

DMM Family Court Reports: some examples

Andrea Landini

CASE 1

We don't want to see our father

CASE 1: Situation

- Parents live separately, but are not legally separated
- Three children:
 - Andrea (17)
 - Lorenzo (15)
 - Sara (10)
- Lorenzo and Sara appear distressed.
- Andrea, “more balanced”, acts out at school and is not compliant with medical prescriptions for his Type 1 Diabetes, but claims “to be ok”.

CASE 1: Situation

- All three children refuse to meet the father
- They are very close to the mother
- And describe their father as physically violent with the mother and with the male children (no legal charges)
- The legal separation between the parents is currently stalled because they both want to give priority to what is best for the children (seeing the father or not, psychological care for Lorenzo and Sara?).

CASE 1: Question

The judge of the minors court asks for:

- Psychodiagnosis of the family members
- Evaluation of the relationships between them
- Evaluation of adequacy of parenting

In case of inadequacy, is the time for recovery compatible with the developmental needs of the minors?

CASE 1: Strategies

Mother's AAI:

Utr(dx)_{csa, sa} Ul(dx)_{best friend, brother} DO[A3,4+,7/
C5-6]

Father's AAI:

A2(4-)

CASE 1: Strategies

Andrea's TAAI:

Utr/l (dx) diabetes, family conflict f, m, maternal family,
death maternal uncle

DO [A2, 4-, 6m/C3, 5p]

Lorenzo's TAAI:

Utr(p/v)_{sep} m-f, work issues m-f A2(4-)m/C3-4(5)f

Sara's SAA:

C4(6)

CASE 1: Formulation

- Critical danger for mother:
 damage to children/sex/intrusion by
 own parents
- Critical danger for father:
 disruption of family relationships
- Critical danger for children:
 disruption of mother's state

CASE 1: Formulation

- Critical cause for change:
clarification of relationship between
parents
(sorting out separation *before* minding
the children's interests)

CASE 1: Follow up

- As the mother is informed about the contents of the report, her reaction is unexpected. Instead of emphasizing that her ex-husband is really a bad person, she acknowledges that her unstated and implicit conflicts with her family of origin might have to do with how the situation turned out, and acknowledges the formulation as plausible.
- In the meantime, Andrea spontaneously made contact with the father and saw him a few times before the report was deposited.

CASE 2

Four parents for one baby

CASE 2: Situation

- A couple separates after having a baby
- The baby stays with the father and his new partner
- The mother has a new partner
- They are preparing to go to court about the placement of the baby.

CASE 2: Question

- How is the functioning of the 4 adults?

CASE 2: Assessments

- Adult Attachment Interviews for the four adults

CASE 2: Strategies

- All four adults' AAls have complex classifications.
- The baby's mother's is the most extreme:
 - very short transcript
 - all negative experience is blocked, displaced or otherwise distanced
 - when the conversation gets too close to danger, she falls asleep (3-4 times during the interview): [ess].

CASE 2: Formulation

- The mother is still too threatened by her past experience with danger to function protectively
- her level of awareness of the problems is so implicit that the time needed to get to deal productively with them is incompatible with the developmental needs of her baby.

CASE 2: Follow up

- After reading the report, the mother's attorney convinces her that going to court would be a waste of resources in the current conditions, and that custody of her son is to be sought in the future.
- The baby stays with the father and his partner.
- Cost of assessment (high) compared with costs involved with the court proceeding (much higher).

CASE 3

Grandparents or parents?

CASE 3: Situation

- John was brought to hospital at 1 month of age with vomiting and fever.
- He was found to have bruises and multiple fractured ribs.
- When neither parent could account for the non-accidental injuries, John was placed with his paternal grandparents where he has resided up to now. He sees his parents daily, but under supervision.

CASE 3: Question

- Evaluate attachment for:
 - John (now 15 months)
 - His parents
 - His paternal grandparents (current carers).
- Identify strengths and risks:
 - in the current relationships with carers (grandparents and parents)
 - in any rehabilitation process of John to his parents' care.

CASE 3: Assessments

- CARE-Index: John and each of the four adults
- Adult Attachment Interviews for the four adults
- Parents Interview with John's mother and father (John present)
 - (These could have been administered at first hospitalization)
- Strange Situation Procedure: John with the four adults

CASE 3: Strategies

Mother's CARE-Index:

Adequate/Coop

Father's CARE-Index:

Controlling/Difficult

Paternal Grandmother's CARE-Index:

Very high risk controlling-unresp/
compulsive-difficult

Paternal Grandfather's CARE-Index:

Mild risk controlling/difficult

CASE 3: Strategies

SSPs: John does not appear attached with a consolidated strategy to any of the adults, except his mother, who he seeks (with a bit of anger).

In all the video procedures, John appears developmentally delayed and shows atypical behavior.

Adult's AAls: distortions parallel the level of risk observed in the CARE-Index.

CASE 3: Strategies

Parents Interview: despite being the most reflective, Mother defers to Father, who seems to dismiss her opinions. He also doesn't seem to value the relationship with her.

CASE 3: Formulation

John has been out of his biological home for almost all his life. At this point, his development appears atypical.

He has difficult relationships with both his paternal grandparents and better relationships with his parents, particularly his mother.

CASE 3: Formulation

John has not formed a normal relationship with any adult, possibly because the emotional and structural relations are unclear to everyone.

He is warmly attached to his mother, who seems unsure of her authority to act (overwhelmed by paternal family).

CASE 3: Formulation

The paternal family is quite active in guiding John.

In spite of their high stimulation and efforts to teach him to be a good boy, John lacks age-appropriate language and regulates his arousal poorly.

He appears to need a more constant and responsive (as opposed to stimulating) environment.

CASE 3: Formulation

John needs a permanent home with one or more parents who feel confident in their role as parents.

His mother does not seem more at risk than the average parent.

CASE 3: Formulation

His father is less aware of his role as a father, relying heavily on his parents and partner for direction.

Without the guidance of John's mother, there might be concerns on his ability to function as a parent.

There are concerns about the functioning of the parents as a couple, but these could be addressed by intervention.

CASE 3: Follow up

John is immediately placed with the parents.