

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

‘Sovereign Parenting’ in Affluent Latin American Neighbourhoods: Race and the Politics of Childcare in Ipanema (Brazil) and El Condado (Puerto Rico)

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Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted among parents living in the affluent neighbourhoods of Ipanema, Brazil, and El Condado, Puerto Rico, I examine how urban Latin American elites deployed their parenting practices as moral justification for their racial and class privilege (what I call ‘sovereign parenting’). One way in which they do this is by producing particular forms of affective relationships with their nannies. The women these upper-class parents hired were largely dark-skinned immigrants: from the Dominican Republic, to work in El Condado, and from the Brazilian Northeast, to work in Ipanema. I demonstrate how elites cultivated a form of ‘informality’ and expressions of care in relation to childcare workers in ways that not only produced whiteness as a pillar of Latin American liberalism, but also associated whiteness with the world of interiority and personal growth.

Keywords: parenting; sovereignty; elites; domestic work; whiteness

Introduction

On an early Thursday evening in July 2014, as I sat to take fieldnotes at an outdoor table at Mil Frutas, a boutique ice cream parlour in Ipanema, I noticed a slim, dark-skinned *babá* (nanny) talking on a mobile phone, quite agitatedly. She was accompanying a stylish, dark-haired white woman in her early 40s. While the nanny resolved what seemed to be a disagreement with a romantic partner on the phone, the mother and her daughter, a four-year-old dressed in a pink tutu, sat at a nearby table. On a couple of occasions, the mother made recommendations to the nanny on what to say or ask of the person at the other end of the line. The mother, who eventually introduced herself to me as Claudia, urged the nanny: ‘Order something [from the ice cream parlour], Leandra. Go ahead!’ Leandra

said she didn't want anything, but Claudia insisted, as one would with a friend who needed a bit of nudging. Eventually, Claudia also turned to a valet parking employee who was working at an outdoor café adjacent to Mil Frutas: 'Go ahead, order something!' Initially, the valet parking employee, a tall, heavy-set, dark-skinned man dressed in a three-piece suit, politely declined. Claudia kept insisting until he eventually gave in and went into Mil Frutas to look at the flavours. 'Let him try some samples', Claudia ordered one of the employees behind the counter, suggesting she would be treating the valet parking worker. 'No, no, I don't need to sample. I am ready to choose something', the valet parker insisted. 'No, no. Try something first', and to the employees at the ice cream place: 'Give him samples. He's a customer.'

Over 5000 km from Ipanema, in a neighbourhood in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Maribel Seijo bemoaned: '*Aquí no hay Mary Poppins*' ('There are no Mary Poppins here'). A well-educated white Puerto Rican mother in her late 40s, Maribel was trying to schedule a trip to Boston to meet up with former college roommates, but neither her mother nor her mother-in-law could stay over with her kids. Other than for the occasional informal babysitting that Maribel's Dominican maid provided, Maribel entrusted her children's care only to family members. As she explained, she feared that the 'bad habits' and 'educational limitations' of nannies in Puerto Rico, most of whom, she noted, were 'poorly-educated Dominican immigrants', would 'rub off' on her children. 'Mary Poppins' would have been ideal but, alas, she didn't exist.

Drawing from ethnographic research among parents in the affluent neighbourhoods of Ipanema in Brazil and El Condado in Puerto Rico, I examine how Latin American liberal elites recast understandings of race and class in relation to parenting practices and goals.¹ In Ipanema and El Condado, parenting practices and ideologies informed perspectives on a range of economic, political and social issues that Brazil and Puerto Rico faced at the time of my research (2012–17).²

¹Puerto Rico and Brazil are vastly different, in the size of their terrain, population and economy; they are different in colonial history, political influence and status, global presence (or absence), and even language, which probably accounted for the puzzled reactions I got whenever I described my choice of fieldsites. Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country, has the fifth largest population and eighth largest economy in the world, while Puerto Rico, a US colony where Spanish is the main language, lacks international presence. Despite these differences, both countries made international news during the time of my research. Towards the latter part of my fieldwork, each country shared a national mood of bewildered anxiety about their respective political and economic futures, austerity policies and governmental corruption. Distrust of the government, fears related to economic insecurity and crime, a turn to austerity politics, fiscal debt crises, widespread political corruption and US economic or imperial influence figured prominently in everyday conversations. For more on Brazil, see Glenn Greenwald, Andrew Fishman and David Miranda, 'Brazil Is Engulfed by Ruling Class Corruption – and a Dangerous Subversion of Democracy', *The Intercept*, 18 March 2016. For Puerto Rico, see Argeo T. Quiñones-Pérez and Ian J. Seda-Irizarry, 'Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico', *New Politics*, 16: 2 (2016), pp. 91–8.

²My fieldwork consisted of eight months each in Ipanema and El Condado, spanning a period of five years. I attended extended family gatherings; parent-sponsored lectures in neighbourhood bookstores and private homes; and civic events in the interlocutors' communities. I accompanied individuals to Pilates and Yoga and to children's sports events, and spent time in homes, work sites, the beach and restaurants. In Brazil, I interviewed and had an ongoing relationship with a total of 39 individuals, comprising eight fathers, 15 mothers, four grandparents, six private school staff, and six nannies. I conducted focus

In this article, I specifically focus on how upper- and upper-middle-class residents of the two affluent Latin American neighbourhoods viewed their relationship with the darker-skinned immigrant women whom they hired to care for their children. In El Condado these women were usually immigrants from the Dominican Republic, 100 km away across the Mona Passage, while in Ipanema they were *nordestinas* or migrants from the Brazilian Northeast.³

Relationships with domestic workers, particularly nannies, often underscored parents' self-conception as 'progressive' or 'liberal', while simultaneously sustaining their privilege and whiteness through a distinctly Latin American iteration of intensive parenting.⁴ It is this form of liberal self-fashioning, along with the cultivation of a particular kind of racialised (white) affect in relation to parenting, which I call 'sovereign parenting'.⁵ I view sovereign parenting as a moral ethics of whiteness and wealth which carried everyday material advantages, articulated through parenting practices, relationships and ideologies. Concerns with neighbourhood surveillance and policing, favouring therapeutic-informed language of wellness and health, and the production of child-centred nodules of urbanism were all characteristics of the sociability through parenting, or sovereign parenting. I use the qualifier 'sovereign' to signal claims to the nation and national belonging that took shape in neighbourhood-based social norms and practices linked to the moral and affective expectations of contemporary parenting, and the cultural distinctiveness particular to white elites in the respective locations of my research. These kinds of elite practice had the power and public platforms to establish distinctions between 'good

groups with several other individuals – mostly nannies – extended family members, and parents from areas outside of Ipanema. I attended monthly police briefings given to Ipanema residents. In Puerto Rico, I conducted repeated structured and semi-structured interviews with 30 main interlocutors: 12 mothers, ten fathers, three nannies, two private school teachers and three community activists. Most of the focus groups and interviews were conducted in Portuguese or Spanish. In between periods of being in the field, I maintained communication with key interlocutors through various social media sites, as well as by email, text and Skype.

³The '*nordestina/o*' category operated both as an actual geo-political referent and as a racialised category (independent of actual region of origin). Ipanema parents knew a great deal about 'their' *babás*' personal backgrounds and intimate lives. When they used '*nordestina*' in reference to their own *babás*, I felt there was compelling evidence to suggest that these workers were in fact from towns and cities in Northeastern states, even if they had been in Rio for many years. Upper-class white Ipanema parents often declared a preference for *babás* who were '*non-cariocas*' (*cariocas* are inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro) and/or who didn't live in the nearby Ipanema favelas, fearing these individuals would 'bring the favela into their homes'. Some excellent studies focus on domestic workers in Brazil and Latin America more broadly (see, for example, Miriam Raja Gabaglia Preuss, 'Emprego doméstico: Um lugar de conflito', *Cadernos do CEAS*, 128 (1990), pp. 41–5); however, here I examine the employers, as the materially powerful, dominant side of these complex power dynamics.

⁴'Progressive' was defined in terms of social dispositions (e.g. concern for the environment), not necessarily in relation to specific political party affiliations.

⁵I subscribe to an 'economies of affect' perspective that considers affect as relational and inter-subjective, in contradistinction to the psychologically individualistic conception of 'emotion', and as a mediator of economic, material and historical transformations (cf. Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnyckyj, 'Economies of Affect', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15: 1 (2009), pp. 57–77). By adopting this conceptual lens, affect remains a vital set of dynamic registers of everyday life, practices, experiences and economic imperatives under neoliberal globalisation. On the latter issue and on racialised affect, see Ulla Berg and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, 'Racializing Affect: A Theoretical Proposition', *Current Anthropology*, 56: 5 (2015), pp. 654–77.

parenting' and 'bad parenting', and controlled, although not uncontestedly, the criteria for the adequate socialisation of future citizens. This indicated a tacit assumption about inadequate parenting which would, conversely, produce the denizens of the nation. Sovereign parenting served as a practice through which projects of the nation, including questions of austerity and corruption at the time of my fieldwork, were communicated and validated.

Even though sovereignty has been associated with the autonomy of nation-states, I use it here in slightly different ways that correspond to contemporary Brazilian and Puerto Rican scholarship. As Jorge Foleña, a Brazilian constitutional lawyer and member of the SOS Brasil Soberano community advocacy group, notes: 'Sovereignty is the hope that we can bring to our people, to the children, to our young people, the integration of this country. A divided country is the failure of sovereignty – of institutional sovereignty and, more importantly, of popular sovereignty ...'⁶ In the case of Puerto Rico, sovereignty serves as 'a native category for the bundle of relations that shape daily life, including access to goods, the valuation of labor, the prestige of vernacular forms, and the ability to forge culturally distinct landscapes, soundtracks, aesthetics, visions of the future, and testaments to the past'.⁷ Puerto Rico has been associated with a 'failure' of national sovereignty, which is in turn associated with a state of unachieved (or underachieved) modernity. Sovereign parenting highlights how, under Latin American neoliberalism, 'sovereignty' has become precarious, even untenable, and increasingly associated with everyday relationships across domains of class, race and local geographies.⁸

A distinct feature of Ipanema and El Condado elites, sovereign parenting offered a collective morality, ethics of care and affective parameters of white supremacy in Latin America through a set of parenting practices, relationships and ideologies. This elite ethics drew from a language of 'national crisis' to invest in projects that secured elite families' sense of 'sovereignty' over their neighbourhoods.

⁶Jorge Foleña, 'III Simpósio SOS Brasil Soberano', *SOS Brasil Soberano: Enganaria, soberania e desenvolvimento*, 8 June 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep9oWv8LrPQ>, last access 17 Oct. 2018.

⁷Yarimar Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. xi.

⁸Scholars have generally used the terms 'sovereign' – and 'sovereignty' – primarily to describe conditions of political governance and nation-state autonomy. For Puerto Rico, see Elga Castro, 'Puerto Rico is Not the Only One: Politics and Disparity between the United Nations and the IOC Membership', in Robert Knight Barney *et al.* (eds.), *The Global Nexus Engaged: Sixth International Symposium for Olympic Research* (London, Ont.: International Centre for Olympic Studies, 2002), pp. 253–8, and Stephen K. Park and Tim R. Samples, 'Puerto Rico's Debt Dilemma and Pathways toward Sovereign Solvency', *American Business Law Journal*, 54: 1 (2007), pp. 1–47. For Brazil, see B. Penglase, 'States of Insecurity: Everyday Emergencies, Public Secrets, and Drug Trafficker Power in a Brazilian Favela', *PoLAR: The Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 32: 1 (May 2009), pp. 47–63. These authors, while acknowledging everyday and cultural practices intended to yield national unity, generally consider sovereignty in a very different sense from what I am proposing here. They deal with sovereignty in order to think about conditions of governance and long-standing formal–informal distinctions. I view the concept to encompass, primarily, the affective and supposedly 'intimate' relations that sovereignty, and claims to belonging and ownership, enable and foster (that are nonetheless public). In particular, I argue that sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean, and perhaps elsewhere, are crucial to practices of whiteness, and that parenting provides the means through which such practices are communicated, validated and reproduced. The concept of sovereign parenting, therefore, brings together the discussion on sovereignty with whiteness, affect and the politics of parenting, which I see as my main intervention into the sovereignty scholarship.

Sovereign parenting conferred moral grounding to white privilege, by marking certain interactions, spaces and activities as done ‘in the name of the children’, where ‘children’ acquires the neutrality of whiteness. Ipanema and El Condado parents valued the cultivation of ‘inner worlds’ – of affective, emotive, psychological and even spiritual forms of personhood – as fundamental aspects of their parenting and personhood. In crafting these ‘inner-world aesthetics’,⁹ wealthy white Latin American parents also justified their own ‘structural oblivion’,¹⁰ a selective process of deciding when and how Blackness – particularly in the bodies of ‘their’ nannies – became visible or remained ‘in-visible’ (see further below).

Nordestinas in Ipanema and Dominican domestic workers in El Condado belonged to a global care chain. They were, overwhelmingly, women from poorer geopolitical regions who cared for children, the elderly and households in wealthier areas, as they themselves supported their own children in their regions of origin.¹¹ These internal and transnational migrants were essential to sovereign parenting practices that connected family life, household and neighbourhood cultural, civic and spatial trends among liberal elites. Ipanema and El Condado parents frequently thought of domestic work in terms of a particular relationship with a specific domestic worker, rather than in broader sociological terms. While in poor, racialised communities, contemporary parenting expectations may in fact constrain parental autonomy and produce conceptions of parents as inadequate, sovereign parenting allowed Latin American elites to gain autonomy and sovereignty, regardless of how these were dispensed on a national scale.

I analyse four main ways in which Ipanema and El Condado parents produced racialised intimacy and difference – simultaneous affective attachment and sociological detachment – through the broader project of sovereign parenting. Firstly, I examine how parents approached changes in the laws regulating domestic work, in Ipanema, and increased global pedagogical expectations, in El Condado; in particular, I examine the intersection of legal, pedagogical and racial realms in the production of affective ambiguity.¹² Secondly, I analyse how parents produced a collective morality and ethics of care, which drew from popular psychology concepts such as being ‘hands on’, even when they arbitrarily outsourced caregiving tasks. Thirdly, I deconstruct how parents projected agency onto ‘their’ domestic workers. In this case, I draw on neighbourhood-based distinctions between Ipanema and El Condado, and distinct cultures of domestic work in Brazilian and Puerto Rican societies. Finally, I demonstrate how, in the context of sovereign parenting, and its public performances in neighbourhoods’ child-friendly sites, like Mil Frutas above, the bodies of poor, dark-skinned workers complemented the

⁹Ana Ramos-Zayas, *Sovereign Parenting: The Moral Economy of Space, Privilege, and Austerity in Brazil and Puerto Rico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, in press).

¹⁰Janet McIntosh, ‘Structural Oblivion and Perspectivism: Land and Belonging among Contemporary White Kenyans’, in *African Dynamics in a Multipolar World: 5th European Conference on African Studies – Conference Proceedings* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Internacionais do Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, 2014), pp. 1277–99.

¹¹Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003).

¹²Donna Goldstein, *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Berg and Ramos-Zayas, ‘Racializing Affect’.

bodies of wealthier, white-skinned employers in choreographed interactions that were at times in-visible, but at other times hyper-visible. As a conclusion, I note how sovereign parenting, built upon a complicated production of a liberal self-fashioning among Ipanema and El Condado white elites, rendered particular nannies as stand-ins for race, regionalism and migration (internal and trans-Caribbean).

Affective Labour, Legislative Labour: The Culture of Domestic Work in Brazil and Puerto Rico

Many parents I met in Ipanema bemoaned ‘the difficulty of finding good, reliable *empregadas* (female employees)’, particularly nannies. Towards the latter part of Lula da Silva’s presidency and into the early part of Dilma Rousseff’s term, before the country’s economic setbacks and political and corporate scandals in 2015,¹³ the shortage of domestic workers actually made headlines in the Brazilian media.¹⁴ Because of Lula’s programmes of wealth redistribution, carried out largely through the Bolsa Família and Bolsa Escola programmes, almost 30 million Brazilians left the lower classes and ascended into the lower-middle and middle classes.¹⁵ This meant, among other things, that individuals previously employed as domestic workers had other employment options, at least until Michel Temer’s takeover in 2016. Nevertheless, Brazil has been notorious for having the highest number of domestic workers in the world; 17 per cent of all female workers (6.7 million) in Brazil were *empregadas domésticas* in 2010.¹⁶

Often, domestic work in Brazil is viewed in terms of a modern-day continuation of the country’s slavery past. By 1872, 16 years prior to the official abolition of slavery in Brazil, the line between slave and paid employee was beginning to blur; it became common among former slave-holding families to rent, rather than buy, house slaves. When the Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas (Consolidation of Labour Laws, CLT), a considerable labour rights victory for low-wage workers, was adopted in Brazil in 1943, domestic workers were excluded from its coverage because it was understood they carried out ‘non-economic’ labour.¹⁷ As Patricia de Santana Pinho notes: ‘By excluding domestic workers from its benefits, Brazilian legislators maintained the status quo of millions of poor (and mainly black) women, thus contributing to further naturalising their position as “less than” labourers.’¹⁸ It was not until 70 years later, in 2013, that then-president

¹³Alfredo Saad Filho, ‘Salários e exploração na teoria marxista do valor’, *Economia e Sociedade*, 10: 1 (2016), pp. 27–42; Greenwald *et al.*, ‘We are Repulsed by this Government’.

¹⁴Patricia de Santana Pinho and Elisabeth Silva, ‘Domestic Relations in Brazil: Legacies and Horizons’, *Latin American Research Review*, 45: 2 (2010), pp. 90–113.

¹⁵Celso Amorim, ‘Brazilian Foreign Policy under President Lula (2003–2010): An Overview’, *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 53: 1 (2010), pp. 214–40.

¹⁶International Labour Organization, *World of Work Report, 2010* (Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, 2010).

¹⁷Patricia de Santana Pinho, ‘The Dirty Body that Cleans: Representations of Domestic Workers in Brazilian Common Sense’, *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 13:1 (2015), pp. 103–28; Natalia Mori *et al.* (eds.), *Tensões e experiências: Um retrato das trabalhadoras domésticas de Brasília e Salvador* (Brasília: CFEMEA, 2011).

¹⁸Santana Pinho, ‘The Dirty Body that Cleans’, p. 107.

Dilma Rousseff extended the legal benefits of CLT to domestic workers, including nannies.¹⁹

Silvana Villela Mattos, an Ipanema parent who often organised speaking engagements profiling prominent child development experts, and her lawyer husband, César Schumer, illustrated how other Ipanema parents viewed the domestic labour laws. ‘Hiring live-in workers has become more expensive and complicated’, César told me. In Silvana’s view, more people would be inclined to hire *diaristas* (who would come every day, but not stay overnight), or place their children in daycare centres, rather than build relationships with full-time live-ins. César remarked: ‘The regulation of formal employment can either decrease or increase benefits, because there are informal benefits that come with a long-term relationship between employer and employee.’ He also noted: ‘Some regulation is needed, because we can’t live in a slave society (*sociedade escravocrata*). That’s where domestic work began; it started with the *amas de leite* (wet nurses). There’s no developed country where everyone, even in the middle classes, has an *empregada*.’ In Brazil, the power inequality endemic to domestic work was rooted in negotiations of non-monetary payments. At the time of my fieldwork, the relationship between domestic workers and employer was still characterised by the exchange of services not stipulated in work contracts; the exigencies of complicity and even affective dispositions between worker and employers; and emotional investments between a worker and her charges. These interactions were not necessarily inauthentic, but their authenticity was profoundly conditioned by radical inequalities and microaggressions.

Parents in Ipanema and El Condado explained the ‘retrogressive attitudes’ of domestic workers in reference to the world views or cosmologies of these lower classes: how they fostered ‘poor eating habits’, ‘poor hygiene’, or ‘excessive TV watching’ in their children, or how they ‘abandoned their children to be raised by others’. More frequently, they alluded to their own view of parenting as a process of personal growth, which had ‘taught them to be more patient’, allowed the child greater ‘self-expression’, and which demanded consistent cultivation of their spiritual and psychological selves. Interest in pursuing personal projects of self-awareness among elite parents did little to transform their personal perspectives about nannies, whom they viewed as inheritors of parental pathologies and, at times, even as viscerally offensive.

Sovereign parenting in both Ipanema and El Condado rendered racial interactions as embodied, felt, including in terms of disgust, for instance: disgust towards bodies, towards manners, towards places of birth or residence, towards linguistic accents and diction, and, above all else, towards how the poor parented. Disgust was indeed ‘an immensely powerful indicator of the interface between the personal and the social’.²⁰ In El Condado, Alejandra Rodríguez Emma, a stay-at-home parent with graduate training in clinical psychology, had nanny ‘horror stories’ that

¹⁹The law, EC 72/2013, was passed in April 2013. Details can be found in Edson Paulo Domingues and Kênia Barreiro de Souza, *The Welfare Impacts of Changes in the Brazilian Domestic Work Market* (Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, UNDP, 2012), on line at <http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCWorkingPaper96.pdf>, last access 9 Oct. 2018.

²⁰Stephanie Lawler, ‘Disgusted Subjects: The Making of Middle-Class Identities’, *The Sociological Review*, 53: 3 (2005), pp. 429–46.

were stories of disgust. She had once placed an Internet ad seeking a nanny and ‘what came here was atrocious!’ (*¡lo que vino aquí fue un desastre!*), she stated with an expression and gesture of repulsion – not simply dislike or concern. In addition to the objectification of the potential employees as indicated in the ‘lo’ neuter pronoun (equivalent to the English ‘what’ in the sentence), Alejandra’s reaction was what one would expect of something that caused nausea. In other cases I witnessed instances of parents moving an object belonging to the domestic worker, such as a handbag or sweatshirt, with only two fingers, avoiding any full-hand touching in a manner that, to me, resembled disgust and fear of contagion.

Disgust was visceral in a way that highlighted how space mattered in the ways that upper-class parents in Ipanema and El Condado experienced relationships to nannies and domestic workers. Disgust hinges on proximity; when spatial or legal boundaries between racial or social groups are challenged, social hierarchy finds other ways of expression.²¹ In the context of sovereign parenting, disgust – the object of which could be seen as threatening to children’s health, for instance – was a morally-sanctioned (and moralistic) endorsement of whiteness through parenting.

These forms of whiteness acquired materiality through parenting and were sustained through the historic, symbolic and geographical conceptions of Ipanema and El Condado as sites of wealth, luxury, progressive outlook and cosmopolitan feel. In the world of elite parenting, where few across-class and inter-racial spaces exist, the childcare worker becomes the closest individual onto whom visceral sentiments are projected. Disgust enabled an intimate, multi-scale understanding of space and the everyday affective, material and social interactions that produce and define it. Displays of wealth in countries of otherwise dire need and poverty, as is the case with Brazil and Puerto Rico, have become commonplace in urban spaces around the globe. Importantly, it is the perception of inequality, more than raw measures of inequality, that has deeper political consequences and more direct bearing on social wellbeing.²² Sovereign parenting rendered disgust acceptable, even necessary, thus underscoring how sensorial, visceral hierarchies produced and sustained whiteness and experiential inequality, at times even beyond built environment and physical segregation, in Ipanema and El Condado.²³

The culture of domestic work has been ubiquitous to Brazil, and most of Latin America, in a way that has not been the case in Puerto Rico. During the period of my fieldwork, Puerto Rico observed US minimum wage laws; domestic workers, at least those who had work permits and were documented, were entitled to minimum hourly wages in US dollars, and paid social security levies and taxes. While in Brazil many middle-class families could often afford full-time domestic workers, at least before the 2013 change to the labour laws, in Puerto Rico only the wealthiest

²¹Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

²²Carol Graham and Andrew Felton, ‘Inequality and Happiness: Insights from Latin America’, *Journal of Economic Inequality*, 4: 1 (2006), pp. 1569–1721.

²³Sociologists Zaire Dinzey-Flores and Jaime Alves empirically demonstrate this, respectively, in the case of the experience and spatial distribution of inequality in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the examination of ‘necropolitical governance’ in São Paulo, Brazil. Jaime Alves, ‘From Necropolis to Blackpolis: Necropolitical Governance and Black Spatial Practice in São Paulo, Brazil’, *Antipodes*, 46: 2 (2014), pp. 323–39; Zaire Z. Dinzey-Flores, ‘Spatially Polarized Landscapes and a New Approach to Urban Inequality’, *Latin American Research Review*, 52: 2 (2017), pp. 241–52.

families employed full-time or live-in employees. In Puerto Rico it was more common to have a bi-weekly cleaning lady (*señora que limpia*), when the kids were older, and a worker who performed daily cleaning tasks and provided babysitting when the children were younger.²⁴ El Condado parents often combined one of these arrangements with help from grandparents. As Alejandra, the El Condado mother who expressed disgust at the nanny candidates, explained: 'Having someone [paid houseworker] is more common now than even ten years ago, even among mums who stay at home. There's always that *señora dominicana* we have.' She added: 'When I was still working, my mum would come by when the nanny was there, [not] just to play with [her grandchild], but also to supervise the nanny.'

Studies of employer–domestic worker relationships in Latin America have critically examined the 'like one of the family' narratives that elites commonly deploy. An accepted conclusion is that these relationships are (and always remain) inherently asymmetrical, notwithstanding the emotive shape or personal histories they involve. And, in fact, domestic workers – viewed as polluting agents in a sanitised bourgeois household – are frequent recipients of bourgeois disciplining. What complicates this picture is that domestic workers are also part of a rare everyday *convívio* (living together, sharing).²⁵ For Ipanema and El Condado parents, whose lives unfolded in radically socially segregated spaces, black, poor and migrant domestic workers provided one of the few contexts to engage with social difference in an ongoing, everyday, intimate way. The recasting of relationships with childcare and domestic workers was one of the important elements of the complex projects of racial self-conception and moral self-fashioning behind sovereign parenting. El Condado and Ipanema white elites deployed narratives about the affective value of these relationships that were, indeed, required for the successful reproduction of whiteness among them.²⁶ As most research on nannies has noted, even when children spend the bulk of their time with the nannies, they continue to internalise their parents' hierarchical social logic.²⁷

Neither El Condado nor Ipanema parents wanted their children to act like rich spoiled brats or 'boss the [domestic worker] around'. While that might have been (and continues to be) acceptable for traditional or conservative elites in Latin American or the Global South more broadly, this was not the case for Ipanema and El Condado parents, who viewed even their choice of neighbourhood, schools and friendships as evidence of their progressive, liberal social outlook. A unifying question here thus becomes: how can the positive affects, genuine emotional connectedness and intimacy that some parents described towards 'their' childcare and

²⁴See also Jorge Duany, 'Dominican Migration to Puerto Rico', *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, 17: 1 (2005), pp. 242–69.

²⁵Santana Pinho, 'The Dirty Body that Cleans'; Jurandir Freire Costa, 'Da cor ao corpo: A violência do racismo', Preface to Neusa Souza, *Tornar-se negro* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1983).

²⁶Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas, *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

²⁷As Jurema Brites notes in her ethnographic research (Jurema Brites, 'Afeto e Desigualdade: Gênero, geração e classe entre empregadas domésticas e seus empregadores', *Cadernos Pagu*, 29 (2007), pp. 91–109), while employers may not be as intimately linked to the cultural universe of domestic workers, the children often spent quite a bit of time listening to an *empregada's* stories and the music they listened to, asking them personal questions, etc.

domestic worker coexist with, and even reinforce, the profound enduring racial and class inequalities? At the time of my fieldwork, debates around the limits of 'outsourcing' caregiving tasks alluded to this question.²⁸

'Hands On' as Elite Parenting Ethics

Mariblanca Giusti, a Yoga instructor and blogger, raved about the advantages of living in El Condado, a pedestrianised neighbourhood which shared many physical, economic and cultural similarities with Ipanema. Like Ipanema, El Condado has a large lagoon to one side and the Atlantic Ocean to the other; it has an active tourism industry; and an urban history of traditional mansions leading the way to contemporary luxury high-rises. Through a narrative of 'wellness' common among El Condado and Ipanema parents alike, Mariblanca remarked: 'Here you can encourage an active, healthy lifestyle for your kids. We do sports in the lagoon, kayaking, beach volleyball. It's not about video games and being stuck in front of a TV.' Only one aspect of El Condado profoundly troubled Mariblanca: the nannies. Mariblanca stated:

Unfortunately, many kids here are raised by nannies. I know there is no perfect formula for all families. But, what values will kids raised by nannies have? The nanny may very well have good values, don't get me wrong. But how does a child feel when the person pushing him in the swings is not his mom or dad, but someone who's not from his family? Breaks my heart.

Mariblanca's statement stood out not by her stance on 'kids raised by nannies', which I heard frequently in both El Condado and, specially, in Ipanema. Rather, it was the fact that Mariblanca was one of the few El Condado parents who not only had a full-time domestic worker in charge of cooking, cleaning and frequent childcare, but whose domestic worker wore a uniform. While having domestic workers wear distinguishing all-white uniforms was the source of popular debate during the time of my fieldwork in Ipanema,²⁹ I rarely heard any reference to uniformed nannies in Puerto Rico. Ironically, just as Mariblanca made the statement about 'values' and 'kids raised by nannies', Tula, her nanny, carried Mariblanca's younger child to another part of the apartment, so Mariblanca and I would not be interrupted. As I got to know Mariblanca and Tony Fortuño Vernet, her husband, I learned that Tula, a dark-skinned Dominican woman in her early 50s, had lived in Puerto Rico since the 1980s. She had been Tony's housekeeper for over a decade, and became also their nanny once the children were born.

Through a parenting ethics, Ipanema and El Condado elites determined, often quite arbitrarily, which tasks could be legitimately 'outsourced' to the nanny versus which ones required 'hands-on' parental involvement. With conviction, Mariblanca stated: 'Tula knows when to help, and when to let me take care of my own children.

²⁸Mariana Sgarioni, 'A criança terceirizada: As confissões das babás', *N Magazine: Para a Nova Geração de Pais*, 6 March 2014.

²⁹Mariana della Barba, 'Nannies de branco: Promotora vê conflito de interesse e pede anulação favorável a clubes', *BBC Brasil*, 14 Jan. 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/01/160113_baba_promotora_mdb, last access 10 Oct. 2018.

With two kids, and a husband who travels quite a bit, of course I need the help. But I make sure I am the one who feeds them, bathes them, takes them to the park. They are clear about who their parents are.' This perspective resonated with many Ipanema parents' expectations of a nanny and their concern with what in Brazil was referred to as *terceirização* ('outsourcing'), a popular term used in reference to the displacement of parenting or childrearing onto nannies.³⁰ Silvana Villela Mattos, the Ipanema mother whose husband is quoted discussing labour legislation in relation to domestic work above, mentioned that the nanny she hired was not a nurse, because 'We didn't want someone telling us what to do. "Wash your hands! Use [the] sanitiser! Take off your shoes!"' Eventually, they chose a nanny who 'would do what we wanted her to do, not what she wanted to do'. Since I knew Silvana well enough to know that she viewed herself as politically liberal, thoughtful and rather diplomatic, I was a bit taken aback by the forcefulness of her tone. She elaborated:

[The live-in nanny] was with us until Eduardo's tenth birthday. By then, Eduardo was embarrassed to be followed around by a nanny. She had a bunch of pictures of him [and would say] 'This is my son.' I would tell her: 'No, this is *my* son. My son is mine!!! Do you get that?' I got to overcome that jealousy ... In some cases, the mother gets home and the child doesn't want her. He wants the nanny to sleep in his room. If that had happened to me, I would be in psychotherapy!

Mariblanca in El Condado and Silvana in Ipanema shared a common anxiety about an emotional power attributed to nannies, virtual strangers who could co-opt maternal love by undertaking specific childcaring tasks. More significantly, though, these 'hands-on' elite parental ethics highlighted the parental shortcomings of other, often poor and working-class women. In Mariblanca's case, she would promptly attribute any life obstacle that Tula's dark, working-class adult children faced to Tula's limitations – her lack of 'hands-on' presence – as a parent. Controlling the emotional dynamics between nannies and their charges was part of an elite ethics of being (selectively) 'hands on'; these parental investments in controlling the nannies–charges dynamics were integral to how concerns with sovereignty and intensive parenting came together in forging Latin American whiteness.

Partly due to the difference in the cultural approaches to nannies in Brazilian and Puerto Rican societies, the Ipanema and El Condado parents had somewhat different concerns about this 'outsourcing'. In Brazil, parents did not question whether they would hire a nanny. The nanny being a given, Ipanema parents focused on the importance of being 'present' parents, which usually meant that they would monitor and give detailed instructions to the nanny, while selectively participating in quotidian childcare tasks which they (sometimes arbitrarily) assumed were the most important ones.

In El Condado most parents assumed that *la señora que limpia* would act as occasional nanny. Prefacing her comment with 'maybe this sounds *comemierda* [snobbish] but', Maribel, the woman who lamented the lack of a 'Mary Poppins', also stated that 'in Puerto Rico, the nanny thing is not well organised'. She elaborated: 'The only

³⁰Sgarioni, 'A criança terceirizada'.

people available to take care of children are the same [lowering her voice, so the cleaning lady would not hear] *señoras dominicanas* that clean houses. Many are illegal, have [only] a fourth-grade education, you know? ... I can't have my kids saying things like "disque" o "estábanos".³¹ Among El Condado elite, 'Dominican' was almost synonymous with domestic worker, elderly caregiver and nanny. Nevertheless, many parents mentioned that, if given the choice, they would prefer to have a nanny who was not Dominican. Colombian and Peruvian were mentioned as preferred nationalities, because these other migrant women 'had higher educational levels', 'had a better accent', 'spoke Spanish better', or 'had better manners'. In Brazil, conversely, parents claimed to prefer nannies who were, in fact, from the Northeast rather than *cariocas*. These parents claimed that *nordestinas* were 'milder mannered', had 'fewer connections to nearby favelas', were 'less tied down by family problems', and 'did not speak like *cariocas de comunidade*' (Rio-born individuals living in poor communities in the Zona Sul) or 'favela Portuguese'. Parents evaluated the nannies' classed and racial (and sometimes regional) cultural dispositions in ways that produced a cosmology of the poor that went well beyond specific skills needed for adequate childcare. Unfolding in spaces of wealth, luxury and privilege that were invariably child-centred, projects of upper-class Latin American whiteness cognitively and affectively altered views of inequality and need; these often referred to perceived psychological inadequacies.³² Techniques of surveillance and disciplining, in the child-centred contexts of care foundational to sovereign parenting, were affectively engineered technics of shaming rooted in the power of whiteness to determine the quality, validity and moral legitimacy of Blackness, its in-visibility or its hyper-visibility.

Separate conversations with Alejandra Rodríguez Emma and Mariblanca Giusti, El Condado residents who recounted their nanny stories above, demonstrated how 'Dominican', as a racialised category of care in Puerto Rico, acquired materiality through the cultural capital and nationalist claims intrinsic to sovereign parenting. The perceived linguistic corruption Dominicans imposed on the already-stigmatised Puerto Rican Spanish highlighted this:

Alejandra (stay-at-home mother; clinical psychologist): People actually prefer that nannies are not Dominican.

Ana (ethnographer): Why is that?

Alejandra: Because of the Spanish, mispronunciation of words, diction. Also because they are *mal acostumbradas* [badly mannered]. These women lack an education. If they were cleaning only, okay. But taking care of children?

Mariblanca: A friend whose child is in St John's [a private school where English is the main language of instruction] told me that now even native Spanish-speaking kids are speaking more English, because they associate the Spanish language with being Dominican.

³¹'Disque' and 'estábanos' – viewed as mispronounced versions of 'dice que' ('he says that') and 'estábamos' ('we were'), respectively – have come to serve as common references to Dominican speech in Puerto Rico, and are deployed as 'evidence' of 'inferior' Dominican levels of education.

³²Dinzey-Flores, 'Spatially Polarized Landscapes'.

Although there is a dearth of work on the contemporary linguistic practices of the Puerto Rican elite, Jennifer Roth-Gordon's work on 'practices of linguistic discipline' among Rio de Janeiro's middle class is pertinent here.³³ Because Portuguese slang is associated with the physical space of the favela, a goal of middle-class Zona Sul parents is to enforce 'proper' Portuguese as a form of socialisation to whiteness. Roth-Gordon deploys W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of 'personal whiteness'³⁴ to highlight the bodily discipline and forms of cultural capital that middle-class Rio residents use to explain their unequal access to resources.³⁵ People who fail to embody discipline, such as that fostered by teaching their children grammar at an early age, are likely to be racialised, according to Roth-Gordon's study, as non-white, independently of phenotype.³⁶

Like Roth-Gordon, I too witnessed the significance parents placed on 'proper' Portuguese in Ipanema and 'proper' Spanish in El Condado, although never independently of phenotype. Among parents and educators I met in Puerto Rico and Brazil, the insistence on 'proper' native language almost always took place not only in relationship to race and class, but also in relationship to nativist (anti-Dominican-ness in Puerto Rico) and geopolitical racialisation practices, including the relationship to English.³⁷

While Dominicans in El Condado and *nordestinas* in Ipanema shared a common position as a racialised or ethno-racial Other, there were critical issues that interrupted this implicit Dominican–Puerto Rican versus Northeast–Rio de Janeiro comparison. As noted above, Ipanema parents in fact preferred nannies who were *nordestinas*, and not *cariocas de comunidade*. In El Condado, perspectives on domestic work foregrounded anti-Dominican nativism and Puerto Rican cultural nationalism, which often triggered discussions about the lower status of Puerto Rican Spanish in a broader Latin American language hierarchy.³⁸ In this broader socio-linguistic context, Puerto Rican elite parents felt they had to over-compensate with very carefully articulated Spanish, as a way of challenging a global stereotype of Puerto Ricans. This Puerto Rican elite often believed that a homogenised 'Dominican community' – of which nannies and domestic workers were a part – compromised the pedagogical and socialisation goals they had for their children, as well as the national integrity of 'their' (white, elite) country and language. Ipanema and El Condado parents were aware that domestic workers transmitted

³³Jennifer Roth-Gordon, *Race and the Brazilian Body: Blackness, Whiteness, Everyday Language in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 2017).

³⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 [original edn: New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1920]), p. 17.

³⁵Roth-Gordon noticed a financial anxiety among her informants which was due to the social mobility of the working and poor classes and the middle classes' inability to distinguish themselves from those 'below them', who were presumably catching up. This context changed in the post-2015 years, as Dilma's impeachment also led to the dismantling of social welfare programmes.

³⁶Roth-Gordon, *Race and the Brazilian Body*, pp. 75–80.

³⁷Ipanema and El Condado elite also understood 'proper' Portuguese and 'proper' Spanish in relation to symbolic, imperial and colonial perspectives about the United States and the English language. 'English' was both a language that carried professional advantages, and one that was no longer exclusively associated with elite status, particularly in Puerto Rico. I discuss this at length in Ramos-Zayas, *Sovereign Parenting*.

³⁸Bonnie Urciuoli, 'The Political Topography of Spanish and English: The View from a New York Puerto Rican Neighborhood', *American Ethnologist*, 18: 2 (1991), pp. 295–310.

various forms of knowledge – social, emotional, ideological and even linguistic – to their charges, oftentimes in a tacit way as a result of conviviality, and they were invested in controlling these processes.

Only two Puerto Rican parents used the ‘like one of the family’ qualifier to describe their relationship with Dominican domestic workers, a qualifier that virtually every Ipanema parent deployed at one point or another. In both instances, the Puerto Rican mothers were divorced, and the Dominican worker had effectively become a stand-in for the missing parent, as well as a personal therapist and confidante to the post-divorce family, performing a great deal of emotional labour. In Brazil, the ‘like one of the family’ referent was very common, particularly in relation to specific domestic workers or nannies, and was based on length of time serving the family or level of intensity in the relationship. In Ipanema, elite parents approached race and class through claims to an affective authenticity between themselves and their domestic workers or nannies. In El Condado, on the other hand, parents viewed themselves as instrumental in asserting a linguistic competency – and superiority vis-à-vis Dominican Spanish – aimed at counteracting more global perspectives on Puerto Rican ‘culture of poverty’ stereotypes long-held in the US colonial context, and often deployed vis-à-vis the so-called ‘bad Spanish’ of Puerto Ricans.

Dominican migrants provided ‘teachable moments’ in how El Condado parents developed projects to teach their children respect, compassion and gratitude. The domestic workers stood in for how parents expected their children to relate not so much to the individual domestic worker that tended to them, but, more globally, to countries that were ‘like the Dominican Republic’, or communities that were less privileged. It was critical for Puerto Rican elite parents to view Puerto Rico as a more cosmopolitan, modern, and less poor country than the nearby Dominican Republic, and often Dominican nannies allowed this discourse to gain materiality in how they made sense of their own impetus to migrate. ‘Teachable moments’ in Ipanema shared some of the same impetus as those in El Condado – elite parents drew examples from their nannies’ lives to encourage gratefulness in children. In fact, in both El Condado and Ipanema, a focus on gratefulness – alongside equivalent comments around ‘being lucky’ or ‘being fortunate’ – engendered mysterious perspectives on wealth. They were ‘just lucky’ and ‘privileged’, but the political economy that in fact produced these drastic social inequalities – and the nanny’s very humanity and personhood – remained concealed.

‘Like One of the Family’ or ‘*la criada malcriada*’:³⁹ An Elite Production of Subaltern Agency

In the Mil Frutas vignette in the Introduction, Claudia’s public self-fashioning was emblematic of a ‘cultivated informality’, a privileged and practised affective disposition that characterised elite relationships with subordinates in Ipanema; in the ice cream parlour, this cultivated informality was illustrated in Claudia’s relationship to

³⁹Translated as ‘the bad-mannered maid’, this was the title of a popular TV comedy sketch that ran in Puerto Rico from the 1960s to the 1980s. The main character was the iconic ‘Azucena’, a feisty maid who lacked formal education and manners, but was ‘street smart’ and ended up getting her way.

Leandra and the valet parking worker.⁴⁰ First, half-jokingly, Claudia remarked, to no one in particular, that she was a good *patroa* (female boss). Not only was she treating Leandra (and later the valet parking employee) to partake in the ice cream parlour experience with her and her daughter, but, more significantly, she was giving Claudia love advice publicly. As I learned later, Claudia was herself divorced, and Leandra had become a *confidante* in the world of dating and romantic entanglements. This was not because either Claudia or Leandra lacked friends of their same social status; in fact, both women were popular members of their respective socio-economic communities. While they viewed those other friends in terms of competition and performance, neither one of them had to compete with one another or perform niceties for each other. For Claudia, the relationship with Leandra offered a momentary stepping out of otherwise rigid social conventions, which was in itself a reflection of her sustained social and racial privilege. In her relationship with Leandra, Claudia could actually go beyond the superficiality that most of my Ipanema informants attributed to social relationships in their neighbourhood.

Claudia had the power to orchestrate how privilege would be displayed and enacted – i.e. its very visibility or in-visibility – in the space of the ice cream shop, by urging some to have an ice cream (Leandra), others to taste multiple flavours (valet parking worker), and yet others (the shop assistants) to treat people like customers. Under ordinary circumstances (i.e. if the man had not been invited to approach the store counter by this obviously wealthy white woman), the dark-skinned worker's status as a customer might have been questioned. Instead, the valet parking worker was promoted not only to customer, but to one of those customers who could take their time (and the shop assistants' time) tasting many flavours before deciding on one (quite pricey) treat. Deploying this Ipanemense cultivated informality, Claudia, and other neighbourhood residents, addressed subordinates and service providers as they would their own 'buddies'. Mastering this cultivated informality was a clear sign of white ease and public display of white interiority, and did not preclude these parents from shifting out of the informality mode to firm orders. None of the parents who had grown up in upper or upper-middle-class Ipanema households, as was Claudia's case, expressed any ambivalence about giving orders and expressing requests, sometimes firmly, to their *empregadas* or nannies, even as they cultivated affective relationships with them; in fact, this exercise of control was associated with involved, hands-on parenting.

In Claudia's case, a critical intention in her informality was that Leandra develop and express a genuine emotional involvement with her and her daughter. The workers, in turn, needed to intuitively determine to engage (or not) in emotional

⁴⁰My perspective on 'cultivated informality' benefits from the works of Shamus Khan and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, whose ethnographies of US elite boarding schools note how socialisation involves a process of appropriating cultural practices from those above and below oneself, and of being at ease in multiple contexts: Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, *The Best of the Best* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Shamus Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). My perspective on cultivated informality pushes these constructions of 'ease' into a deeper affective realm, and foregrounds a form of white interiority particular to the wealthy populations in my study.

self-sharing, while sensing when to be discreet about personal desires, aspirations and expectations, all along remaining aware of the employer's emotional and personal needs above all else. More significantly, though, Claudia reflected what I came to notice as a leading tool of affective whiteness: the ability to decide when and the modality through which Blackness gained or lost visibility.

Although this cultivated informality seemed very specific to Ipanema, in El Condado I witnessed a form of interaction that was somewhat equivalent, and also critical to Latin American whiteness, liberal parental ethos and self-fashioning: the emphasis on the subordinate's agency. El Condado parents often commented, with ironic pride, how 'their' domestic workers and nannies always 'talked back', 'challenged their instructions' and 'felt comfortable' being 'explosive' in their presence. A boutique owner and resident of El Condado, Camila Sandoval had been divorced for a few years from the father of her teenage daughter when I met her. She commented on the instrumental role that her *señora dominicana* had played, not only in terms of helping her with everyday tasks, like cleaning or picking up her daughter from school, but also by providing 'therapy' to both Camila and her daughter during the difficult time following the divorce:

I would give Edelma [the domestic worker] instructions about what I wanted her to do with my daughter, but she would wipe her ass with those instructions [laughed]. Because she is a character. For me, what was most important was that my daughter had balanced meals, and that [Edelma] did not cuss and stayed calm in a crisis. But Edelma had a tendency to get hysterical anyway! She became my right hand, my therapist, and emotional support. She had a different perspective on relationships. Men couldn't be trusted, [and] all that, based on her experience.

Edelma's proclivity to 'be herself' and challenge the employer's directions, rather than being viewed as a negative form of insubordination, was in fact cherished by Camila, as was the case with most of the El Condado parents I met. In both El Condado and Ipanema, upper-class parents used the language of psychology and therapy (e.g. romantic relationships, conflict resolution) as evidence of how they viewed domestic workers as their equals. If they engaged in folk theories of romantic relationships or psychological conversations with subordinates, that meant that the elite had a deep emotional competency across race and class lines; a developed sense of fairness and equality; and were able to blur hierarchies through intimacy, as suggested in Claudia's relationship with Leandra and Camila's relationship with Edelma.

Verônica Igel Botelho, an Ipanema parent involved in children's theatre and outdoors activities in the neighbourhood, had a relationship with her domestic and childcare workers that was particularly revealing of the intensity of forms of intimacy under conditions of profound social inequality. When Verônica and I met for lunch, during an afternoon in July 2015, the first thing she relayed was that she had 'adopted' the second daughter of Rafaela, an *empregada* who had worked for Verônica's family for almost two decades. Divorced when I first met her, Verônica had always sent me e-Christmas cards with a cover photo of herself, her biological daughters, Larissa and Renata, Rafaela, and Rafaela's two daughters.

Verônica had convinced Rafaela to allow her daughters to live full-time at Verônica's home and had got them scholarships to attend a private Catholic school in Ipanema. Many neighbourhood parents had come to know Rafaela, because Verônica would bring Rafaela's daughters along whenever she met other parents and their children at a beachside playground in Ipanema. For some of these parents, Rafaela represented the closest, most intimate window into the world of their own *empregadas* and nannies.

Verônica's intense familial connection with Rafaela coexisted with her pathologising of Rafaela's life and parenting. Verônica blamed Rafaela's pathology on the regional ('being from Pernambuco, living in Cantagalo'), the religious (conservative, Jehovah's Witness), the psychological ('being abused', having many fears which she transmitted to the daughters, being 'stubborn', 'not knowing how things work'), and the moral ('four children, each by a different father'; 'having left a child behind in Pernambuco'). These intimate-yet-pathological narratives had become public knowledge among the Ipanema families with whom Verônica spent most of her time. For domestic workers with children, being a good mother meant providing financially for their children. For the employers who hired them, 'leaving children for a job' was considered bad parenting; in fact, the deployment of such arguments, confirmed, in their view, the 'culture of poverty' perspectives they harboured towards *dominicanos* in El Condado or *nordestinos* in Ipanema, or the poor and Black more generally. This further highlights how sovereign parenting produced morally-sanctioned forms of whiteness that forbade any further discussion. After all, who can argue against the importance of parents being involved in their children's lives?

Parental expectations and the labour of racialised migrant populations in Ipanema and El Condado shared common perspectives on security and insecurity; citizenship and rights; local and foreigner; and aimed to produce more flexible perspectives on what constitutes the family, particularly among elite individuals in non-traditional family structures. Elite parents positioned the labour of careworkers in terms of a required intimacy; as such, rendering intimate the labour and political economic conditions that enabled social inequality further forged the moral codes of whiteness and sovereign parenting.

In-Visible and Hyper-Visible: Race Narratives, Regional Geopolitics

Sovereign parenting furthermore supported a language of feelings, sentiments and cultivated forms of informality that framed relationships of unequal racial and social power in terms of self-awareness and trust. Ironically, genuine affection and power inequality coexisted largely because employers viewed 'their' employees as powerful subjects. Ipanema and El Condado parents harboured anxiety over 'their' caregivers' ability to 'disrupt family routines' or even to change from being 'like one of the family' to being 'threats and thieves'.

When I arrived in Vera Ferreira de Oliveira and Thiago da Silva's Ipanema apartment, Vera, one of the many parents I had come to know quite well over the time of my fieldwork, blurted out a question: 'Ana, how do people in the United States do it, how do they live without a maid?' In one of those odd moments of ethnographic synchronicity, I realised that it was the flip side of this question that

had fascinated me for so long: ‘Why were upper-class Brazilians, in general, and Brazilian parents, in particular, unable to make most life decisions without factoring in issues related to hiring (paid) domestic help?’ The catastrophic experience of losing an *empregada* is illustrative of the feeling of symbiosis on which this relationship is posited and, above all, of how parents viewed the agency of these caregivers.⁴¹

While quality childcare is arguably a leading concern for parents worldwide, including El Condado parents, among the Ipanema parents I knew not having a ‘trustworthy’ nanny oftentimes determined critical life decisions – from the very decision to have another child to the timing of IVF treatments to property considerations and cosmetic surgery scheduling.⁴² Vera and Thiago had decided against having a second child precisely because of the ‘nanny issue’:

The issue of having to depend again on a nanny, so profoundly, made us come to our decision. I felt guilty, because Felipe would cry about wanting a sibling. But it [the nanny–employer relationship] wears you down. I believe it is more difficult than a marriage. I know of a few families who built a beautiful relationship with the nanny, over generations, who ended up taking care of the nanny in old age, got her a house. Now nannies are just like corporate employees. The family becomes like a business.

Although Vera was one of a few upper-middle-class Ipanema residents who had grown up in a lower-working-class community, and had experienced tremendous upward mobility, she subscribed to meritocratic discourses of hard work and personal sacrifice to explain her mobility and expressed profound disagreement with the social welfare programmes of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party, PT). Vera was also one of many Brazilian women who claimed that ‘*a empregada mantém o matrimônio, o casal*’ (‘the maid keeps the marriage going’).⁴³

On this particular day, Vera felt betrayed by Juju, a domestic worker who also served as eight-year-old Felipe’s occasional nanny. She suspected that Juju had stolen from Vera’s elderly mother. Vera suddenly switched from Portuguese to a laboured English, so that Felipe should not understand. Vera explained that she had noticed money disappearing from her mother’s purse, and proceeded to make some tenuous connections between the missing money, specific dates, and Juju. Still visibly upset, Vera stated:

⁴¹Juliana Cristina Teixeira, Luiz Alex Silva Saraiva and Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri, ‘Os lugares das empregadas domésticas’, *Organizações e Sociedade*, 22: 72 (2015), p. 173.

⁴²*Ibid.* Teixeira *et al.* document the non-monetary transactions between Brazilian domestic workers in Belo Horizonte and their employers, as a dominant moral code between *criadas* (maids) and *patrões* (bosses) that dated back to the turn of the twentieth century in Brazil. Employers were expected to provide protection, food, housing and clothing in exchange for the *criada*’s obedience and loyalty. Among many of the domestic workers interviewed, non-material aspects, like affection, tended to complicate evaluations of who was a ‘good employer’; notably, these assessments were often rooted in the *empregada*’s perception that she was not being ‘treated as *empregada*’, but as a member of the family. These relations often conditioned the worker’s (in)ability to demand labour rights.

⁴³Ipanema and El Condado fathers were not required to interact with paid childcarers as much as the mothers were. These gender divisions of labour have been studied extensively and convincingly, e.g. in Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman*.

We never treated her like a maid. Some people, like Thiago's own family, deal with these situations very rationally, as if this is just a service transaction. But I can't help getting involved. I would talk to her, but Thiago believes she will deny the whole thing. She lives in a slang [*sic*; 'slum'], and she knows where we live. I lose sleep over this. She loves Felipe. I began imagining, What if she kidnapped Felipe?

In many instances, the closest quotidian contact that upper- and upper-middle-class parents had with individuals outside of their social group was with domestic workers; for many of them, the *empregadas'* lives were considered a sort of overflow of the favela into their household that was also played out in emotionally intense relationships and affective attachments.

As we laid our *pareios* (sarongs) on beachside chairs, Beatriz Pissollo Itamar, a single mother by choice of a young son, told me that, after numerous interviews, she had finally hired an *empregada* to take care of her apartment, her son and her 85-year-old father. When I asked what she knew about the domestic worker, she promptly answered: 'I know much more than I care to know and it's only been two weeks! [laughed] ... I initiated the kind of relationship where she will be comfortable ... and now she's very comfortable! I'm prepared for her to come with an explosion of information every Monday, after the weekend.' Most of the parents I interviewed believed they knew a lot (far 'more than [they] would want to know!') about their nanny's personal life, routines and hardships. One thing I realised, however, was that the interest in the nanny's personal life was often a strategy to get a sense of the information exchanged between the *empregada* and the other family members she was in charge of caring for.

Beatriz remarked that none of the nannies or domestic workers she had hired in the decades she had resided in Rio had lived in the adjacent *comunidades*, like Cantagalo or Pavão. They had all come originally from the Northeast, and Beatriz explained: '*Nordestinas* don't talk back a lot, and are more discreet. They stay in the same position for a long time. It is also a bit complicated to have a person who lives so close by.' Beatriz was among the most progressive Ipanema parents I met, if defined in terms of conventions about electoral political outlook, activism and social consciousness. Nevertheless, she was still implicated in what was common among all the upper-middle and upper-class families I encountered: part of the process of defending her privilege consisted on sustaining, no matter how hesitantly or apologetically, the existence of separate moral worlds that were always in danger of coming together.

In El Condado, the racialisation of domestic workers happened through an equivalence between domestic work and Dominican women; in Ipanema, this racialisation was highlighted by projections of regional demographic differences that attributed passivity or respectfulness or malleability or discretion to migrant women from the Northeastern Brazilian states. Historically, Brazilian privileged classes manage to convince themselves that their patronage was healthier for their servants than the lives available to them 'on the outside'.⁴⁴ In Ipanema, the

⁴⁴Goldstein, *Laughter Out of Place*, p. 89; Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e senzala: Formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal*, vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1933).

domestic worker was presented as evidence of how intimacy and emotion soothed social inequality; in El Condado, where live-in domestic workers were rare, the function of the worker was different – it was a way to enforce national and perceived racial boundaries through discourses of difference (in education, language, moral values, etc.). Nevertheless, in both neighbourhoods, the humanity of domestic workers was precarious and straddled a fine line between hyper-visibility and in-visibility; the cautious aspiration to complete trust and continuous fear of unforgivable betrayal.⁴⁵ Betrayal served as an emotive stand-in for a greater sociological reading which elite parents deployed to justify inequality on an experiential, visceral level. In this instance, sovereign parenting showcases fear and betrayal, not only as intersubjective emotional experiences, but as the imposition of white affective and personal values on structures of inequality. Upper-class Ipanema and El Condado parents seemed to be in an ongoing crusade to ‘give the poor/Black/foreigner a chance’, and subsequently, showing how ‘yet again’ their belief in good faith had led to personal hurt and betrayal.

The parents who employed nannies in El Condado, and especially those in Ipanema, at times enabled these forms of ‘happiness’ and even ‘cruel optimism’, creating the possibility that one might, indeed become ‘like one of the family,’ and sometimes turning this possibility into a reality.⁴⁶ However, this affective promise was not fully realised or realisable precisely because of the tacit requirements for domestic workers, particularly nannies or those who cared for children as part of their daily tasks, to navigate a firm in-visibility/hyper-visibility line. Although the issue of white uniforms and surveillance cameras were perhaps the most explicit ways of rendering an employee hyper-visible, there were other relational expectations that conditioned this hyper-visibility. The requirement for in-visibility was more forcefully noted in how Ipanema and El Condado parents perceived the role of nannies in framing their own parental identities as well as in their sense of the nannies’ educational and linguistic limitations.

In both El Condado and Ipanema, parents seemed interested in creating diversity in educational contexts, while undermining how whiteness, their whiteness and their children’s whiteness, as well as a broader institutional and spatial whiteness,

⁴⁵Liane Silveira, “‘Eu sou os olhos dela’: As babás nas imagens, na praça ou uma etnografia do olhar”, *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas*, 77 (2015), pp. 95–111. Silveira begins her ethnographic study of nannies at various Zona Sul squares by asking: ‘Who, among us, was exclusively raised by their parents?’ The ‘us’ in this question is obviously a fragment of the Brazilian middle and upper classes, including the academics most likely to be the audience for her article, and who may share her interest in understanding the life of ‘the most intimate stranger in a house: the nanny’.

⁴⁶Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). For Ahmed, happiness is a form of world making and a political technology that produces social norms. People pursue and perform happiness as well as using happiness to justify ideological representations, and to distract and downplay inequalities in specific contexts. The family as the prime happy object lends positive affect to contexts around it such as relationships among individuals who participate in household and family work. Lauren Berlant uses the notion of ‘cruel optimism’ to discuss affect and unconscious fantasies in relation to ideologies of ‘the good life’ in the post-war economic bubble. As she states, ‘cruel optimism is the condition of *maintaining* an attachment to a problematic object’ (*Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 33; emphasis in original). Optimism persists because losing the object’s promise carries the menace of destabilising hope entirely.

got reproduced in everyday interactions with people of colour, with poor whites, and with nannies and domestic workers. The only diversity and inclusion that was in fact of pedagogic merit for their children was the one that could be contained in deliberately didactic settings – schools, community service, volunteerism, travel. Ipanema parents continuously remarked on the lack of Blacks in their neighbourhoods and schools, while effectively rendering their *babás* and domestic workers in-visible in these discussions.

Some of the parents with whom I spoke did not know basic facts related to Brazilian contemporary racial relations; the fact that Brazil has the largest population of Afro-descendants in the West, for instance, was a shocking surprise for Fernando Coutinho Leite, a father who was enthusiastic about sharing this knowledge with me when he learned I was interested in topics of race. In August 2015, I was having dinner with Fernando and his wife, Gabriela Braga Vellozo, in their Ipanema apartment, when Fernando all of a sudden – and maybe in reaction to several posts on my Facebook page related to ‘Black Lives Matter’ – commented, without any prompting: ‘Ana, you are an anthropologist, so you must know about Afro-descendants in Brazil.’ I was wondering what part of this topic he was referring to, and knowing Fernando pretty well by now, I was certain he would go on to explain more, which he did. ‘Well, I saw a video on Facebook about the slave trade and how most slaves had gone to the Caribbean and to Brazil! Brazil has the second largest African population in the world. Can you believe that?’ At this point, what I was finding most unbelievable was that one of the most observant and deeply analytical people I had encountered in the time of my fieldwork had just learned what seemed to me a pretty broadly cited fact even in undergraduate Latin American Studies courses in the United States.

I was also puzzled by the Black bodies that seemed in-visible to Fernando (and Gabriela), since there were so many of them in Ipanema: nannies, domestic workers, valet parking employees, security guards, shop assistants, soccer coaches, personal trainers, ambulatory beach vendors, homeless men and women, barefoot kids in playgrounds were overwhelmingly black. The neighbourhood’s whiteness was interrupted (before being promptly reconfigured) only during moments of explicit social tension, policing and surveillance, particularly when elite action in those instances were justified, and even advocated for, ‘in the name of the [elite] children’. Thus, the daily conversations about the homeless, who were overwhelmingly Black men and women, coexisted with claims that there were ‘no Blacks’ in Ipanema, because the production of personhood in this particular neighbourhood was limited to individuals who could engage in a cultivated informality, which was decidedly classed and raced. Ultimately, in-/hyper-visibility was about whom one registered cognitively and affectively.

Discussions around family nannies, most of whom were Afro-Brazilian in Ipanema, could have gone in a number of ways; they could have been discussions about domestic work, about childrearing, about race, about poverty, about inequality. However, what I sensed more often was an actual displacement of race onto political practices, cultural ideologies, sovereignty and broader comments about who ‘we are’ as a nation or a people. They prompted references to slavery in Brazil, not as a political and economic project of nation building, but as an informative soundbite needed to raise cosmopolitan children, a goal typical of sovereign

parenting. In this sense, sovereign parenting was about consuming certain forms of knowledge under expectations of socialising children into the country's elite.

Teaching 'racial fluency' was central to the form of sovereign parenting that the Ipanema elite practised.⁴⁷ Racial fluency focuses on how effectively one responds to perceptions of race; it does not anticipate an outcome that is antiracist, but may be interested in identifying how racial strategies may intentionally reproduce racism.⁴⁸ Most of the Ipanema parents either downplayed or intellectualised race in ways that effectively undermined Brazilian everyday racism in favour of academic discussions about slavery. In El Condado, most parents codified race, so that blackness was associated with a particular class and/or migrant location, including in terms of Dominican workers and of young dark-skinned Puerto Rican men living in social housing nearby. Contemporary scholarship on racialisation in Latin America has noted how Blackness and whiteness are constituted in the relation between race as embodied experience that is 'exuded' situationally, race as object of discourse,⁴⁹ and race as an ethnic configuration with an emphasis on the 'folkloric' and 'exotic'.⁵⁰ I argue here that the power of whiteness among Latin American elites in fact deepens discursive, embodied and representational perspectives. It does this by alternately cloaking and justifying privilege and locating white supremacy in sites that have traditionally been considered inaccessible to social practices and the material: inner worlds, affective dispositions, senses of self, and the immateriality of race operate in tandem under sovereign parenting. In a context where racism is increasingly acknowledged, even by elites, and where the ability to engage in sophisticated race talk is a sign of cosmopolitanism, racialisation practices and projects have effectively become processed in the domains of the self and constructions of personhood. This does not negate that other forms of cultural capital and embodied and linguistic manifestations shape the legibility of such whiteness; rather, it is to complicate the assumption that 'looking the part' of a white elite is enough. Elsewhere I discuss in detail what I consider an 'inner-world aesthetics' of Latin American white elites, and the particular spatial, affective and geopolitical qualities of such forms of interiority in El Condado and Ipanema.⁵¹ My emphasis in this article is on how sovereign parenting does the moral work of privilege, by focusing on how upper-class white parents determine the affective parameters of their relationship with nannies. I demonstrate here that sovereign parenting

⁴⁷Robin E. Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race, and Racism in Urban Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001). Although Sheriff highlights Brazilian hesitation about 'race talk' in her ethnographic study of a poor *comunidade* in Rio de Janeiro, Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman's examination of race in Bahia, conducted several years later (*The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015)), noted that 'contemporary developments, including growing research on racial inequality and the black movement in Brazil, have emphasized the social significance of race in society' (p. 142). See also João Costa Vargas, 'Hyperconsciousness of Race and its Negation: The Dialectic of White Supremacy in Brazil', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 11 (2004), pp. 443–70.

⁴⁸Hordge-Freeman, *The Color of Love*.

⁴⁹Roth-Gordon, *Race and the Brazilian Body*; Kristina Wirtz, 'Mobilizations of Race, Place, and History in Santiago de Cuba's Carnavalesque', *American Anthropologist*, 119: 1 (2017), pp. 58–72.

⁵⁰Isar P. Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and US Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

⁵¹Ramos-Zayas, *Sovereign Parenting*.

produces a whiteness free of moral stigma, notwithstanding the dramatic inequality gaps that characterised both Brazil and Puerto Rico, and effectively removes inequality from sociological scrutiny. Nanny–employer relations are at the core of the production of a benign white self. I want to insist that the affect that sovereign parenting demands privileges – that is, is empowering – only when it is cultivated and deployed by whites, through inter-subjective patterns of cultivated informality; otherwise, the affective requirements of sovereign parenting become, in fact, a source of liability for racialised populations.⁵²

Conclusion: Subaltern Hope as Mediative of the Affect-Power Inequality Scheme

‘I do it out of love’, stated Liz Silva firmly when I asked her how she ended up becoming a nanny. Originally from Ceará, in the Brazilian Northeast, Liz was in her early 40s and had lived in Rio for 12 years when I met her in 2014. She had worked as a nurse for several years before becoming a nanny to the children of a Brazilian diplomat living in Paris. Once in Rio, Liz defined her work as a nanny in unusually professional terms: ‘I specialise in newborns, until the age of about a year and a half. I work on six- to 12-month contracts.’ Having such a timeline allowed Liz to ‘control better the affection and attachment you develop for the babies’. Liz always provided interesting perspectives on the Ipanema families she had met. She once noted:

Nowadays, parents, grandparents, the people who surround the child, compete for the kid’s affection. To have a kid has become something glamorous, because it is so difficult to protect and secure their future in this country ... It’s an investment. That’s why you have the conflicts between nannies and mothers and also fathers now. The mother doesn’t want to take time off from her career, and then realises that the kid pays more attention to the nanny. Because ‘mother’ is just a word from the child’s perspective. What is significant is the affective bond that develops over time, not the title.

I met Liz at an Ipanema beach kiosk. The manager of the kiosk, who had direct and daily relationships with the many nannies who came there, considered her a ‘*babá top*’ (‘best nanny’). Liz was a nanny who had successfully cultivated the capacity to reflect upon her own emotions and other people’s fears, excitement, desires, trust and comfort, as the kiosk manager often remarked. Like other ‘top nannies’, Liz was ‘labouring to foster in herself and her clients a newly expressive therapeutic ethics. A wider array of affects, in particular those associated with care and empathy, feelings of trust and comfort, intimacy and concern ...’⁵³ She needed to be aware of

⁵²Rachel Sherman, ‘Conflicted Cultivation: Parenting, Privilege, and Moral Worth in Wealthy New York Families’, *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 5: 1–2 (2017), pp. 1–33. Sherman’s work on the anxiety of affluence shows how (white) upper-class parents in New York are conflicted over how much privilege to display, and the impact these explicit forms of wealth had on their children. Latin American elite parents had a more complicated understanding of merit and pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, as narratives around meritocracy were not as foundational to the country’s national mythology as is the case in the United States.

⁵³Hodge-Freeman, *The Color of Love*, p. 181.

parental anxieties about losing or keeping something as unmeasurable as an newborn's affection. She was also aware of the employers' concerns about a bigger national picture; in Liz's case, and prior to Michel Temer's 'soft coup' in Brazil, Liz often stated that 'now it is great to be a nanny', in reference to PT labour laws. Nevertheless, she also had to recognise her employers' conflictive liberal-but-anti-PT fears about how lowering inequality would impact their lifestyle.

In El Condado, Sofia Martínez was also aware of her status as an exceptional nanny; she was light-skinned, Puerto Rican and trained in child development. At the time Sofia was working as a full-time nanny to five-year-old Bianca, Bianca's parents also employed a full-time domestic worker, Tata. A dark-skinned Dominican immigrant in her 50s, Tata had worked for the family for nearly 20 years. Sofia noted:

Most nannies in Puerto Rico are older Dominican women. That's not what these [elite El Condado] parents are looking for ... Bianca's vocabulary has suffered from being around Tata. '*Diseselo*', '*hubieron*'. I am always correcting her. I let parents know that they can't treat the person who cares for their child as 'the help'. The dynamic between Bianca and Tata is one of 'the help'. She treats me completely differently, because her parents treat me completely differently ... Tata can't read, and Bianca senses this. They love each other, but Tata has lost her power and also lost her place. For instance, last Saturday, when Tata left, she said to the parents something like 'Take good care of my Bianca this weekend!' Bianca's parents hated that! How are you going to tell them how to treat their daughter? They gave birth to her!

Sofia's entrepreneurial goals, and what she hoped to accomplish by professionalising the nanny role, drew from dominant elite perspectives on Puerto Rican cultural nationalism under sovereign parenting. Highlighting her cultural capital, at times even above that of her wealthier employers, also required greater distancing from the image of 'the help' which she firmly projected onto Tata, an 'uneducated Dominican' domestic worker. Sofia was also aware that her professional goals, of having her own elite nanny placement agency, were enabled by the shortage of upmarket nannies in Puerto Rico, a country with one of the most highly-educated entry-level work forces in Latin America.

Liz Silva and Sofia Martínez were emblematic of an increasingly segmented Latin American labour market of care which categorises individuals into more or less desirable workers based on the physical, ideological, racial, regional and emotive attributes that might most effectively reproduce white privilege and social inequality in times of national crisis. Although this article deliberately approaches social and racial inequality from the perspective of those who benefit from hierarchical arrangements, I conclude by highlighting how sovereign parenting is, ultimately, a project of white privilege. Sovereign parenting becomes reified, not only as a series of intensive parenting practices, but as the only admissible and morally acceptable way of crafting a parenting self. Through sovereign parenting, upper-class parents in Ipanema and El Condado showcased social (in)security instead of inequality, and thus legitimised neighbourhood surveillance and policing of poor, dark bodies, by making claims 'in the name of the children'. Under sovereign parenting, nannies

and domestic workers were not only individuals engaging affectively and intimately with their employers; rather, they were actual stand-ins for how perspectives on race, regionalism and migration (internal and trans-Caribbean) were circulated and communicated by white elite parents to meet their socialisation goals.

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Spanish abstract

A partir de una investigación etnográfica realizada entre padres viviendo en los vecindarios altos ingresos de Ipanema, Brasil, y El Condado, en Puerto Rico, examino cómo las élites urbanas latinoamericanas desplegaron sus prácticas de paternidad como justificación moral de su privilegio racial y de clase (lo que llamo ‘crianza soberana’). Una forma de hacerlo es a través de formas particulares de relaciones afectivas con sus niñeras. Las mujeres contratadas por estos padres de clase alta eran en gran parte inmigrantes de piel oscura de la República Dominicana, en el Condado, y del nordeste brasileño, en el caso de Ipanema. Demuestro cómo las élites cultivaron una forma de ‘informalidad’ y expresiones de atención hacia las trabajadoras a cargo de niños de maneras que no solo producen blanquitud como un pilar del liberalismo latinoamericano, sino que contribuyen a vincular la blancura con el mundo de la interioridad y el crecimiento personal.

Spanish keywords: crianza; soberanía; élites; trabajo doméstico; blanquitud

Portuguese abstract

Baseado em pesquisa etnográfica com pais e mães vivendo em Ipanema, Brasil e El Condado em Porto Rico, quais são bairros afluentes, examino como as elites urbanas da América Latina mobilizam suas práticas parentais como justificação moral pelos seus privilégios raciais e de classe (o que defino de ‘soberania parental’). Uma das maneiras com que realizam tais práticas é através do desenvolvimento de um tipo de relacionamento afetivo com suas babás. As mulheres contratadas pelos pais e mães da alta-classe são em sua maioria imigrantes de pele escura oriundas da República Dominicana no caso de El Condado ou do Nordeste do Brasil no caso de Ipanema. Demonstro como as elites cultivaram uma forma de ‘informalidade’ e expressões que denotam carinho no relacionamento com essas babás, de maneira que não somente estabelece a branquitude como o pilar do liberalismo Latino Americano, mas que também associa a branquitude com interiorização e crescimento pessoal.

Portuguese keywords: parentalidade; soberania; elites; trabalho doméstico; branquitude

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