
ADOLESCENT FATHERHOOD: THE ROLE WITH CHILDREN BETWEEN THREE AND SEVEN YEARS

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this study was to investigate the performance of teenage parents in the interval between birth and the current stage of infant development. Four parents of children 3-7 years participated in the survey, from a qualitative approach, with data collected from semi-structured interviews, focusing on: the impact of parenthood experience in their personal development; changes and continuities in interactive processes; promotional factors and embarrassment of parental participation in the course of time. The theoretical framework adopted was the Bioecological model Bronfenbrenner and analyzed according to the Grounded Theory. The changes in possibilities of experiencing teenage parenthood were based on reciprocal interactions between contextual opportunities and constraints and the individual characteristics of the participants. The data indicated the move away from traditional models of parenting, expanding operations beyond the provision, including direct care to the child and mutual demonstration of affection. However, the stability of performance has proved compromised by constraining factors, especially the marital separation and the geographical distance, reflecting on his father's accessibility and consequently the opportunities to participate. There was a greater burden on the mother's family and changes in parenting practices, restricting the parental role before the diverse social activities related to sightseeing and entertainment. It testified that a good initial interest was not guarantee of stability, because both people and the contexts are modified in the course of time. Even with the restrictions, interest and parental involvement were kept.

Keywords: Adolescent fathers; adolescent pregnancy; adolescents.

PATERNIDADE ADOLESCENTE: A ATUAÇÃO COM FILHOS ENTRE TRÊS E SETE ANOS

RESUMO. O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar a atuação dos pais adolescentes no intervalo entre o nascimento do filho e a fase corrente do desenvolvimento infantil. Quatro pais de crianças de três a sete anos participaram da pesquisa realizada a partir do referencial teórico-metodológico bioecológico de Bronfenbrenner. Os dados foram coletados a partir de entrevistas semiestruturadas, focalizaram no transcurso do tempo: o impacto da experiência da paternidade em suas trajetórias pessoais; as mudanças e continuidades nos processos interativos; os fatores de promoção e constrangimento da participação paterna. A análise foi realizada de acordo com teoria fundamentada. As variações observadas nas possibilidades de se vivenciar a paternidade adolescente basearam-se nas interações recíprocas entre as oportunidades e restrições contextuais e as características individuais dos participantes. Os dados indicaram o afastamento dos modelos tradicionais de parentalidade, com a percepção da atuação para além do provimento, incluindo os cuidados diretos à criança e a manifestação mútua de afeto. Contudo a estabilidade da atuação revelou-se comprometida pelos fatores de constrangimento, especialmente pela separação conjugal e pela distância geográfica, que repercutiram na acessibilidade do pai e consequentemente nas oportunidades de participação. Observaram-se maior sobrecarga para a família materna e restrições nas práticas parentais, antes diversificadas, que resultaram prioritariamente em atividades sociais, relacionadas a passeios e entretenimento. Atestou-se que uma boa participação inicial não se mostrou garantia de estabilidade, pois tanto pessoas quanto os contextos se modificam no transcurso do tempo. Mesmo diante das restrições, o interesse e o envolvimento paternos foram mantidos.

Palavras-chave: Pais adolescentes; gravidez na adolescência; adolescentes.

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PATERNIDAD EN LA ADOLESCENCIA: PADRES CON NIÑOS CON EDAD ENTRE TRES Y SIETE AÑOS

RESUMEN. El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar la actuación de los padres adolescentes en el intervalo entre el nacimiento y la fase actual de desarrollo infantil. Cuatro padres de niños de 3 a 7 años participaron de la encuesta donde el marco teórico adoptado fue el Modelo Bioecológico del Desarrollo Humano de Bronfenbrenner. Los datos se obtuvieron por medio de entrevistas semiestructuradas, centrándose en: el impacto de la experiencia de la paternidad en sus trayectorias personales; los cambios y continuidades en los procesos interactivos; los factores de promoción y la vergüenza de la participación de los padres en el transcurso del tiempo. El análisis se realizó de acuerdo con la teoría fundamentada. Las variaciones observadas en las distintas posibilidades de experimentar la paternidad adolescente se basaron en las interacciones recíprocas entre las oportunidades y limitaciones contextuales y las características individuales de los participantes. Los datos indicaron que el alejamiento de los modelos tradicionales de parental, alargando la actuación para allá del proveer, incluyendo los cuidados directos a los niños y la manifestación de afecto mutuo. Sin embargo, la estabilidad de la actuación resultó comprometida por factores de constreñimiento, en especial la separación matrimonial y la distancia geográfica, lo que ha repercutido en la accesibilidad de su padre y, en consecuencia, las oportunidades de participación. Hubo una mayor carga para la familia de la madre y los cambios en las prácticas parentales, lo que restringe la actuación de los padres, antes (diversificada) a actividades sociales relacionadas con paseos y entretenimiento. Si testificó que una buena participación inicial no se mostró garantía de la estabilidad, ya que tanto las personas como los contextos se modifican en el transcurso del tiempo. Incluso con las restricciones, el interés y participación de los padres se mantuvieron.

Palabras-clave: Padres adolescentes; embarazo en adolescencia; adolescentes.

Introduction

In recent decades, several authors have pointed out the lack of studies on fatherhood in adolescence, which denounces the invisibility of the phenomenon, reinforced by the insufficient literature and data about this population (Lyra, 1997; Levandowski, 2001; Orlandi & Toneli 2008). According to the systematic review of empirical articles on parenthood in general, conducted by Vieira et al. (2014), although there was an increase of studies on the subject in recent years, teenage fatherhood still represents a small portion of these studies. According to the authors, in the investigations conducted between 2000 and 2012 on parenthood, about 14% referred to teenage fathers. According to Gondim and Lyra (2012) there was an increase in the academic production about parenting in adolescence between the years 2009 and 2011, with a primary focus on the issue of motherhood, but with a pronounced recurrence of the theme fatherhood, in the texts published in Portuguese, with the need to expand the discussions to areas still untouched.

The prevalence of studies on motherhood and teenage pregnancy, to the detriment of fatherhood, point to the maintenance of the female perspective of the phenomenon, up to three times higher than the male (Levandowski, 2001; Paulino, Patias, & Dias, 2013). It is envisioned, mainly, the lack of data on the Brazilian male population in the official information systems (Lyra, 1997; Meincke, Trigueiro, Carraro, Brito, & Collet, 2011; Paula, Bittar, Silva, & Cano, 2011). A scenario that reveals little inclusion of adolescent fathers in the field of sexual and reproductive rights, keeping them away from the public policy programs (Orlandi & Toneli, 2008), or even in the discussions about parenting as “right, pleasure or male desire” (Gondim & Lyra, 2012, p. 4).

At the methodological level, the authors point to the need for designs that investigate parenthood in subsequent periods of the child development, beyond the pregnancy and the months following the birth (Montemayor, 1986; Levandowski, & Piccinini, 2002. Paulino et al., 2013). It was recognized the importance of addressing the phenomenon in periods subsequent to the first year of the baby and broaden the discussion to other issues.

Thus, the issue of teenage parenthood traverses two interdependent issues: the gaps pointed out in relation to the literature and social, educational, economic, family and individual impacts, often cited as consequences of the experience of parenting at this stage of the development (Heilborn et al., 2002; Cerqueira-Santos, Paludo, Schirò, & Koller, 2010; Meincke et al., 2011). In accordance with Bronfenbrenner (2011), the reciprocity between the social demands and the promotion of the research,

such as the issues of public policies that serve as a starting point for identifying significant themes on the human development and its interaction with the environment stands out.

It is known that the term adolescence does not include the diversity of possibilities of experiences at this stage, nor the possibilities that the different contexts provide for their development. In this sense, according to Heilborn et al. (2002, p. 31), there is a “precocity of the adulthood or shortness of the adolescence in lower social classes, mainly when taking the middle classes as a comparative parameter”. The term adolescence is used in this article according to the parameters of the World Health Organization ([WHO], 2004) – from 10 to 19 years old – however, it is considered that it can be increased or reduced according to the contexts and life events.

In this sense, the present study aimed to contribute both to the field of knowledge on parenting in adolescence (with the study delimited to a period still little explored in the father-child relationship) and for the expansion of political actions that can ensure the resources necessary for the healthy development of children and parents, from the indication of the possible constraining factors for the exercise of parenting.

Among the implications relating to public policies, as teenage fatherhood has multi-determined causes often related to pictures of social vulnerability (Lyra, 1997; Heilborn et al., 2002), factors such as education, socioeconomic status and the influence of the stereotypes of gender were considered. The treatment given to the phenomenon, a priori, as problematic and undesirable (Lyra, 1997) by the “adult world”, and sometimes pathologized, was approached by highlighting the possibility of achieving for the fathers in this role. Moreover, even after the assumption of paternity, it was recognized that for some teenage fathers who are separated from the child’s mother, the performance might be constrained due to the limitations imposed by the judiciary.

More specifically, it was attempted to analyze the performance of teenage fathers with children at different stages of child development, considering the changes and stabilities identified and how these synergistically interrelate with the context and the interactions established over time.

The Bioecological theoretical-methodological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2011) and the development perspective adopted have aligned with the heterogeneity and the multi-dimensional character of the object of study (Levandowski, 2001; Heilborn et al., 2002). This theme requires an approach that integrates the several individual, contextual, relational and temporal aspects – understood in its historical and dynamic character. It was sought to oppose to the fragmented analysis of the isolated aspects of development, fixed in time and space.

The dynamics and the mutual influence of the relationships can be recognized in the way that changes in the development of children affect the ways of acting of parents. The physical, mental and linguistic development of the child enable new behavioral skills, facilitate the understanding and make communication between father and child more complex (DeLuccie, 1996). These transformations can contribute to a greater gratification in the interaction between father and child in later periods of development (Hofferth, Stueve, Pleck, & Sayer, 2002), as well as to greater openness of the child to other relationships in addition to the mother (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985).

In contrast, authors have highlighted that the difficulties encountered by teenage fathers over time could reduce the intensity of their paternal aspirations (Rhein et al., 1997). The erroneous expectations regarding the capabilities of the baby, pointed out as consequences of the ignorance of teenage fathers about the development stages of the child, would lead them to underestimate or overestimate the capabilities of the child (Lamb & Elster, 1986). The ignorance was also correlated with the frustration in the parental role and indicated as a preceding condition for more impatient and punitive attitudes with the children (Lamb & Elster, 1986). The exercise of the parental function appeared to have different and divergent modes of operation, with consequences for both the promotion, and commitment to the development of fathers and children.

The assumption of paternity demands from the teenager to play a role for which he could not be socially and psychologically prepared, which can reverse in a situation of vulnerable to the child and parents, especially when the protective factors, such as the support of the family and employment conditions and income, are absent (Bueno, Meincke, Schwartz, Soares, & Corrêa, 2012). Moreover, the widespread stereotype that teenage fathers are absent or deny paternity/parenthood persists (Santos, Luz, Mendes, & Agostini, 1987). It was demonstrated how this conjunction of factors affects the

performance of young fathers/parents both their individual paths and the comparison between the cases analyzed.

Method

The study reported is qualitative, with four participants identified through the snowball sampling method, observing the following criteria: occurrence of paternity during adolescence, have children aged between three and seven full years at the time of the interview, living together or not with their children. Through the location of the participants, three cities were included, from three mesoregions of the State of Minas Gerais: Metropolitan of Belo Horizonte, Western Minas Gerais and Campo das Vertentes. The research project was submitted for approval to the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São João del Rei (UFSJ), with the execution of this study anchored in assent (Protocol CEPES 018/2014). It was ensured the confidentiality of the identity of the participants, representing them in the study by fictitious names.

It was used the semi-structured interview for data collection. For the purpose of this study, we focused on the performance of these fathers in relation to their experiences in the face of the experience of fatherhood. For the analysis of the interviews, it was used the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 2008). It was adopted the approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2008), by considering it more appropriate to address the multidimensional aspect of the phenomenon.

The path traveled by the researcher for the development of the categories began with a "microanalysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 65), line by line of the text, in order to generate initial concepts. In the open coding concepts that showed to represent more abstractly a larger amount of data were identified, as well as their properties and dimensions. In the axial coding, the data were regrouped in terms of conditions (causal, intervention, contextual), strategies of action/interaction and consequences, in order to contextualize the phenomenon.

At the end of this stage, it was achieved the relationship between categories, subcategories, their properties and dimensions. In the selective coding, it was sought to identify the essence of the experience of fatherhood by young people who became parents in adolescence, from the condensation, "in short, from what appears to explain about what the research is" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 145).

Based on the analyzes conducted, the following categories were identified: the birth of the child as an agent of change; constraining factors to teenage fatherhood; and giving new meaning to teenage parenthood from the development of the child. It was attempted, from these categories, to promote a critical analysis to the field of knowledge about parenting, more specifically fatherhood in adolescence.

Results e discussion

In the Bioecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2011), the parental role must be understood considering both the teenage father (person) and the ecological environment in which he is inserted (context) and processes of reciprocal influence (proximal processes) that occur over and under the influence of time. These are the four core elements of the Bioecological reference, also called Process-Person-Context-Time model (PACT) (Bronfenbrenner, 2011).

The concept of parental role relates to the concept of proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 2011), when involving enduring patterns of reciprocal interaction that occur in a stable time basis, with characteristics of progression in complexity. It encompasses mutually influential relationships both between people and between these and their ecological systems in their immediate and remote levels. The multiple relationships established between the teenage father and others, such as the child, the child's mother, the maternal relatives and his own family microsystem, are inserted in these standards.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

	Márcio	Welinton	Gustavo	Ricardo
Age of the father at the time of the birth	19	18	19	17
Current age of the child	5	7	6	3
Was he living with the family of origin at the time of the pregnancy?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Did he have a stable relationship with the mother of the child before pregnancy?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does he live with the family of origin today?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

According to the definition of Economic Classes², by family income of the participants, these were located in Class C, whose the sum of the incomes are in the range between R\$ (Brazilian Real) 1,734.00 and R\$ 7,475.00³. As teenagers lived with their parents at the time the pregnancy occurred, it was considered the family's income. Although the considered range is wide to apprehend the socioeconomic heterogeneity of the family, the indicator is useful to locate the subjects in a given social context, differentiating them from less favorable conditions. Regarding the level of education, all participants presented higher levels when compared to other studies (Heilborn et al., 2002; Meincke et al., 2011; Bueno et al., 2012.). Among the four fathers, only one did not complete high school (Welinton) and two were attending higher education (Ricardo and Gustavo). The only case of school evasion occurred before pregnancy. Similarities between the biographies of two of the respondents (Marcio and Welinton) and their parents in terms of schooling, but also of greater social mobility, were observed, with trajectories slightly upward in educational terms (Ricardo and Gustavo). Authors pointed out differences in the impact of the experience of teenage fatherhood for individuals with low schooling and income, especially due to the poor support network (Heilborn et al., 2002; Siqueira et al., 2002; Meincke et al., 2011; Bueno et al., 2012).

This study corroborated with studies that point to the greater difficulty of adolescents to be self-sufficient in relation to financial resources (Siqueira et al., 2002; Heilborn et al., 2002; Meincke et al., 2011), requiring assistance from the family. However, this picture can be transitory, which could be verified in the cases of Welinton and Ricardo, in which there was greater social mobility, because they achieved an increase in the financial income in the interval between the birth and the time of the interview. The professional conditions of the fathers revealed, in three cases (Márcio, Ricardo and Welinton), changes in terms of career advancement. Only one of the participants was devoted exclusively to studies (Gustavo). The other participants (Márcio, Ricardo and Welinton) were formally employed, with remunerations between two and five times the minimum wage, which diverges from the profile outlined by Meincke et al. (2011) and Bueno et al. (2012), who investigated adolescent fatherhood in less favorable socioeconomic contexts. The insertion in the labor market was not conditioned to the episode of pregnancy, being prior to its occurrence. In line with Heilborn et al. (2002),

² Source: Center for Social Policies / Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Centro de Políticas Sociais, 2011).

³ The reference value for the minimum wage in 2013 was R\$ 678.00.

the way they structure the careers proved to be more subordinate to the constraints and specificities of class, than to the paternity in adolescence.

The self-declared predominant skin color was brown (Welinton, Márcio and Gustavo) and white (Ricardo). Regarding the marital status, only one of the fathers remained united to the mother of his child (Ricardo), in a cohabiting regime, other two had separated (Welinton and Márcio) and one was single (Gustavo). Once located the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, a brief presentation of the cases, integrated into the categories established, indicating similarities and singularities, initiated.

Trajectory of fathers

Among the participants, only Gustavo did not experience cohabitation, remaining part of the child development period at the house of his parents and other part living in another city as university student. Gustavo broke up with the mother of his daughter two months after the birth. The other parents (Welinton, Márcio and Ricardo) joined the mother of their children, cohabiting in a separate house from their family of origin.

The moment in which the cohabitation occurred, varied among the respondents. Márcio moved in with the mother of his daughter a year after the birth, but the relationship ended three years and six months later, when he returned to the house of his parents. Ricardo was in the process of adaptation to living together at the time of the interview, because it was recent that he and his partner started living together.

Before that, he was away most of the development period of his child, with a weekly frequency of visits, by virtue of his military training course. Welinton prepared his own space during pregnancy, cohabiting with the mother of his daughter immediately after birth. However, they separated approximately two years later, returning to the house of their parents.

Even after the dissolution of the relationship with the mother of his daughter, this was not the constraint factor that interfered with the frequency and form of participation of Gustavo as a father. The facilitated access to the child provided both by the mother and by the geographic proximity, in the period that they lived in the same city, was reversed in the greatest readiness by the father for fatherhood.

As for Ricardo, the picture of geographical distance of the partner and son, during his military training period, was what "constrained" his role. However, the facilitation and encouragement of his participation by the child's mother, besides his own personal motivation, contributed to the maintenance of his interest and involvement in the course of time.

For Márcio, after separation, the condition of mutual accessibility and encouragement of the mother to the inclusion of the father kept high his readiness for fatherhood. This participant, however, showed to be more reluctant than the other respondents to "waive" his orientation for freedom and fun, highlighting the role of the family in the process of awareness and assimilation of the young father to the paternal functions: *... but this is it, it was from work to party, because, you know, young men, we are young right, we just want to do this ... Then after I became father I said "no, now I have to" ... even my father pulled my ears* (Márcio).

The birth of the child as agent of changes

This category represented the way that the teenagers reacted to an unexpected event, realigning their actions as a way to respond to the demands and expectations that come with the birth of a child. This included changes observed in themselves, as well as in the interpersonal and contextual relationships. In response to the episode of pregnancy, the four respondents gave continuity to the relationship with the mother of their children, recognizing paternity, assuming it and engaging in the baby care, which contradicts the widespread stereotype that teenagers are absent or deny paternity (Santos et al., 1987). It should be noted that only one of the respondents (Ricardo) remained with his partner at the time of the interview, partly corroborating the findings of Steinberg (1985), about the

difficulties in the relationship, experienced by couples who join in adolescence and, consequently, higher rates of separation.

It was found that the birth was configured as an agent of change in the lives of the respondents, including their patterns of thoughts, attitudes and behaviors, identity, beliefs and values, such as in Paulino et al. (2013), who highlighted significant changes reported by the participants in the face of an unexpected event: *"... so now I have a reason, and not only I can, but also I got used to think beyond the first step"* (Gustavo). *"... from now on I was not alone, ... any of my choice is now directly influenced in their lives, then ... the biggest change was that"* (Ricardo).

Fatherhood served as a catalyst that triggered a deep sense of responsibility and duty to parents. The self-perception that they were reference models for the children contributed to the parents to strive to improve their own behaviors, seeking to modify them: *One of the advantages of being father in adolescence is also that ... you have to grow ... then you already tend to improve yourself as a person early in life, you already tend to seek an improvement because you are a reference* (Ricardo).

The birth encouraged the teenagers to rely on their own parents as a source of support, with strengthening of the family ties and greater intergenerational empathy from their own parental experiences: *"... then you see a little piece of what your father and mother spent with you"* (Welinton). It was evident that the arrival of a child results in a complex system of adaptation, which involves the activation of multiple processes, both at the individual level, and at the level of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2011) of which the young man maintains relationships of reciprocity (child's mother and the whole mother's family; his own family; friends; work, study; community). This was what Márcio highlighted about the support of the entire extensive family: *"... the family of both my father and my mother, they supported me in everything, but after the birth it was only joy to everyone"* (Márcio).

Two codes extracted from the statements of the participants were representative for the cases analyzed: the expression "bearing the consequences" was used to represent the process of accountability and readiness for the parental exercise since the news of pregnancy; the expression "give up", which involved concessions and waivers recognized by the parents as necessary for higher availability and dedication in favor of the child and/or partner.

A common pattern was established in the difficulty to bear most of the responsibilities in the immediate period after the birth, in such a way that the phenomenon was strongly marked by the dichotomy between the dependence and the search for autonomy. Only in one case (Welinton), a greater financial autonomy was reported already during pregnancy, in comparison to the others. However, it was verified that in other areas such as childcare, mainly the maternal family aided the father.

In common, all fathers "shouldered the responsibility", being recognized variations in different periods of their father's paths. They proved initially engaged, not only contributing financially, but by sharing the daily care of the babies with the mothers. These tasks involved feeding, hygiene, play with the child, put him/her to sleep, take him/her for walks, and in one of the cases (Márcio), even the sharing of domestic chores: *"... so what I could do to help her I did, and also at home, cleaning the kitchen, the bedroom, these things, washing the bathroom, laundering, wringing the clothes ..., we helped each other a lot"* (Márcio).

To Welinton during the period of cohabitation with the mother of his daughter, the exercise of paternal role assumed a model of provider father more sharply, since he was working most of the time and the opportunities to interact with his daughter were focused on the weekends: *"... but she was mostly with her mother. I was working all day"* (Welinton). It was observed, according to Lamb (2010), that cohabitation does not necessarily is reverted to greater attention and accessibility of the father to the child. After separation, Welinton recognized greater attention paid to his daughter: *"... when we lived together, did I pay attention? I paid. But I was there every day, I do not know whether it is because we had seen each other little, then after we separated, the attention doubled"* (Welinton).

It was verified that in the episodes in which the teenage father did not "bear" properly with the responsibilities that came with parenthood and/or did not "give up" enough in favor of the child, occurred as a result, increased transfer of responsibility for other receiver sources (mothers, grandparents, uncles/aunts, kindergartens). The *transfer of responsibility* was assumed as a representative code for the burden that falls more often on the environment that has the custody of the

child or where she/he remains most of the time. It was attested that a good initial participation was not guarantee of stability, since changes involving individuals, contexts and relationships were recognized throughout the father's paths.

Constraining factors for teenage fatherhood

The *locus* of the parental participation proved associated more strongly to opportunities of mutual accessibility between father and child, to personal (motivation, conception of fatherhood, readiness for waivers) and interpersonal (quality of the father-child attachment and interparental relationship) aspects, than necessarily to the contexts of cohabitation and/or conjugal union. It corroborated, mainly, with DeLuccie (1996), which the level of participation of the father in the child's life is, among other aspects, determined by the extent to which mothers and their families allow and encourage such participation.

As the definition of proximal process, the readiness of teenage fathers for fatherhood revealed variations such as an articulated function between individual characteristics of the developing person, the context in which the processes occurred, the nature of the expected developmental results and continuities and changes that were implemented over time, from the child's birth to the present time (Bronfenbrenner, 2011).

The category *constraint factors to adolescent fatherhood* represented the barriers, restrictions and impediments recognized by fathers who were faced with situations that significantly interfered with their opportunities for interaction, accessibility and division of responsibilities, reflecting on the paternal involvement. It was revealed that the marital and/or geographical separation presented higher amplitude, extent and permanence when compared to other recognized sources of limitation - such as family interference.

The marital separation (Márcio, Welinton and Gustavo) had repercussions and different weights for each participant. It was verified that the degree of disagreement prior to the separation negatively reflected on the quality of the subsequent communication and the possibility of cooperation between the couple. Thus, the fathers (Marcio and Gustavo) who maintained a lower level of conflict with the mother of their children after separation, regardless of the type of agreement signed, established a more flexible pattern of visits, and a better communication between the spaces of maternal and paternal role.

In contrast, in the case (Welinton) in which the highest level of post-separation conflict was identified, the visiting hours became inflexible, as well as the communication between the couple became undermined, which significantly affected the opportunities for interaction and access to the child by the father. The court order was considered extremely limiting and unsatisfactory, not meeting the needs of the father or her daughter. Noteworthy in this case is the influence of the judiciary on the interference of opportunities for interaction between father and daughter, such as found by Silva (2003), in studies with divorced adult parents. Thus, the fortnightly configuration of visits was indicated as a constraining factor to parental role. The subsequent coexistence with the daughter was settled on weekly bases, maintained in a stable and predictable way by the child.

In two other cases (Márcio and Gustavo), it was added to the dissolution of the relationship, the geographical separation of the parents. To Márcio despite the short distance between the municipalities, the change significantly altered the living opportunities, from a daily to a biweekly frequency. It was recognized the greatest impact on the frequency of interaction between Gustavo and his daughter, from a daily to a monthly basis, in addition to the interval between variable visits, reaching a maximum of five weeks between meetings. The restriction on the mutual accessibility between parents and children proved to be a condition that negatively affected the paternal involvement, mainly for those separated by geographical and marital distance (Márcio and Gustavo).

There was one case (Ricardo) in which the couple remained together and the constraining factor (geographical distance) remained constant since the pregnancy. Consequently, his role in the childcare, as well as in the financial responsibilities, maintained a pattern of stability. Converging with the findings of Lamb et al. (1985), it was verified that the roles of mother and marital relationship, combined with other factors, including psychosocial, interfere in determining the father's involvement with his children.

In fact, it was observed that a good relationship with the mother of the children, regardless of marital a relationship, facilitates the involvement of fathers.

In the three cases where there was dissolution of the relationships (Welinton, Ricardo and Gustavo), they were reduced to the areas of responsibility assumed, so that if before these fathers were assuming a wide range of tasks, sharing them with the mothers, this practice ceased after separation. It was recognized smaller division and greater transfer of responsibilities to the maternal space: *"When she is with me, she is my responsibility, but she stays more with her mother, so it ends up weighing more to the side of her mother. We then share the responsibility"* (Welinton).

Social activities of leisure and entertainment and to lesser extent counseling tasks, setting limits and transmission of family and religious values, were predominant. The results corroborate the findings of Silva (2003) about the type of parental participation assumed by the adult parents after separation, because in both the author's study and this study, the parents were more involved in activities of social interaction than in care: *"... the time that I can devote, the vast majority are for leisure, because it is very rare to have something that I have to talk to her, 'listen, you have done something that your mother does not like ...'"* (Gustavo).

Only Ricardo remained involved in both care and social interaction activities. The stable union between a couple is an important component of the parental microsystem, regarded as one of the main predictors of continuous involvement of the father (Gavin et al., 2002), as can be observed when comparing the cases.

The educational practices revealed by the parents did not corroborate the association between the greatest lack of knowledge of the child development on the part of the adolescent parents and the highest incidence of the use of punishment (Lamb & Elster, 1986). All participants highlighted priority to dialogue as an educational practice, rejecting the use of punishment, especially physical: *... first I try to talk whether it is going to continue or not, I explain, and then I ground him... um... I do not have, right, nor am I going to create the habit of beating, no way ..., I see this even as extremely ridiculous. It is not necessary* (Ricardo).

The role of parents between different spaces (maternal and paternal) revealed as a result the disparity and disagreement in parenting practices. However, for the most part, the roles were complementary, although not coordinated.

Giving new significance to the adolescent fatherhood from child development

This category reflected how the development of the child has expanded the opportunities for interaction, which converged with the recognition of the bi-directionality of the proximal processes, in which not only the parents affect the child but also the whole family system is by him/her affected (Bronfenbrenner, 2011). According to Lamb et al. (1985), it was found that the interaction and the accessibility of the father to the child are usually higher if the child is older. From the age of three the child would be less dependent on his/her mother and more open and interested in establishing interactions with the father. As in the story of Gustavo, father of a five year old girl: *"Oh no, I want mommy Not today, today is the opposite: I want to go to dad's house"* (Gustavo).

A significant improvement reported by the participants in the father-child interaction was evident, covering both the improvement of the understanding and communication and the meaning attributed to fatherhood: *"... as he learned to speak, ... I started understanding him more ... he already turns to me and says that miss me, um... the interaction also changes a lot, right ..."* (Ricardo). *"... Joana was growing, and then her mother was also getting smarter, 'there is no way to forbid her, she will comment there', right? Then, for a couple of years now, I have been participating more* (Welinton).

Among the advantages attributed to the current stage of the child, the improvement of the understanding was of great importance also for Márcio: *"... they can understand easier" ... "she understands much more ..."*. Associated with the development of the motor coordination, such changes influenced the way that the father acts with his daughter, leaving her "freer": *"It changes a lot ... in the creation, then I, now with five years, which I did not let her to do with two years, now I let ..."* (Márcio).

The recognition and demonstration by the child of the importance of the father was representatively defined for all cases, as a redefinition of parenthood in which *"the penny drops again"* (Ricardo). The

results corroborate the statement (Lamb & Elster, 1986) on the psychological and behavioral characteristics of the baby and how they also influence the quality of the interaction with the fathers. In this sense, it was understood that these effects extend to more advanced stages of the development (3-7 years), as observed: “... *he started speaking ‘I love you’, he started to have this feeling, you know, from then on I think this had the most impact ...*” (Ricardo).

The claim that the difficulties and obstacles encountered by teenage fathers over time could reduce the intensity of their paternal aspirations (Rhein et al., 1997) found no support. Given the influence of children, which mitigates the effects of the constraining factors, it was revealed satisfaction and interest of fathers in the exercise of fatherhood. Furthermore, it corroborated with Hofferth et al. (2002), about the greatest paternal gratification in later periods of child development. The essence of the experiences lived by the respondents could, therefore, be captured through the perception of fatherhood as a process of transformation in their lives: “... *I got pregnant, every parent if did not, should (laughs) become pregnant, live this as much as possible, which is a delightful thing, you know, so an amazing experience* (Gustavo). This perception does not rule out the difficulties and sufferings experienced by the teenage fathers, but focuses on the subjective expression of the fulfilment in this role extracted from their speeches, contrary to the stereotype that teenage pregnancy is a priori an unwanted and harmful event to the development of fathers and their children (Lyra, 1997).

Final considerations

Consistent with Bronfenbrenner (2011), in which concern the study of human development, it was noted that the researches on pregnancy and parenthood in adolescence have privileged the characteristics of the subjects, addressing the conditions and contexts as fixed entities, only in a space of determined and presumed time as constant. By limiting the focus of the researches within the range between pregnancy and the first year of the child, it is questioned the transposition of the findings on the objective and subjective conditions of the adolescents and their families, disregarding the potential for change. However, the present study converged with the perspective of Lerner, Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan and Bowers (2010), that the trajectories of the adolescents – such as those who are fathers - are not unalterable, being significantly influenced by factors such as family support and availability of resources and community opportunities, such as schools.

The reduced number of participants proved to be a limitation of the present study. The raising of issues in the child development period, still poorly investigated for the phenomenon of adolescent fatherhood (children between 3 and 7 years old), was presented as a relevant point, indicating the changes and continuities of the paternal participation before the constraining factors.

The results did not corroborate the findings of other studies (Rhein et al., 1997; Lamb & Elster, 1986), which show that in the face of difficulties and obstacles, the fathers would reduce the intensity of their paternal aspirations; would be absent or would deny paternity (Santos et al., 1987); would assume more punitive and impatient attitudes with their children (Lamb & Elster, 1986). It was noticed that the fathers had appropriate expectations regarding the child development, being affected especially by the development of the oral language, which showed to redefine the experience of fatherhood.

Among the constraining factors, it was observed that teenage fathers may suffer, as well as adult parents with the inflexibility of the system of visits imposed by the Brazilian judicial system. To one father (Welinton), the shared custody system best met his expectations of performance, achieved only after much suffering in consensus with the child's mother. Such a system reinforces the stereotype that the *child belongs to the mother*, excluding the fathers of the right to coexistence and restricting them to play activities such as leisure. Moreover, the restriction to the teenage father can still be sustained by evaluating him as unable to childcare, both by the maternal family and by the law enforcement officials.

Although being a father in adolescence is a major challenge, the reports reveal that paternity significantly transforms the lives of these young people, taking as an opportunity for growth and existential redefinition.

Thus, the phenomenon under study reveals the ongoing demand for the training of professionals from several areas, mainly of health and education, to meet the singular challenges of this experience, with emphasis on the professional of psychology.

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