Jo Vorderstrasse, presiding judge in the family division in Lake County, Illinois offers her perspective on custody cases.

Other authors offer the latest information and research on ethical and professional issues, the best interest factors, interviewing children and adolescents, and interviewing adults. There are also additional chapters on psychological testing, including separate chapters on parenting inventories, objective personality testing, and projective personality testing. Furthermore, there are provocative chapters on assessing mental illness in the context of custody evaluations, assessing alcoholism and substance abuse, assessing domestic violence, and assessing attachment. Finally, several case studies are provided, including the psychological report and analysis.

I have contributed several chapters myself, all on topics dear to me and topics that I have had the opportunity to teach several times at various graduate school programs.

After completing my first full independent custody evaluation in 1978, and now having completed in excess of over 1100 custody evaluations in many states, I look back on the changes in the field and can only admire how far this specialty field has come. Of course, we still have a long way to go and much refinement ahead of us. There is much research to be done and more training necessary. Hopefully, this book will contribute to that process.

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