

# BOOK REPORT: MMPI, MMPI-2, & MMPI-A in Court: A Practical Guide for Expert Witnesses and Attorneys

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MMPI, MMPI-2, & MMPI-A in Court: A Practical Guide for Expert Witnesses and Attorneys (hereafter "MMPI: A Practical Guide") is a book that should be in the library of any trial attorney who deals with cases involving psychiatric and psychological disorders. The MMPI tests are the most widely used personality tests in clinical practice. The exam provides several behavior and symptomatic hypotheses about the person who takes the test. First, the answers that test takers provide in the exams aid in the diagnosis of psychiatric conditions. Second, the MMPI tests incorporate the use of scales to evaluate whether psychiatric problems are the result of specific problem areas, such as alcohol or drug abuse, or emotional control issues. Third, there are validity scales which yield information about patients' credibility. Therefore, the MMPI tests can lead to claims about whether patients are malingering or have intentionally exaggerated their symptoms, thus lending objective support to a frequently used defense position.

The utility of "MMPI: A Practical Guide" is that it allows attorneys to understand and interpret the results of the MMPI studies, and therefore evaluate defense experts' conclusions about the results of these tests. It is virtually impossible to challenge a psychologist or psychiatrist who utilizes an MMPI test as the basis for his opinion without a basic understanding of what the results from these tests mean.

In a recent case involving the use of an MMPI test, I obtained the results of the MMPI test administered to my client and after reviewing "MMPI: A Practical Guide," discovered several interesting things. First, since my client was a learning disabled 18 year old living at home and still in high school, the psychologist should have utilized the MMPI-A test on my client. Second, the psychologist administering the test cherry-picked certain validity scales to support a claim that my client was exaggerating her symptoms, despite the fact that complete use of all of the available validity scales suggested that she was not. Third, the psychologist misinterpreted other tests administered. Thus, he wrote in his expert report that my client was malingering, notwithstanding the fact that the MMPI test administered demonstrated my client was minimizing her mental problems.

"MMPI: A Practical Guide" evens the playing field in cases involving the application of an MMPI test. Without an understanding of the results of these exams, an attorney can not challenge the claims of defense experts, who assert that they have "objective" evidence that the client is lying. Obviously, there may be occasions when defense experts have correctly interpreted the data from these tests. However, if you uncover one case in which a defense expert intentionally misinterpreted an MMPI study to inappropriately paint your client as a liar, the money (\$13.63 at Amazon.com) and time invested in reviewing "MMPI: A Practical Guide" will have been well spent.

