Families through the lens of diversity

Book of Abstracts

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OS6: Families in care: Knowledge to promote change
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As the concept of "risk" could be a common reference to professionals working in child protection, it does not reduce the complexity and diversity of families involved in it. The integration of descriptive knowledge (e.g. about parents, children, development or violence) with knowledge about family intervention and the challenges of different contexts (as family home, residential care or divorce) is a major issue in daily practice. This symposium intents to provide four contributions to intervention with families in child protection workfield and reflect this continuous movement between the part and the all; If descriptive knowledge is “the part” and intervention is “the all”, this symposium will reflect the systemic principle of hologram stating that not only the part is in all, but there is also all included in the part. Two of the presentations will be focused on descriptive knowledge and the other two on procedural knowledge. We will start with a paper focusing the parental and family factors related to development and functioning of children in multiassisted families (Paula Martins); after it will be presented a paper about parenting practices of mothers victims of intimate partner violence (Ana Sani). Both papers will include implications for child protection practice. The third paper will propose a guide to case formulation based on complex systemic thinking, useful for situations in and out of child protection system. (Ana Melo). The fourth paper will reflect about the specific challenges of intervention with families in residential care practice, a context where parenting practices are (very) restricted but are also a major factor to consider when deciding about family reunification (Dora Pereira). Both papers will emphasize the nuclear concepts subsiding them.

Parental and family factors related to development of children in multiassisted families
Martins, Paula C.; Oliveira, Vítor

With a view to analyzing welfare program effectiveness, in this study we intended to characterize the needs, capabilities and vulnerabilities of families and children in need in the Portuguese Welfare System. For this 95 parents, with an average age of 36.91 years (SD = 6.88), and an average of 6.77 school years completed (SD = 2.91), and 109 children, aged 8 to 12 years (M = 10.14, SD = 1.40) were recruited among those beneficiary from a cash transfer program. Participants completed a battery of scales that included parental stress (PSI) and social support (IARSP), parental risk of child abuse and neglect (AAPI), family problems, children’s quality of life (Kidscreen), and emotional and behavioural problems (CBCL). Results indicated that most families were multiproblem families and experienced high levels of adversity. With regard to children, they suffered a negative impact in their wellbeing, behavior (both internalized and externalized), as well in their social and emotional competence. In addition, parental stress and low social support had a negative impact on children’s health-related quality of life. Implications for intervention are discussed.

Parenting styles and practices in mothers victims of intimate partner violence
Pereira, Dora; Sani, Ana; Vieira, Ana C.

The experience of intimate partner violence (IPV) tends to influence significantly parenting, as research have been demonstrating. In Portugal victim support services must intervene not only in protective issues, but also in parenting in a new violence free context. To know how mothers perceive their parenting styles after the experience of intimate partner violence could be an important contribute to propose an intervention plan focussed on the best possible match between the needs of children and families and professionals resources. Research questions: How a specific group of mothers victims of IPV perceive their parenting styles. The study was approved by Commission of Ethics of University Fernando Pessoa and authorized by the Directive Board of the victims service. It was a cross-sectional descriptive and quantitative study, with a group of 30 mothers victims of IPV and 30 mothers not victims that consent to answer to the EMBU-P and IVC (Scale of Violence in couples) questionnaires. Data were processed with SPSS. Will be discussed implications for practice of psychosocial intervention in victimization context from the perspective of how the context could influence parenting practices and what would be the parenting functioning features that would promote this new adjustment process.

Complex thinking applied to family change: A guide for case conceptualization
Teixeira de Melo, Ana

When attempting to manage change in complex systems, including human social systems, intervenors are often confronted with the difficulties posed by the specific properties that classify these systems as complex
(e.g. self-organisation, emergence, path-dependency). When the level of complexity of the thinking underlying the interventions is not sufficiently congruent with the complexity of the target systems, intervenors are often confronted with undesirable, unexpected or negative outcomes (Caves & Melo, 2018). In this paper we extend this assumption to family systems, conceived as complex systems (Melo & Alarcão, in preparation). We present the overall architecture (content) and dynamic usage (process) of a newly developed guide for family-based case conceptualisation aimed at supporting the assessment and promotion of the potential for family change. This guide aims to promote sufficiently complex modes of thinking in understanding and supporting family change. It is grounded in a theoretical framework of the family as a complex system, a relational model of change and a pragmatically oriented conceptualisation of complex thinking as a special mode of coupling with target systems for change.

Suspended parenting? Thinking (systemically) about family reunification after child residential care
Pereira, Dora

When a child enters in residential care professionals are called to assess and intervene in order to promote family reunification. That requires the assessment of parenting functioning and intervention not only with parents but also with the children. But how can it be done when parents and children are apart and in many occasions residential care centers are not prepared to integrate families in their daily functioning? Besides that, many reports about parenting are based on the quality of parenting skills before or during the separation period. But, would that information be enough to make prognosis about parenting functioning after residential care in a context with different features, where will be needed different skills? Intervening systemically requires more than judge the quality of actual parenting functioning; professionals should be able to make sound hypothesis about how the family reunification would be a protective context for child development. In this presentation we will reflect about some paradoxical conditions of child protection professionals’ intervention and propose the Parenting Functional Model as a useful main frame to conduct the assessment, plan the intervention and make prognosis about parenting in child protection contexts.

OS7: Families and children in the 24/7 economy: A global perspective
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The transformation from an industrialized society to a service and technology-information society along with globalization and neoliberal labour deregulation has led to a dramatic increase in the demand for employees to work around the clock, so called “unsociable hours” or “nonstandard schedules” that fall out of 8 am to 5 pm from Monday through Friday. This work pattern is particularly prevalent in the service sector and among workers with children. Evidence shows that when parents work nonstandard schedules, the risk for marital dissolution and for poor child outcomes (social/emotional problems, lower cognitive development, and overweight/obesity) rises, particularly in disadvantaged families. There is also solid evidence that parents’ nonstandard work schedules negatively influence children partly through parent-child interaction (e.g., parenting style), parental mental health and the home environment. What we know little about is cross-national variations in the prevalence of parents working nonstandard schedules and differences in the magnitude of the impact and contributing factors to these differences. Of particular interest is the plausible role of social policy in either mitigating or exacerbating the negative impact of the 24/7 economy on families and children. This symposium builds upon cross-disciplinary scholarship from labour economy, family studies, psychology, and child development. It brings together scholars across the globe to interchange and share their current research on this topic with a view of advancing our knowledge in this field. To reach this aim, we have proposed four papers that all address the 24/7 economy and its impact on families and children from different angles and perspectives. Jouko Nätti and colleagues examine the effects of working nonstandard schedules on the risk for marital dissolution among parents in Finland. Marisa Matias and colleagues will present their research on parental work schedules and children’s prosocial behavior in dual-earner families in Portugal. The paper by Tomo Nishimura and Akiko Oishi investigates the impact of fathers’ long work workers (involving nonstandard hours) on child well-being in Japan. The paper by Pablo Garcia et al. focuses on cross-country differences in the prevalence of parental nonstandard work schedules in eight countries (China, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, UK, US) and how the prevalence may differ by parents' education, occupational status and family structure. Together these papers capture different social welfare regimes and diverse cultural, social and economic and political characteristics