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# PSYCHOLOGY EVALUATIONS OF CHILDREN: THEIR PLACE IN THE COURTROOM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

While often misunderstood and sometimes misused, psychological evaluations of children can provide a unique contribution to the judicial process. This article is intended as a brief overview of the uses of psychological evaluations of children in four of the most commonly used areas: 1) child custody decisions; 2) child/sexual abuse investigations; 3) termination of parental rights proceedings; and 4) determination of the appropriateness of a child witness' testimony. It will present information in regard to the possible misuse of evaluation data and the most appropriate types of questions to be asked of the evaluations. Finally, this discussion will provide the reader with a basic background in the types of evaluative instruments frequently used by psychologists as they evaluate children.

Children may be evaluated by a variety of professionals including psychiatrists, social workers, and other mental health professionals. This article will present information relevant to evaluations performed by licensed psychologists. In North Dakota, psychologists are licensed by the State Board of Psychology Examiners.<sup>1</sup> They must have a Ph.D. with primary coursework in the area of psychology.<sup>2</sup> The psychologists must provide evidence of their educational background prior to being allowed to sit for the national psychologists licensing exam. After successful completion of the exam, they are allowed to sit for an oral evaluation before the state board. Upon completion of both evaluations, they are then licensed as a "psychologist." Being licensed as a psychologist does not in and of itself infer the expertise necessary for evaluating children. Each psychologist must declare his or her areas of additional expertise, which must be demonstrated through further education, internship participation, or regularly supervised training.

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1. See N.D. CENT. CODE § 43-32-17 (1978)(licensing requirement for psychologists).

2. See N.D. CENT. CODE § 43-32-20 (1978 & Supp. 1989)(psychologist qualifications for licensure).

Specific standards for designation as a child psychologist are currently being developed and, therefore, are not specified at either the state level or the national level.

Documentation of additional expertise in the area of child psychology should clearly be a function of the court when determining the "expertness" of a witness. Further expertise in the area of child evaluation and assessment would enhance the credentials of the psychologists because this is a unique role. Assessment implies a special knowledge of interview techniques, data accumulation, and test or instrument selection. Not all licensed psychologists have this special child assessment background.

Psychological evaluations are most effective and can offer the court the most thorough information when the psychologist becomes an expert witness.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the psychologist may interview all parties involved, *i.e.*, parents, teachers, and child care providers, and base his or her perceptions of the child's needs on the widest possible amount of data and information.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, when psychologists are placed in positions of testifying for a particular side in a dispute, *i.e.*, mother or father, access to information is often limited or potentially biased. While this does not negate the psychologist's observations about a child, it clearly may create doubt about the comprehensiveness of the assessment.

## II. CHILD CUSTODY

Psychological evaluations of children in the courtroom are probably most commonly thought of in situations where there is a dispute between two parents over the issue of child custody. While many evaluations may be conducted in this setting, the overall percentage of cases in which the evaluations are used is really quite small. In a national sample a majority of judges said that psychological evaluations were presented in less than twenty-five percent of the contested custody cases in their courts.<sup>5</sup> Forty-five percent of the judges reported that this information was presented in fewer than ten percent of the custody cases they hear.<sup>6</sup> This may be surprising in that the primary guiding legal

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3. G. MELTON, J. PETRILA, N. POYTHRESS & C. SLOBOGIN, *PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS FOR THE COURTS* 342 (1987)[hereinafter G. MELTON].

4. *Id.*

5. G. MELTON, L. WEITHORN, AND C. SLOBOGIN, *COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS AND THE COURTS: AN EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED FORENSIC SERVICES* 70 (1985).

6. *Id.*

factor is one of determining "the best interests of the child."<sup>7</sup> The Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act,<sup>8</sup> which has been adopted by many states, provides some structure for determining the best interests of the child.<sup>9</sup> The Act provides in part:

The court shall determine custody in accordance with the best interest of the child. The court shall consider all relevant factors including:

- (1) the wishes of the child's parent or parents as to his custody;
- (2) the wishes of the child as to his custodian;
- (3) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with his parent or parents, his siblings, and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interests;
- (4) the child's adjustment to his home, school, and community; and
- (5) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved.<sup>10</sup>

If indeed the court wishes to gather information with regard to the parents' wishes, the child's wishes, and the child's interactions with their custodians, having someone who has particular skills in conducting such an evaluation could clearly be of assistance. At a very basic level, a psychologist with special expertise in working with children can fulfill the need for a person trained to talk to children and families who are under stress.<sup>11</sup> The psychologist is also trained to efficiently gather facts for the court.<sup>12</sup> It is important to understand that the primary purpose of the psychological evaluation is, indeed, the gathering of factual information or data.<sup>13</sup> This data may be gathered from interviews, the administration of evaluation instruments, and direct observations of the child.

There are times when psychologists or other professionals are asked to reach beyond their expertise and the data that is avail-

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7. See Whobrey, Rohman, Sales & Lou, *The Best Interests of the Child in Custody Disputes*, in ROLES, KNOWLEDGE & EXPERTISE IN PSYCHOLOGY AND CHILD CUSTODY DETERMINATIONS 59, 62 (L. Weithorn ed. 1987).

8. UNIF. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE ACT §§ 101-506, 9A U.L.A. 147 (1973).

9. G. MELTON, *supra* note 3, at 333.

10. UNIF. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE ACT, *supra* note 8, at § 402.

11. G. MELTON, *supra* note 3, at 331.

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

able.<sup>14</sup> In the determination of appropriate custody, the psychologist is often put into a role of evaluating a child in an adversary situation.<sup>15</sup> In this role the psychologist may be requested to only have contact with one of the parents, thus the position of rendering an opinion as to the award of custody to the parent not employing the psychologist has to be suspect. In my experience, it is likely that the psychologist may be hampered in any decision by not hearing both sides of the situation and gathering the necessary family history and data. The scope of a child's evaluation will certainly be dictated by the situation. However, under the "best interest" guidelines, it is important that a child be looked at, not only in his home environment, but also at school and in the community. Moreover, the best interests of the child should be determined by considering the child's relationships with a variety of other significant individuals in his environment, *i.e.*, siblings, etc.

In addition to the evaluation data, psychologists may be asked their opinion. It is very important to recognize the difference between factual information and data and the "expert" opinion that may be shaped by a variety of factors, not only the data presented. Psychologists should be aware of the impact of their own values on the shaping of opinions and should be able to examine their own evaluations for any bias. In fact, my experience in child custody determinations indicates psychologists are often asked to make statements or judgments about particular situations that are clearly irrelevant to the role that they have been originally asked to play. For instance, a psychologist may be asked for an opinion with regard to the fitness of a parent even though the psychologist has only been asked to evaluate the child and not the parents, or the psychologist has had contact with only one parent.

In the context of child custody cases, it is not uncommon for psychologists to render opinions on the effects of divorce on children. The body of good research data about the effects of divorce is somewhat limited.<sup>16</sup> This knowledge, however, has increased substantially in recent years and is primarily compiled in two studies: 1) The Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce by Hetherington, Cox, and Cox;<sup>17</sup> and 2) the California Children of Divorce

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14. *Id.* at 327, 330.

15. *Id.* at 330.

16. *Id.* at 337.

17. Hetherington, *Divorce: A Child's Perspective*, 34 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 851 (Oct. 1979); Hetherington, Cox & Cox, *Divorced Fathers*, 25 FAM. COORDINATOR 417 (Oct. 1976); Hetherington, Cox & Cox, *The Aftermath of Divorce*, in MOTHER/CHILD FATHER/CHILD RELATIONSHIPS 149 (J. Stevens, Jr. & M. Mathews eds. 1978); Hetherington, Cox & Cox, *The Development of Children in Mother-Headed Families*, in

Project by Wallerstein and Kelly.<sup>18</sup> A general summation of these studies has been very clearly provided by Ross Thompson, Ph.D.:

[T]hese investigations characterize divorce as a multi-stage process with multiple influences on family members. During the period immediately following the divorce, the family is in crisis, characterized by emotional turmoil in parents and children and impaired parent-child relationships. Most of these stresses were still evident one year following the divorce, with boys in mother-custody families displaying more acute difficulties in adjusting to divorce than girls. Following this, however, was a period of restabilization for the family and its individual members. Parents achieved greater personal stability and happiness, and this fostered improved interactions with their children. The children themselves also showed signs of growing adjustment to new family conditions, although persisting difficulties remained even after five years, especially for boys. Children's long-term divorce adjustment was a function of both their earlier success at coping and the growing stability and support of the home environment. But even long after the parents had separated, children and their families were still adjusting to the effects of this critical event on their lives. Divorce is, in short, a difficult transition for all concerned, and long-term outcomes vary considerably for parents and children.<sup>19</sup>

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THE AMERICAN FAMILY: DYING OR DEVELOPING 117 (D. Reiss & H. Hoffman eds. 1979); Hetherington, *Family Interaction and the Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Development of Children after Divorce*, in THE FAMILY: SETTING PRIORITIES 71 (V. Vaughan & T. Brazelton eds. 1979); Hetherington, Cox & Cox, *Play and Social Interaction in Children Following Divorce*, 35 J. OF SOC. ISSUES 26 (No. 4 1979); Hetherington, Cox & Cox, *Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children*, in NONTRADITIONAL FAMILIES: PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT 233 (M. Lamb ed. 1982).

18. J. WALLERSTEIN & J. KELLY, SURVIVING THE BREAKUP: HOW CHILDREN AND PARENTS COPE WITH DIVORCE (1980); Kelly & Wallerstein, *The Effects of Parental Divorce: Experiences of the Child in Early Latency*, 46 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 20 (1976); Kelly & Wallerstein, *Part-Time Parent, Part-Time Child: Visiting After Divorce*, 6 J. CLINICAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY 51 (Summer 1977); Wallerstein, *Children of Divorce: Preliminary Report of a Ten-Year Follow-Up of Young Children*, 54 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 444 (July 1984); Wallerstein & Kelly, *The Effects of Parental Divorce: The Adolescent Experience*, in CHILDREN AT PSYCHIATRIC RISK 479 (E.J. Anthony & C. Koupernik eds. 1974); Wallerstein & Kelly, *The Effects of Parental Divorce: Experiences of the Preschool Child*, 14 J. AM. ACAD. CHILD PSYCHIATRY 600 (Autumn 1975); Wallerstein & Kelly, *The Effects of Parental Divorce: Experiences of the Child in Later Latency*, 46 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 256 (April 1976).

19. Thompson, *The Father's Case in Child Custody Disputes: The Contributions of Psychological Research*, in FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY POLICY 53, 83 (M. Lamb & A. Sagi eds. 1983).

Psychologists asked to give new information regarding the effects of divorce should be familiar with current research and its limitations.<sup>20</sup> Changing family patterns and an increase in studies addressing these issues more carefully can provide more relevant information for the court.

### III. CHILD/SEXUAL ABUSE

Psychologically evaluating children who are suspected victims of physical or sexual abuse presents a series of special concerns and difficulties both for the psychologist conducting the evaluation and the courtroom. Clearly, a single psychological evaluation of a child cannot stand alone with regard to the information needed to make an appropriate determination. The evaluation of the child must be seen as presenting information that can be used as "probability evidence."<sup>21</sup> The basic difficulty is one of distinguishing a child's behavioral/emotional symptoms as they relate to or are caused by an incident of abuse versus other types of clinical syndromes.<sup>22</sup> A child who is depressed or a child who is generally over-anxious may present a symptom configuration much like a child who has been involved in an abusive situation.<sup>23</sup> One cannot imply causality from the behaviors that are observed. The more appropriate question to be asked of a psychological evaluation is: Does the child fit the clinical picture of a child who has been abused? Facts and data can then be presented that do not establish causality but bring the child's current psychological status as information to be considered. An example is the child who displays behaviors indicative of anxiety, fear, confusion, etc. If, in fact, the child is displaying no significant symptoms this information should be available to the court.

It is also important to consider utilizing the psychological evaluation to examine special characteristics that the child may have that would predispose them to being abused. For instance, a child may be significantly oppositional or have other behaviors that may place additional stress on a family situation. The question of what factors the child brings to the situation may in fact be an important piece of information as the court is determining the likelihood of future abuse. In this case, information gathered is seen to be pre-

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20. G. MELTON, *supra* note 3, at 338.

21. *Id.* at 321.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

dictive and the child's current and likely future status certainly needs to be considered.

Again, the psychologist can act as a trained observer for the courtroom with regard to these two important questions: 1) Does the child fit the clinical picture of an abused child?; 2) Does the child have any special characteristics that may contribute to the future potential for being abused? The model for evaluating the child in this abuse situation should be one in which not only is the parents' psychological status evaluated but also the child's psychological status. Whenever possible the child should be observed while in relationship with the parent or parents. In this context a comprehensive picture of the child's environment and their emotional/behavioral status can be described for the court.

#### IV. TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Perhaps within the judicial process one of the most difficult decisions the courts face involves the termination of parental rights.<sup>24</sup> Not only does a thorough assessment need to be made of the parents' capabilities, but a complete evaluation of the child's needs can be an important aspect of that decision making process. Again, the psychologist can be called on to act as a consultant to assist the judge in determining the child's best interests. In addition, thorough psychological evaluations of the parents in these situations are of value but are not the subject of this particular review.

A model statute recommended by the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges provides some direction for conducting a broad inquiry that may lead to a finding that a "parent is unfit or that the conduct or a condition of the parent is such as to render him/her unable to properly care for the child."<sup>25</sup> The statute directs attention to such issues as parental mental status, alcohol and drug abuse, and abusive behaviors.<sup>26</sup> In addition, in a termination of parental rights case, the court is required to consider the child's relationship with the foster family and any suitability of that home as a permanent home.<sup>27</sup>

It is often in this situation that a child's attachment and issues with regard to "psychological parents" becomes of concern to the

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24. *Id.* at 323.

25. See N.Y. FAMILY COURT ACT §§ 622, 623 (McKinney 1983); G. MELTON, *supra* note 3, at 323.

26. *Id.* at 323.

27. *Id.*



court. A psychological assessment of the child may address issues of attachment or bonding. The research literature on attachment and bonding of young children provides substantial behavioral indicators of the level of attachment.<sup>28</sup> The psychologist functioning as an observer can provide the court with data regarding the behaviors that can help the court make a decision with regard to the child's attachments.

Like the custody procedure, evaluation of the child's special needs in a termination of parental rights case may also warrant attention. If in fact the child has special health care needs, or behavioral or emotional difficulties, they may require parenting skills beyond what might be considered normal or appropriate for the average family. These special needs may also affect the decision making process in terms of whether a child can be safely returned to a home. It is in this predictive capacity that it is often difficult for the psychologist to provide information other than direct observational data. This data, while very useful for the court, cannot be conclusive with regard to all future possibilities.<sup>29</sup>

## V. CHILD AS A WITNESS

Since 1895, children have been allowed to testify in judicial proceedings if in fact certain minimum qualifications have been met.<sup>30</sup> If the court is to make a determination of testimonial capacity, a psychological evaluation may be required. The capacity to testify is based on four general factors:

- 1) "[p]resent understanding of the difference between truth and falsehood and an understanding of the responsibility to speak the truth; in some states this is phrased as an understanding of the nature and obligation of an oath;

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28. See generally V. Fahlberg, ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION, DSS Publication 429 (1979) (training manual on attachment and separation of children placed in foster care).

Some of the behaviors that indicate attachment on the part of the child are:

- 1) Birth to one year — alertness, excessive discomfort, visual tracking, response to humans, vocalizing;
- 2) one to five years — exploration of the environment, relaxed and happy, reactions to pain and pleasure, response to separation;
- 3) grade school — self-concept, confidence to try new tasks, smiling, positive interactions with peers, academic achievement.

*Id.*

29. G. MELTON, *supra* note 3, at 327.

30. *Wheeler v. United States*, 159 U.S. 523 (1895). See also McGrath & Clemens, *The Child Victim As A Witness In Sexual Abuse Cases*, 46 MONT. L. REV. 229, 231 (1985) (comparison of Montana's Rules of Evidence with other states' rules of evidence regarding competency of child to testify).

- 2) [m]ental capacity at the time of the alleged incident to observe and receive accurate impressions of the occurrence;
- 3) [m]emory sufficient to retain an independent recollection of the event; and
- 4) [a]bility to communicate this memory and the capacity to understand simple questions about the event."<sup>31</sup>

Standards of competency and testimonial capacity may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and the psychological evaluation may vary as well.<sup>32</sup> In addition to providing a specific evaluation of the child's capacities, a psychologist may supply the court with knowledge of current research on the broad area of children's eyewitness memory. There are clear differences depending on age, cognitive capacity, etc., which may affect how a particular child's testimony may be regarded by the court. A recent review of children's eyewitness memory by S.J. Ceci, M.P. Toglia, and D.F. Ross<sup>33</sup> is a very thorough and readily understandable analysis of the research. This research data looks at such issues as suggestibility and the effects of stress on children's memory capacity.<sup>34</sup> As a part of the evaluation to determine competency, a child's personality and special needs may also be addressed. Decisions about using direct testimony versus videotaped testimony may be more easily rendered with knowledge of the child's personality, *i.e.*, shyness, anxiety, etc.

## VI. CONTENT OF THE EVALUATION

Perhaps the most important factor in the actual content of the psychological evaluation of a particular child is the specific question being asked. The clarity with which these questions are framed will provide the psychologist with the direction to be taken in any type of an evaluation. Clarity will also allow psychologists to communicate with the attorneys or the judge concerning the capability of the psychologist to provide information pertinent to the issues. I have received court-ordered evaluations that required specific tests. There have been instances when the tests required do not address the question posed by the court. Deter-

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31. Quinn, *Competency to be a Witness: A Major Child Forensic Issue*, 14 BULL. AM. ACAD. PSYCHIATRIC L. 4, 311-12 (1986).

32. *Id.* at 312.

33. S. CECI, M. TOGLIA & D. ROSS, CHILDREN'S EYEWITNESS MEMORY (1987).

34. *Id.* at 24-36, 122-142.

mination of the specific evaluative instruments that will most closely address the question is in most cases best left to the psychologist.

Psychologists are trained to determine evaluative measurements based on very specific criteria. Their knowledge regarding the reliability and validity of the evaluation instruments is very important. Reliability addresses the extent to which two individuals, using the same instrument, arrive at nearly identical conclusions or on re-examination, the two individuals will achieve a highly similar score. Validity entails the extent to which the technique measures what it is supposed to measure. Specific data about the reliability and validity of certain instruments utilized in the evaluation can be provided to the court.

#### A. COGNITIVE EVALUATIONS

Cognitive evaluations, or evaluations of a child's intellectual status, can be a basic starting point for most evaluations of children involved in a court proceeding. This allows for a specific examination of strengths or weaknesses in the child's intellectual capacities. It can also provide the court with information as to a child's special needs, such as learning disabilities and mental retardation. Certainly, when a psychologist is examining a child with regard to their suitability as a witness, issues such as memory functioning need to be addressed.

There are widely recognized, individually administered tests of cognitive functioning that are currently utilized. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)<sup>35</sup> and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition are examples of cognitive testing instruments.<sup>36</sup> Newer evaluation instruments, such as the Kaufman ABC,<sup>37</sup> may be utilized but are not as widely accepted or as routinely administered. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised is most appropriate for children within the age range of approximately eight through fifteen years. Most psychologists feel that although there are norms beginning at a younger age, there are not as many factors that create a satisfactory measure of overall intellectual status. The Wechsler test provides information about a child's verbal capacities and also their

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35. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, The Psychological Corporation, New York, N.Y. (1974).\*

36. Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition, Riverside Publishing Co., Chicago, IL (1986).\*

37. A.S. Kaufman & N.L. Kaufman, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, Circle Pines, Minn., American Guidance Service (1983).\*

capacities for understanding more abstract visual material.<sup>38</sup> Specific subtests provide information on particular cognitive capabilities, and configurations of subtests can provide additional information about such things as attention and concentration skills.<sup>39</sup>

For children within the age range of three years and up, the Stanford-Binet Fourth Edition is widely accepted as providing good predictive validity.<sup>40</sup> It measures verbal ability, short-term memory, quantitative understanding, and abstract visual capacity.<sup>41</sup>

## B. PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

By observing play of children and interviewing children the psychologist develops most of the information about a child's overall personality or behavioral and emotional status. Skilled and sometimes structured observation will provide the psychologist with information about the child's capability for interpersonal relationships, the child's ability to cope with different situations, and the child's special needs with regard to behavioral management. There are specific evaluative instruments that provide information on a child's functioning. Listed below are several of the instruments that are commonly utilized and can provide an array of information about a child, both from the observation of a psychologist as well as from parental and other caregiver observations. This list is not meant to be comprehensive but rather is intended

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38. Wechsler, *supra* note 35.

39. *Id.*

40. Stanford-Binet, *supra* note 36.

41. *Id.* While specific intellectual capabilities of children younger than three are sometimes difficult to ascertain, there are measures of development such as the Denver Developmental Screening Test<sup>A</sup> and the Bayley Scales of Infant Intelligence<sup>B</sup> that can provide information as to the special needs or developmental levels of very young children. These scales tend to monitor the infant's or child's development by looking at such aspects as their motor coordination, speech development, and social abilities. Other instruments may be used for children who are nonverbal, deaf, or blind, but require special expertise for administration. Some psychologists may have skills for administering academic measures of achievement such as the Wide Range Achievement Test<sup>C</sup> or the Peabody Individual Achievement Test.<sup>D</sup> These evaluation tools are most typically left to the school personnel with credentials in special education or school psychologists. The information from these two tests can provide data regarding a child's special educational needs such as learning disabilities.

A. Denver Developmental Screening Test, Frankenburg Ross Laboratories (1978).\*

B. Bayley Scales of Infant Intelligence Psychological Corporation, New York, N.Y. (1969).\*

C. Wide Range Achievement Test, Jastak Assoc., Inc., Wilmington, Del. (1984).\*

D. Peabody Individual Achievement Test—Revised. American Guidance Service (Circle Pines, Minn., 1989).\*

to provide a sample of the types of information that may be available.

<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Function</u>
Child Behavior Checklist <sup>42</sup>	Parents' or care providers' perceptions of child's behavior
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale <sup>43</sup>	Parents' or care providers' view of child's skills in several domains, <i>i.e.</i> , self-care
Parental Stress Index <sup>44</sup>	Parents' rating of own stress and child induced stress
Incomplete Sentences <sup>45</sup>	Completed by child. Emotional themes and information about relationships
Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale <sup>46</sup>	Children's self-esteem measure (older children)
Joseph Preschool and Primary Self Concept Screening Test <sup>47</sup>	Children's self-esteem measure (younger children)
Rorschach Inkblot Test <sup>48</sup>	Emotional themes and behavior pathology
Children's Thematic Apperception Test <sup>49</sup>	Emotional themes and interpersonal relationships
Personality Inventory for Children <sup>50</sup>	Child completed personality assessment
Conners Scale <sup>51</sup>	For parents and teachers to rate child's hyperactive behavior

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42. T.M. Achenbach, *Child Behavior Checklist for Ages 4-16*, University of Vermont (Burlington, VT, 1988).\*

43. Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, American Guidance Service (Circle Pines, Minn., 1984).\*

44. R.R. Abindin, *Parenting Stress Index (PSI)*, Pediatric Psychology Press (Charlottesville, VA, 1986).\*

45. *Incomplete Sentences*, The Psychological Corporation (New York, 1950).\*

46. E.V. Piers & D.B. Harris, *Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale* (Western Psychological Services, 2d ed. 1985).\*

47. J. Joseph, *Joseph Preschool and Primary Self Concept Screening Test* (Stoelting Co., Chicago, Ill., 1979).\*

48. I.J.E. Exner, *The Rorschach: A Comprehensive System* (John Wiley & Sons, N.Y., 1974).\*

49. L. Bellak & S.S. Bellak, *Children's Apperception Test* (CPS Inc., Larchmont, N.Y., 1965).\*

50. *Personality Inventory for Children* (Western Psychological Services, Los Angeles, Cal., 1977).\*

51. *Conners Scale* (Multi-Health Systems, Inc., North Tonawanda, N.Y., 1988).\*

\*(Available from publishers.)

The accumulation of the preceding data helps the psychologist describe to the court how inclined the child may be to behave in certain ways or how the child may fit into certain clinical pictures. In addition, special emotional problems, the need for treatment, and issues that may jeopardize the child's situation in a particular home can be described.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The psychological evaluation of children for court proceedings can provide substantial information useful in determining the best interests of the child. Psychologists can provide specific data regarding a child's cognitive and personality functioning that can help the court understand the special characteristics and needs of the child. The understanding of these characteristics and evaluative interviews with the variety of caregivers involved in the child's life can provide the comprehensiveness that should be utilized to determine the child's best interests. However, when attorneys or judges ask the psychologist to provide more information than obtained and push for opinions not directly based on the data available, the appropriateness of the testimony clearly needs to be questioned. There indeed are appropriate uses and potential misuses of psychological evaluations of children when they are brought into the courtroom.

