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Clinical Usefulness and Common Profiles of the MMPI-2 RF in Child Custody Assessment

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CLINICAL USEFULNESS AND COMMON PROFILES OF THE MMPI-2 RF IN
CHILD CUSTODY ASSESSMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Psychology

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Title: Clinical Usefulness and Common Profiles of the MMPI-2 RF in Child Custody Assessment

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The current study looked at the revised version of the MMPI-2 (The MMPI-2 RF) to ascertain whether this version of the instrument could provide increased interpretability, as well as information useful to a child custody evaluation. To accomplish this, past MMPI-2 answer sheets completed by child custody litigants were converted to the RF version. Results from an ANOVA, which was completed to compare the MMPI-2 and RF validity scale T scores, revealed a significant difference, indicating greater interpretability with the RF. In addition, it was hypothesized that the RF's addition of scales designed to capture broadband data (Higher Order Scales) would predict specific parenting behaviors and attitudes that are considered important by the courts. These behaviors/attitudes (called the Michigan Criteria) were assessed via a brief questionnaire (created for this project) and used as criterion variables for the HO order scales ability to predict negative parenting traits within seven linear regression models. Results indicated a predictive relationship between the THD scale and the parent's ability to provide for the child's needs, suggesting some usefulness when using the RF as part of a custody evaluation. In addition, this study produced RF norms, which revealed elevated clinical T scores, clinical T scores and supplementary scale T scores. These norms suggest a tendency for this population to produce marginally valid profiles that underestimate faults, as well as elevated Demoralization and Paranoia clinical scales. Lastly, two groups of psychologists from Pennsylvania were asked to read typical

custody vignettes, as well as MMPI-2 and RF descriptions and answer questions about the two instruments' abilities to measure parental strengths and weaknesses. Results did not indicate a preference for one measure over the other, although the "gold standard group" (The Child Custody Project members) reported a slight preference for the MMPI-2.