



What diversity means for contact in foster care?

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Intercultural approach

- Faced with the diversity, it is crucial to accept equal dignity of differences and promote cultural dialogue in building an open, plural and democratic society
- The difference is not an exclusive attribute of the other, also belong to us.

There is conflict in intercultural relationship

- Result from the confrontation with the difference and the interpretation and devaluation that is made;
- Intercultural education finds its space in the center of this conflict, which should help solving and not avoiding.

Interculturalism and Human Rights

- Tolerance can become evil when expresses an attitude of passivity;
- Respect for difference can not justify disrespect for human rights;
- A value, to be universal, do not need the full agreement of men.

Relationship rules

Tolerance is the belief that the relationship with the other is supported by differences, a commitment against indifference, and is oriented to principles, rules and limits, namely freedom of choice and human dignity, as defined in Human Rights.

What diversity means for contact in foster care?

Maintaining contact with parents, siblings, extended family and friends, is crucial for several reasons:

- To lessen the impact of change;
- To maintain a link with child's past and their identity;
- The initial aim for a child's life is often reunification;
- Because staying in contact is a persons' right unless any exceptional situation, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Difficulties associated with the contact

- The relationship between various players and between various feelings like hostility, conflict, joy, or longing;
- The results depend on a vast and complex set of interdependent factors such as the length of stay in care, the kinds of abuse suffered, the path in the protection system, the attitude and the follow-up provided by the social work team, etc.

Cooperation, whenever is possible

- When the contact is characterized by cooperation rather than conflict between carers and parents, the child can keep a sense of belonging to both families (Neil, Beek & Schofield, 2003);
- The contact is not always linear and requires a careful balance of risk and protective factors that are unique to each case.

Respect, listening and dialogue

- When carers are tolerant, they show to the child that certain behaviors are not appropriate or acceptable, and that there is another way of being;
- The refusal must be accompanied by the attempt to understand the reasons that led to those attitudes, which condition the options, and dismiss simplistic explanations of common sense.

Aims

- Analyze how the different actors of foster care – parents, foster families, and social workers – relate each other, and how do they see and evaluate reality
- This work is part of a study of InED, Center for Research & Innovation in Education in Porto called «Contact in foster care: patterns, insights and management models»

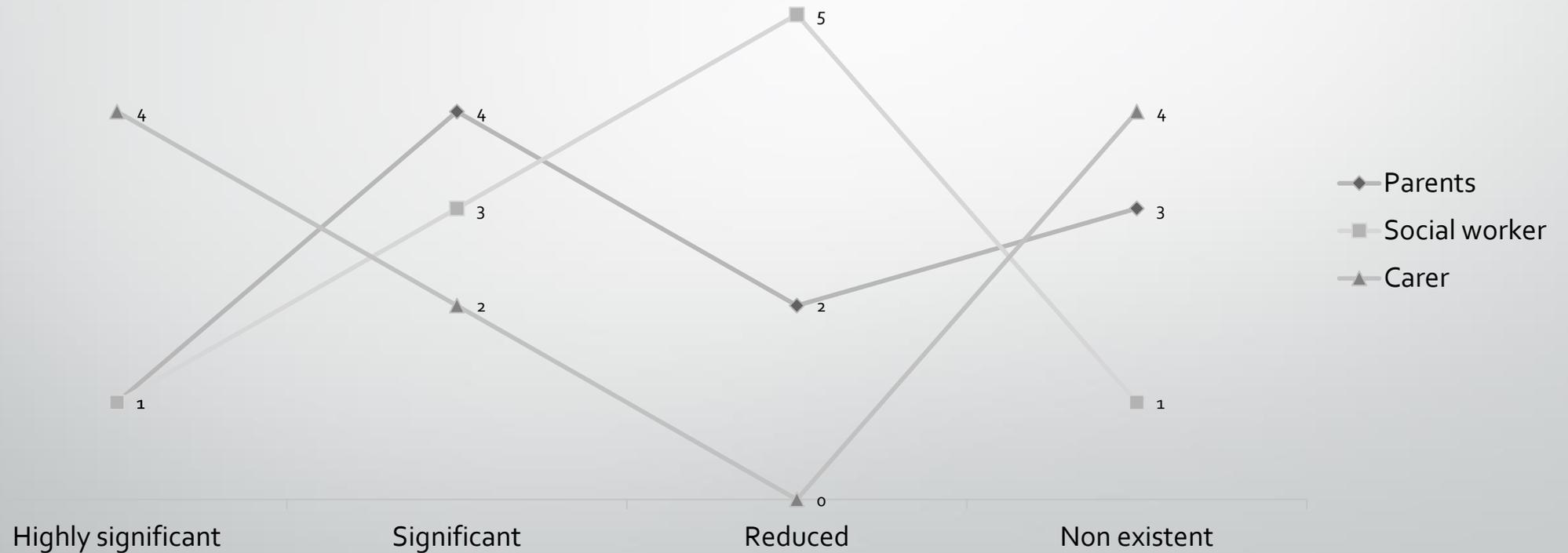
Participants

- Two institutions, one public (200 cases) and other private (21 cases), filled a questionnaire about the contact;
- Other questionnaires were also applied to 217 foster families;
- There were interviews with a sample of carers, parents and social workers
- Children participated in various focus groups.

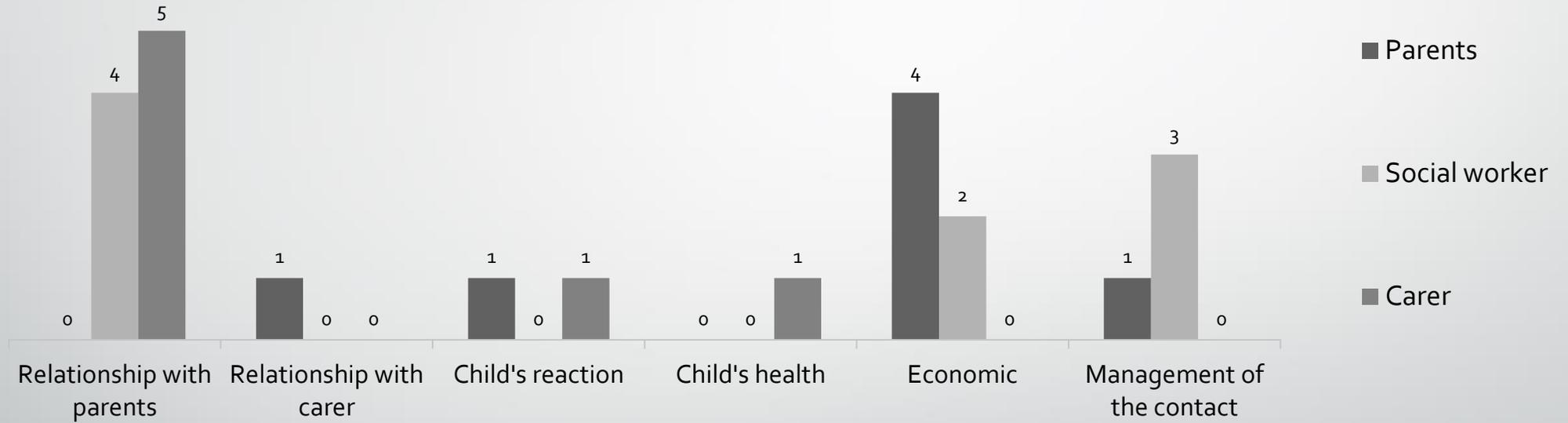
Method

- Based on the sample of children who participated in the focus groups, it was chosen 10 cases in order to interview social workers, parents and carers
- Data based on this triangulation approach
- It was made a content analysis, using MAXQDA 10.0.

Comparison of perceptions on contact difficulties

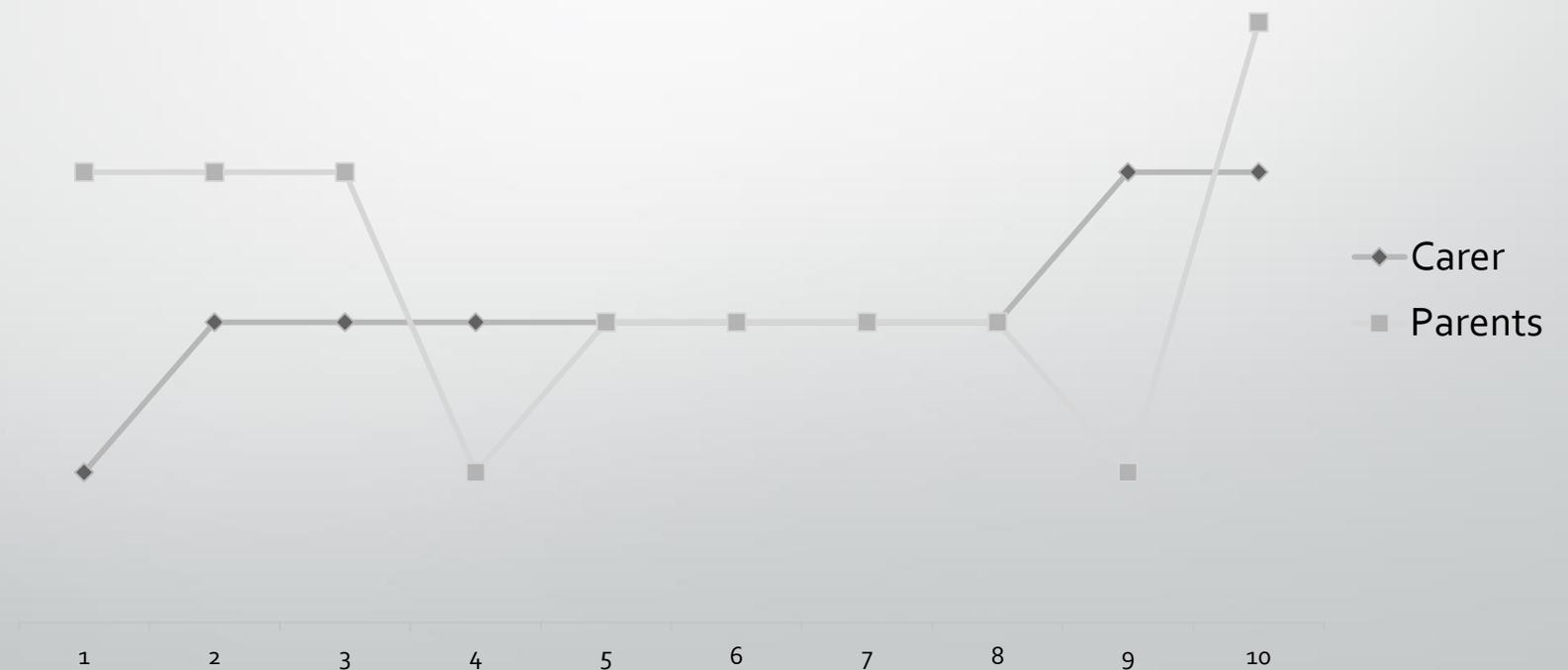


Main difficulties



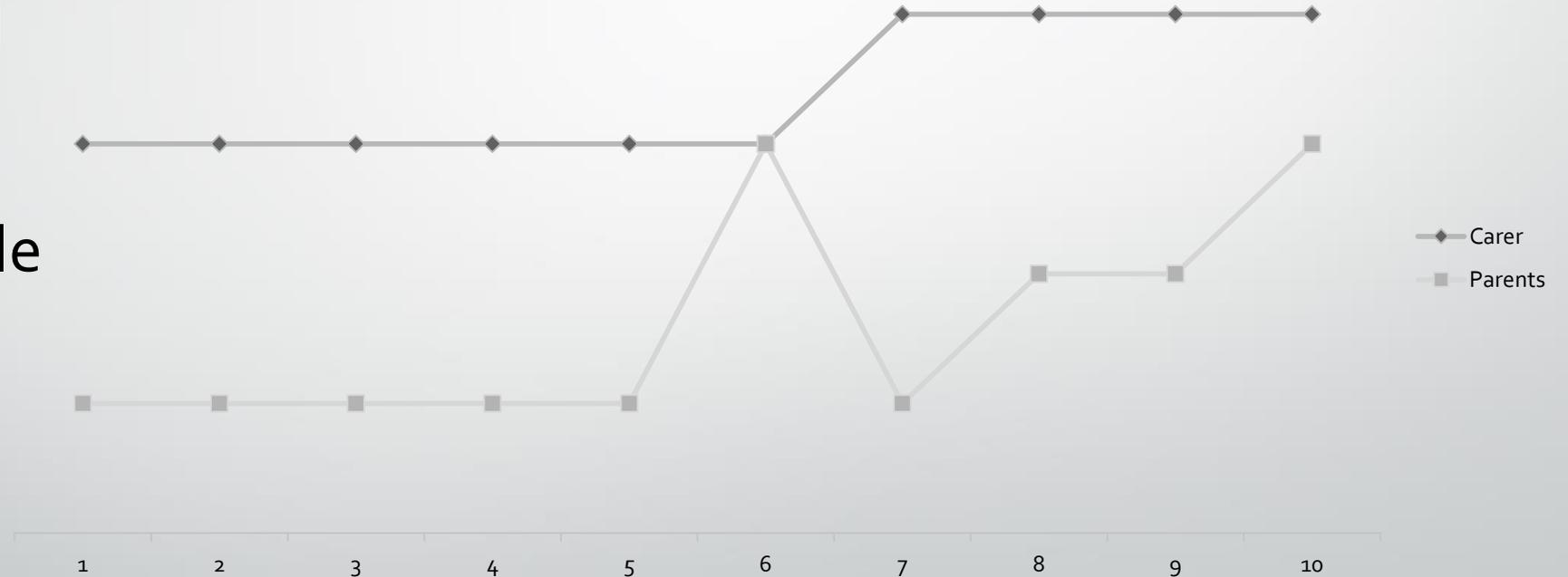
Perceptions on relationship between carers and parents

- Very good
- Good
- Reasonable
- Bad



Perceptions on social work team performance

- Very good
- Good
- Reasonable
- Bad



Perceptions on parents' attitude



Perceptions on children's attitude



Conclusions

- Carers and social workers have a positive mutual perception about their relationship;
- The perception of parents in relation to carers is more positive than the contrary;
- Carers and social workers agree with the performance assessment of the latter, whereas the parents are very critical;
- This degree of disagreement is very significant, widening the gap between the key players in FC;
- A more critical perspective of the parents in relation to FC: the negative feelings of sadness, distress, indifference, anger and fear are mostly referred to.

Conclusions

- The intervention has to pay more attention to parents and try to interpret the reasons that lead to their dismissal from the process and the adoption of a critical stance;
- It is necessary to develop inclusive relationship processes among the FC players, and seek to improve the parents' decision-making during the placement;
- Training on contact and cultural diversity can strengthen communication and relational capacity of all stakeholders in the process;
- In the contact management, it matters to adjust the visit location to a place closer to parents' home, as well as to strength the support for visits, which can contribute to well-being in this context.

Contact in FC: diversity and intercultural education

- It puts families in face to behaviors and values that are often far from their own;
- This is a central question in FC, especially for carers: how to deal with the difference in patterns and behaviors, how to manage it and to what extent to accept it;
- If carers evaluate the parent's conduct in the light of its procedures and conceptions, the judgment will probably be negative. On the other hand if they accept and understand those behaviors, they will respect the child's identity and help her cope with the separation;
- An attitude of distrust or refusal of carers in relation to parents can create in children an uncomfortable feeling of emptiness separating them from the most important adults in their lives (Triseliotis, Borland & Hill, 2000).



Thank you for your attention!

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