

The CARE-Index use in the forensic evaluation for the child protective project

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Aim of the presentation

- One of three cases, brought to Child Protection Service's attention by the Court for Minors in Milan
- How the functional informations coming from CARE-Index are useful with other informations of forensic evaluations for decision making in supporting project to the families and child protection.
- Other informations are:
 - personal history;
 - Psychodiagnostic or psychosocial evaluation for the adults;
 - couple history;
 - psychofisic infant well-being, etc.

Common characteristics of the cases

- All of cases come to the attention of judicial authority for a high couple conflict;
- 2 cases are characterized by an unresolved couple relationship;
- In the 3 cases I made the infant psychological evaluation instead other colleagues made the adult ones.

Michaela's Case: how it arrived at the Social Service's attention

- the **mother had demanded** the intervention of the judicial authority in requesting **exclusive custody** because the **father is aggressive** towards her;
- the honorary judge heard the parents and the judicial authority issued a provisional decree arranging:
 1. Joint custody;
 2. placement of the child with the mother
 3. A calendar of daily visits between M and her father;
 4. A psychosocial investigation through our service.

Psychosocial Investigation: the mother's personal story

- M and her mother lives in maternal family's home.
- Mother workes with her family in a farm.
- She has a limit: an **economic and housing dependency**.
- Since she was a child she had been **obedient to her parents**, a good student and in the rules.
- She had a **complicated childhood due to a sense of inadequacy towards peers for a slim body image**: she had a **narcissistic fragility linked to her mother** perceived as more beautiful and attractive than her. The theme of judgment is very important to her.
- **She meets M's father in the period in which she sought greater autonomy and questioned family models.**
- She has a good resourses: she is a **clever girl**; she is aware of the intrapsychic and relational conflicts;
- She has histrionic personality traits when she talked about the couple history with him and the anguishes that he transmits to her.
- She tends to somatically convert anxiety states.

Psychosocial Investigation: the father's personal story

- M's father lives in his family home;
- He works occasionally as a mason without a regular contract;
- He **talks about his story with difficulty, quickly and minimizing** the situations that can give a negative image of himself and his family;
- By this way, there is a little possibility reflecting of own story.
- He has **a narcissistic fragility** linked to a charitable and traumatic experiences towards which he developed important reactive formations: a strong and autonomous self-image with reactive aggression traits.

Psychosocial Investigation: Couple History and Dynamic

- M's mother and father were very young when they met themselves (17 and 21 years old);
- She choosed M's father to emancipate herself and opposing her parents.
- He saw a strong image of compensation to the fragile narcissistic image.
- **The relationship went on for 2 years and ended almost immediately when they tried to live together after M's birth.**
- Since then they **cyclically alternate moments of strong conflict at times when they can talk and collaborate. All conflicts are in front of M.**
- She complains of being **judged as a bad mother, controlled and oppressed** in her personal life by him, because she had always to be present for her daughter according to a his rigid representation of parenting.
- He **felt excluded from the management of the child** and claimed more and more space.

An important event:

- During the infant psychological evaluation, in Easter period, M doesn't want to go home to her mother after a week-end spent by her father.
- M shows a big crisis of anguish.
- the anguish resounds from father to daughter in a vicious circle;
- The mother is still, immobilised and unable to comfort the child; she reacts aggressive to M's father.
- The father is afraid his daughter had been mistreated by M's mother and her family → Utr (dpl) or Utr (i)?

An important event:

- In this period the mother is very engaged with job;
- M spends a lot of time with his father, benefiting from his care and affection;
- M is experiencing this separation as a maternal abandonment, fomented more or less consciously by his father.

Infant psychological evaluation: the method

- Some psychological interviews with M and the parents and the grandparents;
- The child is observed with or without her parents/other members of the maternal family in some game matches by the psychologist;
- The relationship between M and her parents/other members of the maternal family was evaluated by TCI (Crittenden, 2005) (without frustration task);
- A psychosocial interview with the kindergarten teacher.

Infant psychological evaluation: Infant development

- M is well addressed;
- She is fearful towards the unknown setting;
- She is passive in the game;
- She is a bit clumsy in the movements;
- She has some problems in the linguistic development: limited vocabulary and use of single words for sentences

Infant psychological evaluation: the scores of the TCI scales

- SSD = 3-4;
- The scores of **mother** scales: S = 3, C = 1, UR = 10 → Pattern: UR(a)
- The scores of infant scales : C = 3, CC = 0, T = 3, D = 8 → Pattern: C4

Infant psychological evaluation: the relationship between M and her mother

The mother:

- is active in the game but doesn't reflect her child very emotionally;
- interacts in a pedagogical way as if she is not dealing with the "real child" but with an "imagined child"

Infant psychological evaluation: the relationship between M and her mother

The child:

- the coercive behaviors attracte mother's attention when she leaves the relationship;
- frequent disarmed behaviours are requests for "care" that reinforce the need to stay in relation to the detriment of exploration;
- At the end of the video she shows difficulty in leaving the room with exaggerated behaviors that the mother can't stop: tearing own hair, throwing herself on the floor, throwing the objects;
- C4

Infant psychological evaluation: the scores of the TCI scales

- SSD = 5-6;
- The scores of **father** scales: S = 5, C = 0, UR = 8 → Pattern: Inept
- The scores of infant scales : C = 5, CC = 0, T = 6, D = 3 → Pattern: C2(4)

Infant psychological evaluation: the relationship between M and her father

- less critical in low-stress situations than one between M and her mother;
- more interactive exchanges with emotional sharing;
- the father is in trouble to support his daughter's exploration, expanding its contents and taking his turn;
- The father is less normative and the child has more threatening behaviour
- C2(4)

Infant psychological evaluation: the relationship between M and the other members of the maternal family

- There aren't relational evidence that M could have experienced a real danger with his maternal grandparents;
- M has an adequate relationship with his uncle;
- M seems to be structuring a pattern of attachment A1 to his grandfather

Infant psychological evaluation: psychopathological disorders

Disorders of affective regulation more frequent in times of crisis :

- episodes of nocturnal enuresis;
- stutter;
- anger crisis;
- difficulty in feeding;
- difficulty in separation to go to kindergarten.

In conclusion

Parents have a good parenting skills:

1. Both of them love their child;
2. Mother is more intelligent and normative than father;
3. Father is more empathetic than mother .

In conclusion

1. unresolved couple problems;
2. criticality in personal stories (for ex. Utr for the father, narcissistic wounds, dependence on the family)

create problems in parental skills.

In fact, the parents:

- can't control their anger and argue in front of M;
- perceive M as “vulnerable child” because of the other parent's behavior;
- they reinforce the M's vulnerability behaviors in an unpredictable way.

In conclusion

M has good resources:

- Good ability in adapting to different styles of care;
- She doesn't have experience of important danger.

But she is at psychopathological risk if the situation doesn't change

The Child Protection Service's project

- Child's custody to the Municipality of residence in placing her with the mother and organizing M's visits with her father;
- Initially an individual psychotherapy for each parent;
- Subsequently a path of family mediation;
- A monitoring of the infant well-being.



Bertinoro, 2008



Cambridge, 2010

To download program materials, click here
<https://www.iasa-dmm.org/iasa-conference/>



Frankfurt, 2012



Miami, 2015