



## Parental Conceptions about Child Emotional Development\*

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**ABSTRACT** – Mothers’ and fathers’ conceptualizations of joy, sadness, anger, fear, pride and shame were assessed. Their beliefs regarding the importance of children’s manifestation of those emotions and the connection with the profiles of autonomy, relatedness and related-autonomy were also assessed. Sixty mother– father dyads with children up to three years old participated in the study. Questionnaires of parents’ conceptualizations of emotions were used. Most participants considered joy an important emotion to be manifested by children of their kids’ age (with an individual character motivation). However, anger, pride and shame were associated with older children. Mothers’ and fathers’ conceptualizations and beliefs were not divergent. The autonomous-related self model correlated positively with the importance mothers and parents attributed to all studied emotions.

**KEYWORDS:** emotions, emotional development, babies, beliefs (non-religious), autonomy

## Concepções Parentais sobre Emoções e o Desenvolvimento Emocional de Crianças

**RESUMO** – Foram analisadas concepções de mães e pais sobre alegria, tristeza, raiva, medo, orgulho e vergonha, bem como suas crenças quanto à importância da manifestação dessas emoções por crianças, além da articulação com perfis de autonomia, relação e autonomia-relacionada. Participaram 60 duplas mãe-pai de filhos com até três anos de idade. Aplicado o questionário sobre concepções parentais de emoções, a alegria foi considerada pela maioria dos participantes como manifestada por crianças na idade de seus filhos e importante (com motivação de caráter individual), mas a raiva, o orgulho e a vergonha foram mais consideradas para crianças maiores. Não houve divergência nas concepções e crenças entre mães e pais. O modelo de *self* autônomo-relacionado correlacionou-se positivamente com a importância que mães e pais atribuíram a todas as emoções estudadas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** emoções, desenvolvimento emocional, bebês, crenças (não religiosas), autonomia

Studies aiming at investigating parental conceptualizations might have their relevance based on the view that human development is a process derived from an inseparable intertwining of biology and culture (Cole, 1998; Keller, 2007; Seidl-de-Moura & Mendes, 2012). Therefore, individual development throughout the life cycle originates with characteristics that come from a phylogenetic and cultural history. It is shaped by the sociocultural context one lives in. This conceptual framework comprises issues related to parenthood, including beliefs, values, socialization goals and parental care practices.

The way mothers, fathers and other caretakers understand child’s development dynamic and the meaning they attribute to her behavior are shared by the social group they belong to, but also shaped by individual peculiarities. Such conceptualizations vary in historical time and according to cultural specificities. They are organized in broader categories that consist of cultural models or systems of parental beliefs. They are translated into child rearing practices and have an impact on the child development. Thus, it might be thought that “ideas that characterize cultures at a broad level and that should logically have wide ranging

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functions for the organization of human development and social relationships” (Harkness et al., 2000, p. 23), or the parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996), act as filters making the intermediation between cultural model and child development (Keller, 2007, 2016).

Regarding the emotional development (Denham, 1998), in particular, it is reasonable to follow the same track of thought, which means, conceptualizations and parental beliefs of children’s emotional development are mediators and translate cultural ideas and values, reflecting on rearing and care practices. They have an impact on the children’s development. That implies that emotional experience and knowledge about emotions are foster in the socio-cultural context in which the child grows up.

Whereas culture provides you guidance about tendencies on how to raise children and general decoding patterns and emotional exhibition that are influential in each context and time (Chan, 2011; Keller & Otto, 2009), parents, as primary agents in the socialization process, teach children, for example, how to express emotions and perceive them on other people. Parents’ attributions of meaning, attitudes and beliefs for their children’s emotions have been the object of interest and investigation of researchers and theorists who study socialization processes (Castro et al., 2015; Dunsmore et al., 2009). Dunsmore and Halberstadt (1997) proposed that parental beliefs and their emotional expressive behavior work together to help children create their own self- and world schemas about emotions.

Mendes e Cavalcante (2014) discuss the importance of examining parental beliefs and expectations about their children’s emotions, as they may provide an important way to understand socialization practices that influence the child’s emotional development. However, in the research made for this study, it was not found in the Brazilian scientific literature anything about parents’ conceptualizations of emotions and children’s emotional development.

Recent studies that examine how parents behave and react to their children’s emotional manifestations have reported differences between mothers and fathers (Brown et al., 2015), in the use of language in conversations about emotions (Aznar & Tenenbaum, 2013) and in the belief they hold about different aspects of their child’s emotion socialization (Lozada et al., 2016). Therefore, differences between maternal and paternal beliefs are worth of examination, as mothers and fathers may have different ways to face their child’s emotional development, as well as variations in what is expected from them in this context. However, as it has been pointed out, there is a gap in national literature that is also found in this aspect, the contrast between mothers and fathers about their children’s emotional expressions.

As parents act as socialization agents, promoting their children’s emotional development, it seems necessary to investigate, besides their beliefs about it, the way they conceive each one of the emotions that are part of their

and their children’s emotional experiences. Despite being considered the most important psychological phenomena in our mental life, for the quality and meaning of our existence, it may not be very easy to translate into organized ideas and put into words what one might understand for each one of them. As Izard admits (2009), even adults have great difficulty articulating an accurate definition of their feelings and emotions. Even so, it is important to know the way mothers and fathers understand different emotions so that those notions may act as beacons of thoughts and expectations when considering their children’s emotional development. It was not identified either national or international studies that could add to the discussion in this investigation.

Based on an understanding of development that is connected to what the ecocultural model of development proposes (Keller & Kärtner, 2013), it is justified to study parental beliefs and their implications to the emotional development associated with a conceptualization of self. From this perspective, Mendes et al. (2016) argue the relevance of investigating parental beliefs and child’s emotional development considering mothers’ and fathers’ tendency to value not only autonomy or interdependence (relatedness), but also the balance of both human needs (Kagiçitbasi, 2007). They also point out the lack of studies with that concern.

Parents’ tendency to value more autonomy, or interdependence, or even both reflect in the way mothers and fathers think and act regarding their children’s emotions. Keller and Kärtner (2013) and Kagiçitbasi (2007) indicate how cultural models lead to the development of different models of self with their own dynamics concerning the value of autonomy (self as unique and distinct; priority on personal goals; characteristic of post-industrial urban societies with high educational levels) and interdependence or relatedness (self as being fundamentally connected to other members of the group; focus on social roles; interpersonal relatedness and closeness; characteristic of rural milieu based on subsistence economy), what is reflected in the adults’ concepts and practices from that culture and, therefore, of mothers and fathers.

Thus it can be seen, for example, that mothers in certain sociocultural contexts consider important that small children smile and attribute such importance to the children’s need to express their emotions (considered a tendency to value autonomy, centered in the individual) and not so much to the relevance or importance of being friendly and kind to other people (considered to be a tendency to value relatedness, more focused on the group), as Mendes and Cavalcante (2014) report in a study done in Rio de Janeiro with mothers, grandmothers and nannies. It is in this sense justified the relevance of investigations with focus on analyzing whether, according to mothers’ and fathers’ concepts, the importance of small children manifesting certain emotions rests on a *self*-centered or *other*-centered motivation.

The initial phase of development has been the focus of many studies in the past decades and, according to Keller (2007), there are good reasons for such. With regard, in particular, to emotional development, evidence has indicated that in the first three years of life, a child develops emotional mechanisms that allow her to experiment and express a vast range of emotions that are present in the adult. Starting from basic emotions (Ekman, 2016; Izard, 2007), such as joy, sadness, fear and anger, and reaching the ones called self-conscious or evaluative emotions, as shame and pride, there is a path of ontogenies to be followed. The former are defined by Izard (2009) as processes generated by evolutionarily ancient brain systems that organize and motivate rapid responses that are crucial to addressing immediate challenges to survival or well-being. They have this characteristic at birth and as they develop, they become what he calls *emotion schemas*. As for the others, for the author, they are not innate and presuppose a construction based on emotional feelings allied with cognitive capacities, creating a more elaborated “emotion schema”.

Lewis (2010) proposes an emotional development model in the first three years of life. That period of time was chosen as it represents the main development leap for the majority of emotions that adults show. According to this model, throughout the first years of life such changes take place, so that, right after being born and until the third year of life, children may show a wide range of emotions.

Right at the beginning of life, babies already express certain basic emotions such as joy, sadness and anger (Cole & Moore, 2015; Izard et al., 1995), between the ages of two and three they reach a cognitive milestone that is responsible for their capacity to assess their behavior in relation to a pattern (either external, as a sanction or a compliment from the parents, or internal). That capacity gives origin to another set of emotions that have been called by some authors, such as Lewis, of *self-conscious evaluative emotions*. They include pride, shame and guilty, among others. According

to the author and results of reported studies, at around three years of age, a child has almost all the variety of adult emotions.

In this short period, the changes observed in this set of emotions and the way they are displayed are such that they go from a few emotions and their manifestations to many and highly differentiated. That, however, does not mean that, after this moment of the development, new emotions do not arise or that the ones that are already manifested do not become more elaborated. Assessing whether parents of children in this period of development, up to three years old, are aware of the improvement of their children’s emotional expression and the importance they attribute to that, it helps build up a comprehensive picture of parenting aspects that impact children’s emotional development. Those topics were not found in empirical studies.

Based on that set of principles, evidence and gaps in the literature, this study aimed at investigating, in a Brazilian urban context, in Rio de Janeiro, mothers’ and fathers’ conceptualizations of joy, sadness, anger, fear, pride and shame, as well as, their beliefs about the aspects of the manifestation of those emotions by children up to three years old. Thus, in terms of specific objectives, we sought to: (1) explore and contrast mothers’ and fathers’ conceptualizations about each one of the studied emotions; (2) to investigate whether mothers and fathers consider that children at their kids’s age feel and manifest the investigated emotions, testing for differences between mothers and fathers and between the different age groups of their children; (3) investigate the degree of importance attributed to the manifestation of emotions and why that is important, contrasting mothers and fathers and age groups of their children; and (4) to analyze the relationship between the degree of importance attributed to the expression of emotions and the tendency to value autonomy and interdependence.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample comprised 60 mother-father dyads with children up to three years old. Among the children, there were 20 babies up to six months of age, 20 babies between the age of 12 and 18 months, and 20 babies between 30 and 36 months of age. As inclusion criteria, in addition to the age of the child within the established age range, it was required that parents lived in a stable union, living in the same household. They were all inhabitants of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The mothers’ average age was 31,7 years old (DP=5,46) and the fathers’ average age was 34,6 years old (DP=5,3). Regarding educational attainment level, 7% of the mothers ( $n=4$ ) finished Elementary School, 22% were High

School graduate ( $n=13$ ) and 72% were College graduate or went to Graduate School ( $n=43$ ). 7% of the fathers finished Elementary School, ( $n=4$ ), 25% High School ( $n=15$ ) and 68% College or Graduate school ( $n=41$ ).

### Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection: (a) Questionnaire of sociodemographic data with items such as the age of the parents and their children, educational attainment, marital status, profession and current occupation and the sex of the child; (b) Autonomy, Relatedness and Related-Autonomy scales created by Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) in their version translated to Portuguese and validated by

Seidl-de-Moura et al. (2013); and (c) *Parental conceptualizations about emotional expression in children* Questionnaire based on the theoretical models in question and the objectives of the research. It was developed to be used in the current study.

The scales of autonomy, relatedness and related-autonomy aim to assess individual characteristics according to their conceptualizations of two specific dimensions: agency and interpersonal distance. Starting, empirically, from those dimensions, three trends in the development of the self are assessed: autonomy, relatedness and related-autonomy. These are the examples of the items that comprise the three scales: item 13 (autonomy) – “I do not like a person to interfere with my life even if he/she is very close to me”; item 15 (relatedness) – (reversed item) “I do not share personal matters with anyone, even if very close to me”; item 24 (autonomous – related) “A person can feel both independent and connected to those who are close to him/her”.

The *Parental conceptualizations about emotional expression in children* questionnaire is comprised of general questions, and subitems with options for closed and opened answers. In the item 1, “How would you describe each of the following emotions?”, the participant is asked to write a description for the six emotions: joy, sadness, anger, fear, pride and shame. Then, the following statement is showed: “Now, think about children at the age of your child, but not specifically him/her, and mark the boxes below according to what you consider of each emotion”. In the item 2, the participant should indicate to what extent he/she agrees (on a Likert-type scale of 1 – not at all to 5 – completely) that children at that age feel and manifest the six previously described emotions.

The item 3 displays the same structure of a Likert-type scale but using numbers to rate. The participants should rate how important it is to children’s life to be able to express those six emotions in question. And also, with a written justification, explain the score given to each one of those emotions. It was performed a thematic-categorical content analysis to all the answers to the open questions.

## Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

In this study, the snowball sampling method was used (for 8 months) for recruitment. The initial set of the participants was suggested by the members of the research group to which the authors and participants of other studies belong. Eventually, a group of participants was formed by the people who fitted into the inclusion criteria. In the initial contact, when the objective of the study and some main topics of the Participant Consent Form were explained, it was scheduled a meeting with the participant. The place, the date and the time for the meeting were set according to the participant’s preferences. The most prevalent place for the meeting was the participants’ home. Participants

met with members of the team, Psychology students, who assisted with the data collection and had been trained for that purpose. In the meeting, the participant signed the consent form and completed the questionnaires and the scales. The measures and procedures for the study were approved by the Ethic Committee of Rio de Janeiro State University (Protocol 010.3.2010).

The data, collected from the open questions in the questionnaire *Parental conceptualizations about emotional expression in children*, were analyzed following a thematic-categorical content analysis (Oliveira, 2008). The identification of thematic units and the categories of the meaning unit were defined *a posteriori*, after the reading of the text.

The following categories, which emerged from the data, were identified in the responses related to the description of emotions (conceptualizations): (a) Physical or psychological state with focus on the self (PPSself) – conceptualization that alludes to a certain relation with the body and its neurophysiological reactions, or subjective (internal and singular) psychic reactions with focus on oneself. Example: a sense of personal well-being; contentment; lightheartedness; feel oneself well and calm; (b) Psychological state or motivation with projection toward the other (PSMtother) – conceptualization that alludes to motivational elements and personal stimulation focused on the other and interpersonal relationships, families, or for life in groups, in society. Example: to be with your family; to hang out with your dear ones; to see my child well; to be at peace with people, with the world; (c) Behavioral manifestation (BMan) - notion that involves behavioral expressions and diverse motor actions/reactions. Example: when I play, to smile, to express good things; (d) Attribution of causality/origin to the self or to the environment (AttrCausal) – notion that involves either situations or elements of a social context or an environment, or a personal action in it, as the origin or the causes of emotion. Example: today in “Quinta da Boa Vista”, birth; a comfortable life; my work; (e) Not classifiable into the defined categories (NotClas) – the answer do not fit into the definition of any of the established categories. Example: everything; expanding; inexplicable; and (f) Do not know/did not inform (DnknowDnI) – he/ she did not know what to say or did not want to answer.

Regarding the justification of the importance attributed to emotion manifestation, such categories were registered: (a) Personal/individual character of motivation – justification related to the individual need to express emotions and feelings, and to foster child development in different domains. Example: for them to be happy and feel good; every feeling must be expressed; so they can fully develop; shape personality; (b) Motivation with the focus on interpersonal connection – justification involving the importance of interpersonal relationships, affection exchange, interaction with the other, or the other’s role in emotional expression or regulation. Example: so parents know what makes their

child happy; important for the relationship with people in the family; for the child to socialize; interact with others; (c) Generic character motivation (life, religion) – reasoning that involves motives of general nature related to life, religious, ideological convictions, and parental beliefs focused on these aspects. Example: joy brings happy things; for being positive; because there is joy in life, because a child must be happy; (d) Not classifiable into the defined categories – the response does not fit into any of the established categories. Example: sign of care; attention and affection; and (e) Do not know/did not inform – he/she did not know what to say or did not want to answer.

The identification of categories and the coding of the original text were done manually by the researchers with the use of the word processor of Microsoft Word. Then, the categories were entered into a database created in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 (IBM-SPSS) and analyzed with descriptive statistical procedures and association tests between groups. Relative frequencies were calculated, specifically, for the analysis of how often the categories were evoked in the description of emotions

and in the justification of the importance attributed to emotions. A chi-square test of homogeneity was used for the analysis of preponderant categories. Then, a chi-square test of association was conducted for the comparison of how often the categories were evoked between mothers and fathers and between different age groups. Mann-Whitney (T-test nonparametric) and Kruskal-Wallis (Nonparametric ANOVA) tests were used to compare mothers with fathers and the three age groups of children (up to six months of age, between 18 and 20 months of age and between 30 and 36 months of age) regarding the agreement on the manifestation of emotions and the importance attributed to it (Likert – type scale). Those tests were used in order to respect the statistical assumptions, due to the non-normality of the dependent variables.

Finally, Spearman correlation tests were conducted for the analysis of the relation between the importance attributed to the manifestation of emotions and the scores of autonomy, relatedness and related-autonomy. All the analyses were done with statistical software SPSS for Windows, version 20.0.

## RESULTS

### Evoked Categories in the Description of Emotions

In the analysis of the sample as a whole, considering both mothers and fathers, the category *Physical or psychological state with focus on the self* showed the greatest frequency of evocation of mothers' and fathers' responses in their conceptualizations of joy (42.5%), sadness (44.2%), anger (42.5%) and fear (40%). For pride and shame, mothers' and fathers' speeches concentrated on the evocation of not defined categories, corresponding to 38,3% and 39.2% of the cases, respectively (Table 1). A chi-square test of goodness of fit was used in order to assess if that prevalence had a statistical significance for each emotion. The results showed

a preponderance of one or more categories over others for all emotions: joy ( $\chi^2_5 = 73.60$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\chi^2_5 = 87.20$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\chi^2_5 = 84.10$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\chi^2_5 = 103.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), pride ( $\chi^2_5 = 73.60$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\chi^2_5 = 60.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Analyzing possible differences between mothers' and fathers' responses, it was not found any significant difference in the evocation of the categories in their conceptualizations of joy ( $\chi^2_5 = 4.68$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\chi^2_5 = 6.42$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), anger ( $\chi^2_5 = 7.15$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), fear ( $\chi^2_5 = 2.24$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), pride ( $\chi^2_5 = 2.23$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\chi^2_5 = 5.17$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Based on the result of the test, it is understood that mothers' and fathers' speeches about their conceptualizations of the six listed emotions do not differ, statistically, regarding the evocation of the categories

Table 1

Frequency of the answers of different categories in mothers' and fathers' descriptions of emotions Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Pride and Shame (N= 120)

	EFPeu	EPMoutro	ManCorp	AtrCausa	NaoClass	NSabeNI
Joy	51 (42.5%)	16 (13.3%)	23 (19.2%)	6 (5%)	21 (17.5%)	3 (2.5%)
Sadness	53 (44.2%)	10 (8.3%)	12 (10%)	11 (9.2%)	31 (25.8%)	3 (2.5%)
Anger	51 (42.5%)	6 (5%)	12 (10%)	14 (11.7%)	33 (27.5%)	4 (3.3%)
Fear	48 (40.0%)	8 (6.7%)	4 (3.3%)	11 (9.2%)	44 (36.7%)	5 (4.2%)
Pride	37 (30.8%)	11 (9.2%)	4 (3.3%)	13 (10.8%)	46 (38.3%)	9 (7.5%)
Shame	29 (24.2%)	7 (5.8%)	7 (5.8%)	17 (14.2%)	47 (39.2%)	13 (10.8%)



## Agreement on Children Feeling and Manifesting their Emotions

In mothers' and fathers' responses regarding how much they agree that children at the age of their kids feel and manifest different emotions, the data from Likert scale (from 1 to 5) were dichotomized to express agreement or disagreement. The points 1, 2 and 3 (not at all, a little and more or less) as they did not express a broad agreement, were classified as 'do not agree'; and the points 4 and 5 (strongly agree and completely) were classified as 'agree'. The results indicated that, most participants (94.20%) only expressed agreement on the manifestation of the emotion joy in children at the age of their kids. For the other emotions, the majority of the participants expressed disagreement (Table 2).

Comparing mothers' vs fathers' responses, this time no data dichotomization was employed, Mann Whitney *U* test did not indicate significant differences on how much they agree that children at the age of their kids feel and manifest joy ( $U= 1,564.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), sadness ( $U= 1,992.00$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), anger ( $U= 1,866.00$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), fear ( $U= 1,658.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), pride ( $U= 1,955.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) and shame ( $U= 1,687.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

With regard to children's different age groups (up to six months of age, between 12 and 18 months old and between 30 and 36 months old), Kruskal Wallis test (Nonparametric Anova) indicated that, in the comparison between mothers and fathers of children from zero to six months old and from 12 to 18 months old, mothers and fathers of children between 30 and 36 months old agreed with greater intensity that children at the age of their kids feel and manifest emotions of anger ( $\chi^2_2 = 8.10$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), pride ( $\chi^2_2 = 24.72$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\chi^2_2 = 30.63$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

## Importance Attributed to the Expression of Emotions

Friedman test (*One-Way* nonparametric ANOVA) indicated that the expression of joy was significantly

the most valued emotion among the others ( $\chi^2_5 = 182.22$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This result was maintained when the scores of appreciation of emotion expression of mothers and fathers of children from zero to six months old ( $\chi^2_5 = 87.84$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), 12 to 18 months old ( $\chi^2_5 = 53.67$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and 30 to 36 months old ( $\chi^2_5 = 52.62$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) were analyzed. Kruskal Wallis test indicated that mothers and fathers of children between 30 and 36 months old value more intensely the emotions of pride ( $\chi^2_2 = 13.02$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and shame ( $\chi^2_2 = 6.55$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) than mothers and fathers of children in other age groups.

It was not found significant differences in the comparison of mothers vs fathers on how they value the expression of joy ( $U= 1,652.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), sadness ( $U= 1,628.00$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), anger ( $U= 1,735.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), fear ( $U= 1,439.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), pride ( $U= 1,608.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) and shame ( $U= 1,586.50$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

## Evoked Categories in Justifying the Importance Attributed to the Expression of Emotions

When asked to justify the importance attributed to the expression of different emotions, mothers and fathers evoked with greater frequency responses connected to *Personal/individual character motivation* in their responses about sadness, anger and fear. In the responses about joy, the most identified category was *Generic character motivation*, and when they justified the appreciation attributed to the expression of pride and shame, the preponderant responses were *Do not know/did not inform* (Table 3).

The chi-square test of association did not indicate significant differences between parents and mothers in the indication of preponderant categories regarding why they think it is important for children in their kids' age to manifest joy ( $\chi^2_4 = 8.17$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), sadness ( $\chi^2_4 = 2.19$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), anger ( $\chi^2_4 = 7.65$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), fear ( $\chi^2_4 = 2.10$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), pride ( $\chi^2_4 = 6.83$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) and shame ( $\chi^2_4 = 2.76$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

It was not possible to make comparisons between mothers and fathers of children of different age group due to the high level of cells with expected value less than five, what violated the statistical assumptions of the chi-square test.

Table 2

Frequency of the answers in agreement or disagreement with the view of children at the age of their kids feeling and manifesting emotions Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Pride and Shame (N= 120)

	Children at the age of your kid who feel and manifest the following emotions			
	Do not agree		Agree	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Joy	7	5,80%	113	94,20%
Sadness	67	55,80%	53	44,20%
Anger	71	59,20%	49	40,80%
Fear	64	53,30%	56	46,70%
Pride	94	78,30%	26	21,70%
Shame	87	72,50%	33	27,50%

Table 3

Evocation frequency of different categories in the justification of the importance attributed to the expression of the emotions Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Pride and Shame

	Personal/individual character motivation		Motivation with focus on interpersonal connection		Generic character motivation (life, religion)		Not classifiable into the defined categories		Do not know/did not inform	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Joy	35	(29,2%)	15	(12,5%)	41	(34,2%)	9	(7,5%)	20	(16,7%)
Sadness	38	(31,7%)	13	(10,8%)	16	(13,3%)	25	(20,8%)	28	(23,3%)
Anger	46	(38,3%)	9	(7,5%)	21	(17,5%)	16	(13,3%)	28	(23,3%)
Fear	38	(31,9%)	10	(8,4%)	18	(15,1%)	23	(19,3%)	30	(25,2%)
Pride	33	(27,5%)	10	(8,3%)	14	(11,7%)	26	(21,7%)	37	(30,8%)
Shame	21	(17,5%)	10	(8,3%)	20	(16,7%)	31	(25,8%)	38	(31,7%)

### Relation Between the Importance Attributed to the Expression of Emotions and the Scores of Autonomy, Relatedness and Related-Autonomy

The results indicated a negative correlation between the scores of autonomy and the importance attributed to the expression of sadness ( $\rho = -0.23$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and of fear ( $\rho = -0.33$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Positive correlations were found between mothers' and fathers' scores of relatedness and the importance they attribute to joy ( $\rho = 0.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\rho = 0.24$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and fear ( $\rho = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Regarding the scores of related-autonomy, they positively correlated with the importance that mothers and fathers attribute to all the studied emotions, showing statistical significance in the bivariate analysis with the scores to joy ( $\rho = 0.25$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\rho = 0.46$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.36$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\rho = 0.40$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), pride ( $\rho = 0.20$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\rho = 0.35$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Analyzing separately mothers and fathers of children in different age groups, in the group of 0-6 months old, the results above do not maintained a statistical significance, except for the association between the scores of autonomy and the importance attributed to fear ( $\rho = -0.33$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In the analysis of mothers and fathers of children between the age of 12 -18 months old, the scores of autonomy maintained a negative association with the importance attributed to sadness ( $\rho = -0.56$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and to fear ( $\rho = -0.59$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Adding to that, they were also associated with the importance attributed to anger ( $\rho = -0.46$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and to shame ( $\rho = -0.32$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Conversely, the scores of relatedness showed a positive correlation with the importance mothers and fathers attributed to the expression of joy ( $\rho = 0.35$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\rho = 0.32$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.43$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\rho = 0.50$ ;

$p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\rho = 0.33$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In conclusion, the scores of related-autonomy of mothers and fathers in that age group were positively associated with the importance they attributed to the expression of sadness ( $\rho = 0.68$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\rho = 0.66$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\rho = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Between mothers and fathers of children from 30 to 36 months old, the scores of autonomy and relatedness did not show statistically significantly association with any of the six studied emotions. Only the scores of related-autonomy maintained the association pattern found in the other age group, positively correlating with the importance attributed to sadness ( $\rho = 0.51$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.44$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\rho = 0.48$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\rho = 0.53$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Analyzing separately mothers' responses, the scores of autonomy maintained negatively associated only with the importance attributed to sadness ( $\rho = -0.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and to fear ( $\rho = -0.29$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), similar to results found in the general sample. Regarding the scores of relatedness, those were positively associated to importance mothers attribute to joy ( $\rho = 0.30$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\rho = 0.36$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and fear ( $\rho = 0.44$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Mothers' scores of related-autonomy associated positively with the importance attributed to the expression of all emotions, result that was also in consonance with the general sample, with significant correlations for the importance of the expression of joy ( $\rho = 0.32$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), sadness ( $\rho = 0.54$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), anger ( $\rho = 0.53$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), fear ( $\rho = 0.56$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), pride ( $\rho = 0.41$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and shame ( $\rho = 0.53$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In general, fathers' scores of autonomy, relatedness and related-autonomy did not associate with the importance that they attributed to many of the emotions. It was found significant results only between their scores of autonomy and the importance attributed to the expression of anger ( $\rho = -0.25$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and fear ( $\rho = -0.37$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this section, it is noteworthy that if, on the one hand, the lack of studies addressing the issues approached in this investigation indicates gaps in the literature that make it difficult to discuss the results achieved, on the other hand, it underlines the relevance of the contributions that these findings may represent.

### Evoked Categories Describing Emotions

The category *Physical or psychological state with focus on the self* showed the greatest frequency of evoked responses from mothers and fathers regarding conceptualizations of the basic emotions investigated in this study (joy, sadness, anger and fear), while for pride and shame, mothers' and fathers' speeches concentrated on evocations that did not conform to any of the defined categories. Even though there are not any references that allow to corroborate those findings, maybe it might be thought that as basic emotions are present in the individuals very early on (or even from birth), and they are more frequently considered to have "focus on the self", there might be easier to elaborate content associated with them, but not as much as to self-conscious evaluative emotions, such as pride and shame. They might be considered as having a more complex character and being more dependent on situational circumstances, what makes an objective and univocal description or definition more difficult.

The prevalence of basic emotions evocations associated with the category *Physical or psychological state with focus on the self* may be understood from an attribution of meanings to those emotions that can be translated into states that are lived by the individual as something inherent to his intimate psychological experience (in his subjective internal field) and to the transformations or impacts felt on his body, and not as a shared experience. As Izard (2007) and Ekman (2016) clarify, basic emotions involve an internal body activity and a capacity for expressive behavior derived from evolutionarily adapted neurobiological systems and emerge early in the ontogeny. The aforementioned prevalence was present for both mothers and fathers. This result shows a consonance between mothers and fathers, from the investigated context, in relation to the object in question. However, it is also worth considering the possibility of being the result of a profile of mothers and fathers who were willing to participate in this type of study. Parents who are willing to ponder and talk about emotions and what they think about them.

### Agreement on Children Feeling and their Emotions

Most of the participants agreed about the manifestation of joy in children at the age of their kids, whereas, for the

other emotions, the majority disagreed. Perhaps a cultural trait in which it is strong the desire for children to feel happy might be considered. As Keller (2007, 2016) discusses, mothers from Western urban societies seem to incentive the manifestation of positive emotions, such as joy. As for the emotions, such as anger, pride and shame, that are considered negative and, to some extent, culturally undesirable for very small children, it was found that only parents of older children (between 30 and 36 months) strongly agreed that children at the age of their kids feel and manifest those emotions. This result is in alignment with what Lewis (2010) states about the moment of the development when emotions such as pride and shame emerge and are expressed by children, suggesting parental sensitivity to those advances in children's emotional development.

As for not having significant differences in the extent to which mothers and fathers agree that children at the age of their kids feel and manifest joy, sadness, anger, fear, pride and shame, it might be considered the same reasoning that was used for analogous outcome concerning conceptualizations of emotions. No evidence was found in the national or international literature to confront those results.

### Importance Attributed to Expression of Emotions

Based on what was found on the manifestation of joy, it might be thought that mothers and fathers of children of all ages investigated (including babies up to six months old) valued more the expression of joy than the other emotions, due to parental ethnotheories that favor the presence and manifestation of positive emotions by children. Not only do mothers and fathers think children manifest joy from birth, but also value their manifestation more than other emotions. This finding converges with what Keller (2016) argues in relation to families with middle / high level of education living in an urban environment.

In the comparison of age groups, it was only significant the higher appreciation of pride and shame manifestation by the parents of older children. It seems to adhere to what the literature shows about the development of those emotions in children (Lewis, 2010). The same way, as it was in previous comparisons between mothers and fathers, no significant differences were found regarding the appreciation of the expression of all investigated emotions, which refers to the argument made earlier. Regarding that, no evidence was found in the literature that could be confronted with those results.



## Evoked Categories in the Justification of the Importance Attributed to the Expression of Emotions

The category *Personal/individual character motivation* was the most evoked one by mothers and fathers in the responses related to the importance of a child's manifestation of sadness, anger and fear, whereas *Generic character motivation* was more frequent in the responses about joy. When they justified the appreciation attributed to the manifestation of pride and shame, the answers fell on the category *Do not know/did not inform*. Joy is considered to be the most important emotion to be manifested. The reasons for such importance are from various natures and that configuration of responses might indicate that. Various reasons have been contemplated. These include, among others, reasons associated with a desirable view of life and with religious matters. Those reasons are reflected in parental beliefs and according to them, taking, for example, some answers, "joy brings good things" and "a child must be happy".

For sadness, anger, and fear, the other basic emotions, one can resort, once more, to the notion that they are emotions associated to states lived as inherent to one's intimate psychological experience. The low percentages for *Motivation focused on interpersonal connection* category are noteworthy. In this category, the connection with the other and the social / family group would be privileged, which does not seem to be a priority for those parents.

Once again, it was not identified any statistically significant differences among mothers' and fathers' justifications regarding the importance attributed to children's expression of the studied emotions. Mothers and fathers seem to converge in their beliefs in that aspect as well.

## Relation between the Importance Attributed to the Expression of Emotions and Autonomy, Relatedness and Related-Autonomy Scores

The examination of the relations between the importance attributed by parents to children's emotional manifestation and the indicative scores of how much they valued autonomy, relatedness, or related-autonomy, reveals an aspect for which further explanations must be sought. The scores of related-autonomy, which indicate a balance on how much these two dimensions are valued, show a significant association with the importance attributed by the parents to all studied emotions. That suggests a profile of parents that esteem autonomy, as much as relatedness, and considered important that children express their different emotions,

even those considered to create possible disharmony in the group. A broader exploration of that result, by expanding and diversifying the sample, including other variables in search for an explanatory model, seems important.

For those parents who prioritized autonomy, it was found a negative correlation with the importance of sadness and fear manifestation, whereas those who valued relatedness more considered relevant the expression of all basic emotions, but pride and shame. It seems that the more autonomous the parents are, less they think it is relevant for a child to show that is sad or fearful, what might make sense as it suggests a bigger need of support and dependence *on the other*. On the other hand, more relational parents thought it was important for a child to manifest all basic emotions, but not those that involve assessing fitting into patterns, which generally come from a sociocultural and family context. It is odd that they do not value, for example, shame, which could be considered a more relational emotion, and directed toward the other.

Keller and Otto (2009) reported that mothers, in traditional social groups that prioritize relatedness, have socialization strategies that aim, since the beginning of the baby's life, emotional control with the suppression of negative emotions, like the crying, what might be associated with fear, sadness and discomfort. In the western urban society, middle-class families tend to greater autonomy. Such autonomy includes behaviors that foster self-expression and emotion expression, especially the positive ones, which is highlighted by way babies are stimulated to smile. Chan (2011) and Keller (2016), also report that those who have a more autonomous conceptualization of self value the expression of emotions, especially the ones directed toward the self, such as joy and pride.

In this study, the findings do not fully converge with what the authors state. It was seen that the more mothers were relational, greater was the importance given to the expression of negative emotions, such as fear and sadness, but not anger. What seems to make sense as anger is viewed as an emotion that breaks up the harmony of a group (Keller & Otto, 2009). On the other hand, more autonomous parents did not highlight the manifestation of joy as important, what contrast with the literature. Only the most autonomous parents stress the importance of expressing some emotions (fear and anger). The others (more relational and autonomous-related) did not consider important for the child to express any emotion. Mothers who valued both autonomy and relatedness highlighted the importance of manifesting all the emotions. Such results indicate differences in parents' gender regarding the attribution of importance of emotional expression, taking into consideration the models of self. Those results contrast with other findings that showed some equivalence between mothers' and fathers' views.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed at investigating mothers' and fathers' conceptualizations regarding joy, sadness, anger, fear, pride and shame. Their beliefs about aspects of the manifestation of those emotions by children up to three years old, in a Brazilian urban context, in Rio de Janeiro, were also assessed. In the connections that were expected to be analyzed, there were the ones that crossed the results of parental beliefs over emotions with the models of self prioritized by the participants. This study has, in a way, an exploratory character as it makes possible to identify issues that need more attention, further detailed investigations and a precise formulation of hypothesis. Very few studies were identified in the literature that could allow a discussion confronting the results, and among those, none were Brazilian. Therefore, it was not found evidence in the Brazilian population, from any of the diverse sociocultural context in the country that could allow the collation of the results. This way, this contribution appears to be admissible. As a whole, the results indicate that parents of small children were able to define the emotions that are present in human beings since birth, but not emotions, like shame and pride, that require some time to develop and imply a more refined cognitive development.

Parents seemed to agree on their conceptualizations and notions of children's expression of emotion, so there were no gender differences in their expectations and understanding of what had been questioned. Such convergence of conceptualizations and beliefs was not maintained when another range of variables was introduced in the analyses. When different models of self were considered, with a tendency toward autonomy, relatedness or both, differences

regarding gender were found. That apparent agreement between mothers and fathers on the way they understand emotions and children's emotional expressions needs to be taken with caution. Almost all the participants believed that joy is manifested by children from zero to 36 months and it was significantly the most valued manifestation of emotion. Nevertheless, when those aspects were analyzed considering the models of self, it was seen that the more mothers were relational or autonomous-related; more they valued the manifestation of joy. That correlation was not found in more autonomous mothers. Mothers, who equally valued autonomy and relatedness, valued the expression of all emotions, whereas the more autonomous, relational or autonomous-related were the fathers, the less they valued joy.

It seems unquestionable the need for further investigations that constitutes advances in what was sought in this study. The importance of investigations that assess socioeconomic variables such as parental educational attainment, parental occupation, and the type of family dynamic, with enough heterogeneous samples for the comparative tests is noteworthy. Those aspects constitute a limitation of this study. It must be highlighted the relevance to investigate and discuss methodological questions. Options of method, regarding assessment techniques and instruments to be used, in particular, for self models, can lead to disparities in outcomes for which explanations of another nature can be given. In Brazilian contexts, there is a promising research path to be taken for a greater understanding of parental beliefs related to children's emotional development and we expect to have contributed with some initial steps.

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