Using a Psychosexual Evaluator During a Parenting Evaluation: Getting the Most From Your "Sex-pert"

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Topics To Be Covered Today

Part I: Introduction
- Who We Are And What We Do
- Sexual Behaviors Potentially Relevant To Parenting Evaluations

Part II: Psychosexual experts: What they can (and cannot) do for you
- What is "Sexpertise"?
- Psychosexual Assessment
- Considerations For Risk Management

Part III: Case examples
- "I've Got This"
- "Have I Got This?"
- "You've Got This"

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Sexual Behaviors Potentially Relevant To Parenting Evaluations

- Pornography use
  - What is "normal" pornography use? What is "sex addiction"?
  - Legal but problematic pornography: "Barely legal", themes of force
  - Illegal pornography: Child pornography
- Legal but problematic sexual behavior
  - (e.g. cybense, craigslist, S&M)
- Impaired sexual boundaries with children
  - (e.g. co-sleeping/bathing/privacy issues; lack of vigilance re: adult sex)
- Illegal sexual behavior involving adults
  - (e.g. voyerism, exhibitionism, prostitution)
- Illegal sexual behavior involving minors
  - (e.g. child pornography, sexual offending)

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What is “Sex-pertise”?
Education & Training of this Clinician

- Human sexual behavior
  - Psychosexual development
  - Sexual behavior & relationships
  - Gender & Sexual identity
  - Paraphilic & offense behavior

- Clinical Psychology
  - Sexual human development
  - Adult Psychopathology
  - Forensic Psychopathology
  - Treatment therapy
  - Evaluation assessment

- Forensic Psychology
  - Criminal offenses
  - Child evaluation
  - Sexual offenses
  - Risk assessment
  - Personal Injury (esp. child sex abuse)
  - Child Custody (incl. SA allegations)
  - Child witness/interview issues

Psychosexual Evaluation

- Task is to assess the individual’s sexual thoughts, feelings, behaviors
- No official charge/conviction means you cannot use actuarial risk assessment instruments
- Places sexual behavior problems (SBPs) in the context of the whole person
- Not just whether the person is “sexually deviant”
- Emphasizes the need for comprehensive psychological assessment
- SBPs are not typically due to underlying "sexually deviancy," more likely due to other factors

What a Psychosexual Evaluation Can Provide:

- Identification of adult sexual behaviors that may have impact on child:
  - Clinically-informed assessment of problematic sexual behaviors
  - Assessment of underlying psychological considerations
  - e.g. Axis I or Axis II concerns that may account for and/or exacerbate sexual behavior problems
  - Recommendations for treatment
  - May not be "deviancy"-specific treatment, although clinicians with such expertise may be useful given their fluency in sexual behavior
  - Suggestions for risk management
  - Inherently limited by necessary reliance on clinical judgment
  - May involve considerations beyond the scope of evaluation
What a Psychosexual Evaluation Cannot Provide:

- Actuarially-based assessment of a person’s risk to sexually offend, if he/she has never been arrested/convicted of a sexual offense
- Determination as to whether a particular behavior has/has not already occurred
- Determination as to whether a particular behavior will/will not occur in the future
- Determination as to whether either party is lying

Psychosexual Evaluation Procedures

- Informed consent
- General psychological assessment tools
- Sex-specific assessment tools
- Physiological assessment tools
- Interviews & observations
- Collateral sources

General Psychological Assessment Tools

- Psychological “testing” generates clinical hypotheses about the examinee, based on a comparison of his/her responses to known groups of people
- May provide better understanding of the broader context in which SBPs first developed, how SBPs are maintained, and/or whether the behavior may respond to intervention
General Psychological Assessment Tools

- Provides clinician with broad/comprehensive assessment of the examinee’s past/current functioning in a number of areas
  - Mood, anxiety, thinking patterns (i.e. "Axis I")
  - Personality/interpersonal patterns (i.e. "Axis II")
  - Acute behavioral concerns (e.g. assault or suicide indicators)
  - "Dynamic risk factors" (e.g. antisocial attitudes, intimacy deficits)

Some personality assessments also provide useful information about response style (e.g. impression management, defensiveness)

Examples of general psychological assessments include:
- Personality Assessment Inventory
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
- Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory

Sex-specific Assessment Tools

- Specific assessments of the examinee’s sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Provide specific information about the examinee’s self-reported interests, attitudes, beliefs, experiences
- Some assessments also provide information about response style (e.g. minimization, defensiveness)
Sex-specific Assessment Tools

- Examples include:
  - Multiphasic Sex Inventory
  - Clarke Sexual History Questionnaire for Males
  - Abel & Becker Sexual Interest Cardsort
  - Burt "rape myths" scale
  - MOLEST scale
  - Sexual Attitudes Questionnaire
  - Hypersexual Behavior Inventory
  - Internet Sex Screening Test

Physiological Assessment Tools

- These are NOT psychological tests
- Polygraph measures general physiological arousal (e.g. heart rate) as a "proxy" for deception
- Helpful if the examinee "passes"
- Unhelpful (and potentially harmful or misleading) if the individual "fails"
  - Statements made during follow-up are focus

Physiological Assessments

- Penile Plethysmograph (PPG)
  - Measures change in penile tumescence during exposure auditory and visual stimuli
  - Audio vignettes to assess arousal to force/coercion
  - Visual stimuli to assess arousal to age/Tanner stage
  - PPG is not useful for "non-deviant" interests (e.g. teens)
  - PPG should be used for assessment of treatment needs/treatment progress ONLY (see ATSA guidelines, www.atsa.com)
  - PPG results are NOT an indication of "likelihood" to engage in a certain behavior in the future
  - PPG results are NOT an indication having engaged in a certain behavior in the past
  - PPG is NOT a "lie detector"
Observational/Interview/Clinical Data

- Review psychosocial & psychosexual history
  - Clinical observations of behavior, attitudes, interpersonal style, response style, clinically relevant "symptoms"
  - Opportunity to review testing with examinee, elicit his/her responses to hypotheses
  - Opportunity for examinee to respond to/clarify information provided by collaterals sources
  - Opportunity for examinee to indicate willingness to participate in treatment/interventions

Collateral Information

- Records, e.g.:
  - Police reports
  - CPS reports
  - Medical records
  - Mental health records
  - Employment records
- Interviews, e.g.:
  - Former spouse/romantic partner(s)
  - Current romantic partner
  - Family members
  - Friends, roommates, other parties with intimate contact
  - Clinicians (past and current)
  - Supervisors (e.g. of visitation)

Opinions & Recommendations

- Diagnostic formulation (if any)
- Supervision?
  - Any vs. none
  - Professional vs. family/friends
- Behavioral restrictions?
  - E.g. no overnights, supervised bedtime/bathing/toileting, visits in public places, computer restrictions/monitoring
- Treatment
  - For adult
  - For child
  - For family (dyads/triads, reunification, etc.)
Considerations For Risk Management

- Age/developmental maturity
  - Is child verbal? Can child describe events of visit?
  - Is child old enough to dress/toilet/bathe him/herself?
  - Is old enough to bring other children into the home?
  - If child is school-age, could examinee’s SHPs harm child’s social development?

- In some cases, a child might be more harmed/traumatized by the loss of positive aspects of parent-child relationship, than by the sexual behavior problems themselves
  - Child’s understanding of what has happened is not always the same as adult’s understanding
  - Meaning of events may change for the child over time

Caveats & Limitations of Psychosexual Evaluations

- Opinions and recommendations are limited to the person who was examined
  - Recommendations address examinee’s problem behavior, how it might be effectively managed/treated
  - NOT a parenting evaluation but may have implications for a parenting plan to be addressed by the parenting evaluator
  - Some child-specific considerations may not be adequately addressed by psychosexual evaluation alone
Case Examples

- “I’ve Got This”
- “Do I Have This?”
- “You’ve Got This”

Case Scenario 1

- Mom, Dad, 2 kids age 7 (girl) and 11 (boy). Mom filed for dissolution after testing positive for STD.
- Dad admitted sex with prostitute on Asia business trip when confronted.
- Mom reported other sexual behavior by Dad that caused conflict in marriage: strip bars, porn viewing, past use of prostitutes in college.
- Mom reported Dad’s touching of children makes her uncomfortable — touching “no touch” zones although she was clear she did not believe sexual contact was occurring.
- Mom believes Dad has sex addiction, is worried about his boundaries with children.

Case Scenario 2

- Mom, Dad, 1 kid, age 6 (boy). Mom filed for dissolution after Dad’s affair was revealed.
- Mom reported Dad engaged in impersonal sex contacts through Craigslist; brought affair partner to the home when the child was present; engaged in pornography use earlier in the relationship. Mom is concerned that Dad may expose child to sexually explicit materials and/or behavior.
- Dad acknowledged finding sex partners through Craigslist and bringing current sexual partner to the home when the child was present (no sex occurred on that occasion). Dad is now in a committed relationship with affair partner of more than one year.
Case Scenario 3

- Mom, Dad, 1 child, age 8 (girl). Unmarried couple, residing in different states, high conflict.
- Two years into modification litigation, GAL discovered Dad was actively contacting prostitutes during residential weekends with daughter.
- Dad had been arrested once for solicitation of a prostitute in 2000.

Summary & Concluding Remarks

- Sexual behavior problems often alleged
- SBPs may or may not impact parenting
- A psychosexual expert can help evaluator through consultation and/or evaluation
- Psychosexual evaluation can help through evaluating psychological functioning and sexual behavior

References