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The sociology of family-school relationships: social reconfigurations and new analytical and methodological perspectives

“[...] Be good students to be good parents”: parenting schooling**“[...] Sermos bons alunos para sermos bons pais”:
a escolarização da parentalidade**

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses parenting education, understood as an educational strategy implemented by mothers and fathers to accumulate information that allows them to make good investments in their children's futures. The work is grounded on an empirical study that analyzed written material on parenting education published in Brazil: 20 issues of *Crescer* magazine, 12 parenting books, and nine Instagram profiles. The analysis points out an envisioned public composed of women, primarily white, and from higher social classes. In particular, we see that the main characteristic of this contemporary phenomenon is its intensification and organization within a school form that places parents in the role of learners, establishing a rational and pedagogized learning for the parenting practice. The analyzed materials establish a parenting normative discourse that intends to shape children with abilities, competencies, and knowledge valued in school, such as resilience, flexibility, and self-control.

Keywords: Parenting Education. Parenting. Family School Relationship. Educational Strategies. Middle and Higher Classes.

RESUMO

Este artigo discute o fenômeno da formação parental entendido como uma estratégia educativa implementada por mães e pais para acumularem informações que os permitam fazer bons investimentos no futuro dos filhos. O trabalho se apoiou em uma pesquisa empírica que analisou materiais escritos de formação parental publicados no Brasil, a saber: 20 exemplares da revista *Crescer*, 12 livros sobre parentalidade e nove perfis do Instagram. Os resultados das análises apontam para um público imaginado composto por mulheres, majoritariamente brancas e de camadas mais altas socialmente. Em especial, vemos que a marca principal desse fenômeno na contemporaneidade é a sua intensificação e organização dentro de uma forma escolar que coloca mães e pais em uma posição de aprendizes, por meio do estabelecimento de uma aprendizagem racional e pedagogizada para a prática parental. Os materiais analisados evidenciam um discurso normativo

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para a parentalidade que pretende formar crianças com habilidades, competências e conhecimentos valorizados na escola, como a resiliência, a flexibilidade e o controle de si.

Palavras-chave: Formação Parental. Parentalidade. Relação Família-Escola. Estratégias Educacionais. Camadas Médias e Superiores.

Introduction

There are no instruction manual for children. The motto repeated by the common sense confronts the reality of magazines, blogs, YouTube videos, Instagram profiles, podcasts, groups on WhatsApp and Facebook, apps, forums, congresses, television programs, courses with consultants, coaches, and books that present themselves as manuals to guide parents and offer solutions on how to become the “best” mother and the “best” father, and how to “efficiently” perform their parenthood.

If it is true that since the 19th century there have been materials focusing on educating (mainly) mothers in different countries (Apple, 1997; Vilhena; Ferreira, 2014), including in Brazil (Locks, 2015), the contemporary phenomenon differs in some aspects. First, due to the volume and diversity of materials for parents, which unfold in different shapes and media. Second, these materials seek the voluntary parenting education of more privileged social groups that would already have economic and educational advantages secured in the national context. Finally, the central issue of this article, this “training” is organized under a school format that places mothers and fathers in the position of students within a discourse that calls upon a “new world” in which the accumulated cultural capital of this group is presented as insufficient to guarantee their children’s success. This conscious pedagogical work undertaken by parents on themselves would be the main aspect of this contemporary phenomenon.

Parenting education in this school model establishes itself as a long-term educational strategy¹ of a social group to guarantee its reproduction. In our case, fractions of the elites with a high cultural and economic capital that already have a privileged position in the Brazilian educational scenario but that see themselves as competitors for positions in the international scenario. Furthermore, this group is faced with a transforming world that, as perceived, continuously demands new competencies and skills, leading to insecurity about their children’s success and, consequently, their social reproduction. The game is not won. In this context of uncertainties, the dispositions and knowledge inherited and transmitted through the family are (or are presented as being) not enough by the normative discourses on parenting. To Lignier (2013, p. 53), the uncertainty about their children’s changes of “succeeding [...] motivates, in upper class families, a series of activities to reduce it [the uncertainty]”.

¹ We are guided by the Bourdiesian concept of strategy. Strategy is not seen as a purely conscious action but an unconscious dimension moved by the *habitus*, guiding the subjects’ practices. More than a rational calculation, the strategy would be a sequence of actions guided by the “practical sense as a feel for the game, a particular social game, historically defined” (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 81).

These activities demand progressively more money to be implemented. When analyzing the relationship between income and school performance in the United States between 1943 and 2001, Sean Reardon (2011, p. 91) discovers that “the achievement gap between children from high and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40 percent larger among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years earlier”, and this gap between groups is apparent even before school admission, in early childhood. Cultural capital is increasingly more mediated by economic capital. According to the author, parents with higher incomes tend to have higher educational levels, assembling the knowledge of the educational and professional systems with the economic resources needed to be profitable investments in their children’s future. Good investments depend on good information. The families’ cultural and financial capital would allow them to access an informational capital that would feed back their initial capitals and keep (or elevate) their social position. Hence, when perceiving themselves in a transforming world, we argue that these families would start to invest more diligently and with more money in different educational strategies, which would include their own education as mothers and fathers. In this scenario, guided by unconscious dimensions of a “feeling of the game”, parents from an educated elite would transform themselves into an audience for this normative discourse and translate their apprehensions regarding their children’s future into concrete and verbalized actions of self-education and overinvestment to guarantee for their offspring the dispositions that are not necessarily secured by cultural heritage and that demand an extra effort from the family to develop them, thus leading to the pedagogized structure of parenting we will focus in this text.

Methodology

Our discussion in this text is based on the analysis of materials for parenting education published in Brazil: 20 issues of the magazine *Crescer*, 12 books on parenting, and nine profiles from Instagram. All these materials approach the themes of parenting, parenting education, motherhood, and childhood². They were chosen due to their pertinence to the theme and public success, materialized by circulation, presence amongst the best-selling books on the topic, and number of followers.

The magazine *Crescer* has been published by *Editora Globo* since 1993; its monthly issues cost, in 2024, R\$ 25.00 the newsstand. In January 2024, the content moved exclusively online, costing R\$ 7.90 a month. To analyze the data, we selected the period between October 2020 and September 2022, in a total of 20 issues (*Crescer*, 2020; 2021; 2022). With the slogan “Life is better with kids,” the magazine presents itself as a “companion brand for mothers, fathers, and pregnant women in all moments,” which seeks and filters “the most relevant information about health, education, and behavior and [consults] the best specialists” (*Crescer*, 2020; 2021; 2022).

To select the books, we searched the term “parenting” [parentalidade] at different moments on the Amazon Brazilian site. The titles and abstracts were analyzed to assess the pertinence with

² Other studies, such as Apple (1997), Vilhena and Ferreira (2014), Locks (2015), Santos (2019), and Lupton, Pedersen e Thomas (2016), have investigated physical and virtual material in parenting education. The particularity of our work is the concern in analyzing the current normative discourse for parenting presented in these materials.

the research theme, thus compiling a list of 12 best-selling books (table 1). Some of these titles also appeared in the magazine *Crescer* and in the researched profiles. Two points stand out: the first Brazilian editions are quite recent, and there is only one Brazilian author (Elisama Santos, also a columnist at *Crescer*).

Table 1: Analyzed books

Title	Authors	Brazilian Edition
Bésame mucho	Carlos González	2015
The Whole-Brain Child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child’s developing mind, survive everyday parenting struggles, and help your family thrive	Daniel J. Siegel Tina Payne Bryson	2015
The Yes Brain: How to cultivate courage, curiosity, and resilience in your child	Daniel J. Siegel Tina Payne Bryson	2015
No-drama discipline: the whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child’s developing mind	Daniel J. Siegel Tina Payne Bryson	2016
Raising Children Compassionately: Parenting the Nonviolent Communication Way	Marshall Rosenberg	2019
The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read: (And Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did)	Philippa Perry	2020
Parenting from the inside out: How a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive	Daniel J. Siegel Mary Hartzell	2020
<i>Por que gritamos: como fazer as pazes consigo e educar filhos emocionalmente estáveis</i> [Why we shout: how to make peace with yourself and raise emotionally-stable children]	Elisama Santos	2021
<i>Educação não violenta: como estimular autoestima, autonomia, autodisciplina e resiliência em você e nas crianças</i> [Nonviolent education: how to stimulate self-esteem, autonomy, self-discipline, and resilience in yourself and in children]	Elisama Santos	2021
Screen Damage: The Dangers of Digital Media for Children	Michel Desmurget	2021
Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary Executive Skills Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential	Peg Dawson Richard Guare	2022
The Whole-Brain Child Workbook: Practical Exercises, Worksheets and Activities to Nurture Developing Minds	Daniel J. Siegel Tina Payne Bryson	2022

Source: Created by authors.

The digital facet of parenting education has many shapes. In this work, we focused on Instagram profiles of Brazilian content creators because it is the social network in which Brazilian users spend more time (14 hours and 44 minutes a month) and the audience is mostly composed by women (53%), among which 25% between 25 and 44 years old (Comscore, 2023), an age range in which we can expect a high proportion of mothers. Once again, the choice of profiles was guided by the research object: profiles with content focused on parenting education and, among them, those with a relatively high number of followers (Table 2).

Table 2: Instagram profiles analyzed

Profile	Number of followers	Content creator
@psimamaa	1.9 million	Nanda Perim
@leilianerochapsicologa	1 million	Leiliane Rocha
@criacao_neurocompativel	950,000	Marcia Tosin
@revistacrescer	878,000	Not informed/team
@pediatriaintegralbr	719,000	Daniel Becker
@paisefilhosoficial	553,000	Not informed/team
@tempojunto	340,000	Patricia Marinho and Patricia Camargo
@elisamasantosc	317,000	Elisama Santos
@thiagoqueiroz @paizinhovirgula ³	234,000	Thiago Queiroz

Source: Created by authors.

³ During the research, the profile changed names.

With the *corpus* defined, we initially conducted a floating reading (Bardin, 2020) of the selected material. From them, we built two analysis dimensions. On the one hand, we analyzed the production conditions and highlighted the characteristics of the speakers (columnists, writers, and online content creators) and the imagined public – deducing attributes of sex, race, socioeconomic and educational conditions. During the content analysis, we sought to recognize the normative discourse that emerges from these materials, listing the topics discussed and seeking to find regularities. Some recurrent topics emerged from this work phase: class, race, gender, scientificism, self-cultivation, cognitive and socioemotional development, discipline, play, screed, international facet, and family-school relationship. In a second phase, these highlights established analytical axes for a deeper reading of the material, in which key examples were selected, and we established relationships between the axes and the literature in the area. In this text, we bring some elements that permeate different analytical axes.

Parenting

The way mothers and fathers exercise their parenting takes different shapes depending on time, social position, education conceptions, scientific knowledge, and sociocultural values. Sociology will take social class as a key to analytically understand parenting and, within it, Education scholars focus on the relationship with children's schooling.

Within a political and economic scenario that places a great weight on individual decisions, Brown (1990) coins the term *parentocracy*. According to the author, this perspective would place the responsibility on mothers and fathers to make the "correct" education decisions to guarantee the best opportunities for their children. The weight given to parental responsibility distances from the idea of parenting based on basic care (e.g.: food, security, and hygiene) towards an intensive parenting (Vincent, 2017) in which parents (especially mothers) would be responsible for their children's success. To do so, mothers and fathers would implement a series of subtle and, often, unconscious strategies that would build an expanded horizon for their children.

In this direction, the works from Lareau (2003) and Lahire (2019) dissect everyday family lives and unveil strategies in different social classes. In the book *Enfances de classe* (which can be translated as "Class Childhoods"), Lahire and his team (2019) present the reality of 35 French children between 5 and 6 years old from various social levels to portray the weight of inequalities in childhood and their consequences. The investigated families "live at the same time in the same society but not in the same world" (Lahire, 2019, p. 13); they live, work, deal with money, choose schools, discipline, speak, read, have fun, eat, dress, and care in very different ways. Also based on Bourdiesian concepts and a long research with 12 urban families from different social classes and races, the North American Annette Lareau (2003) delineates two parenting models. On the one hand, the natural growth, typical of poor and working-class families, in which parents are responsible for their children's basic care, the children had a certain freedom in their routines, there was a clear generational hierarchy, a strong presence of the extended family, the use of directives when speaking, a relationship of embarrassment and mistrust regarding the authorities and school. On the other hand, in the middle-class concerted cultivation parents would cultivate their children's abilities

more diligently by investing time, money, and effort in extracurricular activities, the hierarchy was comparatively more horizontal with an emphasis on communication and rationalization in a model much closer to that expected by the school and feeling that school authorities would guarantee their rights, a sense of entitlement.

Considering these differences in parenting models, an imagined profile of family emerged when analyzing the materials. First, the families portrayed are mostly urban, composed of mothers and fathers, heterosexual, with biological, neuro, and physically typical children. The social class is brought indirectly, as the materials start from the assumption that the reading families can guarantee children's basic care, such as food, health, housing, and education. Furthermore, the family income allows financial space to hire babysitters, *personal baby shoppers*, and private health professionals, as well as extracurricular courses, national and international trips, and a series of products, such as expensive toys and electronic devices.

Regarding race, the representation of subjects is mostly white. For instance, when analyzing the photos that illustrate the articles from *Crescer*, there were 75% of white children and 18.1% of black ones in October 2020 (Crescer, 2020). Among adults, the proportion was 83.3% and 16%, respectively. However, we perceive a temporal change in these proportions. In September 2022, the images of white children fell to 63.6% e, and the black ones increased to 27.2% and, with the adults, we see 70% of white people and 23.5% of black ones (Crescer, 2022). Among the specialists, racial disparity is even higher. During the research period, the magazine *Crescer* had three black columnists (among 15). Among the Instagram content producers, there is one black and one brown professional. Among the book authors, only Elisama Santos is black and the single one to approach cultural and racial diversity. When searching the electronic versions of the books with the descriptors "race," "black," and "white," we found only one mention of race in Siegel and Bryson (2016).

About the caretaker's gender, we can say that parenting education is, in fact, mothering education. The predominance of women appears among content producers and imagined and real readers. Analyzing the drawing of the book *The Whole Brain Child* (Siegel; Bryson, 2015), there are 11 representations of mothers, seven of fathers, and one with both. In the October 2020 edition of *Crescer*, we see 15 women represented and three men. Contrary to race, we see no representation change (Crescer, 2020). In September 2022, there were 15 women and only two men represented (Crescer, 2022). We separated the first 50 Instagram followers of each profile researched into women, men, companies, or undefined (when it was not possible to classify). The profile @paisefilhosoficial had the highest percentage of male followers (34%), while @leilianerochapsicologa, the lowest (0%). The lowest percentage of women followers was @paisefilhosoficial, with 58%, while the other profiles had at least 70% of women, reaching 94% (@leilianerochapsicologa).

Based on these data, we can summarize that the public imagined in these materials is composed of women, mostly white, with relatively high income for the national standards, and educated families, considering the cultural goods indicated and the professions of parents portrayed.

Parenting education

The concerted cultivation parenting model typical of the upper middle classes and high classes mobilizes a school and para school market that expands in a diversity of offers and demands parents to know a complex and varied system. Families see themselves faced with an increasing offer of educational goods and information about childhood development, thus having to balance the responsibility for their children’s education with a sense of unease as to how best to ‘make sure’ children receive a ‘good’ education” (Vincent, 2017, p. 541). In this sense, informational capital becomes a trump that allows the prediction of the future and makes the family’s economic and cultural capital profitable. Thus, bringing Bourdieu (1998, p. 93) to the debate, through parenting education, mothers and fathers would seek “sufficiently updated information to know the ‘bets’ to be done”.

Parenting starts to be something to be built or, as in the title of one of the analyzed books, an “inside out parenting” (Siegel; Hartzell, 2020). Paraphrasing Lareau (2003), we would be facing a self-concerted cultivation for the concerted cultivation of their children. Parenting education would thus be a self-education through which mothers and fathers prepare themselves to act as “childhood specialists” that should “know and apply daily the scientific methods of children education” (Vilhena; Ferreira, 2014, p. 137) when actively seeking “information about what they believe to be the best practices to raise and educate children” (Vilhena; Ferreira, 2014, p. 142). A professionalization of mothering (Apple, 2006) and parenting and, ultimately, the professionalization of students’ mothers and fathers (Establet, 1987), which are called upon to “perform tasks, attend demands, and assume responsibilities” (Resende, 2009, p. 79) when doing their work as the father and mother of a student.

The metaphorical notion of mother and father work acquires a material shape when documenting the pedagogical efforts of families, the time consecrated to children, and the “emergence of a series of instruments and commercial services (books, guides, coaches...) that seek to guide and support parents in their educational role” (Van Zanten, 2018, p. 6). According to Vincent, Lahire, and Thin, (2001, p. 41), “in the middle and upper classes, parents – and particularly mothers – tend to become real pedagogues to transform the relation with parents into educational and pedagogical relationships”. Within these professional terms, mothers and fathers seem themselves coerced, as well as in other jobs, to seek an endless continuous formation to guarantee their updating, keep their relevance and, mainly, that of their children, faced by a world that is also portrayed as in constant change.

We bring here an example from the profile “*Tempo Junto*” [Time Together] that portrays well this sensation of insecurity towards the future and, consequently, the need for parenting education. In an email from October 3, 2021, entitled “How to prepare your child for the future,” the authors bring the headlines of news articles that show how “the work market has been changing thanks to digital transformation.” The argument continues with the presentation of an unstable environment, in which children should develop “abilities that make us humans capable of dealing with changes,” such as “critical thought, creativity, emotional intelligence, people management, common sense and capacity of decision, coordination with others (collaboration), etc.”. The reader is questioned about

“how to educate children in a world of constant transformation?”. The answer affirms the need for a “deeper understanding of children’s capacity and their true needs.” The tempting promise is that

With adequate information you will:

1. Be able to *prepare your children for the adult life* and raise emotionally and mature people.
2. Find a way to *decrease the fear of making mistakes* in the decisions.
3. Be *sure to make the best* for your child.
4. Establish a *more harmonious relationship* with the children (Tempo Junto, 2021, original highlight).

In highlight, the text also affirms that “parents are the first teachers of their children. Prepare yourself to be the best teacher your child can have”. After four days, the same sender offered by email the online course “Develop your children’s potential. Surprising (and fun) ways of preparing your children for the 21st century,” costing R\$ 358.80. Thus, an insecurity is created to (literally) sell a solution. The veiled threat is that if parents do not educate themselves, their children will not be prepared for the future.

As we can perceive, in this normative discourse of parenting education, mothers and fathers first have to be students to become their children’s teachers. As good teachers “before teaching, we have to learn. [...] *and be good students to be good parents*” (Crescer, 2020-2021, p. 79, our highlights). As good students, parents are incentivized, even before their children’s birth, to look for information and reflect on their behaviors and feelings, constantly receiving the indication of reading and self-improvement materials, through a normative discourse filled with injunctions established by imperatives to reach the desired ideal child.

A curriculum for mothers and fathers

This parenting education can be considered in a formal and explicit dimension in the normative discourses, a hidden or diluted dimension in the everyday practices and not necessarily verbalized, related to the forms of practices undertaken. The first dimension is established by the normative discourse of parenting education materials that dictates (or presents itself as dictating) the behavior of mothers and fathers regarding their children aiming to create dispositions, behaviors, skills, and knowledge considered desirable (and, consequently, profitable) in modern society and school. The hidden or diluted dimensions of daily practices are formed by the set of practices transmitted through generations and learned during the agents’ socialization, without necessarily being made explicit and verbalized. When associated, the formalized and the hidden dimensions form what would be the real curriculum of parenting education, which is effectively materialized in parents’ care and educational practices when raising and educating each child.

The child imagined by the normative materials gathers several characteristics and skills, such as curiosity, resilience, creativity, ability to handle emotions, imagination, autonomy, optimism, empathy, sensibility, generosity, a sense of justice, independence, they are cultured, cosmopolitan, and happy. Some authors even list these characteristics:

[...] there are four abilities that everyone needs to develop to socialize and to behave well. They are: 1) Ability to tolerate frustrations, 2) Flexibility, 3) Ability to solve problems, 4) Capacity to see and feel others’ viewpoints (Perry, 2020, p. 202).

[...] characteristics that we expect to see in our children: decision making and quality planning; control over emotions and body; self-understanding; empathy; morality (Siegel; Bryson, 2015, p. 71).

The scheme we develop consists of 11 abilities: 1) Response inhibition, 2) Work memory, 3) Emotional control, 4) Sustained attention, 5) Task initialization, 6) Planning/prioritization, 7) Organization, 8) Time management, 9) Persistence guided by goals, 10) Flexibility, 11) Metacognition (Dawson; Guare, 2022, p. 21).

Furthermore, there is an emphasis on mediation through dialogue to establish discipline and incentivize children’s participation and critical spirit, as in Lareau’s (2003) concerted cultivation. According to Lahire (2019, p. 1.002), language itself is a capital and a window to acquire new trumps; this way, “the children whose parents show attention to reasoning and questioning can take advantage of this in the school scenario.” After all, when analyzing the lists of abilities and competencies preached by this parenting education curriculum, their similarities with school demands are evident.

This parenting curriculum for themselves and their children seems to be guided by the large worldwide education trends, defined by multilateral and government bodies, as well as the third sector, which establish the wider dominant educational discourse. The material analyzed unanimously preaches the perspective of early childhood as the main window of developmental opportunities, as well as strongly rooted discourse in mental and physical health and neuroscience. This specific model of caring for childhood is disseminated by a number of documents and programs of parent education worldwide by the great international and national bodies, such as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Health Ministry of Brazil⁴. Similarly, we see the emphasis on the so-called *soft skills* or socioemotional competencies also presented by the international bodies and reflected in Brazilian documents for childhood and education, such as the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (ECA - Child and Adolescent Statute), the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC - Common National Curriculum Framework) and school curricula (Luciani, 2022). That is, the formal curriculum of parenting education seems to reflect the school curriculum.

School form

Based on what was discussed so far, we can perceive that this parenting education acquires a school form that unveils and formalizes practices, contents, and objectives (Vincent; Lahire; Thin,

⁴ Internationally, UNICEF publishes reports and booklets, promotes online courses, keeps a WhatsApp group, and has a specific site (<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/>) about parenting, thus influencing public policies worldwide. As examples, we can mention the national program *Criança Feliz* [Happy Child] and, from Ceará, the *Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil* (PADIN- Support Program for Childhood Development), which offers house visits and guidance for low-income families. Fonseca (2012, p. 14) questions this standardization of parenting because it establishes a “natural true, timeless, in which the various national circumstances would have little relevance”.

2001). When opposing themselves to the social forms of transmitting knowledge about childhood passed through generations and between peers, the materials of parenting education will code and systematize “certain knowledge that earned their coherence in/through writing (by a work of classification, division, articulation, establishment of relations, comparison, hierarchicalization, etc.)” (Vincent; Lahire; Thin, 2001, p. 29). The formation that took place with the family starts to be perceived as insufficient for the world their children will live, creating an appeal for parents to educate themselves to play their roles, even within a format organized by a school model.

Hence, the written material of parenting education, mainly the analyzed books, seems to be real didactic materials for this “schooling” of mothers and fathers. They present themselves as having “an approach [that] includes scientific information, practical tips, and factual knowledge” (Siegel; Hartzell, 2020, p. 10), aiming to “share with you [reader] what is relevant when the topic is raising children” (Perry, 2020, p. 15) or disseminating “methods [...] [that worked] with thousands of children in the school environment, as well as at home with the family” (Dawson; Guare, 2022, p. 8). As stated in the preface of the Brazilian version of the book *The Whole Brain Child* (Siegel; Bryson, 2015), we are faced with a “real school for parents.”

The language and the organization of many of these books also show this pedagogization of parenting. The tone given in several of them is of dialogue, full of questions and answers, with authors presenting themselves in the first person and as mothers and fathers, which seeks to create empathy and identification with the reader. However, they also make their positions as experts clear by presenting their resumes, academic titles, and success cases.

This position of scientific authority is reinforced by the bibliographical references in some of these books, similar to didactic materials and academic works. In *Parenting from the Inside Out* (Siegel; Hartzell, 2020), in the subsection “Spotlight on Science,” the authors sum up scientific works, and at the end of each chapter, other works are listed under the title “For more information.” Dawson and Guare (2022) presented a commented bibliography with 27 works, in addition to indicating online materials. González’s (2015) bibliography, in *Bésame mucho*, has 94 references of books and scientific articles, not much close to Desmurget’s (2021) 67 pages of bibliographical references. Besides stimulating parents to continue their self-formation process, the extensive bibliographies can be seen as an argument of authority.

The pedagogical mediation of content goes through strategies, such as the organization by points, explanatory tables, the book division into short and subdivided chapters, chapter summaries, the use of images and cartoons to illustrate and facilitate understanding. As in school, the internalization of knowledge involves self-reflection through the “multiplication and repetition of exercises, whose role is to learn and to learn following the rules” (Vincent; Lahire; Thin, 2001, p. 38). Therefore, some books will invite parents to answer questionnaires and questions and fill in tables to form themselves better and, consequently, form their children. In fact, the book *The Whole Brain Child* (Siegel; Bryson, 2015) has a companion *workbook* (written in English on the Brazilian cover) entitled *The Whole Brain Child Workbook* (Siegel; Bryson, 2022), in which they resume the content of the previous book adding activities for caregivers, as well as in other books analyzed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Exercises for parents

EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS	
Read each item and then rate how well you think it describes you. Then add the three scores in each section.	
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Tend to disagree	3
Neutral	4
Tend to agree	5
Agree	6
Strongly agree	7
Your score	
1. I don't jump to conclusions.	_____
2. I think before I speak.	_____
3. I don't take action without having all the facts.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____	
4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details.	_____
5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do.	_____
6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____	

Exercise: Where does this emotion come from?

The next time you feel anger towards your child (or any other overly charged emotion), rather than unthinkingly responding, stop to ask yourself: Does this feeling wholly belong to this situation and my child in the present? How am I stopping myself seeing the situation from their standpoint?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTAL SELF-REFLECTION
1. What was it like growing up? Who was in your family?
2. How did you get along with your parents early in your childhood? How did the relationship evolve throughout your youth and up until the present time?
3. How did your relationship with your mother and father differ and how were they similar? Are there ways in which you try to be like, or try not to be like, each of your parents?

Creating Connection	Losing Connection
Eye Contact: <i>Getting down to my child's level (or better yet, below his level) and looking into his eyes while I talk to him helps him feel safe and that I am not a threatening presence.</i>	Eye Contact: <i>Standing over him while I look down at him makes me look huge and imposing. Whatever I say from this position communicates threat to him, and he automatically wants to defend himself.</i>
Facial Expression (example: "soft" eyes, relaxed face...)	Facial Expression (example: frown, pursed lips, aggressive looks...)
Tone of Voice (example: soft, comforting, calm...)	Tone of Voice (example: tense, loud, angry...)

Sources: Dawson and Guare (2022, p. 58), Perry (2020, p. 24), Siegel and Hartzell (2020, p. 163), and Siegel and Bryson (2022, p. 31).

Parents are stimulated to share these types of information and expand this formation to other caretakers. For instance, at the end of the book *The Whole Brain Child* (Siegel; Bryson, 2015), the authors present a “refrigerator sheet”. This material sums up the book into two pages to be cut, copied, and placed “on the refrigerator, so that you and everyone who loves your kids – parents, babysitters, grandparents, and so on – can work together on behalf of your children’s overall well-being” (Siegel; Bryson, 2015, p. 20). Similar to the relationships between adults and children, “it is evident the propensity to transform each moment into an education moment, each activity of the child into an educational activity” (Vincent; Lahire; Thin, 2001, p. 43), we can also see here this pedagogization of the adults’ everyday lives. Any time is a good time to get better, even when opening the refrigerator.

What about the school?

As we have seen throughout the text, parenting education in the analyzed models presupposes families with a high cultural capital to select, read, and understand the concepts presented. Furthermore, it implies parents with an economic capital that can pay for these materials and the conditions to implement their informed choices and decisions, and the available time to put them into practice. Considering the Brazilian reality, a mother with a low educational level has fewer possibilities of asserting her opinions or even clearly expressing her doubts, which can hinder the children’s school service. Moreover, her chances of choosing the school and extracurricular activities are restricted. Therefore, the type of parenting preached in the formative materials would be representative of the upper classes and be reflected mainly in Brazilian private schools.

Within this scenario, the first point to highlight is that, among the analyzed materials, some parenting education books point out that teachers and educators, together with mothers and fathers, are the public. The pedagogical competencies from the family and educational/professional spheres are placed under the same theoretical and practical “umbrella” are placed.

Whether you’re a parent, grandparent, teacher, therapist, or other significant caregiver in a child’s life, we’ve written this book for you (Siegel; Bryson, 2015, p. 17).

[...] it [book] intends to be accessible to all, parents, health professionals, students, etc. (Desmurget, 2021, p. 12).

A second point is that parenting education can be observed and promoted in and by the schools. Vincent, Lahire, and Thin (2001, p. 42), when reflecting on extracurricular activities, argue that “[...] parallel to the work with the children, it is frequently seen the need to act together with the parents to ‘educate them,’ proposing to them workshops and formation meetings, such as food, hygiene, sleep, school work...”. Based on parents’ meetings, lectures, notes in the agendas, conversation circles, workshops, and other events, the schools teach the families about their methodologies, the content worked, and what they consider an adequate (or inadequate) behavior from the children and their parents. Thus, the school would (in)form mothers and fathers within its models, in dialogue, or competition with the formation material available in the market.

As seen, the parenting curriculum analyzed based on the informative materials is strongly similar to the schools’ formal curriculum. Consequently, these “good-student” families could (or, at least, would have the necessary theoretical information) prepare their children within the expectations desired, even before the obligatory admission to school. The list of abilities and competencies aimed at the children in the formative materials is extensive, among them, self-reliance, confidence, independence, autonomy, control of the emotions and the body, and the ability to dialogue. A child with these abilities and knowledge would reach school with a series of dispositions accepted and valued in the school context. When precociously inculcated and within a familiar, domestic, and everyday environment, these dispositions would be incorporated into the children’s *habitus*, naturalizing this parenting pedagogical work carried out in themselves and the child. These “cultivated” children would reach school with a series of pre-dispositions that would ease their adaptation in this space, a “school readiness,” and an “emerging sense of entitlement” (Lareau, 2023) and belonging.

On the other hand, schools are faced with “professional mothers and fathers” who are informed and armed with knowledge on childhood development, psychology, neuroscience, educational methodology, and others. When accumulating this type of information, parents would appropriate themselves to knowledge and jargon in the area and can discuss in a more horizontal way (perhaps even a supposed superiority) with Education professionals. Hence, parenting knowledge can be used as an instrument of power, a trump, to guarantee what they consider to be the best service for their children. This perspective is very clear in the chapter entitled “Working with the school”, in the book *Smart by Scattered* (Dawson; Guare, 2022).

For a genuine improvement to occur, *everyone needs to work together*. [...] Starting from the premise that everyone needs to try harder, we recommend you talk with your children’s teachers [...]. If the teacher does not think it is their responsibility to provide individual support, try indicating this book, or another one we wrote specifically for educators” (Dawson; Guare, 2022, p. 301, highlight in the original).

Throughout this book, the authors constantly call upon the figure of teachers to establish interventions with the child, together with the parents. Based on a discourse of partnership in which “everyone needs to work together,” parents are advised to advise their children’s educators, inverting the roles usually established. Situations such as this might raise conflicts in the relationship family-school and disrupt the partnership discourse between these two instances. Would the schools be prepared for these questioning families? What is the place of these possible interventions demanded by parents?

Final remarks

Parenting goes through an explicit, intentional, and pedagogized movement. Mothers and fathers are incited to place themselves as learners and, in a rationalized and systematized fashion, learn how to acceptably play their social roles in a transforming world. Hence, creating professional parents, who are pupils that study, through different means, a type of formal curriculum in several specialists present their voices. These parents should make school-type exercises to reflect and

incorporate the acquired knowledge in a sort of parenting that reaches schools, which receive this (in)formed families and the children prepared within this mode.

Therefore, we understand the phenomenon of parenting education as an educational strategy of parents from fractions of the educated elites. Motivated by an unconscious dimension of the “feeling of the game”, these families would see themselves faced with discourses that, on one hand, point out that their knowledge and their dispositions transmitted through generations and between peers are insufficient and, on the other hand, stress the need to seek an informational capital based on formal and updated knowledge on childhood development, psychology, education, among others, so as to make good investments on themselves and then on their children’s future. The novelty in this scenario is the emergence of a conscious discourse that aims to shape the subjects to become mothers and fathers within contemporary ideals, hoping that these actions will result in successful children in a globalized world and an uncertain future. Hence, we see the emergence of a rationalized intentionality that seeks to master and order the parenting practices to increase the chance of guaranteeing future social positions.

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