

## Trends in the schooling of São Paulo elites in the 20th and 21st Centuries

### *Tendências na escolarização das elites paulistanas nos Séculos XX e XXI*

Maria da Graça Jacintho Setton\*  
Paulo Rogério da Conceição Neves\*

#### ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to problematize questions about the attendance in basic education of four generations of the elite of São Paulo in the 20th and 21st centuries. This is the analysis of data collected in research *Pensamento e Práticas de Cultura da Elite Paulistana*<sup>1</sup>. Based on a questionnaire and interviews carried out between 2018 and 2019, the intention is to analyze the reasons for the choice and the representations about schools. The main hypothesis is based on Pierre Bourdieu's relational theory of groups, among others, and its subjective and objective ways of building the dispositions of a habitus. To develop the argument, we will make a relational exercise between types of institutions frequented by the researched subjects and their children, remembering the categories of frameworks, time, modalities and cultural dispositions that emerge from them. Through aspects such as the image of establishments on institutional sites, date of foundation, pedagogical objectives, affiliations with international and religious projects, we have observed elements of such processes more closely. As a result, we can say that in addition to the existence of a close correspondence between school selections and family projects, always according to the time of belonging to the elites and sectors of the economy, there would be a tendency since the beginning of the last century for schools with links in the outside.

*Keywords:* school socialization, *habitus*, elites, reproduction, internationalization.

Translated by: Silvia Iacovacci. Email: [siacovacci@gmail.com](mailto:siacovacci@gmail.com)

\* Universidade de São Paulo. São Paulo, Brasil. E-mail: [gracaset@usp.br](mailto:gracaset@usp.br) <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7306-9293>; E-mail: [pneves@alumni.usp.br](mailto:pneves@alumni.usp.br) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4155-2675>

<sup>1</sup> The research started in 2017, coordinated by Prof. Maria da Graça Jacintho Setton, in the Socialization Practices Group, at the Faculty of Education-USP. The data set that supports the study is not available due to the anonymity of the interviewees. The research follows all the ethical procedures foreseen in qualitative research.

## RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é problematizar questões sobre a frequência no ensino básico de quatro gerações da elite paulistana dos séculos XX e XXI. Trata-se de análise dos dados recolhidos na pesquisa *Pensamento e Práticas de Cultura da Elite Paulistana*<sup>2</sup>. Com base em um questionário e entrevistas realizadas no período de 2018 a 2019, a intenção é analisar os motivos da escolha e as representações sobre as escolas. A hipótese principal apoia-se na teoria relacional dos grupos de Pierre Bourdieu, entre outras, e suas formas subjetivas e objetivas de construção de disposições de um *habitus*. Para desenvolver o argumento, faremos um exercício relacional entre tipos de instituições frequentadas pelos indivíduos pesquisados e seus filhos, lembrando as categorias de *quadros, tempo, modalidades e disposições* de cultura que se depreendem delas. Por intermédio de aspectos como a imagem dos estabelecimentos em sites institucionais, data de fundação, objetivos pedagógicos, filiações com projetos internacionais e religiosos, observamos de perto elementos de tais processos. Como resultados, sinalizamos que além de existir uma estreita correspondência entre as seleções escolares e os projetos familiares, sempre de acordo com o tempo de pertencimento às elites e os setores da economia, existiria uma tendência, desde o início do século passado, por escolas com vínculos no exterior.

*Palavras-chave:* socialização escolar, *habitus*, elites, reprodução, internacionalização

## Introduction

The perception that schools perform a reproductive “function” in society is not new; moreover, the finding that schools tend to reinforce the *status quo* should not be particularly surprising, since schools are generally founded to train and socialize young people into the material and symbolic world of their parents’ generation. An analytical perspective focused on the reproduction of social classes suggests that the effects of this socialization may be even more profound, in that students come to believe in the desirability of their class position within society. (COOKSON JR; PERCELL, 2003, p. 104)

The sociology of education in Brazil has a wide and fruitful production in the field of studies on schooling. Since the last quarter of the last century, until the subsequent publications of books and articles on the subject, the main orientation was and is to analyze the social origin of the students, their school performance, and the type of educational establishment to which they are attached. Certainly, the relationship between family and school has always been and still is on the radar of national and international researchers. A large production strives to identify and analyze family strategies

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<sup>2</sup> A pesquisa iniciada em 2017, coordenada pela Profa. Maria da Graça Jacintho Setton, no Grupo Práticas de Socialização, na Faculdade de Educação-USP. O conjunto de dados que dá suporte ao estudo não está disponível devido ao anonimato dos entrevistados. A investigação segue todos os procedimentos éticos previstos em pesquisas qualitativas.

of the upper, middle, and lower classes, which gives us a significant contribution (ROMANELLI; NOGUEIRA; ZAGO, 2013; PAIXÃO; ZAGO, 2007). Nevertheless, the significant number of articles and books published on the topic *family/school*, as well as the limits of this study prevent us from making a satisfactory synthesis of all. However, we will make brief considerations about some of these contributions, in order to recover ideas already put forward and dialogue with them based on the research data.

As Brandão and Lellis (2003) would say, “the sociology of education lacks greater clarity about the characteristics of the cultural and social practices of different sectors of the elites. In other words, the focus on the strategies and mechanisms used by the elites in their choices of schools still remains shallow. On the other hand, the book organized by Almeida and Nogueira, in 2003, was a pioneering and successful attempt in this research universe. It is an immersion in empirical studies in which the diversity of dominant national and international fractions, and their respective expectations in relation to schooling, demonstrate the richness of plausible research objects. It would be possible to cite here some more investigations, such as that of Nogueira and Aguiar (2008), Almeida (2009), Brandão and Paes Carvalho (2010), Quaresma (2012, 2015), Ziegler (2014), Gessaghi (2016), among others, all forwarding reflections that advance and serve as support in the debate. It would therefore be worth an effort to contribute to this research agenda.

Moreover, the intention to investigate sectors of the São Paulo elite responds to research interests of many years. It is about problematizing and relating habits, values, and cultural practices of fractions of the dominant groups in order to understand the process of constitution of the *habitus* of these segments in the current society of São Paulo. *Habitus* is understood as the set of cultural dispositions that guide the objective and subjective choices of social agents, among them school choices (BOURDIEU, 2007 [1979]).

In this article, the goal is to bring a reflection in which lights are placed on the schooling choices of São Paulo’s dominant factions based on three variables, as a cultural practice. The first one refers to the choices of educational institutions based on the time of belonging to the elites, the second variable points out a cut considering the sectors of the economy to which the researched people belong, and the third variable is related to age. It is possible that such a comparison gives us opportunities to verify the relationship between the education of the dominant classes and a probable social mobility through schooling. The intensive and selective use of certain schools may also mean that families that have been less long-time members of the influential groups do not feel competent to guarantee their reproduction and try to attenuate their lacks, with a specific composition of *capitals*, according to the Bourdieusian conceptualization, as we will see below. Put another way, each school will be distinguished from the others by a number of particularities that ultimately have to do with a family’s educational goals and its social characteristics of culture (JAY, 2003).

## Our interviewees

The non-representative sample of 48 participants was made up of personalities from nine economic sectors<sup>3</sup>. In all, there are 25 men and 23 women. Regarding the age range, there are 1 man and 3 women between 32 and 40 years old; 6 men and 7 women between 41 and 50 years old; 9 men and 6 women between 51 and 65 years old; and 9 men and 7 women older than 66 years old<sup>4</sup>.

As far as the time of belonging to the elites is concerned, it was possible to classify the studied fractions in 4 groups. The first of them is the oldest group, in which those surveyed have been in this position for 3 generations. That is, their parents and grandparents already belonged to the dominant factions. They are heirs of the financial market, industry, commerce, or came from political factions, such as governors and state secretaries. The individuals who stand out for having been for 2 generations in the elite inherited an educated family environment and are in the second group. With fortunes derived from industry, trade, and agribusiness, they are mostly 2nd or 3rd generation immigrants who inherited from their parents and grandparents a technical, non-university expertise that was relevant in a time of economic growth in Brazil from the 1930s to 1940s. Most of the time, they brought in their luggage only good will, and their relatives relied on the family's help to consolidate the enterprises.

The third grouping stands out for having an expressive representation, characterized by a distinctive *cultural capital* inheritance in the period of the 1950s and 1960s, and before that, as well as a high level of education in Brazil and abroad. They are individuals coming from *intellectualized families*. That is, their grandparents or parents had higher education when this level of schooling was still the privilege of a few in Brazil. Immigrants, knowing languages and having a background in various areas of knowledge, became part of the society of economically wealthier fractions, which put them in a privileged *relational* situation (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 65).

Finally, the fourth group also draws attention by its numerical expression. The individuals surveyed stand out according to the type of knowledge and/or informational<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The sample of 48 respondents meets the minimum necessary for the calculation of the MCAs. The choice of the 9 sectors does not disregard, however, other financially relevant expressions.

<sup>4</sup> For the classification of these age groups in 4 generations, we operated with a knowledge built during the interviews, proceeding to the particularities of socialization experienced by individuals. It is not about the biological or chronological issue, as Mannheim (1982) would say, but about the experiences lived in the social position they occupy.

<sup>5</sup> In the molds of Bourdieu's theory, this is a knowledge made available by learning/using technological resources, more specifically the domain of an expertise from the possession of digital machines.

and technological cultural capital they have accumulated on their own. We could call them highly educated coming from the commerce fractions, liberal professionals in a second generation of immigrants, whose parents and grandparents did not have a university degree, or if they did, it was not enough to reach the elite groups. Knowing languages like French and or German, they enjoyed an internationalized<sup>6</sup> capital, already early on identifying themselves with the globalized business novelties. Still in the field of the distinction related to schooling, one can notice the presence of agents who made themselves individually because they were up to date with technologies and knew how to relate to dominant groups, in order to allocate themselves in positions of power or even in the conduction of companies where an expertise was necessary in the business *field* in the 1990s.

As far as the sectors of the economy are concerned, Chart 1 shows their composition. It is worth remembering that the older generations are in politics, among celebrities, and in industry. Those between 65 and 51 are concentrated among communicators, in commerce, and in finance. And the younger ones seem to be dispersed among the sectors. It would be possible to state, therefore, that the São Paulo elites are here represented by different sectors, not focusing on one social grouping. Our research observes the distinct dominant fractions, analyzing school selections according to the time of belonging to these groups and the sectors of the economy in which they work. More specifically, the task is to develop a systematic and coherent work on the connections and relations of meaning between the elites' fractions and their schooling choices, with the intention of proceeding to a relational sociology (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 25-28). To develop the argument, we rely on the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, especially the conceptual body coined by him. Bourdieu is considered to have made a set of reflections that help in the interpretative analysis about the processes of production and reproduction of groups, as well as being an outstanding author among those who analyze mechanisms and strategies of maintenance or transformation of the social order from the institutional relations in which family/school have a revealing role (BOURDIEU, 2007 [1979]).

Much has been written about Bourdieusian theory. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that its creation has a great historical and sociological appeal. That is, by coining the social resources as economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital, of strong heuristic power in the 1960s, Bourdieu observed that the dynamics of domination does not happen only by economic factors, but mainly by the articulation of these with real and symbolic factors, that is, the prestige of the possession of erudite or cultured culture (today also informational) valued in the labor and school markets. The creation of the concept of cultural capital and social capital also responds

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<sup>6</sup> In Bourdieu's theory, it refers to a cultural knowledge based on language proficiency, social and/or family relations in different countries, gained in the domestic or business environment.

to a need to explain the mechanisms of transmission and perpetuation of aspects of the domination of social layers that have long belonged to the most privileged fractions.

TABLE 1 - Generation and sector of the economy.

Sector/Generation	+66 years old	65 -51	50-41	40-32	Total
Top Executives	—	1	2	1	4
Agribusiness	-	2	2	1	5
Celebrities	3	-	-	1	4
Commerce	-	3	2	—	5
Communications	2	4	2	-	8
Finance	-	3	-	1	4
Industry	3	2	1	-	6
Politicians	4	-	2	-	6
Liberal Professionals	2	-	2	-	4
Total	14	15	13	4	48

Source: Research data (2019).

In his research, Bourdieu (2007 [1979], p. 162) demonstrates the importance of the construction of habitus in the socializing processes of family and school environments, responsible for a diffuse learning of ways of being, acting, and thinking. In fact, for him, the distinction that the dominant groups get from these practices is made by a strategic and arbitrary work of reconversion of economic and cultural capital into symbolic capital. As Bourdieu pointed out, the advantages and the valorization of the better-off groups do not come only from the possession of financial and/or cultural resources, but from the ability to transform them into objects of power and distinction in an effective subjective, homeopathic, and diffuse operation of an imaginary of superiority.

In a certain way, we are also making use of the concept of field, when taking such fractions as agents belonging to the field of power, representatives of a “dominant class, (...) which guarantees its occupants a sufficient quantum of social strength - or capital - so that they have the possibility of entering the fights for the monopoly of power (...)” (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 28).

The question that mobilizes us is how this elite group uses institutions for the conservation or conquest of privileged positions and, therefore, the maintenance of a hierarchically differentiated society. Certainly, when we talk about group reproduction, we refer to how social agents, in a practical sense (an embodied need), possessing an orientation more unconscious than conscious, develop mechanisms of maintenance or

conquest of prestigious social positions from school experiences - and or get involved, deliberately, in creating them -, among other strategies. In a relationship always conditioned by a historical period and social resources already conquered, groups of agents strive to build conditions of possibility for such reproduction.

Regarding the discussions about elites, it is worth noting that the survey conducted by Setton (2021) points to Bourdieu's reference, since the 1970s/1980s, as the most expressive, followed by Anglo-Saxon studies, reference since the 1930s. According to Perissinotto and Codato (2009), a certain theoretical eclecticism would be necessary to advance in the conceptual discussion between political *elites*, *dominant groups*, or *classes* (*hegemonic<sup>7</sup> class or fraction*). Agreeing with them, we consider more adequate to work with the category's groups or elite fractions, as they would be able to operationalize the analysis of the groups and their forms of symbolic representation. This way, we could articulate the *structural* points of view of Marxist theory, the one that emphasizes the power of the elites in the conduction of capitalist reproduction in the economic sphere, and the *strategic* one, the one that deals with the forms of symbolic domination. Certainly, such proposition dialogues with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capitals, in the sense of trying to relate the capacity of elite groups to influence State issues, defend their interests, and serve as qualified spokespersons, whenever the historical conditions and configurations allow it. In this sense, material, cultural, and symbolic elements must be integrated.

In this direction, we also dialogue with Bernard Lahire (2015), to understand the mechanisms by which the dispositions of school culture are responsible for position-taking about a life trajectory. The intention is to understand how schools, from their pedagogical characteristics, contribute with ways of learning to be and to be in the world, that is, they build dispositions of *habitus*. More precisely, how school institutions are capable of building principles that generate practices and classification of these practices that are transmitted in distinctive signs (BOURDIEU, 2007, p. 163).

Finally, it would be important to point out that following the teachings of Lahire (2015), when it comes to a study on *socialization*, we approach the data according to four criteria. According to this author, those who make use of the notion of socialization must show empirical evidence, contextualized in institutional spaces and times and in educational strategies capable of inculcating varied *dispositions*. In this way, we guided

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<sup>7</sup> Martuccelli (2018), based on Poulantzas, brings a critical reflection about the category elite. For him, such notion has a compromise with the theories of elites that understand such groups in a monolithic way, according to which there would be no overlap between economic and political spheres and, above all, for not dealing with the effects of conflicting relations between classes in dispute. Thus, it should be remembered that the use of the term in the article welcomes this discussion, using, in an alternative way, the corresponding dominant layers or dominant fractions.

the analysis by appropriating the categories i) *frameworks*, which refer to the types of schools; ii) *modalities*, which indicate educational strategies that suggest, implicitly or explicitly, ways of being and acting; iii) *effects*, which present the individuals' behaviors; and, finally, the notion of iv) *time*, that is, the trajectory and the conditionings experienced by temporal experiences.

## **The education of Brazilian aristocrats - time to belong to the elites**

To begin this section, we address the schooling, institutional frameworks, of individuals who have been more than three generations into the elites. Even though we cannot compare the genealogy of the French aristocracy with that of Brazil, and even though our sample was small, it is noteworthy that we have four families with titles of nobility in our research. Three European titles and one conferred in Brazil. It is also remarkable that these men and women structured their resources in a high volume of economic capital in the possession of land, industry, and commerce, confirming the greatest economic wealth of Brazil in the passage from the 19th to the 20th century.

According to the bibliography (SAINT-MARTIN, 2003; PINÇON, PINÇON-CHARLOT, 1998), the families of the French and/or Anglo-Saxon aristocracy in the last century showed little concern with schooling, always privileging domestic education. This was a group that relied on a family style mode of reproduction, in a direct transmission to the heirs of an inseparably material and symbolic heritage. However, in the interwar periods and after World War II, the European aristocracies could not remain on the fringes of the transformations of the intensive use of schooling. Thus, during the first half of the 20th century, the education of children and young aristocrats was largely entrusted to European governesses and nannies, and then to preceptors and elementary school teachers in the family space.

In the Brazilian case, we see a lot of proximity. Among the women we researched and who belonged to the group *three generations ago* in the elites, all of them studied in private, reputable, and selective schools in the 1940s, mimicking the French model. Some of them had classes with preceptors and studied in boarding schools in Switzerland:

She wasn't really a nanny, she was a governess, really, educated in a Swiss school and they were top of the line. She knew all the royal families because all of them, we have picture playing with the daughters of the king of Italy (Woman/80 years old/15 November 2019).

Highly formative and controlling schools were responsible for female destiny and taste choices, given that, in their curricula, art and aesthetic learning were prestigious (JAY, 2003; PEROSA, 2008). We remember here the schools Des Oiseaux (1907-1969), Nossa Senhora do Morumbi (1964), Escola Madre Alix (1951), all belonging to a



network of confessional institutions - the order of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine and the Santa Maria School -, managed by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, at the time all-girls schools. In the site of these institutions, we have the opportunity to know the importance given to the architecture of their buildings simulating the continuity of generous spaces that the students could experience<sup>8</sup>.

When I wanted to do PUC, and I had everything to get into PUC, my father was incredibly involved in the IPÊS<sup>9</sup>, back in the revolution, the dictatorship. I studied in Europe, I went to a boarding school, they sent me when I was 16, I came back when I was 18. Then I did Nanci and I did Cambridge... (Woman/67 years old/10 September 2019).

Nossa Senhora do Morumbi College is located on a 97 thousand m2 plot of land. Thus, our children and young students enjoy green areas and open areas with fresh and healthy air.

Such schools also bet on Christian humanism, with a strong philanthropic tendency, offering their students and families an open pedagogical proposal, committed to the future of the generations and the country. Gessaghi (2015) calls attention to the humanistic and benevolent repertoire of some sectors of the elites. One of our female researchers reported:

taking the cut from Nossa Senhora do Morumbi, they were incredibly young nuns, and super modern, most of them went to Liberation Theology, and it was an experimental school (...). I had wonderful teachers, I studied Guimarães Rosa in what would be the sixth grade now. (Woman/ 67 years old/05 June 2018).

If we check the choice of schools for men, we find exclusive education for males, also in religious institutions, such as Colégio São Luís (1867/1917), Escola Santa Cruz (1952), Nossa Senhora das Graças (Gracinha - 1908), but already with some lay humanist options, such as Liceu Eduardo Prado (1937), Colégio Elvira Brandão (1904), Colégio Bandeirantes (1934/1944). One of the respondents, the son of cultural attachés, and another, an immigrant, studied almost all their time abroad.

My father was also a brother of the Third Order of Carmel, like my mother. And he was also from the Fraternal Aid Organization. I studied from kindergarten

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<sup>8</sup> The search conducted on the schools' websites was undertaken on January 31 and February 22, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> "Organization of businessmen from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo structured during 1961 and officially founded on February 2, 1962, with the objective of 'defending personal and business freedom, threatened by the dormant socialization plan within the João Goulart government.'" (FGV CPDOC, 2022)

to the fourth grade of elementary school at Nossa Senhora das Graças School. Then I went on to study until the third scientific year at Colégio São Luís. The girls went to the Colégio Des Oiseaux. (male/77 years old/10 September/2019)

My sister was born in Lisbon, my father was twice cultural attaché. So, in Brussels, we stayed five years. I was literate, I learned to read and write in French. So French was always the native language for me. (Male/68years/02 September 2019)

Following, therefore, an international trend, since the middle of the 20th century, the families of the São Paulo aristocracy oriented themselves according to their European partners, choosing schools of high reputation among the elites, valuing an education that brought the family's distinctive mark and promoted the contact with group partners, providing spaces and times favorable to an exclusive education. Among the schools, the Dante Alighieri (1911), for both sexes, has a prominent place because it is an institution that had expression in various age groupings. It is interesting to note that schools such as Dante and Santa Cruz are not concerned, today, in their websites, in presenting their pedagogical projects, they only report histories of their foundation. On the other hand, all the other institutions mentioned here disclose information about their educational goals, claiming to be bilingual schools. If we recall the categories of Lahire (2015), this type of institutions uses modalities, ways of being and acting, which, throughout life, help in the incorporation and consolidation of habitus dispositions specific to the dominant fractions. In other words, they end up providing humanistic dispositions, religious values, and language skills early on.

### **The school choice for the children of this generation - the continuity of exclusivity**

Regarding the choice of basic schooling for the children of the older generation, nowadays approximately 50 years old, it is interesting to make a cut by type of belonging to the elites. It can be said that men and women, for three generations, have continued their own paths. Private, confessional, and renowned schools, such as Santa Maria, Madre Alix, Nossa Senhora do Morumbi, Santa Cruz, Colégio Pueri Domus (1966), Dante Alighieri and Vera Cruz (1963), continued to be options of traditional schools, now with mixed education classrooms, but with recognized prestige. The vast majority of sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers of this generation shared school benches in a consonance of space and time, recording strategies of reinforcement and synergy of cultural dispositions of belonging to privileged groups, until they became virtue and necessity. Schooling as part of a sexist education is no longer visibly pronounced. On the other hand, the children of this generation, who come from highly educated families,

attended private schools, with little or no renown, but with a confessional profile and/or in public establishments in cities in the interior of São Paulo.

### **The 65 to 51 generation - bilingual and international schools**

In the age group immediately below, that is between 51 and 65, we again find interesting variations according to the type of belonging to the dominant groups. Among those who belong to two generations, intellectuals and or who position themselves in the elites by being highly educated, we observe a mediated selection between secular schools, such as Colégio Rio Branco (1926), Pueri Domus, Vera Cruz, and humanist confessional schools and institutions with a tendency to dual-language education, such as Colégio Visconde de Porto Seguro (1879/1955), Dante Alighieri, Liceu Pasteur (1923) and Escola Humbolt (1916/1958), schools founded by immigrant colonies. There is also a preparatory school for a British educational institution, Saint Paul (1926), affectionately called Dona Érica School (1953). We highlight here, therefore, a marked tendency in this group for a type of education that prepares for requirements that will be highly selective in the years to come and common in the elitized cultural environment, such as, for example, a spatial and cultural mobility.

When I was little, I had this curiosity for journalism, I think, without realizing it, I started to speak English, I started to learn English at the age of three, at Dona Érica. She prepared children for Saint Paul. And then later I started learning French when I was eight years old. (Woman/ 64 years old/13 February 2019)

That is, in all genders, we observed an increase in the choices with pedagogical proposals of active methodology, constructivist, however, giving continuity to the demands of *distinctive* family schooling, in the sense of Bourdieu (1979 [2007]). Most of our researched students had access to more than one language at home, either because of their immigrant ancestry or because they came from intellectualized families that valued the dialogue with different cultures.

### **About the schooling of the sons and daughters of the 51- to 65-year-old generation - studying abroad**

The offspring of this generation went mostly to renowned schools such as Dante Alighieri, Colégio Santo Américo (1951), Colégio Móvil (1975), Everest (Rio), Porto Seguro, Escola Vértice (1976), Saint Paul, Saint Francis School (2003), See-saw School (1994), Humbolt School, Waldorf School (1956). It is worth remembering here that almost all of these schools are bilingual and provide a non-denominational type of education. Everything leads us to believe that we have a significant expansion in the

educational standards seen until then, and certainly an expansion in the origins of the dominant fractions. We verified a certain gradual abandonment of confessional and traditional schools, giving prestige to secular and bilingual institutions, with emphasis on the continuity of studies outside the country, or on the entrance into Brazilian public universities<sup>10</sup>. We also point out that the bibliography on the theme has already approached such choices as a strategy to maintain the social distinction of the groups (ALMEIDA; NOGUEIRA, 2003; NOGUEIRA; AGUIAR, 2008; NOGUEIRA; AGUIAR; RAMOS, 2008). In the case of the schools mentioned above, most of them have international certificates such as the Porto Seguro School, Humbolt, Liceu Pasteur, Dante Alighieri, St. Paul, St. Francis, besides also being prestigious institutions such as Microsoft and Apple, for using their applications. All these advantages and distinctions are advertised on their official sites, often allowing customers to be won over by the ease of studying abroad.

All in British school, because we concluded that it would be good to have ignorant people in two languages but prepared to live abroad if they wanted to. I can't admit that a person who wants to do law or medicine doesn't do it in Brazil, no matter how bad he thinks the study is here. (Male/66 years old/03 July 2018)

We cannot forget how much these choices bring moral discipline, outlining a type of education that prepares for future career endeavors, repeating, in a way, what we saw in the older generation. Almost all of them excel in the ranking of getting their students to the most prestigious universities. In other words, the schooling trajectory of the sons and daughters of this generation from 51 to 65 years old is quite heterogeneous, although markedly powerful and high tuition<sup>11</sup>. That is not all. Schooling in this segment seems to offer a type of *cultural capital* previously offered by the dominant groups in the domestic environment. If in the older generation, language knowledge was performed in an intimate way, now it would be necessary to choose institutions that offer this learning. As Draelants and Ballatore (2021) and Nogueira (2021) would say, the notion of *cultural capital* must be rethought in the 21st century. That is, the notion coined by Bourdieu (2007, 1998) in the 1970s referred to a type of behavior acquired in families due to modalities of an invisible domestic culture. Today some fractions of the elite need the help of school institutions not only in the matter of languages, but

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<sup>10</sup> Bilingual and international schools are different. The first are those that, following the NCP, offer two languages to their clientele. Many have certificates from the countries of the language they offer. International schools are those that teach the totality of their curriculum in a foreign language and have the validation of their curriculum in a foreign country. Two of these bilingual schools were created by the interviewees' own families.

<sup>11</sup> Tuition varies between 3 thousand and 8 thousand Reais, depending on the education cycle, in February 2022.

also in learning ICTs. Almost all of the schools mentioned here also offer an emphasis on teaching audiovisual and technological language.

Therefore, we observe new demands, and other opportunities arise. It is worth remembering that the choice for a secular schooling, recognized for being more content-oriented, is found in families that have reached the *elites through schooling*. In our case, *high executives, and liberal professionals*, as well as the children of celebrities, tend to choose more open, humanistic, secular educational institutions, such as Escola da Vila (1980), Vera Cruz and Poço do Visconde (1974), with a strong appeal in an education for multiculturalism, ethics, and democracy. It seeks to “form autonomous and responsible citizens, using up-to-date methods and highly qualified staff, in a sustainable and multicultural environment, for a competitive and globalized world”. (Colégio Humbolt)

### **The 41-50 generation - men and women - a marked diversification**

We continue the description of the schooling of the subjects in the 41 to 50 age group. Among the women, two have belonged to the elites *for two generations* and studied in bilingual schools, Porto Seguro and Liceu Pasteur; one with a background in intellectualized families completed her basic and university studies abroad; and three, being *highly educated*, attended private and public schools in the countryside of São Paulo. We found that those who are positioned as managers, rural property administrators and liberal professionals have long schooling.

Among the men aged 41 to 50, we observed the participation of six men with quite heterogeneous paths, but coinciding with the trajectory in public schools, just like some of their generation mates. The choice for prestigious schools, with bilingual and confessional biases, is noticeable, giving continuity to a concern already verified in previous generations, although less evident. As the statements below inform, the study time for dilettantism and language knowledge seems to prepare the future of this age group.

Because I, everybody speaks many languages... We have family in Uruguay, in Argentina, so we speak fluent Spanish. I went to high school to learn French. And Italian is extremely easy, I took a course, so in two years I had already passed all the levels. Arabic, I understand almost everything they say, I answer. I was always a person who was top of the class in fine arts. It was my hobby. In my parents' house, from the age of 10 I had a studio for myself. They set it up, left a space and said, “you can paint and embroider.” (Woman/48 years old/18 June 2018)

We highlight, therefore, a hybridism in the schooling pattern of this group, accentuating a diversification in the concerns and choices for either renowned institutions or public ones, in a movement that expresses a certain social mobility of

the group. It is worth remembering that the elementary schools are still the same as in previous generations. Everything leads us to believe that we are facing subjects with diversified social trajectories, many outsiders in relation to the traditional elites, apparently registering changes in the social structure of São Paulo based on a long and quality schooling.

I went to school in Piraju, I did elementary school in a state school. And then I came to Gracinha when I went to the gym, I took the vestibular, I entered in the sequence, and I already went straight to PUC without any interruption.  
(Male/50years/30 of August 2018)

### **On the schooling of the offspring in the 41 to 50-year-old generation: secular schools strive to be bilingual**

The schooling of the offspring of this group followed the choice for those considered to be the best private schools, especially Saint Paul, Porto Seguro, Dante Alighieri, Gracinha, Escola Carlitos (1980), Escola da Vila and Santa Cruz. Five of them claim to be bilingual institutions. The statement below shows, through our emphasis, that the important thing was the proposal of language training.

I put them in Saint Paul thinking about them going to study abroad, in the United States or in England, because the High School, at the time, he didn't give me good English... "let's put them in a bilingual school, if they want to study abroad, they will have the means." (Woman/48 years old/18 June 2018)

This generation of sons and daughters graduate from basic education in a different range than the one seen so far, in a selection of secular humanistic schools and no longer confessional, but marked, as in the previous generation, by institutions that are known to be able to train young people for the challenges of modern life and with the offer of technologies and languages.

Latest generation *iPads and MacBooks*; Pueri Digital classrooms with countless applications to complement learning. A school associated with Unesco, certified by Apple for the use of technology in favor of education, and one of the few Brazilian educational institutions accredited by the IB. (International Baccalaureate)

Only one of them left his daughter in charge of a public day care center, in this case a leftist politician. Among those who have been in the elites for longer (*two and three generations*) and among those from intellectual families, we observe the choice for schools of a lay humanism, repeating the schooling strategies of previous generations,

that is, above 51 years of age. The statement below is quite revealing of this new wave of schools for fractions of the elites.

The oldest, she started at a bilingual school. Today she has excellent English. Tel, we thought we should send to the Paulistano. Today, if I could go back in time, I would have put Tel in a bilingual school. And the Carlitos, besides all its virtues, was a strong school in languages. They (had) English, French, and Spanish classes using cinema as a tool. The kids who are in fifth grade and eighth grade, together, they make a film here in Brazil and then they go to show that film at the Cinematheque in Paris. (Male/50years/30 August 2018)

### **The 32- to 40-year-old generation - men and women: the young elite - a few subtle changes**

Finally, in the 32 to 40 age group, we find one man and three women<sup>12</sup>. One of them has been in the elites *for two generations*, and three of them have risen to elite positions by an *individual schooling* effort and a favorable social ambience. One of them did his basic studies in public school, and the others in private schools, such as Escola Pacaembu (s/d) and Colégio Arquidiocesano. Only one of them did basic studies abroad. We notice here that the schooling of the group also follows forms of family reproduction with schooling in privileged spaces and times. Three of them have attended, even if for a short time, specialization studies abroad, and another one has done an international exchange program in his youth.

Analytically, this generation is one of the most difficult to interpret, because if, on the one hand, its members follow paths already described above, with one exception, the low number of participants (4) limits us to broader generalizations. That is, although three of them have reached prominent positions through schooling efforts, three of them benefited from their social capital to do so. At the same time, such presence may be illustrative of the self-made person illusion, of which elites tend to use as a way of deterring the benefits their distinctions bring. A young man, coming from a private school in the great São Paulo, scholarship student at a college of little renown, student of a higher education course that is more technical than intellectual, goes through an internship selection process in a big pharmaceutical company. He is an example of someone with few resources, but who invests them in education.

I had a lot of experience with digital, digital, and pharmaceutical, which at that point was just beginning. The [company name] had never sent an email, ... the

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<sup>12</sup> It is only in this age group that two people declared themselves homosexual (a man and a woman). On the debate about gender relations, see more in Setton, Vianna, and Neves (2022)

most was a corporate website. And then I looked at it and said, ‘gee, this could be a super opportunity. (Male/ 32 years old/ August 10, 2018)

Thus, this is the only one among 48 interviewees who did not benefit from the inheritance of any type of capital to reach a position of prominence and prestige, as all the other participants did. Such a condition leaves us with more questions than answers, such as, for example: is this the percentage, in our society as a whole, of those who are self-made?

### **Some considerations about space, time, and habitus dispositions**

It is interesting to observe the dates of foundation of the schools mentioned above, because they help us to configure part of a context of elite schooling and two dispositions of habitus. If we check the decades, there is a gradual movement towards the expansion of the city of São Paulo and, simultaneously, a population growth in which the dominant fractions build new school models. It is not a coincidence that some confessional schools were founded in the interior of São Paulo to meet a demand of farmers’ families for education of their male children, as, for instance, the Colégio São Luís, built in Itu in 1867. Or even institutions for the daughters of businessmen, which followed the European trend, such as Des Oiseaux, founded in 1907, making available an internal instruction, almost total, in the configuration of subjectivities and/or dispositions of feminine habitus, prepared for the performance of social roles. These schools attended mostly, in our research, individuals who have been for more than three generations in the elites. Here we highlight the above-mentioned and other confessional schools of the time.

It is necessary to remember that such schools are distinguished by a moral work of benevolence. It would be no wonder that many of those we researched today are politicians and/or have philanthropic work of expression, as if the teachings proposed by these institutions fostered ethical dispositions with a religious base. We note that on the websites of these schools, the concern with the student as an individual capable of learning alone recalls the purposes of the New School and the Educators’ Manifesto in the 1920s, as well as the power of the Catholic Church in the field of elite education.

For every five paying students at Colégio Santo Américo, we give a free place to a child whose family lives in a vulnerable situation. The students also receive didactic and pedagogical material, uniforms, and five meals a day.

According to data collected on the schools’ websites, in the 1910s and 1920s we noticed the opening of schools from migrant communities, such as Dante Alighieri, Saint Paul and Liceu Pasteur. We witnessed the awakening of interest in locations, in this case Brazil and the city of São Paulo, subject to new investments in various sectors.



In the 1930s and 1940s, there were few initiatives to open school enterprises, certainly reflecting the conflicts arising from the First and Second World Wars. However, in the 1950s, with the emergence of modernization policies of the Brazilian government, especially that of Juscelino Kubitschek, we observe the importation of a type of education, even if confessional, which opened the range of pedagogies engaged with humanitarian ideals, as in the case of Colégio Santa Cruz and Colégio Santa Maria.

It is also worth noting that the schools of the German community started their work in Brazil again after the Second World War, offering places and spaces for immigrants to socialize. This would be the case of Colégio Visconde de Porto Seguro and Escola Humbolt. It is worth noting that these institutions crossed two or more generations in the researched families, giving continuity to a certain cultural identity of the German groups. The Santa Cruz and Santa Maria institutions continue to be stronger among the groups from the communications sector, politicians, big businessmen and industrialists. The Port, as it is fondly remembered among the interviewees, contemplates the pedagogical ideal of younger age groups, children of traders, industrialists, liberal professionals, and agribusiness. In this sense, it is worth remembering that such institutions model their frequenters, conforming them to the interior of specific and privileged social groups, with very disciplined identity dispositions adjusted to an educational ideal.

The 1960s are marked, contradictorily, by secular, humanistic schools that conquer part of the intellectualized fractions of the elite we researched. The harsh years of the Military Dictatorship awakened the desire for institutional spaces that could escape from the warp of oppression and political alienation. Colégio Vera Cruz and Colégio Lourenço Castanho (1964), as well as Escola Nossa Senhora do Morumbi (1964), offered a markedly political and avant-garde reading of the world. In this sense, we observe, from this information, a certain heterogeneity in the elite groups, however legitimizing a pedagogical style aligned to a more open thinking. Today the websites of these schools emphasize the individuality of each child, giving them the opportunity for creativity and the English language.

In the 1970s, we saw the creation of schools with a strong content appeal, secular, aligned with the preparation for the competitive life of the vestibular and the labor market. We are referring to the Móbile and Vértice Schools, both very well placed in the ranking of the best schools in Brazil and São Paulo, due to the high number of their students accessing the most coveted universities. We emphasize, in our emphasis in the excerpt below, the explicitness of their pedagogical objectives, which mold habitus dispositions demanded by competitive ways of being, acting and thinking. The emotional aspect seems to be a highlight. Not only self-control, Christian morality and citizenship are expected, but a true school that must deal with the emotional aspect of each student.

The school has the fundamental role of socializing our children, of **preparing them for the competitive world in which we are immersed**. Today, as educators, **we need to make each student a versatile and flexible citizen. They should**

**also be proficient in computers and be able to communicate in another language.** These are of no use if the child and the youngster have not developed their emotional side. (Escola Móbile)

In the 1980s the Escola da Vila was created, an institution that has in part of its name the neighborhood where it became known: Vila Madalena. The pedagogical proposal evoked by it seems to refer to a moment of political transition in which the São Paulo/Brazilian society was experiencing re-democratization and an education based on individual thought and freedom, these in connection with the collective, the environment and socio-emotional capacities. Present in the families of *celebrities* and of the *communication* sector researched by us, Escola da Vila is still a reference.

Our curriculum generates personal growth and develops cognitive, emotional, physical, relational, affective capacities and, especially, the ability to live in a collective way, with an education for conscious consumption, sustainability, well-being, and diversity. (Escola da Vila)

We cannot forget the calls for technological innovation. Allied to humanistic, Christian, and intercultural goals, the schools of the studied fractions also strive to bring a contemporary perspective of ICTs.

Marista Arquidiocesano links its **solid educational tradition** to a constant pedagogical and didactic renewal. Christian values and principles **dialog intelligently with the most up-to-date technological resources.**

From the 1990s on, we see the strong emergence of international, bilingual schools, no longer founded by a community of immigrants, but by groups of businessmen who sought an education that would meet the demands of globalization. Here we have, in our research records, the See-saw, Biulders and Saint Francis schools.

Based on the “Early Total Immersion” model, developed in Canada, SEE-SAW is one of the pioneers in bilingual education in Brazil. **Our pedagogical project, besides the acquisition of a second language, allows students to contribute positively to the transformations in the world.**

A search of institutional websites reinforces the trend of schools with internationalized teaching. Almost all of them, with rare exceptions, present their curriculum as being bilingual. It is possible, however, to state that such advertising does not entirely correspond to the reality of what we conventionally call “bilingual schools”. That is, with the exception of institutions with diplomas recognized abroad - such as Saint Paul, Saint Francis, See-saw and Biulders -, others such as Arquidiocesano, Vera Cruz, Gracinha, Lourenço Castanho, São Luís, Santo Américo, Madre Alix, do not fully teach the curriculum in a foreign language. They have only reinforced the number of hours of English classes or Spanish with international certification.

It is worth noting, therefore, that the present times have triggered new responsibilities for the schools of the dominant fractions. Besides offering a variety of languages with international certification, we mention here the integral or expanded education. If we look closely at the proposals, this new modality expands the time spent in school by offering subjects that are far from the conventional ones, but that are referenced in foreign learning models. Classes in canoeing, gastronomy, karate, makerspaces<sup>13</sup>, serve a new version of teaching that adapts to the contemporary family needs<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, we could ask ourselves if there is a tendency of choices by economic sectors. First of all, it would be possible to affirm that there is a generalized search for bilingual schools in all fractions. If we take each sector in detail, we will verify that at least half of the sons and daughters of our interviewees mentioned institutions that, by tradition, teach in two languages. The most frequently mentioned are Porto Seguro, Saint Paul, Saint Francis, Dante, Sec-saw and Mobile. However, it is possible to see that some schooling options may be crossed by professional backgrounds and or time of belonging to the elites. In other words, the schools with more content and directed to the universe of successful careers in the current job market would be those most sought after by the children of *top executives* in a movement to solidify the achievements of social mobility, since most of them belong to the elites because they are highly educated. Those surveyed from the commerce, *finance, agribusiness, and industry sectors* give greater prestige to international schools and/or traditional confessional schools. These are families that inherited an economic or cultural heritage that triggered a *practical sense*, in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu, in the management of their social positions. The options they present to their children end up respecting family projects, as already verified in other researches (SAINT-MARTIN, 2003). It is no wonder that all of them<sup>15</sup> are already working with family companies.

The celebrity and communications sectors are areas that aggregate individuals

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<sup>13</sup> The “makerspaces”, ideal for a transdisciplinary approach focused on “doing” and creativity.

<sup>14</sup> Liceu Pasteur: The school, which is recognized by the Ministries of Education in France and Brazil, is qualified to issue the Baccalaureate - a diploma that allows entrance to universities in France, in all European countries, in the USA, Canada, and Australia. Besides, it has openings, without the need for vestibular, in the main universities of the country, such as ESPM, FAAP, and FGV, for students who hold the Baccalaureate. Porto Seguro: Presents on its site 8 certificates and partnerships with universities and international institutions; offers EM students a variety of extracurricular courses developed in partnership with institutions such as ESPM, Poli-USP. Humbolt: With partner companies, often multinational, young people get in touch with the business world very early. At around 17 years of age, they go through a theoretical university education. Mobile: Mobile English is offered to students from 6th to 9th grade, with a weekly class load of 4 hours. St. Francis: Our first age group at St. Francis begins at age 3, at the Year Level called PYP 1 (Primary Years Program).

<sup>15</sup> For the reflection about gender habitus, see Setton, Vianna, and Neves (2022).

with different trajectories. We had the opportunity to interview individuals who have been in the elite for three generations, some others from intellectual families, and a few who have risen to a position through their own schooling. In this sense, repeating the tendency already commented before, the highly educated select schools that are content-oriented and directed to the competitive business world; the intellectuals choose to put their children in more open schools, such as Lourenço Castanho and Vera Cruz; and those who have been three generations within the elites have selected the more conservative schools, such as Dante, and the international schools. We also noticed that the sectors of high executives and liberal professionals aggregate individuals who came from the interior of São Paulo and did their basic education in public schools. By going to renowned university institutions, they reached elite positions through schooling, leading a social mobility of ascension. It should also be noted that all of this segment have taken courses abroad as a way to specialize in their fields. It is notable, therefore, that each fraction of the elites we have studied ends up requiring a specific learning model that gives them greater chances of class reproduction.

## **To conclude**

These reflections aimed to identify and analyze the choices of basic education institutions of some fractions of the dominant groups in the city of São Paulo. The discussion was elaborated from the theoretical and conceptual support of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, taking advantage of his relational perspective both in the analyses of the dominant fractions and in relation to school selections. Moreover, to develop the reasoning, we made use of school choices as practices of culture in conformation to an elite habitus. In fact, the presented material updates fractions of this group, demonstrating a certain social mobility based on long schooling, as well as the maintenance of privileges also based on prestigious school selections. However, these fractions differ among themselves, signaling a heterogeneity in their trajectories and objectives.

It should also be noted that the relevance of internationalization (WAGNER, 2003) reflects the pendular movement of the Brazilian history of opening itself, on one side, to the exterior, in a dynamic of receiving migrations that contributed to the production of wealth and, on the other side, making these agents, adjusted to the taste of the outside world, invest in the maintenance of constant contacts with spheres of fortune and business knowledge. Languages were, for sure, a great instrument. From an early age, learning several languages at home, fractions of the elite continued to invest in this learning, now in a more technical and serial way offered by educational institutions. Certainly, a tendency already signaled by Bourdieu in his book *The distinction: a social critique of judgment* (2007).

We came across the importance of the foundation dates of these establishments, and

they helped us understand that such choices obeyed a historical configuration. It is a history marked by an almost absolute absence of policies aimed at a quality education. From the Vargas period until the Lula government, we saw a weak investment in an integrated public education system that could conquer the confidence of the wealthier social segments (HILSDORF, 2003; VIEIRA, 2015). It would be possible to affirm that, possessing a sense of game, groups of the elites placed themselves in search of alternatives that would meet the demands for distinctive schooling, attentive to the needs of each historical period and challenges of a domination (BOURDIEU, 2007). We believe that the discussion above demonstrates this movement. The segment fractions dedicated themselves not only to opportunize the opening of confessional schools, schools for immigrants, but also, in many moments, made the school a profitable enterprise. It created, little by little, a school market ready to satisfy the demands of its most demanding consumers and tuned in to the globalized educational proposals.

Obeying a vertical logic and specific educational products to please the privileged sectors, we observe an accentuated tendency, throughout the entire period of the 20th and 21st centuries, for schooling in which an education in tune with the times is cultivated. Since the beginning of the last century, confessional schools have appealed to a Christian and benevolent morality; we have seen other signs, starting in the 1960s, of a constructivist pedagogy, in which the student should achieve autonomy. In the 1990s, we saw a growth of bilingual institutions. And, more recently, all these objectives come together, now added to the presence of ICT in schools in the form of individual entrepreneurship. It should be noted that there is, on the part of the interviewees, no explicit demand for this pedagogical tool. However, the schools present the use of technologies as resources in their makers spaces. They articulate here autonomy, creativity, and free production on an individual level very much in tune with the trend for an education preached by international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank (LAVAL, 2019). Allied to these ideals, solidarity with the collective, multiculturalism, and investment in sustainability seem, today, to be part of the pedagogical proposals of the schools of dominant groups with a more humanistic affiliation.

This article, therefore, poses new challenges. How will these educational models be appropriated by public schools? More and detailed research can answer questions like these. The sociology of education in Brazil invites us to other tasks.

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