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# Trends. Abuses of Child Abuse: Suspecting the Usual Suspects in the World of Elian Gonzalez

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One facet of the political psychology of the Elian Gonzalez case involves the opinions from mental health "experts" on Elian's mental status and its dynamics. We have been told that Elian has already "bonded" with his "new family" in Miami and that taking Elian from the family would qualify as child abuse. We have been told that Elian will not be able to begin mourning for his dead mother until he is taken from his "new family." Thus the "new family" is engaging in child abuse, because by holding onto him they are not letting him mourn. We have been told that Elian's father is engaged in child abuse because has not chosen to visit his son in the home of the "new family." We have been told that allowing Elian to assert on a videotape that he doesn't want to return to Cuba is a type of child abuse. We have been told that the longer Elian remains with his "new family," the longer he is being subjected to child abuse. We have been told that Elian's father has been abusive to the boy in Cuba and on the telephone since Elian has been in the United States (US). We have also been told that contact with US commercial culture constitutes child abuse, living in Cuba constitutes child abuse, and viewing demonstrators outside the "new family's" home constitutes child abuse. And some mental health professionals believe that there is no child abuse involving Elian.

One might focus on what combinations of expert opinions may be [right] or wrong, approaching consensus, or consistent with and motivated by various political ideologies and venal instincts. However, one might also note that we seem to be becoming disabused of the contention that expert mental health opinion is indeed expert. (See Barnes, J. E. (April 8, 2000). Three doctors selected to meet with members of the Gonzalez family. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Bragg, R. Doctor sees mental abuse of Cuban boy. (April 19, 2000). Doctor sees mental abuse of Cuban boy. *The New York Times*, p. A16; Burman, E. (1997). Telling stories: Psychologists, children and the production of "false memories." *Theory & Psychology*, 7, 291-309; Goode, E. (April 14, 2000). The Elian Gonzalez case: The mental health experts. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Rhodeen, P., & Wiles, P. (January 17, 2000). Elian, bereaved. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Saakvitne, K. W., Pratt, A. C., & Pearlman, L. A. (1997). Under the mantle of science. *American Psychologist*, 52, 997; Weiser, B. (January 6, 2000). Family disputes, global politics. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Child Abuse, Cuba, Elian Gonzalez, Miami.)