Measuring Parental Alienation in a Swedish Context

The parental alienation syndrome (PAS) is the empirical fact that one parent (the alienator) hinders the other parent (the alienated parent) to meet their child (the alienated child), leading to that the alienated child rejects the alienated parent. PAS is frequently occurring in custody battles, where two parents is disputing how much time a child should have with each of them. Custody battles are evaluated by socialstjänsten, who advices to Tingsrätten of whom gets custody and time to see the child. In these evaluations, it is essential to distinguish between PAS or maltreatment, where in the former case alienation is primary caused by the alienating parent, and in the latter case by the alienated parent. Thus, discrimination between PAS and maltreatment is essential.

This project aims at validating and developing tools for discrimination between PAS and maltreatment. The Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionaire (PARQ) is a set of rating scales aimed for this discrimination. It measures the mother's, the father's and the child's self-rated perception of warmth, hostility, neglect, and rejection (Rohner, 2016). One aim of this project is to validate this instrument in the Swedish context so that it can be used in Swedish custody battels.

Another aim is to develop semantic questions to measure acceptance-rejection using descriptive keywords that are analyzed by machine learning. Our research group has developed such methods where psychological constructs are measured by asking individuals to reply to questions using open-ended response formats. We have shown that our open-ended semantic questions approach yields good statistical properties; with competitive, or higher, validity and reliability than corresponding numerical rating scales. Although rating scales are widespread, easily quantifiable and have led to important findings in different fields, they come with drawbacks, which our approach addresses. Semantic questions have the potential to complement and extend the traditional numerical rating scales as they are based on natural language and both *measure* and *describe* psychological constructs. For more information see our work in published in *Psychological Methods* Kjell et al (2018) and our online tools for analyzing texts.

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Suggested references:

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Rohner (2016). In Zeigler-Hill, T.K. Shackelford (eds.), Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences, Springer International Publishing AG 2016, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_56-1 his

Online support tools: https://worddiagnostics.com/ and https://semanticexcel.com