

# The education of the caring mother and the discourse of body- and sports-related activities in the pages of *Pais & Filhos* magazine

Maria Simone Vione Schwengber\*

**Abstract:** This article is part of a study inspired by the fields of Gender Studies and Cultural Studies that are similar to post-structuralist theorisations by Michel Foucault (1998; 1997). We discuss the emergence of logic according to which education that is body-related in general and for women's specifically, has been intensified since the eighteenth century. We have defined this wider contemporary education process as the "politicisation of femininity and motherhood" (MEYER, 2003), a process that by extension includes the "politicisation of the pregnant body" (SCHWENGBER, 2006). In order to conduct this discussion, we have examined issues of *Pais & Filhos* magazine published from 1968 to 2004, using methodological strategies of discourse analysis. From the investigation's resulting analyses we have identified a movement that allows for perceiving the emergence of logic, according to which education of pregnant bodies is intensified by means of body-related activities, thus building different individual stands: a sports-oriented mother (that takes good care of herself and of other people), a mother that shelters and protects, a caring and protective mother who is responsible for a perfect child.

**Keywords:** Human body. Gender identity. Pregnant women. Mass media.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to Foucault (1999), modern society is marked by the educational investment on the body. Foucault (1999) shows that the body is a support element for different political projects, and that it is a strong instrument in power relationships. Foucault (1999) characterises the late eighteenth century as the time when special attention is given to the

---

\* Doctor in Education. Professor of the Physical Education Course of the Pedagogy Department of the *Universidade Regional do Noroeste* of the State do Rio Grande do Sul – UNIJUÍ. Member of the Paidotribus Group and of the Gender and Sexuality Relations Education Study Group (GEERGE) of PPG-EDU of UFRGS.

concerns with the individual's and the population's body. Hence, for the population, the materiality of the body is overtaken by a positive performance. "In this instance, positive does not mean less painful, but rather, not annulling" in economic and political terms (GHIRALDELLI, 2008, p. 99).

In this way, the body's life, health and vigour become the object of the State's regulation and control, all conditions that are imperative for the healthy reproduction of the species and its very "improvement", e.g. the states of health, longevity, fertility, birth, the expansion of birth control regulation and the fall of mortality rates – especially child mortality. The mindset of "body policy(ies)", or yet, "health policies" is then brought to the forefront, which are expressions coined by Foucault (1979) and used contemporarily, given the relevance of their meaning.

To this end, "health policies" are implemented, through which populations are acknowledged, monitored and cared for (FOUCAULT, 1979). Based on this implementation, the health of populations would become firmly established as the defining element of concrete potentialities of the wealth of State-Nations, whereby the body took on "a different significance; individuals were granted competences and a certain number of qualities and were no longer victimised" (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 119). According to Soares (2006, p. 75), to manage a population means "managing the population in depth, in detail", [...] managing and controlling the body so it can be used it to the maximum [...] to elevate "the body dimension to the useful effect".

The assumption that the wealth of State-Nations is measured by how healthy the bodies of their inhabitants are somehow clearly affected all the bodies, as affirmed by Foucault (1999). I use the author's assumption to complement that it affected (and still affects) particularly women's bodies, due to its unique ability to gestate and give birth to life.

The confluence of the State-Nations discourse gives rise to a change of mindset in relation to women (their body), which are considered co-responsible for the growth and power of Nations. Women are from then on considered essential for the development of the State, in direct proportion to the family's wealth (COSTA, 1979). Within this context, women (their body) were invested with a "new" political function in the family, responsible for raising morally and physically healthy children. The nineteenth century bears witness to the institutionalising of knowledge, mainly medical, about women's bodies. Historically, a phenomenon is identified: the "orthopedia"<sup>1</sup> of the female body (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 97), of a body that threatens both the Nation's stability and economic health. Under this perspective, it is understood that particularly the health levels of the bodies of women and children need to be monitored to prevent compromising the State's power, urban order and the results of a booming capitalism.

The investment in women's and children's bodies as productive power then arises as a measure of guarantee of national wealth (FELIPE, 2003). The concern with reproductive bodies was a novelty in the sense that: "[...] it is the first time, at least in a consistent manner, that society affirms that its future and wealth are associated with building a number of citizens more biologically qualified" (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 28).

This "appeal" was gradually incorporated into the female collective cultural imagination, as it enabled women to attain a valued social status: they were needed by society because of their body and its reproductive work as the consequent valuing of the role of "[...] being a good mother, a caring mother [...] as the condition to being a happy and respected woman" (BADINTER, 1985, p. 147), was one of the strong messages disseminated.

---

<sup>1</sup> ort(o)- straight

Although this was a long and slow, heterogenous and variable transition depending on the woman's social background, bourgeois women were the first to incorporate into their lives the new body-related teachings; on the other hand, aristocrats and women from a less-privileged background were the last to assimilate into their habits the new profile of motherhood – taking good care of themselves during pregnancy (CORRÊA, 2001).

Badinter (1985) supports that within this context the “life economy” is reorganised; it is a technical-administrative life management via policies that address the body (wombs), which are carried out under different manners in literature and art, medical treaties, anatomical images and the discourse made by different areas of Health, Medicine and Physical Education.

I understand that these discourses refer to the “invention of the pregnant body” and associate the pregnant body to a network of practices and knowledge, e.g. pre-natal care, specialised courses, medical consultations, exercising, differentiated food. I call this trend the politicisation of maternity and of the pregnant body, “[...] not in the innovative sense, but as an update, exacerbation, complexification and multiplication of educational-assistential investments” (MEYER, 2006, p. 47) that aim at maximising the health of the foetus via the mother's health.

Insofar as reproduction leaves the domestic and family sphere, it became more regulated and monitored, reinforcing women's central role in the gestation process, in the act of giving birth, breast feeding, caring for and educating their offspring until they become independent.

The discourse of being a caring mother, more and more complex and intensely created and disseminated through different cultural artifacts, e.g. poems, songs, novels, films, soap-operas and documentaries, as well as by the different types of sciences, media and advertising gave rise to something new: knowledge that would then dictate

prescription and norms about how to take care of the female body, starting with the creation of rules and techniques to make bodies as healthy as possible. The knowledge-power binomial can also be construed as procedure techniques “prescribed to individuals in order to establish their identity, maintain or change it [...] thanks to knowledge *per se*” (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 109).

According to Foucault (2004), all these types of knowledge and their prescriptions do not educate only the body, but create subjectivities as well, especially in that they incite and trigger stands and identities. Foucault affirms that knowledge impacts the constitution of individuals, creating certain identities.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the author believes that there is no such thing as a universal individual; quite the contrary, as the individual is historical, given the different means of subjectivation, these means vary according to society’s different historical and social periods. Hence, from Foucault’s point of observation, subjectivation is the process that constitutes the individual.

According to Foucault, Vigarello (2001) and Soares (2006), the history of the body (from primitive to post modern history), including that of pregnant bodies, is somewhat the history of knowledge; it is a heterogeneous and plural history. Knowledge is constantly updated and multiplied, and “[...] there is a rational increase, always intense and extensive, of the means for intervening with pregnant bodies, where their functions and most of their expressions are measured more intensively and progressively every day”.

It is within this context of (education and) reinvention of pregnant bodies that body- and sports-related activities find their niche. Soares (2006) notes that contemporary body- and sports-related activities are included into this educational

---

<sup>2</sup> Identity(ies) hereby is (are) not construed as individuality nor as a static (and defined) process, but rather, as an open-end process that involves the never-ending reorganising of cultural meanings through which we relate to sociocultural contexts. Therefore, we understand identities as being multiple and plural, and as such, capable of being undertaken at the same time by the same or by different social actors (SILVA, 2001)

network of “virtual pedagogies” that are not restricted to giving physical contours and fostering capabilities to pregnant women’s bodies, but first and foremost, interfere with their motherhood and create identities. This means that body- and sports-related activities are fundamental to the process of creating identities (SOARES, 2006) and that they interfere in the process of constituting individuals.

In this article, I propose to show how body- and sports-related activities can educate us as gender individuals, how they teach the means by which pregnancy and motherhood are given a sense in a never-ending and complete process, as noted by Meyer (2003).

## **2 SPORTS EDUCATION FOR PREGNANT BODIES: ON THE PAGES OF *PAIS & FILHOS* MAGAZINE**

In briefly addressing the study of Western culture, I noticed the preferred option for sports-related activities.<sup>3</sup> It seems that sports-related activities in general are conducive to and associated with the idea of body improvement, success and overcoming limits through the exhaustive repetition of gestures, as noted by Soares (2006). Body- and sports-related activities are part of important regulation techniques of contemporary life and represent the paradigm of a measure of productivity, as the athlete must undergo extensive training. In this sense, before the athlete is considered as such, he or she must be trained in a specific and unique manner.

The social production of the sports-practicing pregnant woman can be considered as presented on the pages of *Pais & Filhos* magazine, which uses a metaphor for the creation of gestures:

[...] posture is gradually corrected; a calculated coercion runs through each body

---

<sup>3</sup> According to Soares (2006), it is possible to identify contemporary culture under different names, i.e. sports yoga, sports-oriented lifestyle, athletic-sports-oriented version, contemporary lifestyle, muscle-oriented version and performance cult.

part and takes over, dictates the composition, renders it permanently available; in other words, the sense of responsibility is created together with the implementation of a series of behaviours (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 25).

The pregnant woman's body "[...] thus becomes something that is produced, a shapeless mass; from an inapt body" (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 25), a disciplined and caring sports-oriented expectant mother is created.

According to Soares (2006, p. 86), modern sports designs and displays a world of perfect bodies; it is a place of perfection "[...] sports are built using the dynamics applied to the industrial society; it embodies and expresses not only desired behaviours, but also reveals itself as consented amusement". In my opinion, the image of the sports-oriented expectant mother on the pages of *Pais & Filhos* is interesting, as she represents a quasi-iconic caring and disciplined woman. Sports in the contemporary culture has its own internal logic, i.e. values, norms, rules, types of exercises, and above all, body control.

It is worthy to note that contemporary sports-related activities have chosen the media as a privileged enunciation venue; sports-related activities stand out or are enunciated as a means of taking good care of oneself and as the starting point of the project to endlessly improve one's body. Hence, contemporary women started to invest on and become interested in body improvement, including pregnant women, as verified by this study. Rosa Fischer (2005) is one of the researchers who call the attention to the significance of the media that takes on a central role in the process of constituting the contemporary individual in their roles as men or women, including as a father, mother and expectant mother.

Nowadays, a fruitful alliance has been established between body education and the media. According to Vaz (2006, p. 8), the predominant display of power nowadays is not body monitoring, but rather, the information that brings to the individual's awareness "risks based on what they do and

their genetic background”. I can declare that contemporaneity monitors the body via information, based on what Fraga (2005, p. 28) calls “information biopolitics” – “[...] which is a means of government that does not depend (only) on the body-to-body relationship to impose their wishes on the life of the species, but rather, on a series of techniques, procedures and knowledge that regulate life” through information.

The abovementioned considerations led me to seek understanding about how a specific publication of the Brazilian media - *Pais & Filhos* magazine<sup>4</sup> – helped reproduce and disseminate the noble discourse of contemporary body- and sports-related activities. Within the context of Brazilian media that focuses on the family and mainly on women (potentially) mothers, I would like to note the importance *Pais & Filhos* magazine, given that this publication is considered “the most traditional magazine for Brazilian families, in the market for over thirty seven years”. The magazine’s longevity is amazing, compared to a great number of magazines released for this target audience every year in Brazil<sup>5</sup>; more so because few are able to survive ten years after their first issue.

According to Mira (2001), *Pais & Filhos* magazine is identified as the first Brazilian publication (1968) that started to discuss child education and to show the need for planned parenthood. Of all the magazines dedicated to parents, this is the Brazilian magazine with the highest circulation and is one of the most read by this population segment.

In view of the above facts, I was intrigued to find an answer to two questions: How does the discourse about body- and sports-related activities mentioned on *Pais & Filhos*

---

<sup>4</sup> *Pais & Filhos* magazine was first published by Editora Bloch publishing house; presently it is published by Manchete. This is a referred magazine because firstly it has large circulation Brazilwide, and it is acknowledged for its excellence given its many years in the market compared to other same-segment publications. It was launched in September 1968 and is still going strong, as it is the longest-standing of its genre in the market.

<sup>5</sup> I would like to point out other Brazilian magazines: *Gravidez Feliz*, *Gravidez Especial*, *Gravidez e Gestação*, *Supermãe*, *Da Concepção ao Nascimento*, *A Gestação*, *Ser Mãe Especial*, *Seu Filho e Você*, *Crescer em Família*.

magazine serve the purpose of regulating and governing pregnant bodies? How does this discourse create motherhood identity in contemporary days?

In order to answer them I studied issues of *Pais & Filhos* magazine published from 1968 to 2005, supported by the Gender Studies and Cultural Studies approach that are similar to post-structuralist theories, and using Foucault's discourse analysis as the methodological strategy.

From the viewpoint of the adopted methodology, I carried out studies using Foucault contributions to the definition of discourse and statement. Foucault suggests that the researcher should analyse discourses according to their materiality, how much pressure was put on the conditions of production and the stand taken by the subjects described therein. Guided by this "point of view", I chose to map the statements made by *Pais & Filhos* magazine, starting from observing regularity, insistence and repetition. According to Foucault, a statement has two dimensions: the spoken and the visible. Hence, I analysed discourses and images that frequently go with text in *Pais & Filhos* magazine, not as an illustration but as a discourse activity. Soares and Goellner (2004) teach us that images are not stand-alone, as they are associated to certain regimes of power and transfer meaning, inducing the reader to visualise (focus) some aspects in detriment of other.

### **3 THE MODERN MOTHER AND THE SPORTS-ORIENTED MOTHER**

Since the first ten years when it was launched (1968-1978), I observed that *Pais & Filhos* magazine offered a more comprehensive network of caring and new knowledge, both of which were highlighted as fundamental for a "good" pre-natal. It is evidenced that there are many interventions and discourses aimed at educating the pregnant body; body- and sports-related activities are examples of contemporary

activities that are part of this educational network. As early as in the second issue of *Pais & Filhos* magazine I found the first recommendation of exercise for expectant mothers, translated under this representation:



**Figure 1.** Studio P & F.

*Pais & Filhos* magazine, São Paulo, n. 64, p. 18, Feb 1974.

Down with the Taboos of Pregnancy... exercising during pregnancy. 'Yes' for exercising. (PAIS & FILHOS, 1974, p. 66).

Initially, the magazine makes a clear effort to fight the “so-called” taboos, affirming that exercising “is not forbidden, dangerous or considered impure”. This call bespeaks of a body wearing sports clothes, short hair, made-up eyes (e.g. sophisticated habits, even if sports-orientated) that help establish modern and strong features of the expectant mother. Within the context of 1968 when the magazine was launched, it was unthinkable for a woman to want to be trendy if she did not have short hair, wear make-up and certain clothes and practice sports-related activities. *Pais & Filhos* magazine invested in creating a new woman: a trendy, forward-thinking mother, agile and capable of facing challenges, including overcoming certain taboos, among which the idea that pregnant women should not engage in exercising.

In truth, the association of the ideals of sports and modernity were not new in 1968, when *Pais & Filhos*

magazine was launched. In Schpun's (1999, p. 122) studies about sports within the cultural context of São Paulo in the nineteenth century, he identifies "the beginnings of sports in Brazil are associated to a historical moment of modernity when the recently-independent country started to build a project of nationality, seeking the "modern" forms of developed countries".

Further on, Schpun (1999) identified in sports an element of expression of modernity and associated it with women. Brazilian literature presents different views showing the expansion of sports-related activities for women, in this case, for expectant mothers. However, it was only after the '30s (with the accelerated social modernisation) that there is evidence<sup>6</sup> that more women started to practice sports in Brazil, including pregnant women (GOLLNER, 2003).

The twentieth century witnesses a widespread popularisation of sports, whereby it had huge social acceptance. The capability of social mobilisation via sports enabled the setting up of interfaces with the dimensions of a social life that went from health to economy and politics, encompassing also racial and ethnic conflicts. However, it is in the early twentieth century that women became more participative, thus acquiring greater visibility. Industrial development, new technologies, the urbanisation of cities, immigrant workforce, the strengthening of the State, blue collar movements and strikes, especially feminists that fought for the right to experience the pleasure of body senses and new cultural possibilities. Within this approach, body- and sports-related activities are more broadly inserted into the social context. The different articulations and dialoguing between sports and other spheres of life gave rise to the assumption that

---

<sup>6</sup> This series of evidence cover the participation of women in sports clubs, the greater number of specific competitions for women and Brazilian women competing in the Olympic Games starting in 1932. Her name was Maria Lenk, a swimmer and the only female athlete in that year. In 1936, in Berlin, there were six athletes. According to Schpun (1999, p. 122) the Female Games of the State of São Paulo showed that sports for women in the '30s was more popular and frequent among young women from European background, especially German families.

seems to me as fundamental when addressing this phenomenon: there is a deep correlation between sports and society (DAIOLO, 2004). Therefore, there is an inexorable association between how body- and sports-related activities arise and the cultural values of the society that embraces it.

It is important to note that the body that practices sports is a core reference for the identity of contemporary men and women. According to Lipovetsky (2006), contemporary society became more and more dependent of techno-science's feats, and for this reason we trust and rely on activities that promise to deliver super strong, self-sufficient and active bodies. It is my understanding that this is the driving assumption for perceiving women's physical force. The supremacy of improvement is associated with an idea that Schpun (1999) called "proof of modernity", which is the need to show certain improvement standards, including body-related ones. We observe the eruption of a culture based on the ideals of overcoming oneself. The ideal of overcoming, winning and increasing capabilities take over contemporary society as a whole, absorbing lifestyles, intimacy and many other aspects of life. According to Lipovetsky (2006, p. 261), the culture of performance explodes in every direction "[...] from stadiums to companies, from recreation activities to schools, from beauty to eating habits, from sex to health, every domain is overtaken by the logic of competition and improvement [...]".

Within this context, sports in modern society becomes a pedagogical instance that creates bodies "that exhibit performances more and more improved, either by building bodies usually identified as perfect, or yet by association its practice with the acquisition of health and beauty" (COLLNER, 2003, p. 1 ).

Soares (2003) brings us to ponder that over the last 200 years "the culture of movement" has been established in the Western world, supported by science overruling individuals, groups and different social classes, as an important means to

take good care of oneself that (re)defines its objectives as “an indispensable practice for health”.<sup>7</sup> As observed by Carmem Soares (2003, p. 10), it seems that nowadays there is an attempt to convince “that it is mandatory to put the body into movement, or there will be no health”.

I believe that different occurrences and movements helped to establish the importance of body- and sports-related activities prescribed for women, including expectant mothers, in the twentieth century. Castells (1999, p. 171-172) notes four associated basic movements:

The first movement was the transformation of economy and the job market associated with new opportunities for women in the field of education [...].

The second movement involves the technological changes in biology, pharmacology and medical fields, which gave more control over pregnancy and human reproduction [...].

The fourth movement had as background the economy and technological transformations, where patriarchic society was affected by the growing feminist movement, the consequence of social movements of the ‘60s [...].

And the fourth element is the quick dissemination of urban, industrialised and globalised culture into a new interconnected world where people and experiences are transmitted, mixed and disseminated [...].

Goellner (2004, p. 362) notes other events and circumstances that helped strengthen the importance of body- and sports-related activities for women, such as national and

---

<sup>7</sup> The word ‘health’ is used again, because as observed by Soares, if we study the historical process of Physical Education in Brazil, we notice that this type of legitimization of body-related activities is quite old. Soares (1994) affirms that the first attempts to include physical education in the school syllabus were made in the name of good health, physical and mental hygiene, and moral and eugenic education. The author adds that the concept of health has not remained static, but rather, that it changes according to the possibilities of historical conditions.

international competitions; the Olympic Games; the creation of sports clubs; government and non-government programmes; women “that displayed physical strength performing in theatres, circuses and music halls in the United States and Europe”; the proliferation of images showing sports-related activities in the media, the movies and advertising; the professionalizing in sports; and beauty pageants, to mention but a few.

It is my understanding that sports events mentioned by Goellner (2004) have been and still are conducive to creating the ever-growing affirmation of prescribing these activities for Brazilian women, including pregnant women. Little wonder that a series of such activities for expectant mothers break out stronger after the later mid twentieth century<sup>8</sup> as an important self-care practice based on the negation of the “real” body and in the quest for improving the pregnant body and health. As years go by, the perspectives under which body- and sports-related activities for expectant mothers were qualified changed, whereby it is possible to identify some important changes over the last decades.

#### **4 HEALTHY PREGNANCY: NEITHER EXCESS NOR LACK OF BODY-RELATED ACTIVITY**

It is important to note that the ideal(iced) care mentioned in Pais & Filhos magazine initially does not suggest the excess or the lack of body-related activity. In the first ten years of its publication, the magazine started a movement to show that good body-related activities should be practiced/experienced by expectant mothers and carried out in

---

<sup>8</sup> The greater participation of women in school sports was authorized by the National Sports Council (Brazil 1979, Brazil 1983) and endorsed by many events and scientific studies that put an end to the argumentation that women would be more prone to injuries in sports-related activities than men (AZEVEDO, 1988).

the right measure “where movements are not in excess or too weak” (PAIS & FILHOS, 1970, Cover).

Expectant mother, get your body moving, specially your legs, but don't overdo it [...]. Expectant mother! Do your exercises with the same zest as someone who remains seated (PAIS & FILHOS, 1975, p. 12).

Taking care of the pregnant body now implies making it move (SANT'ANNA, 2001). It should be noted that for *Pais & Filhos* magazine, until 1970, taking care of the body focused on wearing elastic stockings to prevent varicose veins rather than to practice physical exercises. However, after this period the magazine would recommend both the use of stockings and some body-related activities. Expectant mothers were then encouraged to take up exercising and keep on moving their bodies; a more energetic body dynamics is put in place, where just using elastic stockings is not enough. Inactivity is replaced with movement. The magazine recommends expectant mothers to:

[...] become open-minded to working out by taking up some exercising dedicated to the pregnant body: static and dynamic movement (PAIS & FILHOS, 1975, p. 13).

Now, according to *Pais & Filhos* magazine, the rule for expectant mothers is for them to move their bodies; seeking the right balance is supported by prescriptive parameters. Within the context of Western culture, an elaborate system of rules prescribes how the pregnant body can and should move, to which *Pais & Filhos* magazine adheres, but within a sphere of safety. Thus, during the first ten years of publishing, *Pais & Filhos* magazine (1968-1978) prescribes/recommends/suggests expectant mothers to practice alternative, mild and non-extenuating activities<sup>9</sup>, considered as important means of taking good care of the

---

<sup>9</sup> The magazine uses the expressions “alternative”, “mild” and “non-extenuating” as synonyms. Therefore, I will use the first term – alternative body-related activities.

body, which were distanced from notions of effort. Therefore, excerpts like the one below were commonly found in the magazine:

[...] alternative and mild exercising for expectant mothers are the most suggested and recommended (PAIS & FILHOS, 1970, p. 41).

*Pais & Filhos* magazine formulates a proposal for body work that optimises the preparation of the pregnant body, but recommending that so-called alternative and mild exercises should be preferred. I would like to note that in this case the use of the word “alternative” defines these activities for expectant mothers, as pregnancy is a especial condition that calls for less intense activities, therefore requiring alternative proposals.

The dictionary, a resource very much entangled in “operations to establish and legitimate the meaning attributed to words”, according to Meyer (2000, p. 36), enables delimiting some definitions for the word “alternative”: “Refers to something that represents an option between two or more possibilities.”; “That which adopts an independent position in relation to dominant trends.” (AURÉLIO, 2000). I notice that the use of the expression “alternative” as an adjective of the noun “activities” is used to represent the movement started by *Pais & Filhos* magazine to situate alternative body-related activities as an alternative niche for sports-related activities.

Body-related practices are considered “alternative” given their capability of guaranteeing prudence for the pregnant body. The adjective “mild” is defined in the dictionary associated with expressions such as “delicate”, “moderate”, “balanced” – more biased to what is expected in relation to women, and first and foremost, to the pregnant body.

The alternative concept can be explained in *Pais & Filhos* magazine by evoking also the effects of the feminist

movement culture<sup>10</sup> that was becoming stronger in the late '60s, which demanded respect and equal rights, fighting for alternatives for the body, such as sexual freedom, discussing and practicing free love, using contraceptive methods, abortion and divorce (SACAVONE, 2004). The magazine was to a certain extent the spokesperson demanding certain rights, e.g. “we own our body”, which was one of the major mottos of the heated discussions promoted by feminists and anarchists about the body and sexuality in the early twentieth century.

Hence, *Pais & Filhos* magazine disseminates an amount of information as never seen before to reaffirm the importance of alternative body-related activities for expectant mothers.

Pregnant woman! Embrace mild and non-extenuating alternative body-related activities. To keep your health and to feel good during your pregnancy there's nothing better than to stop being lazy and to move your body – do it in a mild rather than an aggressive way (PAIS & FILHOS, 1976, p. 17).

This excerpt shows the extent to which the magazine believes that pregnant women need to have differentiated body-related activities. However, I am led to ponder on the many meanings of the expression “body- and sports-related activities” in Western Culture, as pointed out by Soares (2005). If, on the one hand, sports refer to extreme performance, maximum competitiveness and overcoming limits, on the other it is associated with the idea of learning about *sprit de corps*, cooperation, negotiation and even overcoming individual hurdles (SOARES, 2005). In principal,

---

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that 1975 was International Women's Day, which was extended to the decade (1975-1985). Women's meetings and congresses took place, each discussing different themes, such as the creation of hundreds of organisations, some of which were not necessarily fully feminist, but all demanding more visibility, political awareness and better work conditions for women. March 8 was finally declared International Women's Day by the UN and is from then on celebrated in every country, becoming more organised with the passing of time (SCAVONE, 2004).

body-related activities are also justified for expectant mothers in the wake of this moral perspective as an opportunity to establish social interaction between mother and child. These activities are re-politicised as a metaphor for the “cooperation between the body of the mother and her child” within a context where this bonding is a positive moral value, as justified in the following excerpt:

Nothing could be healthier than physical activities to improve the relationship between the two: mother and faetus (PAIS & FILHOS, 1976, p. 17).

The model of the caring mother triumphs and becomes popular in *Pais & Filhos* magazine – she who cares for others as she cares for herself, as prescribed by the following exercise:

Touch your stomach. Breath slowly keeping a steady rhythm – touch, press and let go (as if you were kneading dough) of your stomach; touch it very gently and carefully, touch it more firmly (safety). This technique can be used doing circular movements (PAIS & FILHOS, 1976, p. 119).

According to the excerpt, alternative practices such as educational body work show to the expectant mother how she can relate to her state of pregnancy in a harmonious, affable, soft, tender and curious manner. Therefore, this exercise stresses continuous, careful, sensitive, calm and harmonious movements. To do them the mother acts, orders, caresses, cuddles and embraces – the mother is represented as someone who assists, helps and endures; as someone who does not shy from interacting and conforms to the conduct by lowering her eyes, placing her hands together and covering the child tenderly, in an act that expects what she desires. This desire comes true via the soft moving of the fingers, the tactile appeal, the touching and the intimacy; expressed desire in harmony with creating mother-body-child fusion. The exercise focuses on the communication of the mother with herself and

with the other (faetus/embryo), in the pleasure of facing herself and her pregnancy.

In this exercise, the focus lies in the dimension of individual communication between both the mother's and the child's body as shown in the image. In this sense, mother-child communication is related to the experience of living: the experience of the relationship with "gentleness, softness, creation of oneself via the exercise [...] at the same time flexibility and promptness to adapt (to the state of pregnancy), lightness and mobility, the effort to make connections with other people, sense of initiative, capable of becoming involved with other people" [...], according to Christian Pociello (1995, p. 124).

Therefore, as of 1975, becoming familiarised with the body and the state of pregnancy is pointed out by *Pais & Filhos* magazine as one of the strongest arguments in favour of alternatives activities. Many individual exercises, as the ones mentioned below, for example, focus on sensitising the expectant mother to her new condition.

Objective: learning how to observe the body [...] sit comfortably in front of the mirror (preferably naked) and observe and touch gently your face, your neck, breasts and stomach (slowly) and visualise your uterus. Now visualise your baby and the space he or she is occupying in your uterus, find the placenta and the umbilical cord. Slowly imagine each part of the baby's tiny body – head, chest, arms, hands, sexual organ, hair colour, the shape of the nose and mouth, eyes and their colour... feel the beating heart and let the love in his or her heart flow until it reaches you. The ideal time for this exercise is approximately 40 minutes (PAIS & FILHOS, 1975, p. 12-13).

The main characteristics of the movements proposed by this exercise are contact, touching and listening. It seems that "being a mother is to unfold fibre by fibre in dedication", as

said by poet Coelho Neto.<sup>11</sup> The aspect I would like to emphasise is precisely the participation in the discourse of mild body activities to give a new meaning to the expectant mother's relationship with her body, as well as the mother-fetus relationship as one of the discourses that educate expectant mothers to accept and understand their new body that changes during pregnancy. It also establishes love bonding with the fetus – already represented as a tiny heart that beats with love for his or her mother. For the magazine's editing board, the sooner women accept their pregnancy, the quicker they can change their bad habits, such as drinking too much coffee and soft drinks, alcohol<sup>12</sup>, smoking or using drugs. These are training strategies taught to expectant mothers so they can break bad habits and/or at least put them on hold during pregnancy.

Lupton (1999) notes that according to certain lines of thought of Child Development Psychology, during pregnancy the expectant mother should undergo “successive and adequate stages” to identify what is the self and what is the baby – to acknowledge the baby as an autonomous being, separated but at the same time connected to her by the development of a strong love bond.

I understand that these exercises also indicate that the very act of taking care of another person is a kind, harmonious and affectionate act that requires an attitude of collaboration, involvement, giving of oneself, exchange and communication. As observed in the previous exercises (and greatly in other exercises) prescribed by the magazine, physical effort, sweat and fatigue are eliminated and replaced by the search for contact and mother-child bonding. The mother's harmony and kindness to the child, usually perceived by our culture as a woman's spontaneous skills, are learnt through control and vigilance, also disseminated by the discourse of

---

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from the poem 'Being a mother is to suffer in paradise!'

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that the era of consumption strengthens the pacification of behaviour, establishing a movement to decrease

alternative body-related activities. Who would've thought? One learns that motherly love, commonly perceived as part of women's nature, is exhaustively taught and reinforced by the magazine via the discourse of alternative body-related activities.

In this type of exercises, taking care of oneself during pregnancy implies involvement with and dedication to someone else. This also entails the mother's responsibility, where the concern for the child she is carrying emerges reinforcing her role as a responsible person. This body-related activity challenges the expectant mother to have an intimate relationship with her own body and her condition, as well as with her child's body, contradicting the cold, abstract and distant rationality of different ways of establishing a relationship, giving rise to a sensitive and affectionate rationality.

The touching technique is shown by the magazine as something indispensable and desirable to establish mother-child trust. It teaches the mother to be more patient and less selfish with her body and to welcome her child with less pain. This type of practice also seems to teach the mother dimension and child dimension. The distribution of the position of the mother-child body, the guidance of how to perceive a relationship of permanent visibility, of privacy exposed to the continuous perception and monitoring are means of power that are taking place in this context. I feel confident to affirm that these exercises produce important effects, whereby expectant mothers become aware of intimacy bonding; the mother is defined as more caring and protective than the father in *Pais & Filhos* magazine.

The magazine gives remarkable importance to alternative body practices in the 1970-1980 period given that the mother's body plays a central role. Expectant mothers are admonished not to take for granted the signs of pregnancy as mere signs that will disappear; it recommends that they

identify and investigate any signs and limits shown by the body.

The body is an instrument or resource that requires primary care during pregnancy; simultaneously, the expectant mother is given great encouragement to take possession of herself, not randomly, but rather, carefully, calmly, docilely and safely. Alternative activities are inscribed in the collective imagination of body liberation, sexuality and feelings. Body games put the body in the limelight, encouraging the feeling of autonomy and at the same time guiding behaviour in the sense of producing an affectionate, calm, careful and tender mother.

It is interesting to observe to what extent *Pais & Filhos* magazine tries to identify alternative activities with innocent, calm and safe activities that pose no risks and help mothers to have a beautiful baby and savour victory. In the core of these strategies lies the assumption that the expectation of the arrival of a child is enough for the mother to change her routine; for example, by exercising regularly and also by strengthening the idea that the child's health is a consequence of the mother's body work and adoption of these alternative activities. Therefore, the confirmation that a child is on its way is perceived as an investment, especially made by the mother and no longer as an "accident".

In this sense, the magazine clearly incites expectant mothers to fit the model of a caring mother that takes good care of herself by practicing body- and sports-related activities. The magazine teaches and incites the expectant mother to develop "a new health, stronger, self-improved, alert, firm and more daring than all other type of health until now" as noted by Paul Virilio (1998).

Governing strategies disseminated by the magazine and emphasised, for example, by the discourse of body- and sports-related activities seem to tell expectant mothers, in many and different manners: *Own yourselves?* What calls my attention is that never before were we so incited to be the owners of ourselves, to know who we are and at the same

time, we have never been so regulated and controlled by the very action of taking over ourselves.

**A educação da mãe carinhosa e o discurso das práticas corporais e esportiva nas páginas da *Pais & Filhos***

**Resumo:** O presente artigo é parte de uma pesquisa inspirada nos campos dos Estudos de Gênero e dos Estudos Culturais que se aproximam das teorizações pós-estruturalistas de Michel Foucault (1988; 1997). Nele discuto a emergência de uma lógica segundo a qual a educação dos corpos, de modo geral, e o das mulheres, de forma específica, se intensifica, a partir do século XVIII. Tem-se definido esse processo educativo contemporâneo mais amplo como “politização do feminino e da maternidade” (MEYER, 2003), um processo que, por extensão, inclui a “politização do corpo grávido” (SCHWENGBER, 2006). Para fazer essa discussão, examinei a revista *Pai & Filhos*, no período de 1968 a 2004, utilizando das estratégias metodológicas da análise de discurso. Do resultado das análises, focalizo um movimento que permite visualizar a emergência de uma lógica, segundo a qual a educação dos corpos grávidos se intensifica, por meio das práticas corporais, construindo diferentes posições de sujeito: a de mãe esportiva (que cuida e se cuida); a que abriga e protege; a carinhosa e protetora, responsável pelo filho perfeito.

**Palavras-chave:** Corpo humano. Identidade de gênero. Gestantes. Meios de comunicação de massa.

**La Educación de la Madre Cariñosa y el Discurso de las Prácticas Corporales y Deportiva en las páginas de la *Pais & Filhos***

**Resumen:** El presente artículo es parte de una investigación inspirada en los campos de los Estudios de Género y de los Estudios Culturales que se aproximan de las teorizaciones pós-estruturalistas de Michel Foucault (1988; 1997). En el discutimos la emergencia de una lógica, según la cual la educación de los cuerpos, de modo general, y el de las mujeres de forma específica, se intensifica, a partir del siglo XVIII. Tenemos definido ese proceso educativo contemporáneo más amplio, como “politización del femenino y de la maternidad” (MEYER, 2003), un proceso que, por extensión, incluye la “politización del cuerpo embarazado” (SCHWENGBER, 2006). Para hacer esa discusión, examinamos la revista *Pais e Filhos*, en el periodo de 1968 a 2004, utilizándonos de las estrategias metodo-lógicas del análisis de discurso. Del resultado de las análisis localizo un movimiento que permite visualizar la emergencia de una

lógica, según la cual la educación de los cuerpos embarazados se intensifica, por medio de las prácticas corporales, construyendo diferentes posiciones de sujeto: la de madre deportiva (que cuida y se cuida); la que abriga y protege; la cariñosa y protectora, responsable por el hijo perfecto.

**Palabras clave:** Cuerpo humano. Identidad de género. Mujeres embarazadas. Medios de comunicación de masas.

## REFERENCES

- BADINTER, E. **Um amor conquistado:** o mito do amor materno. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1985.
- CASTELLS, M. **A era da informação:** economia, sociedade e cultura, o poder da identidade. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1999.
- COELHO, N. **Ser mãe é padecer num paraíso!** Available at: <http://www.amor-em-verso-e-prosa.com/cirandas/442cirandadasmaes.htm>. Visited on 14 September 2006.
- CORRÊA, M. V. **Novas tecnologias reprodutivas:** limites da biologia ou biologia dos limites. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. UERJ, 2001.
- COSTA, J. F. **Ordem médica e norma familiar.** Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1979.
- DAOILO, J. **A cultura do corpo.** São Paulo: Papirus, 2004.
- FELIPE, J. **Governando os corpos femininos.** *Labrys*, n. 4, Jul/Dec 2003.
- FISCHER, R. M. B. Mídia e educação da mulher: modos de enunciar o feminino na TV. In: FUNK, S. WIDHOLZER, N. (Org.). **Gênero em discursos da mídia.** Florianópolis: Ed Mulheres, 2005.
- FOUCAULT, M. A ética do cuidado de si como prática da liberdade. In: \_\_\_\_\_. **Ética, sexualidade, política:** ditos e escritos. Rio de Janeiro: Forense, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Em defesa da sociedade:** courses of the College de France (1975-1976). São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Vigiar e punir:** nascimento da prisão. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1979
- FRAGA, A. B. **Exercício da informação:** governo dos corpos no mercado da vida ativa. 2005. Thesis (Doctor's degree in Education – Faculdade de Educação, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, 2005.
- GHIRALDELLI, P. O corpo. São Paulo: Ática, 2008.
- GOELLNER, S. V. O esporte e a espetacularização dos corpos femininos. *Labrys*, n. 4, Aug/Dec, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. Mulher e esporte no Brasil: fragmento de uma história generificada. In: **O mundo psicossocial da mulher no esporte, comportamento, gênero, desempenho**. São Paulo: Aleph, 2004.

LIPOVETSKY, G. **A sociedade pós-moralista**: o crepúsculo do dever e a ética indolor dos novos tempos democráticos. Translated by Ara Braio. São Paulo: Manole, 2006.

LUPTON, D. Risk and the ontology program. In: LUPTON, D. **Risk and sociocultural theory**: new directions and perspectives. Cambridge/UK: University Press, 1999.

MEYER, D. Direitos reprodutivos e educação para o exercício da cidadania reprodutiva: perspectivas e desafios. In: FONSECA, C.; TERTO, V.; ALVES, C., (Org.). **Antropologia, diversidade e direitos humanos**: diálogos interdisciplinares. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_. As mamas como constituintes da maternidade: uma história do passado? **Educação e Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 25, n. 2, Jul/Dec, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. A politização contemporânea da modernidade. **Gênero**: núcleo transdisciplinar de estudos de gênero, Niterói, v. 6, n. 1, 2006.

MIRA, M. C. **O leitor e a banca de revistas**: a segmentação da cultura no Século XX. São Paulo: Olho D'Água/FAPESP, 2001.

PAIS & FILHOS. São Paulo: Bloch and Manchete, years 1-37. (Collection). Available at <http://www.revistapaisefilhos.terra.com.br>. Visited in: 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006

POCIELLO, C. Os desafios da leveza e as práticas corporais em mutação. In: SANT'ANNA, Denise B. (Org). **Políticas do corpo**. São Paulo: Estação liberdade, 1995.

Recebido em: 25.08.2008

Aprovado em: 11.11. 2008