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eNEWS

A Final Word

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Dr. Martindale chides me for suggesting we can omit observations about children's play from our custody evaluation reports. The drawings of self and family, the family as animals in the sand, the setting up of two doll houses, one representing mother's house, the other father's house are but a small piece of a many-faceted evaluation, that includes parent questionnaires and interviews, observations of parent-child interactions in the playroom and in the home visit, collateral contacts with teachers, counselors, pediatricians. While it is surprising how often these play examples are consistent with the other data, it is understood that they never form the sole basis of our recommendations to the court. We collect a mountain of material and we therefore have to be selective about what we include. It is understandable that we would select those examples that best support our own position, as Dr. Martindale has done in his overall assessment of my work. Perhaps this is why he omitted comment on the extensive research of Pruett, Pruett and Ebling and their examples of how very revealing children's play can be.

My primary purpose in submitting this article is to generate discussion, most specifically about what options are available to us as we observe, evaluate and recommend for the best interest of children under the age of five. My thanks to AFCC for this invitation.