
CONJUGALITY, PARENTHOOD AND SEPARATION: REPERCUSSIONA ON THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP¹

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ABSTRACT. Traditionally, the family begins with the story of two people that form a couple, the support for the raising of children. Throughout the life cycle, several transformations occur. Adolescence and the transition towards adulthood are developmental phases important to understand the changes in the parent-child relationship, in which many times separation has already happened. The purpose of this article is to discuss the repercussions of conjugality and separation on parenthood, analyzing, from the historical narrative of fathers and mothers, the parent-child relationship throughout life, and especially, during emerging adulthood. In a qualitative research, we interviewed men and women, fathers and mothers of 15- to 26-year-old children, of the middle class of Rio de Janeiro. The interviewees were either married, divorced or remarried, and told stories of conjugality, parenthood and separation that affected and/or still affect the parent-child relationship. From the analysis of the 25 interviews, we concluded that both father and mother actively participate in the life of their children, yet in different ways. We noted the striking predominance of the mother and the specificity of the paternal presence, still poorly valued and understood, especially when the separation takes place.

Keywords: Conjugality; parenthood; separation.

CONJUGALIDADE, PARENTALIDADE E SEPARAÇÃO: REPERCUSSÕES NO RELACIONAMENTO PAIS E FILHOS(AS)

RESUMO. Tradicionalmente, a família inicia-se com a história de duas pessoas que formam um casal, suporte para a criação dos(as) filhos(as). Ao longo do ciclo vital, ocorrem várias transformações. A adolescência e a transição para a vida adulta são fases do desenvolvimento importantes para compreendermos as mudanças no relacionamento pais e filhos(as), em que, muitas vezes, a separação conjugal já ocorreu. O objetivo deste trabalho é discutir as repercussões da conjugalidade e da separação sobre a parentalidade, analisando, a partir do relato histórico de pais e mães, o relacionamento de pais e filhos(as) ao longo da vida e, sobretudo, no período da adultez emergente. Em uma pesquisa qualitativa, entrevistamos homens e mulheres, pais e mães de jovens de 15 a 26 anos, da classe média do Rio de Janeiro. Os entrevistados eram casados, separados ou recasados e relataram histórias sobre conjugalidade, parentalidade e separação, que afetaram e/ou ainda afetam o relacionamento entre pais e filhos(as). A partir da análise das 25 entrevistas realizadas, concluímos que pai e mãe participam ativamente da vida dos(as) filhos(as), ainda que de modos diversos. Notamos a predominância marcante da mãe e a especificidade da presença paterna, ainda pouco valorizada e compreendida, principalmente quando ocorre a separação.

Palavras-chave: Conjugalidade; parentalidade; separação.

NUPCIALIDAD, LAZOS PARENTALES Y SEPARACIÓN: REPERCUSIONES EN LA RELACIÓN ENTRE PADRES E HIJOS

RESUMEN. Tradicionalmente, la familia empieza con la historia de dos personas que forman una pareja, soporte para la crianza de los hijos. A lo largo del ciclo vital, suceden varias transformaciones. La adolescencia y la

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transición para la vida adulta son fases del desarrollo importantes para comprender los cambios en la relación entre padres e hijos, en las cuales, muchas veces, la separación conyugal ya ha sucedido. El objetivo de este estudio es discutir las repercusiones de la nupcialidad y de la separación sobre los lazos parentales, analizando, a partir del relato histórico de padres y madres, la relación entre padres e hijos a lo largo de la vida y, sobre todo, en el periodo de la adultez emergente. En una investigación cualitativa, entrevistamos a hombres y mujeres, padres y madres de jóvenes de 15 a 26 años, de la clase media de Rio de Janeiro. Los entrevistados eran casados, separados o casados otra vez, y relataron historias sobre nupcialidad, lazos parentales y separación, que afectaron y/o aún afectan la relación entre padres e hijos. A partir del análisis de las 25 entrevistas realizadas, concluimos que padre y madre participan activamente de la vida de los hijos, aunque de modos distintos. Observamos la predominancia notoria de la madre y la especificidad de la presencia paterna, todavía poco valorada y comprendida, principalmente cuando sucede la separación.

Palabras-clave: Nupcialidad; lazos parentales; separación.

Introduction

The debate concerning the changes that the family has been facing, especially regarding the modification of parental role, has been held in our research starting from the transition to the adult life, considered a distinct phase of the life cycle (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). In this phase, the relationship between parents and children transforms itself owing to various factors, among them the growing development of the children's autonomy, initiated in the adolescence (Booth, Brown, Landale, Manning, & McHale, 2012). During the process of entering adult life, there is no clear definition which determines that transformation, and there is neither any prediction as regards the role and the relationship with the parents (Arnett, 2011).

Touching the theme of the transformation of the parents' roles, emphasizing that there is a parental involvement, we have performed a review of national and international literature and have identified some few studies which address the transformation of the parental role in the adolescence and in the transition to adult life (Gower & Dowling, 2008; Smetana, 2011). Parents' role and function have been discussed in the field of Developmental Psychology from children's childhood to adolescence. When it comes to entry into adult life, what happens, approximately from the middle to the end of adolescence to the age of 29 years, is that this discussion is considerably reduced, being necessary the increase of researches and theoretical discussion so that the picture starts to change (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006; Gower & Dowling, 2008). Parents continue to offer financial and emotional support, particularly when there are no favorable conditions of entry into job market and when love relationships are unstable, not defining a wedding project and the exit of parents' house (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006; Gower & Dowling, 2008; Ponciano, 2015; Ponciano & Féres-Carneiro, 2014).

We understand that parent-child relationship is developed according with the interrelation of, at least, three factors: children's age, difference between father and mother, parenting history and possible separation, which reflect in the history of conjugality. In the childhood, there is a relationship of bigger dependence, suffering modifications in the adolescence, when children's growing process of autonomy commences. In the adult life, it is supposed that the independence is the rule for a larger distancing between parents and children. In all ages, however, the mother tends to predominate as main caretaker, participating more actively in the children's lives. Due to gender socialization, the woman is responsible for the relationship, whereas the man is responsible for the financial maintenance of the household. Nowadays, if the man does not maintain the household financially, he will encounter obstacles, which he will have to overcome to participate in another way, when summoned. As to the history of conjugality, with its dynamics and possible ruptures, it establishes family relationship patterns, configuring the type of relationship between parents and children. The difference between father and mother and the influence of conjugality, and its possible ruptures, determines the difficulties if including the father in the discussion about parent-children relationship. Even though the mother's speech and presence are predominant, we consider important to understand the way how the father's participation takes place, which has been transformed into a historic process of questioning of his power (Hurstel, 1999).

A family's history may have different beginnings. In this exploratory research, we focus only on the family which begins with the history of two people who form a heterosexual couple, being the objective of this paper to discuss the repercussions of conjuality and of separation about a parenting, highlighting, from the interviewed fathers and mothers' historical report, the parent-children relationship along life, especially, in the period of emergent adulthood.

The family based on conjuality, according to Durkheim (1975), is formed by the husband, the wife and the minor single children, characterizing a type of relationship that only exists between the members of this group and is defined surrounding the paternal authority. The marks of patriarchy can still be perceived in this restricted group, considering Durkheim's analysis, in the half of the 20th century. The father must nourish the child and offer it education until the adulthood. The child is dependent on the father, it does not own its own person or its fate. The civil responsibility lies with the father (parental power). When the child reaches adulthood or when it gets married, the legal relations cease, it acquires its own personality, its distinct interests and its personal responsibility, according to Durkheim (1975). Thereby, from the history of the relationships happening in this closed group of intense affective bonds, the development of healthy individuals has its basis in the history of the marital bond.

The marital dyad may comprise the union of two individuals, who carry with themselves different wishes and projects, and a conjuality which represents the project which unites two subjects, forming a third instance, which is the one of marital identity. This union represents a paradoxical dynamic by proposing that both autonomy and marital satisfaction be contemplated (Féres-Carneiro, 1998). The marital subsystem is also formed by the conjugation of two distinct histories, which come from two families. The couple devise their own rules from the elaboration of their own family of origin's rules, which can generate conflicts. In spite of the difficulties of this undertaking, the lovers continue to wish the intimacy and the involvement, represented by the marital union, as, in the adult life, this is a privileged form of establishing oneself as a subject (Berger & Kellner, 1988). Nevertheless, sometimes, this project finishes as separation and divorce, what does not mean, necessarily, the renunciation of, in the future, finding another marital partnership. Today, getting married and separated evidences the constant search for happiness in the marital project (Féres-Carneiro, 1998; Miller, Nunes, Bean, Day, Falceto, Hollist, & Fernandes, 2014).

With the birth of a child, the conjuality is transformed and, even though it does not lose its importance, many times, is subordinated to parenting, increasing the risk of marital dissatisfaction, being common the bigger feminine dedication to maternity. In case of separation, many couples remarry, joining children of different marriages in one same household. The remarriage increases the complexity as to the definition of rules and the different marital and parental roles (Sibertin-Blanc, 2003). These different conjugal forms rebound in the manner how the parents participate in their children's lives, from childhood to adulthood (Warpechowski & Mosmann, 2012).

Nominating the family as parental, we have the opportunity to reflect about another aspect of conjugal family. Parenting keeps the family group even when separation or divorce occurs. The free choice allows there to be the conjugal dissolution, if each member of the couple's initial choice is not confirmed. For parents and children there is no dissolution of the parental bonds, established by the biological inheritance and the State, in the last instance. This way, the couple loses their centrality, as defined by Durkheim (1975) in the conjugal family, to the centrality of the parental relationship, which is indissoluble. Paradoxically, the indissolubility of the parental bond makes the parents submitted to a role. The parents, married or not, are submitted to their children's primacy of freedom, of autonomy and growth. Even if they are not a couple, father and mother must play their role in the family, which may stop being that of a couple, but will not stop being that of parents. To the detriment of their personal choices and of the authority which they believe is their right to exert over their children, each father and mother is bound to each other due to the bonds which they have with their children in common. In the case of divorce, followed by another marriage, the couples who have children possess an eternal bond. They are part of a parental family and may take the conflict of the conjugal relationship to a new family arrangement (Hameister, Barbosa, & Wagner, 2015). They still have a legal bond, keeping them connected as a parental duo.

The parents-children relationship, therefore, becomes different depending on the family configuration: married, separated and remarried develop different trajectories of involvement with their

children. There is, however, a tendency of predominance of the mother's performance and influence on these trajectories. Even if the mother prevails, in order to understand the complexity of the relationship with the children, we must consider both the father and the mother are part of a parental dyad with each one of their children and each dyad has specific characteristics (Parke, 2000). Anyway, the mother influences and orients the father's relationship with the children, as they transmit verbal and non-verbal messages, about the father. The quality of the father's presence is profoundly influenced by the quality of the parents' conjugal relationship, by the mother's acknowledgement and support and by the child's experience with other parental figures (Adamsons, 2013; Barthassat, 2014; Kalmijn, 2013a; 2013b; Schneebeil & Menandro, 2014). In general, it is expected that the father provides material subsistence, having, this way, an instrumental role, whereas the mother exerts the expressive role of physical and emotional care. It is not common, however, the acknowledgement that the father's instrumental role goes beyond material subsistence, covering the development of sports abilities, practiced in the moments of leisure, which teach how to be in a group and to obey rules (Krampe, 2009). Thus, the children have the father as a partner for the games and for the moments of fun, which usually dissatisfies the mother, when they emphasize their overcharge about the physical and emotional care (Castoldi, Gonçalves, & Lopes, 2014; Charles, Spielfogel, Gorman-Smith, Schoeny, Henry, & Tolan, 2016; Dessen & Oliveira, 2013). With the conjugal separation, the parents-children relationship changes. The mother usually maintains her centrality, but she must manage the father's and her current boyfriend or husband's participations. The father tends to decrease the time spent with the children and must manage his participation, based on agreements and disagreements with the mother and his personal commitment. In the phase of adolescence and adulthood, although the children have more autonomy, this pattern tends to remain, influencing the characteristics of the parents-children relationship.

The relationship between parents and children is transformed along the process, which has impact on family life (McKinney & Pastuszak, 2014; Parra, Oliva, & Reina, 2015; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Ponciano & Féres-Carneiro, 2014; Ponciano, 2015; Tsai, Telzer, & Fuligni, 2013). Owing to these considerations and to the characteristics of the research, we highlight the importance of differentiating and visualizing both the mother's and the father's participation the child's life, highlighting the influence of the conjugality and the separation on the parenting, along life. Especially, we consider the period of the emergent adulthood, as the interviewees report their experiences from the passing of adolescence to adult life of their children.

Method

Participants

Thirteen mothers – eleven separated and two married were interviewed, seven couples and five fathers – three separated and two remarried, totaling twenty-five interviews, and adding the participation of thirty-two people. The mothers and the fathers interviewed separately did not have relationships with each other and the interviewed couples were both parents of the same children.

The bigger number of interviews held only with the mothers is due to their bigger availability to talk about their children. After that, we have the interviews held with the couples, which also depend on the mother's organization to bring the father along, and, at last, with the fathers, who have bigger difficulty to be available, in general justified by the lack of time or work obligations. There was no initial determination of holding the interview with one or another, welcoming the availability of the people who volunteered. This way, the interviews commenced with the people who were available, characterizing the mother's numerical predominance. Noting the prevalence of a discourse which excluded the father as an active participant the children's lives, even in the interviews done with the couple, we have opted to conduct five more interviews only with the fathers, separated from the mothers of the children, trying

to actively find them. These last interviews enriched the research, forcing the rereading of the previous interviews.

The children's age group was delimited between 15 and 26 years old. Even though these families might have older or younger children, the focus of the interview was kept on the age previously defined. The age delimitation tried to comprise the beginning of high school, whose ending precedes entering university, characterizing the professional choice as the start of a commitment to adult life, and graduating, whose characteristic is the formal entrance to job market, tracing the steps to the financial independence. Thus, a larger age group than the one initially delimited by Arnett (2011) for this phase was comprised: from 18 to 25, with the understanding that there is no clear delimitation of when the adolescence ends and adult life begins, varying according to sociocultural parameters. The further criteria to the selection of the interviewees were: belong to middle class and be resident of the city of Rio de Janeiro, defining a sample whose characteristics tend to align with the expectation of bigger autonomy for the children, starting at the adolescence. The amount of 25 interviews was confirmed as this sample demonstrated to be sufficiently comprehensive and representative for the analysis of the subjects of this social segment's reports, without pretensions to generalization.

Delimitation, instruments and procedures

The interviewees were referred the involved researchers' direct and indirect acquaintances, after the disclosure by e-mail of the participants' characteristics, characterizing a convenience sample. With the referred people, contacted by telephone or email, and who agreed to participate, the interviews were scheduled at the easiest place for them, considering the necessary privacy. The research was approved by the Ethics committee of the institution where it was developed. The interviews were recorded, after reading and signing, by the participants, of a consented form, which informed the theme of the research, a preservation of anonymity and the possibility of getting in contact with the responsible researcher, if necessary. There was no refuse to participation among the contacted individuals and who accepted to schedule the interview.

We elaborated a half-structured script which approached the following themes: objective identification of the components of the interviewee's family (gender, age, education and occupation); history of parents-child relationship – from childhood to adolescence; characteristics of current relationship with children; perceptions as to children's life style; perceptions as participation in children's lives; expectations for the children's future and their relationship with them. The topics were openly built, so that the interviewees would narrate their experience freely.

The interviewees were named by identifying the components of their families with letters and acronyms, marking the position of each one in the family group, being M for mother, P for father, Fov for older son, Fav for older daughter, Fom for middle son, Fam for middle daughter, Foc for younger son, Fac for younger daughter, Fou for only son and Fau for only daughter. By highlighting a fragment, the abbreviations M or P are relative to the interview held only with the father or only with the mother, and the abbreviation MP is relative to the interview held with married mother and father. To this identification we added the marital status of fathers and mothers who were interviewed individually. The families were numbered from 1 to 25 and the abbreviations are followed by the correspondent number of each interview.

The interviews were submitted to the content analysis (Bardin, 2011), by making use of the categorical analysis, which consists of dismembering the text into analysis categories, establishing sense nuclei, described and discussed hereafter. For the election of the categories, according to the objective of the research, a "floating reading" was done, delimiting sense nuclei of each interview (structural transliteration) and, posteriorly, establishing relations between them, based on the repetition of some significant themes. Based on this reading, we established the categories whose predominance in the interviewees' speeches is affectively significant, relating to the description of the experience of being young parents. This election, therefore, did not occur due to statistic criteria, but clinical ones, for some comprehension based on the narrative, being in accordance with one of the technical possibilities of content analysis, proposed by Bardin (2011).

Results and discussion

After reading and analyzing the interviewees' speeches, two categories of analysis, which evidence narratives about parenting, conjugality and separation, have emerged and are numbered and described below:

1) Parent of young adults: stories about the mother's predominance. Emphasis on the woman as responsible for the relationship, whereas the man is responsible for the financial maintenance of the household. In this category, stories about each one's participation are presented, initially, from the mother's perspective, and then, from the father's perspective, highlighting the importance and effort to bring the father.

Father is very much when you take their little hand and they walk on their own, because, when it's a baby, it's all about peekaboo and he can't even hold it. On the first day, when he changed the diapers, he got terrible, he got almost sick. ... but he's been always very present, always there enjoying the kids... when Fov could already walk hand in hand with him, then he would go for a walk. ... but already two, three years old. (M8 - separated)

He (the father) has always treated the boys, especially Fov, as an adult. Then he would play chess with Fov. Then he would win the son, what? Three years old... kind of? (M15 - separated)

The interviewed mothers observe that the fathers have little sensibility to notice and manage the children's needs, since their first years, evidencing some slight improvement, in some phases of the children's development, when they start walking and from adolescence on (Kalmijn, 2013a; 2013b).

M- Well, he used to really like playing fight with them. He would roll in bed. There were punches and slaps. I'd get desperate, but they used to love this kind of game ... on the weekends we'd go to the country and then he used to like horseback riding. These things would be done with him. ... he used to bring this playful part of his.

P- I endorse everything you said. ... I used to work hard, you were the one who would look after them. ... actually, what happens is that I feel, I'm incompetent and, as the mother deals well with that, I get more relaxed. (MP11)

In the accounts above, the mothers describe a father who cannot look after the children and, because of that, participates in the games, leisure time activities in the relationship with the children, starting from the moment when they start being less dependent, along their development. Care and leisure oppose each other, in these mothers' speeches (Krampe, 2009; Warpechowski & Mosmann, 2012). In this sense, the woman, in her daily task of taking care, develops bigger ability to the understanding about their children's physical and emotional needs, managing to distinguish the different stages of life, their respective characteristics and needs (Hurstel, 1999; Roudinesco, 2003).

In the mothers' accounts, there is criticism and condescension in relation to the way the fathers participate in the moments of playing. There does not seem to be any acknowledgement that the father's role is also to help the children develop sports skills practiced in the leisure time which teach how to be in a group and to follow rules, out of the home environment (Krampe, 2009). The father, thus, may see himself as excluded and/or devalued, like in the father's account in the last extract above. Hence, we consider necessary to acknowledge the specificity of the father's role, so that it is better understood (Warpechowski & Mosmann, 2012).

I think that the woman is so much unconditional love. It can't be unconditional because if he messes up... Unconditional love is something that suffocates and it has this: the woman thinks her love will help her make the best decisions. ... And it's not, man, because love is selfish too. She wants what's better for her. (P16 - remarried)

The interviewed fathers acknowledge the difference and the mother's importance for the children's upbringing, but, at the same time, they also consider that there may be some exaggeration in the care, being harmful the children's good development, especially when they need to follow their own path (Hameister et. al., 2015; McKinney & Pastuszak, 2014).

We find out. I had no idea of what it was to be a father. I usually say that I've learned to be a father training, it's all about learning with practice ... We see ourselves having to raise a child and it's

something that is really hard. ... I had an advantage and that I used to use well, which is my mom. My mom was a grandma who would unite. So, though I was not competent enough to keep a nice relationship with them ... she would gather the grandchildren. And, then, she died and I had to learn to unite them without a woman. And that was the other challenge I had. Then I learned how to be a father and a partner and since the very start I wanted to have a relationship with them that didn't have to go through their mom and that was a cool thing I got. It was hard, but it was cool. (P21 - separated)

The father, though, knowing that he does not have the same abilities as the mother, according with the interviewees, must find his own way, making an effort to participate in the children's upbringing, since their childhood to their adulthood (Hurstel, 1999; Krampe, 2009; Parke, 2000; Parra et. al., 2015). For that, he can, initially, rely on the woman, even if his own mother and not his children's.

I don't want to take it on alone and I don't think he has to take it on alone either. We kind of share this. ... He's already worked in another town, spending the week away. Even like this, he's always calling. Always involved with her things, with her studies. (M4 - married)

There's some variation about what each one says about the other, according with the couple's stories and situations. The married interviewees' accounts highlight the importance of the mother's speech, being what helps motivate or not the father's participation in the children's life. The account above is from the mother who acknowledges the father, her husband, as active in their daughter's raising, since her birth. She claims that she could not have chosen another man, if it were not one who really participated in the daughter's life, pointing out that this is a woman's determination, preceding the man's position (Hurstel, 1999). This way, she acknowledges and compliments the father's participation, mentioning, along the interview, many examples that confirm that.

P- I often joke that they're going to leave me.

M- That he's going to be abandoned.

P- I'll get old and there'll be no one to take care of me.

M- Yeah... he ... says: "but they'll take care of you". My perception is that they'll take care of both. The same way.

P- I think that Fov more. ...

M- That's not the reality, but I think, sometimes, he feels a bit unvalued. But I think it's one issue of his. I take them, I hug them, I kiss them, I pull them, I lie on their lap, I cuddle with them and he doesn't. So, the physical closeness is much bigger with me. ... So, apparently, they cuddle more with me. They miss me more because I cook. They need me more for the managing of the house. And he thinks they'll forget him and it's not like that. ... None of them comes and sits on his lap, kisses him and I think he resents this a bit. Just like I think he resents that they talk more to me than to him, but I think he just doesn't seem open to that. ... (pause) I say it, I say it, I say it, I say it sometimes there's something like that but there's no exchange. And relationships are exchange (pause). (MP14)

M- That's not the reality, but I think, sometimes, he feels a bit unvalued. But I think it's one issue of his. I take them, I hug them, I kiss them, I pull them, I lie on their lap, I cuddle with them and he doesn't. So, the physical closeness is much bigger with me. ... So, apparently, they cuddle more with me. They miss me more because I cook. They need me more for the managing of the house. And he thinks they'll forget him and it's not like that. ... None of them comes and sits on his lap, kisses him and I think he resents this a bit. Just like I think he resents that they talk more to me than to him, but I think he just doesn't seem open to that. ... (pause) I say it, I say it, I say it, I say it sometimes there's something like that but there's no exchange. And relationships are exchange (pause). (MP14)

2) Separation: stories about the difference to the father. We present accounts about how marital separation may mean the distancing between the mother and/or the father and their respective children and the effort – especially the father's – to keep close.

She (Fau) was 19. Things started to go bad in the last five years (of the marriage). ... I thought I was masking things for her, but I wasn't. ... Until I split up, she came to me and said: "now I can bring my boyfriend back here again. With my dad it was impossible, that constant bad temper of his." Maybe his going away has also... made her feel freer. ... (Fau) doesn't interest him (the father), she's not

part of his life. I found it really strange because he was always very close to her and she to him, but it's impressive that when we split up they kind of distanced themselves or maybe there was this distancing already and we couldn't see it. ... (with her father going away, after the splitting-up) she thrived too. ... she felt relieved because she could do the things ... We're going through a bad time, yes, but... we're really united. More and more, we're more united. (M3 - separated)

There is some difference between the father's and the mother's positioning, especially after the separation. This difference goes through the stories of conjugality and of parenting (Féres-Carneiro, 1998). In order to exemplify the separated mother's speech, the account above presents the father's leaving as the determining factor for both the mother's and the daughter's liberation. It is said, as in other interviews, that, along the daughter's life, the father has participated only in the leisure, remaining with the mother the responsibility of caring. The father does not participate in the "liberation", development of the daughter's autonomy because, according to the mother's statement, he is distant, being considered little effective, especially, after the separation (Hameister et. al., 2015; Krampe, 2009; McKinney & Pastuszak, 2014).

We used to be good friends, we'd go out a lot, we used to get along. But I split up, he was twelve, when I split up with his dad and he suffered a lot with it. His dad moved to (another city). He was very close to his dad and he missed him and he blamed me a lot for the separation ... In the first year of high school, he solved to live with his dad ... He lived for two years with his dad. He failed at school. He didn't study. His father got a wife with three children and then he felt lost ... His father (today) is closer even financially, because his father never helped financially ... He comes to Rio and calls Fou out for lunch. ... yeah... I got the boring part of saying no, of criticizing, of telling off, of demanding and his father is always the one who says: "Oh ok, if that's not good for you" ... after ten years separated we have a relationship ... things settled down and we started talking more. Fou got more self-assured in his life too. He now has a masculine figure who he speaks to as an equal. (M1 - remarried)

In this example, the emergence of conflicts, which were intensified by the son's interpretation that the mother was responsible for the father's distancing distances mother from son. With adolescence, the conflict erupted, but decreased over the years. Two events have contributed to the decrease of conflicts: the son having lived for some time with his father and the reconciliation between the father and the mother (parental couple), indicating that the separation may be elaborated in other ways, along the development, modifying the parental relationship, and that transition from adolescence to adult life may be a moment of positive reformulation of the relationship, despite the conflicts (McKinney & Pastuszak, 2014; Ponciano, 2015; Tsai et. al., 2013).

... Fac ... came up with the idea to study Scenography and she asked my opinion: (I told Fac) "Today, the best major for you, ... I think maybe Production Engineering..." She heard me. She passed for ... And now, she came up with the news that she hates Engineering. ... she communicated to me that she was studying ... Scenography. And I said: "Well, you started studying Scenography, did an exam, passed told nothing to your mom". (Fac answers) "You didn't want me to do it." I said: "No. It's not that I didn't want. If you intend to do that for a living it's a bit complicated. I can't afford to support you your whole life." She would go by car, given by her dad, from (college 1) to (college 2). Then I said: "Oh! Am I the one to blame?" Then, she looks at me: "But you told me to study (engineering)." ... "But now I'm going to correct my life because you complicated my whole life ... I'm changing to Business. (M10 - separated)

Above, we present the mother's account which narrates the dialogue which she had with her daughter, who, at first, excluded the father about her professional and educational choice. The mother considers that the daughter managed to decide, independently from her, due the father's help who gave her a car. This situation portrays a common occurrence, especially between separated parents: the relationship with the children (parenting history) reflects the relationship between the parents (conjugality history), which, in this case, is of distancing. When trying to encourage the daughter's financial independence, the mother does not notice the relationship of emotional dependence established, which allows the daughter to consider the mother responsible for her choices. In that case, the father has a different contribution to the development of the daughter's autonomy by giving and sponsoring a car, which has facilitated her commuting to both colleges, without the mother's

knowledge. Regardless of the mother thinking about the daughter's financial independence, the father seems to stimulate more concretely the development of her independence, denoting a kind of participation which brings the daughter to risk in the world (Krampe, 2009; Charles et. al, 2016; McKinney & Pastuszak, 2014; Parke, 2000).

I usually talk with my friends about the three phases of the divorce, of the separation: phase 1, when you split up and it was the man's decision and then the woman thinks you're coming back. When she thinks you're coming back, she's nice, she's understanding, she wants you to be part, she wants your kids close, she wants you close to the kids. If you say you got a girlfriend, she even makes you take the girlfriend to her home and all, because she thinks you're coming back; when she sees you're not coming back, phase two, then she uses the kids against you. She might be a smart, mature person, with all, conscious, a wonderful person. In that moment, the person goes crazy. She turns the kids against you, makes a mess, messes up. (laughs) This is the time when the man has to stay calm and not retaliate and hope for phase 3, which is the phase of mourning, which, actually, is that thing, denial, anger, depression and acceptance. And the acceptance, sometimes, happens when the woman... usually, it happens when she meets another man. And I've been through that. I had to stop her. Once I was in the car, they were talking about ... (ex-wife's present husband): "Oh! He's our second father". Then I stopped the car and said: "He's your mother's husband. I'm your father, the only one. You only have one father, which is me." ... He can go away. I can't. I'll never go away from their lives. (P16 - remarried)

The account above summarizes the complications of the situation and demonstrates, by the interviewee's experience, the effort which the father must make not to lose his place. The separation and the remarriage are events which deserve attention, in order to understand how they influence the parents-children relationship (Féres-Carneiro, 1998; Hameister et. al., 2015). In that moment, it is important to highlight that the relationship with the ex-husband and with the current one is fundamental for the continuity of the good relationship between parents and children, especially, for the father, when he does not live with the children anymore (Hameister et. al., 2015; Sibertin-Blanc, 2003).

In both categories stories and situations narrated by the interviewees are presented. In the first category, the stories/situations refer, predominantly, to the initial years of the children's development, during which the mothers tend to be the closest ones. In the second category, they refer to, especially, the period after separation, in which the children are older, there is an increase in the conflicts between parents and children and the relationship with the father may be less influenced by the mother. In the interviews with the separated mothers, there is predominance of the assertion that the father does not participate in the children's lives since their childhood. With the separation, the distance worsens, consolidating the paternal distancing along adolescence and the beginning of adult life. The mothers have pointed out the father's lack of participation and have stressed his absence and/or failure. In the interviews in which the fathers were present, held with the couple, they had they had the opportunity to talk and tended to agree with the mothers, as to their little participation. When the fathers participated more, there was criticism from the mothers, which seemed to confirm their bigger ability to participate and, in that case, regardless of the marital situation and of the children's stage of development. We have observed in many accounts that the mothers describe their centrality along the children's development. But the father is present, even if it does not correspond to the mother's ideal. This way, both, as of the marital situation and its interference, may acknowledge and modulate their relationship with the children. Analyzing the father's effort is an important step for the understanding of the differences with the mother and how her contribution may be effective, from the dependence to development of autonomy.

Final considerations

We have highlighted that the parents-children relationship differs depending on the history of the parents' union and/or separation, developing different trajectories of involvement. By our interviewees' accounts, we confirm the mother's predominance, while we were able to observe the complexity of the

relationship with the children, when in our understanding we have introduced the conjugality history, which influences the parenting history. By highlighting the father's account, we have focused on the parental dyad with specific characteristics, which depends on the marital situation. We have pointed out equally that, even though the mother influences and orients the father's relationship with the children, his presence has a still little valued and understood specificity, being necessary to be better studied.

One of the parents' worries refers to the necessity to help their children grow. The interviewees approach that aspect in many ways, besides indicating the difficulties presented in that process. As a developmental task which culminates with adult life, in general, the initial search for autonomy surprises the family, generating anxiety and expectations, for which the parents may not be prepared (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). It is important to point out that the creation of an environment which facilitates the autonomy depends on the marital history, which interferes in the parenting history. In this sense, we have reached the objective of discussing the influence of conjugality and separation on parenting, highlighting, from the interviewed parents' historical account, the parents-children relationship along life and, especially, in the period of emergent adulthood.

There are, however, limitations which must be approached, besides highlighting indications for future research. Our study analyzes historical accounts, based on memory, not accompanying the process along the life cycle, which indicates the need for longitudinal studies. The comparison between married, separated and remarried parents has demonstrated to be important, but we have considered the need to draw systematic comparisons, devising a research instrument which approaches the differences and similarities between those groups of parents, discussing the different times or lengths of marriage and separation, which may indicate different stages. Besides, we have touched a discussion about gender, as to the difference between father and mother, which must be more investigated, in the different marital situations, besides researching also homosexual couples and parents. Another important gender distinction is relative to the dyads built by each father and mother and their son and daughter, which must be investigated in its specificity. In this sense, another aspect to be discussed and investigated refers to the recent change which distributes the power between father and mother, present in the replacement of paternal power for the family power, considering how this change occurs in the everyday practice of the father-mother-children relationship, and comparing the different contexts of Brazil.

In the phase of adolescence and the entrance into adult life, the pattern of parents-children relationship, lived in the childhood and marked by the influence of the conjugality, tends to last, with the predominance of the maternal management. However, we have concluded by highlighting the importance of visualizing both the mother's and the father's participation and the stories lived along the development, stories of conjugality and of separation, which influence parenting, so that we are able to elaborate theoretical postulations which help us understand the transformation experienced by the family along the life cycle, assisting, when that is the case, the unlocking of the individual and familiar development.

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