

ABSTRACT

THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF PARENTAL ATTACHMENT IN FOSTER CHILDREN: WHAT ARE THE CURRENT PRACTICES AND HOW CAN THEY BE IMPROVED?

This study investigated the practice of clinical assessment of parent-child relationships for the purpose of placement decision-making within the child welfare system. A sample of 50 current child welfare cases from Fresno County that involved adoption hearings were examined to determine what techniques were in use, what referral questions were most common, what type of degrees were held by the clinicians, whether clinician degrees were related to the type of assessment performed, and whether child characteristics and case outcomes were associated with the use of particular assessment techniques. Although statistical analyses were not possible, assessment practices did not appear to be related to any clinician or case variables; they varied greatly, were conducted by a variety of types of clinicians, and the techniques used did not have any empirically-established predictive validity for the purposes of assessment of attachment for placement decision-making within the child welfare system.

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