FAMILY DIVERSITY IN SOCIAL EXCLUSION SITUATIONS.

RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH,

TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ACTIVITIES.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to characterize the configurations of the families that live in contexts of social exclusion; provide conceptualizations of their operation mode; highlight the formative effects that neighborhood interdisciplinary practices with such families produce in the just graduated psychologists, included on the Extension Program. We wish to contribute to produce systematic knowledge that can account for such family configurations as potential receiver of integration policies. We are also interested on transferring the approach to diversity in the training of young professionals, in order not to be regarded as a deviation from ideal models, but as an expression of different strategies built by members of a community, to resolve children breeding and to bear their existences.

This work is the result about reflections on productions inside a research fellowship: The complexities that takes the breeding in families who lives in a social exclusion situation; researches about breeding, carried out from signature Developmental Psychology II, and from de interdisciplinary work with psychologically assisted families in twelve suburbs of the city of La Plata (University Extension

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Program "Free Legal Offices" (Convention between Law and Social Sciences and Psychology Faculties, U.N.L.P.).

From a qualitative methodology and an interdisciplinary participation, the results have arrive at the characterization and proposed conceptualizations of the included families and at the same time determine the benefits that brings with the work that articulates research and extension activities for the training of advanced students and young graduates.

Key words: family diversity- social exclusion - research- professional training- transference

INTRODUCTION

This paper has sprung, first and foremost, from the results and thoughts derived from two sources mainly:

1) From the products of the Research Initiation Grant, *"Up-bringing complexities within families living in social exclusion situations. Research project in an urban settlement in Ensenada",* for the 2008-2010 period (already concluded and approved).[1]

2) From the research on parenting, which we have been carrying on since 2001 within the Chair of Evolutionary Psychology 2[2], the results of which have enabled us to make a comparative analysis with the findings from families of the settlement in Ensenada.

A third – and later – source derives from the interdisciplinary work done with families receiving psychological support within the University Extension Program called "Free Legal Consultation Offices". These offices are located in twelve poor neighborhoods of

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[1] Scholarship granted by the UNLP . Scholarship holder: Lic. Mariela Gonzalez Oddera. Director. Prof. Psych. Norma Delucca

[2] Research project: *Modalities in the exercise of parenting in families with adolescent children* (2001-2003); *Exercising parenting in families with children from La Plata and Greater La Plata* (2004-2007); *Modalities of diversity in the exercise of parenting and couples* (2010-2013). Director: Prof. Psych. N. Delucca . School of Psychology. UNLP

the city of La Plata (Buenos Aires, Argentina) and the Psychology Section has been a part of them since 2002[3].

The material surveyed when working in the neighborhood offices (interviews with parents and children; reports of the supervision meetings and inter-disciplinary teams) was organized and systematized for its subsequent analysis. Simultaneously, the opportunity to carry out some research on relationship violence – currently going on – came up within this context as well[4]. This gave us the chance to widen the research on family groups living in social exclusion situations, which had begun in a settlement in Ensenada, now to the office in a neighborhood called Villa Elvira. At this neighborhood office, with the consent of the patients, the scholarship holder carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with the two main research objectives in mind: 1) surveying the way family organizations worked; and 2) inferring the representations they had about families, men, women, mothers and fathers. Later on, these interviewed families continued receiving legal and psychological support.

Objectives

Our primary aims in this paper are the following: a) characterizing socially-excluded families' configurations; b) analyzing the way these families function; and c) comparing this information with that from previous investigations on parenting in middle-class sectors. We would also like to point out a secondary aim: the knowledge transference work carried out along the neighborhood inter-disciplinary practices with these families and, dialectically, the learning effects on newly-graduated psychologists who have

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[3] University Extension Program. Agreement between the School of Law and Social Sciences and the School of Psychology of the UNLP. Director: Verónica Más, attorney-at-law. Co-director and Coordinator of the Psychological area: Prof. Psych. Norma Delucca.
[4] "*Relationship violence complexities in family groups living in poverty*". Improvement grant by the UNLP (2010-2012). Scholarship holder: Lic. Mariela González Oddera; Director: Psych. Norma Delucca

started taking part in the Extension Program (Delucca et al., 2010, Delucca & González Odera, 2010).

As regards the first three items - a, b and c -, our interest lies on:

- the investigation and characterization of small children's up-bringing in families living in an urban settlement within the city of Ensenada, and a special reference to the social meanings that structure their representations, their practices and the efficient exercise of family functions;

- the survey of differences and similarities with: a) the families receiving help in the neighborhood of Villa Elvira (La Plata) and b) the families with children belonging to local middle-class sectors, explored during research on parenting[5].

Hypothesis

Within the research/intervention tasks framework, we have established two work hypotheses. The first one claims that *the up-bringing modalities and strategies vary from one socio-economic sector to another*. Apart from understanding that the significances which structure the social space are heterogeneous, we believe that living conditions, the family's degree of inclusion into the prevailing production forms and the ideals from the group they belong to, would all have some effect on: the modalities and organization of the way families operate; power relations and power distribution between the sexes; upbringing guidelines; and children's position and importance.

Simultaneously, the communities living in marginal conditions have not only been – in most of the cases – expelled from the production system, but they have also had their circulation possibilities segregated and limited by the public space, suffering from the

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[5] "*Exercising parenting in families with children from La Plata and Greater La Plata*" (H440). Research carried out within the Chair of Evolutionary Psychology 2 of the School of Psychology of the UNLP. Director: Prof. Psych. Norma Delucca.

effects of the growing social fragmentation which is typical of the social exclusion logic (Margulis & Urresti, 1999).

Consequently, we propose – as a supplementary hypothesis – that, in the family groups being looked into and belonging to poorer sectors, *the processes of subjectivation and support from the symbolic references built by the social group, which provide them with family links, facilitate representations and regulations (both between the members of the couples and between parents and children) would all be affected.*

BACKGROUND

A series of investigations within our sphere –mainly from the field of Sociology– have dealt with the living conditions and reproduction strategies of socially-excluded families. These strategies include: *forms of organization* (extended family, groups of peers or social networks) and *work strategies* to generate income. They also allow us to infer what it means to be a man/woman in these groups.

The presence of *forms of organization* departing from the traditional nuclear model, which entails co-inhabiting parents and children, represent a small percentage in comparison with other Latin American cases (Isla, Lacarrieu & Selby, 1999; Eguía & Ortale, 2007). The following alternative forms are mentioned:

- *groups of peers*: to support children and younger people. These groups appear when the family's leading role diminishes, especially in relation to its structuring and protection functions, at a relatively early time in the children's lives (Dominguez Lostaló, Delucca & Petriz, 1998; Duschatzky & Corea, 2001). These groups work "as values and codes powerplants structuring the subject's experience" (Duschatzky & Corea, 2001,p. 56).

- *extended family*[6]*:* preeminently matrilineal and dominated by a female head. They have several concentrated family nuclei in order to guarantee, among other things, putting food at their member's tables. The widened or extended families appear to be "more efficient" organizations than one-parent families since they create feelings of well-being, which can be seen in the reduced worry about continuous money income, because of the number of members who are actually working among them (Isla, Lacarrieu & Selby, 1999, p. 82). This family modality can promote one unprecedented way of functioning or "alternative arrangement" (Geldstein, 1996,p. 176) which may allow for the construction of novel family strategies. K. Dionisi (2007) observes wider task distribution among the adults forming the domestic unit, as well as household-head women's labor opportunities. Such dynamic establishes a contrast with the more traditional distribution of tasks in nuclear homes, as we will see later on.

- finally, we have found out that *social networks based on closer family relations*, mainly parent-children and siblings relationships, are used as major survival resources (Wainerman, 1996; Isla, Lacarrieu and Selby, 1999; Eguía and Ortale, 2007). The most frequent forms of help have to do with such gifts as food or clothes, as well as with the looking after and accompanying of children. These social networks also include geographically close neighbors, and they might even be organized around ethnic/cultural identities, which offer support and stability frameworks within a collective identity, enabling a larger capacity for self-management (Dominguez Lostaló, Delucca & Petriz, 1998). The persistence of the surveyed networks contrasts with the social fragmentation effects which are typical of a social exclusion dynamic.

As regards *work strategies*, two key issues are stressed: the *work force maximization* phenomenon (Aimetta & Santa María, 2007) and the *job differences in terms of gender*.

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[6] **Extended family** is defined as the organization including other relatives and close people integrated to the nuclear family (which can include one or both spouses), including grandmothers, grandchildren, brothers- and sisters-in-law, and nieces and nephews: different generations living together under one roof.

Maximizing the work force entails adding more family members to the job market in order to increase income. With this aim in mind, even younger people and children have to work. The income produced is contributed to the home's total resources and, occasionally, it is used for personal expenses. In some investigations, there is the idea that children "feel forced to work" in order to help their parents. However, the role of provider is still assigned to the adult and, in general, to the father. Women –especially in nuclear families– do not usually work outside the house. This has to do with – in their own words – three main reasons: the presence of younger children (these are families with high birth rates); the spouse's ban on extra-domestic work for mothers (since the role of provider is strictly masculine); and the self-evaluation they make, arriving at the conclusion that they have little training, which would only allow them to get cleaning jobs (Dionisi, 2007, p. 140).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We will summarize the theoretical concepts upon which our analysis of the material surveyed during various investigations is based.

The concept of family

We understand *family* as a *complex binding structure,* articulated with the kinship system, open to exchanges with its surrounding and crossed by myths, beliefs and socially constructed meanings (Abelleira & Delucca, 2004; Aulagnier, 1977; Delucca et al., 2007; Castoriadis, 1975, 1997, Fernández, 1999; Robicheaux, 2007; Torrado, 2003). Its current heterogeneity leads us to talk about *families*.

We will make a conceptual differentiation between *family organization* and *family structure*, referring to the transformations and differences that appear together with the fundamental aspects that remain through time.

- *Family organization:* refers to how the family group is shaped and formed and to how efficiently the members function (single-parent families; new post-divorce constructions, same-sexed couples, to name some). This dimension is the family's most changing aspect, both from one culture to another and through historical times and through their own evolution.

- *Family structure and the kinship system*: this tends to be more permanent in time, though it is not necessarily unchanging. Therefore, *long-term changing aspects* may be assessed. This has to do with changes *in* structure. Going from one family structure to another can only be assessed *a posteriori*, when the characteristic modalities have stabilized. One example of this has been the move from the pre-modern family to the modern family, as conceptualized by M. Foucault (quoted by Moreno, 2002).

What is more, the kinship system is currently altered by second and third marriages. New bonds exist which cannot be named and within which the scope and operation of incest prohibition is still uncertain.

Aspects which are invariant or which remain more stable. As regards up-bringing, we believe the following are *functional invariants* of the family structure: the adult/child *asymmetry* necessary at early times, in order for someone to be in charge of *protective care*. This care will be framed within what the culture they belong to establishes as *symbolic regulation*.

We also make reference to the necessary conditions and legalities which differentiate the family from other groups: retaining some names for kinship positions; persisting in regulating sexuation by defining what is allowed and what is prohibited in connection

with family ties. We believe that the existence of this regulation responds to the widespread cultural need to *establish rules*, to *regulate its bonds and interpersonal relationships* in order to make life in society inhabitable and to build shared senses (Delucca, González Oddera & Martínez, in press).

The concepts of "Poverty" and "Social exclusion"

Minujin and Kessler (1995) locate variations in terms of how "poverty" is understood. Up until the 19th Century, everyone unable to work was considered poor. As from industrial times, "poverty" started to be thought about not only in connection to job market inclusion exclusively, but also in terms of the material life conditions that certain groups displayed. It thus became necessary to define "basic needs" as the minimum subsistence levels, which would be determined by the specific historical moment.

Characterizing the various definitions of "poverty" is beyond the scope of our article, since they are plentiful and heterogeneous. However, we are interested in alluding to the concept of "social exclusion", which introduces an especially relevant dimension for the study we are carrying out.

This concept became popular and widely used during the 1970s. It originated in France, as a category to name those groups lacking the social protection guaranteed by the State, and it included a wide range of people: from the disabled to single-parent families. The concept was recovered in the 1980s to name a wide range of privations derived from the emerging social problems of an economic re-structuring and well-being State crisis context. The notion of "social exclusion" started being used, then, to refer not only to long-term, recurrent unemployment issues but also to the growing instability of social bonds (Castel, 1995; Fitoussi & Rosanvallon, 1997). This concept allowed to "look at

poverty from a perspective which focused on the accumulation of disadvantages and their effect on *the break-up of social bonds*" (Saraví, 2004, p.169).

In this sense, we believe that exclusion has a decisively relational origin, in which certain individuals are "kept outside" certain social relations. Such relations allow for the development of complex social capacities and achievements, like living within a community without stigmatization or shame (Sen, 1988).

We would like to recover those local conceptualizations which define social exclusion in terms of the difficulty or impossibility to gain access to our basic rights (health, education, work, housing) as well as to consumer goods. The existence of this social condition questions "the extension and consolidation of democracy" (Minujin & Lopez, 1994, p. 89).

All in all, the changes introduced in our country by the so-called Neo-liberal policies came with changes on the social and subjective levels: an increase of individualistic and personal achievement ideals; social fragmentation due to the breaking up of support and organization networks. Social exclusion processes have had their roots within an economic polarization scheme which widened the gap between larger and smaller incomes, thus leaving a growing part of the population outside the productive and consuming circuit. Wealth condensation in just a few hands became more dramatic in Latin America than in any other part of the world (Minujin & López, 1994).

The concept of social imaginary meanings

What we understand by *social imaginary meanings* is the collective constructions which –by means of discourses and institutions– are carriers of norms, values, models, tools and methods to face and do things, at a certain historical moment. They make up a framework that provides coherence, orientation, direction and sense to a society's life as

well as to the lives of the individuals who build that society (Baczko, 1999; Castoriadis, 1993, 1997; Lewkowicz, 2001, 2004; Touraine, 2006).

The collection of social imaginary meanings work as sense organizers of each socio-historical time, establishing what is allowed and what is forbidden, what is valued and what is devalued, what is good and what is evil, what is beautiful and what is ugly, and so on. They also mark the attributes limiting what is established by the dominant discourses as legitimate or illegitimate, aiming at the acceptance of what is commonly agreed upon and at the rejection of dissent. They are therefore set up within a reality interpretation and value system, causing adherences (or not) and becoming part of the subjects. They are of fundamental importance in the process of subjectivity construction. Each family, each subject, internalizes these meanings imposed by society as *representations*, and registers them as they are transformed by their own singularities.

Notwithstanding, these collectively built meanings about who they are and what they want to be as a society, are affected by social fragmentation processes, causing the corresponding dilution of social imaginaries. Such meaning disintegration opens up the heterogeneity, the loss of single hegemonic models and the wider tolerance to diversity. However, within the social fragmentation processes framework we have referred to, it causes loss of support and of symbolic referents which fail to be replaced by new collective constructions (Berentein, 2001, 2007; Burín & Meler, 2006; Delucca; Gonzalez Oddera & Martínez, in press).

The concept of Patriarchy

One of the key meanings which has traditionally structured family organizations is that granted by patriarchy. The classic definition of patriarchy, understood since the 17th

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Century as «the father's right» and captured by the Napoleonic Code, "especially established the principle by which the family was subdued to the authority of the father, [which entails] female degradation in society and unrestricted private property. The family legal regime became the father's property and the private property regime became acknowledged as the structuring principle of all societies" (Palerm, quoted by Albertí & Méndez, 1993, p. 11). This is to say that, patriarchy proposes a model whose ideals are male preeminence and authority, thus expecting women and children subordination. It has also contributed with the so-called "sexual division of labor", which organizes public and private circulation in terms of gender (Roudinesco, 2002).

METHODOLOGIES

The **methodologies** implemented in the various research instances respond to an especially qualitative approach, aiming at a description, explicitation, categorization and interpretation of the information collected. We focus on our interest in *the investigation of diversity*, together with references to what is repeated and what appears to be frequent.

The methodological design aims at showing what is *singular* about the population we are working with, which requires a careful attitude when establishing universals as conclusions are drawn. This design optimizes and pluralizes the possibilities to collect information, similar to a "bricolage" (Jones, Manzelli & Pecheny, 2004).

Emphasis lies on the interpretation the very actors make of the reality they live in and on their practices (Kornblit, 2004), articulated with the researcher's own interpretation.

The chosen qualitative approach focused on diversity as an epistemological and ethical stand, entails the starting-up of a double effect and articulation process. Even though before implementing the research we possess reference theoretical concepts, the

knowledge obtained is taken as "on site production" between families and interviewers. This is to point out that, after intervention in the field, there are transformations in both social actors and researchers' previous ideas.

Instruments

During our *research on Parenting* carried out in middle sectors (from which two investigations in settlements from Ensenada and a neighborhood office in Villa Elvira derive), the following were mostly performed: a) in-depth interviews with parents; and b) binding interviews with parenting couples (Delucca; Petriz; Longás; Vidal; González Oddera; Rodriguez Durán; Martínez & Romé (2008/2009)); whereas *during popular sectors' research* (in Ensenada and Villa Elvira), these instruments were used: a) in-depth instruments (mainly with mothers), based on the structure created for the investigation in middle sectors; and b) supplementary techniques: observation and record of three situations: 1) verbal and attitudinal interactions between parents and children; 2) spontaneous accounts by parents and children about their families and up-bringing, and 3) children's individual and group graphic productions (following instructions connected with "family").

Procedure synthesis

A- *Data collection during research in popular sectors by means of:*

- In-depth interviews to 12 mothers and 3 fathers.

- Observations of parent-children interactions: once a week during 2008 (Ensenada) and 2009 (Villa Elvira).

B- *Data treatment:*

1) The information surveyed during in-depth interviews and family's everyday life observation was analyzed and compared.

2) The information obtained in the different contexts (Ensenada y Villa Elvira) was cross-checked and compared in order to extract similarities and differences between the ways families function in them.

3) The analysis aimed at inferring how the predominant parenting forms worked, for instance: the models which support them.

4) The data analyzed were compared with the results obtained during research in middle-class sectors.

The various topics contributed by the parents were extracted and grouped during the *category construction* processes, in order to categorize and classify the answers, as we tried to describe how families worked and to understand the predominant models and representations about "family" and the exercise of motherhood and parenting.

We tried to stress what was recurrent as well as the diverse strategies that each of the families created in order to deal with the children's up-bringing.

C. *Data analysis and interpretation:*

The analysis of the information collected aims at describing and showing:

1- Which predominant family model can be inferred from what the parents state, as regards:

    1.1. the representations about what they have hoped – and still hope - to become (ideals)

    1.2. the descriptions of their actual functioning;

2. Which imaginary/symbolic meanings about being a parent can be inferred; and

3. Which forms of exercising parenting appear as predominant.

We also point out the recurrences and coincidences in the topics considered relevant by the families, as well as the differences in functioning.

RESULTS

First of all, we will introduce the results of the research carried out in a settlement in Ensenada and continued in offices in Villa Elvira, which make up the group of families living in poverty.

Secondly, we will compare these findings with the data surveyed among middle class groups, and we will introduce our general conclusions, the details of which can be read about in a previous publication.[7]

Thirdly, we will provide a description and reflection about the transference task carried out with poor families, during the professional practices performed by advanced students and newly graduated psychologists.

1) Family organizations in poor sectors: in connection with *functioning modalities*, we can mention the very *diverse forms of organization* to bring up children, far from the traditional nuclear model. They cannot always get "legitimately" organized, at which point expectations and guilt appear because they do not comply with the hegemonic models. In other cases, diversity is sustained more efficiently, enabling the exercise of upbringing functions within the forms of family organization which allow for the children's protection and care.

Among these alternative forms of family organization, the *presence of various homes* to bring up children stands out. This displays the *singularity of intergenerational relationships* within the families being studied. This is a very interesting phenomenon which has come to the foreground during the interviews and which seems to happen

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[7] Delucca; Petriz; Longás; Vidal; González Oddera; Rodriguez Durán; Martínez and Romé (2008/2009).

exclusively in lower-income areas. In these cases, children may live in their grandparents' houses permanently, or – more frequently still – they may live with their grandparents for some time and then, for some other time, at their parents' house. They may also be looked after by people with whom they have no blood relationship (such as a Godfather or friend), though less frequently.

There might be various reasons for this home diversification: on the one hand, the greater bond with the prior generation, with whom the need for differentiation is unnecessary. Like María says, *"...my children live with my mom because they are comfortable there, at my mother's house. And I let them go there because I know that my mom, like I said, how she taught me, my other sister is there... though they are not hers, I see them, in general... I leave them at my mother's because they're fine there, they are never allowed to do things that shouldn't be allowed; they're inside...I feel at ease when they are at my mom's...it's as if I was looking after them"*.

The upbringing practices of their family of origin are taken as models to imitate and follow, and no criticism or evident aspects that need change ever appear. In this sense, there seems to be no clear differentiation between parents and grandparents' functions in terms of kinship positions, the latter group very often exercising the parental role that would traditionally be allotted to the former. In such families as the one from the quotation, this is accepted without questioning. In other families, such superposition causes conflicts. Paula comments that she feels pushed around by her own mother and explains that, when she was very young and had her first children, *"I gave my kids to my mom; she had them. She meddled a lot…I couldn't keep them then"*.

Another reason provided for home diversification is the shortage of economic resources at their disposal for bringing up their children. Sharing this task with the grandparents or with other important people in their lives makes this less expensive and favors their

children's "well-being". Some other times, the other important people play a supporting role and deal with the children's up-bringing when parents can't fulfill or when they don't feel up to the task.

What the children actually consider their family does not become clear in their productions. In one of the cases studied, the family drawn by the girl is the biological family with whom she does not live. She does not include her grandparents, who are in charge of her daily up-bringing. In other cases, the role of the members of the family are not specified (in cases in which the relationships have a name in the kinship system). Talking about her own drawing, one girl explains: "*this is a boy, a girl, another boy…*". When asked who these boys and girls were, she adds: *"my little brother, my little sister, my other little brother…"*. For many children, family is not a reference, supporting or enjoyable spot. Adults are not always references when the need to solve conflicts arises, nor when they need someone to share pleasant times with.

As regards predominant *significances*, what can be inferred in the family groups researched is the *persistence of a patriarchal model.* Therefore, gender asymmetry seems to be the dominant pattern, in which women are subjected to men's authority, to the task of bringing up the children and to the reproduction of the domestic order (to the detriment of their circulation around the public space). In the words of one of the mothers interviewed, "*women at home, men at work*".

As regards women's job placements, far from being an instance that may favor them with a space for personal growth, women's working outside the house would make men dependant or subordinate, which would be a cause of disapproval in the community they belong to. Women display a certain acceptance of these statements, and do not seem to have much chance to consolidate what appears to be an incipient desire to achieve autonomy. Small children's up-bringing, in turn, is presented as a real difficulty

in the evaluation of how convenient it might be for women to get a job. Work options normally include jobs requiring long hours, thus "*leaving* [the children] *alone all the time*", as they lack the resources abundant for other social groups to look after the children when mothers are not around (day-care, nannies, etc.).

According to women's discourses, men make all the decisions connected to women's circulation in spheres other than the domestic: "*I don't work because he doesn't want me to*", "*I stopped working because he didn't like it*". Such inferable asymmetry in couples' organization seems to corroborate the continuance of the patriarchal model.

The gender models observed in adults is verified in children's behavior: older sisters attend activities with a number of younger siblings, without adult supervision, and remain in charge of their younger siblings' care. Older boys work (mainly, "with the cart").

Notwithstanding, the prevalence of the patriarchal model has its contradictions. In women's discourses, at different times of their lives, they find themselves: 1) in situations where the traditional separation of tasks is altered, and thus women go out to work and men deal with the domestic sphere; 2) with different aspirations and ideals according to whether they live with a partners or not. During an interview to a separated mother with a small daughter, we noticed a desire for autonomy and self-sufficiency. But, when asked to picture herself in a couple again, she explained she expected the man to provide protection as well as to provide for the family, just like in the patriarchal model.

That is to say, even though life is dominated by the repetition of traditional models, there are also gaps and ruptures which would make it possible for a modification in how to relate inside the family, though not steadily.

2) <u>Family organization in middle-class sectors</u>. The exercise of parenting is focused around the organization of the nuclear family. Complex parenting responses are dominant here, in a combined functioning system: sometimes mothers' predominance with over-exertion to comply with all the areas of interest and "collaboration" of the father as well as everyday and other tasks; active – and committed – father's participation, toward a symmetrical functioning. These forms of operation include novel couple constructions, in connection with passed-down up-bringing models. In this sense, even though there is a marked grandparents' participation, in most cases parenting functions remain differentiated.

As regards predominant significances, what is observed is that the patriarchal model is losing its hegemonic position. The ideal aspired to is one in which the up-bringing is shared by the couple, though this is not achieved in their everyday lives. In these organizations, the members hope for a greater relationship democratization within the family, as well as for respect and protection of their personal projects, apart from those project which may arise within the couple.

This means that both new strategies and new significations of what being a father and being a mother mean, coexist with traditional parenting models. Such models and ideals are difficult to subjectively harmonize and appropriate.

3) <u>Transference work</u>: the research carried out with families living in social exclusion contexts and the systematization of the information surveyed, is providing some directions for psychological interventions with similar groups in the inter-disciplinary work carried out within the University Extension Program.

In this respect, the inter-disciplinary experience of neighborhood attention has been established as a transference activity on two different levels:

- the intervention level for family issues, in which each case is attended to, and workshops with parents and families from the community are organized (coordinated by assistant psychologists); and

- the training level, for advanced students and recently graduated psychologists, through professional practices supervised by the Coordination Area.

First of all, the work carried out with family members dialectically provides new knowledge and questions, and opens a novel space that enables thinking and reflection upon various aspects of the situation they are going through. Possible changes and solutions can be visualized, involving the subjective and connecting level, with possible repercussions in the community.

Secondly, we believe that the practices at the Free Legal Consultation Offices provide valuable experience for the transition between being students and becoming professionals. They are not just learning opportunities but they also give support and stability, enabling the co-construction of the professional role. Within the framework of this process, the joint transmission and elaboration of a way to approach the diversity inherent to complex issues, like family configurations in social exclusion contexts, are especially important. These issues necessarily call for thoughts, since they require definitions and epistemological, methodological and ethical positioning as regards the definition of who we work with, what for and from which suppositions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. We would like to point out that, according to the data surveyed, the family groups from the urban settlement in Ensenada and the families who turn to the office in Villa Elvira for help, share key similarities as regards how they get organized and how they operate, as well as in terms of the predominant significances which provide them with a

foundation. The differences, according to the descriptions, can be observed more clearly with urban families from middle-class sectors.

Although in both contexts there are different coexistent functioning models, the construction of new significances and strategies becomes more evident in the middle sectors. People from poorer contexts remain more closely connected with the models received from previous generations. It is likely that men and women living in social exclusion situations cling to traditional paradigms and significances, due to the difficulty to form collective significance creators and models with instituting potentiality.

2. As regards transference activities, what is stated is the interest in articulating the so-called pillars of the activities carried out at university (teaching, research and extension). These tasks feed each other, providing problems, interests, projects and strategies, and – simultaneously – enriching the education of future professionals through the close contact with the historical times we have been born in.