

## Psychological Tests That are Helpful in Identifying and Diagnosing Parental Alienation

William Bernet, M.D. — February 2020

Researchers have published peer-reviewed articles regarding several psychological tests that relate in some way to the identification of parental alienation (PA). Some of the tests or questionnaires involve parents; some are administered to children who are being evaluated for the possibility of PA. These tests are not intended to be used in isolation to identify or diagnose PA. They are intended to be part of a comprehensive evaluation of the family, which includes: interviews of the family members; information from collateral sources; reviewing therapy, medical, and legal records; and psychological testing. Here is a list of tests that may be considered—in roughly chronological order based on the time they became relevant for the assessment of PA.

**Bricklin Perceptual Scales.** The BPS, which were developed specifically for use in child custody evaluations, define and quantify children's attachment to and perceptions of their parents (Bricklin, 1984). Estranged children are likely on the BPS to manifest ambivalence toward both parents. Alienated children, on the other hand, are likely to see the preferred parent as totally good and the rejected parent as totally bad. Although Bricklin did not use the term "splitting" in his discussion of the BPS, that appears to be what he was measuring.

**Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–2.** The MMPI-2 is well-established psychological test, which is commonly used in parenting time evaluations. Siegel and Langford (1998) found that alienating mothers were more likely to complete MMPI-2 questions in a defensive manner, striving to appear as flawless as possible. Gordon, Stoffey, and Bottinelli (2008) found that parents who induced alienation in their children manifested higher scores (in the clinical range) on the MMPI-2 than control mothers and fathers (scores in the normal range), indicating primitive defenses such as splitting and projective identification. The scores of targeted parents were mostly similar to the scores of control parents.

**Alienated Family Relationship Scale.** Kathleen Laughrea (2002) developed the AFRS, which is administered to children. A factor analysis and reliability analysis confirmed that the two alienation scales (father alienating against mother and mother alienating against father) were reliable. Scores on this scale were related to other measures in a theoretically consistent manner indicating good validity of the measure.

**Parental Alienating Behaviors Scale.** Braver, Coatsworth, and Peralta (n.d.) described and tested the PABS, although this work was not published in a journal. The PABS, which consists of 6 items, was administered to mothers, fathers, and adult children to determine the presence of parental alienating behaviors.

**Baker Strategies Questionnaire.** Baker and Chambers (2012) developed the BSQ, a standardized measure that could be used to collect reliable and valid information about the specific alienating behaviors that a child had been exposed to and/or a parent was currently

engaging in. After several rounds of piloting, the BSQ was developed, which measures 17 primary alienating behaviors.

**Baker Alienation Questionnaire.** Baker, Burkhard, and Albertson-Kelly (2012) introduced the BAQ, which is intended to identify alienated children using a paper-and-pencil measure that is short, easy to administer, and easy to score objectively. In their pilot study, Baker et al. found that children who had been court-ordered for reunification therapy—specifically for PA—consistently responded in a polarized fashion in which one parent was denigrated and the other was idealized. Baker et al. found that the BAQ discriminated well between alienated and nonalienated children.

**Parental Alienation Scale.** Cunha Gomide, Camargo, and Fernandes (2016) developed the PAS, a questionnaire to be completed by evaluators familiar with the family. The questions pertain to both the parents' and the child's activities and behaviors. This test distinguished alienating parents from target parents and alienated children from nonalienated children.

**Rowlands' Parental Alienation Scale.** The RPAS is a questionnaire for parents designed to capture the manifestations of PA in their children, which had previously been described in the literature (Rowlands, 2018). Six significant factors were extracted representing the eight traditional behavioral symptoms of PA.

**Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire.** The PARQ is a questionnaire that children complete regarding their perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' accepting–rejecting behaviors (Bernet, Gregory, Reay, & Rohner, 2018). A study of the PARQ Gap (the absolute difference between the child's PARQ: Mother and PARQ: Father scores) found that this test was 99% accurate in distinguishing alienated from nonalienated children (Bernet, Gregory, Rohner, and Reay, in press).

**Bene-Anthony Family Relations Test.** Blagg and Godfrey (2018) administered the BAFRT to a population of children in the United Kingdom. The BAFRT (developed by Eva Bene and E. James Anthony in the 1950's) is a projective test that explores indirectly children's perceptions of their relationship with family members. Blagg and Godfrey concluded that “children in the alienated group who had not been abused or neglected by their target parent expressed almost exclusively negative (hostile) feelings towards them, while also expressing almost exclusively positive (affectionate) feelings towards their preferred parent.”

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