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## EMOTIONAL CAPITAL AS A TYPE OF PARENTAL STRATEGY IN RELATION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL CHOICE MAKING

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined two types of parenting and their relationships with the parents' involvement in the education of their children. A small-scale study<sup>1</sup> of one classroom at a urban public school in the Czech Republic suggests that children from families with different backgrounds and different attained education perceive distinct types of parental upbringing styles in relation to their education achievement: the article discusses helicopter and submarine parenting. The main interest is dedicated to helicopter and submarine parenting in their weak and contradictory forms since the research revealed these two forms to be the most prevalent in the studied classroom. As the research data indicates, these two parental models are associated with specific dimensions of emotional capital. The survey revealed that the children of helicopter parents clearly benefit from parental involvement since their parents effectively transform their emotional capital into cultural capital.

### Key words:

Bourdieu, cultural capital, emotional capital, habitus, parental involvement, parental strategy

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<sup>1</sup> Research was funded with support of grant project VEGA 2/0092/11 "Folk Knowledge and its Sociocultural Conditions".

## 1. Introduction

Inequalities in societies are identified at different levels, i.e. material or cultural. All societies are unequal; the only difference is that some of them are more unequal than others<sup>2</sup>. Although education is mostly perceived as a viable weapon against poverty and social inequality, the problem of inequality exists within the educational system itself. Several research works in this area indicate that the achievement gap between school children is associated with the socioeconomic status of the family. Many social researchers involved in the examining of educational inequalities try to understand and highlight the circumstances that are closely related to this problem. The parents' own limited educational attainment can be a detrimental factor, but increasing parental involvement has been identified as a possible strategy for reducing the achievement gap<sup>3</sup>.

According to the sociologist Katrňák<sup>4</sup>, the environment in which one grows up leaves an imprint on one's life:

Children from socially well-built family have a great probability that the socio-economic status and way of life they had during childhood will not change even after they leave the family of origin and establish their own family, or they just start living on their own. On the other hand, there is a strong likelihood in children from poor socially constructed families that they will live like their parents, without education, with low social prestige and economic problems. The continuity of the social organization in time was valid for traditional societies and is equally valid for present societies<sup>5</sup>.

Pierre Bourdieu asked questions concerning the relationship between the educational achievement of children and the socio-economic background of their families as early as the 1960's and 70's. He worked with the concept of "classes on paper", which dealt with a group of actors possessing a similar position inside of the space of social positions. These actors have similar resources, interests, values,

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<sup>2</sup> G. Hofstede, *The Cultural Relativity of Organizational Practices and Theories*, "Journal of International Business Studies" 1983, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> J.S. Lee, N.K. Bowen, *Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children*, "American Educational Research Journal" 2006, No. 2.

<sup>4</sup> T. Katrňák, *Odsouzení k manuální práci: vzdělanostní reprodukce v dělnické rodině* [Sentenced to Manual Labor: Educational Reproduction in a Working-Class Family], Praha 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

preferences, and habits, whether on the material or cultural level<sup>6</sup>. His work emphasized how social classes, especially the ruling and intellectual classes reproduce themselves even under the pretense that society fosters social mobility. Empirical results showed that a person's artistic preferences strongly correlate with his/her position in the social space and also showed that the "subtleties of language such as accent, grammar, spelling, and style – all part of cultural capital as means of cultural expression – are a major factor in social mobility (e.g. getting a higher paid, higher status job). Thus, those 'disposals of taste' or 'consumption of specific cultural forms mark people as members of specific classes'"<sup>7</sup>.

Cultural capital is special in that it develops individual empowerment and performance from an early age. It also influences academic performance, family-school relationships, and children's psychosocial development.

A key issue in the research of educational inequalities is why mostly children of university-educated parents study at the gymnasium (grammar school) while the children of parents with low education choose secondary vocational schools. It is now much more interesting and meaningful to try to explain differences in the educational achievement and aspirations of students not so much in a way that is traditionally structuralistic (i.e. as a result of a combination of attributes such as gender, social class, and ethnicity), but rather as a result of the parental approach to education, their expectations, and their emotional relationship to children. These factors can affect not only the identity of the students, but also their school performance, as well as their choice of secondary school.

In other words, I am talking about a small-scale study, a kind of qualitative probe into the life of a few different families and their different lifestyles. The data below comes from several discussions with mothers and their children, who are studying in the 9th grade at the same school. Additional data comes from a questionnaire that maps the parental upbringing styles within the families.

## 2. Choice of Secondary Vocational School

Secondary vocational schools offer a wide range of specialization and intensity of study. The choice of a secondary vocational school is a practical choice, focusing on the control of specific skills that may, after graduation, be a kind of passport to

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<sup>6</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání* [The Theory of Action], Praha 1998.

<sup>7</sup> B. Gendron, *Why Emotional Capital Matters in Education and in Labor? Toward an Optimal Exploitation of Human Capital and Knowledge Management*, "Les Cahiers de la Maison des Sciences Economiques" 2004, No. 113, p. 5.

a job. The student could be confident that he or she will be focused and able to “capitalize” on his/her acquired skills immediately after finishing school. Within the class that I examined, secondary vocational schools were mostly chosen by students who were unsure of themselves and afraid of failing entrance exams despite the fact that they were achieving above-average results at school. They had major concerns about whether they could handle admissions and then complete their selected secondary education. Equally, however, they also expressed doubts about higher education; they mentioned the difficulty of their studies and they expressed their uncertainty about whether they wanted to continue with higher education from a long-term point of view.

Lucia (Family No. 1): Student Lucia thinks about attending an economic high school or sports gymnasium: “I think... Mom does not want to allow me to go a gymnasium because we do not know what can happen and that it is such that... I will be nothing; I am not focused on anything. So I thought of being an economist. I might like to go to sports gymnasium, I have sporting abilities, I like it, but on the other hand, nobody recommends it... it means that then I would definitely have to go to university...”

As Lucia said, this kind of gymnasium is much like a classic gymnasium, but there are just more hours of sport. When I asked if she wants to go to university after finishing gymnasium, or wants to find a job and start to work, she answered; “I definitely want to go to university. I’m sure that I will go to university...”

Me: “So then the gymnasium is the ideal choice, don’t you think? As it is preparation for studying at university”.

Lucia: “Yeah, I really wish to go to university, but my mom always says that there is no guarantee I will have something to do after gymnasium... that vocational school means more security”.

Lucia is an above-average student; she has had very good school results for the last six months (her average mark is 1,466). She has some problems with subjects like mathematics, physics, and biology, but she is good at all other subjects. It should be added that she receives regular pocket money for her good school results, which is an effective motivation for her, as she herself mentioned. Her leisure activity is taekwondo. Both parents attended high school, but did not graduate. Her mother grooms dogs. Before this job, she worked as a janitor in a school. Her father works as a mechanic. Both have a trade certificate.

Similar responses were obtained from other girls in this class. Markéta (family No. 2) decided to study at a pedagogical high school. She is interested in communication and working with people. When I asked whether she would like to go to university after secondary school, she responded, “No. Maybe someday yes, but

not now... my parents are not forcing me to somehow...". The highest level of education of her mother is high school, but she did not graduate. Her mother works as a shop assistant. Her father received a complete secondary education and works as a maintenance man. Markéta is also an above-average student; her last average mark was 1,357. Most of her problems at school are with mathematics, geography and Czech language. Her leisure activities are exercising, listening to music, and relaxing.

Martina (Family No. 3) chose to attend an integrated polygraphic high school. Her choice was governed by the fact that she enjoys drawing and this school is the nearest to her interest. In the future, she would like to do fashion design. Her parents both have secondary education, but did not graduation. Her mother works in a warehouse; her father installs windows. Her last average mark was 1,4. Her favorite leisure activity is drawing.

Me: "Were your parents involved in decision making regarding the secondary school or did they leave it up to you?"

Martina: "The decision was up to me. They don't care very much... not especially, but they said that it could be like this. My mom said that I should choose something like this, I was happy when she suggested it. And then when I told her about it, she was glad. And my father, well... I don't know. He doesn't care, he's just not involved".

Veronika (Family No. 4), the next student in the classroom, first had a dilemma, "I have no idea. I wanted to go to the dance conservatory, but... I still don't know. I also wanted to do something with animals, but otherwise I really don't know".

Me: "And did you talk with your parents? What do they see as your strengths?"

Veronika: "Well, Mom... she thinks I'm good at drawing. She think I should go somewhere in Jihlava or choose the conservatory. But, I don't think it is a good idea (smile)...". She doesn't want to be interested in drawing in the future. But, she finally chose the high school of economics. Her favorite subjects are mathematics, biology, and chemistry. I asked her if she doesn't think about gymnasium, if she is interested in those subjects.

Veronika: "Well, gymnasium... no I can't go there. My mom does not want me to go to gymnasium because she thinks that... my friend went to gymnasium. Before this, she had great marks and she almost did not have to study. And, now she has a poor report. She can not handle this school". I asked Veronika what her plans are for the near future, e.g. if she plans to go to university after finishing secondary school or if she wants to go to work. "Maybe I will go to university, but I don't know, if I'll be able to handle it. I would have to study for a long time... and probably I don't want to do this", she responded.

Both her parents have attained a complete secondary education. Her mother works as a controller of manufacturing machines. Her father works with iron and produces various iron products.

Veronika has an average mark of 1,6. Her favorite leisure time activities are drawing and dog training.

### 3. Choice of Gymnasium

The main role of the gymnasium is to prepare students for a university education. Gymnasiums offer students a general overview that can be utilized during university entrance exams. In the studied class, those students who already knew they want to study at the university after graduating from secondary school chose gymnasiums most frequently. They have a clear idea about their future. Although some students expressed their concern about the entrance exams, they believe their knowledge, which came not only from school, but also from regular participation in extracurricular courses and tutoring<sup>8</sup>, will be sufficient.

Petra (Family No. 5) decided to go to gymnasium: “Well, I want to go to gymnasium and I thought about at bilingual one, but there aren’t many bilingual gymnasiums, so I will probably choose something general and then... I want to go to study psychology. Actually, my sister studied at gymnasium too and now she studies at two universities. But, we were at this office... the employment office and there they had the list of the various gymnasiums, so that I was glad I could have a look at it... and I did not even know about some of them”. Her last average mark was 1,2. Mathematics and geography are her weaknesses. Her favorite free time activities are playing tennis, going for English lessons, playing the piano, and writing short stories. She started to attend English lessons because her sister recommend Petra take English classes since she will need English if she goes to gymnasium.

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<sup>8</sup> Except for secondary vocational schools and gymnasiums, several students chose secondary technical school and hotel academy. Secondary technical school enables students to gain education in sectors such as electronics, chemistry, construction, transport, informatics, mechanical engineering etc. Students can then apply their acquired knowledge at universities which are mostly of technical orientation. Hotel academy trains specialists who want to gain knowledge in the sphere of the hospitality industry, restaurant catering and other related tourism services. After graduating from hotel academy, they have the opportunity to go to a university of economic orientation (marketing, tourism, etc.). Both types of schools are a very good springboard for further studies at university. They are an alternative option for those who have difficulties choose high school, but know that they are not interested in studying at the vocational schools.

The head teacher told her mother that Petra is very ambitious and asked whether they, as parents, are not too strict on Petra or if they do not push her too much.

“I say education is very important”, said Petra’s mother. Petra’s mother achieved a complete secondary education. She really wanted to study at the university of veterinary medicine, and she actually started her studies, but dropped out in the third year. She is still very disappointed that she did not graduate from university. Now, she works as an accountant. Petra’s father has a university degree and is an entrepreneur.

Kateřina (Family No. 6) wants to go to gymnasium too. She has quite a clear idea what she wants to do in the future. She wants to be a lawyer. She talked about the gymnasium that she chose: “It’s a school from which I want to graduate and even if I fail in my application to this school, then I can pay for it. So I can be there anyway”. Students can start studying at this school at any time during the school year because it is a private gymnasium. Kateřina is a very ambitious and assertive girl. She explained, “I want to have at least one university degree”. Her last average mark was 2,0. In comparison with the previous girls, she has performs worse at school. She has received worse results in mathematics, chemistry, physics, geography, and English. In her free time, she usually attends dance and English lessons to improve her language skills and fitness. Her mother received a complete secondary education and she is an entrepreneur. Her father has a university degree and works as a researcher abroad. He hasn’t live with them for several years.

When I asked if she thinks that education is important today, she answered: “Now, for sure. I don’t think your standard of living necessarily depends on it, but today it is definitely important because then you can have better work and if people ask you if you have a university degree, and you say no and if you say that you don’t even have a school leaving examination, then it’s completely, completely... [giggling] I should be a cleaner then! [laughter]”.

Martin (Family No. 7) is a boy who also chose this kind of secondary education. When I asked what led him to choose gymnasium and whether it was his decision or the decision of his parents, he answered, “Well, I guess that yes. I wanted it and my parents wanted it too. And that was it. Because it is such a prestigious gymnasium with focus on mathematics which I enjoy and my brother and sister both went there, so I was motivated and I liked it”. He plans to go to university after gymnasium. His university study should be focused on mathematics and physics. His older siblings are studying at university. He has a problem with concentration, which is reflected in his school results and his approach to learning. His last average mark was 1,933. His leisure activities are attending a computer course, karate,

and table tennis. His parents both have a university degree. His father is a business owner and manager and his mother works as an administrative assistant in a private company.

#### 4. Emotional Capital

All these skills and knowledge of the students that we have seen above might be seen as a part of the individual's human capital, which has its roots in family and community partnerships. These individual social skills are decisive in behavior and in grasping the opportunities to grow up in society<sup>9</sup>. Each has one important thing in common: they are a sub-part of what we can call emotional capital.

Emotions are associated with higher needs, human values, preferences, and their relationship to life. Marketing specialists have long known that it isn't enough to only introduce a product to the public. They know that through advertising they can effectively manipulate human emotions. The relationship between people's emotions and their behavior and actions is in economic models undoubtedly narrow. This is because they have important consequences and economic returns if they are well managed and utilized. According to economist Bénédicte Gendron, emotional competencies are useful in that they constitute a crucial capital resource for actors through processes like using and plainly exploiting their human and cultural capital<sup>10</sup>. They play a role in making a final decision between equally good choices and in individual performance and efficiency as well. She understands them as a set of resources that inhere within the person and are useful for his or her cognitive, personal, social and economical development<sup>11</sup>. Even in the most "rational" decisions, emotions are present: "All of the experiences you've acquired in your life and work are not sterile facts, but emotionally laden memories stored in the brain. Your life wisdom presents itself as instantaneous hunches and gut feelings... and can dramatically increase accuracy and efficiency of the decision process"<sup>12</sup>. It's not just economics, where emotions play a key role. We also need to take emotions into account in the sphere of education and parental involvement in academic performance. Because emotional competencies are the result of different educational con-

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<sup>9</sup> B. Gendron, op.cit.

<sup>10</sup> Cultural capital in general is a set of organised cultural knowledge which is acquired by the specific cultural quality of a family environment. Cultural capital includes personal empowerment and development which is reflected in person's actions (B. Gendron, op.cit.; T. Katrňák, op.cit.).

<sup>11</sup> B. Gendron, op.cit.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.



texts and situations, they are acquired by learning. So, we can see different types of emotional capital as a socio-cultural variation of parental strategies.

## 5. Preparation and the Field

The data was collected from the 9th grade at one public city school located in Southern Moravia, Czech Republic. The research was based on an interview involving direct contact with the respondents. I made fourteen semi-formal, in-depth interviews with seven mothers and their children. At the same time, in the classroom, I distributed a questionnaire about parenting styles<sup>13</sup> that was designed to determine the manner of the parents' approach as well as detect the level of parental involvement in the education of children. Twenty-three students filled out the questionnaire.

## 6. How Children Perceive the Parenting Style in their Families?

Examined data collected from this classroom suggest the following tendencies:

- Families of children who choose secondary vocational school are characterized by predominantly positive emotional relationships with the child (submarine parenting or free-range parenting), which are associated with greater unity between the child and parent (or both parents<sup>14</sup>).
- Families of children who choose gymnasium are characterized by mostly negative emotional relationships (helicopter parenting<sup>15</sup>), which are asso-

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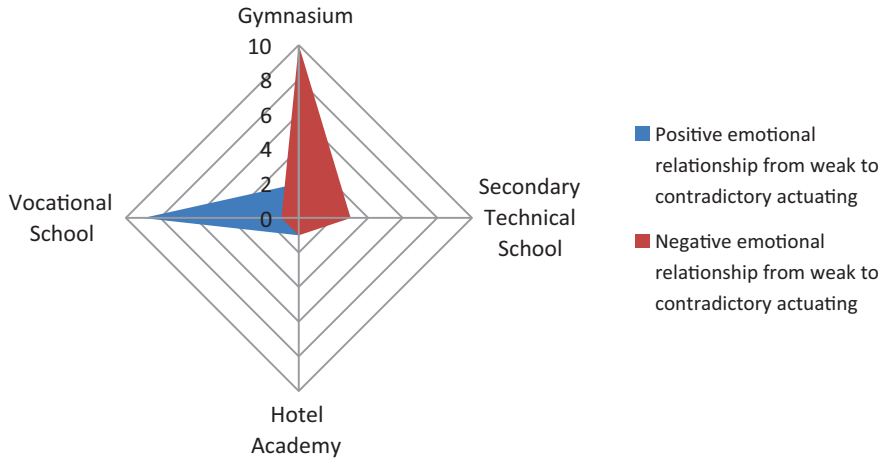
<sup>13</sup> The questionnaire about parenting styles was issued in 2000. Its authors are J. Čáp, V. Čechová and P. Boschek. It's a relatively new means of detecting the parenting style in the family from the child's perspective. By using this questionnaire, we can obtain information about basic components of education: the emotional relationship (extremely positive, positive, negative or negatively-positive) and relationship between dimensions "requirements" and "latitude" which gave us the data about parental actuating (on a scale strong – medium – weak – contradictory). It is possible to find out emotional relationship and actuating with each parent separately, but also for the family as a whole. After combining different types of emotional relationship and actuating in the family as a whole, the authors distinguish nine parental upbringing styles. They called it *Nine Fields Model of Parental Upbringing*.

<sup>14</sup> Several authors work with the term "submarine parenting" (S. Clark, op.cit.; K. Blouin, E. Boyd, op.cit.), meanwhile others prefer to use the term "free-range parenting" (M. Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*, New York 2006; L. Skenazy, *Free-Range Kids: How to Raise Safe, Self-Reliant Children [Without Going Nuts with Worry]*, San Francisco 2009).

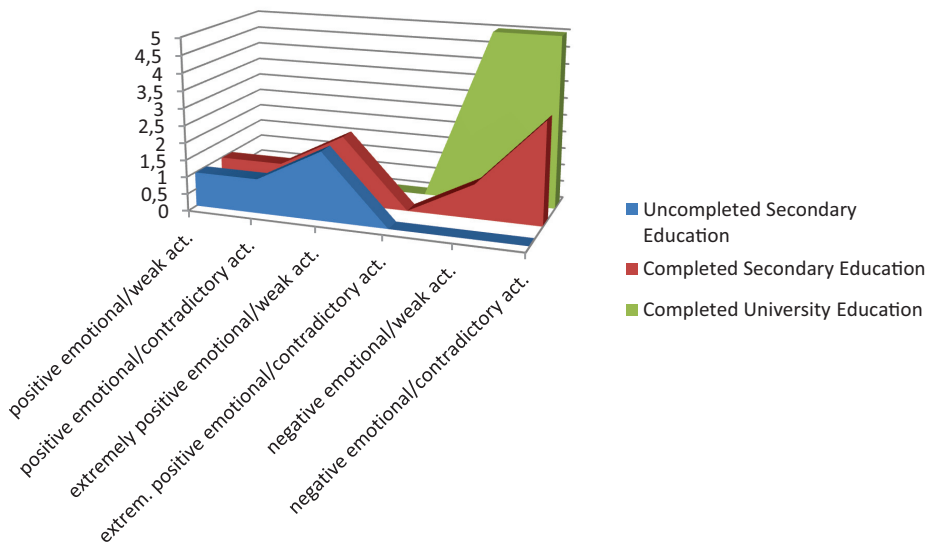
<sup>15</sup> The term "helicopter parenting" was first used by authors Foster Cline and Jim Fay (F.W. Cline, J. Fay, op.cit.) and has been used ever since (M. Levine, op.cit.; R. Alsop, *The Trophy Kids Grow up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking up the Workplace*, San Francisco 2008).

ciated with greater restrictions in terms of demands placed on the child, exerting pressure, and imposing extracurricular activities on children.

**Graph No. 1 Secondary school choice of students and indicated parental upbringing style in the studied class**



**Graph No. 2 Relationship between educational attainment of parents and their parental action**



## 6.1. Helicopter Parenting

First of all, we have here a kind of parenting that we could call “helicopter parenting” or “helicopter parents”. It means that parents are more or less obsessed with their children’s education and with their extracurricular activities<sup>16</sup>. They are trying to fill as much of their children’s free time as possible with these activities. They perceive education as an essential part of their children’s lives and they also adjust, due to this matter, their day-to-day activities. In terms of their child’s future, they have high expectations: “Well, when we said that she would then go to the university, I know that gymnasium is the best choice. I understand that gymnasium is preparation for university, that after graduation from gymnasium, it is really a problem to find a job. But I think that it is a general problem of any secondary school. But it’s a fact that gymnasiums prepare students for university. And since I know how Petra studies, so there should not be any problem” (mother from family No. 5).

In terms of the perceived approach to the child, helicopter parenting can be manifested in several ways. In this family model, a negative emotional relationship, perceived by the child, may lead to highlighting the shortcomings and mistakes of the child, punishing, or putting pressure on the child as a result of the very high expectations of excellent academic performance, restrictions, limiting the actions and activities of the child, and insisting on discipline and obedience when teaching the child to become independent. This same negative component of a parent-child relationship is typified by frequent comparisons of the child with other children in the neighborhood or preference and singing the praises of another sibling<sup>17</sup>. The negative relationship may also apply to the reserved, cold behavior of both parents; one of the parents; the denial of affection; or a positive attitude towards the child.

Some of these so-called “helicopter parenting” families are also unique in the conflict in parental actuating (control). Based on data from the studied class, I will focus my attention only on two following types of helicopter parenting (as well as submarine parenting), especially in terms of contradictory and weak actuating. The reason for this is that I didn’t find the extreme form of these parental models in the field<sup>18</sup>.

Now, several notes should be made on the difference between weak and contradictory actuating in the case of helicopter parenting. The principal difference is the combination of dimensions “requirements-latitude”. In relation to weak actuating,

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<sup>16</sup> F.W. Cline, J. Fay, *Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*, Colorado 1990.

<sup>17</sup> J. Čáp, *Dotazník stylů výchovy pro děti* [Questionnaire of Parenting Style for Children], Praha 2000.

<sup>18</sup> By extreme form I mean helicopter and submarine parenting with strong actuating.

the relationship with the child is characterized by a greater level of latitude. A greater degree of parental restraint can be seen because of their particular orientation towards a career, interests, or problems<sup>19</sup>. Weak actuating is often linked to higher levels of inconsistency. This means that parents may make greater demands on the child, but, at the same time, they systematically monitor the fulfillment of their duties. “I think we have a friendly relationship with my son. Even if you know now when he is in that ninth grade, so it does not work much, I don’t know... Sometimes, when he brought a bad mark home from school, I said to him that he must fix it. When it was on detention, so I was a little more angry (laugh). A man can sometimes be too angry and then he does not behave correctly. My husband scolds him for detention, takes his notebook from him (sanction), but otherwise he does not have much time for it during the year” (mother from family No. 7).

The parental monitoring of (school and non-school) duties is not as strict as it would be in the case of a negative relationship with strong actuating, which is characterized by significant authoritarian elements<sup>20</sup>. Parents retreat to their children in most things, keep supervision of their daily activities, try to solve their problems, but mostly try to leave things to the children’s discretion<sup>21</sup>. It is like balancing between neglecting periodic control/monitoring of child and parental severity, consistency in terms of requiring of rules compliance.

The data processed from the research suggests that children who perceive this type of relationship – the negative relationship with weak actuating – have a slightly higher score of latitude than requirements (but the difference is not great). This type of parent-child relationship is associated predominantly with a liberal style<sup>22</sup> of education<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> J. Čáp, op.cit.

<sup>20</sup> In comparison, with a strong actuating there arises (developes) a parental need to manage every aspect of child’s life.

<sup>21</sup> A. Orlová, *Mezigenerační přenos výchovných stylů z orientační do prokreační rodiny* [Intergenerational Transmission of Parenting Styles from Family of Orientation to Procreation Family], Brno 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Nowadays, parents according to their opinions and views, as well as according to processed questionnaires, use less authoritarian and more democratic and liberal parenting in comparison with their parents. Shift to parenting styles with weak parental actuating and more „friendly“ relationship with children is also confirmed by several other domestic and foreign research studies (I. Gillernová, *Edukační interakce rodičů a dětí a její proměny v reflexi dospívajících* [Educational Interactions of Parents and Children and their Changes in Reflection of Adolescents], *Československá psychologie: časopis pro psychologickou teorii a praxi* [Czechoslovak Psychology: Journal for Psychological Theory and Practice] 2009, No. 3; H.G. O’Brien, *The Intergenerational Transmission of Parenting Styles of Irish Immigrant Mothers*, *Journal of Family Social Work*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2010.514680> [access: 22.04.2013]).

<sup>23</sup> J. Čáp, op.cit.

On the other hand, there is a negative relationship with contradictory actuating. Here, we can see elements of parental indifference and severity overlapping at the same time. In this case, there are signs of both strong and weak actuating present<sup>24</sup>. We can talk about this type of relationship in the case of families with a dis-united parental style of upbringing. One parent is more directive and requires fulfilling duties and obligations, but there is an absence of fulfillment monitoring: “I think that we as parents are strict, especially my husband. He is a little bit fighting with it. I think that he has a terrible fear about our girl. I am pushing her. And, the fact is that he is pushing her too, because he always says that if he did not rush himself in anything, he would shepherd sheep at home” (mother from family No. 5).

His or her behavior is mostly characterized by a lack of interest and occasional negative interest focused on some particular misdemeanor and the subsequent punishment of the child. A rest period and irregular supervision without any kind of systematic checking follows<sup>25</sup>. Another possible variant of contradictory actuating is disagreement in the upbringing style of the father and mother, i.e. when one of them is very strict and the other, in an attempt to mitigate this impact, is forgiving and benevolent.

Regardless of where their position is in the range of actuating, helicopter parents have something in common. They arrange and support a minimum of two or three extracurricular activities for their children in specialized institutions, where they can improve their skills. They also frequently arrange sporting activities and leisure trips to various locations, go to the theatre, or take their children to concerts.

## 6.2. Submarine Parenting

The positive component of this type of relationship is related to parental understanding for their children, positive emotional expressions, and common activities of various types (games, entertainment, recreation, learning, home labor). As the name itself suggests, these parents are like a submarine that stays close to the child in case of a real threat. When the situation requires, the submarine “comes to the surface” and solves the problem of the child, but most of the time, it is out of sight<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> L. Cášková, *Výchovné prostředky v souvislosti s rodičovskými výchovnými styly* [Educational Methods in the Context of Parental Upbringing Styles], Brno 2010; J. Čáp, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> S. Clark, *Fun-Filled Parenting. A Guide to Laughing More and Yelling Less*, California 2010; K. Blouin, E. Boyd, *Helicopters and Submarines*, Moms in the Know, <http://momsintheknow.com/2012/04/helicopters-and-sumarines/> [access: 22.04.2013].

Submarine parents are less involved in their child's education. They are also less involved into the relationship with school. They do not place great demands on their children: "Well, when I get a bad mark, I'll tell it to my mom. Mom does not really ask about it" (Veronika from family No. 4). Lucia from family No. 1 says, "I think that it's also a lot about a man, because everyone now... you have to finish secondary school, because if a person doesn't have parents who buy him everything... and university is important because nowadays, everyone has finished secondary school and who has got a university, but, on the other hand, there are people who are only student types and when they graduate, they are useless. So, that they simply learned and now they do not know what to do with it. So... experience. It seems to me that work experience is most important. I think that a person who has got that vocational certificate, and he seriously wants to prove and goes for it, so I think he can get somewhere" (Lucia from the family No. 1).

Submarine parents allow their child to spend his/her time entirely according to his/her wishes. They don't have high educational aspirations in relation to their children and they also do not see practicality in long-term systematic studies. For example, one parent (the mother of family No. 2) said, "Today everybody wants to go to gymnasium. Gymnasiums are overcrowded with students and vocational schools, conversely, have a lack of students. I think it is good when a man has an apprenticeship in something, can handle some craft and will be able to care for himself. If Markéta wants, she still will be able to go to college after high school of pedagogy. But even if she did not go, she can work in the field from which she will graduate. I really don't know what she would do with the graduation from gymnasium. She would end up just at the Labor Office, because she won't be able to find a job. To all children can study at gymnasium. Who would then repair water and electricity, who would bake or teach, if everybody studied at the gymnasium and then became managers, economists and lawyers?"

As in the case of "helicopter parenting", individual types of submarine parenting can be characterized by their actuating specification. I will discuss weak and contradictory actuating in this respect.

A favorable atmosphere in the family is characterized by weak actuating. Parents often describe their relationship with children as friendly (this is especially true of relationships between mothers and daughters)<sup>27</sup>. From the side of the parents, there is a lack of requirements and criticism of faults. They don't pay heed to system compliance or small, everyday duties. If a child lacks certain discipline, he/she may have a weaker performance or may not fulfill his/her obligations. Parents

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<sup>27</sup> J. Čáp, op.cit.

are trying to fix this problem through conversation and are satisfied with the promise improvements. But, these improvements are not controlled. In some cases, parents blame others, teachers, or friends to avoid admitting the child's mistakes<sup>28</sup>.

Authors indicate a positive emotional relationship with contradictory actuating as very unfavorable for a child's upbringing<sup>29</sup>. On the one hand, this relationship creates a positive, warm climate in the family; the relationship between parents and child is friendly and congenial. But on the other hand, parents do not provide a well-defined and uniform image of upbringing, which may be adversely reflected in the sphere of the child's education. In some families, parents, through this bond, emphasize "kindly rigidity". Others instead leave the child with too much latitude. According to Čáp<sup>30</sup>, it depends on which of the parents significantly affects the child during the specific developmental period.

Submarine parents in general do not expect that their child will be special at school. "They see in them their own image too much, their own educational path composed of elementary school and vocational training. They don't try to push children into exceptional school performances or encourage them to higher educational aspirations... If the child is smart, does well in school and is interested in further study, parents do not prevent him from other studies, however, they expect from him that he will train in some special field and then he will go to work"<sup>31</sup>.

It can be said that children of submarine parents underperform due to their own uncertainty. "I think that gymnasium wouldn't be a good choice in the sense that it has got too general studies. If she would graduate from gymnasium, she would not be focused on anything, no specific specialization in something, nothing you know... Even after economic high school she can go to university if she wanted to, so I think that the secondary vocational school is the best choice for her. If she did not get to university, then at least she could find a job in her field. But if she studied at the gymnasium, then what would she do?" (mother from family No. 1).

To summarize, the key difference between helicopter parenting and submarine parenting lies in their educational management, in the stimuli, and the level of support they provide to their children.

Helicopter parents are more open to education and further learning; they try to provide a wide variety of stimuli to enhance their children's development. They have a much greater impact on the complex organization of their leisure activities

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<sup>28</sup> L. Cásková, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> J. Čáp, *op.cit.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>31</sup> T. Katrňák, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

than submarine parents. On the other hand, submarine parents offer their children much more time for themselves, as well as for arranging and managing their leisure time on their own. In comparison with helicopter parents, the relationship between submarine parents and further education can be characterized as more passive. They are not sure of and even have doubts about whether their children need to achieve higher education in their lives.

The research also uncovered differences between “helicopters” and “submarines” in the level of helping with co-organizing school events. According to the mother from family No. 7<sup>32</sup>, “Well, I go to these meetings. I try not to miss any appointment. Regarding the sponsorship, last year we donated our dictionaries to the raffle at the ball. I tell myself that we can also do it this year”. The mother from family No. 5 also says, “From time to time I sewed something for some school events, when it was needed. For a longer time I was also the class treasurer”. On the other hand, we can see the passive attitude relation of submarine parents in terms of their involvement and support of the school. By contrast the mother from family No. 4 says, “No, I’ve never been involved this way. I don’t have time for it as I work in shifts and sometimes I even miss the parent-teacher conference”.

Table 1. Families

Family	Highest attained education of parents	Type of selected secondary school	Average assessment in school	Extracurricular activities	Formative acting of parents	Are they plan to go to university?
1	secondary school without graduation	secondary vocational school	1,466	taekwon-do	positive emotional relationship, contradictory acting	yes
2	complete secondary education	secondary vocational school	1,357	exercising, listening to music, relaxing	extremely positive emotional relationship, weak acting	maybe
3	secondary school without graduation	secondary vocational school	1,4	drawing	positive emotional relationship, weak acting	no
4	complete secondary education	secondary vocational school	1,6	drawing, dog training	positive emotional relationship, weak acting	probably no

<sup>32</sup> They donated to the school raffle educational books that her husband sold within his business activities.



Family	Highest attained education of parents	Type of selected secondary school	Average assessment in school	Extracurricular activities	Formative acting of parents	Are they plan to go to university?
5	university degree	gymnasium	1,2	playing tennis, playing piano, English course	negative emotional relationship, contradictory acting	yes
6	university degree	gymnasium	2,0	dance lessons, English course, fitness	negative emotional relationship, weak acting	yes
7	university degree	gymnasium	1,933	computer course, table tennis, karate	negative emotional relationship, weak acting	yes

As we can see from the table, families No. 5, 6, and 7 are the families with helicopter parents. Children spend their leisure time actively, they chose gymnasium, and after graduating they are planning to go to university. Families No. 1, 2, 3, and 4 are the families with submarine parents whose activities, in comparison with the previous families, are characterized by fewer activities. These activities are of an informal character and usually occur in the home environment. Except for family No. 1, students did not express a clear interest about future studies at university. Instead, they are rather skeptical towards further studies. Family No. 1 can be described as an ambitious family<sup>33</sup>. Despite the low educational attainment of the parents and the mother's disagreement with the gymnasium, the child has ambitions to go to university. In this case, there is a probability that behind the student's higher ambitions stands one parent, who puts greater demands on the child than the other parent (which could explain the contradictory parental acting perceived by the child).

<sup>33</sup> Research in Czech Republic *Parents and Upbringing* (2010) examined the differences in the educational aspirations, cultural capital and leisure activities of children in families with university education and families with a vocational certificate – working-class families. The results of this research pointed to the differences between these two family models in terms of their volume of cultural and economical capital as well as parental approaches and values (O. Špaček, J. Šafr, K. Vojtíšková, *Rodiče a výchova 2010. Závěrečná zpráva z výzkumu* [Parents and Upbringing 2010. Final Research Report], Praha 2010). Authors distinguish two types of working class families according to their ambitions in relation to the education of their children: 1) ambitious working class families and 2) static working class families. On the basis of their understanding of ambitious working class families, we can classify family no. 1 as an ambitious working class family. Although Lucia chose the vocational school because of the certainty of her parents, she has no doubt that she will go to university after graduating from secondary school. Also the emotional relationship with one parent points to the higher demands and requirements placed on her.

We should not forget that neither of these parental models exists in its homogeneous, sharp-edged form<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, the family system is dynamic and may change over time due to various life circumstances (employment of parents, death of a family member, divorce, or the birth of another family member, etc.). All of these aspects can affect the parent-child relationship and may lead to possible changes in parental models and actuating styles.

## 7. Discussion

In this small-scale study, we can see several tendencies, such as parents with a university education select a specific kind of behavior (negative emotional relationship) and actions (the child engaging in several extracurricular activities, common discussions about the education of the child, regular participation at parent-teacher conferences, active assistance with managing school activities, personal visits to selected secondary school) to persuade their child to attain the desired education and accumulate further knowledge. We call this involved type of parents “helicopter parents”. Helicopter parents are characterized by higher educational aspirations and also by higher attained education.

On the other hand, there are parents with a positive emotional relationship, so-called “submarine parents”. These parents have a passive attitude to the child’s progress in education<sup>35</sup>. They are characterized by less interest and involvement in their child’s process of accumulating skills and knowledge, which is manifested in their specific actions (lower number of leisure activities of their children, irregular attendance at parent-teacher conferences, non-involvement in organizing school events, etc.). According to Vojtíšková, if a family doesn’t have more experience with

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<sup>34</sup> In each model field of parental upbringing that I investigated through the use of this specific questionnaire, in spite of common traits, the forms are individually different (J. Čáp, op.cit.). Therefore, it is possible to distinguish both models of parenting (helicopters and submarines) into several other sub-categories, for example: pampering style, inconsistent, negligent, perfectionist, excessively protective, repudiating etc (Z. Matějček, *Dítě a rodina v psychologickém poradenství* [Child and Family in Psychological Counselling], Praha 1992; J. Langmeier, D. Křejiřová, *Vývojová psychologie* [Developmental Psychology], Praha 2006). The specific sub-styles practised in families can be specified through detailed family case reports.

<sup>35</sup> Researcher Geoffrey Walford in his research describes two types of parents: the “chooser” and the “non-chooser” in their attitude to the choice or non-choice of he further education trajectory for their children. Choosers were those who were actively involved in the choice mechanisms and also in the education of their children. Non-choosers were passive parents, ignoring the choice mechanisms and less involved in their children’s education progress (G. Walford, *Markets and Equity in Education*, London 2006).

the studies, “it cannot naturally prepare the child for the study world and higher education is a bit of a journey into the unknown”<sup>36</sup>. She describes this relationship in a way that the habitus of families from a lower social class in contact with the school reflects its own sense of low cultural capital, which leads to self-exclusion as people adjust their expectations to perceived chances.

Parents with different backgrounds manifest different types of involvement because of their different habitus. These different predispositions toward certain types of behavior in relation to their involvement in education may come from differences in economic capital, educational knowledge, as well as their experiences with and confidence in the educational system<sup>37</sup>.

The attitude of parents towards school is largely influenced by their own educational experiences in childhood, as well as by their occupation. In turn, these are entrenched in their affiliation with a social class<sup>38</sup>.

Katrňák also describes a different approach to school based on different experiences. According to Katrňák, working-class families never had a good relationship with school since school did not please them and they do not require their children to be a superior student or to seek higher education. Katrňák's attitude revealed that working-class families therefore have a free attitude to school; they choose the so-called material strategy. The material strategy provides a quicker return of the economic costs invested into the child's education and thus his/her educational course is short. They do not intend to gain any higher education in their lives or the lives of their children. These children must help themselves, because the family does not help them. Due to the lack parents' lack of interest in their children's education, the children will not possess high educational aspirations. Learning in this case is not a motivation for the children and they gradually give up on succeeding at school. Such limited learning management is rational in light of the family's lower social status<sup>39</sup>.

The families with a university education prefer a status-oriented strategy. This strategy is characterized by ideas about education as a guarantee of a certain social status and parents will mobilize their social capital for this purpose only. They

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<sup>36</sup> K. Vojtíšková, *Výběr střední školy v rodinách* [Secondary School Choice Making in Families], “SOCIOweb” 2008, No 6, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> M. Grenfell, D. James, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, Bristol 1998; T. Katrňák, op.cit.; K. Vojtíšková, *Školní úspěšnost a její (re)produkce na základní škole* [Academic Success and the Intergenerational Reproduction of Academic Performance at Basic School], Praha 2011.

<sup>38</sup> I. Bayer, *Přístupy k sociologickému zkoumání kultury a stratifikace* [Approaches to the Sociological Study of Culture and Stratification], Praha 2007.

<sup>39</sup> T. Katrňák, op.cit.

focus their actions towards attaining an education that is related to a higher social status. In their minds, education brings future profit. They emphasize on cultural activities, skill improvements, and increasing general knowledge. The parental relationship with the school is much more consistent<sup>40</sup>. This is confirmed by several other research studies conducted not only in the Czech Republic<sup>41</sup>, but also abroad<sup>42</sup>. According to Lee and Bowen, “the greater an individual’s cultural capital, the greater his or her advantage in procuring additional capital that will benefit family members. Some individuals have inherited cultural capital in the process of ‘habitus’ formation in their families, which makes them more successful players than others in the field of the education system. In contrast, individuals with less cultural capital encounter constraints that result in unequal access to institutional resources”<sup>43</sup>.

## 8. Conclusion

It seems that the transformation of emotional capital into cultural capital is not entirely independent of the class structure of society. Differences in attitudes with respect to attained education in families are obvious. These differences shape their approach to the educational involvement of their children, which is embodied in a parental upbringing style that either leads to sufficient motivation and developing of the skills and knowledge of the child; to the cultivation of his self-confidence; or, on the contrary, to the undermining of his certainty and self-assurance and thus to insufficient development. In terms of the potential development of the future educational path in the studied class, it is obvious that the children of “helicopter parents” clearly benefit from parental involvement. They are better prepared for systematic, long-term studies and they believe more in their own success in high school entrance exams. Their self-confidence reinforces the sense of success. The aim of this paper is not to generalize these findings, however. Its main goal was to gain more insight and understanding of how educational ambitions can be related

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> K. Vojtíšková, Školní úspěšnost a její..., op.cit.; J. Šafr, *Vzdělanostní aspirace a mimoškolní activity patnáctiletých. Pracovní texty* [Educational Aspirations and Extracurricular Activities of Fifteen Year Old Children. Working papers], Praha 2010; I. Bayer, op.cit.

<sup>42</sup> M. Grenfell, D. James, op.cit.; A. Lareau, *Linking Bourdieu’s Concept of Capital to the Broader Field: The Case of Family-School Relationships* [in:] *Social Class, Poverty, and Education: Policy and Practice*, B.J. Biddle (ed.), New York 2001.

<sup>43</sup> J.S. Lee, N.K. Bowen, op.cit., pp. 197–198.

to the environment in which the studied children have grown up. Not all children with successful academic performance and the necessary preconditions to study at gymnasium in this case were seen as ambitious children with high educational aspirations. Therefore, it was interesting to try to reveal the possible causes of this low self-confidence that strengthens their low aspirations. My findings lend partial support to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. This issue will be the subject of further and more complex research. Here, I have merely discussed my preliminary partial results. I expect that further investigation will reveal other important contexts and bring us more understanding in this respect. However, it's already clear that we cannot ignore the close relationship between the parental style of upbringing, forming one's own identity, and the choice of the child's educational path. Social and emotional skills and approaches are essential factors that may be involved in the academic achievement and future orientation of a person.

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