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The Two-Step Procedure: Using Gaming Insights to Improve Custody Evaluation Risk Assessment

Leonard Ngaosuvan

Abstract
Some children are maltreated and societies must protect them. This is done either at child protective services or when parents litigate over child custody, living, or visitation. Custody disputes provide difficult challenges for custody evaluators, particularly because information is often insufficient for high-precision decision-making. These challenges are present in both risk assessments (RAs) and investigations for the children’s best interest (ICBIs). Insights from gaming and signal-detection theory show that thinking several steps ahead leads to statistical advantage which improves decision-making in game play. The purpose of the present study is to show that gaming advantages can be used to improve RAs in custody disputes. The two-step procedure is organized as: (1) defining RAs and ICBIs as two sets with intersection; and (2) completing RAs before initiating ICBIs and using liberal RA decision-making criteria. Formal analysis and mathematical example show that the two-step procedure reduces the total number of RA errors by about 50 percent and suggest that gaming fineses are transferrable to custody disputes. Furthermore, should the two-step procedure be implemented, children are potentially protected from maltreatment post litigation. Implementation issues of the two-step procedure are discussed.

Keywords
Gaming, signal-detection theory, custody evaluations, risk assessments (RAs)

Protecting children from harm is one of the most important tasks that parents and society as whole are challenged with. Under no circumstance child maltreatment is acceptable. Sadly, even the wealthiest countries suffer from such cases. Baby P, a tragic case from the UK, was repeatedly beaten before finally perishing despite being admitted to several medical institutions. Such cases are met with massive public outcry, horror, and disgust. Clearly, protecting children from maltreatment, sometimes from their own parents, is a matter of life and death. Few things are more important.

Many western governments have two processes to protect children from harm: child protective services that are alerted by citizens when children are maltreated and risk assessments (RAs) in custody disputes. Making accurate decisions in both processes is hard, particularly when critical information is inaccurate or missing. Many games revolve around decision-making in such situations and several
principles for increased gaming performance have been developed. The purpose of the present paper is to show that gaming advantages can be used to improve RAs in custody disputes, and thereby help protect children. Specifically, this is achieved by introducing the two-step procedure and providing formal analysis and mathematical example as evidence.

CUSTODY DISPUTES

Many separating parents find common ground and solve practical issues such as child custody, living, or parental visitation without involving authorities. Parents who cannot come to terms end up in custody disputes. For purposes of this paper, custody disputes are used as a catch-all concept for all types of litigations, regardless if the dispute is about custody, living, or visitation.

Many western cultures use adversarial judicial systems, where parents hire legal representatives that speak of their clients’ behalves in courts. In custody disputes, courts assign experts to conduct custody evaluations, where the children’s best interest is given more weight than parents’ wishes. Theoretically, custody evaluations consist of two sources of information that may or may not solve disputes: RAs for child maltreatment and investigations of the children’s best interests (ICBIs).

In the US, custody evaluations are conducted by psychologists, whereas in Sweden, social workers conduct both RAs and ICBIs. For the purposes of this paper, professionals conducting RAs and ICBIs are called custody evaluators regardless of academic backgrounds. In Sweden, custody evaluators practically decide the outcome of the disputes as nearly 70 percent of the cases lead to recommendations (based on either RA or ICBI) and these recommendations are followed by court decisions to nearly 90 percent of the court rulings (Rejmer 2003). An American archival study showed that about 60 percent of judges’ rulings are based on custody evaluator recommendations (Kunin, Ebbesen, and Konechi 1992). This is further supported as judges’ report that custody evaluations are important for decision-making in courts (Waller and Daniel 2010). Needless to say, custody evaluators wield great power in custody disputes.

Emotional valence of custody disputes present difficulties for evaluators. Parents, fearing that the government or other parents will take their children away from them, sometimes threaten social workers (Littlechild 2003). Working under such high-strain conditions creates an emotional influence to the situation, which may affect judgment and decision-making (Angie et al. 2011), not to mention the importance of the decision itself. Furthermore, evaluators may not have full access to parents’ medical journals, records of parental mental health (Stansbury 2010), scientifically validated instruments, updated scientific literature on risk factors in child maltreatment (preferably divided into each identifiable type of maltreatment), or even adequate resources to conduct proper evaluations.

RAs and Its Challenges

The purpose of custody dispute RAs is protecting children from future abuse, neglect, abduction, or other forms of maltreatment. Parental characteristics such as psychopathology and substance abuse are carefully considered in RAs (Ackerman et al. 2004). Should parents present too many such characteristics, they are considered unfit, which leads to custody dispute loss. At a structural level, RAs are indeed challenging.

First, custody evaluators must agree on who the potential perpetrator is. Mostly, parents take the role. Second, type of maltreatment must be defined in order to be used in the RA, which is a series of scientific debates. For instance, definitional issues have to be resolved about emotional abuse (Black, Smith Slep, and Heyman 2001). Third, even when definition can be agreed upon, risk and protective factors on each
type of maltreatment must be identified. This is a massive research endeavor before enough high-quality studies are published and each factor can be established. Generally, each single protective or risk factor demands several studies before establishment in the scientific community. In some fields (i.e., types of maltreatment), many studies have been published: physical child abuse and neglect (e.g., Stith et al. 2008).

Assuming that aforementioned challenges can be met, there are still two fields of issues to be addressed. First, custody evaluators are human and not immune from making mistakes. Cognitive psychology has a long history of studying human mistakes in judgments and decision-making. In addition, philosophers can identify several fallacies of risk (Hansson 2004), similar to logical fallacies in argumentation. Another way of studying human judgment ability is to compare it with mechanical models. Professionals usually perform worse than mechanical models (Grove et al. 2000). Again, a comprehensive review of this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, some studies are more related to custody dispute risk than others. People find it difficult to disregard irrelevant information. In the case of custody dispute RAs, Nuttal and Jackson (1994) found that clinicians with a personal history of childhood abuse were more likely to believe accusations of child abuse than clinicians without personal experiences. Furthermore, Bar-Hillel (1980) showed that people tended to neglect base-rate which was critical information related to judgments. That is, people tend to ignore how frequent the phenomenon (i.e., child maltreatment) is in their judgments.

Second, accurate measurements of protective and risk factors are not viable in custody evaluations. There are simply not enough resources or available accurate methods to find out each important factor for each parent. This is more pronounced in custody disputes than in medicine or psychiatry, because parents realize that lying about risk factors generally works in their favors. Conversely, exaggerating the oppositions’ weaknesses also works in favor of the speaking parent. Thus, both parents are in a less credible position. The base-rate neglect issue is a clear example of lack of resources. If there is no data on the base-rate, RA is impossible. That is, there is no base-rate to mistakenly neglect. Simply put, without knowing how frequent physical child abuse is, there is no way to make accurate RAs. So, even if the research community would present perfect RA instruments that accurately define each form or maltreatment, identify all relevant protective and risk factors and eliminate human errors, the working environment would limit RA performance.

ICBIs
ICBIs are used to analyze the practical aspects of the children’s life situations. As opposed to the RA, ICBIs are conducted mainly to settle the dispute by using the children’s best interests as guidelines for the decision. In Sweden, factors such as stability, positioning, and previous engagement with the child (Schiratzki 2008), as well as older children’s opinions, are considered. Stability (i.e., avoiding relocation) reflects children’s need for continuity in terms of homes. Positioning refers to parents’ goals in the dispute and previous engagement is about how much time (parental leave) parents have spent with the children. Again, completely reviewing relevant research literature on ICBIs is also beyond the aim of this paper. Many relevant factors are complex and demand extensive research such as relocation (Austin 2008) and attachment (Ainsworth et al. 1978). Similar to RAs, there are also cognitive challenges in ICBIs. Evaluators may consider irrelevant information such as gender (Sagi and Dvir 1993) in their court recommendations.

Summary
In summary, custody evaluations are challenging. Not only do evaluators face very complex decision-making
tasks in both RAs and ICBI s, but also they do so under heavy emotional pressure from parents and limited resources and information. Even worse, should a child, despite being evaluated, happen to be maltreated in a particularly vicious manner, involved custody evaluators can expect massive blame from parents, politicians, and other actors.

However, from a rational and organizational standpoint, two conditions must be met for winning parents: (1) they cannot be judged as unfit; and (2) the ICBI must be favorable for them. This alone enables formal and sequential analyses. The two-step procedure is inspired from gaming situations which view custody disputes from a formal standpoint.

GAINING ADVANTAGES IN GAMING

Gaming and custody evaluations share a critical aspect: managing insufficient information when judging or making decisions. Good game players think several steps ahead about future consequences to improve their in-game decision-making. Thinking multiple steps ahead is considered a critical part of game play ability. In games such as chess, this is widely known, but same principles are valid when both skill and unknown variables are combined. In these situations, success is not guaranteed regardless of analysis, but chances of success are improved.

In this section, first, two gaming examples in which thinking ahead improves decision-making are presented. Then, brief description of signal-detection theory is outlined followed by an explanation on how RAs in custody disputes are improved by the two-step procedure.

Example 1: The Monty Hall Problem

The well-known Monty Hall problem posits a challenging task for contestants: “There is a prize behind one of three doors. One door is chosen initially by the contestant. After first guess, the content behind the one of the non-chosen and non-winning doors is revealed. The contestant may then choose to change the initial guess. Should they?” Contests should, because they only have one third chance of finding the right door by staying with the initial guess, whereas they would have two thirds chance of finding the prize by changing the initial guess. Thus, changing doors improves statistical chances. When sticking to the initial guess, contestants will only win if the first guess is correct. However, if contestants switch, they will win if the initial guess is incorrect. There is only one prize and three doors making the first guess more likely to be incorrect. Understanding that new information (learning that there is no prize behind a door) can improve decision-making is not trivial. About 85 percent (Burns and Wieth 2004) stay with their initial guess and do not utilize the new information (i.e., the fact that there is no prize behind a door) in their decision-making. Previous research has shown that many individuals have great difficulties in understanding this problem, regardless of education and present evidence (Krauss and Wang 2003).

Example 2: A Game Similar to Poker

Assume that players A and B have randomly drawn one traditional playing card each. No one is allowed to see either card. In the middle, there is a pot of $100. Each player has $500. Player A bets $100 that A has the higher card. Now, player B has three options:

(1) Fold. B thinks A is correct. In this case, B will keep $500, and A will get $600;

(2) Call. B is unsure about who has the higher card and wishes to find out by paying another $100. When doing so, the cards are turned up and the one with the highest card gets the pot. That is, the winner will keep unused money ($400), and the pot of $300 will add to $700. The loser keeps $400;

(3) Raise all in. B thinks that B has the better hand, and bets the remaining $500. Now, A must choose between folding or calling.

Which option is best? Clearly, option 1 is a
terrible choice. In this case, B will only get $500 guaranteed and zero percent chance of winning the pot. Option 2 is acceptable. B will have exactly 50 percent chance of winning $700. However, option 3 is superior. The actual chance of winning is higher than 50 percent when raising all in. Instead, B has 50 percent, plus the probability that A folds. In one or two trials, raising all in might appear to be the worst choice. B might get called and lose, but in the long run, it is a superior strategy. Sklansky and Malmuth (2007) called the percentage difference between options 2 and 3 the gap. The notion is critical because it stresses the importance of knowing the options that the opponent has in the immediate future. Thinking ahead is beneficial in decision-making, even when the statistical gain is limited.

The Monty Hall problem and the poker-like game shows how rational and step-wise thinking ahead can improve decision-making in gaming situations. By thinking two or more steps ahead, statistical chances can be improved and overall decision-making performance. Furthermore, the actual outcome of the decision must be separated from the quality of the decision-making process. To illustrate, suppose that the task is to predict the roll of a six-sided die. There are two options: (1) The die will show 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5; and (2) The die will show a 6. Clearly, option 1 is superior. This is true regardless of the actual outcome of the rolled die. When discussing basic probability theory and the rolling of dice, this is trivial. However, in the poker-like game outlined above, the statistically best option may lead to loss of all resources, which some may fear. Said emotion may affect judgment and decision-making (Angie et al. 2011). In custody disputes, the fear losing contact with one’s children is even more emotional.

**DECISION-MAKING IN RAS**

Logically, there are four possible combinations in each RA (see Table 1).

In some democratic nations, decision-making in criminal cases has an explicit conservative principle: Said countries would rather have criminals on the street, than innocent prisoners. Thus, in criminal cases, accused must be proven guilty beyond any reasonable doubt before conviction. Not having a clear principle is suboptimal. Suppose that a parent is involved in two custody disputes in different municipalities. Two different custody evaluators conduct RAs with the same parent. Should these two custody evaluators have different general attitudes, the two RAs might reach different results which lead to confusion.

So, the question is whether RAs in custody disputes should be conservative or liberal. Conservative attitude means that parents must be proven to be unfit with great certainty before a court can rule a parent as unfit. A liberal attitude means that parents should be judged as unfit with less certainty. In terms of signal-detection theory, a conservative attitude would prefer that misses are less harmful than false alarms. Thus, RAs are designed to have few false alarms and by consequence more misses. Liberal attitude considers misses as more harmful as false alarms. In the liberal view, RAs should be designed to have few misses and thereby more false alarms. This attitude is essential regardless of actual RA accuracy. The difference between conservative and liberal decision criteria can be shown as follows (see Table 2).

From a general standpoint, it is unclear which attitude is preferred. Signal-detection theory also shows that there is no hidden trick to improve total performance in single-step decision-making. One must choose between false alarms or misses. In custody disputes, simply assuming that risk of child maltreatment is less acceptable than reduced parental contact for the child is insufficient, because RAs are not perfect and children need intimate contact with parents. Instead of solving this issue with ethic or moral argumentation, the two-step procedure suggests a solution based on gaming strategies.
Table 1. RA Outcomes According to Signal-Detection Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True parental risk status</th>
<th>RA result</th>
<th>Signal-detection theory outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfit</td>
<td>Unfit</td>
<td>Hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Unfit</td>
<td>False alarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfit</td>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Miss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Correct rejection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Consequences of Decision Criteria in Terms of Signal-Detection Theory Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signal-detection theory outcome</th>
<th>Conservative criterion</th>
<th>Liberal criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False alarm</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct rejection</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GAMING AND CUSTODY DISPUTES: THE TWO-STEP PROCEDURE

Clearly, custody disputes can be made to include two separate steps: RAs and ICBIIs. They should be regarded as two different sets with a common intersection. That is, some information from the investigation is used only in the RA, some information is used in the ICBI only and some parts of the investigation are used in both the RA and ICBI. The two-step procedure puts the RA before the ICBI in time. By doing so, the ICBI becomes a second step for the RA to take into account. So, how does the ICBI affect the RA? RAs provide two outcomes. Some parents will be assessed as fit, others unfit. Of course, the courts cannot beforehand know if the RA is correct or not. However, knowing about future events (i.e., the ICBI) provides critical information. By considering the ICBI, the RA should be affected as follows (see Table 3).

Hits are only marginally affected by the ICBI. Yes, half (theoretically) of the truly unfit parents would have lost the custody dispute anyway in the ICBI. However, the very idea of conducting RAs is to protect children from being raised under too risky circumstances. Thus, unfit parents should lose the disputes, so there is no real gain to be made from the future information provided from ICBI.

False alarms are affected by the ICBI in a pronounced way. It is known that 50 percent of the incorrectly judged parents as unfit would have lost the dispute anyway because of subsequent ICBIIs. Practically, the ICBI cuts the number of false alarm errors in half.

Misses are not affected by the ICBI, at least not to the point that it actually protects the child. Misses mean that children have been neglected, beaten, abducted or worse. Most likely, these tragedies happen after the courts’ final rulings and ICBI. Thus, since the identification of the outcome usually is discovered after the ICBI, there is no real effect from it. Theoretically, misses could be detected during ongoing evaluations, between RA and ICBI. However, that space of time should be very limited indeed.

Correct rejections are not affected by ICBIIs. To establish correct rejections, children must be adults and absence of any type of abuse, maltreatment or neglect must be established. Ideally, children do not reach adulthood before ICBI completion, and therefore it cannot affect the outcome.

In summary, there is a 50 percent gain to be made in the false alarm outcomes. This gain is not evident in
Table 3. Effects on RA of ICBI in Four Situations According to Signal-Detection Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signal-detection theory outcome</th>
<th>RA and legal outcome</th>
<th>ICBI effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>Unfit, lose dispute</td>
<td>Yes, but academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False alarm</td>
<td>Unfit, lose dispute</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>Fit, unclear</td>
<td>No, or too late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct rejection</td>
<td>Fit, unclear</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the miss outcomes. Hence, liberal RA attitude (which leads to few misses and many false alarms) is superior to conservative. Simply put, hits and false alarms are affected because they decide the outcome of the custody dispute. In contrast, misses and correct rejections are usually established after ICBI.

**MATHEMATICAL EXAMPLE**

Imagine a country that makes 100 incorrect RAs each year. The RA errors are presented in increments of 80 and 20 respectively. Conservative attitude would have 20 false alarms and 80 misses, equaling 20/2 (false alarms) + 80 (misses) = 10 + 80 = 90 RA errors (10 do not live with one of their functional parents and 80 are maltreated). In contrast, liberal attitude would have 80 false alarms and 20 misses. After RA, the courts know that 20 percent of the 80 false alarms would have lost anyway, equaling 80/2 (false alarms) + 20 (misses) = 40 + 20 = 60 RA errors (40 do not live with one of their functional parents and 20 are maltreated). It is noted that overall RA accuracy is identical in both examples, only with different decision criteria. Also, the two-step procedure is useful regardless of how the RA is conducted barring no explicit decision-making attitude.

An important part of understanding the two-step procedure is to accept the concept of reducing the risks of making errors in the long run. Improved chances do not guarantee perfection. Even if the two-step procedure is implemented, mistakes will still occur in the future. However, as shown above, they should be fewer.

**DISCUSSION**

The present paper shows that insights from gaming contexts can be applied to improve RAs in custody disputes. By organizing the RA and ICBI in temporal order, custody evaluators can adjust their RA decision criteria to minimize RA errors. However, the reason for losing matters for parents. When RAs are used as reasons, parents are labeled as unfit with future implications. When ICBI is used, there are mostly practical aspects that are decisive, parents are probably less affected. The two-step procedure treats these two outcomes as equals, which is negative for parents. This is a valid point. From parents’ perspective, being judged as unfit is unpleasant. It affects parents’ future chances of starting a new family or child adoption. When losing because of ICBI, parents are probably less provoked and the consequences might not be so dire. However, end result is still the same: a loss, and in the face of reduced total number of RA errors, this difference might be less critical. Furthermore, the concept “unfit parent” is not very elegant as well as scientifically misleading. Considering that some protective and risk factors associated with child maltreatment have little or no connection to the parents (Brown et al. 1998; Stith et al. 2008), it puts too much focus on the parents’ flaws. Risk factors such as handicapped child,
child with low verbal IQ may have little or nothing to do with parental attributes, but still are identifiable (Stith et al. 2008). Also, labeling parents as unfit hints some degree of permanence, when reality is that some risk factors may be temporal such as unemployment, physical illness or criminality (Brown et al. 1998; Stith et al. 2008). Thus, the difference between unfit parent and loss because of RA or ICBI can be reduced by using other descriptions of negative RA outcomes such as “the presented life situation of the child is associated with risk for X”, where X is substituted with relevant type of child maltreatment. Such or similar phrase would more accurately describe RA outcome rationale and put less focus on parental shortcomings.

The efficiency of the two-step procedure is dependent on maltreatment mechanisms. Depending on how the maltreatment occurs, the custody dispute has a varying degree of preventing it. In deliberate and intentional cases of maltreatment (e.g., child abduction) where culprits are carrying out meticulously planned crimes, the two-step procedure is less useful because legal actions following RAs and decision in custody disputes might be insufficient. In cases where maltreatment occurs as incidental or non-intentional, the two-step procedure and subsequent legal actions (i.e., children do not live with high risk parents) are probably more efficient. However, the two-step procedure aims to improve RAs in custody disputes, and the potential futility of legal actions following accurate RAs is beyond the reach of the RA.

IMPLEMENTATION

Assuming that courts are willing and able to accept the two-step procedure, there might be implementation issues. Gaming and statistical principles such as the Monty Hall problem are not trivial to understand even for mathematically shrewd minds (Krauss and Wang 2003). Probably organizational procedures based on similar thoughts are expected to be hard to understand.

Changing RA criterion is dependent on its execution. For some custody evaluators this is easy. Instead of demanding seven risk factors and two previous incidents of maltreatment to judge parents as unfit, courts could simply demand four risk factors and one previous incident. Assuming valid factors, the number of false alarms is increased and the number of misses is decreased. In practice, this is not so simple, as some custody evaluators might not use clear and systematic RA procedures. Others may feel that the rights and integrities of parents are more important than risk of child maltreatment.

Intimidated Parents

The two-step procedure could intimidate parents because it proposes liberal RA decision criteria. Even worse, parents, custody evaluators, judges, lawyers and adults in general may spontaneously sympathize with the disputing parents more than they do with children. For instance, custody dispute evaluators or judges might imagine being disputing parents more readily than being children. Adopting conservative attitudes in custody disputes has self-serving functions. Adults can only end up in custody dispute as parents. Parents may fear of being wrongly assessed as unfit. Hence, it is better for disputing parents that courts use conservative attitudes in RAs.

Confusing Custody Evaluations

The two-step procedure demands that custody evaluators separate between RAs and ICBI. In reality, this may not be a standard procedure. Indeed, a recent practical guideline outlines how custody evaluations should be conducted, but without separating RA and ICBI (Luftman et al. 2005). Theoretically, such custody evaluations present confusing documentations, particularly concerning assessment of parental fitness. Should custody evaluators cling on to such conglomerate investigations, the two-step procedure
Confusing Criminal Cases With Custody Disputes

Speculatively, laypeople may confuse custody disputes and criminal cases. Disputing parents are in court, and should either parent be judged as unfit, loss of legal custody follows. Subjectively, disputing parents may experience RAs as being on the bench of the accused in criminal cases. This corresponds to the court’s ruling as the verdict and the loss of child custody is the punishment for the unfit (guilty) parents. This analogy is seriously flawed. Disputing parents are in court by their own design and losses are not punishments but tragic results of family failure of cooperation. In custody disputes, children should be centers of attention, not parents. As outlined above, in criminal cases, many countries use very conservative RA decision-making criteria. Potentially, the flawed analogy with criminal cases may influence laypeople to be negative against the two-step procedure which argues for liberal RA decision-making criterion in custody disputes.

Practically, the two-step procedure is relatively easy to implement: (1) dividing custody evaluations into RAs and ICBI as intersected sets; (2) using liberal decision-making criteria in RAs; and (3) avoiding using the label unfit parent or equivalent phrase that focuses on parents too much. Of course, both RA and ICBI have to be absolute as opposed to relative in nature. That is, both parents should get the same outcome irrespective of the other parents’ situation.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Formal analysis and mathematical example show that gaming advantages are transferrable to improve RAs in custody disputes. Instead of improving the RA quality per se such as increasing risk factor measurement precision or decreasing human errors in decision-making, the two-step procedure operates at a relational level. The two-step procedure improves RA by creating a statistically advantageous relation with the ICBI.

The two-step procedure also stretches the boundaries of traditional social work because statistics and gaming strategies are not conventional tools to solve ethical and organizational issues. Furthermore, other aspects custody evaluation quality might be improved by the two-step procedure such as transparency and reproducibility. However, these potential improvements are dependent on current custody evaluation quality. In addition, there might be other organizational improvements in social work (or other areas) that gaming strategies can inspire. The two-step procedure is rationally promising, but empirically untested. As such, empirical evidence would be natural next step. This is a daunting task, where pre-post longitudinal follow-up data on custody cases is needed. However, the potential gains of the two-step procedure are promising which should help starting such a project. Finally, the strongest argument for implementing the two-step procedure is also the most basic: It might save children from being maltreated.

References


**Bio**

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