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JUDGEMENTS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL COMPETENCE:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE EVALUATOR

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requirements for the degree of Master of Clinical
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Originality of thesis

Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis is my own original work.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'SH' with a stylized flourish.

Susan Hays

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Tables.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Method.....	75
Chapter 3: Results.....	83
Chapter 4: Discussion.....	94
References.....	113
Appendix A.....	130
Appendix B.....	134
Appendix C.....	140
Appendix D.....	141
Appendix E.....	142

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1. Alpha values for social competence and antisocial behaviour scales.
- Table 2. Correlations between social competence, antisocial behaviour, and liking within all age groups
- Table 3. Comparisons of correlation coefficients between social competence and liking for all age groups

ABSTRACT

Social skills training programmes for children have had only limited success in the past. One possible cause for this situation is that different groups of judges (ie. adults and peers) evaluate children's social behaviour in different ways. The present study investigated the influence of various rater characteristics upon judgements of children's social behaviour.

Thirty-eight male and female eight year olds and the same number of 12 year olds and adults served as subjects in the study. The subjects watched video tapes of 10 year old children in a variety of social situations. They used a specially designed questionnaire to record their judgements. The questionnaire yielded two scales of behaviour, a social competence scale and an antisocial scale, as well as an affective component.

Contrary to prediction, adults and children showed moderate agreement in their judgements of children's social competence. Although these judgements showed agreement, a series of regression analyses showed that the attributes which contributed to the judgements were different. Adults and children also showed some agreement in their judgements of antisocial behaviour, however, adults and eight year olds disagreed. Adults liked the target children more than the

subject children did. Generally there was a sex difference in ratings with females rating children higher on social competence and liking the children and males rating children higher on antisocial behaviour.

The clinical implication of these results, with special reference to the assessment of children's social functioning and the content of training programmes, as well as areas for future research are discussed.