
Intergenerational Transmission of Secure Attachment: Evidences from Two Cases¹

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to investigate mother's experiences with her caregivers and the secure attachment of her child. Two mother-child dyads participated (mother: 38 years old; son: 2 years old and 2 months; mother: 34 years old; son: 2 years old and 2 months), in which the child presented secure attachment behaviors, evaluated by the Attachment Q-sort. The mothers' experiences with their caregivers were investigated by a scale that evaluated the perceptions of their dyadic, and their attachment representations, the current relationship was investigated through an interview. The results show consistency in mothers' experiences with their caregivers characterized by affective, sensitive care and autonomy encouragement and their child's secure attachment behaviors, as well as a good mother-child relationship. These results support the literature that highlights the intergenerational patterns of attachment, since the maternal experiences with their caregivers relate themselves to the child's secure attachment.

Keywords: Attachment; representation; psychic transmission among generations.

Transmissão Intergeracional do Apego Seguro: Evidências a Partir de Dois Casos

Resumo. O objetivo do estudo foi investigar as experiências da mãe com seus cuidadores e o apego seguro do filho. Participaram duas díades mãe-filho (mãe: 38a; filho: 2a 2m; mãe: 34a; filho: 2a 2m), em que a criança apresentava comportamentos de apego seguro, avaliados pelo *Attachment Q-sort*. As experiências das mães com seus cuidadores foram investigadas por uma escala que avaliou as percepções sobre seus pais, e por meio da avaliação das representações de apego; enquanto a relação atual das díades foi investigada por meio de uma entrevista. Os resultados revelam consistências entre as experiências das mães com os seus cuidadores caracterizadas por um cuidado afetivo, sensível e incentivador da autonomia e os comportamentos de apego seguro do seu filho, bem como uma boa relação atual mãe-filho. Estes resultados apoiam a literatura que destaca a intergeracionalidade dos padrões de apego, visto que as experiências maternas com seus cuidadores relacionam-se com o apego seguro do filho.

Palavras-chave: Apego; representação; transmissão psíquica entre gerações.

Transmisión Intergeracional del Apego Seguro: Evidencias a Partir de Dos Casos

Resumen. El objetivo del estudio fue investigar las experiencias de las madres con sus cuidadores y el apego seguro del niño. Participaron dos díadas madre-hijo (madre: 38a, hijo: 2a 2m; madre: 34a, hijo: 2a 2m), cuyos niños presentaban comportamientos de apego seguro, evaluados por el *Attachment Q-sort*. Fueron investigadas las experiencias de las

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madres con sus cuidadores por una escala que evaluó las percepciones sobre sus padres, y a través de la evaluación de las representaciones de apego; ya la proporción actual de las diadas fue investigada a través de una entrevista. Los resultados muestran las coherencias entre las experiencias de las madres con sus cuidadores caracterizadas por una atención afectiva, sensible y de apoyo de la autonomía y las conductas de apego seguro de su hijo, así como la buena relación actual madre-hijo. Estos resultados apoyan la literatura que pone de relieve la intergeneracionalidad de los patrones de apego, ya que las experiencias maternas con sus cuidadores se relacionan con el apego seguro del hijo.

Palabras clave: Apego; representación; transmisión psíquica entre las generaciones.

The mother's feelings and behaviors towards her child are profoundly influenced by her personal experiences, especially those experienced with her own parents (Bowlby, 1988/1989). In this sense, the mother's sensitivity on the demands of her child tends to be associated with her history of affective bonds with her caregivers what helps the child to have a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969/1990). The Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969/1990) describes attachment as an emotional bond formed by the child's emotional and cognitive development and by the consistency of the parental care. The child would present a sense of security that would be linked to one or more attachment figures (Bowlby, 1969/1990). Following Bowlby's contributions, Ainsworth (1989) developed a laboratory procedure known as Strange Situation, which allowed the baby's attachment classification in relation to the care figures into three types: secure attachment, avoidant insecure attachment and ambivalent insecure attachment and, later a fourth type, classified by Main (1991) as disorganized attachment.

Besides the caregiver - child relationships resulting in different patterns of attachment, Bowlby (1969/1990) also suggested that these relationships are related to the development of an internal psychological organization, in other words, representational models of the self and of the attachment figure, named internal working models. At the end of the first year of life and during the second and the third, with language acquisition, the child is able to build internal working models. In other words, she represents what expects from the physical world, the way the mother and significant others will behave, as well as what she expects from herself and from the interactions. Therefore, life experiences with the caregivers would have been considered transcendental impacts to the individual development, in order to establish an internalized pattern of functioning and of interaction with the world (Fonagy, 1999; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997; Huang, Lewin, Mitchell, & Zhang, 2012).

Given the importance of the concept of internal working model in further development, Waters and his colleagues (Waters, Rodrigues, & Ridgeway, 1998; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001) criticized some aspects of this concept, as the fact that it can be replaced by the concept of mental representations. For them there are various forms of mental representations, with their own operational characteristics and with different implications for development. On view of the inconsistencies, these theorists have suggested the term attachment mental representations, which is associated with a specific cognitive architecture, in which the attachment, or secure base phenomenon is represented in the memory as a script, that is, a construction that is related to the affective network of the semantic memory, which saves beliefs on aspects of the family life. The scripts are cognitive and dynamic structures co-constructed during childhood with the primary attachment figures. These are created in the repetition of similar experiences and mobilized when a particular experience comes close to that existing representational attachment.

Therefore, Attachment theorists postulate the hypothesis of a link between the individual's experience with their attachment figures and their ability to form emotional bonds later, i.e., the pattern of attachment tends to have stability throughout development (Bowlby, 1989; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001; Broussard & Cassidy, 2010). Despite this tendency to stability of the attachment patterns, it is noted that Bowlby (1969/1990) and Ainsworth (1989) did not totally refuse the possibility of these patterns changing, so that the representations of attachment may be vulnerable to difficult life situations. Later, theorists tended to consider the existence of certain stability of the attachment pattern throughout development, mainly represented by the current concept of attachment mental representation. However, this pattern would tend to be modified by positive or negative events, or by reelaborations of these experiences.

Besides this hypothesis of attachment patterns stability, researchers have been investigating the association between the attachment patterns of caregivers and that of their children, and they have suggested an interrelation between the parents' attachment representations, parental behaviors and children's attachment patterns, suggesting an intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns (Muzzio, Muñoz & Santelices, 2008; Dollberg, Feldman, & Keren, 2010). Van Ijzendoorn's meta-analysis (1995) highlighted strong associations between parental attachment representations and the sense of the children's security. To that end, the study by Wong et al. (2011), conducted with 121 mothers and their preschool children, also investigated how mother-child relationship influenced the development of this baby's attachment. The results showed that children's secure-base behavior and the quality of the mothers' attachment representations appeared significantly associated.

Van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (1997) report that some relationships can be highlighted in this transmission: the past attachment experiences can be resignified by the current attachment mental representation, influencing the parental behaviors and the construction of new attachment relationships; the current attachment representation is formed based on early attachment experiences, and also by the current secure base that a good friend, spouse or therapist can provide in order to resignify adverse childhood experiences; moreover, the parental behavior would be influenced by the social context, as the social support network can moderate the effects of unfavorable circumstances; and that some children may make it harder for parents to be sensitive due to severe physical disabilities or highly irritable temperament.

Thus, the patterns of attachment comprise different individual parental and children's variables, as well as relational and contextual variables, which may influence the child's relationship with each parent. Considering the above, the present study aimed to qualitatively investigate the mother's experiences with her caregivers and the current mother-child relationship in two dyads with secure attachment. Based on the literature that highlights the stability of the attachment pattern throughout development (Bolwby, 1989; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001) it is expected that the child's secure attachment is associated with the mother's experiences with her caregivers.

Method

Participants

The study included two mother-child dyads whose babies had secure attachment behaviors, as assessed by the Attachment Q-sort (Waters, 1987) when they were 24 months old. In Case 1, Roberta, the mother was 37 years old and his son, Rafael, 2 years and 2 months; while in Case 2, Carla, the mother was 44 years old and his son Carlos, 2 years and 2 months. The names used in this study are fictitious in order to protect the identity of the participants. The children presented secure attachment behaviors with scores 0.639 and 0.524, respectively, placing them among the children with more secure attachment of the 63 evaluated, which made up the largest study entitled "Day care's impact on the socio-emotional and cognitive development in children: A longitudinal study from the sixth month of a baby's life to the end of the preschool years – CRESCI" (Piccinini et al., 2012). The dyads were living with the child's father in Porto Alegre and they were of an average socioeconomic status. All participants signed the Written Informed Consent, and the CRESCI project was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of UFRGS (Opinion n° 2010070 on 06/12/2010) and of the Porto Alegre Clinical Hospital (Opinion n° 100553).

Design, procedure and instruments

A collective-case study was carried out (Stake, 1994), in order to qualitatively investigate the mother's experiences with her caregivers and the current mother-child relationship in two dyads with

secure attachment. The families were contacted via telephone and/or email. For those who agreed to participate, two individual meetings with the mother were scheduled; each meeting lasted about an hour and thirty minutes, at the university or other place of her choice. The following instruments were used: (1) Family sociodemographic data sheet (NUDIF / GREW, 2011): used to obtain information of the housing setting, employment status, family income, and other family data. (2) Attachment Q-Sort/AQS (Waters, 1987): used in order to evaluate the child's attachment behaviors. It consists of 90 items that characterize the children's behaviors and are distributed by the mother in cells ranging from 9 (totally similar) to 1 (totally different). The correlation between the results scored and the secure child prototype (value criteria established by experts in the field) allows to obtain a profile of the child in a continuum that can range between -1 and +1 (perfect positive or negative correlation with the ideal secure child) as detailed by Waters (1987). For this study we used the version translated by Barbisan (1993). (3) Parental Bonding Instrument - PBI (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979): evaluates the perceptions of the respondents about the care received from their parents by 25 items answered on a Likert scale involving two axes, the affection (affection, warm, availability, care, sensitivity versus coldness and rejection), and the parental overprotection (control, intrusion versus autonomy encouragement). The instrument classifies the parents in one of the four categories: ideal care; affective control; without affection control; and negligent care. The PBI has been adapted to Portuguese by Hauck et al. (2006). (4) Attachment Script Assessment (Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001): evaluates whether the person has or not a script, or attachment representations of secure base. Five sheets of paper are used for application, each containing a title and a list of words arranged in three columns. The person is asked to draw up a narrative. Two of the stories are adult-child ("Morning Baby" and "Doctor's office"), other two stories are adult-adult ("Joan and Peter's Camp" and "Susan Accident") and a fifth, considered neutral as it does not enter into the analysis ("The morning of shopping"). The four narratives are later analyzed in terms of coherence, knowledge and access to the secure base script. Each narrative is given a score from 1 (no content script of apparent secure base) to 7 (script with content of secure base with substantial development) and the final score is the average of the four stories. For the present study the codification of the narratives was conducted by the first author and by two other graduate students trained in the theory and practice by an expert in the use of this instrument. The version used in this study was translated into Portuguese by Semensato (2009). The reliability among the stories coders was: "Morning Baby" (95.2%) "Doctor's Office" (93.7%); "Joan and Peter's Camp" (88.9%) and "Susan Accident" (85.7%). (5) Interview about the mother-child relationship (NUDIF / UFRGS, 2012): it is a structured interview, conducted in a semi-directed way, in order to investigate the mother-child relationship. It was based on the affection and overprotection axes of the Parental Bonding Instrument- PBI (Parker et al., 1979). The answers were analyzed through qualitative content analysis (Laville & Dionne, 1999), based on two axes of PBI, affection and overprotection and on the own data, which allowed to identify current indicators of the mother-child relationship.

Results

The results will be presented separately for each case with emphasis on the following topics: 1) Case presentation, it addresses sociodemographic characteristics, family background and mother's perception regarding her caregivers, rated by the Parental Bonding Instrument; 2) Mother's attachment representations, in which the Attachment Script Assessment findings are described; 3) Mother-child relationship, in which the relational aspects of the dyad reported by the mother on the Interview about the mother-child relationship are highlighted; 4) Case discussion, a dynamic understanding of the case, listing all the available information presented.

Case 1: Roberta and Rafael

Case presentation

Roberta was a 37 year-old woman, who has been married to Renato (42 years old) for four years and was the mother of her first son, Rafael, (2 years and 2 months). Roberta came from a broken marriage; her ex-husband's emotional unavailability was among the reasons for their separation. Renato, her current husband, was also separated and father of three children, under his custody. At the time she was interviewed, Roberta was living with her current husband and her three stepchildren, two teenagers and a child, with whom, according to her, she had a very good relationship.

Roberta was very happy about the choice of her husband and her child's father, since Renato was very kind, sensitive, with a very developed paternal side, she was also happy with her choice because was very different from her mother's. According to Roberta's report, her father was present in her life until she was two years old when he separated from his mother and since that time the contact was only through a pension. She considered her father a very emotionally disturbed person, and for her he was an abandonment model. To deal with this situation, Roberta stressed that she held 10 years of therapy. In relation to her mother, Roberta had great admiration, as she provided an ideal care according to the Parental Bonding Instrument, whereas her mother was very affective in the early years and she also had a controlled overprotection, in other words, she could enable Roberta's autonomy development.

Roberta had six months of maternity leave to care for her last son, Rafael, and, after this, she returned to work, with a workload of eight hours. The return to work, in the first months, led her to choose a nanny, whom she described as a very affectionate woman. When Rafael was one year old, they decided to get him to a nursery school in the afternoon, in which he had a teacher who was described as a very affective person.

Roberta's answers to the evaluation of Rafael's attachment behaviors, through the Attachment Q-sort instrument (Waters 1987,) revealed high secure attachment behavior scores (0.639) indicating that his mother tends to be a secure base, that is, she is both a source of comfort and affection for his emotional needs and sensitive to the child's exploration requirements, what enables him to feel confidence to go in search of the unknown as well as to return to his mother for his anxieties and his desires.

Mother's attachment representations

With regard to the attachment representation, which was assessed by the Attachment Script Assessment (Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001), Roberta presented organized narratives indicating attachment representations with secure base both in relation to adult/child stories and the adult/adult stories. Roberta's narratives revealed the presence of secure base on the relationships among the characters, who helped her to select and to implement strategies to normalize the situation and to diffuse the anxiety created in the narrative, as well as facilitated the transition to other activities. The character who acts as secure base helped to focus on more positive aspects, in order to spread negative emotions, usually highlighting the positive side of the situation. Interpersonal focus, sensitivity or perceptions of the involved characters' emotional state were very present. The narrative content showed interaction, cooperation and emotional reciprocity among the characters, in which the expressed emotion of a character causes an emotional response in the other. Thus, the analysis showed secure base contents, indicating the presence of secure attachment representations.

Current mother-child relationship

Based on the high scores of the attachment behaviors assessed by the Attachment Q-sort and on the Interview about the mother-child relationship one might think that Roberta provided a secure base for Rafael, that is, she is a source of comfort for his emotional needs. During the interview, Roberta

described herself as a loving, sensitive and available mother before her son's needs. For example, when it is bedtime, she states:

I feel happy to know that he's assisted in what he needs. As her as to sleep is concerned he is very peaceful, he says he doesn't want to sleep, and I say to him to let get the pijama's and change his diaper and I am very happy when he gives me a kiss and say to me goodnight mother and I can infer from this that he is happy because I understood that he really wanted to sleep.

Roberta mentioned that she would like to be less angry at times: *"I think I wish I could relativize things more, I sometimes feel very angry, internally, but I cannot work that out, but I sometimes think that I'm a little impatient."* These feelings and thought awareness clearly enabled Roberta to question herself and to think about them, in order to have a more consistent behavior and a healthier relationship. In addition, this awareness was also present on the expectations that she had about Rafael, which helped her to manage these desires: *"I hope he has a behavior of an older child than he is, I can control this, but I know that I expect he would be was waiting for me with his backpack when he have to leave."*

Another time Roberta's sensitivity was present in the relationship with her child is when he was tired:

He comes home from school tired, he didn't sleep, he woke up early in the morning, he is in a bad smell's more regressive, and then I cannot understand. Then I say, 'No son, just a moment, mum can understand, speak straight, do you want milk, do you want water, what do you want?' "No, mother!" And then he drops to the floor, it's harder.

As far as her availability is concerned she seemed to be a mother with a lot of emotional availability. This availability, as well as her sensitivity, was clearly present when facing her child's fears:

Now he's in a phase of fears 'Ahhn, listen to the noise, it is the lion which is coming' and I say 'Oh, son, it is the lion!' So I spend hours in that role. When he says, "I'm afraid to go to my room, mum, please go with me", then I go with him.

Regarding the way she talks to her child, Roberta mentioned that she was sweet and explanatory: *"If I get angry with him, I say: 'your mother was very upset because you did that'. I have a too explanatory way, according to Ricardo."* The fact that Roberta provides explanations to her child seems to enable him to understand what was happening in their relationship, especially regarding the recognition of their feelings. But, when her son demanded determination, Roberta was also firm with him, such as when Rafael was stubborn: *"It is more difficult when he's stubborn or when he yells. I stop, I hold him firmly and I look at him and say, 'Son, your mom is talking to you, look at me', I sometimes have to stop him."* In these moments Roberta was able to handle the situation as to calm her child and to impose a healthy limit.

Roberta used for her child's discipline his fighting moments with her goddaughter, especially in order to help him to develop feelings of empathy and respect for others and for identifying his feelings towards the situations that he was not nice. In relation to the control exercised toward her child and the encouragement to his autonomy, Roberta felt that she had *"Improved a thousand times"* since he was born. Roberta realized that the biggest encouragement to autonomy was seen in play time: *"Sometimes I go very happy with him to the park and he doesn't want to play with the swing, and he says, 'No want, Mom'."*

Despite this awareness, as it was healthy for her child to have autonomy and to grow, Roberta said that she missed the time he was a baby, but she also identified how much she liked his new communication skills: *"I had more control of the things. But those communication skills that he has, of being able to tell me what he dined, what he wants to drink. And this whole thing related to this interaction. Well, I think it's wonderful."*

Case 1 Discussion

The above reports revealed that Roberta's attachment history with her own parents was, possibly, filled with resignifications. First, the absence of her father who, according to Roberta, left an abandonment mark. According to the literature, an absence mark tends to leave self negative records, as possible low self-esteem, devaluation, and feeling of not deserving affection (Bowlby, 1989/1988). As a negative view of her caregiver, who is not sensitive, not available for her emotional needs (Ainsworth, 1989). However, despite this possible emotional mark, it was realized that Roberta's mother was a positive attachment figure, helping her to feel loved, and to develop a sense of availability of the other to deal with her anxieties and a stimulus to face her fears.

As seen, Roberta's attachment mental representations of her caregivers showed secure base contents and this result can be understood through the relationship with her mother. This is supported by the literature that highlights that people who have healthy emotional experiences in the early years tend to develop attachment representations with secure base (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Dollberg, Feldman, & Keren, 2010; Broussard & Cassidy, 2010). It is also possible to think about an appropriate redefinition of her father's abandonment mark, through the personal psychotherapy that she had taken for 10 years. According to the literature, strong links to therapists are characterized as a resignification factor of attachment mental representations against negative emotional experiences of important attachment (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2010; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997). Resignifications also appear to have occurred in her most recent romantic relationship. Roberta had an experience with her first husband, who, according to what she reported, was not a good partner and would not be a good father. However, Roberta's new partner is clearly described as playing a secure base role in her life (Selterman, Apetroaia, & Waters, 2012).

These experiences, possibly filled with resignifications, may have affected the way Roberta relates to her child. The presence of secure base representations related to the emotional availability, to the emotional exchanges, to the sensitivity to the signs of the other, to the ability of giving comfort and protection, as well as the availability to provide explanations and to encourage autonomy, to exploration, and to be able to solve a crisis when facing it (Wong et al., 2011). It is verified both by the results of the Attachment Q-sort and by Roberta's reports during the interview, as she was sensitive to her child's signals, respected him as a person with his own wishes and desires, enabling her to encourage him in his autonomy. It was also identified affection towards her child, and the emotional readiness to be with him in the easiest times, when she was more sweet and affectionate, and in the most difficult times, when it was necessary to impose limits with a firmer posture. Roberta's awareness, of her emotional and behavioral state, has a great influence in her relationship with her child, as she had avoided behaviors that would not facilitate healthy emotional development.

Another aspect of a relationship characterized by a secure base is when the child asks his mother when he is not good or when he needs help to deal with his fears (Ainsworth, 1989). We could see this situation with Rafael when he requested mother's presence at the time of going to sleep. Or even, when he showed to like his mother's presence in order to talk, to play, and when he expressed feelings of security and freedom to be himself, to name his desires and to explore what he wanted to know. So, these child's behaviors, give evidence that this dyad had a relationship that provided the development of a more secure attachment in the child.

As for Rafael's relationships with his caregivers, it is also stressed the support he received from his nanny who tried to contribute to his secure attachment. By the interview it is noticed that she seemed to be very emotional, sensitive, kind, available and close to him. According to the literature, the caregivers, especially those who spend more than ten hours a day with the child, tend to influence the child's attachment (Waters et al., 2000). In the same way, it is stated that the teacher was very affectionate with Rafael, who may also have contributed to the formation of a more secure attachment. One can also think that Rafael's subjectivity, which was also the result of his relations with his mother and father, had also stimulated in adults such a behavior that corresponded to his demands. So, it was observed that Roberta's resignification trajectory by the relationship with her father, especially in

presence of a loving mother, with therapy and the presence of an affectionate husband, enabled her to have a healthy relationship with her son.

Case 2: Carla and Carlos

Case Presentation

Carla was 34 years old, she has been married to César (44 years old) for four years and was the mother of her first son, Carlos (2 years and 2 months). The three lived together in an apartment. In this family, the initial months of Carlos were very difficult for Carla, as her son had many refluxes and vomited all the time. The maternal anxieties about her child's well-being, present in these first months, were shared throughout the pregnancy with the psychologist in psychotherapy sessions. Despite the relationship with her husband being characterized as very good, as he is very present, affectionate and available, she said that these early months have been difficult for the couple, since all eyes were directed to their child.

Carla said that she followed a mother model similar to her own mother, who was attentive, present, affectionate and containing. In relation to his father, Carla said that he was a great role model, because he always talked a lot and gave a lot of attention to her. Thus, with respect to the care received from her mother, this was considered control with affection, according to the Parental Bonding Instrument, that is, a care characterized by affection and overprotection; and the perception of care received from her father was of great care, that is, an affectionate care and with adequate protection.

Carla's answers to the assessment of Carlos attachment behaviors, through the instrument Attachment Q-sort (Waters 1987), revealed that she tends to be a secure base. Carla possibly was a source of comfort and affection across her child's emotional anxieties needs, while sensitive to her exploration needs.

Mother's attachment representations

With regard to the attachment representation, evaluated by the Attachment Script Assessment (Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001), Carla had scores that characterize organized narratives' around the attachment representations with secure base in relation to the caregivers and to the romantic relationships. The narratives analysis produced by Carla revealed that the character representing the secure base was aware of the other character's emotional state, who helped to implement strategies to normalize the elaborate crisis situation as well as to minimize the feelings of anxiety and sadness, and focused on more positive aspects, usually highlighting the positive side of the crisis. An interpersonal focus among the characters was also a narrative's characteristic, as a sensitivity to comfort and to protect the other's needs and an emotional reciprocity. Explanations on the crisis situation were also presented in order to minimize the present anguish in an anxiogenic time. Thus, the analysis showed secure base contents, indicating the presence of secure attachment representations.

Current mother-child relationship

Based on the results of the Attachment Q-sort (Waters 1987) and on the Interview about the mother-child relationship, it can be concluded that Carla related to Carlos in a way to provide a secure base for her child. Carla's own perceptions about herself facilitated her child's tendency to have a more secure attachment, as she was interactive, playful, caring and loving. Although Carla realizes that her

willingness to treat her child with encouragement and attention varied slightly when she was tired or when she realized that her son was angry, the way that they interacted did not change so much:

Some days I get more tired or there are days when he's harder. Then the bath is faster, for example. Then, there are days when I think that I'm don't feel like playing, and then he is watching DVD and I'm on his side.

Carla believed that even in these fatigue situations she could assist her son:

And about the emotional needs, there are days when I can see that he's demanding more attention, maybe I want to do something else and then I think "Why does he not play alone anymore?" I think it is related to his emotional needs, which is sometimes not easy to deal with, but there's no way that I cannot handle these needs, then I realize that I got them due to his answers.

As for her availability of time, Carla thought it was enough: *"I sometimes do too many things. I think that the fact I'm an autonomous professional helps."* In relation to the emotional availability, Carla thinks she is available:

I realize that I am available, but there are other things that keep my attention. It may be that I am often physically present but emotionally I'm concerned about a customer, or something with my husband, it is not the world of wonders, for sure.

Carla realized that she protected her child very much, especially in situations that might be worth Carlos living and coping with the emotion he felt:

For example, he's watching a DVD and I think there's a part that he made a face I know he is scared. And I say "No son, no need to be scared", and he cries. And César says "No, you made him cry, do not talk, it's not necessary", and my husband is right.

The fact that Carla questions herself and accepts her husband's look seems to contribute to the healthier emotional development of her child.

The mother-child relationship was also based on a lot of talk: *"Ah, I usually talk a lot, to arrange things, to ask things, if he liked such a thing, to comment when he did something nice, like when he stores things then I praise him, I give him a kiss."* At the moments that he was playing and he became sadder or angrier, Carla tended to provide several explanations for her child in order to help him deal with these situations. When facing her child negative feelings, it was identified Carla's sensitivity to mitigate them:

I take him in my arms when he's about to cry, I explain what is wrong when he gets angry with toys, and I also explain what happened, I try to name things for him. I help a lot, I'm sure he needs this for his development.

Another example: *"He tries to assemble a game and he fails, he gets angry. So I say to him: 'I understand that you got angry, and then he asks his mom's help.'"*

Carla realized that his son was more independent and he communicated better his desires now, and often the way that her child found to communicate was dropping to the floor, becoming a stubborn child. Facing these situations, Carla and her husband had certain attitudes, which were later questioned by Carla: *"What could I have done better?"* This questioning enabled Carla to find what the best attitudes towards her child's behaviors were. Despite these questions, Carla said she felt "secure" with her attitudes, especially when Carlos asked his parents to play *"In his pleasure in being with us, in his pleasure to come home."*

For her child's growth, Carla said she was very happy to see her son acquiring new skills, but at the same time she realized she no longer has a baby at home: *"I'm totally happy and proud. But sometimes*

I look at him, my God how this kid is great in bed! I get a feeling that time is going too fast, but I always think I am enjoying that a lot."

Case 2 Discussion

Carla noted the way each of her caregivers contributed to her development and to the way she is as a mother. Her mother was seen as very emotional, very present, interactive, and also moderate and able to give her the appropriate limit. She evaluated her mother as affectionate even if her gestures were interpreted as overprotection during adolescence. And her father's evaluation based on his conversations, which were clearly important to her. According to these positive experiences, Carla attachment representations about her caregivers were characterized as a secure base. The secure base presence on her attachment representations was related to the fact that Carla tends to feel emotionally satisfied in her emotional needs and with resources to face her anxieties. The literature suggests that when the children have had positive experiences with their parents in childhood, they tend to have attachment representations with secure base in adulthood (Broussard & Cassidy, 2010; Dollberg, Feldman, & Keren, 2010; Waters et al., 2000).

Regarding the romantic relationships attachment representations, Carla also had secure base contents. One might think that these representations are the result of the positive experiences in her love relationships. It can be seen that the relationship with her husband was full of affection, characterized by love and affection gestures. It was also possible to identify that even in times of trouble, the couple could identify the lack of marital investment, and this awareness has enabled that both returned to look for their relationship. Reciprocity and joint commitment before a crisis is associated with the secure base phenomenon in the loving attachment representations (Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001; Selterman, Apetroaia, & Waters, 2012).

The affective care perception, the secure base attachment representations in relation to the caregivers and to the romantic relationships tend to contribute to the presence of a child attachment behavior, especially the way this mother relates herself with her child (Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997; Waters & Waters, 2006). When we investigated the mother-child dyad relationship, it was observed that Carla had emotional availability and time to be with her child as well as willingness to be with her son, pleasure in playing and interacting, giving evidence of the presence of emotional exchange. These characteristics are portrayed in the literature. Mothers who have secure base content in their narratives tend to be sensitive to their children's signs and they have children who use them as a secure base (Bost et al., 2006).

Carla reflected about her emotional state, and identified how this aspect has influenced her behaviors when interacting with her child. Another important fact is that Carla did not tend to blame herself for not always being emotionally to her son, as she could notice it as a normal human process. In addition to Carla and her child's relationship be permeated by warmth, affection, attention to emotional state, it is clear that she also encouraged her child's autonomy, letting him identify what he likes to eat, to play and deal alone with some challenges in accordance with his age, such as in games. Carla is characterized as a sensitive mother to her child's emotional state in order to assist his emotional needs.

Another important characteristic was the fact that she goes to therapy sessions, which is another aid and resignification source, as stated in the literature (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2011; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997). Information regarding the nanny and other caregivers were not highlighted by Carla, but it was found that the couple organized themselves in their jobs hours in order to be more present in their child's early years. Finally, it was found that Carla's childhood positive experiences seem to be related to her attachment representations, which in turn seem to be related to the type of relationship that Carla has established with her child and her child's attachment security behaviors.

Final Considerations

The results of this present study showed evidences to support the initial expectation that the secure attachment, of both children studied, was associated to their mothers' experiences with regard to their caregivers. These results support the literature that highlights the attachment intergenerational patterns, since the maternal experiences with caregivers appeared related to the child's secure attachment (Bowlby, 1989; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001).

As for the experiences with their caregivers, the two mothers had a very sensitive, emotional, available and containing maternal caregiver. As for the paternal caregiver, even though one of them (Case 1) had an experience of abandonment by her father, later, it seems that she resignified this emotional experiences in a healthier way, either by the extensive therapeutic relation and/or her husband relationship. And, the other mother (Case 2) stated a very present father record, who was available and sensitive as well as her maternal caregiver. Therefore both mothers had secure base attachment representations in relation to their caregivers.

As for the attachment representations about romantic relationships, the two mothers also had secure base contents and reported positive experiences with their husbands, who tended to be loving, sensitive, available and present. Both have created characteristic narratives of more secure attachment representations about romantic relationships. As for the resemblance between the secure base presence in both attachment representations (child-adult and adult-adult), the literature states that people tend to relate to partners in line with the attachment representations in relation to the caregivers, that is, they find partners that tend to characterize what they think about themselves and what they expect from the other (Bowlby, 1973/1998; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2004). As for the current relationship with the child, the two mothers emphasized more the security attachment behaviors and less the dependency behaviors. These data make it possible to infer that the children tended to view their mothers as a secure base (Ainsworth, 1989). This secure base phenomenon, according to Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979/1997), tends to be present when the mother-child relationship is characterized by affectivity, warmth, availability, sensitivity and autonomy encouragement.

Taken together, the analysis results revealed consistencies between the mothers' experiences with their caregivers characterized by affective and sensitive care and autonomy support and their child's secure attachment behaviors. Thus, the evidence reveals aspects of these mothers and their children's attachment intergenerational patterns, which allow us to infer that the positive experiences with caregivers tend to have an important influence on parental relationships throughout life.

Despite the possible methodological limitations of the study (few cases; instruments answered only by the mother, without triangulation; inhibition in the preparation of the narratives; social desirability when referring to the relationship with the child) it is highlighted the importance of the findings as they bring empirical evidence on the early relationships with caregivers and the subsequent attachment representations of these relationships. Moreover, these representations appear to be closely related to the subsequent relations established along life, including love relationships. In this sense it is very important that health professionals remain attentive to the emotional relationship quality of mother-child dyads and also of the families, so that they can eventually intervene, minimizing the effects of inadequate emotional relationships to children and adults.

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