

Chapter 1

Background Literature

The family plays a critical role in shaping children's opportunities. Pierre Bourdieu argued that the family is the "best hidden and socially most determinant" site shaping the child's *habitus* (Bourdieu 2001:p.98), a set of durable tastes, preferences, and predispositions that will orient the child's choices and behaviors throughout their life (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Further, Bourdieu acknowledged that parents act strategically in the interest of their children, stating that "the most fundamental questions raised by all societies" are "those of the specific logic of strategies which groups, especially families, use to produce and reproduce themselves...for the perpetuation of their position in the social space." (Bourdieu 1990:p.74) My central goal in this research is to develop a theory of strategic parenting, exploring how parents strategize to advantage their children, to understand the role the family plays in reproducing and transforming the social world from one generation to the next. In this endeavor, I rely on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu to help to understand parents as social creatures, and to recognize "parenting" as an interested social endeavor.

According to Bourdieu, parents engage in "reproduction strategies" (1984:p.125) geared towards the "transmission of cultural capital," social capital, and economic

capital¹ from parents to children (Bourdieu 1990:p.74; Bourdieu 2001:p.6). However, because cultural capital is “linked to the body and presupposes embodiment,” it “cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest...” to another person. (Bourdieu 2001:p.5) Rather, unlike economic capital which can be transferred directly from parent to child, the acquisition of both cultural capital and social capital requires effort on the part of the child: “Like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second-hand,” but requires “a personal cost, an investment, above all of time,...with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice that it may entail.” (Bourdieu 2001:p.99)

Although Bourdieu explicitly identified the family as the “most fundamental” (1990:p.74) and “most determinant” (2001:p.98) force shaping children’s habitus and life opportunities, the role of parenting strategy has not been fully theorized or empirically examined in the literature. Bourdieu’s theories about parenting strategies remained at an abstract level, for example describing parents’ strategies to transfer their cultural and social capital as making “investments” in “educative strategies,” “strategies of cultural investment,” and “aims to reproduce the properties that enable (the family) to maintain its position, its rank in the social world” (1990:p.68-69), and did not fully conceptualize the specific routes, techniques, and strategies parents used to pass their advantages and resources along to their children.

Bourdieu’s theoretical work has been the basis for a body of empirical research focused on demonstrating that specific parenting *practices*, and the cultural capital these

¹ Bourdieu defined three major forms of capital, or resources that are capable of generating “profits” and cultural advantages for a person. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979) Economic capital takes the form of money, property and wealth, social capital consists of social connections and reputation, and cultural capital comes from the acquisition of culturally valued knowledge and resources.

provide for children, impact children's academic success. The focus of this literature was to demonstrate that classed parenting practices were differentially rewarded by the educational system; this research did not seek to compare or contrast the full range of parenting *strategies*, or the logic that sustained and reproduced them. One body of work showed that children's future academic and career success was linked to the specific, classed cultural activities and knowledge they received in childhood (e.g. music lessons, travel, trips to the museum), which were an indirect product of parenting practices (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Kaufman and Gabler 2004). This literature examined parenting practices as *fait accompli*, and did not consider the classed logics motivating them.

A second body of literature, largely produced by educational sociologists in Britain, explored parents' *educational* strategies to advantage their children, focusing on strategies that middle-class parents used to reap a disproportionate share of the available educational resources for their children, such as advocating academic "tracking." (Ball 2003; Ball and Vincent 2001; Brantlinger et al 1996; Brantlinger 2003; Reay 1998a, 1998b, 1998c; Reay et al 2001, 2007; Vincent and Ball 2007). This literature seeks to show that "middle-class acquisitiveness" (Reay 2007) and "self-interest" (Brantlinger 1996) has led to the non-democratic allocation of educational resources, and does not examine the individual logics or strategic motivations behind these practices.

By ignoring parents' logic, and the strategic motivations behind their practices, these bodies of research leave a gap in our understanding of the "lived experience" and social realities of the logic, strategy, and practice of parenting. In the absence of empirical application and exploration, these studies, like Bourdieu's theoretical observations, tend

to obscure rather than illuminate the logic and strategy of parenting, as well as the costs, including labor, money, and effort, that parenting entails for both parents and children.

For example, in his early works, Bourdieu's famous theories posited that the cultural capital of the dominant classes was arbitrarily rewarded by the education system, cultural capital which upper-class children obtained through the "social inheritance" of parental capital, but which the middle classes could only gain through "laborious acquirement" in school (1979b:p.73). Untested, this theory fails to illustrate the actual experience, logic, and practices of parenting, obscuring the specific forms of labor required either to expose upper class children to parents' own natural "extracurricular culture" (*Ibid.*:p.17), or to gain advantages through the school system (*Ibid.*:p.21).

Sharon Hays' research on "intensive mothering" offers more insight into the lived experience of parenting in this historical and cultural moment in more depth. While Hays' work did not focus on social reproduction or mobility, or the inheritance of capital, it illustrated the fact that parenting today, especially among the middle classes, is labor-intensive, time-consuming, and mentally taxing for mothers (Hays 1996). Hays' found that middle-class parents' "intensive parenting" efforts had them reading books, consulting experts, spending money and time, and worrying a great deal about raising their children properly. Further, Hays found that both working and middle-class mothers were aware of the dictates of "intensive mothering," which they felt accountable to either practice or resist.

Hays' observations about the growth of "intensive mothering" among the middle class are useful in developing a theory of strategic parenting. Although Hays did not explore the logic behind intensive mothering, she identified that this form of parenting

did not come “naturally” or easily to mothers, who were self-conscious in their efforts to parent effectively (through experts, classes, books, etc.). She showed that this parenting approach was widely recognized as superior, and that both working- and middle-class mothers felt accountable to it. Finally, she showed that parents, particularly mothers, made sacrifices in order to practice intensive mothering (Hays 1996).

Most helpful to an understanding of parenting strategy is the work of cultural sociologist Annette Lareau. In order to empirically demonstrate Bourdieu’s theory that distinct, classed parenting approaches were arbitrarily rewarded differentially by the educational system, Lareau (2003) used ethnographic research, observing parents’ classed child-rearing practices at home, and their academic consequences in the classroom. Lareau concluded that where working class and poor parents practiced “natural growth” parenting, assuming that their children would thrive if parents ensured that the child’s basic needs were well met, middle class parents worked at “concerted cultivation” to give their children advantages both within school, intervening in their children’s relationships with teachers and administrators, and outside school, teaching children to interact confidently with adult authorities and engaging them in discussions and negotiations to build their self-advocacy and efficacy skills. Like Hays and others, Lareau showed that the work of parenting is time, effort, and cost-intensive, especially for mothers (Lareau 2003; Hays 1996; Waltzer 1998).

However, because her research focused on examining the intersection between classed parenting practices and educational success, Lareau’s work identified class-linked differences in parenting *practices*, but did not examine the different classed logics or strategic goals that motivated patterned differences in parenting practices. It was not

clear from her study *why* middle class parents adopted different parenting strategies from their working class and poor peers, because Lareau did not examine the specific logics that undergirded parents' strategies. Understanding the logic that generates parenting strategy and practice is key to learning why and how parenting practices are maintained and reproduced from one generation to the next.

Further, without an understanding of the logic motivating parenting practices, Because her focus was on how specific classed parenting practices were received and rewarded by the education system, Lareau's described *patterns of practice*, and cannot truly be seen as capturing distinct parenting *strategies*. Understanding practices alone does not imply understanding of parenting strategies and motivations: for example, similar practices may be motivated by different logics and strategies, and conversely, similar logics and strategies may motivate different practices.

To date, no empirical research has explored the logic behind different parenting approaches, nor the social factors that shape this logic, rendering this dimension of the process of social reproduction invisible. In foregrounding parents' logic, I follow Bourdieu's *theory of practice*, in the belief that by examining individuals' logic and practices we can come to understand the "strategy generating principles" that motivate, sustain, and reproduce social action (1977:p.72).

Bourdieu's theory of practice relied on the interlinked concepts of practice, logic, and strategy. Bourdieu argued that symbolic systems (such as parenting) have a "practical coherence." Within these systems, *practice*, or "objectively intelligible" "activity" (1977 :p.2-4), can be seen as "obeying a 'poor' and economical *logic*" (*Ibid.*:p.109): through the conditioning of habitus, each individual has "internalized" a "practical sense" of "the

objective chances they face” of success in any action or practice, which directs them “how to ‘read’ the future” and generates “practical anticipations that grasp...that which ‘has’ to be done or said,” directing them to the practices that will maximize their chances of success (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:p.130).

Further, Bourdieu asserted that individuals apply their habitus-generated logic in creating *strategies*, or “lines of action” (1979a:p.95), practical applications of logic that “form coherent and socially intelligible patterns, even though they do not follow conscious rules or aim at the premeditated goals posited by a strategist.” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:p.25) In this way, habitus shapes the array of practices people will choose for themselves and for their children, eliminating some and enabling others.

Understanding the logic underlying parenting practice offers a powerful tool for explaining behavior otherwise unintelligible for the researcher. For example, in applying Bourdieu’s theory, Lareau (2003) found differences within the middle class that were difficult for her to explain. First, she found that some middle-class parents were more effective than others in “activating their cultural capital” through “concerted cultivation” to achieve school advantages for their children².

Second, Lareau described a phenomenon she called “cultural capital gone awry,” a situation portrayed earlier by Bourdieu (1979b), where middle class parents deployed their cultural capital in ways that were not helpful for their children (Lareau 2003). Without further exploration of the logics of different groups of middle-class parents studied, and consideration of the habitus-related factors shaping this logic, it was not

² In a footnote, Lareau states that differences in middle class parents’ effectiveness in achieving advantages for their children could not be attributed to specific family-related factors such as income and parents’ background (2003).

clear whether these two problems reflected differences in parents' logic and strategy, or simply differences in efficacy in enabling a similar strategy. Lareau's sample of middle class families, drawn from one public school, may not have been varied enough to explore the full-range of middle-class parenting habitus, strategies and logics.

Bourdieu's work offers some additional insight into the lived experience of "family strategy" that are useful in my project of developing theory of strategic parenting. In his later work, Bourdieu theorized two important aspects of the lived experience of parenting strategy, unexamined in his prior works: namely, the role of family relationships in promoting the transmission of cultural capital to children, and the mental health costs for children potentially exacted by parental strategies. In *The Weight of the World*, Bourdieu recognized parents' need to maintain parent-child family bonds in order for the successful "transmission of cultural capital." Bourdieu designated the father's "striving, inclination, natural tendency, impulse or effort", as a "project" which was "transmitted unconsciously, in and by his whole way of being, and also overtly, by educational acts aimed at perpetuating the line..."(1999:p.508)

Bourdieu acknowledged that the "transmission" of the father's "project" would not happen automatically, but relied on the quality of family relationships and the parent-child bond: "Identification with the father and with his 'project' doubtless constitutes a necessary condition for the smooth transmission of inheritance" (*Ibid.*:p.509). The need for parents to maintain positive family relationships to promote the successful "inheritance" of cultural capital is an important aspect of understanding the lived reality of parenting strategies and practices that is not yet fully theorized in the literature.

The potential mental health costs for children exacted by parents' reproduction strategies was another aspect of the lived experience of parenting that Bourdieu acknowledged later in his career. In the *Weight of the World*, Bourdieu recognized that parents who sought to maximize their children's cultural capital often damaged their children in the process. He stated that parents, especially the upwardly mobile, often push their children to achieve "beyond any realistic limit," causing "a major source of contradictions and suffering" for children who may become "long-term sufferers from the gap between their accomplishments and the parental expectations they can neither satisfy nor repudiate." (*Ibid.*:p.511). Bourdieu implicitly acknowledged that children's mental health poses an upper limit on parenting strategies designed to promote cultural capital, as unrealistic parental strategies can actually damage children's habitus and derail their success: "Such experiences tend to produce a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to...multiple identities." (*Ibid.*:p.511) Recent empirical research confirms Bourdieu's suggestion that there are potential mental health costs attached to the high-achievement strategies of middle class parents (Lucey & Reay 2002).

Bourdieu's theoretical work on "family strategy," along with Lareau's ethnographic research on classed parenting approaches, offer a strong starting point for my project of developing a theory of strategic parenting. In this attempt, I also found it helpful to turn to Bourdieu's theoretical construct of *field* to understand parents as social actors, and parenting as a social endeavor. Although the concept of field has not been systematically applied, either theoretically or empirically, to parenting, this theoretical tool offers a useful lens for understanding parents as strategic actors in a competitive arena.

Bourdieu insisted that one cannot understand a social actor or social phenomenon in isolation, but must envision them as embedded in a *field of cultural production*, defined as the whole set of relationships between the social actor and other actors and agents with whom they are engaged (Bourdieu 1993). Envisioning parenting as a field provides a way of understanding the strategies and actions of parents as social actors within their larger social and structural contexts, allowing us to theorize the constraint that institutions, structured relationships, and hegemonic ideas place on parents, while simultaneously leaving space for the strategies and maneuvering that parents enact in the logic of their own practice (Bourdieu 1977).

A field can be thought of as the arena where a particular social game is played out. In any specific field, all actors agree upon the *stakes* of the game, and all seek and require the *recognition* of others in the field, as legitimate players, in order to participate in the game. Everyone in the field is pursuing strategies to maximize their cultural capital within the field, that is, to satisfy their material and symbolic interests within the field (Bourdieu 1977). Each field has forms of capital that are specific to it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), and symbolic rewards (non-economic forms of cultural capital) may outrank economic capital in a specific field (Bourdieu 1996). Although actors in a field may make investments of time, sacrifice, and effort that seem “disinterested,” these investments should be seen as ultimately translatable to profit in the dominant field of power (Bourdieu 1996): actors participate in multiple fields simultaneously, and cultural capital obtained in one field can be transformed into capital valued in another (Bourdieu 2001).

The *structure* of the field is a state of the power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle. A field is always about the struggle over legitimacy (Bourdieu 1993), which grants control of the power of *consecration* of the producers and products in the field (Bourdieu 1996). However, there can be great diversity of *principles of legitimacy* which vie for preeminence within the field: in any field “there is no absolute domination” of one system of principles of legitimacy, “but the rival coexistence of several...principles.” (Bourdieu 1988:p.113).

Bourdieu insisted that we must understand that individual strategies in the field are not calculated or premeditated (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Rather, habitus allows people to generate or improvise strategies which can be aligned with their interests “without having been expressly designed to that end,” as people unwittingly draw on “wisdom, sayings, ethical precepts, and... unconscious principles” to arrive at strategic decisions (Bourdieu 1977). Actors often see themselves as “totally disinterested” (Bourdieu 1993:p.76).

Further, by controlling the institutions and structures that reproduce advantage for themselves, the dominant can truly forget their own strategic interest in social actions that benefit them. Through institutions, the dominant don’t need to assert their dominance, but can “let the system they dominate take its own course” (Bourdieu 1977:p.191). However, when domination cannot be institutionalized and can only be exercised in a direct, person-to-person relationship, the dominant use symbolic violence to exert their own authority over others, while simultaneously hiding the fact that any exploitation is taking place (*Ibid.*).

Bourdieu's theory of field is particularly useful for understanding the practices of middle class parents at this cultural and historical moment. Karl Marx (followed by EO Wright and Bourdieu) insisted that the advantages and privileges of the upper classes are necessarily enjoyed at the expense of the classes below. These theorists argued that the structure of the academic and professional markets ensures that there is not enough room at the top for all children to win privileged social positions, regardless of their level of education or "human capital"(Wright & Dwyer 2003). According to these social theorists, parents who hope for successful middle class careers for their children must not only strategize to help their children to gain the necessary human capital; rather, as in a high-stakes game of "musical chairs," these parents must consciously or unconsciously strategize to help their children to "beat out" other children for a limited number of privileged middle class spots.

Research on current economic and employment conditions facing today's children supports the idea that middle class parents in America today feel the need to strategize competitively on behalf of their children: literature on the recent changes in class structure paint a particularly bleak picture for parents hoping to launch their children into the middle class. Unlike upper-class parents, whose property acts as "insurance" against their child's downward mobility into wage labor by allowing them to finance their children's businesses out of profits or borrowings (Wright & Western 1994:p.611), middle class professional parents have no guarantees, but instead must attempt to prepare their children for adult success through their parenting practices.

Today's middle class parents face greater obstacles to ensure that their children attain middle class status than their own parents did. Michael Hout's research supports the

theory of “expanding universalism,” that “superior status cannot any more be directly inherited but must be legitimated by actual achievements” (Blau and Duncan 1967:p.42). Hout (1988) found that the association between socioeconomic origins and destinations dropped by 33% between the 1970’s and 1980s, and disappeared altogether for college graduates. This means that middle class children cannot count on inheriting middle class advantage, but increasingly need credentials to avoid downward mobility.

However, obtaining necessary credentials has never been harder for middle class children. In a different study, Hout and Fischer (2006) found that while the percentage of the population seeking college education has greatly increased over the past few decades, the number of spots in colleges and universities has only kept pace with population growth since the 1970s: the secondary education system cannot accommodate new growth in college attendants, making competition for college entrance and completion increasingly competitive.

Despite the importance and difficulty of obtaining a college degree, middle class parents cannot be sure that their child will be able to achieve middle class status even if they manage this feat. Katherine Newman (1993) found that while baby boomers without credentials were “essentially locked out of the middle class,” the growing “glut” of college graduates that resulted from this credentialism could not be absorbed into the labor market, and one in five college graduates ended up in jobs that the Bureau of Labor Statistics defined as not requiring a college degree.

Not only is the middle class increasingly squeezed by competition within, but they are blocked from upward mobility as well. In a study of intergenerational class mobility, Wright and Western (1994) concluded that both across and within generations, social

mobility from working class to middle class was several times more likely than mobility from middle class to upper class. These trends mean that the middle classes are being squeezed from within, while also being blocked from mobility into the upper class.

Regardless of the actual conditions their children will confront, research shows that middle class parents *believe* the situation to be bleak, and have grown increasingly pessimistic about their children's chances of future economic success. Theodore Caplow (1982) found that despite surprising attitudinal and demographic continuity between the 1920s and 1970s, parents in Middletown during this time went from optimism to pessimism about their children's economic futures. As the first generation since the Great Depression that could expect to have a lower standard of living than its parents, Newman found that the baby boomers she interviewed (born 1940s to 1960s) were "worried that those critical advantages, those aspects of personal biography social scientists call 'cultural capital', may be lost to their own children in the 1980s and 1990s." (Newman 1993:p.3)

The theory of field offers potential insights towards developing a sociological analysis of parenting strategy in the middle class. First, the theory suggests that parents' strategies will reflect the strategies they experienced first-hand through their own childhood upbringing. In addition to the practical aspects of their current situation (structural aspects of the field), the strategies of each actor in the field is shaped, in Bourdieu's theory, by the actor's habitus – which is formed primarily by her/his "originary experiences" with family in childhood, but also molded by subsequent life experiences, such as education and career (Bourdieu 1984:p.109; Bourdieu 2001:p.99).

Bourdieu further showed that extreme differences in early and late life experiences can lead actors to have “cleft habitus,” for example when a person elevates their social standing beyond that of their parents through education, leading to strategies that are contradictory or ill-suited to current circumstances (Bourdieu 1984:p.109; Bourdieu 2007:p.100). Where Lareau’s research identified a link between parents’ classed occupations and different parenting approaches (Lareau 2003), I follow Bourdieu’s theory in assuming that parenting strategies will be shaped by parents’ own classed childhood upbringings as well as current class location, as defined by career and education.

Further, Eric Olin Wright’s research on divisions within middle class occupational types suggests a possible source of strategic difference within the field of middle class parenting. Wright argues that while the upper class owns and controls the means of production, and the working class has neither ownership nor control, people in the middle class, who constitute up to half of the population, occupy “contradictory locations within class relations”(Wright 1979:p.63): although they sell their labor power to capitalists (like workers), their skills and credentials allow middle class workers to appropriate their own surplus (Wright 1990:p.195), earn discretionary income (through “credential rents”), and own property (*Ibid.*:p.332).

According to Wright, members of the middle class hold three “clusters of positions” within the social division of labor: managers and supervisors, semi-autonomous employees (e.g. doctors and professors), and small employers (Wright 1979:p.63). Elsewhere, Wright offers a more fine-grained categorization, breaking out petty-bourgeoisie (business owners who employ few or no employees), manager-experts who

occupy managerial or supervisory positions but whose occupations also require scarce skills, managers who lack skill sets, professionals who monopolize skills because their occupations require advanced (beyond undergraduate) academic qualifications but who have no control over authority within the organization, and semi-professionals who are nonmanagerial employees in technical and semi-professional occupations not requiring post-graduate education (Western & Wright 1994:p.608).

Applied to the field of parenting, Wright's work suggests that we might expect parents' habitus to be influenced by their location within the middle class occupational structure, which may lead to differences in parenting strategy. For example, Wright insists that a person's location within the middle class occupational structure has a great impact on the amount of autonomy and control he or she has at work, arguing that "the labor market has a less coercive aspect for professionals than for most other categories of employees," and that "within the employment relation, professionals and experts exert much more control over their own work." (Wright 1990:p.337).

In addition to the habitus of the agents, the theory of field also suggests that middle class parenting strategies will be inflected by the policing effect of the field itself. A field is marked by the need for *recognition*, and in order to be recognized as a "player" in the field of "good parenting," middle class parents must conform to certain rules of legitimacy in the field, which thus exerts a "policing" effect on parents' behavior and practices. This effect has been described in class literature as "the middle class gaze" (Skeggs 1997:p.93; Bottero 2004:p.998) or "gaze of the bourgeoisie" (Leeb 2004), used to describe the working-class perception that the middle class is observing their behavior and judging it as inadequate. Although the term "gaze" originated in psychoanalytic

theory (Lacan 1968), and has been theorized in film studies as well as sociological studies of post-modernity (Bhabha 1994) as an explicitly “scopic,” or visual drive, the term “middle class gaze,” as used in this context, corresponds more closely to Bourdieu’s concept of recognition, which may be symbolic rather than specifically visual.

The literature has focused primarily on the downward effect of the middle class gaze on the poor and working class, but has not explored the power of this gaze to shape parenting behavior within the middle class itself. The theory of field suggests that this gaze might shape parenting practices as parents adapt their behavior to the recognized standards for legitimate “good parenting” in the field.

Because the theory of field has not been specifically applied to parenting, the question of how two parents negotiate a parenting strategy, given their two distinct habituses, has not yet been theorized or examined empirically in the literature. Bourdieu avoided theorizing this “dual habitus” situation, arguing that marital endogamy, or the tendency for people to marry within their own social class, generally “ensured” that parents would share similar habituses, insisting that “class and even class fraction endogamy...is ensured almost as strictly by the free play of sentiment as by deliberate family intervention” (Bourdieu 1984:p.242).

However, although he did not theorize the effect of marital endogamy on parenting strategies or the transmission of cultural capital, Bourdieu did acknowledge that the lines of endogamy were “blurred” in the middle class, which, “ambiguously located in social structure, inhabited by individuals whose trajectories are extremely scattered...is more likely than in other classes to bring together spouses (relatively) ill-matched not only as regards social origin and trajectories but also occupational status and educational level.”

(Bourdieu 1984:p.112) The effect that these “blurred” lines and “ill-matched” couples have on middle class parenting practices, and on social reproduction or mobility, remains unexplored in the literature, and can be informed by this research.

Chapter 2

A Theory of Strategic Parenting

Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Annette Lareau, in this chapter I propose a theory of *strategic parenting*, developing a theoretical framework for understanding parents' role in creating capitals for their children. In this attempt, I hope to make theoretical and empirical contributions in two directions. First, guided by Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction and field, I hope to expand understanding about the logic that animates and sustains classed parenting practices, leading to the social reproduction of advantage, and identifying avenues and barriers to social mobility. I hope to provide evidence that parents act and think strategically in making decisions about how to raise their children, and to orient social analysts towards considering how specific parenting practices fit into broader "lines of action" that parents create to advantage their children in the future.

Conversely, the empirical study of parenting also affords an opportunity to extend Bourdieu's sociological theories about the role of the family in social reproduction and strategic action in a competitive field, specifically on the way that couples jointly arrive at a parenting strategy, with two distinct habituses.

In this chapter I describe two distinct, "ideal type" middle class parenting strategies, *orchestrated achievement* and *disciplined self-management*. I show that parents'

different classed life experiences in their careers, in their childhood upbringings, and in their spouse's habitus ultimately led them towards distinct logics of success for their children, and towards these two distinct parenting strategies. Further, I show that the need for recognition as "good parents" influenced parenting practices. Finally, I argue that parents misrecognized the effects of the two parenting strategies, "naturalizing" the advantages provided to kids raised with orchestrated achievement, and ignoring the costs.

By exploring the negotiations that underlie strategic parenting decisions, this research also answers a call from sociologists who describe family decision-making processes as a "black box." Moen and Wethington (1992:p.234) argued that researchers generally take a macro approach to family decision-making that doesn't interrogate the processes underlying outcomes. "Exactly how conflicting strategies can coalesce into a "family" strategy – or even how family members with different goals achieve consensus – is mostly uncharted territory." As a result, the authors argue that "What is defined as a "family strategy" is often a hypothetical construct, inferred from demographic and behavioral trends," obscuring the fact that "Individuals may pursue their own distinctive strategies, sometimes even competitively or at cross-purposes with one another." This research provides a chance to examine how two parents, with different class backgrounds and sets of cultural capital, arrive at a parenting approach that shapes their children's life chances.

This study provides an opportunity to disrupt assumptions about the middle class. Many sociologists look at the middle class as a non-category that doesn't merit examination, like heterosexuals or whites, including it in research studies primarily as a foil for working class or poor families (Lawler 2009; Power 2001). The homogeneity and

efficacy of white, two-parent, middle class parenting is rarely called into question (Brantlinger 2003; Gillies 2005; Power 2001; Reay et al 2001; *Ibid.*2007). In this research I examine both positive *and negative* impacts of middle class parenting, for children, parents, and society. I seek to challenge the assumption of a uniform middle class parenting approach that underlies Lareau's concept of "concerted cultivation," and to explore this aspect of the middle class experience that challenges its presumed uniformity.

Two Middle Class Parenting Strategies: Orchestrated Achievement vs. Disciplined Self-Management The middle class parents studied were not pursuing "natural growth," trusting that their children would succeed if parents' removed obstacles from their path. Instead, as Lareau's findings about "concerted cultivation" suggest, these middle-class parents viewed themselves as playing an active, necessary role in their children's adult success. These parents' strategies for raising successful children fell into two distinct "ideal type" patterns. In pursuing the first strategy, which I call *orchestrated achievement*, parents prioritized *distinctive* or elite levels of achievement for their children. Parent-management of children's activities and achievements was the most obvious attribute of the orchestrated achievement strategy; parents arranged, managed, and oversaw almost all aspects of their children's time and schedules. Parents even managed children's leisure time, encouraging and implementing "edutainment" to make even downtime enriching and achievement-oriented. Children in these families were seen as having a secondary role in creating their own achievements.

Second, orchestrated achievement parents relied heavily on "expert-boosting" to enhance their child's achievements, orchestrating a dizzying array of enrichment

activities including coaches, tutors, private teachers, clubs and classes to advance their child's abilities and address their perceived weaknesses. Parents oversaw these relationships with experts, monitoring children's progress and managing their effort-level.

Finally, orchestrated achievement parents prioritized family time as critically important for their children's successful futures, but spent little time all-together as a family because of both parents' and children's busy schedules. Instead, orchestrated achievement parents (mostly mothers) arranged infrequent, scheduled "family rituals" (e.g. family pizza night, family meeting, family movie night) and retreats (annual family vacation) in order to ensure "family time."

In pursuing the second strategy, which I call *disciplined self-management*, parents' primary goal was raising children who were motivated by a strong work ethic and sense of responsibility. Parental discipline was the defining feature of this strategy, and parents guided children to "do their best" in school and with specific family and personal responsibilities (e.g. chores, paper routes) through discipline, creating tailored systems of rewards and punishments to encourage compliance. Parents attempted to increase children's motivation and effort-level to achieve, but gave their child ultimate responsibility for her/his own achievement.

Disciplined self-management parents used expert-boosting to reinforce motivation and discipline in their children, and to build children's social networks and skills with peers. Sports were the preferred activity, because parents believed they instilled both discipline and social, team-building skills. Chores and jobs (e.g. paper route, baby-

sitting, shoveling snow) were also used as a method of instilling discipline and a sense of personal responsibility.

Disciplined self-management families were less likely to spend family time in scheduled “rituals”, but instead frequently spent family time all-together as they engaged in the regular activities of daily living, such as making dinner, doing chores, watching television, or doing homework around the kitchen table. Children’s sporting activities and events also provided opportunities for the family to spend time together on a regular basis.

Defining Parents’ Class Habitus Three factors influenced parents towards one or another of the two strategies: parents’ position within the middle-class labor structure, their classed upbringing, and their spouse’s position within the middle class labor structure. Parents pursuing orchestrated achievement most closely, that is, those adhering most narrowly to this ideal type strategy, were those parents that I label *semi-autonomous professionals*. Although many of these parents worked for employers, semi-autonomous professionals had the option of self-employment, and thus were able to leverage their scarce skills to avoid the coercive employee-employer relationship forced on the working class, to use Wright’s terminology.

Semi-autonomous professionals were in three of Wright’s middle class occupational categories. First, they were often “semi-autonomous employees (e.g. doctors and professors)” (Wright 1979:p.63) or “professionals” who monopolized skills because their occupations required advanced (beyond undergraduate) academic qualifications (Western and Wright 1994:p.608). Second, these parents were often “petty bourgeoisie” (*Ibid.*) or “small employers” (Wright 1979:p.63) who avoided the coercive employer-employee

relationship by selling their own labor. In addition, *some* manager-experts were semi-autonomous professionals, because they had the *ability* to exit the employer-employee relationship if desired, by relying on their scarce skills (as lawyers or doctors, for example) to become self-employed. However, some manager-experts did not have the leverage of self-employment, and did not fall into the semi-autonomous professional category (e.g. research scientists, automotive executives).

These semi-autonomous professionals had greater autonomy in their work, and relied more heavily on *scarce or rare* credentials or unusually valued experience and skill-sets than did parents pursuing disciplined self-management. Further, the parents matching the orchestrated achievement ideal type most closely were themselves raised with orchestrated achievement, often by parents who were themselves semi-autonomous professionals, and were married to spouses whose upbringing, education and career (or career trajectory³) mirrored their own.

In contrast, the parents pursuing disciplined self-management did not have the option of self-employment, and were locked into the employer-employee relations typical of the working class. However, these parents, whom I label *protected employees*, enjoyed a favored position compared to most members of the working class, relying on valued skills or credentials to reduce the level of coercion and competition they faced as employees, and to increase their “rents” or profits from their work.

Protected employees held 3 positions within Wright’s middle class occupational structure. First, protected employees were “semi-professionals”, non-managerial

³ Wright notes that an individual’s class position should be identified by their *trajectory*, defined as “a life-time structure of positions through which an individual passes in the course of a work career.” (Wright 1979 p93). Because many of the women in this study were currently not employed, I used their career trajectory, including their education and prior work history, instead of their current employment to identify their location in the middle class occupational structure.

employees in technical and semi-professional occupations not requiring post-undergraduate education, such as accountants, teachers, and research scientists. Second, protected employees included “managers and supervisors” who lacked skill sets, but occupied managerial or supervisory positions. Finally, some “manager-experts,” or employees in managerial positions whose occupations also required semi-professional skills, were protected employees. In particular, those without the option of self-employment followed disciplined self-management instead of orchestrated achievement.

In addition to their own occupations, parents conforming most closely to the disciplined self-management ideal type had been brought up with disciplined self-management themselves, generally by parents who were either working class or protected employees themselves. Disciplined self-management parents also were likely to be married to spouses with similar upbringings and occupations.

Understanding Middle Class Parenting: the Structure of the Field Why did parents with different class habitus pursue two different strategies for raising successful middle class children? In this section I outline two unique structural features of the field of middle-class parenting that can help to explain the origins of these two distinct parenting strategies.

Like actors in all fields, these middle-class parents strategized towards common goals. However, a first unique structural attribute that parents faced as actors in a competitive field was the nature of these shared stakes, or capital. Parents did not seek to obtain one type of capital for their children in a single field of competition, but rather strategized to help *prepare* their child for the acquisition of *multiple capitals*, to be used in *multiple fields*, simultaneously. Most notably, parents sought to prepare their children

to compete for post-secondary academic and professional success, as well as marriage and family.

These parents tried to arm their children with the specific set of resources, or *generalized cultural capitals*, that would help prepare them for success in all future fields. For example, although their children were currently too young to marry, parents attempted to arm them with the resources they believed children would need to make and sustain good marriages in the future. Similarly, parents could not provide their children with successful careers at present, but instead tried to provide them with the types of skills and abilities needed for future professional success.

A second distinguishing structural feature of the field of parenting was parents' need to act as agents for their children, operating as "back-seat drivers" in their children's fields of competition. To help their children acquire the necessary cultural capitals for success, these middle class parents used two different "back-seat" approaches: *family transmission* and *strategic boosting*.

Through family transmission, these parents agreed that children could effortlessly acquire the cultural capitals needed for their future success simply by spending time in the company of both parents, observing and absorbing parents' overt and subtle habits, tastes, dispositions, and life-styles. Parents recognized two requirements for family transmission to succeed: children must spend large amounts of time with both parents, and parents and children must maintain close, mutual bonds of affection towards one another. Parents believed that both conditions could be met through "family time," where parents and children spent time in each others' company, as a group.

In addition to transferring the cultural capitals needed for their child's future academic, career, and social success, parents recognized family transmission as the only platform available for passing on family-building skills to their children, for the future. Parents recognized family-building skills as a valuable asset for children's futures because they viewed having a strong marriage and family as a critical component of their children's adult success. Parents recognized that family time was required for children to absorb and acquire family-building skills, through family transmission.

In addition to family transmission, these middle-class parents all made use of a secondary "back-seat" approach to help their children build cultural capitals, which I label *strategic boosting*. All the middle-class parents studied recognized that they could facilitate children's cultural capital-building by taking over some of the responsibility for the effort required for children to create cultural capitals. Through strategic boosting, parents substituted their own (or other paid experts') effort, time and labor for their child's, thus fostering their child's cultural capitals without demanding as much effort or labor from the child. In pursuing both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management, these parents drew on their own habitus, as well as their cultural and social capitals, to guide children towards the achievements, activities, social relationships, and practices that they felt would best foster the child's cultural capitals.

Parents used two different boosting strategies to augment kids' cultural capitals: *motivation-boosting* and *achievement-boosting*. Through motivation-boosting, parents tried to *amplify children's incentives* to pursue their own accomplishments, and to work towards building the cultural capitals parents prioritized for them. Parents' goal was to encourage children to take increased responsibility for managing their own

accomplishments (cultural capitals). In attempting to mold children's motivation level, these parents used their own labor to create and manage incentives for the child, but left the ultimate responsibility for achieving cultural capitals up to the child him or herself.

In contrast, strategies focused on achievement-boosting sought to *expand children's cultural capitals* directly. Instead of motivating children to work towards building cultural capitals themselves, parents doing achievement-boosting took over control of children's effort-level, managing their homework, overseeing their lessons, and monitoring and enforcing their instrument or sports practicing. In addition, parents used "expert-boosting", hiring private tutors, coaches, teachers, and counsellors to further monitor and compel their children's labor and effort. Children were neither explicitly rewarded for effort nor punished for non-compliance, but were simply given no choice but to achieve as parents directed.

Because their time and energy were limited, and because both family transmission and strategic boosting required significant resources of parental and child time and energy, these parents recognized that time spent on strategic boosting cut into the available "family time" needed for family transmission, and vice versa. Because of the inherent tensions between the two parenting strategies, parents could not choose to maximize both family transmission and strategic boosting, but had to make trade-offs between the two. Parents who pursued strategic boosting intensely had little free time available for regular, daily family routines and interactions, and parents who prioritized lots of family-time lacked the necessary time and energy for the activities and orchestration of strategic parenting.

How Class-Fraction Shaped Middle-Class Parenting Strategies Understanding these two distinctive features of the field of middle-class parenting helps to explain why parenting strategy looked so different for parents with different middle-class habitus. In this section I show how parents' class habitus shaped both their logic about the specific mix of cultural capitals that their children needed to succeed, as well as the ways that parents pursued both family transmission and strategic boosting.

Cultural capitals: Tension among Resources Among these middle-class couples', parents' career experiences played a large role in determining their understanding of the cultural capitals their children needed for success. Overall, parents recognized five key cultural capitals as holding potential value for their children's futures; mastery of socially-valued *achievements*, *social networks and skills*, *family-building skills*, independent *self-management*, and strong *mental health*. Although parents with different class habitus sought a different blend of these five resources for their own children, all five cultural capitals were broadly acknowledged as potential assets for promoting children's future success.⁴ I describe each briefly and generally below, and each will be more fully explored in the following section.

Achievement: Mastery of Valued Achievements These middle class parents agreed that it was critical for their children to master a set of socially-recognized achievements, during childhood, in order to become successful adults.

Social Networks and Skills: Developing good social networks was another valuable resource for middle class kids that was broadly recognized by these middle class parents.

⁴ Sometimes parents mentioned a resource in order to inform me about why it was *not* necessary for their particular child, or to explain how they were making up for it in a different way. But these assertions also demonstrated that parents recognized a resource as having a culturally acknowledged value.

In addition, parents valued children's social skills, the social abilities that would allow them to create and maintain adult social networks.

Mental Health: Solid Mental and Emotional Health These parents were agreed that their children would not succeed without strong mental and emotional health, which parents viewed as another key resource for their children's future success. Good mental health was important to their child's future success in two ways. First, parents felt that a "mentally healthy kid" would have the self-confidence needed to achieve socially and in their achievement-oriented pursuits. Second, parents felt that solid mental health was necessary for kids to avoid the mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, that might otherwise derail their achievements and social relationships. Instead of attributing children's mental health solely to genetics or personality, parents acknowledged that their parenting decisions and practices played an important role in protecting and promoting children's mental well-being and adult success.

Self-Management: Child's Independent Responsibility-Taking In addition to their own role in taking responsibility for children's future success, parents also recognized that it was valuable for children to learn to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions, learning to manage aspects of their own lives independently, without parents' help or oversight.

Family-building skills: Strong Family Bonds Finally, these parents held "the family" accountable for playing a large role in children's future success. Parents believed strong family ties offered children benefits in two ways. First, parents valued having a family as a top priority for their child's future, and viewed their current family relationships as the best medium for fostering future family-building skills. Second, parents viewed their

family as the central platform for transferring all other resources (achievement, social, self-management, and mental health) from themselves to their children. Accordingly, parents took pains to establish strong family ties in order to maximize children's other resources.

Cultural capitals: Tensions and Trade-offs Research with these 25 families made it clear that these middle class parents were not able to "have it all," but were forced make difficult trade-offs and painful sacrifices as they strategized to help their children to succeed. In fact, none of the parents in these families pursued all five cultural capitals for their children to the fullest degree (compared to other parents), in part because of *core tensions* that existed among the different resources. Instead, parents in each of the 25 families prioritized a subset of the five cultural capitals, and sacrificed at least one of the others, pursuing these at a lower level than other parents might do.

In developing a parenting strategy, parents had to confront several basic tensions between the labor and resources required to pursue any one type of resource at a high level, and that needed to pursue the other four. Though tensions could potentially exist between the resources needed to fully pursue any two resources, the major tensions parents identified arose from attempts to maximize children's achievements, which were seen as a threat to developing *all four* of the other resources to an adequate extent. In the section below, I briefly outline the tensions that parents perceived between *achievement* and the other resources. These will be illustrated more fully in the following chapters.

First, a strategy of fostering elite achievement posed a perceived threat to children's mental health, as it was widely believed to require parents to push children to perform, compromising children's mental and emotional well-being. Second, maximizing

achievements was believed to compromise the child's *self-management* skills, because the constant parental orchestration and child obedience required to foster the child's elite achievements was seen to offer little opportunity for the child to develop accountability and learn to act independently and responsibly.

Third, maximizing achievements was believed to conflict with building *social networks and skills* for children, because socializing and peer culture were viewed as posing a "downward mobility" threat to the child's achievement, distracting them from a focus on effort and achievement. Further, maximizing achievement was seen as conflicting with fostering family-building skills, because enrichment activities were believed to eat up family time and require parental "pushing," potentially eroding key bonds of affection between parents and kids, connections which parents believe are critical for their child's success.

Parents' experiences as semi-autonomous professions vs. protected employees played a dominant role in determining their logic about the cultural capitals most useful for children's future success, and in shaping the "back-seat" strategies parents used to help their children to build these cultural capitals. In addition to parents' classed career experiences, parents' own childhood upbringings, and the habitus of their spouse, also affected their parenting strategy. However, in this section I offer an explanation of how parents' career trajectories shaped their beliefs about cultural capitals and their back-seat strategies, temporarily postponing consideration of how parents' childhood upbringings and "dual habituses" complicated this picture.

Material Assets and Strategic Parenting Classed differences in material assets might explain some patterns in parenting practices, giving semi-autonomous professionals more

income and available time - including greater likelihood of a stay-home mom (Becker and Moen 1999) - to pay for, orchestrate, and chauffeur children to the many expensive, time-consuming activities of “achievement-boosting.” However, many protected employees also had incomes comparable to those of semi-autonomous professionals, yet didn’t engage in “boosting” activities to the same extent. Further, when interviewed, these parents did not express a thwarted wish to do orchestrated achievement, but explicitly stated that they perceived themselves as facing no “obstacles” to raising successful children. For these reasons, in this study I explore the role of parents’ habitus in shaping their parenting logic and practices.

Careers and Strategic Parenting Parents in different spots on the middle class occupational structure had different parenting strategies in part because their career experiences led them to develop different logics about the best cultural capitals to advantage their children, and also afforded them different access to “back-seat” strategies. In this section I describe how semi-autonomous professionals were led to a parenting strategy I call *orchestrated achievement*, while parents with experience in protected professions pursued *disciplined self-management*.

Orchestrated Achievement: Boosting Achievement to Gain Distinction Strategic parenting among semi-autonomous professionals, or *orchestrated achievement*, was impacted by two unique characteristics of parents’ professional careers. First, experience as semi-autonomous professionals taught parents that success required not only achievement, but *unusual* or *distinctive* levels of achievement. A defining characteristic of strategic parenting for semi-autonomous professionals was a focus on helping their child to create distinction through this single type of cultural capital. A second pivotal

feature of strategic parenting for these parents was a lack of available *family time*, leading to lack of access to back-seat strategies of *family transmission*. Because semi-autonomous professional fathers had career demands that required long hours and travel (and sometimes mothers did as well), these families spent very little “family time,” with parents and children all together.

These two factors together set the strategic parenting stage among semi-autonomous professional parents. The first goal of parents pursuing *orchestrated achievement* was to develop their children’s distinctive achievements. Because their careers allowed little family time, these parents had low access to family transmission strategies, and instead amped up their investment in boosting strategies. However, these parents’ intensive focus on achievement curtailed their ability to help their children acquire the other cultural capitals. Further, these parents were concerned about protecting two of the other cultural capitals that they felt were critical for their children’s success: family-building skills and mental health.

The need to protect their children’s mental health, while still fostering children’s distinctive achievements, was a defining tension for parents pursuing orchestrated achievement. These parents recognized the potential threat that seeking distinctive achievements posed for their children’s mental health (several families had already experienced mental health consequences for their children), and hoped to protect their children’s mental health in several ways. First, parents tried to reduce the child’s achievement-oriented effort and strain through achievement-boosting strategies. Through these strategies, parents took over responsibility for identifying and fostering children’s passions and gifts, hoping to reduce the parental pressure and child self-management

needed for distinctive achievement. Parents also orchestrated children's schedules, social lives, activities, and leisure time in an attempt to optimize the development of achievement without over-taxing children's energy level and mental health. Further, parents hired experts, such as private tutors, coaches, teachers, and counselors, to boost children's achievements with less child-effort. Finally, as a last resort, parents hired mental health professionals to redress any mental health problems children experienced.

Although these semi-autonomous professional parents already had reduced opportunities for family skill-building because of their career demands, they still attempted to protect this cultural capital by instituting *family rituals* and *retreats*, providing the family with sporadic, scheduled, "special" opportunities for family transmission and family-capital building. For example, parents (most often mothers) instituted weekly rituals like "family meetings," "family pizza night," "game night," or "family movie night." Parents also scheduled retreats such as annual family vacations or weekend family getaways as opportunities to connect with children, away from the demands of work and activities.

Parents pursuing orchestrated achievement made the decision to sacrifice the two other forms of cultural capital, social networks and skills and independent self-management. Parents' decision to prioritize achievement - while protecting children's mental health - through managing their children's time and orchestrating their life activities, left their children with few opportunities to foster independence or self-management. Parents acknowledged the value of independence, responsibility and self-motivation for their children, but did not actively take strategic steps to foster this cultural capital.

Children's social networks with peers was another cultural capital that parents pursuing orchestrated achievement sacrificed in favor of achievement. These parents were willing to largely forego developing children's current peer networks because socializing and peer culture were viewed as posing a "downward mobility" threat to the child's achievement, distracting them from a focus on effort and distinction. Instead of encouraging children to build peer networks, parents took steps to limit the influence of peer and popular culture on their children.

Disciplined Self-Management: Boosting Motivation to Instill a Work Ethic

Protected employee parents had entirely different logics about cultural capitals and access to "back-seat" parenting strategies. Experience as protected employees taught these parents that social relationships with peers and independent self-management were also critical to their children's future success, and these parents were not willing to sacrifice these cultural capitals in pursuit of distinctive achievements. Further, because protected employees generally worked regular, "nine to five" hours (even though mothers were more likely to be employed outside the home), these families spent frequent, regular "family time" in daily interactions and routines such as making dinner, doing chores, doing homework, and watching television. The opportunity cost of family time, as well as family-transmission and family-capital, furthered these parents' unwillingness to pursue distinctive achievements to the exclusion of family time.

Instead, disciplined self-management parents lowered their achievement expectations for their children, seeking not distinction but the development of a work ethic that would allow them to master socially valued achievements (getting good grades, earning a spot on a sports team, playing an instrument) while still maintaining social relationships with

peers and managing their own effort level and achievements. By defining their achievement demands around children's effort level ("do your best") instead of competitive ones (elite achievement), parents hoped to lower the mental health strain their children faced in trying to achieve both social and cultural capital. Parents also tried to direct children towards "realistic" career goals, discouraging them from career aspirations that parents felt were unattainable, and might lead to mental health strain.

Experience as protected employees taught these parents that *self-management* was key to their children's adult success, and by using motivation-boosting instead of achievement-boosting strategies, parents hoped to foster their children's success without usurping their independence. Instead of managing or controlling children's life-decisions, parents developed systems of rewards and punishments to instill self-motivation and a work-ethic, primarily targeting children's homework and family responsibilities (chores). In addition, parents viewed paid jobs as good avenues for teaching children independent self-management, and encouraged their middle-school aged children to get paper routes, shovel snow, and baby-sit, for example. Finally, parents relied on from experts – coaches, teachers, and other school officials – to reinforce their emphasis on discipline and a solid work-ethic for their children.

Experience as protected employees also taught these parents that social networks and skills often were more salient to career success than distinctive achievements. As a result, parents encouraged children to build a strong position among their peers. This required a fair amount of unscheduled "down time" for socializing, further discouraging achievement-amplifying strategies such as parent-management and expert-boosting.

Sports provided a particularly synergistic opportunity for cultural capital-building for parents doing disciplined self-management. Team activities provided opportunities for children to build social networks among their peers, encouraged discipline and independent self-management, and allowed parents and families to attend and support their children, building family bonds instead of jeopardizing them, as many other activities did.

“Cleft Habitus:” Combining Logics and Practices from Two Strategies In his theory of field, Bourdieu insisted that actors’ strategic decisions were shaped not only by their current life situations, but by their early childhood experiences as well. In particular, Bourdieu theorized that those who achieved upward mobility through education might have a “cleft habitus,” which generated strategies off the normal trajectory for their current social position. This research confirmed that while parents’ current occupational positions as semi-autonomous professionals or protected employees played the dominant role in its formation, parenting strategy was also influenced by parents’ own childhood upbringings, especially for parents’ whose class roots differed greatly from their current class position.

Within this study population, some semi-autonomous professionals who had been brought up with disciplined self-management, by working class or protected employee parents, displayed a “cleft” parenting logic. Although these parents espoused some of the same logic about the value of distinctive achievements as their semi-autonomous professional peers, their parenting approach was complicated by their loyalty to the practices and values of their youth: notably, the preference for firm parental discipline instead of parent-management, for independent self-management vs. parent-management,

and for more unstructured family time than dictated by the logic of orchestrated achievement. These parents with “cleft habitus” tended to incorporate elements of both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management in a mixed parenting strategy, to try to accommodate their competing logics of parenting.

“Dual Habituses:” Cobbling Together Competing Strategies In addition to parents’ classed careers and upbringings, the spouse’s habitus was a third factor affecting parenting strategy. In addition to its other singularities, the field of parenting was unusual in requiring parents to co-create a strategy with a partner. Bourdieu did not elaborate on the situation of “dual habituses,” or how two parents’ habituses jointly influenced strategic parenting, as it countermanded his assumption of marital endogamy. However, this study determined that, just as the strategy of actors with a “cleft habitus” was shaped both by their discrepant early and late life experiences, the parenting strategies of couples with “dual habituses” bore the marks of the distinct, classed logics of each parent. Protected employee parents were not simply able to adopt the orchestrated achievement practices of their semi-autonomous professional spouse, even when they wished to do so. Their own habitus proved too “sticky” and tenacious. Instead, these parents created patch-work strategies, intentionally and unintentionally sabotaging each other’s game plans, and practicing jumbled and sometimes contradictory elements of orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management.

The “Middle Class Gaze:” The Need for Recognition Shifts Parenting Practices In addition to parents’ habitus, Bourdieu theorized that strategic action was shaped by the actors’ need to be recognized by others in the field. This theory was borne out by the middle class parents in this study, who transformed both their parenting practices and

their framing of these practices in order to conform to the recognized rules of “good parenting.”

Notably, both parents practicing orchestrated achievement as well as those doing disciplined self-management felt pressure to seek recognition in the field, responding to perceived criticism about their parenting strategy. Disciplined self-management parents felt judged by an “upper-middle class gaze” for not constantly monitoring and managing their children’s time and activities, and for not orchestrating family rituals. Orchestrated achievement parents similarly felt dogged by a lower-middle class “reverse gaze,” which they felt accused them of damaging their children through “over-scheduling” and inadequate “down-time.”

However, parents’ responses to the “middle class gaze” were classed, and the need for recognition in the field shaped strategic parenting for disciplined self-management parents more than for those doing orchestrated achievement. While both groups of parents tried to resist negative judgments by attempting to reframe their own actions as aligning with the dictates of “good parenting,” disciplined self-management parents were less successful in doing this, and ended up feeling judged and inadequate. In response, although disciplined self-management parents openly rejected or critiqued some practices of orchestrated achievement as Bourdieu suggested they might (1984), these parents simultaneously adapted their parenting practices to try to achieve recognition as “good parents” in the eyes of others. In contrast, orchestrated achievement parents were more successful in redefining the terms of good parenting, and reframing their own actions as aligning with these terms, and were able to dodge negative self-judgments about their own parenting practices.

Naturalization and Misrecognition Although they were aware of different parenting practices generally, these middle-class parents were unaware of the existence of two classed parenting strategies, and did not acknowledge the different costs and consequences of orchestrated achievement vs. disciplined self-management for children and parents. By an act of social “misrecognition,” the parent-management and expert-boosting underlying the distinctive achievements of the children of semi-autonomous professional parents were “forgotten,” making these children appear to be innately gifted “superkids,” while their peers with protected employee parents were most often viewed as lazy and unmotivated, even by their own parents. Further, neither the toll that orchestrated achievement exacted on children’s mental health and family bonds, nor the trade-offs in children’s ability to act independently and responsibly and to build social skills and networks, were transparent to disciplined self-management parents. The opacity of the social and personal costs of “achievement-boosting” practices led to their cultural recognition as a superior standard of “good parenting,” one to which parents doing disciplined self-management felt accountable.

Figure 1. Comparison of Middle Class Parenting Strategies

	Orchestrated Achievement	Disciplined Self-Management
Habitus		
➤ Career Type	Semi-Autonomous Professional	Protected Employee
➤ Childhood Upbringing	Orchestrated Achievement	Working Class or Protected Employee
➤ Spouse’s Habitus	Similar	Similar
Key Cultural capitals	Distinctive Achievement	Work ethic Social networks and skills Self-Management skills
Family Transmission Strategy	Family Rituals/ Retreats	Family Routines
Parental Boosting Strategy	Achievement Boosting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering “Passions” • Parent-management • Expert-boosting 	Motivation Boosting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental discipline • Chores/ Jobs • Sports
Parental Role	Management	Discipline
Child Control	Low	High
Evaluation of Own Parenting	Validated as “Good” parents	Judged and Defensive
“Innate” Traits Attributed to Child	Self-Motivated Gifted	Lacking Motivation Average Abilities

Chapter 3

Research Methods

From September 2007 through February 2008 I conducted in-depth interviews with parents in 25 families (25 mothers and 22 fathers) living with at least one biological child age 10-14 in the Ann Arbor area. All interviews were conducted by the author. To narrow my focus to middle class families, I selected families where at least one parent occupied what Erik Olin Wright calls a “contradictory class location”: having a job that both required him or her to earn a living like a member of the working class, but that offered opportunities to earn surplus capital through either managerial responsibility or “credential rents”: extra income earned through college, professional training or graduate degrees (Wright 1978; Wright 2005). I included families where one or both parents occupied one of Wright’s middle class categories (defined in Chapter 1): semi-autonomous professional, manager-supervisor, manager, small-business owner, or semi-professional (Western & Wright 1994:p.608).

Despite my discomfort with the politics of producing “exclusive” research, I chose to include only white, heterosexual, judeo-Christian, two-parent, married parents with biological children in order to limit the number of comparisons I would need to analyze and defend in such a small population. By controlling for these factors, this sampling methodology allowed me to attribute parenting differences I identified within the middle

class to factors related to cultural capital, eliminating most of the other “usual suspects” (including race, family structure, and economic hardship).

Contextualizing the Research: *Ann Arbor* Ann Arbor provided a unique opportunity to explore variations within middle class parenting strategies, both because of its diverse middle class population, and its unusual access to enrichment opportunities for children. First, as the home of the University of Michigan and its health and hospital system, Ann Arbor is a highly educated city, with almost 70% of its residents holding a college degree and almost 40% with a master’s, professional or doctorate degree (compared to under 25% and 9% nationwide)⁵. Because less than 10% of its residents have only a high-school degree or less, Ann Arbor is an almost entirely middle class city.

However, despite its connection to academia, Ann Arbor is home to a middle class occupying a range of positions within the labor force, in part because it acts as a bedroom community for auto manufacturing executives in the Detroit area, affording an excellent opportunity to observe diversity of habitus within the middle class. The city’s middle class population is composed not only of highly educated academics and healthcare professionals employed by the University and its health systems, but also by engineers, accountants, managers, and others who work for the “Big Three” auto manufacturers and their suppliers in the Detroit area⁶, as well as the middle class infrastructure required to support this mid-size city (e.g. teachers, city employees, small business-owners).

Where most University employees have master’s or doctoral degrees, middle class managers, engineers, teachers, and small business-owners generally have only a

⁵ According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

⁶ The 1997 Bureau of Labor Statistics identified the two largest employment sectors in Washtenaw County in 2007 as “Professional and Scientific” (which includes both academic and automotive industry professionals) and “Transportation and Equipment Manufacturing.”

undergraduate or business degree. Further, occupants of these different locations within the middle class can be expected to have different class upbringings as well as educational trajectories (Duncan 1979), providing additional sources of variation in the habitus of this middle class population.

Second, because it offers a wealth of publicly available cultural and educational resources, Ann Arbor is a good place to observe different middle class parenting strategies relatively unfettered by lack of opportunity or economic barriers. Despite its smaller population of just under 115,000, Ann Arbor has a cultural and artistic life comparable to larger cities: American Style magazine ranked Ann Arbor among the top 25 arts destinations in the US in 2006, and Smithsonian.com's "Guide to a Cultured Retirement" included Ann Arbor in its top fifteen places to live in 2008. Further, Ann Arbor's public schools are highly ranked⁷ and provide nationally acclaimed programs in sports and the arts, providing children with excellent free educational and extracurricular enrichment opportunities. Ann Arbor was voted the "Best Place in Michigan to Raise Your Kids" by BusinessWeek in 2009, and its high school music program was ranked in the top 100 nationally by the Grammy organization.

Children in Ann Arbor have access to an unusual variety of enrichments and artistic resources through the University, and parents face far fewer barriers to pursuing enrichment for their children than those in similar-sized cities elsewhere. In addition to free and low-cost concerts, performances, and sporting events, undergraduate and graduate students at the University provide low-cost lessons, classes, and camps in music, sports, and the arts not available or affordable in comparable-size cities. In a recent local

⁷ Ann Arbor's public high schools were given a "Silver Medal" rating by U.S. News and World Report in 2009. Huron High school was rated "Michigan's Top High School" by Business Week in January 2009.

survey, Ann Arbor's access to educational opportunities and opportunities to attend cultural activities were the attributes most highly valued by its residents.⁸

Choosing subjects from within the Ann Arbor area had advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, the area has a plethora of free and low-cost enrichment opportunities for children and excellent public as well as private (and charter) schools, which minimized the strategic limitations parents face in advantaging their children due to economic barriers and poorly funded schools, school districts, and community activities. Doing research in Ann Arbor therefore had the benefit of maximizing the potential range of strategies that I could see middle class parents employ to enrich and advantage their children. On the negative side, because Ann Arbor residents have more education than average, I had to take pains to make sure my study population included sufficient families with less education (e.g. college only, or one parent without a college degree), to make sure that I didn't miss important ways that parenting strategies might differ for this segment of middle class parents.

There are several possible implications of drawing on residents of this particular location, at this particular moment in history, to generate theory about parenting practices. In general, it is likely that the parents studied were unusually invested in strategies to promote their children's future success, both due to current economic conditions and the climate of a university town. First, current economic conditions for the middle class are unusually competitive both in the United States generally, and in the mid-west specifically. The economic crisis is particularly worrisome for residents of the Ann Arbor area, both because of the city's proximity to Detroit and ties to the failing

⁸ "2008 Ann Arbor Citizen Survey Results" Summary Report. National Citizen Survey, National Research Center, Inc.

automotive industry, as well as recent local business failures - in particular the closing of a regional branch of an international pharmaceutical company that had employed over 2,400 local professionals.

As a result, parents in the Ann Arbor area may have been unusually concerned about their children's future viability on the job market, and may have invested more heavily in strategic parenting to advantage their children than they would in a more economically prosperous time or region. These parents may have been more sensitive to the need to strategize towards "safe" professions (e.g. medicine, academia) or to prepare their children to get into elite colleges as protection against a corporate economy that they perceived as risky and unstable.

Further, strategic parenting in Ann Arbor may be more intense than elsewhere for reasons beyond current economic conditions. As residents of a university town, these Ann Arbor area parents may have prized academic achievement – and distinction more broadly – more than parents from non-academic cities. Even parents who were not themselves affiliated with the University may have stepped up their enrichment activities for their children when surrounded by neighbors with atypically resource-intensive parenting strategies. Parents with higher goals for their children may have self-selected into the Ann Arbor area, which is known for good schools and opportunities, and parents who are uncomfortable with the pressure of intensive strategic parenting may have self-selected out of the area.

Sampling Families were selected through snowball sampling using my personal and professional contacts as a life-long resident of Ann Arbor, a parent of school-aged children, and a member of many community organizations (response rate was 96%). I

began with the idea of including as broad a range of different types of families as possible to identify a comprehensive set of the strategies used by middle class parents. Because I had already made the decision to control for race, sexual orientation, judeo-Christian faith, and two-parent families, I primarily looked for diversity in parents' education and occupation. I also avoided interviewing multiple families that knew each other well, lived in the same neighborhood, or whose children attended the same schools.

Once interviews were underway, I used theoretical sampling to investigate any patterns my initial interviews seemed to suggest. For example, when the data began to indicate that parents' class origins might be important, I made sure to interview parents from a range of class backgrounds to allow comparison.

I chose to do a small qualitative study with limited participants because my purpose in this research was to identify parenting patterns and construct theory about how parents make decisions, not to prove theory or produce generalizable results. In presenting this research I did not seek to quantify results or claim that my findings are representative of all middle class parents. Instead, I hoped to use interviews to elicit stories, narratives of what each parent *felt* they did or could do to help their child to succeed, to uncover their worldviews, and identify some of the factors that shape parents' views and resulting practices.

Further, I did not use these interviews to pinpoint the actual parenting practices of all middle class mothers and fathers: interviews are not a good method for charting real behaviors. Instead, I hoped to use interviews to map out the range of behaviors that middle class parents considered to be within the horizon of the possible for them, the

potential universe of options each person would even consider, both their aspirations and their taboos (Young 2006).

I structured interviews to be as open as possible to offer subjects the opportunity to offer narratives of what they felt they do, as a parent, that is most critical and beneficial for their children's success. With a few calculated exceptions, I did not lead parents to any specific categories but allowed these to arise from a free-form opening narrative. For example, although I hoped to learn about what subjects thought of "other people's" parenting practices, and which practices (their own or others') they see as "better" or dominant, I allowed this to arise from parents' conversation and did not ask about it directly.

I structured each interview around four key interview questions that I asked each parent. After establishing "who is in the family" (names, ages, and occupations or school and grade of each family member including themselves), I began each interview with a broad, sweeping "grand tour" question (Spradley 1979), designed to elicit parents' own narratives about how they felt they could best help their kids to succeed. This question was designed to give parents a chance to mention or hint at all of the potential resources (or forms of cultural capital) that they felt parents might offer to their children. ("What do you think are the most important things that you do as a parent, or could do, to prepare your child to be a successful adult?")

After encouraging parents to elaborate on this response, I followed up by asking about each specific area they mentioned. When parents had completely explained each element of their beliefs about parenting and how they attempted to address them with their children, I asked them three additional questions. First, I asked them about any

obstacles they faced in doing the things they mentioned for their own children. Second, I asked them if their *spouse* might approach this question differently in any way, and how they resolved these differences. Third, I asked them to describe a “best-case scenario” and a “worst-case scenario” for their child’s future (they could pick one focal child or describe different scenarios for multiple children.) I finished up the interview with demographic questions about the subject’s education, occupation, and political identification, their own parents’ education and occupation, and their family’s ballpark household income.

Each interview lasted 1 to 2.5 hours. Interviews were conducted primarily in subjects’ homes, and occasionally at their work-site. This format allowed me to include ethnographic observation as a component of each interview. In most cases I met all members of the family during the interview process, observed the family’s interactions and what activities the children and spouse were occupied with, and generally learned a great deal about their family life and organization.

Although my opening question encouraged parents to look for strategic elements within their parenting actions, parents were free to deny intentionality or responsibility (e.g. “I don’t do anything,” “It’s up to them,” or “It’s up to the schools”); however, none of the parents did this, nor did they seem tongue-tied or confused by my framing of parenting as intentional and strategic. All the parents I spoke with were willing to accept the basic assertion of my research, and did not resist the suggestion that their parenting actions might be viewed as strategic and intentionally designed to advantage their children. Instead, all the parents I interviewed offered multi-level descriptions of the

specific elements of their strategy. All were conscious that their specific parenting decisions played a role in their child's success.

Because my questions directed parents to discuss the facets of parenting that they viewed as advantageous for their children, this research does not explore the full range of other possible motivations behind middle class parenting practices. Therefore the broader universe of parenting practices motivated by other objectives is not illuminated by this analytic framework.

Further, for this research, although parents outlined the steps they took to help their children to succeed, this does not imply that all the parental practices they described were, in fact strategically motivated by a desire to help their children succeed. The parenting practices that they described might in fact have been spurred by other objectives, such as fun, conformity, social status, accident, or tradition. However, at the time of the interview, no matter their original motivation (or multiple motivations), parents recognized the actions they described as *strategically* beneficial for children's adult success. In other words, parents may not have *acted* with the intention of strategically advantaging their children in a premeditated way. But at least in hindsight, these middle class parents were all easily and quickly able to identify the parenting practices that they felt were advantageous to their children.

The terms used in the research questions were purposely left open and vague, allowing parents room for interpretation. In particular, parents often asked me to clarify my definition of "adult success" for a child, but I asked them to define it for themselves. Parents frequently responded "I just want him/her to be happy, I don't care what job he/she has," at which point I asked them to describe more fully what "happy" would look

like, and the boundaries of what an acceptable job would look like. If parents found this difficult, I offered an extreme negative example to help them recognize the boundaries that we all unwittingly place on “success.” For example, I asked “Well, would you consider them a success if they were a criminal, or homeless, or addicted to drugs?” With those guidelines, all parents were able to launch into detailed descriptions of success.

Because of the study-imposed orientation towards “adult success,” parents were artificially pushed towards prioritizing their child’s future outcomes over their current experience during childhood. Parents were not directly asked to discuss their child’s current success (or happiness), and generally only discussed their child’s current emotions or activities in relation to their adult success. Readers should note that this distinction resulted from the interview questions, not from the orientation of the parents themselves.

In addition to the wording of interview questions, parents’ responses were likely shaped by my identity, especially my identities as a mother and a graduate student. Most parents asked me many questions about my children and their education and activities, my husband and his occupation (professor), my graduate studies and prior education, and my future career plans. Although I tried to explain my student status, many parents assumed I was a parenting expert, and asked me for advice about specific parenting decisions for their children. Despite my efforts to put parents at ease, some parents, particularly mothers, seemed anxious that I might judge their parenting practices, feeling the need to justify or excuse them. However, in general parents were very comfortable

discussing their parenting philosophy, and seemed to enjoy sharing their expertise on this subject with an interested listener.

After completing all interviews with mothers and fathers, I identified two distinct approaches to parenting, which I have since labeled *orchestrated achievement* and *disciplined self-management* (described in Chapter 5). In distinguishing between these two “ideal type” classed approaches to parenting, I did not rely on accepted social class definitions or distinctions.⁹ Instead, I first noticed that parents described two distinct, patterned approaches to parenting, which I now call orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management, that each had its own specific logic (see Table 1), as well as distinct tactics and practices (see Table 2). I then worked to identify the characteristics that distinguished parents in each group, finding that parents in the two subsets differed pointedly in their education level and career-types (see Tables 1 and 2), and in the organization of family life (see Table 4).

I recruited three families from among the 25 for ethnographic observation: I chose one family pursuing orchestrated achievement, another pursuing disciplined self-management, and a third family combining elements of both strategies. (100% response rate). In addition to choosing families that most closely exemplified the two ideal types (and the combination of the two), I selected families that voiced interest in my project and seemed open to participating in future research.

I was concerned about my ability to convince parents to participate in the ethnographic observations, given the unavoidable invasiveness and loss of privacy that

⁹ I made this decision in part because there is little agreement in the sociological literature about the factors that are most important in differentiating social classes, particularly in defining the middle class and its subgroups (Lareau *Social Classes* 2009)

my observation of their family life would entail. However, all three families I approached ultimately agreed to participate, in part because all three felt the exposure to the research project would be beneficial to their children. The disciplined self-management family I invited to participate quickly agreed: Evan Moore replied simply “I think we would be honored to continue to assist with your project.”

The other two families were more hesitant because of their children’s demanding schedules. Laura Zeigler, an orchestrated achievement mother, sent the following email: “I guess that since our lives are so jam-packed already the thought of adding another body to the mix is somewhat daunting.” Her husband separately expressed his fear that “the addition of a hovering observer might tip things over to some uncontrolled teenage reaction.” However, both families were ultimately convinced because of the opportunity it provided their children to be exposed to the research process. Both asked me to discuss my research with their children, and frequently asked me questions about my education in earshot of their children.

I conducted in-depth ethnographic observations with these families not simply to check on the validity of interview responses, but rather to illustrate them and to get a feel for how the things parents described in interviews actually worked out in practice. Many things that were hinted at in interviews were unmistakable in observations. For example, in interviews, parents described having many daily activities for their children, and often expressed the feeling that it was all “too much”: In observations I could differentiate between families whose schedules felt merely “busy” versus those that felt positively “grueling.” Further, observations allowed me to see the level of parent-labor involved in children’s activities, the gendered division of this parent-labor, the amount of kid-

resistance vs. kid-enthusiasm for activities, and the nature and content of the activities themselves.

Observation was critical to learn what actually went on during “down time,” family time, and during lessons and activities. For example, observations allowed me to see the major difference between similar-sounding activities. For example, I was able to observe and contrast the activities of a disciplined self-management child, an after-school gymnastics club involved almost no tailored expert supervision, little kid effort, and no parental involvement, to the more intensive activities of an orchestrated achievement child, for example, a private Suzuki violin lesson that entailed one-on-one expert oversight and constant parental monitoring (with note-taking) and follow-up reinforcement at home. Without direct observation, these two children’s enrichment activities sounded comparable: with observation the distinctions were unmistakable.

Further, observation allowed me to see *who* in the family was present and participating in the different activities parents described. For example, many middle class parents described “family dinner” as beneficial to children’s future success, but observation allowed me to see that although family dinners were specifically mentioned by orchestrated achievement parents in interviews as highly ritualized and “special” events, because fathers generally spent only this earmarked period of time engaged with the family, these same events were a routine and unremarkable event in protected employee families, because family members spent much of the evening in the household together most nights of the week. Interviews alone would have indicated that family dinners took place exclusively in orchestrated achievement families; observation showed

they were common across disciplined self-management families as well, but simply less rare and ritualized, and less frequently specifically mentioned in interviews.

Observation also allowed me to observe tensions raised by the different demands of family life, and how these differed for various members of the family. For example, in all families I observed, children's behavior eroded when parents pressured them about homework, practicing, etc. and when children didn't get any "down time." Also, observation showed that semi-autonomous professional fathers sometimes resisted being pushed to be involved in scripted "family time" activities, which were generally orchestrated by mothers. Finally, observation showed me that mothers whose husbands were semi-autonomous professionals encouraged their children to become involved in many scheduled enrichment activities because they felt overwhelmed with responsibility for single-handedly keeping their kids productive and organized while their husbands worked or traveled. In contrast, mothers in protected employee families resisted activities because they interfered with comfortable family routines, casual socializing, and "down time" activities. None of these distinctions were apparent from interviews alone.

From March through November 2008 I conducted ethnographic observation with these three families. All of the observations were conducted by the author. Most ethnographic observations occurred during a 7-14 day "immersion period" with each family, during which I scheduled visits during as many waking hours as possible (range= 52-64 hours). After this intense initial period, I made several follow-up visits with each family to observe special activities and events that I didn't see during the initial observation period (for an average of 72 total hours for each family).

I observed each of the three families on different days of the week and also during different times of day (morning before school, after school, bed-time, weekends), and accompanied each family to observe activities outside the home, including children's performances, religious services, parent-teacher meetings, and children's lessons and after-school activities. I scheduled visits during times when fathers and mothers were both home, when only one parent was at home, and when children were home alone in each family. I visited the classrooms of children in each family during their school day. I also observed five of the six parents at work.¹⁰ My total period of involvement with each family, beginning with in-home interviews and family introductions, and ending with informal visits, email and phone check-ins, was approximately eighteen months.

Consistent with grounded theory¹¹ methods of analysis, as I conducted interviews and observations I kept a journal about the themes and patterns emerging from the data. By continually comparing themes and concepts among respondents, I detected underlying patterns and differences as I gathered data. As my arguments solidified, I returned to read and re-read interview transcripts and observation field notes, allowing me to test my emerging arguments against the data. I found it useful to test my early theories by mapping out actual data into different categories in data tables. This approach forced me to confirm or falsify my "hunches," clarifying the robust themes and patterns, in a strategy similar to the "data matrices" described by Miles and Huberman (1994).

All interviews were taped and transcribed, and the initial data analysis consisted of rereading and reviewing interview transcripts, interview notes, and observation

¹⁰ One father's employer had a policy forbidding visitors. However, I was able to observe both parents at work in the *orchestrated achievement* and *discipline and effort* families: the father I was unable to observe at work was in the family that combined elements of both approaches.

¹¹ Glaser and Strauss (1967).

fieldnotes. Early in the research process I developed a solid sense that I was seeing two distinct approaches to parenting, shaped both by parents' social class background and by their family's labor-based class location – which I first identified as upper-middle class versus lower middle class careers. In order to confirm or disconfirm this and several other hunches I had developed, I did line-by-line coding of 5-7 transcripts in each of four categories I identified as significant: upper-middle class mothers, upper-middle class fathers, lower-middle class mothers, and lower-middle class fathers. I chose parents who seemed to be the most extreme examples of the divergent parenting approaches I had seen to make the differences stand out most starkly. (I later refined these categories to align with Wright's middle class occupational criteria.)

Identifying commonalities and patterns of difference from these 24 cases led me to settle on the themes that I used to code all transcripts and fieldnotes (Appendix A), using text analysis software to help manage and index data (HyperResearch). I created data matrices, comparing each code by class and gender to confirm or disconfirm my initial suspicions about parenting patterns and their relationship to gender and class. This analysis *disconfirmed* or failed to strongly support some of my initial hunches about what was going on with my data, but supported many of the others. I used the resulting analysis to inform my overall conclusions about the resources viewed by middle-class parents as valuable for their children, the resource trade-offs made by parents with different class habitus, the two resulting parenting strategies (orchestrated achievement vs. disciplined self-management), the habitus-related factors that pushed parents towards one strategy or another, and how the need to be recognized as a “good parent” shaped the parenting practices of parents in both groups.

I have chosen pseudonyms for all individuals identified in this research, giving each family a last name beginning with a different letter of the alphabet, and choosing first and last names from the telephone directory. To allow readers to easily identify family relationships, I chose to assign a single last name to all members of each family, despite the fact that mothers in some families had retained their maiden names after marriage.

In addition, because the location of this research is not cloaked, I have taken additional steps to protect the identities of the families under study. I have changed identifiable professions of the parents studied, although I have attempted to reflect the work conditions, educational requirements, and time demands of each parent's actual job. I have also made minor changes in the number, ages and gender of children in each family to ensure that no family is identifiable by specific circumstances or characteristics. However, I attempted to make sure that the overall family characteristics (e.g. large families, overall age-range of children) were maintained despite these changes. Family characteristics are noted in Appendix B.

In identifying two patterns of middle class parenting, I relied on Max Weber's *ideal types* as an analytic tool (Weber 1949). Of course, no one family conformed exactly to one specific ideal type, either orchestrated achievement or disciplined self-management, but rather each fell somewhere between the two. Ideal types are useful because they offer a means of understanding the otherwise confusing range of parenting possibilities, providing two poles which demarcate the bounds of parenting approaches that these middle class parents actually used. I chose to use Weber's technique because it allowed me to look at the different elements of parents' habitus and that seemed to push them towards one ideal type or the other, and which factors seem to push families away from

either strategy. By examining the characteristics of families who clustered near each extreme, I could gain insights into the aspects of parents' habitus that led them towards one parenting strategy or another.

Choosing simple language to illustrate the patterns identified in a small qualitative study such as this is problematic. I have tried to avoid the use of quantitative terms (including "most," "few," or "all") as much as possible, to avoid the suggestion of generally quantifiable results, and because the open nature of these interviews meant that each parent did not respond to a standard set of questions, making these terms inaccurate and misleading. However, both identifying overall characteristics of this group of middle class parents, and acknowledging differences within it, required me to make broad statements such as "middle class parents do X," or "parents with semi-autonomous professional jobs believe Y." This decision poses the risk of appearing to overstate my results. When I make these statements I am not claiming that I queried each parent in this group and found consensus; rather I am suggesting that a clear pattern was apparent in parents' volunteered responses: for example, a pattern emerged in which semi-autonomous professional parents were repeatedly saying certain kinds of things, and protected employees were saying different kinds of things. Before drawing these strong conclusions I confirmed them using data matrices (as described above).

I support the assertions made in this research using quotes and examples drawn from the parent interviews, which represent one source of evidence for the conclusions drawn in this study. I generally provide at least two quotes in support of any given assertion, both to show various dimensions of parents' responses, and to offer validation for each response. Although I have limited the number of supportive quotes for purposes of

brevity, the quotes used represent themes or ideas stated by many other parents. I add to this supportive evidence from ethnographic observations, as needed, to provide fuller explanation and richer illustration, to bolster the suggestions made in interviews with real-life family examples observed in the field, and to highlight aspects of parenting behavior not apparent or easily demonstrable from interview data.

Chapter 4

The Role of “Family Time” in Strategic Parenting

All the middle class parents interviewed, both those doing orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management, held “the family” accountable for playing a primary role in determining their children’s future success. Of the five cultural capitals discussed by the middle class parents in this study, the first four were fairly self-explanatory, but the concept of *family-building skills* is less intuitively obvious, and requires fuller discussion. Further, because family-building skills have not been discussed as a form of cultural capital in the family literature, this topic merits some extra explanation. Most importantly, I take this chapter to expand our understanding of family-building skills, because the parents studied unanimously gave this resource a central and necessary place in their discussion of the cultural capitals required to ensure their children’s adult success.

Parents explained that family bonds had a double importance for their children. First, parents’ valued having a strong marriage or partnership and family as a primary *goal* for their children’s futures, and viewed their own family as the best and only route to fostering healthy family-building skills in their children. Second, parents viewed their family as the most effective medium for *transferring* cultural capitals (achievement, social networks and skills, self-management, and mental health) from themselves to their children, in a process I label *family transmission*.

In section I below, I explore why the parents studied viewed the family as providing a key resource for their children that would pay off in adulthood. I follow this discussion in section II by illustrating parents' beliefs that their family acts as a platform to transfer cultural capital to their children, through family transmission. "Family time" was the basic resource that parents recognized as necessary for creating family-building skills and facilitating family transmission.

Section I: Marriage and Family as a Valued Resource When asked about how they help their children to be successful, the middle class parents in this study give a central role to family connectedness and "family time." Family time – when both mothers, fathers, and children interact all-together - was viewed as vital for middle class success for a complex set of reasons, which I outline below. These beliefs were shared and voiced by orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management parents alike.

Family = Success These middle class parents viewed a healthy marriage and family life as critical components of success for their children. William Stewart had a successful career as a partner in a law firm, but when asked to describe a "best case scenario" for his children's futures, he prioritized family over career success.

I guess I think one scenario is that they find somebody that really is a match, and that they have kids and they have a family. That would be great. And the flip side is if they don't find somebody or they find somebody that's a bad match and they end up divorced. Even frankly if they ended up deciding that they wouldn't have kids or something, I would feel bad about that. I would feel like they really missed something. There's just something about having kids that almost defines success, you know?

Kim Thomas, a stay-home mom trained as a nurse specialist, also included having a happy family life as a vital component of her vision of success for her children.

You know for each of my kids, I want 'em to find a job that will support them and their families. I'd love to see 'em happily married with kids. Have a job that they really like, that doesn't suck all of their time away from their families. And just a family that enjoys being together, loves each other.

Family Time to Role-Model Marriage The middle class parents I interviewed agreed that *family time* provided the only reliable means of preparing children for success in marriage and parenting. Through spending time all together as a family, these parents believed they could role-model healthy spousal and parental relationships for their children. In other words, these parents believed that “family time” offered the best platform for transferring family-building skills from themselves to their children. Mary Jordan prioritized “family dinners” together and other “family time” because she believed that observing her marriage offers her children an important opportunity to prepare themselves for healthy family relationships.

Well, some of it I think is watching my husband and I interact. I think that it's important for them to see how a married couple is supposed to talk to each other, work together to get the dinner done, talk to the kids, take part in all of that.

Dawn Ross, a stay home mom and ex-teacher, agreed that children need time with the family to observe their parents relationship, however “flawed,” to learn good relationship skills for marriage and parenting.

I think of my young sons as growing up to be husbands and fathers and I think they're watching my marriage with my husband. So I hope that we are showing communication, respect, and all of those things - love, forgiveness. Some of those things that we're so flawed in modeling, but I hope that we're being good models. And also in how we parent,

we know that that will be passed onto them and they will follow a lot of those same patterns, for good or bad.

Wayne Underhill, a physician and health center director, described the parents' marriage as a "template" that children use to build their own future partnerships.

So if you've seen a good marriage—because in every relationship there will be conflict - so you can see how people resolve conflict and how they can negotiate and share responsibility. So yeah, children that are fortunate to grow up in families where there is a strong marriage have a leg-up. It's the same thing I think as maybe having a \$2 million trust fund. You're probably going to have a stronger marriage because it will teach you how to conduct a large portion of your life. If the template is essentially sound, and all you have to do is tweak it, it's a lot easier than saying, 'I'm going to throw out 75% of that' and essentially be starting over.

In contrast, Jason Bradley, a financial analyst, worried that his tumultuous relationship with his wife may have "polluted" their children, damaging their ability to form healthy marriages in the future. His counter-example also illustrates the importance that these parents placed on family role-modelling in shaping their children's happy futures.

We kind of worry, because we were going through all this (marital trouble), and were like, 'Is all this going to hurt the kids?' And we think, 'Well, jeez, maybe (our daughter) gets frustrated easily now because she saw us being angry at each other and not having intimacy and somehow we polluted her. Cause (my wife) had no desire to give me any kind of comfort, or just 'How are you doing, hon?' And whenever I got pissed at her, I would just tune out and not be helpful and go do a project or whatever.

Section II: Family Time to Transfer Cultural Capitals: Family Transmission These middle class parents viewed the family as the primary platform for transferring parents' cultural capital to the children, or family transmission. They felt that spending time with their children allowed parents to share their wisdom, good habits, skills, priorities, passions, and expertise with their children, through active teaching, role-modeling, and casual conversation and engagement with one another. As Larry Crosby, an engineer/manager at an automotive supplier expressed it, "If your kids aren't with you, or are very rarely with you, how can they possibly be learning substantial things from you?" Parents viewed the family as the best vehicle for delivering all the different cultural capitals: family (described above), achievement, social, mental health, and self-management. Below I describe examples of how parents felt that the family helped transfer these cultural capitals to their children.

Family Transmission of Social Resources Social relating skills were best learned in the family, according to these middle class parents. Peggy Crosby, stay-home mom with a high school education, explained that family life is an excellent way for children to learn good social and relating skills.

The thing that I get on (my son) the most about, because I'm wanting him to be able to get along with people, is I feel like he should get along with his sisters. Because if you can get along within your family, you know you can get along with anybody out there.

Daniel Blackburn, a management consultant, agreed that family relationships teach children how to "be human" and "connect with people" later in life.

I think the (parental) nurturing tends to lead to better connection with other people. When I think of friends who have grown up in nurturing environments, they tend to feel

more connected with people and they tend to care more about how other people think. In a way, nurturing is just another way of setting an example: you're showing your children, 'This is what it is to be human.' And it's something we concern ourselves with. Because it's easy to raise a child who doesn't connect with people.

Ann Oakes, a stay-home mom and ex-secretary, seconded the belief that family provides the cornerstone for developing her children's important social skills, teaching kids the rules of healthy social relating.

If you have your 'family first', if you learn from that, you're able to communicate with people. You learn how to pick out the important things and let the other stuff go. You're able to disregard cattiness and stuff. If someone says 'This is a secret', then it's a secret. Being open instead of beating around bushes. I think that just helps.

Family Transmission of Achievement Skills These middle class parents also felt that the family can help children build valuable skills towards achievement. Arthur Vaughn, an intensive care physician, felt that by spending time with them, he could pass the secrets of his success along to his three children.

My medical school training was atypical. I didn't have a single lecture. It was our responsibility to go out and dig into the anatomy and physiology lab. And having had that experience, I look at it as you can get through anything if that spark is there. And so what I do (with my kids) is just that – try to figure out how to get that love there, you know? So I think that's my challenge, to make it 'real world' and give a purpose to whatever topic that (my kids are learning) in school. Show the benefits, spark the fire and see what happens.

Wayne Underhill believed that America's most successful people have achieved greatness because of the support of their families. As a self-proclaimed "Independent"

who typically voted Democratic, Wayne still admired and hoped to emulate some of America's most "distinctive" families, by supporting his children to achieve adult success.

It strikes me that the Bush family, that mother Barbara in particular seemed to know how to support her kids and help them reach their potential. All of her kids seem to feel supported and enabled. You see that - some families where there's several generations of people that have whatever this magic is. The Fords are another successful family like that. And it isn't just about the accumulation of wealth. Those families seem to have a way of supporting one another that's distinctive. And hopefully (my wife and I) are secure enough and self-actualized enough that we step in and support our kids that way.

Helen Moore believed that success comes from hard work, and felt that by spending time "side by side" with her, her children would learn the knack of "good work habits, good study habits."

I just work right alongside them, doing chores. I was forced to do it (as a child), and I hated it. But looking back on it, it was so good for me. Because why do I know how to do so much now? Because my dad taught me, or my mom taught me. So I want to work side by side of them. If you're not there to teach them how to do it, then how are they going to know?

The middle class parents I interviewed also felt that simply discussing their daily lives with their children offered kids significant benefits. These parents felt that their children will learn a great deal about how to succeed as a middle class professional from hearing about their parents' adult lives and work experiences. Laura Zeigler explained that the value of family dinners came mainly through shared discussion. "Every Friday night is family meeting night, and we have pizza and watch a movie together. And both

(my husband) and I take those opportunities to talk about what's happened in our day, what we were happy about." Linda Norris also felt that by sharing their daily experiences with their children, parents offer their children a great benefit.

Dinner in particular is hugely important. Because dinner is one activity that we do together, pretty much every night we possibly can. (My husband) will talk about school, and about a kid who get in trouble or whatever, and the kids hear that and ask questions. And dinner is pretty much the only time we get into the depths of that.

Family Bolsters Child's Mental Health Third, these parents viewed the family as an important *safety net* for their children's mental health. When children experienced problems or set-backs, made mistakes, or faced difficult decisions in their lives, these parents saw family as offering a vital buffer-zone protecting them from emotional and relationship instability, which could otherwise lead to bad life choices and downward mobility. Where a child without strong family bonds might fail because of temporary bad judgment or bad fortune, these parents felt that family support could give a child a second chance to get back on track. Leah Kerrigan, stay-home mother and ex-musician, experienced this first hand when she got back on her feet after an unplanned teen pregnancy, with the support of her parents. She explained that she wants her children to rely on their family to support them through the difficulties of growing up, as well.

We want them to leave our family knowing that whenever they need help, they can come back to their family, their brothers or sisters or their parents, for help as they grow up. They're all going to make mistakes, so that's not what we're really concerned about. It's just more, how do they deal with them and where do they turn to when they make their mistakes? Are they going to turn to drugs and alcohol? So eventually we'd like them to turn to ...their brothers and us and their relationships in the family.

Based on her own experience, Kim Thomas, stay-home mother and ex-nurse specialist, hoped that her children would be able to “draw on” the strength of their sibling bonds to help carry them through the difficulties they will inevitably encounter during their adult lives.

(Having close family bonds) gives you some roots to fall back on. I say to my kids ‘Your siblings are your most enduring relationship.’ I want them to have a relationship with their siblings for the rest of their lives. My mom has multiple sclerosis, and my sister and I have had times where we’ve had to agree ‘We’re not putting her on the ventilator this time,” knowing that she could die. But we have such a good relationship that we’re never at odds in those decisions. That’s just a concrete example of why building that family bond is so important. As things get more difficult as you’re an adult, whether it’s aging parents or difficulties in marriage, or with your kids or anything, you can draw on that.

Ken Isaacs, plumbing business owner, described family as the “safe zone” or “anchor” keeping kids from falling too far when they make a mistake or steer off-course.

Family’s like a base, so you don’t have a valley, in the dumps, or whatever. If you go to college and your best friend dumps you or your girlfriend or whatever, family is the people you can come to for comfort, it’s kind of like a safe zone. Otherwise, there’s no place else to go. You end up making bad decisions because you don’t have anybody like mom, dad, cousins, or brothers or sisters to ask. It comes back to that anchor, that security blanket. If they’re sinking, then they can get pulled back out, and put back in again.

For parents in this study, family also offered a safety net for children’s mental health by protecting them from being damaged and disheartened by the demands of achievement in a competitive, sometimes cruel world. Belinda Foster, stay home mom and ex-hospital administrator, felt it was her job as a parent to “build up” her kids in a harsh world.

“There are enough places in the world where you get slapped down. If a mother can’t build you up, who can? “

Dawn Ross, stay-home mom and ex-teacher, was confident that with her family providing a “safe place” for her kids against the demands of their daily lives, they would be confident and successful in their adult lives.

I want my kids to know that when you cross this threshold that you are okay here. You are loved and you are safe here at home, and nothing is going to change that. To know that at least if no one else, your mom and dad love you. You can go off and do a bunch of really bad things, and you will face consequences for it, but you will always be loved here. And I think if you know that, that you are loved and accepted no matter what by your family and always have that safe place to go, then you are free to try different things and to fail. Then you can be free to find out what it is that you’re supposed to be doing with your life, and what it is that you are to become.

Wayne Underhill viewed family time as providing a “restorative mechanism” against the daily pressures his children faced to achieve.

We’ve always been people that have tried to push ourselves. But you also don’t want to do that to the point of being unhealthy and so we had to learn for ourselves how to keep ourselves healthy and balanced and that just sort of translated into the kids as well. And whenever we notice there’s stress in the family, then we usually try to figure out how to restore a balance. Which might be as simple as like a family walk out at one of the nature parks. Yeah, just a few hours together. We’re having some quiet time and some conversation and using that as a restorative mechanism.

In order for family time to deliver all its potential benefits to children, these parents felt that they must build a close bond of love, trust, and affection with their children. The parents believed that their children were unlikely to turn to their parents for support in a

crisis, or to willingly follow their advice and example, without caring and connectedness. These middle class parents insisted that the only way to build this relationship was through family time, forging family closeness through communication and shared activities.

Conclusions Parents unilaterally agreed that “family time” and family bonds played a significant role in determining children’s future success. Further, parents gave family-building skills a central place in their discussion of the cultural capitals required to ensure their children’s adult success, for three reasons. First, parents’ viewed a strong marriage and family as a valued *goal* for their children’s futures. Second, parents believed that spending family time all-together was the best and only route to foster family-building skills in their children. Third, parents saw the family as the most effective medium for *transferring* cultural capitals (achievement, social networks and skills, self-management, and mental health) from themselves to their children, through family transmission.

Chapter 5

Orchestrated Achievement

How did middle class parents end up pursuing either orchestrated achievement or disciplined self-management? What factors pushed parents towards one of these ideal types, and away from the other? The results of this study show that parents' habitus, shaped by their classed life experiences, guided their parenting strategy and the specific combination of cultural capitals they pursued for their children. For the middle-class parents in this study, *career-type*, or location within the middle class occupational structure, and *classed upbringing* were the habitus-shaping life experiences that had the greatest influence on parenting strategy.

Parents pursuing orchestrated achievement most closely, that is, those adhering most narrowly to this ideal type strategy, were those who held positions Wright describes as “semi-autonomous employees (e.g. doctors and professors)” (Wright 1979:p.63) or “professionals” who monopolized skills because their occupations require advanced (beyond undergraduate) academic qualifications and “scarce” skills (Western & Wright 1994:p.608), and “petty bourgeoisie” (ibid) or “small employers” with expert knowledge and scarce skills requiring post-undergraduate education (Wright 1979:p.63).¹² Some

¹² I make this distinction about the credentials or “scarce” skills of petty bourgeoisie because the one small business owner in this sample without a college education ran a heating and cooling business, and followed the logic of disciplined self-management.

members of a third middle class occupational position also fell into this category – Manager-experts who held managerial positions but who also relied on scarce skills or advanced (beyond undergraduate) academic qualifications, and who had the option of self-employment to escape employer coercion.

These members of the middle class – whom I refer to as *semi-autonomous professionals* – had greater autonomy in their work and freedom from the coercive power of the employer-employee relationship than did others in the middle class. These parents either had autonomy through self-employment, or had this option because of scarce and highly valued skills or credentials. As Wright explained, professionals and experts form a “petty-bourgeois shadow class” because their scarce and valued credentials (e.g. PhD, MD, JD) offer them the “relatively open option of self-employment” (Wright 1990).

In this chapter, I show that these semi-autonomous professionals (or those with semi-autonomous career trajectories¹³) prioritized distinctive achievement over other cultural capitals for their children, and explore the factors that led these parents towards orchestrated achievement. Further, I show that classed career demands shaped parents’ family time and boosting strategies, limiting family transmission for semi-autonomous professional parents.

All the semi-autonomous professionals studied were more likely to espouse the logic and practices of orchestrated achievement than were protected employees, regardless of their childhood upbringings or spouse’s habitus, and therefore I support my assertions about the logic and practices of orchestrated achievement in this chapter using quotes

¹³ Wright notes that an individual’s class position should be identified by their *trajectory*, defined as “a life-time structure of positions through which an individual passes in the course of a work career.” (Wright 1979 p93). Because many of the women in this study were currently not employed, I used their career trajectory, including their education and prior work history, instead of their current employment to identify their location in the middle class occupational structure.

from semi-autonomous professionals. However, although their logic parallels that of other semi-autonomous professional parents in many respects, I have reserved statements from the subgroup of parents with “cleft habitus,” or those whose parenting strategy was shaped by both their semi-autonomous professional career as well as their working class or protected employee roots, for discussion in Chapter 7.

In section 1 of this chapter I illustrate the links between parents’ semi-autonomous professional career experiences and the orchestrated achievement approach to each of the five cultural capitals. In section 2 I outline the orchestrated achievement family transmission and boosting strategies, explaining the structural factors and strategic logic that motivated them. I explore how other habitus-related factors (a parent’s discrepant childhood upbringing or “cleft habitus”, and spouse’s different habitus or “dual habitus”) complicated the way that habitus shaped strategic parenting in Chapter 7.

Section 1: Links Between Semi-Autonomous Professions and The Logic of Orchestrated Achievement In this first section of this chapter, I explore how semi-autonomous professional experiences shaped the logic and worldview that undergirded the orchestrated achievement parenting approach. I argue that orchestrated achievement parents prioritized distinctive achievement, modifying their achievement efforts somewhat to maintain adequate levels of mental health and family-building skills for their children, but jettisoning the child’s social networks and skills with peers and self-management skills in favor of elite achievement. I propose that orchestrated achievement parents were taught to value distinctive achievements through their own experiences en route to semi-autonomous professional careers, reinforced by the advice and examples of semi-autonomous professional coworkers, friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Further, I show that orchestrated achievement parents were barred from building family-building skills through routine, daily family interactions because fathers' semi-autonomous professions removed them so frequently from family life, and instead relied on creating infrequent family rituals and routines for family transmission. Regarding mental health, orchestrated achievement parenting logic was shaped by a belief that their ambitious achievement goals posed a threat to their children's mental health, a lesson they learned in part from experiencing these problems with their children.

Building children's current social networks with peers was not a priority for orchestrated achievement parents, whose own semi-autonomous professional careers taught them not to view children's current social networks as valuable for career success. Further, orchestrated achievement parents perceived social contact with peers as a downward mobility threat for their children, distracting them from their achievement-oriented pursuits, and encouraging them to waste time on shallow, pop cultural priorities. Finally, although the orchestrated achievement parents recognized the value of fostering children's self-management skills, these parents felt required to relinquish this goal in order to orchestrate the details of their children's lives to maximize their distinctive achievements, and were willing to sacrifice self-management in favor of this more important goal.

In the remainder of this section I outline how parents' semi-autonomous professional career experiences shaped their logic about each of the five cultural capitals for their children.

Achievement: Top Priority for Semi-Autonomous Professional Parents Of all possible avenues to success open to their children, the development of distinctive or

uncommon achievements was the one most commonly mentioned, and most vigorously pursued, by parents pursuing orchestrated achievement. These parents prioritized *distinctive achievement* over the other cultural capitals for reasons that were linked to their class *habitus*, shaped by their class upbringing and life experiences. The orchestrated achievement parents felt strongly that their children's uncommon achievements were a vital and necessary ingredient of their ultimate adult success, both for college admission, and for career success as well.

Among other things, these orchestrated achievement parents believed that unusual skill sets or achievements were needed to ensure that their children were accepted into good colleges. Simon Thomas, a second-generation physician, explained his perception that children must “stand out” in order to “get in.”

I don't even want to think about how hard it is to get into college these days. But (my kids) have got to realize that if you're going to get in somewhere, then you've got to have something that makes you stand out. That makes you unique. Otherwise you're going to fall short.

To make sure his children develop the necessary unusual achievements, Dr. Thomas tried to strategically plan his fifteen year old son's academics and activities to be “a little bit unusual.”

With our oldest, we have tried to get him involved in things that he could put on his resume down the road, things that are a little bit unusual. Like volunteering at the Salvation Army, and he's applying to the Beta (academic honors) society. And other things, like being a lifeguard. If he was a lifeguard, that would stand out as showing self-motivation, I think.

The orchestrated achievement parents believed that developing unusual skills was also important for their child's future career success. Daniel Westbrook explained his belief that developing their "most unusual" abilities gives kids the highest chance of success later in life.

Ideally I want my kids to move into adult lives where they are using a lot of their abilities. And probably the abilities that are the most unusual. I mean, if they have the abilities that a lot of other people have, using those is not necessarily going to do them a lot of good.

Ultimately, the orchestrated achievement parents hoped that these unusual achievements or abilities would help their children to rise above the competition. However, they did not feel that their children could distinguish themselves simply through in-school achievement. Instead, orchestrated achievement parents felt that children must develop skills above and beyond what is available to them through normal avenues. Daniel Westbrook explained the need for extracurricular distinction.

In the United States, everybody gets roughly the same education as a kid. But what you do outside of that is one of the things that differentiates you. If you think you're going to become an individual just in school, that's probably not going to happen. So it (extracurricular distinction) is part of what makes you an individual, and part of what gives you the skills that other people don't have.

In response to worries about security and stability in the job market, semi-autonomous professional parents hoped to angle their children into more "protected" careers in the professions. These jobs require an uncommonly high level of achievement – usually a graduate education - which demands that children go to "good" colleges or

universities, and outperform their peers at college. Simon Thomas, physician, explained why he would push his children towards professional jobs.

(I'd steer my kids away from) things that are economy-tied these days. The auto industry. Technology. And the service industry. You get into engineering, you get into medicine, you get into education, law, from a security perspective. I don't want my kids to be in a situation where they're uprooting their family every couple of years.

Achievement and Semi-Autonomous Professional Career Experiences Why did these orchestrated achievement parents prioritize distinctive achievement so highly for their children? Where did they learn that achievement was so critical for college admission and career success? The answer is that orchestrated achievement parents were motivated both by both “pull factors” towards achievement, and “push factors” away from family transmission strategies. In this section, supportive quotes from parents pursuing orchestrated achievement illustrate that these parents’ perception of the primacy of achievement came from their own experiences as semi-autonomous professionals, and the achievement-focused example that they were exposed to through their semi-autonomous professional neighbors, friends, and co-workers. These class-related factors both shaped these parents’ career goals and expectations for their children, and their ideas about how best to help children to achieve these goals.

Further, orchestrated achievement parents were pushed towards an achievement-oriented parenting strategy by patterns in the organization of family life driven by semi-autonomous professional careers. Semi-autonomous professional fathers tended to work long hours and travel extensively, offering minimal “family time” and opportunities to build family-building skills for their children through family transmission. These parents

specialized in developing achievement capital for their children with little or no opportunity cost to family time and family-building skills, compared to protected employee families, who had regular, “nine to five” hours at work. In the paragraphs that follow, I offer support from interviews and fieldnotes for these assertions.

Orchestrated achievement parents learned from their semi-autonomous professional experiences that their children would require distinction, through unique achievements, to succeed. Jessica Stewart, lawyer and business professor, explained that the array of activities, tutors, and private schools that she orchestrated to enrich her children were a reaction chiefly to her own and her husband’s professional experiences. Among other activities, Jessica’s daughter had a private Japanese tutor, and her son worked with a private math tutor to develop his abilities. “Part of it’s coming out of our professions we’re in. We’re kind of looking ahead to see what options are available to our kids, and what skills do they need to keep those possibilities alive.”

Achievement Exposure from Semi-Autonomous Professional Friends, Family, and Neighbors The orchestrated achievement parents learned about the value of unique achievement for their children’s success in part from their contacts with other successful, high-achieving semi-autonomous professional families practicing orchestrated achievement, such as their neighbors, relatives, and co-workers. Wayne Underhill feared that because all his neighbors were so accomplished, his children would feel they also must be high-achievers to be “special.”

This town is full of families that are living the same lifestyle (as us). Like the guy next door was a very well established neurosurgeon who has his own institute and all of that. And the lady across the street runs the School of Public Policy at Michigan. So, we like Ann Arbor, and it’s

a pleasant town - but the down side of that is that some kids who grew up in Ann Arbor never felt they were special.

Standing out as unusually talented or accomplished, especially in a high-achieving town like Ann Arbor, was a difficult thing for semi-autonomous professional parents to help their children to do. These parents recognized that their children faced a long, hard road to distinguish themselves, because of the accomplished company they kept. Laura Zeigler felt this struggle to “stand out” keenly for her two middle-school age girls. Despite expensive private music lessons, an advantage that most Ann Arbor children did not have, Laura lamented her daughter’s inability to “stand out” through her musical achievements.

Johanna was in the orchestra, and for some reason in her grade there were four violin prodigies. They would play Mozart concertos in fourth grade. One of them could be on the concert stage. And Johanna’s doing really well for a Suzuki student but she’s not musically gifted. But she compares herself to these people and she feels really inferior.

Further, orchestrated achievement parents learned about the difficulties of competing for admission into a good college from their semi-autonomous professional peers with college-age children, whose examples proved that unusual levels of achievement are a must for their own children’s successful future. Kathleen York, a stay-home mom who previously worked as VP of human resources at a large firm, learned how competitive she felt the college admissions process had become through watching a friend’s child negotiate the application process.

One of my friends sent me a copy of her son’s application to Michigan engineering school. And I’m just looking at

all of these things and it's just like 'It's amazing what this kid has done.' Yet he's sweating it about getting into a good school, like Michigan or UVA. And he's participated in all these different engineering programs and really done things. He's taking AP Calculus and he's got an A in it. He's captain of the golf team. He races antique cars on the weekend. He does all kinds of volunteer work. And I'm like 'This is nuts'.

Simon Thomas, a doctor and director of a specialty practice, learned from a friend's example that parents need to "road-map" a plan for their children to succeed.

I have a good friend of mine—they have sort of road mapped their son's life. They live in Ann Arbor and (the son) went to Catholic Central in Detroit. And he is not a big guy but became co-captain of the football team at Catholic Central and is off to Notre Dame. And that was their goal. They sort of road-mapped from junior high school on, as a family, a strategy and the activities to get him out so that he does shine, and does stand out above the crowd, and to get him the best chances to get where he wants to go. And I think that's probably to some degree what is needed for any kid these days.

Material Resources and Unique Achievement Although I do not focus on the role of material resources in this analysis, it was clear that parents' ability to prioritize and develop their children's unique achievements was undeniably linked to having adequate time and money for this resource-intensive pursuit. Although parents didn't acknowledge that lack of time or money limited their ability to prioritize their children's achievement or activities¹⁴, it was clear that orchestrated achievement parents, overall, had higher

¹⁴ Parents were directly asked about any obstacles they faced in helping their children to succeed as adults. Although I had expected that many parents with incomes below \$100,000 per year would discuss the advantages they would give their children if they had more money, this complaint was made only once, by an orchestrated achievement parent with a much higher income.

incomes than parents doing disciplined self-management (see Table 3)¹⁵.

The fact that some of the disciplined self-management parents had higher incomes than some of the orchestrated achievement parents demonstrates that material resources alone did not dictate parenting strategy. However, orchestrated achievement parents were less likely to have annual household incomes under \$100,000, and more likely to have incomes over \$200,000, than were disciplined self-management families. This pattern shows that parents' income level did not fully determine their parenting approach, but I use this data to support my conclusion that greater material resources made it more possible for semi-autonomous professional parents to prioritize achievement for their children than for protected employee parents.

Similarly, parental time and energy was another resource that seemed to shape parents' attitude towards fostering unique achievement. Orchestrated achievement families were more likely to have one parent (almost always the mother) who either did not work for pay outside the home, or who worked part-time or flexible hours (See Table 4). These mothers had far more time potentially available to dedicate to developing their child's unique achievements, orchestrating their activities, and managing their time. These data patterns suggest that available parental or maternal time was a second resource that enabled semi-autonomous professional parents to prioritize unique achievement for their children, both because fathers were able to earn high enough salaries to allow their wives to reduce or eliminate inflexible work commitments, and

¹⁵ Although some parents provided information about their wealth and other potential material resources available for children's enrichment (e.g. financial assistance from grandparents, trust funds, savings) in addition to income, this information was not consistently available from all parents, and therefore not included.

because mothers had the educational credentials to allow them to find careers with the freedom to flex their hours around their children's busy schedules (Golden 2001).

Mental Health: Jeopardized by Distinctive Achievement The parenting strategies of orchestrated achievement parents were shaped in no small part by parents' concerns about their children's mental and emotional health. Where Bourdieu theorized the mental health costs of upward mobility, this research demonstrates that even parents with semi-autonomous professional careers found the pressure to achieve had mental health costs for their children and families. Although none of the disciplined self-management parents discussed this, orchestrated achievement parents were far more likely to refer to their concerns about their child's mental or emotional health problems (both actual and potential), and to view professional management of these problems as an important element of their child's future success (see Table 2). The orchestrated achievement parents recognized that mental health problems such as anxiety and depression posed a real threat, both to their child's current achievement and future adult success.

Kathleen York illustrated the inherent tension involved for orchestrated achievement parents in trying to balance the competing goals of raising a "mentally health kid" and getting her to "step up to" the "best education."

We want our kid to have the best education she can. We want to provide the best education we can, and we want her to step up to it. But we're not just about her getting into the best school. My husband always says "I just want her to be happy." And that's what I want, too. We just want a mentally healthy kid. That's a big deal for us.

The orchestrated achievement parents dealt with their child's mental health struggles by trying to reduce the achievement demands that were put on their child, while still

expecting a high level of overall achievement. Carolyn Underhill, whose 13 year-old son suffered from anxiety, illustrated the tension she felt between protecting her son's mental health by lowering her achievement standards for him, while still promoting his achievement.

We had to ask ourselves some questions and we had to modify some things. We told him 'Do you have to get all A's? No, A's are good, but a B is not the end of the world. Do you have to practice your trumpet every night? No, forget that. He was worried about French. Is it okay to get a B in French? Yes, Madame says you're doing fine in there anyway.' We are all achievers, so we still want him to do well, but do you have to be perfect? No.

Other orchestrated achievement parents felt forced by their child's mental health problems to reconsider their lofty career ambitions for their child's future. Kelly Westbrook recognized that her 11 year-old son's recent emotional struggles could limit his potential for adult academic achievement.

I used to think that there was no question in my mind that the kids would both go to graduate school. Benji would probably be in engineering and Victoria would probably be in art and/or literature. However, that has changed. Honest to God, I actually think the mental health piece of it is bigger than any other part of it.

When asked what shifted her perspective, Kelly answered tersely "Talking to Benji's therapist."

Family-building skills: Semi-Autonomous Professional Careers Limit Opportunities for Routine "Family Time" For orchestrated achievement families in this study, parents' own achievement-oriented semi-autonomous professional careers made it difficult or

impossible for them to spend much regular down-time or time “as a family”: Dad was frequently gone, and sometimes mom was, too. There was less opportunity cost for these families, in terms of family time, family-building skills, and family transmission, in shifting most of the family’s resources to distinctive achievement and boosting strategies. Especially because enrichment activities often helped keep family life organized for mothers single-parenting due to the frequent absence of a semi-autonomous professional father.

In the orchestrated achievement families, professional fathers worked long hours and traveled regularly - often for weeks at a stretch - and mothers handled all the daily responsibilities of family life (See Table 4). As a result of their work commitments, these professional fathers participated in family life in an adjunct role, giving support, input, and advice to their wives from afar, as illustrated in the following quote from Carolyn Underhill. Because Carolyn’s husband’s job as medical director led him to work long hours and travel at least 2 weeks out of every month, Carolyn felt required to “spoon-feed” him information to keep him updated on his children’s lives.

(My husband) is an awesome father and he’s totally involved on a level he can be: he knows everything going on in their lives based on me sharing a lot of it. I spoon-feed him everything when we talk during the day. He’s heard nothing first-hand for the last few weeks, but he is able to follow along because I brief him on everything.

Daniel Westbrook agreed that his frequent work-related travel (he was home only 10 to 15 days in the last 6 months) meant that his parenting occurred at a distance, and his information about his own children came “second hand” from his wife.

I guess the real difficulty is you don't necessarily have your finger on the pulse of who the kids are or what issues they're struggling with. And you really only—you get it second hand. I mean Kelly'll tell me that, 'This is what Benji is struggling with.' 'This is what Victoria is struggling with,' but that's second-hand information, so it's hard to really know at the core what's going on.

Keeping their husbands abreast and aware of their children's daily lives posed an added demand on mothers. Because Kathleen York's husband, a business owner who traveled globally, was rarely home to participate in routine aspects of parenting, Kathleen explained that she had to "help him" to be able to relate to his daughter's daily life.

Last night he was home really late. It was about 10:00. And I said, 'Here's the deal. (Our daughter) didn't get home till late because of this auditioning and tutoring and all of that, and she's really tired and she doesn't feel great. And she has a presentation tomorrow and I really want her to get some sleep. So do you mind just running upstairs and getting your stuff and getting out of there?' And he's like, 'Okay.' I just have to kind of help him, because he hasn't been there and he didn't see anything that happened all day.

In addition to cutting into family time, these parents acknowledged that the lack of family time due to father's professional work demands put a great deal of stress on the children in the family. Wayne Underhill explained that at times, his career has put a strain on family time, to the detriment of his children.

I have had some professional challenges that have put stress on the family at times. Most of the time, actually. For about a year and a half I ran an emergency department in Pennsylvania, which meant traveling there at least once a month, maybe two trips at five days apiece. And it became apparent, when I was gone for three weeks in one month, that it was putting a lot of stress on them. And for awhile that became very stressful. The kids seemed stressed out, we weren't communicating well. They demonstrate it, and you sort of have to decide if it's all worth it.

Parents also recognized that father's absence from family life placed a particular strain on mothers, who felt stressed and overburdened by the unwanted demands of single-parenting. Sheri Evans struggled with her lawyer husband's long hours and frequent travel that limited their family time, and described the toll these absences took on her stress level.

(I'm) Always feeling harried. Feeling rushed because I don't have someone here to help. I need to be super-organized when he's out of town. So being organized, and making sure someone else can bring one of the kids home if they both need to be picked up at the same time. Friends help out a lot, because all of our husbands travel to a certain extent.

Bernard Donovan, a pastor, also acknowledged that his absence several evenings a week were hard for the whole family, especially putting a strain on his wife, who "doesn't have much support."

(My wife) carrying everything alone for the third night is – well it's difficult (for her) to remain pleasant with everybody. It gets tiresome and she needs a break. And if there's an illness thrown in, or a homework issue or a teacher issue or a discipline issue, she doesn't have much support there.

Social Networks: Avoiding the Peer and Pop Culture "Quagmire" The orchestrated achievement parents studied recognized the value of social networks for children's future success, but relegated fostering their children's current social networks and skills with their peers to a low place in the hierarchy of cultural capitals. These orchestrated achievement parents viewed their children's peer culture as a downward mobility threat, fearing that it would distract and disrupt their children from their goal of developing uncommon achievements.

Orchestrated achievement parents worried about keeping their child “focused” on achievement and developing their passions, gifts, and unusual achievements; they feared that their child’s peers would distract their children from their parentally-sanctioned pursuits by orienting them towards shallow popular cultural priorities. Although they did not mention it, it is possible that these parents will place a higher value on the role of social capital later in their children’s lives; however, they viewed their child’s current peer networks as offering far more risk than reward.

Orchestrated achievement parents feared the contaminating effects of “mediocrity.” Through the influence of their children’s peers, orchestrated achievement parents feared that their children would waste potentially valuable enrichment time worrying about beauty, popularity, dating, and material values. Peer social culture was viewed as a “quagmire” by these orchestrated achievement parents, who hoped to help children to navigate through its negative aspects as much as possible en route to adulthood. Simon Thomas described his anxiety about the bad behaviors, materialism, and premature sexuality he saw among kids today, “I see all of these kids and I say, ‘Okay. Now how am I going to get my kids through this quagmire to adulthood (laughs)?’”

Kelly Westbrook viewed her daughters’ peers at her top-ranked public school with trepidation, and expressed great pride in the fact that her daughter rejected a peer focus and was able to re-orient away from the “garbage” of the group.

There are parts of that group that aren’t so good right now. They’re trying out power games, and it’s pretty intense. There’s a lot of ‘Who likes this boy?’, ‘Who doesn’t like this boy?’, online chatting, calling people ‘bitches’, really nasty power moves. Well (my daughter) looks at it and says ‘I don’t want any part of that.’ It was like, ‘I don’t want anything to do with this garbage.’

A major goal for orchestrated achievement parents was to help their children to avoid getting “sucked into” the conformist social world of their peers. John Zeigler, founder and editor of a small magazine, described the mindset of his middle-school aged daughters’ peers as vapid, and pushed them to rise above it.

I mean they’re in the middle of all these social issues of ‘boy this, girl that,’ and ‘This boy said that.’ And “I want to fit in,” or they think they should want to fit in. But part of that is the awareness that you can be yourself, and not have to fit in. And be your own person and be just fine, rather than being sucked into all the social crap.

The orchestrated achievement parents viewed their children’s peers as a dangerous conduit for pop culture and its empty values. Once swept up in the mainstream preoccupations of their peer social scene, orchestrated achievement parents feared that their children would be hopelessly distracted by “shallow” and “tacky” aspects of pop culture (especially TV shows like *Hannah Montana* and *SpongeBob* and pop music stars like Britney Spears, all mentioned frequently by orchestrated achievement parents).

Tony Evans, lawyer, felt the material on TV seeps into kid-culture in unsettling ways.

There’s stuff on Disney (channel) that’s not so appropriate for Alex to be watching. Hanna Montana, the Suite Life of Zack and Cody. Just like the boy-girl type stuff. It doesn’t seem age-appropriate for middle schoolers, let alone elementary school kids. It’s all about dating. And a lot of what’s shown on Disney is then being translated into what’s happening at school. We have friends with a 6th grader who called her mom from a birthday party and said ‘We’re playing ‘Spin the Bottle’. It’s like this high school environment being pushed down to these kids who are too young to be dealing with those issues.

Kathleen York also monitored her daughter's exposure to the "tacky" influence of "the lowest common denominator" through TV and social contact with her peers.

There's so much superficiality everywhere, it's just hard. Because these kids are saying and doing things and hearing things, it's not as civil a culture as we have had in the past. It's kind of tacky, and seems like the lowest common denominator in terms of behavior and expectations. It seems a lot nastier. And the whole notion that everything relates to beauty, paying a lot of attention to the way people dress. So we try to keep the TV off as much as possible. So she's been swimming a lot - just keeping her on the move, keep her active, keeping that stuff out of the way.

Child Self-Management: Sacrificing Independence for Achievement The struggle to maximize achievement, maintain family bonds, protect children's mental health, and control children's social environment to limit social distraction required orchestrated achievement parents to closely manage their children's lives and decisions. Balancing these many tensions required orchestrated achievement parents to monitor almost all aspects of their middle-school aged children's lives through constant supervision. It also required parents to maintain control over most major and minor decisions in their child's lives. Orchestrated achievement parents were aware that this left their children with very little opportunity to demonstrate or develop initiative, resourcefulness, or accountability in their own current actions and decisions.

Although the orchestrated achievement parents recognized the value of fostering their children's self-management skills, they argued that it would be impossible or irresponsible for them to allow their children to control aspects of their own lives and decision-making. Martha Howland, journalist, clearly valued independence for her

children, but used “research” to argue that children who are heavily managed by their parents will grow into independent adults.

I really believe that really dependent kids can become independent adults. That’s kind of the theme that goes through parenting for me. So I just want to make sure that I am there for them as much as possible and they know that they are unconditionally loved. Just try to spend as much time as I can. Because I have heard, research does show that dependent little kids, the research shows that they become well adjusted, independent adults.

Section 2: The Practices of Orchestrated Achievement Parents: Boosting Strategies to Enhance Distinctive Achievement In this second section of the chapter I describe specific orchestrated achievement boosting strategies, and explain how they link to the cultural capital priorities and worldview of orchestrated achievement parents, outlined in Section 1. Because orchestrated achievement parents were striving to maximize achievement capital without abandoning mental health and family-building skills, most of the orchestrated achievement parenting practices were intended to build at least two and often all three of these cultural capitals at once.

If the defining goal for orchestrated achievement parents was fostering distinctive *achievement* for their children, the defining element of their boosting strategy was parental *orchestration* of children’s lives to maximize achievements. These parents accepted almost full responsibility for the effort and labor required to cultivate successful children. The two major tactics involved were *achievement-boosting and family transmission*. These parents relied on family rituals and routines for family transmission, because family time was limited by both adults’ career demands and children’s enrichment schedules.

These orchestrated achievement parents used two strategies for achievement-boosting: *parent-management*, and *expert-boosting*. Through parent-management, in order to maximize achievement, orchestrated achievement parents carefully arranged and oversaw children's activities and schedules to try to strike a balance between maximizing achievement capital and protecting mental health or family bonds. Like a gardener carefully tends a bonsai, these orchestrated achievement parents carefully managed even the smallest details of children's lives, hoping to strike a delicate balance between the goal of distinctive achievement and the fear of trauma, with little margin for error.

Second, in addition to micro-managing children's daily lives, parents also took responsibility for orchestrating a phalanx of enriching experts, classes, tutors, coaches, and tailored learning environments to assist them in fostering their children's distinctive achievements, while helping to protect their mental health by "boosting" their performance with less effort required from children. The orchestrated achievement parents used several specific achievement-boosting strategies to monitor and maintain their children's mental health as well as their family bonds, while never taking their eye off the primary goal of maximizing achievement capital.

In the sections below, I outline the major practices of orchestrated achievement, both achievement-boosting strategies and family transmission strategies.

Achievement Boosting Strategies Parents used two major tactics to boost their children's achievements: parent-management and expert boosting. Expert-boosting involved hiring experts to help enhance children's achievements compared to their peers, with less effort and mental health strain from children. Parent-management strategies included identifying and fostering children's gifts and passions, managing children's time

and activities, and taking over children's family and personal responsibilities. Parents also managed children's relationships with experts, including finding and maintaining relationships with the "right" coaches, tutors, teachers and mental health experts as needed. Parents also took responsibility for controlling children's exposure to the distractions of peer and popular culture. Finally, parents managed "edutainment" for their children, providing enriching experiences and conversations that would help their children to develop distinctive achievements during "down time." Parents also used edutainment to expose their children to "real world" or "big picture" understandings of how the world works in hopes of amplifying children's desire to achieve. In the sections below I outline the practices of parent-management and expert-boosting.

Parent Management: Fostering Gifts and Passions, Protecting Mental Health First, orchestrated achievement parents promoted distinctive achievement while protecting mental health and family bonds by encouraging children to pursue their "gifts" and "passions," in the hopes that aligning achievement demands with children's natural inclinations and abilities would reduce the mental strain and effort required for children to succeed. In this way, parents helped to maximize kids' achievements with less motivation and/or effort needed on the part of the parent and child, thus both reducing mental health strain for the child, and limiting stress on the parent-child bond.

To reduce the child's level of effort and mental strain required to develop uncommon achievements and skills, orchestrated achievement parents tried to identify and foster their child's "passions." By working with the child's innate interests, orchestrated achievement parents hoped to increase their child's motivation to work towards developing unusual achievements and abilities, and reduce their resistance to the

sustained effort this accomplishment demands. Wayne Underhill described his conviction that passion led to perseverance for children. “I do think it’s helpful to do what they enjoy. Because that’s where they’re going to have the passion and the perseverance.”

Janis Archer, a research scientist, explained her fear that pushing kids to achieve would threaten both parent-child relationships and the child’s mental health. “I have this strong feeling that if you’re not doing what you feel that you want to do, then you’re either going to resent your parents because they wouldn’t let you do it, or just be totally miserable.”

Identifying and developing children’s natural *gifts* was another path to developing unusual abilities that required less effort on the part of orchestrated achievement parents and children. Orchestrated achievement parents hoped that finding the areas where their children displayed unusual aptitude would give them a leg-up, making it easier to outperform other children with less child effort or “pushing” from parents.

Helping children to identify and develop their natural gifts and passions required a great deal of investment and energy from orchestrated achievement parents, primarily from mothers. These parents described following a two-phase process: an extended period of “exposure” where younger children were allowed to try and experience many different types of activities, followed by a period of “narrowing,” during which orchestrated achievement parents guided older children towards specific achievement areas, based on the parents’ perception of the child’s passions and aptitudes. These processes, described below, were both very labor- and cost-intensive for parents.

All the middle class parents interviewed talked about the importance of exposing their children to different activities and opportunities to help them to figure out their

natural gifts and passions. However, where disciplined self-management parents focused on in-school options and enrichment, orchestrated achievement parents oriented towards private, extra-curricular enrichment activities and opportunities (see Table 2).

Orchestrated achievement parents mentioned specifically that non-school, private activities and enrichment yielded the best opportunities for building the most valuable sets of unusual skills and abilities. Janis Archer, cancer research scientist, explained that she tried to help her 3 kids find their passion outside of school avenues. “We try and get ‘em excited about things, and not just the soccer ball or English in school, but other stuff.” Janis gave the example of taking her son on a nature walk, and his excitement about the sunset. “Maybe he’ll get excited about it. Studying the sun, or light, or the clouds or the weather.”

Daniel Westbrook also stressed the importance of finding interests outside of school. “I expect (my kids) to do well in school, but I also expect them to find things that they excel in that aren’t just school, to explore and find things that they’re good at.” Daniel explained that he helps his kids to find their interests and aptitudes in a scattershot approach.

It’s a little bit like the theory I had when we were planting flowers in our backyard. My wife wanted to plant bulbs, but I just went and got a big thing of mixed wildflower seed and threw it out there and whatever came up I said ‘That’s what we’re getting.’ (laughs) So the corollary with the kids is we try a lot of different things.

Daniel gave examples of sending the kids to a week-long theater camp to test their interest, going on archeological digs as a family to expose the children to paleontology, and taking a family trip to Europe to explore their family history. These more intensive,

involved, and expensive forms of enrichment were typical of the way that orchestrated achievement parents exposed their children to new areas to identify potential passions and gifts.

The broad experimenting that came with exposure ended when orchestrated achievement parents felt they had identified the gifts and passions that they wanted their child to pursue, and began the process of *narrowing*, or honing in on a limited set of activities. In the narrowing process, orchestrated achievement parents did not simply consult their child to identify his or her own preferred interests and abilities; instead, orchestrated achievement parents played the primary role in determining which passions and interests to develop further. The dual processes of exposure and narrowing required a large commitment of energy and resources from orchestrated achievement parents, as evidenced in the quotes below.

Kathleen York, a stay-home mother (ex- VP of a major corporation), directed her daughter's "passions" towards swimming, piano, theater, and voice training, and away from "ball sports." Kathleen wanted her daughter to find her passions, but she wanted her to narrow her interests to "beneficial" passions.

If it's out there, we've tried it (laughs). We tried all the ball sports. She'd go out and run around and around (laughs). She always wants to sign up for those things, because the other kids are doing it. But I think we've finally zeroed in on some things that are really beneficial. I think we're in the right place, finally.

Daniel Westbrook also steered his two children towards their passions, but preferably towards the specific passions that *he* felt would pay off in their adult careers.

Our theory has been to find the things that the kids are excited about, and that will actually give them skills that

are useful later on. A good example of that is theater. In my professional life, speaking, consulting, and in a sales function, having the skills that you learn in theater can really make you successful. So I think that's a good skill set to work on.

Expert "Boosting" Once they identified their child's gifts and passions, orchestrated achievement parents felt responsible for fostering them. To maintain the delicate balance between achievement and mental health, the orchestrated achievement parents arranged and managed a phalanx of experts, activities, and educational and enrichment experiences to "boost" their children's achievement while reducing the pressure, effort, and mental strain on the child's part.

I call this kind of help "boosting," because it increases children's skills and achievements with less effort or motivation from the child and less pushing from the parent. Expert boosting also protected the parent-child relationship, by shifting some of the burden of pushing the child to achieve onto an expert, instead of the parent. It can also be thought of as "outsourcing," because parents were able to purchase this benefit from experts. By hiring expert help beyond what children of poor, working class, or protected employee parents had access to through school or after-school sports and activities, orchestrated achievement parents helped their children to "stand out" without having to "push" them as much, or to rely as heavily on their child's own efforts.

Orchestrated achievement parents used experts and tutors not to address children's weaknesses or bring them up to the expected level of competence for their age group, but rather to amplify their children's already superior gifts and abilities. Jessica Stewart, a professor and lawyer, used private tutors to foster her children's admittedly unique academic interests and gifts.

We have made a conscious effort to get them enrichment activities and things where we see they have particular interests and skill sets. With April, we know she has a gift of language, and we knew that early on. I didn't want her to lose that gift, so she has a Japanese tutor. Same thing with Jacob. We recognized in first grade he was very good at math and it was really interesting to him and he could see patterns in things. So we have a retired engineer to tutor him in math.

These orchestrated achievement parents believed their children needed just the right type of expert help to achieve distinction, and parents felt responsible to find and manage relationships with the specific coaches, tutors, and teachers that would optimally enrich their children. Janis Archer, a research scientist, recently shifted her son from his long-standing private soccer team to another team, in order to take advantage of superior coaching. “(My son) wanted to play with his friends, but I said ‘Vincent, you need more’. He could be good. But he needs more than the coach that’s coaching his old team.” Janis’s quote makes it clear that she believes her son needs the right coach to “be good.”

The private organized activities that orchestrated achievement children participated in were highly directed, and the children received a great deal of one-on-one attention from teachers. This was especially true during tutoring and private music lessons. Private music teachers echoed parents’ focus on guiding and demanding effort and achievement, and praising improvement, as the following excerpt from the Zeigler family observation fieldnotes illustrates.

[fieldnotes] We go to Johanna’s viola lesson after school. Johanna has the rhythm wrong on a piece she is playing. Her teacher tries to help her to count it out. “I could do it right at home.” insists Johanna, not listening. “No. You couldn’t” the teacher insists, counting it out until Johanna

corrects the rhythm. When Johanna makes a mistake, the teacher says “You know, if you had used my fingering, that wouldn’t have happened.” Again, Johanna corrects the fingering. Johanna finally plays the piece through carefully and well. Her teacher rewards her with warm praise. “WOW! One week! That’s a lot of coordination!” The teacher stands back and gives Johanna a big approving smile. Johanna looks very pleased. The teacher says “For next week I want to hear the whole piece memorized. Can you do this?” Johanna nods.

Child Self-Management: Parents Control Kids’ Choices That their children might share some responsibility for their own success was a foreign concept for the orchestrated achievement parents. Orchestrated achievement parents felt completely accountable for managing even the most minute aspects of their children’s lives to maximize their chances of adult success. Characteristic of orchestrated achievement parenting strategies, this practice required intense parent-involvement and parent-labor.

Although orchestrated achievement parents and children sometimes had intense struggles over the control of these decisions, orchestrated achievement parents hid or minimized the familial conflict and suppression of child self-management required by this practice. While parents acknowledged some conflict or “problems” with this arrangement, they asserted that children were ultimately “happy” with the result of their parent-managed decisions.

Orchestrated achievement parents had ultimate decision-making power over which activities their children engaged in, and how they spent their non-school hours. For example, Laura Zeigler described her insistence that her two children both play instruments in private orchestras, take private and group music lessons (and practice daily), and participate in a twice per week swim club. Despite their open protestations,

Laura still described her daughters as “happy” and “positive” about their participation in these activities, implying a shared decision-making that was self-contradictory (“they’re not always thrilled about it.”).

The swimming and the music are two things that there is a problem with. They’re not always really thrilled about it. The problem is just the fact that it doesn’t come easily to them and they have to work at it. But they’re happy about it once they learn the piece, or once they master the stroke or whatever it is. Then they feel a lot more positive about it.

Further, Laura’s daughter Johanna did not feel her own preferences were reflected in her actual after-school activities. When I asked what after-school activities she would do if she could choose, Johanna replied "I don't know. (Long pause) I'd like to do something with animals, like volunteer at an animal shelter. (Pause) And I like to read. A lot." When I asked her whether she would choose to continue any of her current activities, she replied that she would quit them all.

Laura’s control of her children’s activities and schedules is well-illustrated in the fieldnotes below, which describe Laura’s pattern of prioritizing her ideas about her children’s best interests instead of their own preferences.

[fieldnotes] Laura reminds Johanna about the science fair on Friday, and says "We'll have to skip yoga this week." Johanna opens her mouth wide in outrage, then yells "MOM! We said NO YOGA! We already have fencing, swimming, and judo! That's ENOUGH physical activity! We said NO FRIDAY ACTIVITIES!" Laura responds calmly and evenly, "Johanna, we'll just try it for a few weeks and see if you like it. You can continue if you like it, and otherwise not." Johanna seems annoyed, but somewhat mollified.

Similarly, Kathleen York enrolled her middle-school-age daughter in an intensive private swim club, despite her resistance. Kathleen relied more heavily on her own

opinion (“it’s great exercise”) and the opinion of her daughter’s coach (“He thinks she’s very gifted”) than on her daughter’s preferences (“she’s complaining a lot about it”) in deciding how her daughter should focus her time and energy to best develop her skills and achievements.

She’s still swimming with Club Wolverine, although she’s complaining a lot about it right now. They can practice every day, but she only does it three or four days a week, and she’s being coached by a private high school swimming coach on Sunday, which is fabulous. He thinks she’s very gifted with swimming. And it’s great exercise and she can use it forever.

In describing her decision to narrow her 14-year-old child’s activities to give her more time for her passion, Kelly Westbrook illustrated how completely orchestrated achievement parents controlled decisions about children’s activities and achievement, and the lack of agency that kids in orchestrated achievement families felt about determining their own activities (“I...am only doing it for you, Mom”).

My friend who’s a sculptor explained that artists like (my daughter) need the time and space to stare out the window for two hours. And at the time, (my daughter) was taking Indian dancing. And so I talked to (my daughter) and said “Victoria, do you want to continue with this?” And she looked at me with such relief, like ‘No. I really don’t. I pretty much am only doing it for you, Mom.’ And I was like ‘Right, got it. Okay, so we’ll pull out of that. We’ll pull out of choir. We’ll pull out of piano.’

Orchestrated achievement fathers also felt responsible for making decisions about children’s activities and achievements, but were often more focused on academics and sports than arts and other enrichment activities. Although John Zeigler’s daughters were not athletic girls, he explained his insistence that they participate in sports. John felt that

the ultimate decision about how his girls spend their time belongs to the parents, viewing their resistance as a “little problem.”

We’re starting to have this little problem with them with sports. They were never really applying (themselves), and they don’t have natural ability. So there is this issue, and I had to do something. They were really fighting it, they were both like ‘NO!’, and I had to come home from work to weigh in with (my wife) to say ‘You’re going! No choice here.’

Parent Management: Managing Mental Health When the Balance is Broken

Orchestrated achievement parents tried hard to prevent their children from experiencing mental health problems as a result of their intense focus on elite and uncommon achievement, by engaging in the parent-management strategies outlined above. However, when this delicately orchestrated balance was broken and their children experienced anxiety, depression, or other emotional problems, orchestrated achievement parents felt accountable for an additional form of parent-management - redressing their children’s problems by orchestrating and managing their children’s relationships with professional mental health experts, social workers, and counselors as needed (See Table 2).

Among the orchestrated achievement families in this study, many children had experienced mental and emotional problems, usually anxiety or depression, for which they had sought mental health counseling and treatment. For example, Dawn Underhill’s 12 year old son often experienced anxiety that didn’t allow him to “function as well,” and he periodically visited a psychiatrist to address this.

(My son) has had some anxiety issues: tangible ones. And so we addressed it and sought professional help. And he knows he will have to pay attention to that for the rest of his life. When he gets highly anxious, he doesn’t function as well. And his issues come and go. At high stress times,

he's more anxious. And we periodically still see someone professionally, just to keep on top of it.

When her middle-school aged daughter became anxious and depressed about going to school each day, Kathleen York also decided to seek professional help to help get her daughter back on track. Kathleen's quote makes it clear how responsible Kathleen felt for managing her daughter's mental health ("Kathleen, you'd better get on top of this").

So every day she'd just go "I can't go back to school. I don't want to go back to school. I can't deal with this." So she was very withdrawn. And so every day I'd shore her up. I kept reinforcing, "You're really great" and all of that. You know, the usual mom things. But finally I called a friend of mine one day who's a pediatrician and I said, "I've pulled all of the rabbits out of the hat and I am just—we have to go get some counseling." I was like, "Kathleen, you'd better get on top of this and get her in to see someone." So my friend gave me the name of a person so we go see this person.

Orchestrated Achievement Social Strategies: Avoiding the Peer and Pop Culture

"Quagmire" Orchestrated achievement parents were unanimous in wanting to reduce the influence of peer and pop culture on their children. Again, parent-management was the primary strategy for reducing this perceived threat to children's adult success. Limiting and controlling kids' exposure to TV and music was one technique orchestrated achievement parents used to reduce the distractions of pop culture. Though all middle class parents limited kids' exposure to violent or adult-themed shows, orchestrated achievement parents also restricted shows that were technically "kid friendly" (i.e. rated G), but that orchestrated achievement parents consider to be vapid, distracting, and without enrichment value (Disney's *Hannah Montana* and Nickelodeon's *Spongebob* were mentioned frequently).

Jessica Stewart, a lawyer and professor, explained her insistence that her children watch almost no TV, blocking the influence of shallow cultural values (“commercial stuff” and “Britney Spears”) and freeing up time for more valuable pursuits.

We don't watch any TV in the house. There are a lot of things on TV that we didn't want them to see, and we didn't want them to deal with. It just frees up tremendous amounts of time and gets you away from a whole range of things that we would really rather not deal with. All the commercial stuff – they're not as materialistic, they don't demand things. Because they're just not in tune with all the variety of things that are out there. So we really don't hear about 'I want an iPod.' I don't have to deal with all the stuff like Britney Spears. They just don't know about it.

Orchestrated achievement parents tried to re-orient their children towards an “internal focus,” teaching them to ignore the influence of cultural values and peer culture. Laura Zeigler explained that she wanted her two middle-school aged daughters to focus on “internal motivation” to steer them clear of shallow cultural or peer values.

I guess the biggest value is internal motivation for the girls: for them to know, ‘To thine own self be true’. And not let themselves be blown by the winds of change just because the TV has a new ad for a different kind of boots. To learn that happiness is from the internal thing, and not necessarily that you have the latest designer clothes or anything like that.

Tony Evans echoed the idea that successful children need to learn not to “follow the herd,” but to stand apart and follow their internal compass.

The people you respect in life, teachers or in business, exude a certain degree of confidence and independence. The ones that stand out always go their own way a little bit. I want my kids to be independent people, and free thinkers. To feel they can express their opinion and disagree. Find

their own voice and be their own person. Not just like the ‘following the herd’ mentality.

Teaching children to become cultural critics was another orchestrated achievement technique for helping children to avoid cultural and peer distractions. By arming children with tools of cultural critique, orchestrated achievement parents hoped to teach them to challenge pop and peer cultural beliefs and priorities, and orient towards their parents’ focus on achievement, passions, and gifts. Again, this strategy required intense parent-labor and parent-management of children’s activities and lives. Arthur Vaughn, as an MD-researcher, trained his 3 children to question the cultural messages that he felt society dictates.

I think there’s a lot in today’s society that makes (parenting) hard. Because everything’s handed to you today. So (in our family), we’re not allowed to watch movies until we’ve read the book. And then we talk about it. My kids’ll tell you everything that was wrong with the Harry Potter movies because they like the books better. Then you can get into ‘Well, that’s the director’s perception of it, but what do *you* think about it?’ Because you’re inundated with this message of ‘This is how it should be, you don’t need to think about it.’

Elite private schools offered another way for orchestrated achievement parents to protect their kids from some of the potential distractions of peer and popular culture. By surrounding their children exclusively with other children from orchestrated achievement families at expensive private academic institutions, orchestrated achievement parents hoped not only to increase enrichment, but also decrease peer distraction. When I spoke to John Zeigler, his girls were attending a high-quality public middle school, but he

planned to steer them away from conformism and mediocrity by switching them to his alma mater, a private prep school, during their high school years.

Right now, the girls excel in what they do in the groups they're with. They're not challenged, per se, simply pushed along by the big river of humanity. But (as a prep school student), I used to cross paths with friends who were in public high school and it was clear that my head was in a lot different space than theirs was. They were often caught up in clichés and a limited vision on the world and what was important to 'em.

The Orchestrated Achievement “Big Picture”: Motivating Achievement

Orchestrated achievement parents agreed that in order to succeed, it was vital that their children learn to broaden their vision of their role in the world beyond their immediate situation, extending their understanding across “real world” social structural realities, across history, globally, and cross-culturally – “getting the Big Picture.” In the words of Suzanne Vaughn, *getting the big picture* means “to think outside the concrete - your concrete everyday life. Consider things that are grander than yourself and grander than your community. And to feel comfortable thinking in a very large way.” By giving their kids a “big picture” understanding of the world, parents hoped to re-orient children away from the “clichéd” “Barbie-world” of peer and pop culture. Parents hoped this broader understanding would help motivate their children to achieve, contextualizing the relevance of the information they were learning, and providing children with an authentic motivation to learn.

Like most of the practices of orchestrated achievement, giving kids the big picture required intense parent-management and involvement, as well as expert-boosting.

Parents described three types of “big picture” understanding that could potentially benefit their children in their adult lives; structural, historical, and global-cultural.

For orchestrated achievement parents, a big part of getting the Big Picture was understanding how the “real world” works. For John Zeigler, getting the “big picture” meant that he wanted his girls to understand the structural realities and constraints of the real world, and become “savvy” about opportunities for individual agency and efficacy within that structure.

You understand your place in the world and the larger systems at play. You understand that there are factors at play here that are within your control and not within your control. It allows you to move through your life more comfortably and understand things. The word here is ‘savvy’. You ‘get it’.

Orchestrated achievement parents also understood getting the “Big Picture” in terms of history. For Kelly Westbrook, making connections to the past and future was important to having a “Big Picture” understanding. She explained that “It’s really important when you’re a citizen in this world to learn more history, and to understand it. Not just for the knowledge, but for the connections, like the patterns of what’s gone on before.”

Larry Crosby, PhD engineer, agreed that an understanding of history is critical to getting the “Big Picture.” He felt that his children need at least a college education, and plenty of history, in order to understand and succeed in an increasingly complicated world.

The world is getting more complicated, and a high school education just isn’t enough to really understand the society around us and not be foreigners to it. And I’m growing more and more a fan of history, too. As knowledge

increases, you have to ride that curve and understand and deal with the society around you. Otherwise, you're going to be left behind, where you're stuck in some low McJob. You're sitting back and not understanding what's happening to you.

Geographical and global awareness were also part of getting the “Big Picture” for orchestrated achievement parents. Parents felt that getting exposure to other cultures and other ways of living was critical for their children’s success. Jessica Stewart traveled extensively with her 3 children, hoping to give them a broader “Big Picture” understanding of (and comfort with) the global world and its opportunities.

When (our youngest child) was five and fully mobile on his own, we thought ‘Now is the time we can start really going back to international traveling. And we’ve made a conscious choice to do that with them. ‘Cause in this global economy they need that kind of exposure. And it’s paid off hugely. I think they understand people are different, and there’s different ways of living and different customs. And that doesn’t floor them much. Because they’re so young, they just kind of go with the flow on it, so they’re comfortable with that kind of diversity. I think they realize that there’s a lot more out there in terms of opportunities. All of that is more real to them. And so I think it’ll make it easier for them to succeed inside the world that they’re going to have to deal with.

For orchestrated achievement parents, giving their children a “big picture” understanding of the world was also seen as a way to motivate children to achieve. Orchestrated achievement parents hoped that while the demands of school and enrichment activities might otherwise seem dull and uninspiring to their children, these efforts contextualized within a real-world, “big picture” framework would be much more

rewarding. Arthur Vaughn, a physician, felt a “real world” understanding of the topic would help motivate his children to learn.

I look at (helping the kids succeed) as about taking the mundane-ness out of math flash cards, spelling. How do you get through that? So I think my challenge is to make it ‘real world’ and to give a purpose to whatever topic or thing that’s going on in school.

Daniel Westbrook also tried to motivate his children to achieve by contextualizing learning with real-world applications, especially travelling.

A couple years ago we were traveling in Europe and when we visited Roman ruins, we talked about the historical context. ‘Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a world where this was your entertainment, going into a Roman theater?’ And I think that brings a lot of things home. Those connections between real experiences and more ‘book learning’ creates a stronger understanding, it just strengthens a lot of those connections. In my own upbringing, in the travel we did as a family, it made it easier for me to learn things, because when I went to college and studied something, I could connect what I was learning to experiences I had already had.

Without a big picture view, orchestrated achievement parents were convinced that their children would be condemned to a small-time life of unhappiness. Arthur Vaughn is a doctor who also viewed a small-picture understanding of the world as causing people to get “trapped” in dysfunction. “I have a lot of experience with dysfunction in my job. A lot of dysfunctional families. Some people that are trapped, and can’t get out of their, can’t see beyond their situation.”

The orchestrated achievement parents feared that having a small-picture understanding of the world might also leave their children vulnerable to manipulation and

control by others. Larry Crosby, a PhD engineer, wanted his children to have a big picture understanding of the world to allow them to become discerning adults. With a big picture understanding, Larry explained, “you can understand where we are, rather than sitting back and accepting whatever comes your way. If a person really doesn’t understand that, they wouldn’t realize that they are getting manipulated, which is happening all the time.”

Edutainment: Making Leisure Time Enriching Techniques for helping kids’ to get a big picture understanding of the world were highly labor intensive for orchestrated achievement parents. Parents outsourced some of this labor to experts, and some of it happened through in-school and extracurricular enrichment. However, much of it happened in “edutainment,” in daily conversations between parents and children, and in parents’ attempts to “expose” children through travel, museums, concerts, plays, sporting events, and other “broadening” experiences that parents hoped were both fun and enriching.

For example, in order to push his daughters out of their “Barbie-world” orientation towards their peer social network and popular culture interests, John Zeigler insisted that the movies shown at his family’s Friday evening “movie night” ritual help to educate and focus his daughters about the “real world” of politics and history. The two movies they watched during my observations (accompanied by groans from his two teenage daughters) were “All the President’s Men,” and “Reds.” Further, at Christmas this year, John gave both daughters gift certificates from Kiva, a micro-lending organization, in order to educate them about third world poverty and living conditions. In these ways, he

hoped to orient his daughters away from their “nitter-natter” social world, and towards the “larger systems at play” in the “real world.

Edutainment was yet another orchestrated achievement activity requiring intensive parent-management of children’s time and activities, this time extending into children’s leisure time. Like John Zeigler, parents practicing *orchestrated achievement* didn’t limit educational advancement to school and activities, but also sought to use children’s leisure time and “family time” as platforms for increasing knowledge. Daniel Westbrook exemplified how parents doing *orchestrated achievement* pushed their children to choose entertainment activities that were enriching, even in their rare down-time hours.

My son (age 10) loves computer games. My daughter (12) not so much. But we encourage both of them to play games that involve things like resource allocation, which is it’s a skill set that’s not really taught in school. It involves a kind of critical thinking that you see a lot in adults who have responsible jobs. They have to think about “How do I manage my time?” and “How do I decide what to do and what not to do?” And some of it’s just straight economics. My son prefers the first-person shooter-type games, which to me don’t really teach much except for maybe a little bit of hand-eye coordination. So I don’t encourage that as much.

Daily interactions with mom offered another arena for promoting children’s enrichment in families doing orchestrated achievement. The fieldnotes below show a typical interaction between Laura Zeigler and her children during their daily car travels between after-school activities. In these conversations with her children, Laura was not spontaneous or casual, but like a teacher, she was very deliberate in her use of questions, her tone of voice, and the careful responses she made.

[fieldnotes] Driving to Johanna’s viola lesson on a snowy day, we spy a man carrying a shovel, looking disgruntled.

“Why is that guy carrying that shovel?” Laura asks the kids (playfully). “Maybe he’s going around digging people out for a quarter.” Johanna says “Or maybe he told his girlfriend he’d buy her a new shovel and his car broke down so now he has to carry it to her.” Meghan adds “Or maybe his house burned down and all he rescued was that shovel.” Laura smiles “You guys are so creative!”

Family rituals afforded another platform for promoting learning and enrichment for families doing orchestrated achievement. The fieldnotes below illustrate how John Zeigler attempted to influence his family’s entertainment choices for “family movie night,” to include more “important” and “educational” movies.

[fieldnotes] For family movie night this week, Laura (mom) has rented “All the President’s Men,” at John’s insistence. The kids keep asking which movie they will be watching, and when John finally tells the kids, they groan. Johanna complains that all John’s choices are boring. “Like ‘Reds’, last time. You said it was good but it was the worst movie ever.” John explains “Johanna, this is a very important movie.” Johanna finally says “Ok, I’ll watch it. But you have to promise from now on that when we watch *our* movies you won’t leave half-way through.” John says “No, I don’t have to agree to that because my movies are different. They’re educational.”

Through “edutainment,” orchestrated achievement parents like John and Laura not only want to educate their children, they also hope to influence their taste, “improving” their sense of what is important and interesting. In the fieldnotes below, John sets clear boundaries about appropriate priorities by policing his daughter’s responses during “family movie night.”

[fieldnotes] In the first few minutes of the movie, Meghan makes several comments about Robert Redford’s 70’s hair and bell-bottom corduroy suit. “Look at those flares!” Meghan snorts. John is silent while Johanna and Laura chuckle, but after the 3rd or 4th comment he suddenly erupts. “*Meghan!* This is one of the most important moments in

political history and you're talking about *haircuts* and *clothes*.”

Through his chastisement, John is teaching Johanna and Meghan that “important” things (like politics) are worth her attention, but things like haircuts and clothes should be beneath their notice.

Parent-Management Trumps Kid-Responsibility In response to the strenuous pressure placed on their children in terms of achievement, parents doing *orchestrated achievement* made very few demands on their children in terms of either personal or family responsibility. Because of their demanding schedules, children in these orchestrated achievement families had little free time, and were generally exhausted and often crabby when they were at home. Instead of requiring that children contribute to family chores such as meal preparation or house cleaning, orchestrated achievement mothers (and sometimes fathers) generally took responsibility for all the tasks of family life themselves. Further, these mothers took on most of the child's personal responsibilities as well, such as preparing their breakfast, making their school lunches, and organizing and overseeing their morning and evening routines.

Where disciplined self-management parents consciously fostered their children's self-management skills, using discipline systems to enforce responsibility-taking for self and family, orchestrated achievement parents did the opposite. In order to foster distinctive achievements without taxing mental health, orchestrated achievement parents (especially mothers) tended to shoulder the responsibility for most of the daily tasks of their children's self-management. The fieldnotes from the Zeigler household below show how Laura Zeigler shepherded one of her children through her daily morning routine. The

example also illustrates how many parents relax behavior standards in favor of getting children through the many demands of their challenging days.

[fieldnotes] At 7am Laura goes upstairs and tells the kids to get up. After Laura has trudged up and down the stairs 4 more times, at 7:45 Johanna (13) finally comes down and sits at the table. Laura brings her in a bowl of oatmeal. Laura asks quietly “Johanna, do you know where your shoes are? Are they unlaced?” Johanna ignores her. When Laura asks again, Johanna rolls her eyes and mumbles “I have no idea.” Laura goes upstairs and gets the shoes, and begins untying them. Laura kneels to help Johanna into her shoes, ties them, then helps Johanna into her coat. Laura carries Johanna’s backpack and lunch, and guides her out the door to the car.

Observation with the Zeigler family provides a sense of the complexity of children’s schedules in orchestrated achievement families, and the level of adult orchestration and parent-management required to create them. Both children in the Zeigler family participated in a long and varied list of activities, orchestrated by their mother to meet each child’s interests and perceived needs. Both took private music lessons in the Suzuki tradition (on different instruments), which required that Laura attend lessons and supervise children’s daily practice sessions. Johanna also met weekly with a quartet to practice for a local music competition, and had an additional group lesson once per week. One evening a week Johanna also played with a local private youth orchestra that will travel to China next year. Both girls swam with a private club two days per week, and went to an after school Robotics team once per week. Meghan did debate club one day a week, a weekly language arts program through the University, and a “women in science” program on Saturday afternoons. She also met weekly with a “life coach” who tutored her in “executive skills” since Laura was concerned about her lack of organization and “time management” skills. Both girls took a fencing class on Saturdays, and Johanna

also takes a weekly judo class. Finally, both children had semi-annual music recitals, and competed in the local science fair every year.

Orchestrated achievement parents, particularly mothers, felt a deep sense of obligation to provide each of their children with the specific mix of lessons, classes, coaching, tutoring, and counseling they felt each child needed in order to fulfill their potential. Despite all their activities, including hockey, private tutors, private schools, choir, scouts, and private instrument lessons, Jessica Stewart still worried that she may have “missed an opportunity” for one of her three children.

I worry a lot that we don't have enough time to do it all, although I get more relaxed about it as they get older. When they were younger, I felt much more pressure. Like we're missing opportunities for them, and there are doors closing and I don't know they are there. That we've cut short their opportunities because we didn't deal with it early enough.

Orchestrated achievement children's music lessons required a great deal of practice time, which was taxing for both mothers and the kids, given their busy schedules. This excerpt from the Zeigler observation fieldnotes shows how orchestrated achievement parents feel required to engage and participate in children's lessons and activities, instead of just dropping them off or taking a moment to relax.

[fieldnotes] Laura sits near the piano bench throughout Johanna's violin lesson, with a clear view of the music, the teacher, and Johanna. Laura has no book or activity, just closely watches the lesson. She occasionally adds a comment or offers information. She writes down the teacher's comments in a notebook she keeps for this purpose. When the teacher instructs Johanna to practice her pieces several times through, and more slowly, I watch Laura write down “Practice 8 times. SLOWLY.”

In the Zeigler family, Laura Zeigler always stayed to observe all of her children's activities instead of carpooling or dropping them off and doing errands. She often took a book along, but usually sat and listened to the instruction, occasionally taking notes. Laura told me that earlier in the year she had tried exercising at the gym while the kids were at swimming club, but after learning that Johanna was staying in the locker room instead of going to swimming class, Laura decided she needed to monitor this activity as well. Instead, Laura cut her own work hours shorter so she could exercise while the children were at school.

Orchestrated achievement parenting was extremely demanding of parent's time and energy, particularly for mothers. Because it required parents to push and supervise their children's effort and achievement, it also strained their relationships with their children. This excerpt from the Zeigler observation fieldnotes shows both the energy orchestrated achievement required from Laura as well as the parent-child tension it created.

[fieldnotes] After dinner John goes back to work at his office, and Meghan practices the piano at her mom's insistence. She plays 3 pieces, very quickly, with increasing sloppiness and lots of mistakes. Laura sits nearby and tells Meghan to slow down. "That's too fast. It says 'poco andante' – what does that mean?" Meghan shouts over her mother's voice "No mom! Stop!" and ignores her. Finally Laura gets up from the chair where she was sitting with a book (ostensibly reading, but really listening to Meghan practice) and says in an unusually adamant voice "Meghan! I mean it! You need to slow down and play that correctly. Play that last passage 3 more times at 2/3 that speed, then you can play through the last one and be done." "All right, all right!" yells Meghan back, angrily. After several tries and repeated mistakes, Johanna yells "I HATE practicing!"

Conclusions These data showed that parents' experience in semi-autonomous professional careers led them to a distinct set of parenting logics and practices that I call

orchestrated achievement. These parents' careers taught them that their children required unusual, or distinctive achievements in order to succeed in adulthood, and that the best route to distinction lay in fostering children's gifts and passions. These parents felt primary responsibility for cultivating their children's distinction, and did so through parent-management and expert-boosting, choreographing a range of tutors, classes, coaches, activities, and opportunities to amplify their children's abilities. Orchestrated achievement families did not have to sacrifice "family time" or opportunities for family transmission as a result of their children's hectic calendars, because fathers' semi-autonomous professional jobs limited family time to infrequent family rituals and retreats.

There were trade-offs associated with the orchestrated achievement parenting strategy. First, these parents had limited opportunities to build their children's independent self-management skills because parent-management required parents both to control most of their children's choices, and to take over children's daily self-management responsibilities. Second, orchestrated achievement parents chose to curtail their children's social networks and skills with peers, because they viewed peer and pop culture as dangerous distractions from the effort and time required to create distinction.

Third, orchestrated achievement parents' efforts to create distinction taxed their children's mental health. Through parent-management and expert-boosting, parents hoped to reduce the mental health strain their children faced when confronted with the demands of attaining distinction. However, their children were prone to mental and emotional health problems, which parents handled with the help of mental health professionals.

Chapter 6

Disciplined Self-Management

If “distinction” and “achievement” were the key priorities of orchestrated achievement parents, “hard work” and “people skills” were the parallel goals of parents pursuing disciplined self-management. Disciplined self-management parents were not simply failed orchestrated achievers, sharing the logic but lacking the ability to execute the parental management and expert-boosting of semi-autonomous professional parents. Instead, disciplined self-management parents explicitly *rejected* the logic of orchestrated achievement, believing that developing unique achievements in a single area was not only *not* a priority, but was downright dangerous for their children’s adult success.

Instead, disciplined self-management parents prioritized a more balanced blend of cultural capitals to help ensure their children’s future success. Peggy Crosby, a stay-home mother with a high-school education, rejected the orchestrated achievement focus on developing kids’ uncommon achievements as “extreme,” and preferred a more balanced strategy.

I just see that those (kids’ sports and activities) are all good skills to learn - getting along and handling challenges - and so I see that they’re important. But it’s not the ‘end all’. I am not going to be one of these moms who have their kid practicing every day for two hours so they can be extreme in anything, I guess. I am not all about that.

In this chapter I explore why disciplined self-management parents pursued a different set of cultural capitals for their children, instead of attempting to develop distinctive achievements for their children, as orchestrated achievement parents did. These data show that the disciplined self-management parents had learned, through their own classed career and childhood experiences, that the other four cultural capitals were also vital for their children's adult success. In their own experience, these parents had watched people with uncommon achievements fail because they lacked social skills and networks, independent self-management skills, solid mental health, and strong family bonds. Based on their experiences as protected employees, this group of parents was unwilling to sacrifice these resources in favor of fostering elite achievement for their children.

Further, in this chapter I show that the defining aspect of the parenting labor required by disciplined self-management was *discipline*. Where orchestrated achievement parents relied on *achievement-boosting* through parent-management and expert-boosting to make sure their children achieved the necessary cultural capitals, disciplined self-management parents gave their children the ultimate responsibility for their own success. Instead of managing children's choices and boosting their achievements, disciplined self-management parents instead provided discipline, through systems of reward and punishment, to try to encourage children to choose to do the work needed to develop the cultural capitals parents believed would help them to become successful adults.

Through this research, I conclude that the logic and practices of disciplined self-management parents were shaped by several elements of habitus: by parents' classed upbringings and career experiences, and by their spouse's habitus. However, the data showed that the parents whose strategies conformed most closely to those of disciplined

self-management were those with specific middle class occupational types, whom I label *protected employees*.

This group included members of four of Wright's occupational categories, all of whom were locked into the employee-employer relationship typical of working class relationships, but who earned special privileges and "rents" through having credentials or skills that, while not rare or scarce, were valued by employers. First, "semi-professionals," or nonmanagerial employees in technical and semi-professional occupations not requiring post-undergraduate education, (such as teachers and accountants) had degrees and training that afforded them access to jobs, increased autonomy, and higher salaries. Second were "managers" who lacked scarce skill sets, but occupied managerial or supervisory positions that afforded them higher salaries and increased control over working conditions.

Third, the subset of the group of "manager-experts" who lacked the ability to leverage their skills into self-employment fell into the category of protected employees. These employees leveraged both their managerial skills and credentials into higher salaries and increased control over work conditions, but were still answerable to employers. Finally, small business owners with no scarce skills or credentials also fell into this category (there was one in this sample). Although this heating/cooling business owner had autonomy as a business owner, he did not gain his autonomy through leveraging rare skills as did the semi-autonomous professionals.

Because they lacked the ability to leverage scarce skills, parents in all of these middle class occupational locations had less autonomy than professionals and small business owners with expert skills. Especially in the current difficult economic climate, these

semi-professionals, small business owners, and manager-experts were subject to coercion and control by their employers (or clients in the case of the small business owner). Even the manager-experts, most of whom had post-undergraduate degrees (usually master's degrees in business or engineering), were employed in a corporate culture that did not offer them the option of autonomy through self-employment.

Although protected employees had advantages in their work environment compared to those in the working class, unlike semi-autonomous professionals, these protected employees still faced coercion in their labor relations. For example, as a tax accountant, like many other protected employees, Evan Moore was occasionally subjected to humiliation and repressive control by his employers, as the fieldnotes below illustrate.

[fieldnotes] As Evan walks into the office in the morning, he pokes his head into the office of a co-worker and whispers "Are the boys in?" nodding his head towards the office of his two bosses. "Nah," replies his coworker, grinning. "Yes!" Evan shouts, pumping his fist in the air. Later that day another coworker asks Evan about how to present some negative customer satisfaction results to their bosses, Randy and Matt. Evan advises her to give them the results as early as possible. "Randy wants the good *and* the bad. That's the way to keep off his shit list. That's a list of people you *don't* want to be on." She nods in agreement. "Anyway, that's how I keep from getting yelled at these days" Evan says.

Mark Ross also felt the pinch of a controlling work environment, despite his protected position as a product planner at an automobile company.

It's a fairly regimented work environment. We go in at 8:00 and we're done basically at 5:00, which is nice. But it's kind of nuts —like to take (my son) Stephen to the orthodontist I have to get special permission to come in a half an hour later or whatever. And it's funny because are you paying me for my job or are you paying me for my attendance? It's bad actually. It's a bad situation. But at

least I've got a job, and I've got a group of people that I can laugh about it – how ridiculous it is – with.

Similarly, as a teacher and an administrative assistant, Douglas Norris and his wife Linda worked in controlled work environments that allowed them little autonomy in scheduling their time.

I am fortunate enough that the union gives me a certain amount of vacations and sick days—and they do include personal family, you know, immediate family. And (pauses) this year I was able to call into the system and say, “I can't be here because my daughter's sick.” So that was very nice. But we are at a situation right now where Linda cannot take any more personal days for the rest of the year. Because she's used all of her personal days. So we may have a problem if one of the kids gets sick.

In Section 1 of this chapter, I show how protected employees' career experiences shaped parents' logic, leading them to value disciplined self-management's portfolio of cultural capitals for their children. In Section 2, I describe the specific motivation-boosting and family transmission strategies that disciplined self-management parents used to help their children to succeed as adults. Further, in this section I outline the ways that manager-experts translated the logic of disciplined self-management into practices that mirrored those of orchestrated achievement in some ways. I address the role of classed upbringings and spouse's habitus in Chapter 7.

Section 1: Links between Protected Employee Careers and the Logic of Disciplined Self-Management Disciplined self-management parents had learned through their career experiences as protected employees that the other four cultural capitals sometimes outweighed achievement capital in promoting adult success. In this section I outline the ways that protected employee career experiences led these parents to value social

networks and skills, child self-management, mental health, and family strength over distinctive achievements for their children.

Achievement: “Do Your Best” to Master Socially Valued Achievements Disciplined self-management parents put a premium on teaching and disciplining their children to “work hard” and “do your best.” Both mothers and fathers felt that a good work ethic was critical for their child’s success, both academically and in their future work success. In their experience as protected employees, these parents didn’t rely on getting or keeping their jobs because of unusual or unique credentials or skills; they had to outwork the competition in order to succeed. As Leslie Quinn, real estate agent, explained, “Life’s a bitch. It’s hard. And the earlier you learn that, the better off you are.” Evan Moore echoed this worldview. “This is what life is about. It’s not just riding on a hay wagon, goin’ down the road. You have to work, and you have to do stuff every day.”

For disciplined self-management parents, developing a work ethic wasn’t only about a child’s current school situation, but also about their future career options and outcomes. Disciplined self-management parents believed that successful middle class careers were the result of hard work, and wanted their children to understand this fact. Fearing that their children might fail to recognize the hard work required for middle class success, these parents struggled to convince their children that the middle class life that they took for granted did not come easily, and would elude them without hard work. Donna Isaacs, a nurse midwife, explained “My husband and I both talk (to the kids) about what it took to get where we are. We weren’t handed this.” David Jordan understood the need to work hard to succeed this way:

Every part of your life is a competition: your job, your getting a house, a wife or a girlfriend. Pretty much nothing

is gonna fall in your lap. Everything you want to accomplish, somebody else wants to accomplish it too. And if you're not willing to do the extra work, or go that extra mile, then you're not going to get anything.

Disciplined self-management parents had learned from their own career experiences as protected employees that unique achievements were not always necessary or even helpful for career success. For example, Marshall Quinn, quality engineer for an auto manufacturer, learned that being a “jack of all trades” was more valuable than having unique skill sets.

At X Motor company, and many North American companies, they basically promote people that are jacks-of-all-trades, but not necessarily masters of any one trade. And I was one of those people. I could go into a job and I could pick it up very quickly and understand the five things you've got to know to be successful in it, and be successful in it, and then I would be moving on.

Many other disciplined self-management parents had found success as protected employees without unique achievements or credentials. Andrew Peters, a chemist with a large corporation found that he could succeed quite well in his career with only a bachelor's degree. “I just have a Bachelor's degree in chemistry. But in engineering and science, you can (succeed) with that in some fields. If I was in Germany, I'd be in a lab washing glassware with my education. But I was in the right place at the right time.”

Chad Foster also felt he was able to succeed without possessing unusual knowledge or skill sets. Chad was Sales Director for a biotech company, but when I asked, he explained that he did not need any special scientific knowledge or training to succeed in

his career. “Not really. I had worked on nuclear reactors in the Navy, so I had a lot of science through that. But yeah, a lot of it was just kind of picking it up.”

Instead of unusual levels of achievement, disciplined self-management parents felt that job market competition simply meant that foregoing college was “not an option” for their children. Like orchestrated achievement parents, these disciplined self-management parents were concerned about their child succeeding in a competitive job market, but their experience as protected employees taught them that a college degree – not uncommon achievements or advanced degrees - is what kids require to succeed.

Patricia Long, a teacher’s aide, expressed the common view among disciplined self-management parents that it was no longer possible for her kids to “count on a high school education” for success.

Things have changed so much in the last years. I have a bachelor’s degree, and my husband has a Bachelor’s and an MBA. I just know with my children, there’s just a huge demand for people with a good education out there, and if they’re going to be responsible adults in getting a job, I don’t think they can just count on a high school education any more.

David Jordan agreed that in today’s world kids need education, and “can’t rely on (their) hands.”

I just basically stress that education is the key to advancing yourself, and if you don’t pay your dues now, you’re going to pay ‘em later. You can’t rely on your hands. If you’re not going to use your mind to get ahead today, they’ll get a machine to do your job, and you’re going to be out of luck.”

Similarly, Ann Oakes, day care provider, told her girls that college was mandatory for success in a more competitive job market. “I don’t think

there's an option not to go to college. They all know they have to. Forty years ago, you didn't have to go, and you could still be successful."

However, despite their awareness of the importance of a college degree, few disciplined self-management parents had specific knowledge about how to prepare a child for an elite college or for post-undergraduate study, and unlike orchestrated achievement parents, disciplined self-management parents did not describe detailed plans to do so. The details from my fieldnotes below illustrate that the Moore family, like many other disciplined self-management families, had little knowledge about colleges and graduate schools beyond Evan's own experience attending a non-competitive local college.

[fieldnotes] Sean (14) asks Lisa (11), "Lisa, where are you going to college?" "I only know Michigan and EMU (Eastern Michigan University)," she replies. "Well I'm going to Michigan," Sean declares. "Then you better have a backup plan. Like Harvard or Yale!" Helen (mother) laughs. "Dummy! Those are law schools!" says Sean. "Well, you can go to that one in Maryland that my gynecologist went to, whatever it's called." "Johns Hopkins," Evan (father) responds.

Material Resources and Achievement As I discussed in the previous chapter, although material resources were not the primary focus of this analysis, disciplined self-management parents' time and financial resources likely played a role in shaping their focus on hard work and self-management rather than unique achievement. Disciplined self-management parents tended to have jobs that provided them with lower incomes and less ability to afford expensive expert boosting (see Table 3). Further, mothers in these families were more likely to work full-time, inflexible jobs (see Table 4), leaving them with less available parental time for the intensive parent-management required for

developing children's unique achievements. Both of these patterns lead me to conclude that disciplined self-management parents steered away from distinctive achievement, in part, because their positions as protected employees limited the money and time they had available to develop this resource for their children.

Child Self-Management: Responsibility-Taking Bolsters Success Disciplined self-management parents learned from their careers as protected employees about the importance of independence, self-reliance, and responsibility for their own career success. These parents prioritized teaching their middle-school aged children to be independent and responsible, seeing these traits as highly valuable resources for their children's careers and adult futures. Where orchestrated achievement parents saw children's independence and self-management as conflicting with parents' ability to manage their children's distinctive achievement, disciplined self-management parents viewed developing their children's initiative and responsibility as the *vital ingredient* for children's adult achievement and success. As Douglas Norris, high school teacher explained, "I want them to know how to take care of themselves, to know that they're okay. I want them to be able to survive on their own. Isn't that the job of a parent? To get them to be able to stand on their own two feet and feed themselves and house themselves and find love for themselves."

Jennifer Peters seconded Douglas' belief that children need to be able to manage themselves independently to be successful adults. "You have to let go. Because she has to learn to deal with stuff and learn to take care of herself. To learn the rules for herself. You have to let her experience things for herself." George Oakes and his wife Ann also tried to teach their children the value of taking responsibility for their own lives and

decisions. “Ann and I have really instilled upon ‘em, ‘Well, nobody’s going to do it for you, so you need to make sure you get yourself to the point where you can take care of yourself financially or job-wise.”

Social Skills and Peer Networks are Key to Success Disciplined self-management parents learned from their protected employee jobs that *social networks* could play a critical role in their children’s adult success, and took steps to help their children connect with the “right” peers, through social steering. Parents’ focus on fostering children’s networks with the “right” peers connects directly to the definition of *social capital*, which highlights the importance of social connections that enhance one’s cultural capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). In addition, these parents had also learned on the job that *social skills* – the ability to build social networks from scratch –were vital for career success. I hypothesize that because these disciplined self-management parents did not begin their own careers with the “right” social connections, they had learned to prize the ability to use “people skills” to create these connections themselves, and hoped to prepare their children to do the same. Unlike orchestrated achievement parents, who viewed peer social relationships primarily as a threat and a distraction, disciplined self-management parents valued social skills and social networks as important cultural capitals for their children’s future success.

Superior management, supervision, and other social skill-sets had helped many disciplined self-management parents’ to succeed as protected employees. George Oakes felt that the social skills he developed in high school helped him in his adult career managing 400+ people each day as general foreman at a major auto supplier, and saw social skills as a valuable resource for his own children’s futures.

(I want my kids) to be able to get along with different sets of people. If you can be friends with different sets of people, it helps you out later in life. You know, you can go into a situation at work and function better. I was friends with a lot of different people in high school – I was friends with athletes, partiers, school people. And it helps me in my job today. You know, I deal with anywhere from people with doctorates and PhD's, to somebody that's spent ten years in prison for assault and battery now. You have to be able to relate or handle yourself with different sets of people.

Similarly, David Jordan described his primary job asset as his “people skills.”

I work for the Sheriff's department, and I'm in charge of day to day operations and supervising officers. And before that I was the Operations Manager for a security company - kind of the same thing: hiring and firing people, setting up schedules, dealing with clients. It's pretty much about 'people skills'. I have a lot of issues between coworkers, and the inmates have problems, and I am the guy that whenever anybody has a problem, they come to me.

Social Skills and Networks Trump Uncommon Achievement Disciplined self-management parents learned from their experiences as protected employees that social networks often mattered *more* than unusual academic or other achievements in the marketplace. Through their career experiences, these parents had learned that without a social network, distinctive achievements would not guarantee success. Marshall Quinn learned the hard way that despite his own merit, his lack of social networks made success in a 'Big Three' motor company an “uphill battle.”

I left (a major automobile manufacturer) because my upward mobility was limited. Although I think I'm pretty good, my peers are also pretty darned good. And as much as they would like you not to think it, it's still a bit of the 'good old boys' network. You know, if you're networked,

you're golden. If you're not networked, it's an uphill battle. And basically my network wasn't there.

For Chad Foster, his ability to create his own social networks taught him that “getting along with people” was more important than being highly educated.

I deal with a lot of very intelligent PhD professors that work in laboratories. And a good majority of them are complete nit-wits. Getting along with other people, being able to converse – I guess at the end of the day I would say that being liked, or being a likable person who is able to make friends is a big part of growing up successful. That's what I've always been really good at, and that's why I'm pretty good at sales. I can talk to the janitor, and then I can talk to a department head without being freaked out about it. And that really helps you in life, but that's not something you can learn in a book.

Working in a corporate environment, Evan Moore had also learned that social networking skills were an invaluable asset in the business world.

[fieldnotes] (The owners) just brought in this new guy with an MBA from Michigan. He was the old manager of the business, who stepped up to be an owner. He's the “magic man.” Without him they wouldn't *have* a business. He's the guy who can go out and have ten beers with you and get you to sign a contract. He's an amazing businessman. A real mover and shaker.

Mental Health and Family Ties: Threatened by Distinctive Achievement Disciplined self-management parents felt responsible to somehow get their children to develop a work ethic that would allow them to be successful in adulthood. However, these parents also feared that pushing their children to elite levels of achievement could strain family relationships and cause children to have mental health problems and weaken family bonds. Like many disciplined self-management parents, Peggy Crosby believed that

parents who pushed their kids to “go far” and achieve at unusual levels risked having their kids “freak out” and go “whacko” later in life.

Some parents, I’m just going, ‘You guys get a grip. You are so bent on them getting full-ride scholarships that they have to get A’s in third grade.’ And those kids are tense, uptight. I’m like, ‘Let ‘em be a kid!’ They may go far, and they may get their scholarship, but they’re not going to be able to handle failure. And then it’ll crash down one day. They may get to be a CEO, but one day their mind just will freak out on ‘em. And you’ve heard of professors going whacko, or students just losing it.

Carl Archer also worried that his three kids lacked motivation, but wasn’t willing to get them “stressed out” trying to live up to his expectations. Instead, Carl tried to encourage his kids to work hard and “do (their) best.”

I mean I recall as a kid thinking ‘My mom’s gonna go upside my head if I don’t do x, y, z.’ I guess I don’t want them to get stressed out over, “Oh, I’ve got to do this really super or my dad’s going to get mad.” But that’s why I try to emphasize just to ‘do your best.’ That’s what I want you to do: do your best. Because I’m pretty confident if they do that, they’ll be fine.

Disciplined self-management parents were uncomfortable pushing their children to achieve in part because they feared that the discipline involved would take a toll on their parent-child bonds of affection. These parents based their worries on their own experiences with being disciplined as children. Andrew Peters’ parents motivated him with shame, fear, and corporal punishment, leading to a conflicted parent-child relationship that he was loathe to recreate with his own daughter.

My parents, if you came home with B’s you were in trouble. And I grew up in a time when my parents hit me, too. And I lived in fear of my parents, a little bit - there

was a threat there. But Elizabeth (my daughter) is not afraid to disappoint us. And I don't want to have that same relationship with my daughter, but I do want to impress on her that the goal is to get all A's without punishing her for getting B's.

Leslie Quinn also described her concern that disciplining her children to exert themselves ("doing my job") would erode her relationships with her kids.

I'm trying to make them understand that I'm not trying to make them do things they don't want to do. I'm just trying to do my job. This is my job, to make you understand how important school is and having physical activity is. Making them understand that I'm not trying to be an evil pain in the butt, but I'm just doing my job.

Jason Bradley echoed Leslie's discomfort about how discipline strained his affectionate bonds with his son Ben. "I have memories of being upset with my dad and just having hate-feelings towards him. And I guess that's how Ben feels now, and I don't want that."

Family-building Skills: "Down-time" and Daily Family Routines In disciplined self-management families, fathers (and often both parents) worked in protected employee jobs with regular hours, rarely working evenings or weekends or travelling overnight. These families spent lots of time at home together in the evenings and on weekends, and both parents generally were present for daily meals, to help with homework, and to attend children's sports, after-school activities, school conferences and performances. While mothers generally had a greater role than fathers in managing family life, fathers also had regular, daily family responsibilities, such as getting children ready for school or bed, driving children to after-school activities, helping with homework, and doing chores such

as laundry, shopping, and preparing meals for the family. Based on these daily interactions with their children, both fathers and mothers had first-hand information about the details of their children's daily lives.

Linda Norris explained that she and her husband Douglas shared household and childcare responsibilities, working around both their full-time jobs. "Douglas and I really share a lot of what we do. Douglas does most of the cooking. He is just as—he probably does most of the grocery shopping. We share laundry. We share all of those tasks that come with being a family."

In the Moore family, Helen left for her job as a day care provider before the rest of the family awoke, leaving her husband Evan to oversee the children's morning routine. The fieldnotes below describe the carefully planned morning routine that relies on both parents' participation to get their children, Lisa (11) and Sean (14) ready for school.

[fieldnotes] At 6:15am Helen comes downstairs fully dressed and begins packing her lunch and getting her breakfast. She also gets out the kids' lunchboxes and ice-packs and puts them on the counter. She opens the curtains in the living room and starts the coffee. Evan pads into the kitchen in his pajamas and joins Helen in the kitchen, yawning, and without speaking, he begins unloading the dishwasher and setting up dishes for his own and the kids' breakfast. At 6:30 Helen leaves for work and Evan goes upstairs (where the kids' are still asleep). He turns on the hallway and bathroom lights, and carries a laundry basket with Lisa's clothes down to her room. When he enters her room Lisa is sleeping. "Here's your clothes, sis" he says. Lisa growls. Evan walks to Sean's room and says "Good morning Sean." Sean doesn't respond, but walks down the hall to the shower. "Can you get me a towel, Dad?" asks Sean. "Yeah." By 6:50 Lisa and Sean are both showered and dressed and downstairs in the kitchen. Sean gets out cereal and milk, and Lisa puts her homework papers in her backpack and begins packing her lunch. Evan asks Lisa "Watcha want sis? Bagel?" "Half. Top part only, toasted. Butter on it," Lisa responds automatically.

Evan gets Lisa's bagel and pours some coffee into a travel mug for himself, then eats some raisin bran while the kids eat their food. Evan rinses his dishes, then gets up and says to Lisa "I'll do your hair in a second. I'm going up to get dressed." Lisa nods silently. Evan comes down and brushes Lisa's hair while she sits quietly on a high stool at the kitchen island. Evan squirts detangler spray into her hair "Close your eyes." He pulls her hair back into a smooth ponytail. At 7am Helen calls on the cell phone. Sean picks up the phone saying "One minute from her normal time." Sean talks to his mom briefly in monosyllables. The kids get their coats on, and gather their backpacks and instruments. Evan shepherds them out the garage door, where he's got the car warming up. He sits in the car watching them as they walk to their bus stop until the bus picks them up.

Section 2: The Parenting Strategies of Disciplined Self-Management In this section of the chapter I describe specific disciplined self-management parenting practices, and explain how they link to the cultural capital priorities and worldview of disciplined self-management parents, described in Section 1. Because disciplined self-management parents were striving to achieve a diversified portfolio of cultural capitals for their children, many of the disciplined self-management parenting practices were chosen because they allowed parents to foster a broad array of the four cultural capitals. I chose the label *disciplined self-management* to describe this parenting strategy because while these parents sought a balanced array of the four cultural capitals for their children, their defining goal for their children was *self-management*, and the defining motivation-boosting strategy for fostering children's cultural capitals was through systems of *discipline*, as parents attempted to instill habits of self-management in their children.

While I found that a subset of the manager-expert parents followed the logic and practices of disciplined self-management, I found that these manager-expert parents

tended to parent in a way that looked very similar to the highly-scheduled parenting of orchestrated achievement. I outline the reasons for this discrepancy at the end of this section.

The two major strategies of disciplined self-management were *motivation-boosting* and *family transmission*. These parents relied on family rituals and routines for family transmission, because family time was limited by both adults' career demands and children's enrichment schedules. Disciplined self-management parents spent lots of leisure time with their kids, viewing both "down time" and strong family bonds as an important buffer for kids' mental health. Parents also used "family time" to role-model good habits and a work ethic, involving children in family chores, as well as parents' hobbies and household projects.

Parents used two strategies for motivation-boosting: *discipline*, and *social-steering*. Through systems of discipline, these parents tried to boost children's incentives to work towards socially-valued achievements, but gave children the ultimate responsibility for their own behavior. By focusing their effort on discipline instead of parent-management, these parents belied a tacit belief that the children themselves, and not the parents, had primary accountability for their own choices, successes, and failures. Further, to protect their children's mental health, parents developed discipline systems that rewarded and punished children based on their effort-level, not their actual achievements. To instill discipline, parents used two strategies: first, they developed elaborate systems to reward responsible behavior and punish irresponsible behavior; second, they encouraged their children to do chores, take jobs, and participate in activities that reinforced self-discipline and a work ethic.

A third critical disciplined self-management parenting practice was to encourage child to build the social skills and peer networks that parents viewed as vital to adult success, and parents also prioritized activities that maximized children's social networks and skill-building. The benefits of building social skills and networks came at the cost of exposure to risk behaviors, so disciplined self-management parents also used sports and other activities as mechanisms for *social steering*, guiding their children towards the “right kids” – kids that parents hoped were less likely to introduce their child to sex, drugs, and crime.

Self-Management-Building Strategies: The Buck Stops with the Kid Disciplined self-management parents had hopes and goals for their children, but viewed their children as independent actors with ultimate responsibility for their own success. Unlike orchestrated achievement parents, disciplined self-management parents did not believe that micromanaging or orchestrating children's time, effort, and activities would ensure their success. Instead of managing their children's lives to help them reach given levels of achievement, disciplined self-management parents disciplined their children, giving children both the freedom to make their own choices about their effort level, and the ultimate accountability for their eventual achievement and success.

Raising children who were capable of taking care of themselves and their responsibilities independently was a major goal for disciplined self-management parents. Primarily, parents were concerned that their middle-school aged children be capable of handling their own daily responsibilities, such as personal hygiene, packing lunches, doing chores and homework, and organizing their social life, without parental oversight.

One of the ways that parents tried to instill responsibility was to encourage children to manage their personal obligations without adult assistance. Unlike orchestrated achievement parents, who were willing to take full responsibility for managing their children's personal responsibilities to maximize achievement, disciplined self-management parents felt it was critical that children learn to be self-managing before reaching adulthood.

Unlike orchestrated achievement parents, who took full responsibility for overseeing their children's academic performance, disciplined self-management parents held children accountable for their effort and achievement in school. Mary Jordan, a teacher, expected her 3 boys to be accountable for their own school work, and viewed parent-management of children's duties as damaging children's ability to "be responsible for their own stuff."

I don't sit down with them and do homework. I don't even review their homework. I say 'Did you do your homework?', and I leave it at that. Because I'm trying to teach them to be responsible for their own stuff. And I'm not going to remind you in the morning to bring your papers, to bring your homework and your agenda. You need to do that yourself.

Peggy Crosby echoed this sentiment, adding that she wanted her daughter to make her own choices about the level of effort she was willing to exert, and the consequences she received.

I don't oversee every question on her worksheets to make sure she gets them right. She does her work and turns it in, and what grade she gets for what she did is what she gets - and I'm fine with that. I may have to push her a little bit, but she has the choice to obey me or disobey me and she suffers the consequences. I'm like, 'Let her deal with her own stuff', you know?

Instead of handling children's responsibilities through parent-management, the Moore family encouraged their children to handle their own daily responsibilities instead. In the fieldnotes below, Helen showed that she expected her children to be accountable for many of the daily self-management routines that orchestrated achievement parents generally handled for their children.

[fieldnotes] At 6pm Helen calls from work and directs Sean and Lisa to get dressed in their "good" clothes for the school honors assembly at 7pm. Evan microwaves soup for himself and Helen in a large glass measuring cup. He sets out a plate of olives and pickles as well and begins eating while the kids are upstairs dressing. At 6:15 Helen comes home from work and goes upstairs to change clothes. Sean yells "Mom, where's my belt?" "How do I know? I just got home. You're in 8th grade! Find it yourself!" Sean comes downstairs and pours himself a bowl of soup from the measuring cup. "You're not eating *my* soup?!" Helen inquires. "That's yours? Sorry" says Sean, and gets himself a yogurt from the refrigerator. Helen helps Lisa with her hair while Evan checks an email. Sean calls down that he can't find his medal for academic honors. "I can't help you now," says Helen, "I've got to eat something."

Benefits for Adulthood If they were taught to manage life's daily responsibilities independently, disciplined self-management parents felt confident that their children would be well-prepared for adulthood. Linda Norris explained that she occasionally left her 11 year -old son and 9 year-old daughter home alone for brief periods of time, believing that this would build their independence and self-management skills for the future.

There are times when I'll go return a baby-sitter or run to the store, and I'll leave 'em alone. So that kind of thing sort of plants the seed – about taking responsibility, and how to be a grown-up."

Mary Jordan also saw independence and self-management as key ingredients for her children to become successful adults.

All three boys, by the time they were 7, would cook. They all do laundry. They do dishes. The stuff they're going to need to know how to do. I'm trying to give them the real life skills to be a successful person; the things you need to know how to do to support yourself.

In disciplined self-management families where both parents worked full time, developing children's self-management skills was also important to maintaining family life, with limited time for parent-management. Mary Jordan explained that although she felt learning to be responsible had great value for her children, it was also necessary in her dual-income family.

We try very hard to make sure that the kids are self-sufficient. Partially because we need them to be. My husband works nights (as a sergeant in a prison), I work days (as a pre-school teacher). There are times when they are here without us, because I get home an hour and a half after my husband leaves. And I am gone in the morning before they get up, and my husband gets home and goes right to bed. So they have to know how to make their own lunches in the morning, get their own snacks after school.

Linda Norris echoed the idea that responsible children make a busy dual-career household more manageable.

Mornings, I couldn't deal with at all if (the kids) didn't have their list of stuff that they need to do. Alex is amazing. He gets up, gets dressed, makes his bed, opens his blinds, puts his pajamas away, comes to the table and gets breakfast organized for him and for Amanda. And that has really helped all of us.

However, the desire to foster children's independent self-management skills was not simply a reflection of parents' dual careers and busy schedules. Both examples below show that parents deliberately chose to push children to do chores and take responsibility,

even when it was not necessitated by their schedules. For example, Michelle Gill insisted that her children do chores even during a time when her family was able to afford a cleaning service.

The boys have chores and they help me. Like Edwin is the best sink cleaner in town and if he puts his mind on the tub, he does a good job with that, too. And Reed (9) is one of the best dusters I have ever met. And with Edwin being 13, he cuts the lawn now and he shovels the snow. You know, I had somebody help me with my house for a couple of years when we could afford it. But I still made them have a chore to do. Every Saturday they had get up and do something.

Similarly, when I observed the Moore family, Helen got angry when her daughter Lisa tried to persuade her father to do her chore of unloading the dishwasher.

“Lisa, you need to do the dishwasher and open the shades. NOW.” Helen said. Lisa smiled over at her dad, “Daddy, will you do my dishes for me?” “NO!” Helen yelled angrily, “Go do your work yourself!”

Freedom to Make Mistakes As long as they were made aware of the consequences of their actions, disciplined self-management parents felt their children should have the freedom to make their own choices and learn from their mistakes. The 3 teenage girls in George Oakes’s family were given the freedom to make their own informed choices, and to suffer the consequences.

We pretty much let ‘em make their choices on things and explain to ‘em what the consequences will be. Like my daughter had a sleep-over and they were talking about t.p.-ing (toilet-papering) a house and I flat-out said ‘That’s a bad idea. Nothing good’s going to happen.’ And they decided to go ahead and do that. And got caught, and there’s your consequences.

George had gone so far as to drive by the local trailer park to make sure his daughters understood the consequences of their efforts at school.

I try to show ‘em what (education) can do for you. Drive by Apple Orchard Mobile Home Park and show ‘em, ‘This is what will happen if you don’t have an education. Do you want to live here? This is what your choices will get you if you don’t try and excel, or go to school.’

George’s wife Ann agreed that having the freedom to make mistakes is the only way kids can really learn.

I don’t have a hard time with them learning the hard way. Because I never could take advice – I just never could learn that way. Like when my mom said ‘I don’t like that boy’, I liked that boy more (laughs). So instead of saying ‘I don’t like those friends’, we just kind of let it go until it’s very visual for them that they’re not trustworthy or loyal or whatever.

Regarding after-school activities, instead of controlling their children’s activities as orchestrated achievement parents did, disciplined self-management parents felt it was better to allow children to have freedom to make choices. For example, although Jennifer Peters would have liked her daughter Elizabeth to take piano lessons, unlike orchestrated achievement parents who would make this decision for their child, Jennifer regarded her daughter as having the final say in whether to take lessons.

My sister-in-law has this little electric piano at her house, and the kids will end up playing on it for hours every time Elizabeth’s over there. But does she want lessons? No. It drives me nuts.”

Similarly, Patricia Long only enrolled her daughters in activities that *they* really wanted to participate in.

I tell (the kids) that if they really want to do something we’ll try to work things out. But if they’re kind of

mediocre or there's not a huge interest, I'd rather them get really excited about something.

The Buck Stops with the Child Ultimately, disciplined self-management parents felt that the responsibility for their children's life choices and success lay not with the parents, but with the child. Although parents felt a deep sense of obligation to help, discipline, guide, and support their child en route to adulthood, parents insisted that in the end, the child's own motivation and effort would determine her life outcomes. This viewpoint stood in stark contrast to the orchestrated achievement parents' insistence on both managing and holding themselves responsible for their children's achievements, effort, and success.

This contrast suggests that the two groups of parents held starkly different views of adolescent children: disciplined self-management parents viewed middle-school aged children as being the decision-making authorities in their own lives, but orchestrated achievement parents saw these children as dependent on parental authority and decision-making. This conclusion supports findings that working class parents in Britain gave their children a stronger role in academic decision-making than did middle-class parents, who included their children in decision-making only in a ritualistic, pro-forma way (Reay and Ball 1998). Both findings contradict popular notions and academic research linking professional classes with more democratic parenting strategies, and lower classes with more dictatorial ones (Kohn 1963).

When asked about their hopes for their children's future, disciplined self-management parents referred to their child's agency in his or her own future, downplaying their own parental role. As Jennifer Peters said, "She's got to live the life. You know, we try to

give her the tools to live it. But she's the one that's got to live it." Similarly, Chad Foster was willing to encourage his son to try new things, but felt the ultimate decision about whether to engage lies with his son – not with him. "I've tried to get (my son) on the treadmill a little. I'll say things like 'Didn't your coach say you should maybe do that?' And he's like 'I don't know about that.' So I don't know. I mean the tools are there. It's just whether they decide to do it."

Disciplined self-management parents held their children accountable for their own motivation and success, and resisted being held accountable for pushing, guiding or forcing their children to achieve or exert themselves. Helen Moore was concerned about her son's weight, and although she tried many ways to help him slim down, she declined to hold herself accountable for his ultimate success or failure.

His weight, he's heavy. Too heavy for his age. And we've already done the Shake Down clinic at the hospital – I sunk \$1000 into that program. And we give him the pep talks. But he snitches candy sometimes. And I just tell him "You're on your own. You know you don't need it." I just can't police them on everything, you know.

Although they know there are parents who are doing more to further their children's success, disciplined self-management parents pushed back against pressure to be held accountable for their children's achievements. Chad Foster was a sports lover, and encouraged his sons towards athletics of all kinds. However, Chad declined to pursue intensive measures, deciding his kids' success is "up to them."

I've read some books on (raising athletes) – Drew Bledsoe's dad wrote one, and of course Tiger Woods' dad did one. They had some interesting ideas, but those aren't things that work for me. I don't have that kind of personality and, quite frankly, that kind of time to nurture

my kid to be X, Y, or Z. I think whatever they're going to be is going to be up to them.

“Do your Best”: Promoting Achievement while Protecting Other Cultural Capitals

In order to help their children to achieve without having to orchestrate or micromanage their time and achievements, disciplined self-management parents sought to instill a work ethic in their children. This strategy allowed children to maintain the ultimate responsibility for their own success, and charged parents with the task of helping children to learn to “work hard” through discipline.

Helping their middle-school aged children to develop a good work ethic was a major challenge for disciplined self-management parents. These parents were much more concerned that their children learn to work hard and make a good effort in school than with the actual grades their children got. Because the work ethic itself was the goal, disciplined self-management parents were much more concerned about their children's effort-level than the actual measures of their performance.

The strategy of telling children to “do your best,” and rewarding effort instead of achievement, was overwhelmingly prevalent among disciplined self-management parents (Table 1). In order to help children to achieve at high enough levels to gain admission to college, without taxing children's mental health or family connectedness, disciplined self-management parents focused on their child's effort level instead of demanding that children always got A's in school, or achieved at any set standard level. These parents hoped this distinction would protect their children from too much pressure, and limit conflict within the family. “My biggest expectation is that you do your best. And if your

best is C work, then that's fine. But that better be your best," explained Mary Jordan. "I expect you to turn in every assignment."

Jennifer Peters also preferred to focus on her daughter's effort instead of specific grades or performance measures.

I'm like 'Do better, kid. You can do better.' If she were getting B's because she didn't get it, that would be one thing. She doesn't have to come home with an 'all-A' report card. But come on, if she doesn't turn in her homework and gets a B, yeah, I'm going to be mad. You do your assignments and you turn 'em in. That's your job. It's the work ethic part.

Leslie Quinn, real estate agent and parent of three children, told her children that even complete failure was okay, as long as they "try as hard as (they) can."

You know, life is hard. You're going to fail a few times and that's okay. It doesn't mean that you're a failure. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't try as hard as you can. I'm always trying to impress upon them that you've got to give it everything you've got, at everything. Do your best at every essay, at every game, at every math test, you know?

Disciplined self-management parents felt that family duties and chores were an important technique for teaching kids responsibility and a good work ethic. Helen Moore was raised doing chores and felt they were critical to building a work ethic that extends into adult career success. "The most important thing is to instill good work habits. As in doing chores. I just work right alongside of them, doing chores." Michelle Gill felt that doing chores helped her children to build a work ethic.

Chores are huge to me. I came from a family that was pretty extreme, but it created a great work ethic with me, which I think lacks with a lot of younger people now. It's

like there's a sense of entitlement that bothers me. And so we work really hard at getting them involved in understanding their role in the family. You do things because you're a family member, not for an allowance.

Michelle pointed out that taking a role in family work had importance beyond practical necessity. "I had somebody help me with my house for a couple of years when we could afford it. But I still made them have a chore to do. Every Saturday they had to get up and do something." Leah Kerrigan agreed that kids need to understand that family life comes with responsibilities. "We're certainly not going to just do things for our kids just so that they can get a free ride until they turn 18. We work as a family when we do chores."

Discipline: Instilling a Work Ethic through Rewards and Punishments Ultimately, disciplined self-management parents hoped their children would internalize a work ethic – doing their best with their school and family obligations - but realistically, most realized that their middle-school aged children hadn't yet developed these skills. In hopes of reinforcing a work ethic, these parents relied on rewards and punishments to give children external motivation to exert themselves and give full effort. Evan Moore explained that he rewarded his children's efforts with cash for good grades and completed chores. "We expect them to do the best of their ability, and we kind of know if they are working up to that level. So we try and reward them for doing good things, and punish them for things that aren't acceptable."

His children Sean (14) and Lisa (11) described their family's system of rewards and punishments for grades. "Lisa gets a dollar for doing her homework, but I don't – it's expected of me because I'm older. But I rake it in for grades. Five dollars for an A+, one

dollar for an A, fifty cents for a B, and minus fifty cents for a C,” Sean explained.

“Anything below that, and you’re (makes a strangling motion),” added Lisa.

George Oakes echoed Evan’s belief that consequences and rewards were a key parental tool to direct children towards desirable behaviors and away from undesirable ones. “We try an instill in ‘em, ‘Before you do something, what are the consequences going to be?’ So they’re thinking ‘If I do this, am I going to get in trouble?’ or ‘If I do that, is it going to be good?’ And when they get their consequences and say ‘Well, that’s not fair,’ we go ‘Well yes it is. It’s what I told you was going to happen. So I think for the most part it gives us a pretty good base to try to lead ‘em from.’”

In the Gill family, children’s effort level was encouraged by their individualized “plan,” a written system of rewards and punishments for doing homework and chores, with a list of consequences that changed weekly. Michelle explained, “I am a firm believer in leverage. Whatever works – that’s what the plans are based on. What motivates them? What’s going to get them doing what they need to do?”

Managing and maintaining discipline systems effectively was no simple task, and posed a great struggle for disciplined self-management parents. Customizing rewards and punishments to make them effective, and being consistent about enforcing consequences was a challenge for disciplined self-management parents, given the demands of work and family life. Michelle Gill struggled to keep her two sons on a discipline system with the demands of a dual-career family. “It’s a difficult thing to do, and you’ve got to stay on top of it all the time. Sometimes we have too much going on, where we end up letting it slide. Because some nights we’re just too tired and it’s ‘Okay, we don’t feel like dealing with this.’ So what determines whether it’s working well or not is our will and our follow

through.” George Oakes’s family also found it difficult to maintain consistent discipline systems. “For us, sticking to our guns is the biggest thing. I wouldn’t say we’re always great at it.”

Chad Foster’s example illustrates the difficulty many parents found in maintaining a consistent, effective discipline system. “We tried things; do certain chores and you can have X number of hours on the ‘boob tube’. And that became too hard to maintain. To track it and to enforce it was just like, finally, pppffffttt. (sound of letting air out of balloon).”

Role-Modelling a Work-Ethic: Family Transmission Many disciplined self-management parents, especially fathers, tried to role model hard work, using *family transmission* to show children through parents’ example that they should try their hardest in all their efforts. Because their work was most often conducted away from home, where kids couldn’t see it, disciplined self-management dads often tried to role-model a work ethic in their hobbies and activities. This sort of role-modeling was possible for these fathers, whose protected employee jobs allowed them to spend time at home or doing activities with their children, unlike professional fathers who were rarely home. Chad Foster hoped his dedication to exercise and fitness at home would help his sons to learn a work ethic by example.

We had our kids in soccer and then baseball for a little bit, but they never really committed to anything per se. They had some skills in some things but they just weren’t willing to really lay it out there. So I guess part of my strategy (with the kids) is, I go into these kind of fits, especially with exercising and fitness and stuff like that, where I do it every day. We have a treadmill in the basement and I was on it for an hour last night. But in my mind, I am not just doing it for my own good, but I am trying to show them (the kids) to commit to something.

Disciplined self-management parents hoped to help their children to internalize self-discipline, responsibility, and a work ethic by putting them in activities that forced them to work hard and “give 100%.” Of all the available enriching activities, disciplined self-management parents considered team sports the best possible way to reinforce the self-discipline required for a good work ethic.

Given how hard it was to be consistent with discipline, and to maintain friendly bonds with children, disciplined self-management parents looked to outside resources for back-up, outsourcing some of the job of motivating children from parents to their coaches and peers. George Oakes admitted that he and his wife weren't always consistent about disciplining their three daughters, but relied on children's teachers and coaches to reinforce discipline.

Lynn is a pretty good field hockey player, and her coach will tell her ‘Okay, if you don't do well in school, it'll effect you being able to play the next game.’ I think that's done a lot. And this year, her French class is going to Quebec. And along with that, if you don't do your assignments, you're off the trip. And that gives the kids a boundary that helps us, as parents.

Peggy Crosby loved the discipline her son's soccer coach imposed on him during practice. “His coach, no matter what, he made them run two times around the field before every game. And my son complained on and on about it. But I told him ‘Honey, coach needs to see if you've got the ability to give him all you've got.’ And he didn't like it. But I thought ‘This is a good idea. That's what it takes, you know?’” Patricia Long also valued team activities for helping to reinforce a work ethic. “I am an advocate of sports or any sort of team concept. It could be debate team, it could be choir. Just being part of a group and everybody has to give their 100% to succeed.”

Similarly, Leslie Quinn felt that the school football team was a good place for her son to learn responsibility and self-discipline as he faced the consequences of his own decisions.

My son is offensive line, and this year he's playing center, which is kind of an important place to play. And he started probably 60% of the games as center. But then he lost his position because he screwed up. That's how it works. You blow your assignment a couple times, critical assignments—your assignment is to block that guy so that that guy will not sack your quarterback. So he lost his position.

Activities: Protecting Family Time and Down-Time Despite differences in their parents' logic, like their peers raised with orchestrated achievement, children raised with disciplined self-management also participated in many enriching after-school activities, as illustrated by the description of the Moore children's weekly schedule below. Lisa (11) and Sean (14) both met after school weekly with the school yearbook committee and the student council. Sean had a weekly after-school book club, and practiced with the school track team 4 days a week. Lilly participated weekly in after-school gymnastics and swimming clubs, geography club, study table, and girl scouts. The children were able to take a "late bus" home from all of these at-school activities, or else were given rides home by the parents of their classmates. Both children played instruments in the school band and orchestra, but neither took private lessons. Neither child has ever met with a private tutor, coach, or counselor, taken private lessons of any kind or participated on a private team or sports club. Parents Helen and Evan took turns driving the kids to religious education classes at church on Wednesday nights. This was the children's only

non-school activity, and the only activity that cut into “family time,” when parents were both home from work.

Because disciplined self-management parents had more time in the evenings with all family members present, they were not thrilled about chauffeuring children to multiple enrichment activities that interrupted family activities or down-time. Chad Foster encouraged his kids to participate in sports, but felt adding many more activities were “a waste of time.”

I think it rounds you out more when you have more diverse things to do. But not just for more things to do, not busy stuff. I think that’s kind of a waste of time - taking a lot of macramé classes and stuff like that. I think that’s a danger, too. I think a lot of kids these days—and we know some people that do—that they’re just over scheduled. I mean the kids have two or three things to do every single day in some cases.

Jennifer Peters also saw the value of some activities, but stressed the importance of down-time for her daughter as well.

As far as activities go, I don’t know if this is a good thing or not. Andrew and I have always been big believers in ‘free time is a very good thing’. Being bored is a very good thing. Having down time is a very good thing. And I think maybe we’ve taken that too far in some cases. But she has had a childhood where you’re not going from activity to activity and to activity. Some kids really like that. Mine, she likes some activities but to be honest, she likes her free time. She likes to be able to flop down with a book and sit in her room and play.

Team sports were a favorite activity for disciplined self-management parents because they simultaneously fostered children’s responsibility and a work ethic, strengthened their peer social networks and skills, and encouraged family closeness by allowing families to attend together. Despite her aversion to allowing kid activities to force her

family to “divide and conquer” in the evenings, Linda Norris was happy to allow her kids to play hockey and other team sports, because they allowed the whole family to enjoy time together. Her comment makes it clear how much opportunity cost the Norris family feels about losing family evenings “quiet at home,” compared to orchestrated achievement families where dads are rarely available at night.

We need time to be quiet at home, and when the activities really start to pile up and you’ve got hockey practice here and a meeting there... Last week I needed to go to (the kids’ school) for some class fundraising something-or-other and Alex had a (hockey) game. And I’m like, ‘I really want to go to the game!’, you know? It just ticked me off that I had to go in one direction and Douglas had to take the kids in another - divide and conquer. It’s convenient to be able to have another parent to do that, but I’d rather do it all together. It’s fun to watch a good game together, I enjoy it. When we have to divide and conquer for games, that kind of bums me out.

Disciplined self-management parents viewed their children’s activities mostly as fun ways for their children to be social, get some enrichment, and possibly some discipline as well. And for many dual-career disciplined self-management parents, after-school activities also provided free or low-cost child-care. On rare days when Lisa and Sean Moore had no after-school activities, they stayed home unsupervised for 1-2 hours until their parents came home from work. To keep the kids productively occupied and supervised, the Moores encouraged their children to choose as many after-school activities as they could, as long as their activities required no parental transportation or parental involvement.

Unlike the activities of children doing *orchestrated achievement*, disciplined self-management children’s activities were not intense or individualized, but were low-key

and self-directed. These activities did not require either one-on-one child-expert guidance nor parent-involvement or parent-management. For example, when I asked, neither Lisa nor her mother Helen could recall the name of Lisa's gymnastics coach. The fieldnotes below show that Lisa got almost no expert "boosting" from her Lisa's afterschool gymnastics club.

[fieldnotes] As Lisa and I walk to the gym, I ask the name of her coach. Lisa makes a face, "He's some old guy." When we arrive at gymnastics, the coach assumes I am Lisa's mother. He shrugs apologetically, saying "I haven't met any of the parents yet." The coach has attached a laminated sheet to each piece of equipment, describing the practice routine. He points to the balance beam and tells Lisa "Show her your 'A' routine." I ask Lisa if the routines change from week to week, or if more advanced kids have different routines. "No, they're always the same," she says. Some kids work on the routines, but many just talk to each other or hang around. The coach calls all 12 boys and girls to line up and practice jumping over the pommel horse. The coach spots each kid as they go over. One boy can't do it, and Lisa struggles. The coach spots them without comment. There is a big range of ability among the kids, but the coach issues directions to the group as a whole ("Try to land on your knees!"), and doesn't single children out for special attention, praise or critique.

Compared to the private, one-on-one lessons of the orchestrated achievement children, disciplined self-management children's after-school activities were much more self- than teacher-directed and more play- than achievement-oriented.

Further, children in disciplined self-management families were more likely than those in orchestrated achievement families to choose their own activities, instead of their parents. When I asked Sean Moore about his array of activities he explained "In 7th grade I wasn't in a lot of things. But I purposely got in a lot of things this year. Cause of boredom."

Social Steering: Finding the “Right” Peers The social world was an important component of success for disciplined self-management parents, who hoped to help their children develop strong social networks with peers, and to foster the “people skills” that would help them to do this themselves later in life. However, the social capital available from any social connection depends upon the cultural capital of its members (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), and disciplined self-management parents were concerned that their plans for their children’s success might be derailed by the “wrong crowd” influencing them to risky behaviors. So the desire to build strong peer social networks was balanced by a desire to angle kids away from “bad” kids and towards the “right” friends, a trick which disciplined self-management parents tried to accomplish through “social steering” through sports and extracurricular activities.

Leisure Time Families doing *discipline and responsibility* were concerned about how their children spent their leisure time, but considered TV-watching and computer games acceptable pastimes for children in moderation, once their homework and chores were done. Unlike parents doing *orchestrated achievement*, these parents weren’t afraid of the “dumbing down” effects of TV and video games, nor were they trying to substitute more *educationally enriching* activities (“edutainment”) for television and computers. Instead, as one father explained, these parents limited TV and computer time to encourage kids to “go outside and play like we did,” and to make sure TV-watching time didn’t cut into family-time.

Although they were aware that “other parents” were more strict about monitoring their children’s exposure to TV and video games, disciplined self-management parents often pointed out that they themselves thought that most kid-oriented TV shows were

harmless, and offered kids healthy opportunities for entertainment and down time. In the quote below, it is clear that this father thinks the fun of his son of seeing something “hilarious” outweighs any inappropriate “stuff” he might see watching “Austin Powers” (rated PG-13 for “sexual innuendo and crude humor”).

I’m a little more relaxed than some other parents (about restricting TV shows) just because it’s there anyway. Like my son (11) used to watch Austin Powers, and there’s a lot of stuff that’s in there. But most of it went over his head. And he thought it was hilarious and seemed to be able to pick through. Some of them are a lot more strict than I am.

Where orchestrated achievement parents expressed revulsion and had a zero-tolerance policy for many specific kid-oriented television shows, disciplined self-management parents did not mention rejecting TV-watching altogether, or even banning or disliking particular channels or television shows. Instead, these parents explicitly mentioned television-watching as an acceptable and appropriate leisure-time activity, in moderation. Evan Moore shared the common disciplined self-management belief that television is fine for “relaxation and vegetation,” and only becomes a problem when a child develops a “borderline addiction to the TV,” which gets in the way of playing outside and being active.

Of course in the wintertime, you know, she does have her borderline addiction to the TV (laughs). Which is fine, because kids will all need relaxation, or vegetation time. But I don’t want her to do that all the time. I like it when she goes places and does things. She can go riding a bike, or she rollerblades. Much better than sitting in front of the TV.

While they viewed television-watching itself as benign, disciplined self-management parents were also concerned that time spent watching television cut into valuable family-time. Chad Foster didn’t have a problem with his kids watching cartoons, which he

himself loved as a child, but found it hard to compete for his children's attention against 24 hour- per-day cartoon channels.

I just think compared to when I was young and my parents, people just seem to be more busy these days. There's less time to kind of just hang around. And I think TV is a huge problem. I just think that when I was a kid at least, Saturday mornings was a big deal. I would wake up early in the morning so I could watch cartoons. Now they're on four stations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So I think that that's a big deterrent to spending a lot more time with your kids if you want to. Because boy, when I shut the TV off, they look at me like, "What are you doing?" And God knows there's no quality time going to come out of that.

Instead of concerns about media and pop culture contamination, disciplined self-management parents perceived the influence of drugs, alcohol, premature sexual activity, and crime as very real threats to their children's adult success, a concern mentioned only rarely by orchestrated achievement parents. Kids hanging out with the wrong crowd, or even having one "bad" friend, made disciplined self-management parents extremely nervous. The underlying belief was that risky behaviors were contagious, and disciplined self-management parents took great pains to encourage their children to keep clear of kids who they perceived as up to no good. Mary Jordan explained the "protocol" she used to steer her sons towards the type of children she prefers them to associate with.

I think as they get older, it's more important not to have (friends) who are doing drugs and talking about sex and alcohol and skipping school. My son is almost 14 and that's a very scary age. I just had a conversation with him about what the protocol is going to be. 'Okay, you want to go over there (to a friend's house). This is how you ask, these are the details I need, I need to talk to their parents, those kinds of things.'

In response to fears about the contagious effect of friends' risky behaviors, Michelle Gill limited her son Edwin's contact with a friend who was caught shoplifting. "I said 'I like (your friend), but he's made some really bad choices.' And Edwin had limited exposure to him after that, and it was always here (in our home). He knew, 'Don't ask to go somewhere with this person, because it's not going to happen.'"

Influencing children's social lives to reduce their exposure to risky behaviors required a great deal of effort for disciplined self-management parents. Both Mary Jordan and Michelle Gill kept actively involved in the social details of their children's lives, the lives of their children's friends, and the families of their children's friends, in order to effectively monitor the level of risk their children faced. This ongoing process was very time- and labor-intensive for disciplined self-management parents.

Like other disciplined self-management parents, Helen Moore wanted to steer her children towards the "right" kids, which she attempted to do by getting her son into a new local high school. The fieldnotes below illustrate Helen's dismay when she learned that some of the "wrong kids" would also be attending the new school.

[fieldnotes] Sean tells Helen that a classmate, Maria, will also attend Skyline high school. Helen looks upset. "That's not right. She's not making good choices. She's hanging around with the wrong kids. If she isn't pregnant by eighteen, I'll be shocked. Don't hang around her Sean." Helen turns to me and mouths "She's a *whore*."

Social Steering: The Logic of Sports and Activities Concerns about risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, sex, and crime pushed disciplined self-management parents towards sports and other activities as a technique both for keeping kids out of trouble, and steering them towards other "good kids." Like other disciplined self-management parents, Marshall Quinn tried to keep his kids busy to keep them "focused" and out of trouble.

I try to keep (my kids) disciplined, focused, and occupied. I have found that part of the reason that I was a bad child or a misdirected child was because I didn't have anything else to do. So what we try to do is get the kids involved in extracurricular activities if we can.

Disciplined self-management parents also viewed sports teams and other activities as a screening tool, steering their children towards other “good kids.” Ann Oakes encouraged her three girls to participate in several sports a year because she likes them to hang around the kind of kids and parents that play on these teams. “Parents (of kids on teams) are the parents that would encourage their kids versus beat down their kids. And I think kids that are on teams tend not to be..., you tend to have less... Well, if you're a cross-country runner, you can't be smoking six packs a day.”

Parent-Child Communication as Risk-Protection In addition to guiding their children towards the “right” peers, disciplined self-management parents hoped to reduce their children's chances of choosing risky behaviors by keeping the lines of parent-child communication open. By being open and available, instead of rigid and punitive, they hoped to insulate their children against some of the pressures they might face from peers to participate in risky behaviors. Marshall Quinn worked hard to quell his instinct to “blow up” when his son told him about his son's drug experimentation, hoping that communication would offer some protection from risks. “The other day (my son) came in and said ‘Today I smoked a joint with some friends.’ And I said ‘Well, really?’ But my first reaction was the gut reaction, ‘I should blow up at this, right?’ That's what my parents did. I guess I figure anything he does is okay, as long as we can talk about it.”

Providing kids with information about risk behaviors was another way disciplined self-management parents tried to influence their behavior. By acting as her chief source

of information about risk behaviors, Jennifer Peters hoped to keep her 13 year-old daughter on the straight and narrow.

Now is the rocky time in junior high-school, because they spend more time with their peers than they do with you. And it's funny, every opportunity that presents itself, we have the drug talk. The sex talk. You need to. And the poor kid's probably more educated than any human being really needs to be. But you know, forewarned is fore-armed.

Ken Isaacs agreed that having a parent or family-member to turn to for information could keep a kid from making a bad decision. "You could end up in jail, you can make bad decisions because you don't have anybody like mom and dad, cousins or brothers or sister to ask. Family is like the safety zone."

"Being Realistic" to Protect Mental Health In order to protect their children's mental health against disappointed expectations, disciplined self-management parents consciously attempted to help children learn to "be realistic" in their future hopes, reigning in ambitious career goals that parents viewed as unattainable, and steering children towards more accessible career goals. Jennifer Peters, church administrator and mother of middle-school age Elizabeth, explained

She needs to be realistic. I mean, (imitating daughter's voice) 'I'm going to play Carnegie Hall with my cello,' or 'I'm going to be in a beauty pageant.' Yeah, right (sarcastically). It's not a realistic expectation. It's not to be limiting, though. But just to be realistic, and understand how the world works.

In their conversations with their kids, disciplined self-management parents reflected their desire to help their children to have "realistic" ideas about their capabilities and

future opportunities. Like Jennifer Peters, Helen Moore was concerned that her son not develop overly grand ideas about his future, and although she often praised her children in private, she rarely complimented her children or built up their self-esteem within their hearing. Instead, both Helen and her husband Evan were more likely to criticize them, particularly when children showed signs of self-confidence that the parents found troubling.

[fieldnotes] Sean has applied for an annual school district-wide competition that will take 2 students from each middle school to France. While Helen is clearing up the kitchen Sean says “Mom, Brittany and Chris also applied, so I might get to go with one of them.” Helen looks up sharply. “You think you’re gettin’ France? 25 kids applied for that!” She stares at him hard for a second, then goes back to wiping down the counter, shaking her head. “I know. But I *might* get it.” says Sean, sounding somewhat deflated.

Manager-Experts: Mirroring the Practices of Orchestrated Achievement Although they followed the logic and practices of disciplined self-management in much the same way as their semi-professional and small business owner peers, parents in this subgroup of manager-expert occupations appeared to parent in a way that bore similarity to the highly scheduled, expert-intensive practices of orchestrated achievement. I attribute this anomaly to the fact that the gendered labor patterns of this subgroup of manager-expert families bore closer resemblance to those of professionals or small business owners with scarce skills than they did to semi-professionals or managers.

These manager-experts tended have long work hours and frequent travel similar to professionals and small business owners with scarce skills. Manager-experts also tended to earn salaries comparable to or even greater than their professional counterparts. As a result, fathers in these families were less able to play a regular role in family life, with

three important results that mirrored those of orchestrated achievement families. First, mothers were left with the lion's share of the responsibility for keeping children productive and "organized" after school, pushing children towards scheduled activities. Second, there was little opportunity cost to "family time" for scheduling lots of enriching children's activities, since fathers were rarely at home. Third, families had the material resources to afford expensive activities, classes, coaches and private teams. This also meant that mothers in these families were less likely to work for pay outside the home, and had more time available to focus on children's enrichment activities.

Because these manager-experts had gendered labor patterns and income levels more similar to professionals than to semi-professionals or managers, these parents engaged their children in a flurry of activities more similar to that seen in orchestrated achievement families. However, despite their focus on extra-curricular enrichment, these manager-expert families espoused the same logic, with a focus on discipline, social networks, and fostering independent self-management, as their peers with semi-autonomous professions. This subgroup of manager-expert parents enrolled their children almost exclusively in sports (instead of music or arts) that they believed would foster these cultural capitals, and did not prioritize fostering their child's passions or distinction as orchestrated achievement parents did.

Conclusions These data showed that parents' experiences as protected employees led them to a specific set of parenting logics and practices that I label disciplined self-management. These parents' careers taught them that *hard work* was the key to success for their children. By telling their children to "do their best" instead of demanding specific achievement goals, parents hoped to minimize the mental health costs of

achievement, and to preserve family bonds of affection. In order to help their children develop a work ethic, parents enforced systems of *discipline*, rewarding children for self-managing their responsibilities, and punishing them for failing to do so. Experience as protected employees also taught parents that children needed strong *social networks* to succeed, as well as the *social skills* to create and maintain networks as adults.

Because parents protected employee careers had regular hours and required no travel, both mothers and fathers in disciplined self-management families frequently spent time with their children and families, engaged in the routine activities of daily life. As a result, disciplined self-management parents were less willing to sacrifice family time and family transmission opportunities for children's activities. However, parents steered their children towards team sports, for three reasons. First, teams sports reinforced parents' values of responsibility, self-management, and discipline. Second, teams sports helped children to build their social networks and skills with peers, while steering children away from the "wrong crowd" and towards the "right kids." Third, instead of competing with family time, team sports provided opportunities for families to spend time all-together, attending children's games and events.

Chapter 7

Cleft Habitus and Dual Habitus

Although parenting strategy was closely linked to a parent's career and educational background, these data showed that this relationship was complicated both by the parent's own childhood upbringing and their spouse's habitus. This chapter offers an empirical illustration of how these two additional aspects of parents' habitus shaped strategic parenting for middle class couples. This chapter demonstrates that upward mobility, both through education and marriage, set parents on a different trajectory from other semi-autonomous professionals, leading them to incorporate both elements of disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement in their parenting strategy. Parents with disciplined self-management childhoods in this study had achieved upward mobility through two avenues, first, by using college, professional, or graduate education to achieve a semi-autonomous professional career, or second, by marrying a semi-autonomous professional partner. However, despite upward mobility through these avenues, parents did not automatically or easily shift their parenting practices from disciplined self-management to orchestrated achievement. Instead, these additional elements of a couple's class habitus exerted a strong gravitational pull towards disciplined self-management, in two ways.

First, for parents in this study, parents' class origins tended to resurface in their childrearing practices, leading parents to inadvertently reproduce aspects of their own class upbringings. This happened because, in addition to their classed career trajectory, each individual's habitus and parenting logic was shaped by the experiences of his or her own classed upbringing. In particular, parents with "cleft habitus," those who had achieved upward mobility in their own lives from protected employee or working class upbringings to semi-autonomous professional careers, shared some of the disciplined self-management parenting logic of protected employee parents, and felt torn about abandoning the advantages of disciplined self-management for those of orchestrated achievement. Despite the lessons of their semi-autonomous professional careers, these parents also put faith in the strategies of their childhoods, and raised their children using a patchwork of the logic and practices of orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management.

This finding aligns with Bourdieu's theory of cleft habitus, showing that an individual's habitus, including their logic and practices, is shaped by their class roots as well as their class destination (Bourdieu 1990). Though suggested by theory, prior research on parenting has not identified links between parents' own childhood upbringing and the specific parenting patterns they adopted later in life (Lareau 2003).

Second, for the parents in this study, "marrying up" did not lead directly to "parenting up." Many middle-class couples in this study did not share similar class backgrounds or career trajectories, and struggled to negotiate parenting practices based on their two disparate habituses, and their different understandings of the logic of success. Although each *individual* parent had his or her own parenting logic, shaped by classed experiences

in their career and upbringing, each *couple's* parenting practices were shaped by both partners' habitus, a situation I label the problem of "dual habitus."

In the end, the middle class parent with a lower level of cultural capital (either through class roots or career) was often unable or unwilling to enact the orchestrated achievement parenting practices favored by his or her higher cultural capital spouse, consciously or unconsciously sabotaging their spouse's parenting priorities. This situation was the cause of a great deal of tension and conflict for parents as they struggled to make parenting decisions with opposing logics. Further, children of these dual habitus marriages were not automatically raised with orchestrated achievement, but rather with a mosaic of the logic and practices of disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement.

Although Bourdieu did not address the dual habitus situation because of his assumption of class endogamy (Bourdieu 1984:p.242), understanding the need for parents to negotiate dual habituses helps to explain an additional way that habitus shapes parenting strategy, and provides potential insight into the "stickiness" of class reproduction and the difficulties of upward mobility. I consider the situation of dual habitus couples further in section 2 of this chapter.

Section 1. Cleft Habitus: Stubborn Class Roots Some upwardly mobile parents in this study –parents raised with disciplined self-management who had achieved semi-autonomous professional careers - were influenced in their parenting approach both by their class origins and their career experiences. For this subgroup of parents, having "lower roots" meant that these parents valued the cultural capitals favored by their own disciplined self-management parents, in some respects. Thus these upwardly mobile

parents approached parenting not exclusively with orchestrated achievement, but with a blend of disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement logic.

Although many of the semi-autonomous professional parents in this study were raised by working class or protected employee parents, not all of these parents evidenced a “split” in their parenting logic. Many of these parents were indistinguishable from other semi-autonomous professional parents in their discussion of their logic and parenting practices. Although I cannot offer a definitive explanation for what made a parent’s habitus “cleft” with respect to parenting, I theorize that parents who had a particularly great distance between their origins and destinations were most likely to evidence contradictions or ambivalence in their parenting logic and practices. The parents with cleft habitus in this study had earned post-undergraduate degrees and had high-status careers, despite the fact that their own parents had failed to complete college.

Like several parents in the study population, William Stewart and Jerry Howland were raised with disciplined self-management, but through education, ended up in semi-autonomous professional jobs. Like other cleft habitus parents, Jerry and William did not simply practice orchestrated achievement like other semi-autonomous professionals, but also mixed in elements of disciplined self-management learned in childhood. Both William and Jerry felt uncomfortable with some aspects of orchestrated achievement, and were reluctant or unwilling to abandon the disciplined self-management parenting strategies of their own class childhoods - strategies that they believed led to their own successful adult lives and careers. Although they were not always successful in practice (William was unable to fit chores into his kids’ busy schedules), both William and Jerry maintained aspects of the logic of their upbringings, and worked to institute valued

practices of disciplined self-management into their families' child-raising strategy (William punished his kids, Jerry pushed his kids towards responsible work).

William Stewart, partner in a property law firm, was raised with disciplined self-management. His father, the only one of 7 kids in his family to finish high school, had a successful career running his own insurance agency; his mother graduated from high school and stayed home raising children. Like most semi-autonomous professionals, William viewed achievement as paramount for his own children, and spent a great deal of time and energy driving them to private schools, hockey practice, and math and language tutors.

However, William's upbringing also influenced his parenting, leading him to prioritize values typically associated with the disciplined self-management logic of working class or protected employee parents. For example, William emphasized the importance of using punishment to discipline his children, a familiar pattern among disciplined self-management parents that was rarely mentioned by orchestrated achievement parents. William linked his belief in parental discipline to his own upbringing, saying that it "goes back to the way you're brought up."

It's important to be tough enough to discipline your kids, and do what needs to be done to get the appropriate behavior out of them. And it's especially difficult to be consistent. We do too much of trying to reason with children, and that can't be done. I don't think that (my wife) is ever physical with them, but I hit the kids. Once in awhile I beat 'em. To get their attention. Which, again, goes back to the way you're brought up, I think.

Unlike most orchestrated achievement parents, William also felt that family responsibility and chores played an important role in raising successful children. This

attitude was common among disciplined self-management parents, but rarely mentioned by semi-autonomous professionals. Because of their many activities, William found it impossible to prioritize chores for his children, which he viewed as critical for raising productive, disciplined adults.

Where we don't do a good job for instance is, I think it's important for (the kids) to pick up after themselves, clean the house, help out doing chores and that kind of stuff. I mean they're all old enough now that they should be able to do that. I think what we're doing is probably the worst thing you can do for 'em, because then they think they have somebody else to do it. But there isn't a lot of time.

Like William, Jerry Howland was another cleft habitus parent: although neither of Jerry's parents went to college, he earned a masters degree and owned his own business. Jerry's disciplined self-management upbringing led him to prioritize the importance of responsibility and "working a hard day" for children's success, a value most often espoused by protected employee parents.

They need to learn the value of working a hard day. And it starts with being on the other side when you're 16 years old, the kind of jobs you get. I worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I was a golf caddy. I worked in Murray's Auto Parts. I worked at a restaurant, as a bus boy. I had a bunch of crappy jobs, and I had jerky bosses. So I want them to work. I want my guys cutting the lawn. I want them to go door-to-door with a snow shovel like I did.

Jerry's class roots shaped his families' parenting approach, leading them towards the jobs and chores of disciplined responsibility, and conflicting with their desire to foster their children's distinctive achievement. When we spoke, Jerry and his wife were trying to negotiate ways to add responsibility-building "work" to their kids' achievement-

oriented schedules (track and cross-country, private soccer teams, piano and violion lessons). Jerry's wife Martha explained their conundrum,

Jerry, he grew up very lower-middle class, and was mowing lawns when he was 12. And I'm trying to figure out if it's helpful for them to have to work. Because I don't want to give them the world – I don't think that's helpful to them. So we're just trying to kind of figure out that piece – what to do for them, and what to make them earn themselves.

Section 2: Negotiating Parenting in “Dual Habitus” Couples: Creating a Patchwork Strategy So far, the data from this study have supported Bourdieu's theory about how habitus shapes practice: we saw that each individual's parenting logic and approach were defined by their own habitus, both their upbringing and career experiences. However, to understand how each couple arrived at a parenting strategy, despite differences in their upbringing and career trajectories, we must go beyond existing theories about strategy and practice. Bourdieu posited that because the vast majority of all parents share similar class habitus (through endogamy), the question of what I call “dual habitus” is an inconsequential one (Bourdieu 1984). This study's findings suggests otherwise, at least within the context of middle-class America today.

For some couples, orchestrated achievement was the default, uncontested parenting strategy, reinforced by both parents' childhood upbringings and career experiences. For example, Daniel Westbrook described that he and his wife both shared the “high-stimulus,” enriching environment of an orchestrated achievement upbringing.

Kelly and I both had a high stimulus upbringing. I mean she was overseas a lot growing up - she lived in Switzerland and India and Belgium. So she had a different kind of stimulation, a stronger cultural exposure with classic arts, theater and opera, music. And my dad was

really into jazz, so I did get a lot of that. I mean the parallels are certainly there. We both went to a lot of concerts when we were kids, we both spent a lot of time in museums. My parents always insisted on taking us to museums wherever we went.

However, unlike Daniel and Kelly, many of the middle class couples in this study had very different classed backgrounds. Many of the middle-class couples I studied had at least one area of difference in their habitus, either in their upbringing or labor experiences, that translated into conflicting priorities about the cultural capitals needed for their children's success. These differences resulted in marital tension and discord over parenting decisions in some cases. But more importantly, couples' dual habituses led them to work at cross-purposes from one another as parents, intentionally or unintentionally sabotaging one another's strategic goals and resulting in parenting practices that met neither parent's vision of "parenting success."

In the end, this research leads to the conclusion that dual habitus muddied the waters of strategic parenting. When parents had different class backgrounds, instead of "parenting up" - pooling resources and following the parenting strategy of the spouse with the highest amount of cultural capital - these dual habitus parents ended up with a hybrid parenting strategy combining elements of each parents' classed approach that prevented either parent from realizing their own ideas about how best to prepare a child for adult success (see Tables 1 and 2).

Hopes that "Marrying Up" Would Lead to "Parenting Up" In many dual habitus marriages, the parent with a working class or protected employee background or career admired their spouse's cultural capital, and hoped their children would follow in their spouse's footsteps, career-wise, rather than their own. In other words, the parent who

was “marrying up” also hoped to “parent up.” For example, Jason Bradley contrasted his wife’s orchestrated achievement upbringing with his own “haphazard” disciplined self-management one, and hoped to help her to raise their children in the orchestrated achievement tradition of his wife’s childhood.

As an adult, I’ve felt like I could have used more direction as a child. My upbringing was kind of haphazard – my mom would ask me ‘How’s your homework?’ and I would just say, ‘Fine’. And my wife, I was attracted to her in part because she’s very goal-oriented and she has a knack for succeeding. She’s very serious and she can get things done. And her mother really fostered that. They didn’t watch TV very much. Her mom would bring her to the DIA, the Detroit Institute of Arts. And she took classes, her mom would get her involved in things. And I like the idea of fostering that in our children.

Like Jason, William Stewart regarded his wife Jessica as a superior role model for their children, and hoped his children would follow her path, instead of his.

I contrast Jessica and I in some ways. Jessica is very organized and disciplined and sort of a self-starter. I probably couldn’t do her job, because I would just do nothing and then get fired. And part of the reason I’m always sitting here (doing work) between midnight and 3am is because until I have this phenomenal pressure on me, that there is just no more choice, I can’t get things done. And I’m not sure how good a job we do with our kids, but hopefully they’ll get it from Jessica.

However, despite parents’ hopes about “parenting up,” dual habitus marriages often led parents to disagree about their parenting priorities, resulting in conflicting parenting strategies that resembled neither disciplined self-management or orchestrated achievement, but a random, sometimes contradictory hodge-podge of the practices of each. For parents with greatly different habituses, differences in parenting priorities were

most severe, and most likely to result in tension and conflict in the family, and in couples parenting at cross-purposes from one another. Parents inevitably linked disagreements in their parenting beliefs to differences in their backgrounds, usually to differences in their upbringing or career experiences, as revealed in their quotes below.

Parenting conflicts often reflected parents' different assessments of the relative value of different cultural capitals for their children. Parents were aware that, given limited time and resources, they had to make trade-offs between different cultural capitals for their children. Conflicts arose when parents made these trade-offs differently, resulting in neither parent feeling the other supported the appropriate mix of activities to promote the "correct" blend of cultural capitals for their child.

The most common parenting conflicts arose around three central cultural capital trade-offs. First, parents disagreed about whether to prioritize achievement over social skills and networks. Second, parents clashed over whether it was more important to promote independence and responsibility for their child versus relying on parent-management to maximize kids' achievement. Finally, couples diverged on whether to guard family time or to encourage activities and individual achievement for their child. In the paragraphs below, I illustrate how each of these three types of conflict unfolded among dual habitus couples, using parents' own words. Embedded in these examples were the parents' own implication that differences in their habituses were central to the conflict.

These examples of marital conflict arising from different classed experiences demonstrate the "stickiness" of the logic and practices associated with disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement. These classed parenting differences

disrupted parenting harmony in no inconsequential way: parents are not able to simply dismiss or ignore them. Instead, these examples illustrated that strategic parenting was not simply habit or preference, but was embedded in deeply rooted, classed core beliefs about children's success and failure.

Social Networks vs. Distinctive Achievement Conflicts over whether to prioritize distinctive achievement versus social skills and networks arose from differences in parents' childhood upbringings and classed labor experiences. Chad and Belinda Foster weighed the importance of academic achievement and social skills/networks differently. Belinda was raised with orchestrated achievement and earned a masters' degree in health administration; she valued achievement through academics more than Chad. Chad, raised with disciplined self-management, served 6 years in the navy before getting a college degree and working his way up the ladder in sales; he prioritized social skills and networks over academics and achievement.

Chad explained that his success in his sales career taught him that social skills outweighed academic achievement.

I think Belinda puts a lot more emphasis on the whole school thing and the education, where I tend to think it (success) is more of being socially adept and fitting in – being confident in yourself and the way you interact with others is pretty important too. That's what I've always been really good at, and that's why I'm pretty good at sales.

As a result, Chad did not prioritize his children's academic performance, leaving that to Belinda. "She kind of focuses on that (school work) and I don't. I mean very rarely will I help the kids with something in homework or answer questions about school or any of that sort of stuff."

Sheri and Tony Evans also disagreed over whether social networks or academic achievement were more important for their children's success. Sheri described a recent conflict where she questioned her husband's desire to pull their daughter Wendy out of public school and put her in a local private middle school for "gifted" children. Although all family members were agreed that the move would be highly beneficial for Wendy academically, Sheri resisted out of concern for her daughter's social networks. Sheri ultimately allowed her husband to win this negotiation, but was uneasy about the possible cost to her daughter's social capital, which was an important facet of her own disciplined self-management upbringing.

I was the one who dug my heels in. I thought, 'I wonder if she should continue with her friends that she's been at school with ever since kindergarten?' It was really, really hard. They said 'Do you know how hard this is going to be for Wendy? She won't know the kids when she gets to (high school). She needs to go to (public middle school) because otherwise she won't know the neighborhood kids anymore and won't have anyone to play with.' And I'd start thinking, 'Gosh'. But Tony hung tough. He went, 'We're doing this.'

Like orchestrated achievement parents, Jerry and Martha Howland both valued enrichment activities for their children, but Jerry, with his disciplined self-management background, was more invested in sports to build his kids' social networks and skills, while Martha was more interested in music and dance to enhance children's unique cultural achievements, reflecting her own orchestrated achievement childhood. Jerry explained,

There's a lot of things we just don't have resolved. Like sports. The soccer thing we kind of fell into, and by third or fourth grade things got more serious, and now we're on a private traveling team. So I guess I think it's more

important than Martha. And she may not see it at that level that I do. Because as a guy, I've seen the competitive side of boys and that social grouping and camaraderie. I think it's just really important for success, and for their future. And she may not quite see it the same way.

Jerry's wife Martha didn't support her husband's "big agenda" in sports, valuing the brain-development of music and dance more highly. "Jerry is more concerned that the boys see themselves as athletic. Like he wants to expose 'em to golf and down-hill skiing and let them have the opportunity to try that. He just has this big agenda all the time." Instead, Martha viewed music and dance as having more value for her children's achievement. "Well, in brain development - their piano teacher will tell you - reading music and being able to read music and have your fingers going, I think it's just good for different connections in their brain."

Parent Management vs. Child Self-Management Dual habitus couples dealt with conflicts over raising kids who were independent, versus "managing" kids' lives to protect them from risks and oversee their achievement. Parents often attributed these disagreements to differences in their habitus, with each parent subscribing to the parenting approach he or she was raised with. Parents who were raised by parents doing orchestrated achievement tended to be more heavily "managed" by their parents, who were highly involved in overseeing the details of their activities, academics and social life, and generally viewed this as appropriate parental behavior. However, parents who were either raised with disciplined self-management, or who had protected employee or working class jobs, viewed their spouse's "managed" parenting approach as at best unnecessary, and at worst, over-involved molly-coddling that would ultimately hinder children's autonomy, independence and self-reliance.

Like many other parents raised in disciplined self-management homes, Michelle Gill viewed fostering her children's independent self-management skills as important for their future success. Michelle felt that her husband, Dale, fussed needlessly over her sons instead of letting them learn to handle their own activities. Michelle saw her husband's insistence on parent-management as "bad parenting", and attributed their conflicts to differences in their own upbringings.

Dale's was the total opposite extreme from mine. He had a mom who did absolutely everything for him. Two very different worlds. We have a lot of differences because we were brought up so differently. And tonight is a good example. Dale is all worried about getting Reed to bed. He wants to get Reed to lay down and read with him. And I told him 'Reed's fine being by himself for awhile.' The difference is that I think they (the kids) need to be on their own sometimes, doing their own thing, and it's okay. And they don't need me right there and they don't need him. But he thinks that's good parenting. And I don't. I see it as bad parenting.

Peggy and Larry Crosby had widely discrepant class backgrounds and career experiences (Peggy and her parents had high school educations, and Larry and his father both completed post-graduate work), and had regular conflicts about whether to manage children's homework to foster achievement (Larry's preference) or to encourage them to handle it themselves to build independence and responsibility (Peggy's preference). Peggy admired her husband's achievements and struggled to adhere to Larry's preferred parenting practices in hopes of helping her children to emulate their father's success. However, she found herself ill-equipped and often uncomfortable with putting his ideas into practice, because they conflicted with her own ideas about what matters most.

Peggy illustrated with a recent disagreement over how to handle her son's bad grades due to missing homework assignments. Larry's preferred strategy was parent-management – he wanted Peggy to oversee the children's homework. Although she agreed with Larry in principle, Peggy's actual practice reflected her belief that chores and responsibility outranked parental management of achievement in determining kids' future success. Although Peggy granted her husband authority over academic decisions because of his superior experience in this world, she found it difficult to enact these agreements because they clashed with her own ideas about what was best for her children's adult success.

Larry will try to get me to see his way, and I'm like 'Oh my gosh, that does all make sense, that would work.' And I'm in total agreement, we're on the same page. But what's funny is that I'll say that I agree with it, but then I find that I stray from what I said I would do. Like he wants the kids to come home and do homework at this table every day, the minute we walk in the door. And I say 'Yes, I agree.' And so then when we start to have problems with homework not getting done, he's like 'Well, so why are they not sitting at the table with it?' See, I stray from what I said. When they come home from school, I tell them, 'You don't have to do homework right away. You help me clean this house.' So they pick up the floor and they put away clean clothes that need to be put away, sweep the floor, we do a load of dishes.

Achievement-Oriented Activities vs. Family Time A third area of conflict for dual habitus couples was how to make trade-offs between spending time as a family versus on individual achievement-oriented activities. These conflicts came from parents' different upbringings, with parents raised with orchestrated achievement prioritizing activities, and parents raised with disciplined self-management advocating family time.

Like many parents raised by working class or protected employee parents, Jason Bradley grew up in a family where “family time” was regular and frequent, and scheduled enrichment activities were few. In contrast, his wife Monica had a highly scheduled childhood. Jason felt his wife discouraged his preference for spending “down-time” with his children, viewing him as “a little bit funny” for prioritizing “tenderness” over “the calendar.”

My wife thinks I’m a little bit funny, because I’m the kind of guy who likes to have a cup of coffee and just talk. I tend to want to express a lot of tenderness with the kids and she doesn’t have that same desire. She’s like the domestic engineer. She’s the one who gets things done and gets the kids where they need to go and knows the calendar. She has these ideas on what the kids should be doing, and so she does them and she’s the one responsible for ensuring that they get done and the kids get to where they need to go, and she signs them up for things. But I don’t see her expressing that kind of tenderness that (pauses) I think my mom expressed. It always seems like she cared and you knew it. And sometimes I worry that my kids don’t know. I mean (my wife) is kind of the enforcer, keeping the kids on focus, and I’m the one who would go out of my way to tell my kids I love ‘em, you know?

Like Jason’s wife, Leah Kerrigan felt enrichment activities were beneficial for her children, based largely on her own childhood which was packed with gymnastics, dance, and music lessons, and was frustrated with her husband’s belief that their children could get the same benefit from “playing in the backyard.” Leah attributed their differences to their different upbringings, where she had lots of orchestrated achievement activities and her husband did not.

I put a bit more emphasis on outside activities than he would. We do Scouts and gymnastics and swimming, and I drive the children to choir at church. I was always really into music and gymnastics and stuff (as a kid), so for me

it's really important. But I think he'd be happy if we just stayed home all the time. Jim thinks that they don't really need it (activities), that they could just as easily accomplish that by playing in the backyard.

Conclusions How did dual habituses and conflicting parenting approaches affect a couple's ultimate child-rearing strategy? From the examples above, it is clear that when couples disagreed about the best parenting approach, neither parent got exactly what they wanted. Although parents described individual instances or issues where they were successful in instituting their own preferred parenting practices, they also described times where they remained dissatisfied with their partner's practices and had to "agree to disagree."

The conclusions related to theory are three-fold. First, parents' current class position did not dictate their parenting strategy. Instead, parenting strategy was shaped by each parent's social origin as well as their destination. Parents who moved from working class or protected employee backgrounds to semi-autonomous professional careers in their own life trajectory were likely to reproduce elements of their own disciplined self-management upbringings in raising their own children. This happened because parents' ideas about how best to advantage their children were deeply affected by their own disciplined self-management upbringings. This finding supports Bourdieu's theory of cleft habitus; that our roots as well as our class destinations shape our logic and practices.

Second, many of these middle class couples had differences in their habitus which lead them to prioritize different cultural capitals for their child, contradicting Bourdieu's assumption of class endogamy. In fact, the dual habitus situation led parents to unintentionally create piece-meal, even self-contradictory parenting strategies where

neither parent's preferred approach was fully realized. Parents' dual habituses offer one explanation for why we so often saw parents practicing a combination parenting approach, somewhere mid-way between orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management, as they struggled to negotiate an acceptable compromise, unintentionally (or intentionally) derailing one another's roadmaps for children's success.

Third, parenting strategy was not dictated by the spouse with more cultural capital. Instead, each spouse's habitus was reflected in a couple's parenting strategy. In dual habitus couples, the parent "marrying up" did not unquestioningly attempt to adopt the strategies and practices of their spouse. In fact, the spouse with a "lower" background often rejected and even scoffed at the orchestrated achievement practices of their higher cultural capital spouse, a pattern noted by Bourdieu (1984). But even when they admired their spouse's cultural capital as superior to their own, and hoped to pass it along to their children, disciplined self-management logic were unable to fully adopt their spouse's parenting logic and strategy, unwittingly undermining the orchestrated achievement approach as a result.

Chapter 8

The “Middle Class Gaze” and the Need for Recognition

The preceding chapters have explored all the ways that habitus influenced strategic parenting for these middle class parents. But this research also showed that parents, as actors in the field of parenting, felt accountable to meet certain standards of “good parenting” behavior in order to be recognized as legitimate “good parents.” In this chapter I explore how parents’ need for recognition in the field shifted parenting practices, encouraging disciplined self-management parents towards orchestrated achievement. Further, I show how the need for recognition shifted the structure of the field, as parents engaged in a symbolic struggle to redefine the terms of “good parenting.”

Parents in this study, particularly mothers, were clearly aware of, and influenced by, a “middle class gaze.” Both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management mothers were alert to specific ways in which their own parenting strategies were considered lacking by other middle class parents. Orchestrated achievement parents responded to social critiques of both “over-scheduling” and “over-parenting” their children, leaving them with mental health problems and no room for independent self-management. Likewise, disciplined self-management parents felt judged for *failing* to manage and schedule their children sufficiently, and for not instituting family rituals.

However, although each group perceived social judgment about aspects of their parenting, only disciplined self-management parents changed their parenting practices in an attempt to be recognized as meeting the middle class social standards of legitimate parenting. Although disciplined self-management parents resisted perceived negative assessments of their parenting practices, they simultaneously internalized these evaluations, doubting the effectiveness of their parenting strategy, and taking steps towards aligning their practices with those of orchestrated achievement in several areas. In an effort to be recognized as legitimate “good parents,” disciplined self-management parents overrode their habitus-inspired parenting logic, shifting their practices towards those of orchestrated achievement.

In contrast, orchestrated achievement parents also took steps to be recognized as conforming to the standards of “good parenting,” but did this without ever changing their parenting practices. Instead of actual changes in their parenting, these parents used *symbolic strategies* to redefine the terms of “good parenting,” reframing their own behaviors as falling within the definition of legitimate parenting practices. These parents were able to mobilize their cultural capital to exert *symbolic dominance* in the field, consistent with Bourdieu’s theory that cultural capital and prestige advantage actors in struggles for legitimacy in the field (Bourdieu 1984).

In addition to exploring the way that the need for recognition in the field shaped parenting strategy, this chapter also provides an opportunity to explore the way that standards within a field shift and evolve, as both protected employees and semi-autonomous professional parents struggled to be recognized as “good parents.” The impact of a downward focused upper-middle class “gaze” was evident in disciplined self-

management parents' frequent references to orchestrated achievement parenting practices. In describing their own parenting approach, disciplined self-management parents used orchestrated achievement parents as their reference group, and their parenting logic frequently reflected a desire to emulate, resist, or reject orchestrated achievement practices.¹⁶ Despite the fact that disciplined self-management parents had made conscious strategic choices about the parenting trade-offs they were making, mothers in particular felt dogged by an upper middle class gaze, making them feel judged and inferior about their parenting decisions and practices.

However, although the upper middle class gaze made disciplined self-management parents question the adequacy of their own parenting, they did not passively accept the perceived social judgment of their own inferiority. Instead, these parents *resisted* negative judgments, offering counter-judgments which cast a critical lower-middle class "reverse gaze" back on the orchestrated achievement practices of semi-autonomous professional parents. The power of this reverse gaze was evident in the defensive responses of orchestrated achievement parents to these perceived slights and criticism.

These data offer a view of the middle class gaze as neither uniform nor stable, but rather as a dynamic process, constantly contested and re-defined. As the two groups struggled for symbolic dominance, seeking legitimacy for their own practices, they shaped each other's practices and beliefs, co-constructing the definitions and practices of "good parenting" in a dynamic, evolving process.

¹⁶ Because I did not ask parents to discuss other parents or parenting approaches in the interview questions, all talk related to "other" parenting practices was raised unprompted by the parents themselves in the course of describing their own parenting priorities, and reflected their own perceived need to respond to a social judgment or valuation about their parenting.

Further, this study provides empirical evidence about how cultural capital shapes struggles for social legitimacy. Bourdieu's argument that dominant groups, with more cultural capital, will ultimately obtain symbolic domination is largely supported by this research. Although disciplined self-management practices were sometimes judged superior to those of orchestrated achievement, aiming an uncomfortable "reverse gaze" on orchestrated achievement parents, orchestrated achievement parents were able to avoid negative self-evaluations, using symbolic strategies to reframe and redefine the terms of "good parenting" to always include themselves. In this effort, orchestrated achievement parents were supported by social institutions that reinforced the legitimacy of orchestrated achievement practices. In contrast, parents with working class or protected employee careers and backgrounds were not always able to do this, and sometimes internalized negative judgments about the adequacy of their parenting.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In each one, I illustrate the conclusions above using three examples of classed symbolic struggles; parent management versus child self-management, "overscheduling" vs "down-time," and family routines vs. family rituals.

Parent-Management vs. Child Self-Management Perhaps the most debated and volatile issue among middle-class parents was whether "good parenting" required vigilant parental-management and child-supervision versus the careful fostering of children's self-management skills and independence. Orchestrated achievement parents leaned towards parent-management: children were almost constantly interacting intensively with parents and/or experts, and rarely spent time without adult supervision. In contrast, disciplined self-management parents leaned towards independence: their children spent a

great deal of time with no direct adult involvement, and were regularly under their own supervision. In the paragraphs below, I use quotes from parents to describe the symbolic struggle over this issue, illustrating that although both groups felt the need to “do work” to be recognized as “good parents,” orchestrated achievement parents did only symbolic work, where disciplined self-management parents felt pressured to take steps towards parent-management.

In a symbolic attempt to define parent-management as “love” and child self-management as neglectful, orchestrated achievement parents used put-downs of “loosey-goosey” parents who didn’t properly manage and monitor their children. Disciplined self-management parents were aware of this judgment, and responded in two ways. First, they doubted the adequacy of their parenting, and made attempts to modify their behavior to meet “good parenting” standards. However, disciplined self-management parents also resisted negative judgments, and made the counter-assertion that orchestrated achievement parent-management eroded children’s freedom and independence. This reverse judgment was clearly recognized by orchestrated achievement parents, who used symbolic strategies to redefine the terms of the argument, insisting that they, too, were raising independent children.

In an act of symbolic domination, orchestrated achievement parents equated constant parental management and monitoring with *loving* their children. Like many other parents pursuing orchestrated achievement, Belinda Foster raised the question of whether “loosey-goosey” parents love their kids as much as parents who constantly supervise them. Belinda also suggested that parents who leave their children unsupervised were endangering them.

I mean I think there are some people who are really kind of loosey-goosey as parents and I do sometimes wonder. Like they don't seem to have a clue what their kids are doing. I mean you can never accuse someone and say they don't love their kids as much as we love our kids, right? Or if something happened to their kid, that they would be any less devastated or anything. But I do sort of wonder.

Laura Zeigler equated parent-management of children's academic performance with love. When her two daughters switched from an exclusive private school into the local middle school, Laura felt they were shocked to be exposed to kids "whose parents don't love them."

So they went to (public middle school) from (private school for gifted children), and it was just like throwing them into the ocean. Into the ice-cold north Pacific or north Atlantic. Oh, my gosh. They were starting with everyone else, 'cause the public school philosophy was, they throw everybody together in sixth grade. And they were stunned, 'cause they had just never been around kids like that, whose parents don't love them, who don't have any idea what their kids are doing.

Lack of parent-management and monitoring was framed by orchestrated achievement parents as having deep, destructive effects on children's lives. Kathleen York, like other orchestrated achievement parents with this approach, felt that leaving a child unsupervised after school was "unthinkable" and damaging.

Last week they had a half day of school and I took Alison to get lunch at the mall. And we saw this girl there with another kid, and they were there having lunch together. It's two 12-year olds! And I just thought 'That's really weird.'" And Alison's like "Mom, I don't think their parents are there." And I said, "I don't think so either." They just dropped them off! I mean it breaks your heart because—and I know of an instance where this one kid, all year last year she'd go home to a dark home and there were no parents, just by herself. I feel judgmental when I talk about

this, but I just know for me, that would be (pauses)
unthinkable. But I know it affects them.

Disciplined self-management parents, especially mothers, responded to perceived pressure to manage their children like orchestrated achievement parents with both self-doubt and resistance. In describing her reluctance to manage and monitor her children's activities, Linda Norris, a disciplined self-management parent, expressed both her fears of inadequacy ("I may not be the best mommy") compared to orchestrated achievement parents, and her counter-judgment about the dependence of orchestrated achievement children.

I know other moms are much better at playing with their kids and doing activities with their kids a lot. And I admit that I am not that mom. My kids are pretty independent. And you go through that, 'Oh gosh, I may not be the best mommy.' You wonder 'Did I do enough or did I do too little?' But then I think my kids are independent, and they're able to be alone and not need constant attention, and I think that's a good thing. 'Cause I know kids that are my kids' ages that are constantly, 'Mom, will you go and throw a ball with me?'

Like Linda, Peggy Crosby was a disciplined self-management parent who expressed deep ambivalence about her parenting decisions ("I'm not that good at that."). Although she felt her children needed firm discipline and independence to succeed, she struggled with orchestrated achievement messages – reinforced by institutions ("school or seminars") - telling her that her approach was damaging for children, and orchestrated achievement parent-management was superior.

What you hear at school or seminars or whatever is just to be supportive and, like, cheer them on, and get behind them. And I'm usually someone who – well, I don't have

time for that. Like Katee, let's say her sock has a hole in the toe. It will ruin her whole day. And I'm just not having it. I'm like 'Get up. We're getting out the door. Quit fidgeting or I'm going to spank your butt.'" And so I think there are times when you just have to pull 'em up by their bootstraps and say "Too bad, move on." But there's other times when you have to try to help them to work through their feelings and to validate them. And I may not validate my kids much, maybe. I'm not that good at that.

In order to be recognized as "good parents," these disciplined self-management mothers tried to sidestep negative judgments about their parenting by modifying their behavior to align better with orchestrated achievement parent-management practices, and by using symbolic tactics to stretch the definition of "parent-management" to include their own practices. Disciplined self-management mothers took steps to cover themselves from criticism by monitoring their children from afar, allowing their children some distance and independence while protecting themselves from disapproval. Helen Moore always made sure her house looked welcoming for her children, even though she and her husband weren't able to be home with them immediately after school. "I always open the curtains in the kitchen because I never want the kids to come home to a dark house. I can't stand that idea."

Helen also called them on her cell phone as soon as they arrived home from school, instructing them to start working on their homework and chores in her absence, in order to feel she was monitoring them from afar.

I used to bust (my daughter) every day. I'd call and say, "What are you doing?" (she'd say) "Doing my homework." I said, "No, you're not. What are you doing?" "Watching TV." I said, "Turn it off." "Okay, Mom, I'll turn it off right now." And then I call back around about three minutes later "Did you turn the TV off?" "Yep." And I said, "You're lying to me."

Despite the fact that she actively sought opportunities to teach her children to handle themselves without adult supervision, Linda Norris limited her children's time alone to make sure that she could not be held guilty of parental neglect.

Douglas and I, sometimes in the mornings we wake up around 6:00 and go for a walk. I mean just down to the corner and back. It's not a biggie. But it's like, "We have the cell phone." Griffen knows if something happened, he could call somebody. And we walk as fast as we could home.

In addition to schools, the orchestrated achievement biases of other social institutions reinforced parent-management, rejecting disciplined self-management independence-building practices as "bad parenting." As described above, Linda Norris occasionally left her 11-year-old son Alex home alone with his 9 year old sister for brief periods of time, but when she tried to enroll him in a baby-sitting course last year, the Red Cross rejected him as "too young." Despite the fact that there is no law determining that an 11 year old is too young to stay home alone or babysit; the Red Cross set this age-limit reinforcing orchestrated achievement beliefs about the need for parent-management.

Like many disciplined self-management parents, Helen Moore also felt judged as "negligent" because she didn't monitor and attend all her children's activities, as this excerpt from my observation fieldnotes illustrated.

[fieldnotes] Before going to bed, Helen looks over her calender to plan the week's activities. "Oh crap! Tuesday is Lisa's girl scout ceremony! We missed it last time and now I have to work late Tuesday. Evan, you could do it, but you're supposed to see your nutritionist that night." Helen looks upset. "It's awful nobody will be there for her. It makes you feel so bad, like you're a negligent parent. But what can you do?"

Another example from the same family illustrated Helen's guilt over leaving her children unsupervised to prepare their dinner while she worked. Despite the fact that Helen valued and deliberately fostered her children's independent self-management skills, she felt judged as a "bad parent" for failing to live up to parent-management standards, by allowing her children to get their own dinner.

[fieldnotes] While Lisa watches TV, Sean microwaves leftover pizza and breadsticks for her. He makes himself a salad and joins Lisa to eat dinner in front of the TV. Helen calls from work, and Sean answers. "Lisa's about to start her homework.... You're *not* a bad parent... We already kinda had dinner... I had salad, and Lisa had leftover pizza...."

The power of the need to be recognized in the field was also evident in the symbolic work of parents doing orchestrated achievement. In describing their parenting practices, orchestrated achievement parents fought against the perceived critique that children who are constantly monitored will become dependent adults. Parents did this in two ways: first, by arguing that orchestrated achievement parent-management actually did offer children freedom, and second, by arguing that parent-management ultimately led to independent adults. Like other orchestrated achievement parents, Belinda Foster almost constantly monitored her middle-school aged son's activities, but insisted that he still had room to build his independence. In this act of symbolic domination, Belinda tried to redefine "freedom" to include being in constant visual and cell-phone contact with a parent.

Chad and I talk about that, about trying to give 'em some freedom. Like we let Matt and his friend go to the football game and sit by themselves in the seats. Chad and I were a few sections over, so we could see them. And then they called me and told me they were doing fine and everything.

Martha Howland was highly involved in managing her children's schedules and activities, but used "research" to validate her argument that this practice ultimately leads children to be "independent adults." This is another example of orchestrated achievement symbolic domination, as Martha made a counterintuitive, contradictory assertion – which she supported using the authority of social institutions ("research") - that reinforced her own orchestrated achievement practices as "good parenting."

I really believe that really dependent kids can become independent adults. That's kind of the theme that goes through parenting for me. So I just want to make sure that I am there for them as much as possible and they know that they are unconditionally loved. Just try to spend as much time as I can. Because I have heard, research does show that dependent little kids, the research shows that they become well adjusted, independent adults.

"Over-scheduling" vs. "Down Time" A second topic that made middle class parents uneasy and defensive was the question of "over-scheduling" versus "down-time." These middle class parents all saw value in scheduled activities for their children, and all the children in this study participated in a range of activities outside of school. However, parents also agreed that "overscheduling" children was unhealthy, as they need "down time" to protect their mental health. The practices of disciplined self-management aligned closely with these accepted guidelines for "good parenting" practices, scheduling plenty of "free time" and fewer, less intensive activities for children. In contrast, orchestrated achievement parents generally had their children involved in schedules that could only be described as hectic or frenetic.

However, despite the fact that disciplined self-management parenting practices received social legitimation, orchestrated achievement parents effectively used symbolic

techniques to assert that their own orchestrated achievement practices also provided “down-time” for children. This example demonstrates that disciplined self-management parents had the power to exert influence on cultural norms as well as their orchestrated achievement peers. However, it also shows how parents with more cultural capital (orchestrated achievement parents) had the ability to use symbolic tactics to reframe social understandings, thereby avoiding changing their parenting practices or internalizing negative social judgments, even when their behavior did not meet recognized standards of “good parenting.”

Parents doing disciplined self-management were openly critical of orchestrated achievement parents who they accused of “over-scheduling” their children’s lives. Like many disciplined self-management parents, Chad Foster’s kids played a couple of different after-school sports and had lots of unscheduled time. Chad was skeptical of the flurry of organized activities that many of his neighbors’ and friends’ seemed to value, suggesting they might have more to do with social status than enrichment.

I don’t want more things to do, not busy stuff. I think that’s kind of a waste of time. Taking a lot of the macramé classes and stuff like that. I think that’s a danger, too. I think a lot of kids these days—and we know some people that do— they’re just over-scheduled. I mean the kids have two or three things to do every single day in some cases. And it’s a social thing. I think parents think it reflects better on them or on the kid to have the kid involved in a gazillion things.

Like Chad, Jennifer Peters saw the value in fewer activities and more “free time” for her daughter. Jennifer’s expression of self-doubt in not pursuing achievement-oriented activities for her child (“maybe we’ve taken that too far in some cases”) reflects her

inability to completely reject the orchestrated achievement practices of her peers and neighbors.

As far as activities go, I don't know if this is a good thing or not. (My husband) and I have always been big believers in "free time is a very good thing." Being bored is a very good thing. Having down time is a very good thing. And I think maybe we've taken that too far in some cases. But she has not had a childhood where you're going from activity to activity and to activity. Mine, she likes some activities, but to be honest, she likes her free time. She likes to be able to flop down and sit in her room and just play.

Despite the middle class consensus about the importance of down time to protect children's mental health, orchestrated achievement parents engineered activity-packed schedules for their children, allowing almost no unscheduled time. However, although orchestrated achievement parents' were defensive about being overscheduled, they did not express self-doubt, acknowledge admiration for disciplined self-management practices, or try to change their own practices to emulate them. Instead, orchestrated achievement parents responded to the perceived critique by working to redefine "down-time" to legitimize their own parenting approach. These parents used four symbolic tactics that allowed them to reframe the terms so that their own highly-scheduled practices fit the definition of "good parenting": 1) claiming their children actually had lots of downtime, 2) stating that their children's activities were actually a form of "down time," 3) contrasting their children's schedules with much busier "others" (usually "Asians"), and 4) hiding or medicalizing their children's mental health problems and denying any connection between these problems and over-scheduling.

Surprisingly, despite their children's crowded schedules, many orchestrated achievement parents stressed the importance of down time, implying that their child had lots of it. These parents felt empowered to assert their own preferred version of reality, despite evidence to the contrary. Kathleen York explained how important it was for her daughter to have time "just to sit." Given that her daughter swam three days per week, had weekly workouts with a private swim coach, attended theater group every day after school, took a weekly voice lesson, worked with a math tutor twice a week, did girl scouts and an after-school running program, and met with a psychologist weekly, it's hard to imagine when Allison's daughter found time to "lie in a hammock."

A lot of the pressure is on the kids. It's "Okay, what activity are you going to be in? So you'll do soccer and would you like to do swimming?" And it's all about achieving and doing and I find a lot of them just aren't—they're not "in the moment." And we have to pull back and say, "Well, back up a minute. You need time just to sit and just go lie in a hammock."

Orchestrated achievement parents also attempted to obscure their child's lack of "down-time" by recasting achievement-oriented orchestrated achievement activities as "fun" and "social," and therefore not taking a toll on their child's mental health. For example, Laura Zeigler acknowledged that while many of her children's activities were demanding (e.g. Suzuki music lessons, swim club), some were "fun" or social, and therefore the equivalent of "down time."

We're really good at saying, "Oh, are the kids overloaded? Are they doing too much?" And I ask them. But the thing is, they love the robotics team, they love the kids there, they love the activities that they do. They look forward to it. They don't resent it or anything. Then they're doing Girl Scouts, which is with their friends so they get a chance to see these girls a couple times a month; they went to

Chicago for the weekend in September, so they have fun doing stuff like that. And Johanna has a group violin lesson, which is all fun. Her teacher plays musical games with the kids.

Because their children had little free time during the school year, many orchestrated achievement parents asserted that summer vacations and infrequent family trips offered reasonable mental health breaks from their children's busy schedules. By stretching the definition of down-time to include yearly vacations, these orchestrated achievement parents attempted to use symbolic tactics to align themselves with "good parenting" practices. Wayne Underhill admitted his family operates on a demanding schedule, but argued that bi-annual family vacations provided "ample space to regroup and restore the soul."

We see a lot of families that have said, 'Well, okay, we're going to take the kids for three weeks to the family vacation home or go to Europe for a week.' It gets into this vicious cycle of like living in successful families, right? Because the expectations are always high. So the only way you can do that without decompensating or ending up potentially mentally ill is just to have ample space to regroup and just restore the soul, you know.

Like Wayne, Laura Zeigler also insisted that even though children might not get any down time in their daily lives, vacations also provided a legitimate source of down time.

Their after-school activities in the winter, it can be sort of intense. But we try to schedule in down time where there's nothing happening, which doesn't really happen at our house because there's always something happening. But in the summer, it's a big change. We go away to this place in Maine, it's out in the country and you can open the front door and run outside. There's kids down the road, there's a place where they can go swimming and there's a general store. It's very friendly for children and very, very different from living in this kind of intense setting that

we're in here. So it's a good balance for them. They get that in the summer.

In order to counter social judgments that their children were too scheduled and would suffer mental health consequences, orchestrated achievement parents also contrasted themselves with more scheduled “Others,” who they argued were the *true* over-schedulers. By using these “others” as a reference point, orchestrated achievement parents hoped to reframe cultural understandings to cast their own children as relatively unscheduled and rich in down-time. Pointing to other families who were *more* “over-scheduled” gave orchestrated achievement parents a way to identify themselves as “good parents” by contrast. The most common target group was “Asians,” who were blamed for both “over-scheduling” and putting too much pressure on children to achieve.

Although Martha Howland’s children were enrolled in multiple activities every day, and her son suffered some anxiety issues, she identified her family as having “balance” in contrast to “Asian” families who she viewed as “destructive.”

There’s got to be a balance. I mean, I see a lot of the Asian parents, like one little boy, he couldn’t come out and play in the summer because he had to practice his piano for an hour and a half, and he had math quizzing and different things like that. I mean I am totally not like that. I mean we are not—we don’t do that kind of thing. I think that can lead to very destructive things. And maybe we’ll get the same result. But there’s a balance.

Parents compared themselves with “Asians” in part to convince themselves that their schedules weren’t as bad as they could have been. In the fieldnotes below, Dawn Ross tries to help her husband Mark and family to feel less upset about their over-scheduled

day – and lack of down-time – by contrasting their schedule with that of an Asian neighbor family.

[fieldnotes] Mark joins us on the soccer field mid-way through Bennie’s practice. “Did you get Miles?” Dawn asks. “Yeah.” “And took him to his soccer practice?” “Yeah.” he says. He was supposed to stay at Miles’ practice where we would meet him later, but apparently he forgot. Dawn doesn’t say anything, just looks annoyed.

After practice, Colin tries to join his friends on the climber near the soccer field, but Dawn pulls him off and directs him home. “We have to go get Miles at his practice now.” Colin looks sulky.

We drive over to a small playground across town to get Miles from practice. As we drive Dawn says “Mark, you think we have it bad. Ke Seouk has skating and two soccers today!” “Well we have Science Olympiad and two soccers,” counters Mark. “And baseball!” adds Stephen gleefully. Dawn looks annoyed.

Parents fought implications that orchestrated achievement’s lack of down-time was damaging to their children’s mental health in two ways. First, parents hid the fact of their child’s mental health problems from others. Parents did not disclose this information lightly, even in a confidential interviewing environment, and they specified that they had a policy of hiding this information from those outside their immediate family. Second, orchestrated achievement parents medicalized their child’s social, emotional, and behavioral problems, defining them as biological or genetic, instead of related to the pressure and stress of orchestrated achievement practices.

Although orchestrated achievement parents disclosed their children’s mental health problems during these interviews, parents did not share information about their children’s mental health problems with others. Carolyn Underhill explained that her family had not shared information about her son’s anxiety issues with anyone but her mother, and her

worry about disclosure was apparent as she sought extra reassurances about the confidentiality of this information.

Of course, our family knows that he has struggled with this; my mother knows. But we've kept it private that way. As an adult, he may decide one day he wants to tell people. I assume if he marries or whatever, there'll be people he will trust to tell. We've said, "One day you may, you may not." I don't know. But that's just not a cool thing to talk about as a child. Well we've never—we don't tell. We've discussed it, because we've had friends share their issues with us, but I never say anything. I listen and I'm empathetic, but.... But Henry—I mean you won't use his name, right? This is not something that comes out obviously, about him by name, and our family, right?

Medicalizing their children's mental health issues provided orchestrated achievement parents with another strategy to align themselves with the dictates of "good parenting." Laura Zeigler explained that her daughter Johanna has been treated for anxiety with therapy and drugs for several years. "She will worry about a test that is six months away, worry about college, worry about saving money for a home." However, instead of linking Johanna's stress to her demanding, achievement-oriented schedule (including private violin lessons, group lessons, private orchestra, swim club, judo, fencing, robotics team, girl scouts, and a "Women in Science" program at the University), Laura described Johanna's anxiety in medical terms, as an "auditory processing" problem, related to the functioning of her brain.

Like Laura, Carolyn Underhill viewed her son Henry's anxiety about school and other demands through a medical lens, instead of linking it to his demanding private school, sports teams, music lessons, or other high-achievement arenas.

You know, there are things when I think back I'm like, 'Oh, I wish I could go back and actually do a few of those

things better with Henry.’ But I wasn’t tuned in, I just didn’t know. And, you know, professionally I’d asked (Henry’s therapist) about this, and he still might have had the same issues exactly. Do high anxiety kids come from a certain type of parent? Kind of. But not exclusively. And it’s not that we made him anxious. He was born with a certain amount of anxiety.

“Family Time”: *Rituals vs. Routines* A third symbolic battle was waged over the appropriate way that families should spend time together. All middle class parents valued the importance of “family time,” but families differed in the way this time was organized. As I outlined earlier, in disciplined self-management families both mothers and fathers spent a great deal of time with their children in routine, daily activities, such as making meals, doing homework, and doing chores. In contrast, in orchestrated achievement families, fathers did not have a regular role in the daily routines of family life, but rather participated in infrequent, scheduled “family rituals.” Interviews and observations provided evidence that the family rituals of orchestrated achievement set the standard for “good parenting” behavior in the middle class: “Good parenting” was widely acknowledged among both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management parents to require spending “family time” that was organized around planned rituals, not casual, routine interactions. Although disciplined self-management parents struggled to redefine “family time” to include informal family routines, they also described having made attempts to institute family rituals into their family lives, in order to be recognized as “good parents.”

This example offers a powerful demonstration of the power of the dominant to use symbolic tactics to set the boundaries of cultural legitimacy. The fact that “family time” is a key element of current cultural understandings of “good parenting” would seem to

provide evidence of the dominance of the disciplined self-management parenting practices of protected employee parents, whose families prioritize spending lots of leisure time, daily, all-together. The fact that semi-autonomous professional parents spent very little time together as a family would suggest that orchestrated achievement practices would be socially recognized as inferior. However, in an act of symbolic domination, parents doing orchestrated achievement were able to reframe the definition of family time so that the infrequent rituals that they squeezed into their ambitious family schedules actually set the standard of “good parenting” for all middle class families. Somehow, through this symbolic domination, the frequent, relaxed, daily family interactions of families doing disciplined self-management have been deemed inferior in the field of parenting.

Similar to the “quality time” vs. “quantity time” argument¹⁷, all middle class parents agreed that “family rituals” were an important element of good parenting, above and beyond the amount of time parents spent with children. Despite the fact that disciplined self-management parents spent a great deal of time with their children each day, the power of those with higher cultural capital (orchestrated achievement parents) was evident in the fact that disciplined self-management parents still admired the deliberate, ritualized interactions of orchestrated achievement, and often attempted to emulate them. For example, Linda Norris described her admiration for a family dinner conversation ritual, which she tried unsuccessfully to adopt. Linda’s comment suggests that the superiority of the family rituals of semi-autonomous professionals has been institutionally legitimated by the media (“we read in a magazine”).

¹⁷ Bianchi, S. M. (2000) "Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity?" *Demography* , 37, 4, 139-154

At dinnertime we used to do this one we read in a magazine and it's like (everybody says) something (pauses, eyes to ceiling, remembering)...something sad and something nice, something... it was like four something's. Over the course of the meal you're supposed to say "Tell me something sad that happened today, tell me something happy that happened today. Something that made you laugh," you know. We kind of killed that, it was a lot of work. But it's just a way, you know, that's an opportunity for us to say, "What did happen today? What was your day like?"

Like Linda, Helen Moore viewed ritualized family dinner conversations as "good parenting," and tried to incorporate a scripted dinner-conversation ritual during my dinner-time visits. The fieldnotes below describe Helen's family's rejection of this attempt as false and for my benefit. This contradiction suggests that Helen evidently did not acknowledge her family's typical dinner routine - enjoying a TV show together and talking casually - as "good parenting."

[fieldnotes] As we sat down for dinner, Evan mentioned that American Idol was on. Sean (age 14) jumped up and turns on the TV (which we could see from the kitchen). Helen looked at me apologetically and said "Our rule is no TV at dinner." (The TV stayed on.) Helen explained to me "Normally we each go around the table and everybody says something about their day, something good and something bad." Lisa (age 12) raised an eyebrow and says "Right, mom. We did that one time, like, two years ago." Sean and Evan laughed in agreement. Helen glared at Lisa, then said "Well, we talk about our day, stuff that happened." While we ate dinner, everybody else watched American Idol while Helen described a dispute at work.

Despite the fact that all middle class parents accepted that family rituals were an important element of "good parenting," many disciplined self-management parents resisted the implication that "family time" included *only* scheduled family rituals. For example, Linda Norris resisted the idea that organized, resource-intensive family outings were the only measure of "good parenting." She felt that the *quantity* of time spent in

“earshot” of each other was what mattered most, and argued that the definition of “family time” should also include casual, spontaneous time together.

I’m not really big into the, “Let’s all get in the car and drive out to the cider mill.” I mean, for me it’s knowing that we’re all nearby. And we could all be doing different things. Douglas could be cooking and I could be working on the yard. We could be watching TV, reading, taking a nap. To me it’s not about what you do so much as how much time you spend together. It’s not, “We got tickets to U of M (football) game!”... I mean, Amanda might go two doors down, and Alex might have Dan (his cousin) over, playing computer games in the basement. To me, it’s still family time because we’re all in the house together. We’re all, like, within earshot of one another.

Orchestrated achievement parents avoided feeling judged about their relative lack of family time by symbolically reframing their family rituals and retreats as equal or superior to routine family interactions. Unlike Linda and Helen, orchestrated achievement parents did not talk about either admiring or trying to adopt elements of the organization of family life of disciplined self-management families. Although orchestrated achievement parents described family connectedness as critical to their children’s success, they downplayed the impact of the father’s absence on their children’s lives, extolling the virtues of infrequent retreats and rituals. For example, Daniel Westbrook was an international consultant, who was home only “10 or 15 days” in the last 6 months. He described the impact of his absence on his children’s lives as offset by extended annual “family retreats.” Like other parents practicing orchestrated achievement, Daniel implied that infrequent ritualized family involvement would make up for the lack of frequent, routine family involvement.

Well, I mean the one down side is there’s always a period of reintegration. Because I have a routine, I have a way of being that does not necessarily take the family into account. And

the family has a routine that does not hinge upon me, and does not require me. Because it can't. But it's tough because it's hard to fit yourself back into the routine when you're gone. And there are little developmental things that you do miss if you're away a lot. Fortunately, because my work is terribly flexible, I do get to have these big, huge chunks of time- a month or two every year - where I can just be with family. And we use that for travel. So those really are the high points of our lives. We take a month and go to Europe or something like that.

Conclusions Interviews with these middle class parents showed the power of the need for recognition as “good parents” to shape parenting practices. In particular, the need for recognition in the field pushed disciplined self-management parents away from the strategies generated by their habitus, and towards the practices of orchestrated achievement. Disciplined self-management parents were pushed towards parent-management – and away from fostering children’s self-management skills that their own logic dictated – by the need to conform to standards of “good parenting.” These parents also felt accountable to institute family rituals instead of the routines that better supported their own priorities, in order to feel recognized as “good parents.”

As they responded to the need for recognition in the field, parents not only shifted their parenting practices, but also used symbolic strategies that constantly redefined the field. These examples showed that the standards for good parenting within the middle class were not uniform or static, but constructed through a dynamic process: both disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement parents used symbolic strategies to define the terms of legitimacy that policed one another’s parenting practices, and shaped definitions of “good parenting.”

Further, these findings provided an empirical example of how struggles for legitimacy unfold, confirming Bourdieu's theory that groups with more cultural capital are advantaged in battles for symbolic domination. However, orchestrated achievement parents did not always win battles for cultural legitimacy: if they did, then the middle class gaze would uniformly reflect orchestrated achievement parenting practices, and middle class "good parenting" practices might remain static over time. Instead, disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement parents were both engaged in a struggle for social dominance, wrestling and wrangling for cultural legitimacy.

In this battle, both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management parents were creative in using symbolic tactics to gain legitimacy for their own practices, for example, stretching the definition of "parent-monitoring" to include cell-phone check-ins, equating parent-monitoring with "love," and contrasting themselves against cultural "others" (Asians). These data help paint a picture of how parenting practices in the middle class might shift over time as result of the dynamic process of symbolic struggle: as each group struggled to shift the definition of "good parenting" slightly to validate their own practices, the other responded by changing or reframing their own practices or redefining the terms to align themselves accordingly.

In this struggle to capture the "good parenting" label, the decks were stacked towards orchestrated achievement parents, whose additional cultural capital gave them a distinct advantage. Unlike disciplined self-management parents, orchestrated achievement parents never described feeling inadequate or inferior as parents: They were always able to use symbolic tactics to re-align themselves safely under the protective shelter of the "good parenting" label. This may have resulted, in part, through the support and

validation of social institutions, which consistently reinforced the legitimacy of orchestrated achievement as “good parenting” (e.g. “schools and seminars,” Red Cross, and “research”), and undermined disciplined self-management parents’ confidence in their own practices. It may also have stemmed from the fact that the orchestrated achievement parents experienced less scrutiny of their parenting practices than did disciplined self-management parents, since their higher social position protected them from observation.

The symbolic work involved in seeking social legitimacy as a “good parent” was primarily undertaken by the middle class mothers in this study: the fathers remained largely silent on the topic. Because parents’ responses were unprompted, this discrepancy may simply imply that although fathers felt similarly to their wives, they did not mention it in the context of the interview. However, the parenting literature (Blackford 2004; Caputo 2007; Hays 1996; Waltzer 1998) suggests that mothers discussed this topic more readily because they held themselves accountable to the mandates of “good parenting” where fathers did not, and felt more pressure to either conform to this perceived pressure, or else to do symbolic work to avoid it.

The self-doubt and inadequacy that disciplined self-management mothers expressed, and the symbolic work that both disciplined self-management and orchestrated achievement mothers engaged in to seek legitimacy as “good parents,” extracted costs of both effort and mental strain, which were not shared by their husbands. These findings suggest that the work of being accountable as a “good parent” is an important aspect of the “second shift,” and should be included in future analyses of the gendered division of labor.

Finally, this analysis raises questions about parental confidence among working class and poor or low-income parents, especially mothers. If the need for recognition as “good parents” has the power to undermine parental confidence among working class or protected employee mothers, who can manage to find the time and economic resources to manage to conform to some aspects of orchestrated achievement, how do working class and poor mothers stand up under this scrutiny? Future research should examine the coping strategies that working-class and poor mothers use to maintain a sense of parental competence in the face of the middle class gaze.

Chapter 9

Hidden Collaborations: Child Achievement and Parent- and Expert-Boosting

In this study, I found that parents attributed different traits to children raised with orchestrated achievement vs. those raised with disciplined self-management. Although I was not able to measure children's distinctive achievements, I found that both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management parents generally viewed children raised with *orchestrated achievement* to be more motivated and accomplished than children raised with disciplined self-management. Further, both groups of parents saw children raised with orchestrated achievement as *innately* motivated and accomplished, seeming to overlook or “forget” the huge investment of parents' and experts' knowledge, labor, and money required by *orchestrated achievement*. These data offer an illustration of Bourdieu's idea of *misrecognition* (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977:p.xiii) as the resources and labor that orchestrated achievement parents (along with experts) invested in developing their children's distinctive achievements were “forgotten,” and the resulting achievements were credited solely to the motivation and effort of the children themselves.

Middle class parents doing orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management evaluated their children's abilities and motivation-levels differently (see Table 5). Parents practicing orchestrated achievement generally saw their children as

uniquely gifted and motivated to achieve. Parents using disciplined self-management generally described their children as lazy and unmotivated, and contrasted them with “other children,” who seemed to be *innately* driven to achieve. Neither group of parents acknowledged a connection between the parenting approach – and the labor of parents and other experts – and the motivation and accomplishments of these kids. The result was that children raised with orchestrated achievement *appeared* to be naturally more highly motivated and higher achieving than other children, obscuring the parental investment of time, cultural capital, and money that propped up these children’s impressive accomplishments.

Disciplined Self-Management Parents: “He’s Not a ‘Superkid’” When their children didn’t excel in school, sports, or any other socially-recognized area of achievement, parents practicing disciplined self-management were likely to attribute this to their child’s lack of motivation. Like other disciplined self-management parents, Jennifer Peters felt her daughter was capable of getting all A’s in school, and when she didn’t, Jennifer attributed it to being “lazy,” and “not that driven.”

She could achieve all A’s if she really wanted to. She’s not that driven. It’s like, “Do better, Kid. You know this stuff.” And if she were getting B’s because she didn’t get it, that would be one thing. But when she doesn’t turn in her homework and gets a B, yeah, I’m going to be mad. You do your assignments and you turn ‘em in. That’s your job. It’s the work ethic part. And we’re lazy, and she is, too.

Michelle Gill likewise described her son Edwin as able, but unmotivated. “We mainly worry about his study habits. I think he has a lot of ability, but not a whole lot of motivation.” Her husband Dale agreed, and worried that his son’s lack of motivation

might lead to future problems. “We see things that we know, if this keeps up into adulthood, there’s going to be some big problems.”

Parents pursuing disciplined self-management viewed their children’s lack of motivation or laziness as an innate, or natural, trait. Carl Archer lamented that his children were “not as motivated” as some others, feeling that motivation was determined “internally” vs. via any parenting strategies. “Kids seem to either be motivated or not motivated, internally. I would say (my kids) are not as motivated. And I don’t know where that comes from.”

In judging their children to be lazy or unmotivated, these disciplined self-management parents explicitly or implicitly compared them to “superkids” whose motivation they implied was innate. Like many other disciplined self-management parents, Andrew Peters contrasted his daughter’s lackadaisical attitude towards homework against other kids (“some people”) who he perceived to be naturally “driven to be the best.” Andrew did not acknowledge the role of parents or experts in children’s level of achievement or motivation.

I know kids who border on obsessive about doing their homework. They come home, “I’ve got to get the homework done.” Elizabeth is just more laid back about that kind of stuff. And she’s like me and Jennifer (my wife). I mean neither of us were achievement-oriented people ever in our lives. I mean, I would much rather have fun than score high or something. But some people are very driven to be the best and stuff like that. And I guess she would be a different person if she were like that. But it’s just who she is. She’s not real achievement-oriented.

Dawn Ross also contrasted her son against high-achieving “superkids” like his friend Andy, not acknowledging a parental role in children’s achievement or motivation.

Although Dawn was aware that Andy had been highly parent-managed and expert-boosted, playing on private soccer teams, taking private music lessons, and going to a University “speed and agility camp” each summer, she still viewed Andy as a “super-kid,” whose superior skills and achievements were innate.

(Stephen) would like to be a sports guy, but he's not very talented at it. He likes watching sports. He's more of a couch potato. We have to always be scooting him out the door so he doesn't just sit around. It's hard for him, because he's really just a good kid. He's not a super-kid, not a super-athlete, or a super-genius at anything. And I feel bad for him sometimes. Because his friend Andy seems like he's this huge success at everything he does. Sports, soccer, school. And Stephen is just this nice kid. He'll be a great dad, a great guy.

Some parents doing disciplined self-management did make a connection between the fact that motivated kids often came from semi-autonomous professional families. However, they did not often acknowledge the parental investment of resources, time, and cultural capital that went in to that motivation. For example, Evan Moore told me that before they were married, his wife Helen made extra money house-sitting for professional families. While the home-owners traveled to conferences or went on vacation, Helen and Evan would take care of their children and household. Evan described his admiration for a teenager they cared for in one such household, attributing the boy's motivation and achievements to his father's profession. However, Evan did not seem to recognize the parent and expert resources that went into creating this young man's achievements.

Helen and I used to do these nanny jobs for doctors and dentists – (whispers) rich people. Million dollar homes. And this one kid I really admired. He was ranked 2nd in the state in golf. And I remember in a three day period, while

Helen and I are sittin' watching TV, he studied non-stop from the time he got home. He only took breaks to exercise. And on Saturday he'd do his training. First he'd go out and run a bunch of miles. Then he'd eat 2 bananas and do 200 pull-ups on the swing set. Then he'd go eat 2 yogurts and do 100 sit-ups on the patio. He amazed me.

When I asked Evan "What do you think motivated that?" he shook his head, saying "I don't know. His dad was a doctor, so maybe seeing that every day. I don't know."

Orchestrated Achievement Parents: Forgetting the Expert/Parent "Givers" Behind "Giftedness" In contrast with disciplined self-management parents, orchestrated achievement parents generally described their children as "gifted" or unusually talented in some area, and viewed these "gifts" as natural, originating solely within the child. For example, like many other orchestrated achievement parents, despite the fact that her daughter had benefited from years of private art, music and dance lessons and camps, a creative writing clinic, and parental-management, Kelly Westbrook insisted that her daughter's creative abilities were "innate," and denied the role of expert boosting ("classes don't help her").

(My daughter) is really, really an amazing writer and an amazing artist. She's very good at math. I mean there's no—there isn't an area where she's not good. But she really stands out in the writing and poetry and stories and then her art is amazing. I mean, her grasp of three dimensional objects and how to draw people?— I could never do it. She gets an image in her head and it just comes right out.

When I asked "Is that cultivated through art class or anything?" Kelly shook her head, "No, it's an innate talent. The classes don't actually help her."

In addition to giftedness, the orchestrated achievement parents also described their children as innately self-motivated. After her 7th grade daughter and her friends organized

a multi-school presentation and fund-raiser for an environmental cause, Jessica Stewart attributed her daughter's unusual motivation and dedication to "her personality." Jessica never acknowledged the role of her own parental investment, her daughter's exclusive private school education, or the many experts and tutors who shaped her experience and abilities.

That's just her personality. She's super-organized and she's very goal-oriented. They wrote letters they published in the newspapers. They put together this whole PowerPoint presentation that they presented at several schools, which they organized on their own. They arranged a dance at school and they raised like \$500. I mean it was beautiful - some college students wouldn't do it that well. It's just her. I mean that's just the way she is.

Orchestrated achievement parents described their children as bright, gifted, and motivated not only because they displayed unusual gifts and talents, but even when there was evidence to the contrary. Where disciplined self-management parents ascribed mediocrity or failure in any endeavor to their child's innate laziness, parents doing orchestrated achievement identified these weaknesses as medical, emotional, or educational problems to be addressed by experts. For example, Kathleen York attributed her "gifted" daughter's difficulties with middle school math to the teaching approach used in her daughter's Montessori elementary school. Kathleen solved this problem with expert help, and never interpreted her daughter's "problem" with math as diminishing her intelligence or giftedness.

I loved the whole Montessori approach. The only thing we really had a problem transitioning with was math. It's just, the Montessori approach —I thought this was great in the beginning: the hands-on, touchy things. But the reality is, some of the old tried and true stuff, memorization and all of that, really would have been better for her. But we got her

tutoring. Lots of tutoring. I had to hire somebody. But now she's caught up and she's fine.

When their children had problems in school, parents doing orchestrated achievement did not change their view of their child's innate ability or motivation. Instead, parents attributed the behavior problems to educational issues (often "giftedness") and sought expert help, as Kelly Westbrook did for her "gifted" son Benji.

In second grade Benji's teacher called us in about his behavior. I went in to observe and she was teaching them about the timeline, from the beginning of time to the present, to show how little the human race has been around. Well, (my son) got that concept in about five seconds. And then he put his white board on the carpet and put his butt on it and spun around in a circle. He was so deeply bored. And the teacher could not get him back at all. So we started working with a therapist, a private psychologist. And it took us about two years to get him on track.

Even if their children seem to lack motivation to do their school work, parents practicing orchestrated achievement viewed this as a medical or physical issue, and did not define their child as "unmotivated." For example, although Laura Zeigler described her daughter Meghan as "deeply gifted," she frequently did not do her homework, or forgot to hand it in on time. Laura considered this a "time management" issue, not a motivational issue, and addressed it through expert help. In the fieldnotes below, in a parent-teacher meeting, Laura redefined the teacher's complaints about Meghan's poor classroom behavior ("she thinks she knows everything," her work is "illegible and late") as a "time management problem." Laura was able to continue to view her daughter as gifted, despite this critique, by framing her behavior as an organizational issue.

[fieldnotes] In the counsellor's office, Meghan's language arts teacher, Mrs. Eagen, sits across the table from Laura and

patiently describes the problems she is seeing with Meghan's classroom performance. "Her work is usually illegible and late, and I have caught her a few times trying to sneak her paper into the pile after I've already collected them. She thinks she already knows everything, and I keep having to confiscate her books because she's reading in class when she should be listening." Laura looks concerned and nods during this critique, then responds by saying "So it's a time-management issue."

Later, after the meeting, Laura explained to me that Meghan "has no sense of time," and sees a life coach weekly, to improve her organizational skills, "executive skills," and time management technique.

Conclusions These data showed that both orchestrated achievement and disciplined self-management parents saw children raised with orchestrated achievement as motivated, gifted "superkids," while characterizing children raised with disciplined self-management as lacking drive or talent. Both groups of parents attributed the distinctive achievements of these children solely to the children themselves, and "forgot" or misrecognized the collaborative role that both parents and experts played in creating these children's accomplishments and dispositions.

Through symbolic violence, disciplined self-management parents were led to doubt their own parenting practices, and their children's abilities. These findings illustrate that although disciplined self-management parents were able to resist or reject some aspects of orchestrated achievement, as Bourdieu suggested they might (1984), they were not only unable to avoid feeling judged and defensive about their parenting practices (see Chapter 8), but they also ended up viewing their children as innately inferior and lacking. In contrast, orchestrated achievement parents were not only able to dodge negative judgments about their parenting using symbolic tactics, they were also able to "forget"

their own contributions and expert investments, defining their children's accomplishments as individual efforts, when they were in fact collaborative projects.

Chapter 10

Conclusions, Discussion and Implications

This research suggests that the social order in America reproduces itself through the classed logic and practices of parenting. The middle class parents interviewed explained that their classed life experiences in childhood and in their careers shaped their ideas about the specific resources their children need to succeed as adults. Parents then drew on this classed logic to create parenting strategies and practices to advantage their children. Thus classed life experiences led to classed parenting practices, practices which constituted the classed experiences which orient children's choices, preferences and decisions throughout their lives. In Bourdieu's terminology, this research has offered empirical evidence that habitus reproduces itself from one generation to the next, through the logic of strategic parenting.

These data paint a picture of two distinct middle class parenting strategies that paralleled parents' two distinct locations in the labor force. Semi-autonomous professional parents pursued *orchestrated achievement* adopted parenting strategies that they hoped would help their child to achieve adult success, based on their upbringings and professional experiences. These parents felt responsible for orchestrating children's enrichment and managing their time and activities to help them develop distinctive achievements, while always fearing the potential toll these efforts might take on their

family bonds and their children's mental health. Protected employee parents pursuing *disciplined self-management* were not engaged in this competition for elite achievements, but instead focused their parenting efforts on helping their children to master socially valued achievements (e.g. good grades, participation on sports teams and enrichment activities) while arming them with social competence, strong family bonds, and the ability to take responsibility for self and family, resources that their childhood and professional experiences had taught them were needed for adult success.

Both groups of parents in this study were anxiously struggling, drawing on their work and life experiences to figure out the best strategies to help their children to succeed. Neither group felt sure whether their efforts would actually have the desired effect.

Research on the social reproduction of advantage does not generally focus on the trade-offs and costs associated with creating social distinction. Bourdieu, for example, described the upper classes as giving their children superior cultural and educational advantages through “investments of capital” (Bourdieu 1984), a phrase which obscures the human costs and sacrifices that Bourdieu recognized and sought to illustrate in his later works (1999). However, in this research I found that the orchestrated achievement parenting strategies of semi-autonomous professional parents required painful trade-offs and extracted high personal costs for both mothers and children.

In order to enact the strategies that they hoped would give their children an academic edge, families practicing *orchestrated achievement* traded-off resources, time and labor that would normally have been devoted to other pursuits, such as leisure-time, “family time,” efforts to build the child's social skills/networks, and to develop the child's ability to act independently and responsibly. Semi-autonomous professional parents were willing

to make these sacrifices because their work and life experiences taught them that distinctive achievement was necessary for their children's adult success. In contrast, protected employee parents doing *disciplined self-management* were not willing to abandon the social skills and networks, self-reliance and personal responsibility, and family bonds, that their own life and work experience had proven to be so valuable, in favor of elite achievements.

Theories of social reproduction did not theorize the *toll* that this competitive effort to develop distinctive achievements would take on parents (often mothers) and their children. The strategic practices of these orchestrated achievement parents were neither “natural,” nor were they paid for with abstract concepts like “investments of capital”: instead, these strategies were created through the labor of the children and parents (most often, mothers) who struggled to produce them. The consequences of these practices for children were evident in terms of children's mental health, leisure, self-management, and social development.

These data suggest that middle class success was not an individual accomplishment, but a collaborative effort. Orchestrated achievement parents paid experts to boost their children's performance in ways that actually improved, enhanced and augmented their child's own abilities, skills, knowledge, accomplishments, and resilience – essentially buying their children cultural resources that were directly attributed to the child.

Further, orchestrated achievement parents collaborated in their children's achievement and success through parental boosting as well as expert boosting. By managing their children's effort towards achievement (organizing an array of enrichment activities, supervising homework and practicing, etc.), overseeing their activities and

schedules, and monitoring their social contacts and leisure activities, orchestrated achievement parents shifted much of the effort required for distinctive achievement from their children to themselves, allowing their children to acquire the distinction required for semi-autonomous professional success with less mental strain, effort, or individual responsibility.

Orchestrated achievement parents were able to do take on this additional labor, in part, because of their ability to outsource many typical adult responsibilities (housekeeping, tutoring, yardwork) to paid professionals. Thus the distinctive achievements attributed to children of semi-autonomous professionals actually reflected the labor and investment of children, parents, professional experts, and household support staff. In the terminology of EO Wright and Karl Marx, these semi-autonomous professional parents might be seen as exploiting these experts and support staff, using their surplus labor to purchase privileged social positions for their own children.

However, the additional labor and resources required from mothers and children doing orchestrated achievement took a mental health toll. This finding adds to Bourdieu's late-career recognition of the personal costs of the distinction strategies of the dominant classes, and his acknowledgement that the strategies of *orchestrated achievement* were not infinitely elastic, but were bounded by upper limits. This study demonstrated that parents were constrained in their competitive efforts to achieve distinction for their children by the mental health costs of orchestrated achievement strategies.

Middle class strategic parenting decisions reflected the need to manage the tension between achievement and mental health. On one hand, middle class parents felt intense pressure to exploit all available options to help their children to compete for academic

advantages. On the other hand, they feared causing their children to suffer, and possibly negatively impacting their adult success, by pushing them too hard to achieve.

Orchestrated achievement parents responded to this tension by strategizing to increase achievement while minimizing mental health strain, using orchestrated achievement strategies requiring cultural capital and economic resources to boost their children's achievements, and hiring professional mental health experts to repair any damage. In contrast, disciplined self-management parents with working class or protected employee careers and backgrounds chose to limit their demands and expectations for their children's achievement, in order to protect children's mental health.

Although both semi-autonomous professional and protected employee parents were aware of some of the resources required by orchestrated achievement, as well as some of the costs and trade-offs, both groups of parents "misrecognized" the distinctive achievements of children raised with orchestrated achievement as the singular product of children's own innate talent and drive. Bourdieu described "misrecognition" as a process of symbolic dominance, where the resource-intensive processes behind achievement and distinction are "forgotten," and their products are seen as "natural," arising from superiority instead of privilege, exploitation, or effort (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

I argue that the naturalization of distinction for the children of semi-autonomous professionals resulted from conscious and unconscious symbolic strategy. The expert and parent "boosting" that enhanced these children's achievements was not readily apparent to protected employee and working class parents, who likely viewed orchestrated achievement enrichment as equivalent to their own children's less intensive, disciplined self-management after-school activities. Similarly, orchestrated achievement

parent boosting and management took place behind the walls of private homes, schools, and classrooms, and was not readily apparent as an achievement strategy to outside observers.

Second, orchestrated achievement parents consciously took pains to hide the mental health problems their children experienced, and the professional help used to treat them. They also practiced family rituals and retreats that obscured the lack of daily, routine family interactions resulting from semi-autonomous professional work hours and travel demands. As a result, both semi-autonomous professionals and protected employees described children raised with orchestrated achievement as naturally motivated, gifted, driven, “superkids”; protected employee parents generally viewed their own children as “lazy,” “not that motivated,” and not that special or talented.

This study provides evidence that the investments, costs, and trade-offs of the orchestrated achievement parenting strategies of semi-autonomous professional parents are hidden from view, resulting in misrecognition, a process through which Bourdieu theorized that parental investments were forgotten, and children’s abilities and achievements came to be seen as “innate,” or natural. This is problematic for three reasons: one, because it prevents protected employees, working class and poor parents from recognizing the steps required to raise a child with the potential to succeed in a semi-autonomous profession. Two, it obscures the fact that what is currently regarded and rewarded as academic merit and excellence is actually purchased with semi-autonomous professional parental labor and the resources of experts, including expert “boosting,” mental health damage-control, and household support staff.

Finally, naturalization hides the costs and trade-offs that accrue to children of semi-autonomous professionals themselves, failing to identify potential fault-lines and failings of orchestrated achievement child-rearing practices (such as mental health problems, lack of child self-management, and family bonds), and allowing these parenting practices to become idealized, setting the cultural standard for “good parenting.”

Despite the enrichment and investment they received, the findings of this study raise questions about how children raised with orchestrated achievement will fare in an adult world. Though studies suggest they outperform working class kids academically (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Kaufman and Gabler 2004; Lareau 2003), the findings of this study suggest that children raised with orchestrated achievement may not be as well-prepared to succeed in other arenas. These data suggest that because their childhoods have been heavily parent-managed, children raised with orchestrated achievement may have less preparation to manage their own lives and decisions. In addition, if they have not developed social skills and the ability to build peer networks independently, they may struggle to build social ties and connections with others in their community.

Further, if their energies have been solely directed at building their own achievements, not towards family bonds and responsibilities, children raised with orchestrated achievement may have trouble managing relationships and the shared duties of family life. Finally, if these children suffer disproportionately from mental health issues resulting from excessive achievement pressure, they will have to deal with a higher burden of depression and anxiety from a young age. To paint a more full and accurate picture of the costs and benefits of different parenting approaches, future research should examine these possibilities using representative sampling methods.

Among parents in this study, mothers took responsibility for validating their family's parenting practices, doing the symbolic work to align their family's parenting approach within the boundaries of "good parenting." For protected employee mothers in particular, this responsibility entailed dealing with a great deal of stress and fears about inadequacy, as the "upper-middle class gaze" made them feel judged and incompetent. Orchestrated achievement mothers also felt the need to react and defend themselves against the perceived "lower-middle class reverse gaze," critiquing their intensive parenting practices and requiring defensive maneuvering and reframing. In both cases, mothers expressed awareness of the need to conform to social ideologies of "good mothering" in a way that fathers did not, and felt accountable for both the physical labor required to be recognized as "good mothers," and the symbolic labor to reframe "good mothering" practices to include their own. Either way, middle class mothers managed full responsibility for the symbolic work of "good parenting," and single-handedly bore the scrutiny of the middle class gaze.

This research provides a compelling explanation for why mothers, and not fathers, felt disproportionate accountability for carrying out the physical and emotional labor of intensive parenting, and also bear a disproportionate amount of the resulting stress and heartache (Hays 1996; Walzer 1998). As sole representatives of their family in struggles over "good parenting," this research shows that middle class mothers were also accountable for a form of invisible parenting labor that their husbands did not share: symbolic capital (Di Leonardo, 1987). Recent research has suggested that this gendered accountability for "good parenting" arises from "playground panopticism," as mothers' parenting practices are subject to the constant surveillance and judgment of other mothers

in schools, playgrounds, and other public spaces (Blackford 2004; Caputo 2007). Future research on the gendered division of labor should take symbolic labor, and its mental health costs, into account.

These findings show that although both groups of mothers actively and effectively engaged in struggles for legitimacy, mothers doing orchestrated achievement were better able to resist negative judgments and reframe definitions of ‘good parenting’ to align more closely to their own parenting practices. I argue that orchestrated achievement parents had more success in symbolic battles because their higher cultural capital as semi-autonomous professionals (vs. protected employees) gave them advantages both in individual symbolic debates and in gaining legitimacy through the support of social institutions.

On an individual level, mothers themselves played a role in reinforcing the legitimacy of orchestrated achievement practices as “good parenting.” Although both groups of parents did symbolic work to validate their own parenting approaches, orchestrated achievement parents were better positioned to hide their own failings from the lower-middle class “reverse gaze,” and to redefine the terms of “good parenting” to include their own parenting approach. Disciplined self-management parents, especially mothers, also struggled to do these things, but were only partially successful, often perceiving themselves as “not the best” parent, or “not that good at” important practices of “good parenting.”

Secondly, both groups of mothers indicated ways that social institutions validated orchestrated achievement parenting practices, citing “science,” schools, magazines, and organizations like the Red Cross. These social institutions offered legitimacy for the

practices of orchestrated achievement, giving semi-autonomous professional parents greater confidence in the superiority of their parenting practices, and intensifying the perceived upper-middle class gaze, making parents with working class or protected employee jobs feel judged and inferior.

This research identified a classed element to the gendered division of labor that is not widely recognized in the current literature. In contrast to popular assumptions, where parents with professional jobs are generally perceived as espousing and practicing a parenting approach based on ideologies of gender equality compared to their protected employee or working class peers, this research supports the opposite conclusion. Among the middle class couples studied, professional demands meant that semi-autonomous professional fathers had a minimal physical presence in the lives of their children and families, due to frequent travel and long work hours. As a result, mothers in these families took over responsibility for almost all the daily responsibilities of managing family life.

In contrast, protected employee fathers worked regular hours, rarely travelled, and played a regular role in their children's daily routines. As a result, mothers in these families shared parenting responsibilities with their husbands to a much greater degree than those in semi-autonomous professional families. This finding should be examined further to verify whether it is a widespread phenomenon. This finding has two important implications for the evolving meaning and classed importance of "family time," and for the reproduction of orchestrated achievement practices in semi-autonomous professional families.

This research sheds light on this important element of current “good parenting” practice: “Family time.” Where protected employee parents spent large amounts of time involved with their children and families in routine, daily activities, semi-autonomous professional families were not able to spend regular family time together, relying instead on infrequent “family rituals” and retreats in an attempt to maintain family bonds. However, instead of being socially perceived as an inferior alternative, family rituals were widely recognized by both groups of parents as a superior mode of family interaction, and both felt accountable to develop “family rituals” to cement family bonds. This reframing is an example of symbolic violence, and demonstrates that class and cultural capital offer powerful advantages in symbolic struggles. Future analyses of family practices and policies should view the idealization or valorization of family rituals with skepticism, recognizing them as classed, not universally necessary or valid, family practices.

Given the extensive demands of orchestrated achievement parenting practices and the highly gendered division of parenting labor in these families, this study suggests that the reproduction of orchestrated achievement parenting strategies over successive generations will be problematic. Although gender equality was an important cultural value among these semi-autonomous professional parents, and daughters were generally raised with the expectation that they would combine a professional career with motherhood, the dictates of “good mothering” required a massive parental investment that was not evenly shared by semi-autonomous professional husbands, whose primary commitment was to professional achievement and status. This put mothers in the

awkward position of limiting their own professional options so that their children (including their daughters) could maximize theirs.

Many orchestrated achievement mothers were raised by parents who carefully cultivated their daughters' achievements, hoping their daughters might have opportunities to be hold semi-autonomous professions themselves, as doctors, lawyers, journalists, and professors. And yet these women, as mothers, had often relinquished or reduced their own career achievements and success in order that they might provide the same benefits to their own children. This situation is inherently contradictory, and may lead to problems with reproducing the *orchestrated achievement* strategy for semi-autonomous professional parents.

This research extends theories of social reproduction and family processes, exploring how couples jointly negotiate strategy for their children. Bourdieu recognized that each individual's habitus – both their class origins and current experiences – shaped their logic in ways that are not easy to shift, limiting social mobility. This research extends our understanding of how habitus shapes parenting strategy, and how couples negotiate a “family strategy,” by demonstrating that “dual habitus” middle class couples approached parenting with distinct, contradictory logics, consciously or unconsciously sabotaging each other's parenting strategies, and resulting in a patch-work approach to parenting that met neither parents' strategic goals. Thus, for the parents in this study, “marrying up” was not an effective strategy of upward mobility for one's children, even for parents who actively sought this goal. Parents did not find it easy to swap out the logic of *disciplined self-management*, learned through a lifetime of experiences in childhood through adulthood, for that of *orchestrated achievement*. Instead, each parents' habitus was

reflected in their joint parenting practices, and parents were not simply able to “pool” their cultural capital, maximizing their joint resources for their child’s advantage.

This empirical research offers a more fine-tuned understanding of the specific classed parenting practices that distinguished strategic parenting within the middle classes. These findings can improve future large-scale studies examining the social origins of privilege, which currently use participation in after-school enrichment activities, experience with high culture, and parent-management as the primary conduits of social advantage for children. My research suggests that neither activities nor parent-involvement alone that indicate advantage: but more specifically frequent, private, one-on-one, expert “boosting,” in combination with parent-management of the child’s effort and achievement, are the most significant joint markers distinguishing semi-autonomous professional parenting practices.

Where current studies ask whether students play an instrument, or participate in an after-school sport, these findings indicate that more finely-tuned measures are needed to identify advantage: does the student take private music lessons? Does a parent or tutor participate in and supervise lessons and practicing? Does the student participate in a private sports team or club that meets more than once per week? Does the student have a private academic tutor or sports coach? These questions are more likely to target parenting practices aimed at distinction, versus those aimed at peer network-building, discipline, after school child-care, or just having fun. Future research should examine the benefits not only of the specific activities that children engage in (e.g. “music classes,” “intramural team sport”), but the intensity and tailoring of the range of activities a child pursues.

Policy-wise, these data argue against the notion that policy-makers can simply extol orchestrated achievement parenting practices as the ideal without addressing the logic and classed experiences that shape these practices, and recognizing the costs and trade-offs that they entail. Further, policy-makers must be careful in making assumptions that these parenting practices are necessarily superior or more beneficial for children than those of working class or protected employee parents. A fairer assessment of parenting practices must consider not only the easily measurable benefits of orchestrated achievement efforts, such as distinction in academics, sports, and the arts, but also take into account its less apparent opportunity costs for children's social skills, family bonds, independent self-management, and mental health.

These findings also suggest that we should understand current public debates over parenting practices (such as “helicopter parenting,” quality vs. quantity time, parent-involvement, family time, “hurried child syndrome,” latch-key kids) as symbolic skirmishes within a larger classed battle for legitimacy; for the right to define “good parenting.” We must recognize that symbolic debates cannot be won on their own merit, by expert opinion, or by some “objective” psychological principles or scientific research. Instead, the winners and losers in these debates are determined by who has the strategic upper-hand in these symbolic battles. To this end, policy-makers and educators should avoid automatically aligning their own “best practice” guidelines with those of semi-autonomous professional parents, refusing to be used as pawns to reinforce a classed agenda that serves only to needlessly circumscribe the freedom of both parents and children.

Table 1. Logic about Success vs. Parenting Strategy*
(N=47 parents)

	Orchestrated Achievement			Disciplined Self-Management	
	Key to Success	Source		Key to Success	Source
	Distinctive Abilities	Child's Innate Passions & Gifts		Hard Work	Child Taking Responsibility
Semi-Autonomous Professionals N=20 parents	56%	70%		25%	20%
Protected Employees N=24 parents	4%	25%		83%	83%
Cleft Habitus N=3 parents	33%	100%		100%	33%

* Because subjects volunteered these responses unprompted, these data were not provided for each subject, and are therefore most usefully viewed as trends or themes within each group.

Table 2. Key Practices vs. Parenting Strategy*
(N=25 couples)

	Parents Manage Child's Activity Choices	Expert Boosting E.g Private tutors, coaches, lessons	Mental Health Experts		Parent-Imposed Discipline System	Child Responsibility-Taking E.g. Chores, paper route, jobs	Public Sports Teams and Activities
Semi-autonomous Professionals N=7 couples	71%	100%	57%		14%	14%	14%
Protected Employees N=9 couples	22%	11%	0%		89%	56%	78%
Dual Habitus N=9 couples	56%	44%	0%		66%	22%	89%

* Because subjects volunteered these responses unprompted, these data were not provided for each subject, and are therefore most usefully viewed as trends or themes within each group.

Table 3. Annual Family Income vs. Parenting Strategy
(N=25 couples)

	Orchestrated Achievement N=7 couples	Disciplined Self-Management N=9 couples	Dual Habitus/ Mixed Strategy N=9 couples
< \$100k	14%	33%	22%
\$100 - \$200K	28%	56%	45%
> \$200k	58%	11%	33%

Table 4. Family Organization and Parenting Strategy
(N=25 Couples)

	Father has Frequent Career Travel	Father Works Evenings and Weekends	Mother works Flexible Hours, Part-time or Not at All	Parents Plan Family Retreats and Rituals*
Orchestrated Achievement N=9 couples	96%	100%	71%	57%
Disciplined Self-Management N=9 couples	11%	22%	44%	0%
Dual Habitus/ Mixed Strategy N=7 couples	11%	22%	67%	11%

* Because subjects volunteered these responses unprompted, these data were not provided for each subject, and are therefore most usefully viewed as trends or themes within each group.

Table 5. Parents Assess Kids' Innate Ability/Motivation*
(N=47 parents)

	Lazy/Unmotivated	Gifted/Motivated
Semi-autonomous Professionals N=20 parents	5%	50%
Protected Employees N=24 parents	59%	0%
Cleft Habitus N=3 parents	0%	0%

* Because subjects volunteered these responses unprompted, these data were not provided for each subject, and are therefore most usefully viewed as trends or themes within each group.

Appendix A. Thematic Codes Used for Analysis

BigPicture	parent feels child needs a “big picture” view of the world to succeed
Edutainment	parent arranges entertainment/leisure activities to enrich and educate child
Experts	parent uses experts to help child succeed
Family	parent feels family is critical to child’s success
Gender	parent discusses gendered divisions in parenting practices
HardWork	parent feels “hard work” is the key to child’s success
Income	parent identifies their current income
Internal motivation	parent values internal motivation vs peer orientation for success
KidResp	parent views self-directed or independent child activity as key to success
Labor	parent links own labor experience to parenting practices/beliefs
MentalHlth	parent discusses the importance of child’s mental health for success
Mixture	parent contrasts own parenting practices/beliefs with that of their spouse
Monitor	parent discusses importance of parental oversight for child’s success
Others	parent refers to the parenting practices of other people
Punish	parent believes parental discipline is key to child’s adult success.
RiskBeh	parent is concerned that risky behaviors may limit child’s adult success
RoleModel	parent role-models behaviors to aid child’s adult success
Roots	parent links own upbringing to parenting practices/beliefs
Social	parent views social skills or networks as key to child’s adult success
TooMuch	parent feels that children today have too many activities and pressure
TravelGone	parent has frequent work-related travel and/or long work hours
Unique	parent believes that unique achievements are key to child’s adult success

Appendix B. Subjects List

Family Name	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Children's Names & Ages
Archer	Carl Engineer (part-time)	Janis Cancer researcher	Vincent 12 Trisha 9 Gabrielle 5
Bradburn	Jason Financial advisor	Monica Stay home mother Ex-lawyer	TJ 10 Christa 8 Priscilla 5
Crosby	Larry Corporate engineer	Peggy Stay-home mother Ex-retail worker	Xavier 14 Courtney 13 Rhianna 11 Deanna 8 Cristal 7 Audrey 5
Donovan	Bernard Youth pastor	Nancy Stay-home mother Ex-teacher	Bryson 11 Eric 10 Brianna 8 Eliza 5
Evans	Tony Corporate lawyer	Sheri Substitute teacher (part-time)	Wendy 11 Hank 9
Foster	Chad Sales director	Belinda Stay-home mother Ex-hospital administrator	Tyler 15 Preston 13
Gill	Dale Human resources specialist	Michelle Teacher	Edwin 14 Reed 9
Howland	Jerry Auto supply business owner	Martha Stay home mother Ex-journalist	Noah 14 Ellis 11 Ramona 9 Alexis 6
Isaacs	Kenneth Plumbing business owner	Donna Nurse midwife specialist	Daniel 11 Jessa 8
Jordan	David Police sargeant	Mary Teacher	Jackson 14 Alan 11 Carter 7
Kerrigan	Keith Business manager	Leah Stay-home mother Ex-music teacher	James 12 Harlan 11 John 10 Bob 8 Melvin 6 Lara 4
Long	Neil Corporate account manager	Patricia School para-professional (part-time)	Tamar 11 Jeannette 8
Moore	Evan Tax accountant	Helen Day care provider	Sean 14 Lisa 11
Norris	Douglas Teacher	Linda Administrative assistant	Alex 11 Amanda 9
Oakes	George Auto supplier foreman	Ann Day care provider	Lynn 14 Annette 12 Jill 10

Peters	Andrew Chemist	Jennifer Administrative assistant (part-time)	Elizabeth 14
Quinn	Marshall Auto company quality engineer	Leslie Real estate agent	Christopher 14 Gail 13 Melissa 10
Ross	Mark Auto company product planner	Dawn Stay-home mother ex-teacher	Steven 14 Miles 9 Colin 5
Stewart	William Law-firm founding partner	Jessica Professor	April 14 Jacob 12 Ned 9
Thomas	Simon Physician and clinic director	Kim Stay-home mother ex-nurse midwife	Brad 14 Val 13 Phillip 10 CJ 7
Underhill	Wayne Physician and medical center director	Carolyn Stay-home mother ex-occupational therapist	Henry, 14 Justin 10 Allegra 7
Vaughn	Arthur Surgeon	Suzanne Stay-home mother ex-graduate student	Tasha 11 Rachel 9 Jordan 5
Westbrook	Daniel Business consultant	Kelly Business consultant	Victoria 14 Benjamin 11
York	Kenneth Physician and business owner	Kathleen Stay-home mother ex-corporate vice president	Alison 13
Zeigler	John Magazine editor	Laura Magazine business manager (part-time)	Johanna 14 Meghan 12

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