

Judges taking “Attachment and Psychopathology”

Andrea Landini & Giuliana Florit (Italy)

An introduction to DMM in Milano

- Two honorary judges in the Minors Court in Milano invited all their colleagues (both judges and honorary judges from helping professions) to take a 3-day “Attachment and Psychopathology” course.
- High interest, but hard for the judges to extricate themselves from hearings for 3 consecutive days

About 15 judges attend the course

- Their main interest was to understand more about the psychological reports, especially:
 - technical language
 - meanings behind labels (often unrelated to specific observations)
 - evaluation criteria

Course not especially tailored to judges

- Just emphasizing concepts like:
 - Attachment figures are not interchangeable
 - Attachments are organized in the first year of life
 - etc.
- (They even took the multiple choice 72-questions questionnaire at the end!)

During the course

- After watching the group of psychologists underestimate the dyadic synchrony of a DS=14 CARE-Index video, one judge wondered:
“How reliable have been the negative reports I have received in the last few decades?”

During the course

- In informal conversations we recommended that the judges request more clarity from the authors of the reports, in terms of:
 - How they obtained their information (formal or informal observations)
 - The process that led to the stated conclusions

After the course

- We interviewed informally 4 of the judges about what they learned from A&P.

What was learned by the judges

- Basic concepts (secure/anxious attachment, different strategies, etc) often quoted by experts, but without a definition provided in the reports
- How observational assessments work and how you take information from them)

What was learned by the judges

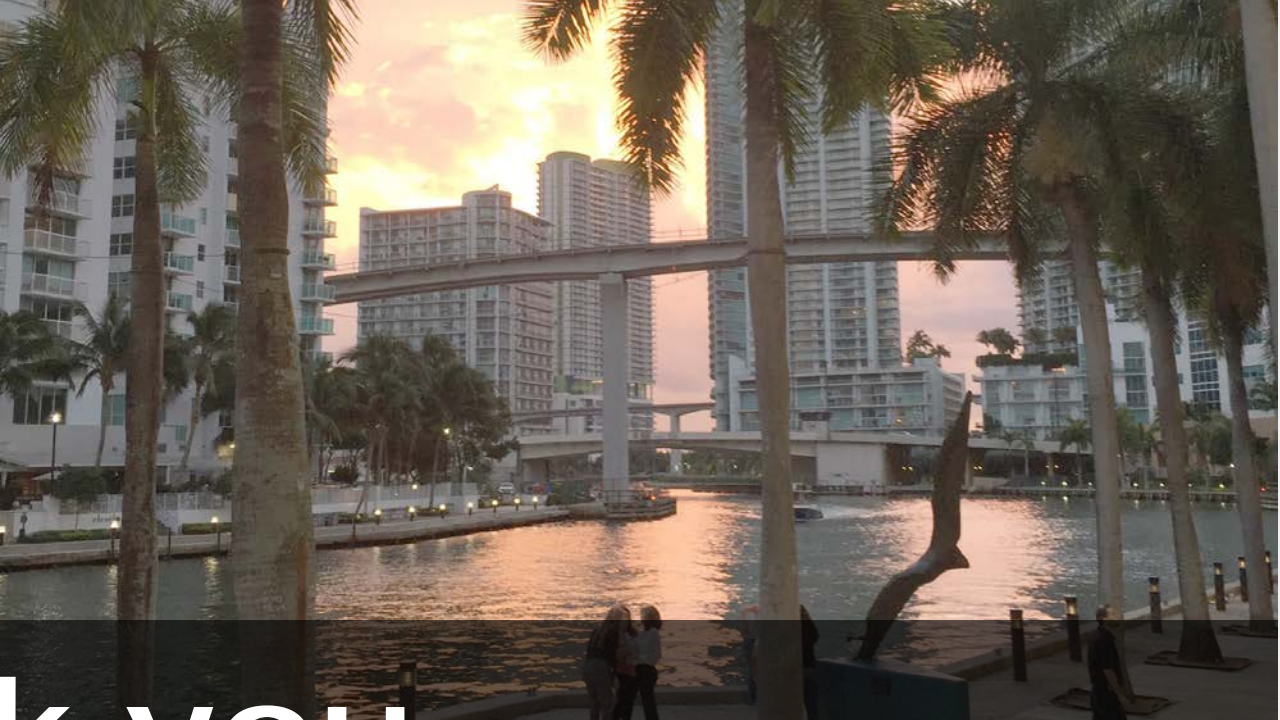
- More criteria to evaluate the reports' conclusions
- In turn, when to apply more or less caution in the decisions based on them

What the judges did

- In their questions, more frequent explicit requests to use observational assessments
- More requests for further assessments
- In response to a recent DMM report, expressed surprise for the transparency of the process of observation and evaluation.

What we learned

- The effort to disseminate information about the IASA court protocol is likely to pay off;
- Dissemination must go beyond scientific publication;
- Language and communication strategies appropriate for law personnel, administrators and policy makers are needed.



Thank you

