

Division 37, American Psychological Association

President's Column

Section Activities: What Have We Been Up To?

by Gail S. Goodman, Ph.D.
University of California, Davis

Often, people who hold membership in a division or section wonder about the workings of their organization. What is going on behind the scenes? Is anyone in charge doing anything important? Is the organization making a difference? We are a small and new group, but we are engaged in a growing number of activities, some of which I'm sure will be of interest to you:

Does Child Sexual Abuse Have an Adverse Effect?

As many of you may know, an article published in *Psychological Bulletin* last year has recently caused quite a stir. The article, "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples," by Bruce Rind, Philip Tromovitch, and Robert Bauserman (1998, *Psychological Bulletin*, 124, 22-53) begins with the following abstract: "Many lay persons and professionals believe that child sexual abuse (CSA) causes intense harm, regardless of gender, pervasively in the general population. The authors examined this belief by reviewing 59 studies based on college samples. Meta-analyses revealed that students with CSA were, on average, slightly less well adjusted than controls. However, this poorer adjustment could not be attributed to CSA, because family environment (FE) was consistently confounded with CSA. FE explained considerably more adjustment variance than CSA, and CSA-adjustment relations generally became nonsignificant when studies controlled for FE. Self-reported reactions to and effects from CSA

indicated that negative effects were neither pervasive nor typically intense, and that men reacted much less negatively than women. The college data were completely consistent with data from national samples. Basic beliefs about CSA in the general population were not supported" (p. 22).

The authors conclude that researchers need to separate out "willing sexual experiences accompanied by positive reactions and coerced sexual experiences with negative reactions" (p. 46). Appropriately, they end with a discussion of the differences between wrongfulness and harmfulness, for example, "lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness," and they qualify that "the current findings are relevant to moral and legal positions only to the extent that these positions are based on the presumption of psychological harm" (p. 47).

As Dan Dodgen describes in his newsletter column (see p. 3), the American Psychological Association (APA) came under considerable attack in recent months because the article

was published in *Psychological Bulletin*, which is an APA journal. Radio host "Dr. Laura" (Schlessinger) appears to have started the debate, and several legislators and others joined in to question how the APA could publish an article that could be interpreted as concluding that child sexual abuse does not have adverse effects. Newspaper articles and press releases began to appear with reports such as, "Can children actually consent to sex with adults? According to a recent study published in the American Psychological Association's premier publication, they can and with effects that might actually be positive for 'willing' children. On Wednesday, a coalition of psychotherapists, talk radio show hosts, members of Congress, child protection advocates, pedophilia victims, and public policy groups gathered to call on the American Psychological Association (APA) to renounce the study on pedophilia that suggests sexual relationships between adults and children are less harmful than believed."

And, "This study gives pedophiles a green flag . . . Though the APA warns

Inside This Issue

President's Column: Section Activities	1
When Worlds Collide: Child Abuse, Science, and Policy	3
Internet Sites of Interest to Practitioners and Trainers in the Area of Child Maltreatment	5
Section Election Results	6
Tainted Testimony and the Competency of Child Witnesses	7
Officers in the Section on Child Maltreatment	4

against inferring 'endorsement,' NAMBLA, the North American Man-Boy Love Association, which advocates laws to permit sex between adults and 'consenting' children, hailed the study on its Web site, until recently, as 'good news.' They now reference the study under the heading, "Positive and Beneficial Experiences" (Newswire, 1999, p. 1-2).

Division 37 and Section on Child Maltreatment officials were contacted to help APA deal with the mounting reaction. With Division and Section input, APA quickly put out a statement clarifying that APA does not condone child sexual abuse. Highlights of their statement, "APA Resolution Opposing Child Sexual Abuse," include: "WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association is steadfast in its stand against the sexual abuse of children, and WHEREAS, the welfare, appropriate treatment, and protection of children is a priority of the highest order for the American Psychological Association . . . WHEREAS, children who have been sexually abused often experience health problems, eating disorders, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, fearfulness, social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts . . . THEREFORE, be it resolved that the American Psychological Association reaffirms its long established position that sexual relations between children and adults are abusive, exploitive, reprehensible, and properly punishable by law." A series of responses to the *Psychological Bulletin* article are expected to appear next year in one of the APA journals. I encourage all of you to read the article and judge its caliber for yourself.

Educating the Public About Child Sexual Abuse

Perhaps, in part, because of the controversy over the Rind et al. (1998) article, APA also is about to publish a pamphlet for the general public (e.g., parents) on child sexual abuse. In conversational tones, the pamphlet defines child sexual abuse and discusses the effects of such abuse. It also will provide the names and addresses of several organizations that provide information and help concerning child sexual abuse. Division 37 and Section on Child Maltreatment officials are again playing an important role in this effort. Specifically, although the pamphlet is being written by APA staff, a subset of executive committee members of the Division and Section are reviewing drafts of the document and providing feedback. The pamphlet is only one such outreach effort in which the Section is involved.

As another example of our outreach efforts, the Section has also been sponsoring the development of a high-school

curriculum on child abuse. Dr. Cindy Perrin-Miller, Pepperdine University, heads this effort. A draft document is being circulated now among EC members, and the final document should be available in the year 2000. Thus, considerable progress has been made on a number of fronts.

APA Convention

Since the last newsletter, we were also busy organizing events for the APA Convention held in Boston, August 20 to 23 (special thanks go to Drs. Sandra Bishop, Ann Culp, and Allison Redlich for their efforts). Members and affiliates of the Section on Child Maltreatment received a mailing regarding events at the Division 37/Section on Child Maltreatment Hospitality Suite. As a reminder of two important happenings, the Section held an informal meeting on Saturday, with everyone associated with the Section invited. On Sunday, August 22, we held the official Executive Committee (EC) Meeting. Newly elected and current Executive Committee members were to attend the EC meeting, but all other members and affiliates of the Section were encouraged to come as well. (Congratulations to the newly elected officers, whose names appear elsewhere in this Newsletter, and thanks to everyone who agreed to run for office!)

Our Newsletter

As a final note, our newsletter plays a crucial role in informing members and affiliates of our activities. We are grateful to Dr. Sue Limber for having served as the Newsletter Editor for several years and, fortunately, Dr. Limber will remain active in the Section as one of our Members at Large. Dr. Margaret Feerick of the Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Services, has graciously agreed to become our new newsletter editor. Her term begins with the next edition, and we welcome her!

In Conclusion

If you have ideas about other ways in which the Section can advocate for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, contribute to relevant science and clinical practice, or educate society (e.g., the public, the legal system, professionals) about child maltreatment, please let me know. Also, as always, feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any additional information (e.g., a summary of the Executive Committee meeting). I can be reached via e-mail at ggoodman@ucdavis.edu.

Public Policy

When Worlds Collide: Child Abuse, Science, and Policy

by Dan Dodgen, Ph.D.
American Psychological Association

As Gail Goodman describes in her presidential column (p. 1), APA has recently been at the center of a controversy that began in July 1998 when *Psychological Bulletin* published "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples" by Bruce Rind, Philip Tromovitch, and Robert Bauserman. The article addressed several issues related to child sexual abuse, including definitions, long-term impact, and consent. This column will not attempt to evaluate the article or its merits. No group in the Association is as well qualified as the readers of this newsletter to do that. However, the controversy provoked by the article provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the increasingly complex intersection between science, policy, and Congress.

Background

The controversy began when, following the publication of the *Psychological Bulletin* article, the North American Man Boy Love Association heralded it as "good news." Various conservative groups and individuals, including radio talk show personality "Dr. Laura" Schlessinger, then began citing the article as evidence that APA either supports pedophilia or erred in publishing the article. These events culminated in a press conference on May 12 at which a congressional resolution condemning the article, and indirectly APA, was announced. Because APA staff responded swiftly to the concerns, the resolution was modified somewhat so that it better reflected APA's strong record in the area of child abuse. To support that effort, a briefing sheet describing, among other things, the establishment of the Child Maltreatment Section of Division 37, was developed and circulated to show APA's impressive initiatives regarding child abuse. The modified version of the resolution passed the House of Representatives on July 12 by a vote of 355-0, with 13 abstentions. Although the final version of the resolution was more favorable to the organization, APA and its publications continue to be under intense scrutiny from various members of Congress, and conservative media and organizations.

Consequences of the Controversy

There is no question that the publication of the article engendered a response that was both emotional and political. We cannot ignore, however, that it caused many members of Congress to speak more openly of their concern about child abuse. This concern was evident as members shared their

personal experiences of child maltreatment as foster parents, adoptive parents, prosecutors, and physicians. Many members also expressed a desire for more research on child abuse. In fact, the congressional resolution itself calls for "investigations to continue to research the effects of child sexual abuse using the best methodology." It further states that such research is important "so that the public, and public policymakers, may act upon accurate information."

As a result of this controversy, of course, many scientists might be tempted to question the value of trying to use science to inform the policy process at all. They may fear that the gulf between the two worlds has grown too large. That would be a serious mistake. Although the kind of attention this particular article has received has clearly been quite negative, it nevertheless points out something more important: People still value research. Policy makers were outraged by this article, not just because they disagreed with its conclusions, but because they felt these conclusions could adversely influence public policy. In fact, several congressional offices and conservative groups were upset by the article precisely because they felt that publication in an APA journal gave the article heightened scientific credibility. While the context for this revelation was negative, the message was a positive one: Scientific research can and does have an impact on policy decisions.

This increased awareness of psychological research reflects several trends that are of note. First, APA's advocacy efforts have begun to achieve success in establishing the scientific credibility of the discipline. Second, the electronic age has created a whole new audience for scientific journals. No longer are journals accessed only by professors, graduate students, or undergraduates needing extra credit. Now, anybody can go on the World Wide Web and find out what the latest research indicates. Reaching this new, wider audience offers tremendous opportunities to inform public policy, but it also creates increased responsibility regarding what we say and how we say it. In a very real sense, the world is watching what we publish.

Conclusion and Updates

One message that has been communicated clearly throughout this controversy is that child abuse is an important concern to many members of Congress. As I mentioned in

my last column, there has been a fair amount of activity related to child abuse in Congress lately. For example, in the last issue, I described the Child Abuse Protection and Enforcement Act (H.R. 764) introduced by Representative Deborah Pryce (R-OH). The introduction of that bill, and its bipartisan sponsorship including key Republicans, is evidence that child welfare may be a higher priority in the current Congress. Further evidence of this trend is found in the recent passage of H.R. 1802, the Foster Care Independence Act, on June 25. This bill doubles the federal expenditures states can receive to help foster children become self-sufficient after age 18. Provisions of the bill include raising the amount of money a young person can save without losing benefits, and allowing states to extend Medicaid benefits to former foster children age 18 to 21. Senator John Chafee (R-RI) has introduced a similar bill (S. 1327) in the Senate.

While these actions are clearly positive signs for child welfare professionals and researchers, funding issues remain a top priority. In recent years, social services have borne the brunt of many cuts. Child welfare services, often a low priority anyhow, have assumed a

disproportionate amount of those cuts. APA is working in conjunction with many other organizations to maintain and increase funding for child abuse prevention, treatment, and research. As part of that effort, we are developing a proposal for more funding for child abuse research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that we have already begun discussing with key members of Congress. At the present time, it is expected that appropriations for child abuse programs will not be decided until September at the earliest.

How to Get Involved

During the time that I have written this column, I have repeatedly stated that Child Maltreatment Section members can be vital allies in my work in Washington. The *Psychological Bulletin* article controversy is an excellent example of how that can work. I greatly appreciate the feedback I received from Section members regarding the article and related issues. More than that, it was the work of many Section members through the years that made it easy for APA to demonstrate its long-term commitment to the prevention and treatment of child abuse. I look forward to continuing to partner with each of you as I represent

APA, and its child welfare experts, in the public policy arena.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the issues discussed in this column, or other related issues, please feel free to contact me at the address listed below:

Dan Dodgen, Ph.D.
Senior Legislative and Federal Affairs
Officer
Public Policy Office
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002-4242
E-mail: ddodgen@apa.org
phone: (202) 336-6068
fax: (202) 336-6063

I also want to encourage Division 37 members to become part of the Public Policy Action Network (PPAN) of our APA Public Policy Office. You can sign up at our Web site (www.apa.org/ppo/ppo.html) or contact me for an enrollment form. PPAN sends up-to-the-minute alerts on legislative issues of designated interest to you where your input or advocacy could make a difference. This list is used sparingly and is not interactive.

Officers in the Section on Child Maltreatment

Gail S. Goodman, President
Department of Psychology
University of California
One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA 95616
Phone: 530-752-6981, Fax: 530-753-0442
E-mail: ggoodman@ucdavis.edu

Jeffrey Haugaard, Past-President
Department of Human Development
and Family Studies
Van Rensselaer Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
Phone: 607-255-2533, Fax: 607-255-9856
E-mail: jjh15@cornell.edu

Sharon Portwood, Secretary
Department of Psychology
University of Missouri-Kansas City
5319 Holmes St.
Kansas City, MO 64110
Phone: 816-235-1321, Fax: 818-235-1062
E-mail: sportwood@umkc.edu

Barbara Bonner, Treasurer
Department of Pediatrics
University of Oklahoma Health Sc. Cntr.
Box 26901
Oklahoma City, OK 73190
Phone: 405-271-8858, Fax: 405-271-2931
barbara.bonner@cclink.net.uokhsc.edu

Susan P. Limber, Member at Large
Institute on Family & Neighborhood Life

243 Poole Agricultural Center
Clemson University
Phone: 864-656-6271, Fax: 864-656-6281

Narina Nunez, Member at Large
Department of Psychology
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY 82071
Phone: 307-766-6718, Fax: 307-766-2926
E-mail: Narina@uwyo.edu

Penelope Trickett, Member at Large
3 Plum Tree Road
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274-5911
Office: 213-740-2033
Phone: 310-377-4489, Fax: 310-377-5659
E-mail: Pennyt@rcf.use.edu

Practice and Training

Internet Sites of Interest to Practitioners and Trainers in the Area of Child Maltreatment

by Katrina Davino, Rebekah G. Bradley, M. A., &
Pauline M. Pagliocca, Ph.D.
University of South Carolina

The Internet offers a vast network of information and resources on countless subjects. The difficulty faced by Internet "surfers" is sorting valuable resources from others that do not provide reliable or useful information. In case you have not had a chance to search the "net" for information related to child maltreatment, we offer a short list, including descriptions, suggestions, and web addresses. Happy browsing!

Child Abuse Prevention Network - www.child.cornell.edu/

Sponsored by the Cornell Family Life Development Center (FLDC) and LifeNET, Inc., this website describes itself as the "World Wide Internet Nerve Center for professionals in the field of child abuse and neglect." It offers descriptions of and links to programs and services of FLDC, as well as to the other "partners" of the site, including the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (<http://ispcan.org>) and the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) of the U.S. Army. The FAP page allows you to download training manuals, slides, and overhead transparencies for training related to domestic violence. You can also access the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (<http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/>) which offers a wealth of information of use to researchers in the area, including funding and training opportunities, access to research databases for secondary analysis, and directions for joining listservs and discussion groups for professionals. The site also offers the "Prevention Bookmarks Index." con-

taining links to a range of other webpages and organizations of interest to both clients and professionals. Finally, for those moving toward a paperless office, you can read the text, *Travels in the trenches: Between child welfare theory and practice* by George Thomas, appearing in serialized form through an arrangement with Haworth Press.

National Center for PTSD - www.dartmouth.edu/dms/ptsd

The National Center for PTSD is a multi-site, research, treatment, and training program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Visitors to their website can obtain PTSD information geared towards a variety of audiences, including veterans, trauma survivors, women, students, clinicians, researchers, journalists, and librarians. Professionals can access National Center publications, including past issues of the PTSD Research Quarterly and PTSD Clinical Quarterly. A limited index of trauma assessment instruments is also accessible, including descriptions of the measures, sample questions, and order forms for each. One especially valuable link is to the "Pilots Database," an interdisciplinary index of literature related to traumatic stress. Whether you are an experienced or a novice electronic searcher, navigating Pilots is relatively straightforward; you can search by title, author, or subject, resulting in full citations, including abstracts. Readers interested in disaster planning and response will want to check out the Center's comprehensive manual, *Disaster mental health services: A*

guidebook for clinicians and administrators. Although not focused specifically on child maltreatment, this website offers a wealth of information on the broader area of violence and trauma.

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information - www.calib.com/nccanch/index.htm

The National Clearinghouse, a service of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, describes itself as "a national resource for professionals seeking information on prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect and related child welfare issues." The "What's New" area offers summaries of recent Clearinghouse reports and conferences, new funding opportunities for service provision and training development, and an on-line application for grants from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

In the "Publications" area, full text online resources are available, including "fact sheets," child abuse statistics, and a "User Manual Series," training materials for particular professional groups, such as mental health professionals, caseworkers, educators, and law enforcement personnel. The "Catalog" area includes descriptions and ordering information for a variety of publications on topics such as types of maltreatment, prevention and family support, treatment, and grant programs. Many of these publications can be ordered for free and most others are available at low cost. In the "Services"

area, you can search for state civil and criminal statutes related to subjects such as abuse reporting, child witnesses, and investigation (www.calib.com/nccanch/services/statutes.htm). Databases of published documents, national organizations, and prevention programs are available. It may take some practice and creativity to navigate the databases, but a considerable amount of information is available along the way. Practitioners, as well as researchers, will want to visit the "Funding" area, with its lists of specific sources of federal funding and other resources for funding information. This site is worth a visit!

APA, Div. 37, Section on Child Maltreatment - Clinical Internship Guide -

www.uwo.edu/a%26s/psyc/psyfac/psyclaw/intern.html
It's that time of year again! Doctoral students in applied areas of psychology will soon begin applying for internships. We would like to remind students and faculty about the internship guide developed by the Section on

Child Maltreatment. This site provides information about internship programs that have identified themselves as offering training in the area of child maltreatment. Internship applicants may want to include this site in their expanding collection of internship training resources.

Katrina Davino and Rebekah Bradley are doctoral candidates in Clinical-Community Psychology at the University of South Carolina. Ms. Davino is a pre-doctoral intern at University of Massachusetts Medical School/Worcester State Hospital and Ms. Bradley is a pre-doctoral intern at The Cambridge Hospital/Harvard Medical School. Pauline M. Pagliocca is a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Carolina.

Members who would like to contribute to Practice and Training columns should contact Dr. Pagliocca, column editor, at 803-777-6189 or at paulinep@sc.edu.

Section Election Results

We are pleased to report the results of the recent election for several offices within the Section. Many thanks to all who agreed to run for office, and congratulations to those who will assume offices in the Section in January of 2000.

President-Elect/President

Bette Bottoms, Ph.D., will be the next President of the Section on Child Maltreatment. After serving one year as President-Elect, she will begin her 2-year term as President in January of 2001. Dr. Bottoms is associate professor of Psychology and Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She received her doctorate in Social Psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Dr. Bottoms' research on child maltreatment, children's eyewitness testimony, and adults' perceptions of child victims has been funded by the National Institute on Mental Health and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, and recognized with the Saleem Shah Early Career Award for Contributions to Psychology and Law Research, by the American Psychology-Law Society and the American Academy of Forensic Psychology. She has co-edited two books, *Child Victims, Child Witnesses: Understanding and Improving Children's Testimony* (Guilford, 1993) and *International Perspectives on Child Abuse and Children's Testimony: Psychological Research and Law* (Sage, 1996).

Treasurer

Cindy Miller-Perrin, Ph.D., has been elected Treasurer of the Section. Dr. Miller-Perrin is associate professor of

Psychology at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Washington State University. Following her doctoral studies, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Washington, where she was involved in research and clinical work with developmentally delayed children. Her major research and publications are in the area of child maltreatment, and she has had a variety of experiences working with maltreated children and their families. She has coauthored three books in the area of child maltreatment, including: *Child Sexual Abuse: Sharing the Responsibility* (1992), *Family Violence Across the Lifespan* (1997), and *Child Maltreatment* (1999).

Member-At-Large

Patricia Hashima, Ph.D., was elected Member-At-Large for the Section. Dr. Hashima is a developmental psychologist interested in public policy issues affecting children, youth, and families. Currently, she is a research scientist at the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College, participating in the management and direction of a national longitudinal study of families experiencing spousal violence, child physical abuse, or child sexual abuse. After completing her graduate work at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and receiving a student award from Division 37, she accepted an NIMH-funded post-doctoral research training fellowship at the Family Research Laboratory the University of New Hampshire, where she focused on research on the victimization of children.

Case Notes

"Case Notes" informs Section members about legal cases having the potential to impact law or policy regarding child maltreatment.

Tainted Testimony and the Competency of Child Witnesses

by Narina Nunez, Ph.D.
University of Wyoming

&

Michael J. Krampner, J.D.
Krampner, Fuller & Hambrick, Attorneys at Law, L.L.C.

Social scientists generally favored the 1980s' trend toward less restricted competency requirements for children. After all, research has repeatedly demonstrated that even young children can accurately describe salient past events (Poole & Lamb, 1998). At the same time, however, researchers cautioned against subjecting children to repeated, suggestive interviewing, for fear it could lead to false statements (e.g., Ceci, Leichtman, Putnick, & Nightingale, 1993). These two potentially compatible positions (i.e., that children should generally be viewed as competent, and that coercive interviewing can lead to inaccuracy) may be on a collision course as research on child suggestibility is being used (possibly misused) to reintroduce competency hearings.

In *State v. Michaels* (1994), the New Jersey Supreme Court adopted "taint hearings" designed to determine whether investigative procedures in a case were so suggestive as to render a child's recollections of events irreparably damaged. The Court ruled that the standard for holding a taint hearing is for a defendant to show "some evidence" that suggestive interviewing produced children's statements. The decision, which was partly guided by an amicus brief filed by social scientists, appeared reasonable, especially given the highly suggestive and repetitive nature of the interviews in the Michaels case.

Several state Supreme Courts have taken the *Michaels* decision a step further. The Washington State Supreme Court, and more recently, the Wyoming State Supreme Court (*State v. English*, 1999) have held that separate pretrial taint hearings are unnecessary additions to established competency hearings. In other words, the competency hearing is reborn with a new emphasis on the possibility that a child's testimony has been tainted.

Further, states such as Wyoming have adopted the "some evidence" standard employed by the Michael's court for determining when a competency hearing is justified. That is, a defendant need only supply some evidence that a child's statements may be tainted. In the Wyoming case, an adult

spotted a male babysitter naked in the bathtub with the alleged victim, a 5-year-old girl. When informed of this, the child's mother questioned her daughter about the suspected abuse. The daughter initially denied any misconduct by the defendant. Only after the mother became desperate, offering to trade secrets with her daughter, did the girl admit that the defendant "played with her pee pee." At trial, the defendant requested and was denied a competency and taint hearing, was subsequently convicted, then appealed. The circumstances of the mother's interview led the appeals court to conclude that the defendant had provided "substantially more evidence" of the alleged victim's incompetency than necessary to warrant a hearing on the issue. They overturned the case and remanded it for new trial partly because the defendant's request for a competency and taint hearing was denied in the original trial.

Psychologists might question whether the defendant had substantial evidence that this child's testimony was tainted. The alleged victim was not repeatedly interviewed after a long delay. There was only one questionable interview, occurring less than 24 hours after the alleged abuse. Although the mother admitted being "desperate" in trying to elicit information, this scenario does not mimic the methods employed in most studies of suggestibility. Researchers who have demonstrated marked degrees of suggestibility in young children admit that those effects are not typically easy to obtain, and rarely with only one interview (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

From a legal standpoint, the reason for reversal may not be the Court's belief that a competency hearing would have found the child incompetent, but the belief that the defendant should have been heard on the subject of competence. Thus, the Court sought to assure that if a defendant asserts that he has some evidence of taint, it will be heard by the trial court. Further, if the trial court finds that the testimony is tainted, then the child will be ruled incompetent to be a witness in the case at trial.

A troubling issue is the low standard used to trigger competency hearings. Though federal standards require that hearings be triggered only if there are "compelling reasons" to do so, state courts are adopting the lower *Michaels'* court standard of "some evidence." Competency hearings may therefore become more commonplace. Even if professionals use solid, non-leading interviewing techniques and limit the number of interviews, a savvy defense attorney may raise the issue of pretrial taint based on an initial parent or teacher interview.

Social scientists, successful in pointing out the egregious interviewing techniques used in the *Michaels* investigation, may be called upon again—this time, to keep the pendulum from swinging too far in the opposite direction. Psychologists may need to remind courts that children's testimony can be tainted, but that it takes a lot of work to do so. Further, we may need to provide

data to help courts determine which standard of taint evidence (from "some evidence" to "compelling evidence") leads to the fewest errors.

References

Ceci, S. J., & Bruck, M. (1995). *Jeopardy in the Courtroom: A scientific analysis of children's testimony*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Ceci, S. J., Leichtman, M. D., Putnick, M. E., & Nightingale, N. N. (1993). The suggestibility of children's recollections. In D. Cicchetti & S. L. Toth (Eds.) *Child abuse, child development, and social policy*. (pp.117-137) Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Poole, D. A., & Lamb, M. E. (1998). *Investigative interviews of children*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), a multi-disciplinary, international professional association of 5,000 members, promotes interdisciplinary human development research, fosters an information exchange among scientists and other professionals, and encourages application of research findings. SRCD hosts a biennial meeting and sponsors these publications: *Child Development*, *Monographs of SRCD*, *Child Development Abstracts and Bibliography*, *Social Policy Report*, and a newsletter. For further information, please visit the website at www.srkd.org or contact Thelma Tucker (tel: 734-998-6524; E-mail: tetucker@umich.edu).

Newsletter of the Section of Child Maltreatment
Susan P. Limber, Ph.D., Editor
Institute for Families in Society
University of South Carolina
Carolina Plaza, 12th Floor
Columbia, SC 29208

Non-Profit
Organization
**U.S. POSTAGE
PAID**
Permit #766
Columbia, SC

3750 AF 999900008200
Susan P Limber
Institute for Families in Society
Univ of South Carolina
Carolina Plaza
Columbia SC 29208