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CLASS, POLITICS AND FAMILY LIFE:
A STUDY OF PROGRESSIVE WORKING-CLASS PARENTING

ELISE D. WEST

62 Pages

Parenting is entwined with political and social class realities, but rarely is this intersection explored. Seminal research in social reproduction theory finds that working-class parents pass on to their kids a “sense of constraint,” while middle-class parents successfully transmit class advantages that reproduce inequality (Lareau, 2011, p. 3). This research could be enriched by a political analysis that considers parents’ political ideology. On the other hand, research addressing ideological reproduction describes a model of progressive parenting that takes a stand against inequality, but it is not known how this model applies to working-class parents (Lakoff 2002). In this exploratory project, I ask: How might progressive working-class parents approach child rearing in a way that reflects their politics? The study uses qualitative, inductive methods to conduct and analyze seven semi-structured, in-depth interviews with progressive working-class parents. Findings lend empirical support to Lakoff’s Nurturant Parent Model while extending Lareau’s analysis of working-class parenting. Parents in this study cultivated autonomy, resistance, and political consciousness in their kids, helping them develop an emerging sense of empowerment despite economic constraints. Findings demonstrate that combining class and political analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of both working-class parenting and the parenting approaches of progressives.

KEYWORDS: Progressive politics; Working-class; Parenting approaches; Social reproduction

CLASS, POLITICS AND FAMILY LIFE:
A STUDY OF PROGRESSIVE WORKING-CLASS PARENTING

ELISE D. WEST

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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2023

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CLASS, POLITICS AND FAMILY LIFE:
A STUDY OF PROGRESSIVE WORKING-CLASS PARENTING

ELISE D. WEST

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Richard D. Sullivan, Chair

Maria H. Schmeckle, Co-Chair

Jason Whitesel

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Parenting is infused by political and social class realities, but rarely is this intersection explored. Seminal research in social reproduction theory finds that working-class parents pass on to their kids a “sense of constraint,” while middle-class parents successfully transmit class advantages that reproduce inequality (Lareau, 2011, p. 3). This research could be enriched by a political analysis that considers parents’ political ideology. On the other hand, research addressing ideological reproduction describes a model of progressive parenting that takes a stand against inequality, but it is not known how this model applies to working-class parents. (Lakoff 2002). In this exploratory project, I ask: How might progressive working-class parents approach child rearing in a way that reflects their politics? The goal was to explore how a particular political identity (progressiveness) can impact working-class parenting and, in turn, how a particular social-class standing (working-classness) may influence expected parenting approaches of progressives. The study uses qualitative, inductive methods to conduct and analyze seven semi-structured, in-depth interviews with progressive working-class parents.

My findings lend empirical support to Lakoff’s Nurturant Parent Model while complicating Lareau’s findings about working-class parenting. Parents in the study cultivated autonomy, resistance, and political consciousness in their kids, helping them to develop an emerging sense of empowerment. Overall, the findings suggest that kids’ future role in shaping the social landscape of their communities may be a more important aspect of parents’ vision for their kids than their individual economic outcomes, particularly for progressive working-class parents engaged in activism. Findings of the study also demonstrate how combining class and political analysis can create a more extensive and nuanced understanding of both working-class parenting and progressive or liberal approaches to parenting.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I discuss my personal connection to the research, as well as the study's social and sociological significance. The next chapter discusses relevant research about class, parenting, and progressivism. The third chapter provides the study design and methodology, and the fourth contains the findings. Chapter five is a discussion of the findings, and chapter six offers some conclusions of the study, along with suggested directions for future research.

Personal Connection to the Research Project

My position in relation to this study equips me with an insider's perspective on the three major aspects of the research. I am a parent, I was working-class for most of my life, and I am politically progressive. My four children, ages 4, 9, 11 and 19, are all at varying stages of development. My goal as a parent is to teach my children to nurture themselves and others in their community. As they develop relationships with others, my hope is that they feel encouraged to reflect critically on social conditions and act alongside others to build a more just and caring community and society.

I was not political throughout the first thirty years of my life. Neither were my parents, but my upbringing was implicitly conservative. My dad taught aircraft mechanics in the Navy, after performing this work himself for over 15 years. My mother taught piano to the Navy kids on base, myself included. On Sundays, we went to a small Presbyterian church where my mom led the music. Religious and military influences led my parents to value social prestige, and upward mobility was a central goal they had in raising me. My parents had strong expectations that I go to college but, when I left my parents' house at 18, I took a variety of low-wage jobs instead. I was a sandwich "artist" at Subway and a book coiler at a book bindery. I cleaned newly constructed, multi-million-dollar homes. I unloaded trucks at Wal-Mart, and then I was a baker.

These jobs were often repetitive and burdensome, yet my co-workers and I found ways to “keep it light.” What I hated most was how we were treated by our bosses and customers. I enrolled at a community college and, three years later when I earned my associate degree, I became the first person in my family to earn a college degree. After I transferred to Illinois State, the experience of caring for young children while learning to think sociologically attuned me to the ways in which the “personal is political,” to quote the first-wave feminist credo.

Certain aspects of my class background complicate my approach to parenting, and I find myself always learning and unlearning simultaneously. My life experiences, along with the sociological perspective I’ve acquired throughout my journey in higher education, have made me realize that a hyper-focus on individual economic outcomes does little to prepare our children for the unjust social arrangements they will inherit. The opportunity to learn from a population with whom I share similar identities and common goals has, in my opinion, produced data that are rich and experiences that have been rewarding.

Social and Political Significance of the Study

Since parents provide a lens through which to interpret experiences, parenting can be a tool of social transformation. Some critical race scholars see their parenting role as a form of activism and discuss strategies of parenting that specifically address racial injustice (Christin and Cheryl 2016). Direct involvement in social activism is also a powerful way that parents shape children’s worldviews. For example, during the Justice for Janitors protests, parents made family visible to their work by bringing their young children along, carrying them on their shoulders and in strollers. They practiced and framed unionism as a family affair, and in so doing, heightened visibility for the value of caregiving (Cranford 2007). These children gained early lessons about solidarity and the fight for fair wages and gender equality. More recently,

children and families attended Black Lives Matter protests together in response to the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, increasing awareness among youth of social problems (Clark 2021). In Peru, the child-led Movement of Working Children, made up of more than 100,000 youth ages 8-16, is a story of parents and other adults working alongside children and youth, developing their capacity to talk about important social issues (Taft 2019). In addition to promoting direct involvement in activism, there are other important ways that, on a day-to-day basis, parents can help children value, participate in, and restore democracy. This is what the current project seeks to explore.

Illuminating the nature of parenting among working-class progressives is important in that it addresses a widely held belief that many social problems are attributed to “failures of the family,” or failures in parenting. Such a view is often associated with conservative ideology (Murray 2012). Parental blame for social problems signifies a myopic view, given that all of humanity finds itself at the intersection of multiple crises that cannot reasonably be explained by parental shortcomings (Robinson 2014).

Narratives of the “American family in decline” often serve as deflections from a larger crisis. Social conservatives endorsed the neoliberal agenda in the 1980s (and have ever since) in order to end the “welfare state,” which they saw as too expansive (i.e., too inclusive of single-parent families and people of color) and therefore contributing to the breakdown of the institution of the family (Cooper 2019). Ironically, the family has only become further strained within the neoliberal regime. Working-class parents have since the 1980s encountered an increase in institutional barriers and struggles to healthy childrearing due to the dwindling social supports for families (Cherlin 2014, Menaghan 1991). As a result, working-class families’ precarious class situations cause them to suffer from “anomie,” or a sense of hopelessness, and a

feeling that escape from situations of relative deprivation is very unlikely (Standing 2011).

Overall, this research affirms the well-known fact that economic insecurity – along with its resulting emotional consequences – poses challenges for healthy child rearing practices.

Considering these economic strains, most working-class people express support for a wide range of progressive economic policies (Madland & Wall 2020). They want to see such things as higher taxes for upper-income people, more regulation of Wall Street, more funding for healthcare and retirement, paid leave, and higher wages (Madland & Wall 2020). Despite a rise in conservatism among the white working class that has been well-covered by media and academic scholars alike (Frank 2005, Hochschild 2016), working-class people want social progress. Less understood is how this desire manifests day-to-day in parenting practices.

Sociological Relevance of the Current Study

Socialization takes place across multiple contexts, the first of which is the family. This study recognizes that children possess agency and make sense of their own experiences within various contexts. With respect to political ideology, children’s views and attitudes may come into conflict or consensus with those of their parents throughout the life course, leading either to *intergenerational solidarity* (agreement), or *intergenerational conflict* (rejection) of parents’ political worldview (Bengtson, 2007). What kind of role might progressive politics play in adult children’s decisions to “break the cycle” of social inequality and instead contribute to intergenerational change? What kinds of challenges arise, and what kinds of supports can sustain their efforts? These are important questions to explore.

The connection between parenting styles and political views may not be at the forefront of parents’ minds, but George Lakoff theorized that people construct “unconscious metaphors” about politics that reflect our ideas of good parenting and the right kind of family life (2002).

Research using Lakoff’s conceptual framework finds that this relationship has empirical support, with real implications for the transmission of political attitudes (Feinberg et al. 2019; Feinberg and Wehling 2018). Exploring how parenting styles may “match up” with political values is important because it can explain how people move from consciousness to action or illuminate the barriers that prevent this process from happening.

Understanding how political identity, class and parenting intersect is a timely topic. The middle, working, and poor classes over the past few decades have received a decreasing share of the national income and thus have experienced increasing levels of economic insecurity. This trend was already rapidly growing before COVID-19 transformed family life dramatically, intensifying already-existing hardship. The differential effects of the crisis on health, education and food security made class and racial disparities even wider (McNeely et al. 2020). The need for increased care infrastructure was felt in every facet of society and has been ever since.

Being at this historical juncture heightens tensions as well as possibilities for making progress toward a more compassionate society that no longer punishes families and the poor. Although this process cannot start within the family alone, social reproduction within the family is a critical site for resistance. Activist parenting can strengthen the intergenerational solidarity needed for achieving transformative change across social institutions. Low-paid occupations that offer little autonomy, flexibility or reliability create multiple stressors that directly impact family life and childrearing. This may help account for the fact that parenting approaches that are democratic, instill reason and empathy, and promote social justice are more common in affluent families than in working-class families (Lareau 2011, Hagerman 2018). Learning about the parenting of working-class progressives can offer a more nuanced understanding of social

reproduction, a matter important within political sociology and psychology, as well as children and family studies.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents are granted almost unrestricted power by the state to care for children and youth under age 18 in whatever way parents deem appropriate. There are only a few legal protections to ensure that their treatment meets the level of basic human rights. Beyond this, parents are seen as ultimate authority figures. Power dynamics therefore are an inherent aspect of any parent-child relationship. What follows in this chapter is a review of research that illustrates how the parent-child relationship is differentially influenced by two factors: class location and political ideology of parents. Most of the current research examines these influences separately, but there is a small body of literature that discusses how they work in tandem.

Social Class and Parenting

Defining social class is a complex task. The most well-known measures used to determine social class are occupation, education, income, and wealth. Education receives particular emphasis in quantitative research because it is a reliable measure across the life course. Studies conducted by the Center for American Progress Action Fund as well as the Economic Policy Institute define the working class as consisting of anyone in the workforce without a 4-year college degree (Wilson 2016; Madland and Wall 2020). This measure is not perfect; it excludes workers who are highly educated but currently working low-wage jobs, and it also excludes those who do not have a degree at all but who have acquired high social status and earnings through means other than education. Annette Lareau defines working-class households as those in which “neither parent is employed in a middle-class position and at least one parent is employed in a position with little or no managerial authority, and that does not draw on highly complex, educationally certified skills,” including lower-level white-collar workers (Lareau 2011 p. 365).

Lareau employs the concept of *habitus*, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, in her study of social class differences of parenting. Habitus can help to explain how class experiences manifest themselves, both in political outlooks and daily parenting practices. Broadly, habitus is a set of “internalized dispositions” (Swartz 2012, p. 50) that produces homogeneity among social groups, along with a sense of what is “natural” for the people in those groups. Habitus guides how people interpret their experiences within a range of contexts as well as how they act in response. It stays with individuals throughout the life course and is difficult to change since by definition it has become internalized and exists mostly below the level of consciousness, shaping beliefs, actions, and opportunities, as well as embodiment. Parents take part in shaping habitus just as habitus shapes parenting.

Working-Class Approaches to Parenting

A seminal longitudinal ethnography that explores class differences in childrearing is Annette Lareau’s *Unequal Childhoods: Class Race and Family Life* (2011). Lareau examined two major domains of working-class and middle-class families: the organization of daily life (i.e., time and language use) and families’ interactions with social institutions (i.e., schools). She found two different “cultural logics of childrearing” between middle-class and working-class families (p. 3). Working-class child-rearing is characterized by what Lareau calls the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ in which children ‘hang out’ and play often with relatives, are given clear directives from parents with limited opportunities for negotiation and are granted more autonomy to manage their own affairs in institutions outside of the home (p. 32). What follows below is a breakdown of these findings, as well as those of other research about working-class parenting. I organize this discussion of Lareau’s work around the key elements of

family life that she examines. Following this is a review of parenting styles from the psychology literature.

Time Use / Structure of Daily Life

While middle-class children's day-to-day lives are felt as "hectic and exhausting" due to a higher number of structured and extracurricular activities, working-class children do not have these same constraints on their time. Their lives after school are mostly free from adult oversight and monitoring, devoted to leisurely play and building kinship bonds (Lareau 2011). Despite some fighting, sibling relationships are relatively congenial. Children's activities and play are self-directed and initiated in this domain, hence the idea of "natural growth." As a result, working-class kids developed creative, often team-oriented forms of play, which contributed to stronger kinship bonds among working-class kids. When Lareau conducted her study, there were no smart phones. Children today increasingly prefer to engage with social media, stream videos and films, and play cooperative video games. Kids' forms of play are less self-directed and are qualitatively different now than the kinds of play that were prevalent in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Language Use / Discipline

Research shows that the amount and nature of verbal interaction that takes place between parents and children both differ as functions of SES (Hoff, Laursen & Tardiff 2002, Bernstein 1965). Working-class parents generally tend not to treat their children as conversation partners as often as middle-class parents do. Short directives are more frequently used, and there is less turn-taking and "back and forth." Reasons for employing language are more often centered around compliance and delegating tasks rather than facilitating and exchanging viewpoints (Lareau 2011). Threats of punishment are used more than negotiation when conflicting priorities arise.

Ultimately, the boundary between parent and child is much more clearly delineated in verbal exchanges. This reflects a power differential that favors parents, and although this does not directly speak on the aspect of parental warmth, it seems consistent with other findings that suggest working-class parents trend toward being authoritarian.

Navigating Social Institutions

Interactions with schoolteachers and administrators are much less frequent among working-class parents in Lareau's study. Parents tend to entrust children with the responsibility of meeting teachers' expectations, seeking out help from teachers when it is needed, and completing the work that is required of them. Parents seemed to expect obedience to school rules, but they did not seem to stress to their kids the importance of things like first impressions or making eye contact when speaking to authority figures. Working-class parents in the study felt that their involvement and monitoring ultimately would do little to affect their children's ability to succeed in institutions, possibly suggesting a fatalistic view among working-class parents.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

There is some research linking social class to parenting style, which is an area of study originating in psychology and child development. Baumrind's typology of parenting styles includes four different types of parenting that manifest along two dimensions of childrearing that are of central importance: demandingness (i.e., parental expectations for mature behavior) and responsiveness (e.g., warmth, meeting children's needs). These four styles of parenting are authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and neglecting. The consensus is that authoritative parenting is the gold-standard and has the best outcomes for children across contexts because it consists of high expectations and limits balanced by warmth and a respect for children's needs. As an ideal type of parenting, it entails the most reasonable balance of power between parent and

child among the four styles. Critiques suggest that even authoritative parenting often relies on psychological and/or behavioral manipulation and is therefore detrimental (Kohn 2005).

However, in refining her model, Baumrind argues that true authoritative parenting does not involve coercion (2012).

Research suggests that authoritarian parenting – high in demands and low in responsiveness and warmth – is widespread among both lower SES parents in the U.S. and ethnic/racial minority parents, often with converging effects between these groups (Smetana 2017). In some neighborhood contexts, authoritarian parenting can have protective effects for children, but generally authoritarian parenting is found to be less effective. Although research suggests that authoritarian parenting is the norm among working-class parents, there are no studies that explore the parenting styles (e.g., aspects of demandingness and responsiveness) of a particular subset of working-class people that are politically progressive.

Parenting and Politics

In this section, I first discuss contested meanings of progressivism. Then I discuss seminal research describing parenting approaches that can be viewed as consistent with political goals. Some of these approaches are not explicitly connected to progressivism, while others are. I find that they reflect core values of progressivism, nonetheless.

“Defining” Progressivism

Progressivism is associated with effecting “social change,” but this is an outcome desired by conservatives and progressives alike. Many conservatives vehemently separate themselves from “the establishment,” such as when they called upon Trump to “drain the swamp.” Azevedo, Jost and Rothmund (2017) found that although some Trump voters in the 2016 election also wanted “change” and were critical of the “status quo” of liberal, Democratic governance under

President Obama, these voters did not actually challenge the status quo of the economic system in a deeper sense. Still, if both liberals and conservatives fight a particular “status quo,” then that means this tendency alone is not a defining feature of progressivism. It raises the question of what “social change” means for progressives? Here, it is helpful to distinguish between two types of movements. One type is “regressive” – movements that organize in the spirit of a “reversion” back to what is seen as a “better past” due to some perceived harm of social change. The other type is the “progressive movement” which, in addition to pushing for reform, are characterized by a “call for new ways of looking at an issue, or an *expansion of rights for an oppressed group*” (Sternheimer 2015).

Meanings of progressivism in America have been in flux since the Progressive Era began in the 1890s. However, its focus – the central importance of human well-being – has remained constant. As a political philosophy, progressivism is about creating government policy that combats social, economic, and environmental injustice. What does progressivism look like? In a historical sense, the term “progressivism” recalls a series of class struggles and victories. Early examples include the Sherman anti-trust act to combat monopolies and corruption, the fight for workers’ rights that led to the NLRA in 1935, New Deal programs, women’s suffrage, and the civil rights movement that led to proposing the ERA and abolition of Jim Crow policies. Progressivism also manifests in 21st century struggles such as “Occupy Wall Street,” “Fight for Fifteen,” “Black Lives Matter,” ANTIFA, indigenous and environmental justice movements. Today, progressive government policies are often informed by scientific findings about what is beneficial for humanity and the environment. All these movements, past and present, have fought against the tyranny of corporate America and the police state that protects it.

Progressive Identity in the Neoliberal Era

In the past, progressivism has been characterized as a reformist rather than a radical ideology; however, this connotation has faded in the recent years of political polarization. Centrists and moderates were not afraid to be labelled “progressive” since this ideology has “historically been associated with science, rationality, and an approach to government and society reliant on knowledge and empirical methods (Elfving 2016).” Today, however, right-wing politicians have dominated political discourse and now equate both the terms “liberal” and “progressive” with the extreme left. In any case, the labels have become interchangeable for many people.

Progressivism today has come to mean resistance to the neoliberal policy regime that has shifted the wealth distribution upward. The neoliberal framework includes austerity measures, deregulation, privatization, dismantling worker protections, and the eradication of trade barriers and capital controls. Mainstream economists tout these strategies as promoting economic growth and development; the actual outcome of neoliberalism has been “accumulation by dispossession,” whereby wealth is redistributed to those who have class power (Harvey 2005, p.178). Progressives – particularly the far left – assert that the neoliberal focus on capital accumulation has devastating effects on human welfare and the environment that are morally untenable.

Toward a Useful Definition of Progressivism

Inherent in the notion of progress is that it is never complete; there is always more work to be done. Whether the goal is to incrementally *reform* or to radically *transform* society, progressives today do have a shared vision. They all seek systemic change or, at the very least,

structural “corrections” to make society work better for people. All who invoke the term “progressive” for their various agendas have, in so doing, entered and shaped the sociopolitical arena. They take part in the struggle for change and the discourse surrounding it, which brings further visibility to social problems.

This study uses a definition of progressivism conceptualized by George Lakoff, a political philosopher and cognitive linguist. Lakoff’s theoretical framework, discussed in the next section, can also be understood as a significant contribution to the literature on ideological reproduction. In his book *Moral Politics*, Lakoff systematically demonstrates how the hallmarks of the “Nurturant Parent” provide an ideal metaphor for understanding liberal or progressive morality (2002). This model of parenting emphasizes two main priorities, which are “empathetic behavior and promoting fairness” and “helping those who cannot help themselves.” (Lakoff 2002, p. 417). He describes the liberal/progressive moral system itself as “an ethics of care, centering around empathy together with responsibility, both for oneself and others” (p. 418). This definition has relevance for the current study.

Progressive Approaches to Parenting

Lakoff’s Moral Politics Theory has acquired empirical support over the last decade for its assertion that the ideological divide between conservatives and progressives is the product of two very different moral worldviews, rooted in cognitive models about ideal parenting and family life (Lakoff 2010). The “strict-father” model corresponds to conservatives and their political world view, while the “nurturant-parent” or nurturant model, corresponds to progressives and their world view. The rationale behind this theory is that people engage in abstract reasoning about the larger social world in terms of the knowledge they have derived from their own direct interactions with the world – in this case, the family. Therefore, parenting and politics are

connected in the mind, often at an unconscious level. According to the strict-father model, which he argues aligns with conservatism, children are seen as being, by nature, prone to misbehavior and self-indulgence. Parents must teach children to be self-reliant, self-disciplined, and not dependent upon others. Authority should be respected. Punishment is framed as “tough love,” aimed at fostering the self-discipline necessary to becoming self-reliant. Competition is a necessary aspect of survival in the strict-father model, so giving things to children that they have not earned is considered “bad” parenting and leads to dependency.

On the other hand, the nurturant-parent model is aligned with progressive values. In this moral worldview, children are inherently good – capable of cooperation and empathy. Children need, above all, connection to others. The parent’s role is to instill nurturance and empathy for oneself and others. To facilitate these traits, nurturant parents feel it is important to “lead by example,” nurturing and empathizing with their children. Communication is respectful and bi-directional. Taking the perspectives and needs of others into account is the hallmark of this model of parenting. Underlying the model is also an assumption that social problems have complex and systemic causes, rather than individual ones.

Recently, a prominent study drawing upon a representative sample of Americans found that aspects of Lakoff’s strict and nurturant family models do, in fact, have strong predictive power in determining moral worldviews as well as political attitudes (Feinberg et al. 2020). These findings lend empirical value to his framework. Lakoff goes beyond offering a conceptual definition of liberal morality to make a secondary argument in *Moral Politics*, which is that his model of nurturant parenting is a superior type of parenting given its consistency with advice on healthy human development (p. 340). It has yet to be explored how this morality holds up in “real” parenting.

There is some research that provides in-depth, ethnographic exploration of *actual* parenting approaches characterized by progressive values. A seminal ethnography is Margaret Hagerman's (2018) book on affluent white kids' racial socialization, *White Kids: Growing up With Privilege in a Racially Divided America*. Hagerman explores how white affluent parents differentially construct their children's racial contexts by carefully designing their social environment. Aspects of environment that she considered were neighborhoods, schools (e.g., public v. private), extracurriculars, the friendships parents choose to encourage, traveling and volunteering. Hagerman also closely observed aspects of family dialogue – or “family race talk” (p. 147).

One of Hagerman's findings suggests some self-proclaimed progressive parents who may unintentionally create in their children a sense of being “special,” more intelligent and distinguished from the “less opportunity kids,” and more “deserving” of the best possible education. The practice of placing children into private schools (especially for such reasons) is inherently unfair and arguably not progressive at all by Lakoff's definition. Nevertheless, this finding points to a paradox that exists among affluent self-identified progressive parents, and which might prove to be salient among working-class progressive parents: “They are faced with a conflict between their abstract values of fairness and their own personal interests of securing for their own child the best education possible” (p. 73). This paradox affirms Lareau's findings of middle-class entitlement. Hagerman's finding also specifically speaks to the intersection of politics with racial and class privilege. Although working-class progressives do not have the privileges and resources that Hagerman's parents do, they may be especially motivated – by their own experiences of occupational hardship coupled with their progressive values – to seek out the environments that they believe will best nurture their children.

Some researchers have examined progressives' parenting in working-class families. For instance, Nancy Naples studied "activist mothering," in which "political activism is a central component of mothering," and which involves "community caretaking of those not considered part of one's defined household or family" (Naples 1998, p. 11). These women were working-class (and poor) black mothers that were involved in both paid and unpaid forms of community care work. Such Black activist mothers are sometimes called "community othermothers" because, beyond being "bloodmothers" caring for their own children, they also care for other children and adults in marginalized communities (Hill-Collins 1991). They were able to model for their children how to nurture not only their own families but also the wider communities in which they lived. Many of the women interviewed recalled their mothers' activism, and their own children became civically engaged themselves when they grew older. A similar approach and analysis are needed to understand working-class progressive parenting today.

Intersections, Gaps, and Research Question

Researchers have characterized parenting styles in lower-SES homes as authoritarian, parent-centered, obedience-oriented, and distrustful of institutions (Bronfenbrenner 1958, Bernstein 1975, Park & Lau 2016, Lareau 2011). Black activist mothering in marginalized communities poses an exception to this finding, but this research dates to the 1990s (Naples 1998). I have found no recent research that explores in-depth how working-class progressive parents characterize their parenting. In terms of the parenting of middle-class progressives, I have found research that explores aspects of middle-class Black fathers' parenting (Hagerman 2016), as well as upper middle-class white parenting (Hagerman 2018). There has been some exploration of how liberal political attitudes reflect nurturing and socially conscious childrearing beliefs, both in theory and via quantitative methodologies (Lakoff 2002, Feinberg & Wehling

2018), but empirical explorations have not extended to actual families, and the framework does not take social class into account. More research is needed then to illuminate how a progressive identity adds a particular set of tensions as well as possibilities for how “working-class parenting” can be understood.

More research is needed that explores how working-class parents’ intimate knowledge of economic struggle is connected to their progressive worldview and their parenting. There are claims that, in more recent years, working-class parents seem to be emulating aspects of the middle-class parenting characterized by Lareau (*The Economist* 2020). However, liberal parents would seem to be more likely (if Lakoff is correct) to critique and resist the middle-class preoccupation with economic outcomes. On one hand, there is Lakoff’s *analysis of political differences*, grounded in a *metaphor* of parenting. On the other, there is Lareau’s analysis of *class differences*, grounded in *actual* parenting. The current study will explore how the liberal parenting metaphor might be connected to working-class parenting approaches.

Parents are often painfully aware of how their parenting philosophies and goals may diverge from “what actually happens” in their family life. Progressive parents may be more likely to recognize the ways they are both reproducing and challenging existing structures of racism, classism, and other forms of inequality. Hagerman noted that in her research, progressive white, affluent parents seem to realize that they are “faced with a difficult paradox,” by which she means that “in order to be a ‘good parent,’ they must provide their children with as many opportunities and advantages as possible; in order to be a ‘good citizen,’ they must resist evoking structural privileges in ways that disadvantage others (2018, p. 207).” Working-class progressives must also deal with this paradox, although they may hold less privilege but be keenly motivated to seek it. I anticipate that working-class parents who identify as progressive

have, at some point, consciously thought about ways to merge their progressive values with their parenting, even if it is difficult to do so in practice.

To summarize the literature on class and parenting, we know that the “accomplishment of natural growth” is found among working-class families and that “concerted cultivation” is found among middle-class families. Lareau found that working-class and poor parents in her study employed language minimally with their children, were distrustful of social institutions (particularly schools and their administrators) and were avoidant when it came to involvement or intervention on behalf of their children. They encouraged their children to stay out of trouble and to comply with the expectations of authority figures, and for a variety of reasons were generally unsuccessful at modeling for their children how to advocate for themselves within institutional settings. These findings in some ways suggest that working-class parents reproduce acquiescence to current institutional arrangements.

The idea of working-class parents’ acquiescence is in line with findings from Park and Lau (2016) suggesting that lower SES parents across several countries value obedience over independence, both at the national and individual level. Yet Weininger and Lareau (2009) uncover much more complexity. They point out that a paradox exists among working-class and poor parents, in that while their childrearing *values* emphasized conformity to external authority, their *behaviors* in many ways went against these values; they granted their children autonomy and promoted self-direction in terms of structuring their own time and activities after school. Conversely, while middle-class parents tended to embrace the *notion* of self-direction in their values, *in action* they heavily exercised their authority (although subtly and indirectly) to structure their children’s leisure time. The important finding here is that working-class parents, in some ways, are more encouraging of self-direction and autonomy (which are the qualities that

middle-class parents want for their children) than their proclaimed value commitments would seem to suggest. This, along with other findings, suggests that approaches to parenting in working-class families are complex and that studying them requires further specificity.

To summarize the literature on progressive parenting, then, we have learned from Hagerman about a type of parenting existing in affluent white families that could be deemed “progressive,” particularly with respect to race and class consciousness. In terms of values and ideals, (but not necessarily actual parenting practices), we know from Lakoff and others who empirically studied his theory that parents who are progressive are likely to have ideas of parenting that entail nurturance, empathy, and cooperation, as well as helping those who can’t help themselves, both within and outside the family. This parenting bears much resemblance to the kinds of parenting that have been predominantly located within well-resourced, middle-class families, while strict morality strongly resembles the authoritarian parenting described among the working classes (Park and Lau 2016). Lakoff’s moral politics theory has not to date incorporated any discussion of class differences in who is more likely to identify with these two models and what that looks like.

What we are left wondering is how a particular political identity – progressivism – might expand our existing knowledge of working-class parenting, as well as how a working-class identity can expand our understanding of progressive parenting in a neoliberal society. What perspectives can be gained from this group? How might they bring their political values to bear in their parenting? What are the challenges to doing so? I have developed the following research question: How might the child-rearing practices of progressive, working-class parents reflect their politics?

The project is exploratory, and its methods will be centered around three goals: 1) to create rich description of parenting approaches within a niche population, which allows us to 2) apply both political and class analysis to this sample of parents, and 3) extend a current typology of working-class parenting.

CHAPTER III: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

The research question above lends itself to a research design that is qualitative and semi-inductive. Research is needed that explores current approaches using a combination of class and political analysis. Lareau and Lakoff's findings, and exploration In the following sections, I discuss the recruitment process, criteria for inclusion in the sample, characteristics of the sample, the primary method of data collection (interviews) and analytical approach.

Recruitment

I used purposeful sampling to recruit seven informants who would provide rich and detailed insights via in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I drew upon my social networks, which had complications. My working-class acquaintances were mostly conservative, and my newer progressive friends are middle-class. This meant I had to rely almost completely on local left-leaning Facebook groups, a local moms' Facebook page, and word-of-mouth. I also approached two left-leaning mothers who have been engaged in local activism, and the snowball technique was helpful from that point forward.

I posted on my Facebook feed and Facebook groups that I was looking for people who were 1) parents who had children under age 18 living in the home, 2) working-class, and 3) politically progressive. I experienced some difficulty in finding eligible informants whose self-assessments of being working-class were in line with my definition. See appendix A for screening questions. I did not seek out a diverse sample; given the small sample size, high similarity among informants was a better approach. After messaging prospective informants who indicated interest (usually over Facebook messenger), I sent them a link with the informed consent and a short screening survey. See table 1 below. The names listed are pseudonyms that have been given to informants and their children.

Table 1: General Characteristics of Sample

Name	Kids' Names/Ages	Parent Race	Parent Gender	Household size	Co-Parent Living in the Home	Political Orientation
Kristin	Joel, 7 Mark, 13 Sarah, 15	White	Woman	4	No	Democratic socialist
Joy	Andrew, 14	White	Woman	2	No	Liberal
Hazel	Alana, 10 Dillon, 14	White	Woman	4	Yes	Progressive & Anarchist
Tanya	Eric, 15 Serenity, 19	White	Women	3	No	Liberal leaning
Mick	Jenna, 17	White	Man	2	No	Communist (Marxist-Leninist)
Katie	Jacqueline, 14	White	Woman	2	No	Fairly Liberal
Marisa	Mia, 5 Zora, 3	White	Woman	3	No	Socialist & Member of Oregon's Progressive Party

For the purposes of my study, a “parent” is any figure who identifies themselves as a parent and has children currently living at home. Custody arrangements vary, so I asked participants to mark if children currently live with them, whether they lived with them on a part-time basis, or on a full-time basis. Children’s age was also a factor considered in the screening process; the child(ren) needed to be at least five years old for the parent to be included. I considered it important to interview parents whose children have at least reached the stage of “middle childhood” because the developmental milestones associated with this age range allow children to begin developing a sense of morality (Kohlberg, 1984). It is a time that children can take the perspectives of others and can more clearly articulate thoughts and feelings. This can create both tensions and possibilities in parent-child interactions. It was also important for the

parents in my sample to still be currently involved in childrearing, since being “in the thick” of an experience yields the most textured data and concrete detail.

A “parenting approach” in this study consists of parent-child interaction styles, parenting philosophies, and goals. I did not attempt to discern, in any rigid sense, the distinction between parents’ philosophies and actual parenting practices. This would have required more time and resources to conduct participant observation or interviews with children. Therefore, a distinction between each of these aspects could not be made. I asked parents to speak to all the above-mentioned aspects of parenting when talking about their general approach to parenting.

The criterion for progressivism was self-identification. Since recruitment primarily took place via Facebook, prospective informants read the Facebook recruitment post, which stated that I was “looking for those who identify themselves as politically progressive.” By clicking “Next” to go to the screening survey, this was an indication that they self-identified. However, to be certain, I asked informants to write in their political orientation in a few words. If they stated anything that was left of center, I included them in the study. If they wrote anything that was ambiguous, (e.g., centrist, moderate, libertarian), then I did not include them in the study since the rationale was to speak with parents who have a transformative vision of society.

With respect to the social class of the sample, I have defined “working-class” broadly as having employment but experiencing economic disadvantage. To participate, prospective informants had to take a screening survey with ten questions. Their responses allowed me to determine if they met certain criteria in at least two of the three major indicators: income, education, and occupation. Participants had to indicate that 1) their household income was relatively low, 2) their education must be less than a 4-yr degree, and 3) their occupation was one that afforded little autonomy, authority, prestige, or benefits. See in table 2 below:

Table 2: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Sample

Parent Name	HH Size	Income	Education	Occupation	Co-parent Occupation	Co-parent Education
Kristin	4	\$30-\$45K	Some college	Organizer for social justice organization/ Holds a local office	n/a - retired	Bachelor's degree
Joy	2	\$0-\$15K	Some college	Activity aide, student	n/a	n/a
Hazel	4	\$15-\$30K	High school diploma/GED	Teacher's assistant	Manufacturing	High school diploma/GED
Tanya	3	\$30-\$45K	4-yr degree (Bible/missions studies)	Administrative Aide	n/a	n/a
Mick	2	\$30-\$45K	High school diploma/GED	Electrician (residential)	n/a	n/a
Kat	2	\$30-\$45K	Some college	Retail Sales	n/a	n/a
Marisa	3	\$30-\$45K	Some college	Waitress	n/a	n/a

For further specificity regarding these indicators, I draw from Lareau's definition of a working-class household, which places more emphasis on occupation and education, rather than setting an arbitrary income range which will fluctuate. Specifically, she described her criteria of working-class households as those in which "neither parent is employed in a middle-class position" and "at least one parent is employed in a position with little or no managerial authority, and that does not draw on highly complex, educationally certified skills," including lower-level white-collar workers. (Lareau, 2011; p. 365). This is an appropriate way to operationalize class for my study because of the rationale embedded in my research question: economic disadvantage (i.e., relatively low income, lower-status occupation, and lack of enculturation and market options that a college degree presumably brings) heightens the tension between parents' immediate goals of improving the family's economic trajectory and their longer-term progressive goals of challenging inequalities.

An important working-class characteristic of the sample is that informants were (ideally) to have less than a four-year degree to participate. There are certain situations, however, that call for some flexibility. Higher education can offer access to many forms of capital that can potentially lift individuals into the middle class. However, a bachelor's degree alone – even when combined with the socialization that comes with it – does not guarantee additional employment options or upward mobility. In some cases, a person cannot access the social networks or types of employment that correspond to their degree. The type of school (i.e., online or physical), the type of degree, and the market availability of jobs in a particular geographical area are all important factors to consider. I anticipated that I may need to follow up with prospective informants to learn more about their situation. Furthermore, I felt this was the correct approach since informants had already self-identified as working-class; people's claimed identities warrant being taken seriously and evaluated carefully.

In one case instance, I decided to include an informant with a 4-year degree in my sample. Tanya received her 4-yr degree in Bible/missionary studies from a Christian college, right out of high school. She is an administrative aide in her 40s now, and her income falls in the range of \$30-\$45K. Tanya told me that a degree was never required for any job she has managed to obtain; it was the three years of experience from a temp job at a local insurance company that got her hired for her current office position. I also inquired about whether her college education had any bearing on her becoming more progressive later in life. She said that being it was a traditional Christian college, it “had the opposite effect” on her. She didn't become progressive until many years later, on account of work-related experiences. Tanya felt the college education she received had more of an indoctrinating, suppressive effect on her ability to think critically throughout her life. My goal was to recruit informants that did not have a four-year degree, but

Tanya was unable to benefit from this degree in her occupation. Therefore, I felt she qualified to participate since she met the other two criteria of working-classness for my study.

Kristin was the only other case in which one of the three criteria was not met. Her occupation is that of an organizer for a local social justice organization. This job affords Kristin some autonomy and respect from community members. It is important to note that many active progressives seek out jobs that, though they may pay very little, can be very rewarding in terms of the opportunity to perform community care work. Their ideology may also make them more likely to avoid toxic and overly taxing workplaces for the sake of self-care.

Data Collection

I conducted seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews, each lasting 1-1.5 hours in length, either in-person or via Zoom. I used an interview guide containing eight questions and several anticipated follow-up questions and probes. Refer to Appendix 2 to see the interview guide. Building rapport throughout the recruitment process and during the interview was key to eliciting thoughtful responses. Informed consent was obtained electronically with a signature. After clicking “Next” prospective informants agreed to participate and began the screening questionnaire. This questionnaire had a total of ten questions that ensured participants met the criteria of the study. See below in Appendix A. After establishing eligibility, interviews were scheduled and conducted. All data was kept confidential; all names and workplaces were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

I started interviews by briefly introducing myself, my department and institution, the general purpose of the research, and how I personally connect with it. This was very brief. Then, I gave the informant an overview of what we would talk about, letting them know that I would be starting the recording. The structure of the interview was as follows: I started with something

very broad, “So tell me about your family.” Here I got information about who was in the family, as well as a sense of what homelife was like. The next group of questions asked about their general parenting approach. This included philosophies and overall goals. Next, I asked questions that sought more depth on five areas of parenting. These questions were supposed to give a deeper sense of what their parenting was like in practice, on a day-to-day basis. The first three domains were focused on the level of parent-child interaction: these included time use/daily structure, behavior management, and emotional guidance. The last two domains were related to how they fostered their kids’ interactions beyond the home; I asked parents about how they helped their kids navigate relationships/interactions, and about oversight of various forms of consumption (primarily social media, news). This allowed me to determine how parents helped their kids make sense of current events, and then we transitioned into the next part of the interview.

It is here that I explicitly asked (if it was not already stated) whether and how parents incorporated their political views into their parenting: “Do you approach your parenting with your politics in mind?” If they said, “No,” or “Not really,” I asked them to tell me why they had made that decision. If they replied yes, I asked them why, and if they could tell me more about what this looked like. I also asked if there have been any challenges in doing so and, if so, what they were.

For the final segment of the interview, I asked questions about what the three identities mentioned during recruitment entail for them. I asked them about what it means to them, being “progressive,” as well as what it means to them to be “working-class.” I asked what their backstory was to becoming progressive, what activism they engaged in, if they mentioned this, and what issues matter to them. The last question was what their role as a parent means to them.

In “wrapping up” the interviews, I asked if there were any other thoughts they wanted to share that I hadn’t mentioned, regarding parenting. Then I thanked them for their time, ended the interview, and stopped recording.

Analysis

After data collection was complete, I had seven recorded interview transcripts as well as my observations and impressions regarding the interviews. After listening to the interview recording and cleaning the transcripts that I generated using Otter.ai (a free auto-generated transcription software), I then created summaries for each case, pulling important quotes that seemed to help answer the research question, making analytic memo notes, and applying preliminary codes.

Going through the data a second time, I developed some firmer codes. Descriptive, process codes were best for documenting for capturing action and daily processes, while values coding worked best for labeling subjective experiences such as attitudes and belief systems expressed by participants (Saldaña, 2013; p. 15). I was mindful of certain principles of Grounded Theory, such as allowing for “emergent themes,” but I had several specific *a priori* codes that I was looking for in the data. I had entered the interviews with previous literature firmly in mind. Some of these *a priori* codes included: time use and daily structure, autonomy, monitoring, fostering relationships, empathy, emotional guidance, behavior management techniques, strategies of fostering interactions and relationships, gentle parenting, nurturing others, speaking up for others, concerted cultivation and natural growth, overt and covert resistance, non-judgmental discussion, leading by example, politically conscious parenting, challenges, and progressive backstory.

I acknowledge that coding is “a primarily interpretive act” (Saldaña, 2013; p.4) and that both my position in relation to the research, combined with my knowledge of prior research, guided my interpretations and analysis of the data, including the construction of codes. Nonetheless, I took care to balance the analysis by staying as “close” to the data as possible, extending “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1954) as they became relevant.

Memo writing was an important aspect of the data analysis. Throughout the process of listening to the data and analyzing the interviews and after, I created memos to detail my observations, patterns I recognized across cases, suspected findings, connections to literature, emotional undertones or nonverbal cues expressed during the interviews, and other “journaling” type writing to help me flesh out meanings of the responses. This included my own reactions and subjective impressions as well. I also noted possible themes that I might explore further. Summaries were also written at the end of listening to each interview, to summarize the major themes and to note similarities and differences between informants.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Below I address some of the main themes from the data. Some of these findings are broad and apply across all cases, while others only apply to only a few cases. A major theme across cases was self-regulation and autonomy. This pertained to all areas of parenting. A divergence arose relating to nurturance, with some parents (a minority) emphasizing strategies of self-preservation in their parenting, and other parents (five of the seven) emphasizing strategies of nurturance – both of themselves and of others. Other themes related to goals of parenting that arose were a resistance to unequal power relationships (e.g., authoritarianism) and the cultivation of a political consciousness.

Self-Regulation and Autonomy

The parents in this study afford a great deal of autonomy to their kids in nearly every domain of parenting. In terms of time use, schedules were largely open, and routines were flexible. Many parents described evenings after school as a time where people “just go with the flow.” Kristin said she expects that her two teenage kids to “keep their commitments;” each of them are usually active in a sport of their choice. Otherwise, they tend to “do their own thing” but are asked to join the family for dinner. Structure exists in each family, but expectations are very reasonable. Boundaries between parents and kids exist, but these boundaries are permeable, and developed out of mutual respect for others’ autonomy, rather than out of any sense of hierarchy. When Marisa has her kids (Monday through Thursdays), she allows herself to have one main goal for the day; she also has a built-in “lazy day” every week. Katie puts on her pajamas the minute she gets home from work at Wal-Mart or taking IT classes at her community college. Joy often tells her son, “Here are the things we need to do today; just get them done

when you can,” allowing him to set his own timeline; she also has her own work and school responsibilities to balance.

Marisa treats Mia, her 5-year-old daughter, like an equal in many ways. For example, she allows her to have opportunities to join adult conversations. During the interview, Mia, who was helping her mother by washing the dishes, felt comfortable inserting herself into the dialogue at several points. Her mother acknowledged her statements and did not discourage her participation. Mia demonstrated her ability to negotiate during the interview, bringing up the fact that “we need to change the rules” around dishwashing; she had found a different way to do it than what her mother showed her. Marisa also cultivates Mia’s autonomy and ability to converse with authority figures in other ways as well, such as by taking her to see a therapist. Marisa’s decision to give her daughter access to therapy means that Mia can begin learning to address her own unique needs, bolstering her sense of autonomy at a very early age.

Joy, Kristin, Tanya, Hazel, and Katie grant their kids nearly full autonomy over what they do in their spare time. Often, they use that time to consume various forms of media. In part Joy admits this is because she “doesn’t have the time to stand over [her son’s] shoulder every minute” and monitor what he does; she “leans heavily into technology” and has utilized parental locks to protect him from “creeps on the internet.” Marisa’s kids play on their tablets, but for “no more than two hours”; there are some limits on content, since they are ages 3 and 5. As for her son, now 19, she did not monitor his media consumption after age 14. Hazel deliberately has chosen “unlimited screen time” as a rule. The parents with older kids let them play videogames online with friends watch YouTube videos and engage with others regularly on social media.

Parents say they do not worry very much about the content that they come across, although the time spent on such things does sometime require some intervention, primarily at

bedtime or whenever they become a cause of emotional frustration. For example, Kristin often has her son take a break from videogames and tells her daughter to put down the phone when there is too much “social media drama” among her and her friends. Instead of targeting the videogames and social media themselves, however, she has them “get busy on something else instead” that is more soothing. For example, she encourages her son to go for a walk when he gets angry playing *Call of Duty*. Regarding internet use, she says she is not worried about her kids coming across misinformation because she knows her kids will come to her “if something doesn’t look right to them.” This statement indicated to me that she trusts in her children’s ability to discern conflicting points of view and raise questions. Kristin’s tone seems as though she has made peace with the fact that her kids “don’t come to [her] with a whole lot of personal stuff;” she views it as a trend that “kids these days... tend to go to their friends... and social media instead of their parents.”

Marisa recalls a time when her son took a liking to content on 4chan and Reddit. She disliked that her son was visiting those sites, and she knew that his friends were responsible for piquing his interest. Yet she never discouraged him from hanging out with any of his friends, and she was willing to debate with him. She had an “open door, open conversation policy.” She recalls telling her son, “I might judge the content, but I won’t judge you.” Over time, she said, her son “came back around to what’s right.” Joy told me that the only time she really intervened is when she checked the history on her then 13-yr-old son’s laptop and found “some X-rated content.” Her intervention took the form of a conversation about realistic expectations surrounding sex; she did not want her son to develop a “skewed view of human sexuality.” This led to a conversation about respectful treatment of women and their bodies. She admitted that “It was awkward at first, but I don’t want him to become like those gross men I’ve come across on

dating sites who are just entitled and disrespectful.” She did not restrict his future content. Instead, Joy took what could have been an awkward, judgmental exchange and used it as an opportunity to “build trust” via candid conversation with her son.

Mick is the only parent who spoke about having some “hammered out” rules and structures in place, regarding time use and outings with friends. His 17-yr old daughter has been diagnosed with oppositional defiance disorder. As a communist who is opposed to tyranny of any kind, he expressed how much he dislikes imposing rigid structures and expectations on his daughter; “I feel like I don’t really have the freedom to fully bring my politics to bear in my parenting.” But granting too much autonomy and leniency had negative outcomes for his daughter, who is currently “flunking” school and has “gotten into a lot of trouble” in the past. Implementing firm but reasonable rules has been helpful in protecting her from forces that are truly authoritarian, such as the police and criminal justice system. The perception I developed was that Mick’s imposition of curfews, time limits, and consequences like removal of privileges was coming from a place of protecting her autonomy.

In terms of aspirations for their kids, parents did not mention going to college as a goal, although many did mention expectations of finishing high school. Kristin’s expectations, for example, were aimed at simplicity and practicality: “My goal right now is just to get both of them through high school without too many hiccups, and then make sure they have the tools they need to do whatever they want to do after that.” Otherwise, she expects that her kids “keep their commitments” in terms of the extracurricular activities they choose. Mick admitted that “college is probably not in the picture,” for his 17-yr old daughter. He did not voice any concerns about this reality, which indicated to me his acceptance. Tanya’s 19-yr-old has dropped out of high school and tends to sleep a lot, which concerns her mother. Tanya believes she is still attempting

to “self-heal” from past experiences of emotional abuse. It is important to note that parents did not speak of any perceived difficulties of navigating institutional expectations; they simply refused to push their children into doing anything they felt unready or uninclined to do.

Nurturance

Autonomy and self-regulation, documented above, are the first steps in learning how to nurture oneself and, potentially, others. Gentle parenting that is “firm and kind” is the best approach for Marisa’s 5-yr-old. She shared how she had to “learn how to parent all over again” when she recognized her daughter’s special needs. Reasoning alone had worked for her grown son, but it doesn’t always work for her daughter because she gets into intense emotional states. When she was age 4, she felt her daughter had started becoming “violent” toward her younger sister, so Marisa educated herself on her daughter’s needs and how to best accommodate them. She sought out counseling for herself as well as occupational therapy for her daughter. Therapy is their one regularly scheduled “activity” from week to week. She has made very concerted efforts to develop the kinds of nurturance that will help her to become well-adjusted. When her daughter is frustrated, she tries to recognize her need for manipulation, giving her playdough to help her get her feelings out. In the store when she is overwhelmed, she lets her daughter have a sucker to help her manage “sensory overload” from all the things she wants to touch. When she gets into things she shouldn’t, she gives her daughter ways to be “a good helper” (e.g., washing the dishes) and then thanks her for it. She is acutely aware that some might consider her a “pushover parent” and even refers to herself as such during the interview twice. Yet Marisa understands her child’s needs and that, sometimes, relaxed discipline is the best approach for her daughter.

When Hazel decided to become a parent, she wanted to avoid passing on any trauma from her own childhood to her child. She took a class on “trust-based relational intervention,” and learned the importance of “felt safety.” Developing trust and felt safety is a priority in her parenting, she said, rather than establishing order and obedience, because this is the first step to teaching kids how to properly care for themselves and others. This also requires being “present,” she says, which is more important to Hazel than structure and routine: “I try to emphasize presence. Because when we [society] talk about time management, it’s never about presence.”

For some parents and kids in the study, the purpose of teaching self-regulation has not yet advanced beyond assuring their kids’ self-preservation. When I asked Joy about how she helped her son foster interactions with others, she said that it was important for her son to be able to self-manage in situations. She told me how her son, Andrew (age 14), used to go to a Boys and Girls Club where he was often picked on. She told him that, while she could tell the teachers what was going on, this would not help him in the moment. She assured him that, even though he should never start a fight, he should “defend himself” by hitting them back. The fact that this came to mind as a response to the question indicated to me that there was an emphasis on self-preservation that was perhaps unavoidable. This may be related to her own experiences of abuse; she had also mentioned that her child’s father had “terrorized” her after coming back from Afghanistan to the point that she had nightmares for years after they divorced.

Katie is like Joy in that they seemed more concerned with teaching their kids how to set boundaries. Setting boundaries is an important part of having healthy relationships, but I noticed that this topic was a primary focus of her response. Both parents (Katie and Joy) have strongly conservative backgrounds, specifically fathers and ex-spouses who they felt were (and are) oppressive and silencing to women. Their kids are the same age, but while Joy’s son is

conservative and “mirrors his dad,” Katie’s daughter is very liberal like her mom. Another difference is that Katie has connected her daughter with therapy and mentions that she herself is “learning a lot” from her daughter about how to set boundaries while also maintaining authenticity regarding her beliefs in conversations with conservative family. Joy’s son “leans pretty conservative like his dad,” and he does not have (or desire) therapy currently. It seemed to me that Joy and Katie are both still working to “free” themselves of conservative influences in the family and the abuse that these figures have created. They are still healing from these previous relationships. Making this more difficult is the fact that Joy’s son, like her, is relatively isolated due to his online schooling, and he has only one friend.

In some way or another, all the parents I spoke to all had a level of social and political consciousness weaved into their parenting approaches, although this was less prominent with the two moms who were doing all that they could just to juggle work and college while raising a child.

Resisting Unequal Power Relationships

Every parent in this study had, at one point in their life, an authoritarian figure or force that negatively impacted them and from which they now were determined to distance themselves. For Mick, an active member of a local tenant union as well as a communist political group, it was the “tyranny of bosses and landlords” as well as growing up conservative Catholic. Others like Joy and Katie, and Marisa, had authoritarian or abusive parents whom they ultimately rebelled against, as well as spouses of a similar mindset whom they chose to divorce (Kristin, Joy, and Tanya). Katie had learned to tolerate various family members who imposed their conservative values on her; to this day she works to avoid “tense” conversations by using humor

or disengaging from conversations that may lead to conflict. Yet she is proud of how her daughter expresses resistance:

She stands her ground, and luckily she's learned that her opinion is every bit as valid as anybody else's. But she respectfully debates it; she doesn't talk down to other people or tell them they're wrong. I think in that sense, she's kind of teaching me more than I'm teaching her.

Similarly, Jade felt like she and her son have been “swimming in a sea of conservatives” for most of their lives. Hazel took a bold stance against such influences in her and her children’s lives; she shared with me that she specifically instructed her daughter, “You don’t have to be obedient to anyone who won’t allow you to communicate to reach understanding.” The parents separated themselves and their kids from people and institutions that they felt prevented children (whether theirs or others) from developing authentic and nurturing qualities. They felt this distancing was necessary to achieve full authenticity and freedom to live by their ideologies.

Hazel tells a powerful story of how she empowered her daughter to oppose authoritarianism in an institutional setting. When Hazel’s kids were still attending a rural, majority-conservative public school, her daughter became very troubled about how another kid in her class was being treated by a teacher. He had fallen behind during the pandemic and was now struggling in the classroom environment as kids went back to school. This bothered Hazel’s child so much that Hazel requested a meeting with the school administrators regarding the teacher’s actions toward the troubled student. School personnel became defensive about their approach and showed no willingness to change their policies or attitudes during or after this meeting. At this point, Hazel and her co-parent allowed their child to leave the school setting altogether and transition to homeschooling. This was a rebuke of the school system and a refusal to stand by and accept ableism and school-endorsed bullying. Hazel said that, if or when her child ever wishes to go back and face the school again, she will support that decision.

Cultivating Political Consciousness

All the parents in my study wanted to raise politically conscious children. I found that there were implicit and explicit ways that parents cultivated this desired outcome. On one level, this entailed parents modeling self-care and teaching their children to develop techniques for self-regulating their emotions and behaviors. Learning how not to be controlled by fear, uncertainty, and anger was part of developing a true sense of autonomy. They expressed outright rejection of parenting strategies that might result in their children becoming “people-pleasers” like they had been raised to be (Katie). Tanya and Hazel felt strongly about this, too. This authentic sense of autonomy is likely a key element, at the level of the individual, of effecting any type of change.

One way that parents developed this sense of empathy for others was by openly talking about current events or injustices present in society. When Marisa’s son shared that he did not believe in white privilege, she reminded him of how nonwhite families sit down and have “the talk(s)” about interacting safely with the police. She asked if he had ever had to worry about “walking while Black” in his own neighborhood while wearing a hoodie. Likewise, when her 5-yr-old daughter first became aware and pointed out the visible differences of Black and Brown bodies from white ones like her own, Marisa turned this into an opportunity to explore differences in experience. And, as a result of talking to her daughter directly about her own special needs, and pointing out how other kids have similar issues, her daughter has taken on the responsibility of sticking up for nonverbal kids who attend preschool with her, helping to communicate the needs of those kids to caregivers.

Laying the groundwork for political consciousness ends here, at least for the time being, for Katie and Joy. They both talked about recovering from family/spousal abuse, taking on

school and work together, and being exhausted and/or socially isolated. They had open conversations with their children about social issues, but they found no time for activism. They appeared to have taken on so much that there was little room for developing community ties.

For the other five parents, social activism was a key part of their lives. They chose to engage in politically conscious parenting by serving their communities in activism, often bringing their children with them to school board meetings, town or city council meetings, tenant union meetings, union rallies, and other activism-related functions. I gathered from parents' stories that this had an inspirational effect on children. This showed up in the case of Kristin's 13-yr old son, when public issues affected him and his peers. He went beyond talking about this issue, opting to deliver his first remarks at a school board meeting recently in defense of a referendum that proposed an increase of funding for local public schools.

Tanya's 19-yr old daughter, although not politically engaged at this point in her life, also has a sense of admiration for her mother. She joined her mom and me for lunch just before I conducted the interview with her mother. Casually, I asked her what her mom was like as a parent, and after looking at her mother thoughtfully, responded that her mom was "someone who leads by example," a compliment which seemed to take Tanya off guard (in a good way). She added that she was "proud" of her mom for all the things she had done in the union, and that it was "cool to see her be so passionate" about that work. She knew that her mother had played a significant role helping her union negotiate two contracts, a political act that improved the quality of life for many people at a local university.

Another aspect of cultivating political consciousness explicitly was in how my informants' commitment to educating their kids in how to locate correct information and providing them with helpful resources to respond to political propaganda, bullying, or other

misinformation. Tanya mentioned her excitedness to gather information about political candidates and key issues for her kids when they became of age to vote. Mick encouraged his daughter Jenna to engage in debate with her history teacher when he felt the narrative being taught was inaccurate or only telling half the story:

You know, I'll send her an article on her phone and ask, 'Well, what does your teacher that's teaching you Nazis were socialists have to say about this article?' She does quite often get extra credit, though. From stuff we've talked about at home.

He goes on to share his concerns about the effects of today's politics on schools, expressing a sense of solidarity with institutions of learning, despite the need to critique them:

There's a real contradiction at the schools, with wanting them to do better and wanting to be vocal and fight that [misinformation]...but not wanting to weaken them in light of this greater enemy they're fighting and dealing with. So, it's a real juggle. And something you kind of walk on glass approaching.

This role of helping kids access truthful information and fighting misinformation came up several times across interviews. Kristin, mentioned how it made her feel proud to see how her kids, now age 13 and 15, over time have become increasingly able to debate their peers about current political events and issues. Now, she says, they are at a point where they can articulate good arguments without even asking for her help. Parents taught their kids that, regardless of whether they would choose to go to college, education and truth-seeking should always matter.

Another story of how Mick cultivated Jenna's political consciousness was when his daughter came home from school one day, upset that a student at her high school had gotten permission to set up a "pray the gay away" table. She had gay and trans friends and wanted something done about the situation. Her dad had contacts from organizations that specifically combat issues of religion in schools; she asked him to reach out to them. By working with Jenna to take action against this form of bullying and discrimination, the "pray the gay away"

campaign was brought to an end at Jenna’s school. Mick supported his daughter in her efforts to “speak up” for others who needed support.

Challenges to Politically Conscious Parenting

The challenges to politically conscious parenting that my informants mentioned to me included economic constraint, as well as a predominantly conservative milieu. For some, the family background that made parents feel like they and their kids were “stuck in a sea of conservatives.” When I asked Marisa about what difficulties she experiences in bringing her political values into her parenting, she confided the following:

...maybe feeling a bit disenfranchised? You know, melancholy about the state of the world. I'll find myself disassociating, which makes it hard to raise two kids ... like the state of the economy. All this stress with the cost of housing, especially. I'm currently trying to move out of the rural area that I'm in ... trying to find a place that is like, within my price range, and it's hard. The rent ... it's out of control.

The state of the economy and lack of available opportunities has led to feelings of demoralization and “dissociation” which can sometimes distract Marisa, and likely many others, from being the socially conscious, nurturing parent she wants to be.

Another challenge for some was a lack of community ties. It is not surprising that parents who had stronger community ties with other local progressives also tended to be more involved in activism. The two parents who tried to balance work and higher education generally lamented that there was little time to create a connection to the community or make friends. Joy reported some tension regarding conversations with her son about politics; she believes that for the time being, he is “mirroring his dad.” This may be partly due to her social isolation; since she has little external support to validate her views, her son may perceive her as lacking in moral authority.

Sometimes, it seemed that allowing autonomy around social media and videogaming at times presented challenges to parenting in a way that reflects her progressive values. This arose particularly in Hazel's family. Here, she speaks to how videogames can "train" people to think of life in a task-oriented way:

I think it triggers you to be more work-oriented, like one task at a time. But really, that's not how you solve problems. Because if you can only think about the issue at hand, or that one thing over and over again, you don't think collectively about how you could resolve a problem. I think we're training people, accidentally, to be super hyper focused on one thing. And not thinking about how you could resolve, or like, create solutions outside of that line of vision.

Similarly, Kristin voices her concerns about her daughter's use of social media. Her concerns highlight how social media can become an all-consuming activity for kids which, in some sense, can pose a threat to the autonomy that these parents work so hard to protect:

Especially with my daughter being in high school, there is a lot of social media drama happening, that then gets brought into the schools. Yeah, so it's kind of hard to do anything about it because so many other parents also are not doing anything about it. These kids have twenty-four/seven access to each other. And if you tell them like, no social media, well then, their friends will just text screenshots to them. You know, you have to take the whole entire phone completely away to get them away from any of that stuff. And then they have complete breakdowns and lose their minds over not having a phone.

Both Hazel and Kristin ultimately choose *not* to regulate or set rules around the quantity or content of their kids' social media or videogame consumption. Kristin tries not to "target social media itself," and Hazel says that she "tries not to" regulate their consumption of anything.

Hazel goes on to explain her very conscious reasoning for this decision, and then she articulates her strategy for addressing the issue:

I will sit with them and talk about the consequences of the choices they're making in their consumption. Or the feelings they're having mentally, spiritually, physically around their choices and consumption. But I don't dictate to them what they can or cannot do, because that's not felt safety. That's me telling them how they should be. And that's not enriching their ability to feel confident and self-actualizing. And that's my job, is to make sure that they're confident and becoming self-actualized. And that they know they have support ...

I could yell at Dillon about being on his Xbox all the time. But it doesn't make him want to get off his Xbox. But if I go into his room and say, "Hey, Dillon, you want to make something on your 3D printer, or you want to go for a walk with me and Alana? He's more likely to engage in something other. It's a redirection as opposed to a demand.

Similarly, Kristin, Tanya and Katie also mentioned that redirection – often in the form of going outside – tends to be the best technique for preventing unhealthy habits of consumption.

Flexibility is key. Even though the very nature of videogames and social media can distract people from nurturing themselves and others, parents stay true to their decisions to respect their children's autonomy. They did, however, pay attention to signs that their kids were becoming too immersed (agitated by a videogame that was difficult to beat, or by social media drama, for example) and help them find other things to do. Interestingly, parents did not report kids putting up much resistance to these suggestions, except in the case of Joy, who sometimes had to threaten to "ground" her son from videogames.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Unlike the kids of prior generations, the children of parents in my sample do not routinely go outside to play or ride bikes with their cousins and friends until dark. They prefer to interact with others via social media, play videogames, and watch entertaining videos. They are “inundated with pop culture, so they learn through different media than they used to,” as Kristin pointed out. So, working-class childhoods look much different today in terms of leisure than they did when Lareau was collecting her data. Although online information and entertainment seek to monopolize kids’ time today, this is an issue that at least some parents are not terribly worried about.

Working-class progressive parents in my study certainly felt the economic “sense of constraint” of which Lareau spoke. Yet because of their acquired political worldview, this constraint seems to have motivated most of them in the direction of fighting for social and economic justice. Even those who do not participate in local politics or union activism still had explicit conversations with their children about social injustice and the need for more compassion in politics. These two parents experience a degree of social alienation, and as a result of not having community ties, instilling progressive values is often an uphill battle. They themselves have learned to be critical of conservative politics, but they still suffer from a lack of nurturance in their upbringing that prevents them from knowing how to nurture themselves or others in their communities. For these parents, parenting is focused on helping kids to heal from trauma, establishing security, and fostering critical thinking. They are trying to at least make sure that their kids are not “part of the problem” even if they aren’t quite teaching their kids how to be “part of the solution.”

For the kids of the activist parents, the only constant “structure” and unwavering influence is their parent’s progressive views, which they are invited to engage with freely, and which they, at the very least, overhear daily in their parents’ conversations with countless like-minded people. This is due to the nature of their parent’s paid and unpaid community work. Kristin and Mick mentioned that they have friends and acquaintances in the community who come to their house on a regular basis to talk about or plan community action. They bring their kids with them to various community building events, although this is not forced. Kristin mentioned how she is always wearing different “movement t-shirts” and how there is the presence of “books of [her] persuasion all over the bookshelves.” They don’t expect their kids to pick up these books yet, but the constant presence of these symbols is still influential.

In a strictly economic sense, being working-class brought stressors; however, it drove my informants to fight for a better world and participate more fully in local politics. Mick, Marisa, Joy, and Katie admitted that they were often tired and exhausted from their jobs, but they did not allow themselves to reach a point of self-degradation. They refused better-paying jobs that would have come at the expense of being present with their families and helping their communities. Most of the parents in my sample had taken lower-paying jobs and positions so that they could have the flexibility needed to raise their family. It seemed that, possibly even more than economic issues, what wore down my informants was having to deal with tyrannical or authoritarian people and forces in their lives. Their political identities were often formed out of this sentiment and led them to care about social and political issues much more than upward mobility.

Mick, Joy, and Katie and Hazel all spoke of having conservative upbringings. This suggests that, although habitus is difficult to change, it is not necessarily fixed or permanent. It

can potentially be transformed through the development of one's political consciousness. This is what happened with Joy after she divorced from her conservative husband and moved to a geographic area with a high ethnic diversity and a high population of immigrants. This new social landscape – to use Bourdieu's terms, a new "field" – she began making new friends who had lived experiences very different from her own; she talked of how much these new acquaintances changed her perspectives. Low-SES parents may be more likely to have a parenting approach that favors obedience and conformity (Park & Lau 2016); yet, despite having a conservative upbringing by parents they described as unsupportive, Mike, Joy, and Marisa, and Kate identify as progressive now in their adulthood. Statements they shared with me about their parenting reflect an approach that arose out of intergenerational conflict; there was a conscious effort to separate themselves from an authoritarian habitus. Parents who have undergone such transformations may be able to illuminate how habitus can change despite upbringing, even without formal higher education.

Kristin's son speaking at the school board meeting suggests something very different from Lareau's findings. Lareau argued that working-class kids do not develop the ability to converse and interact with school officials because of their parents' "hands-off" approach in this domain, and therefore they struggled to navigate social institutions. But my findings show that kids of actively progressive parents can learn, even at a young age, how to articulate their expectations for economic justice in a formal, institutional setting. This skill goes beyond cultivating a middle-class advantage; it is a skill for cultivating political consciousness and ultimately social change, which is far more important to Kristin.

When comparing the working-class progressive parenting described here with the middle- and upper-middle-class parenting depicted by Lareau (2011) and Hagerman (2018),

there are some similarities and differences. Lareau's gardening metaphor does not do full justice to the parents in my study; however, the way the parents in this study develop political consciousness in their kids does reflect some elements of Lareau's "accomplishment of natural growth." For one, they are not imposing their politics on their kids, who learn to initiate discussions of current events and issues on their own. For the parents who were involved in politics, these conversations do arise organically or "naturally" out of parents' day-to-day activism. Parents in my study provide special opportunities for their kids to voice their views and become involved in local issues if they so choose.

Progressive working-class parents in this study "plant the seed" and let it grow, taking great care not to suffocate it. They do not view their kids as "optimization projects" to be groomed, perfected, imbued with self-discipline, and finally sent off to a prestigious college, as is the case with many middle- and upper-class parents (Loe & Cuttino 2008). Instead, my informants "work on" themselves and their environment. They do a tremendous amount of self-care work (e.g., reading, therapy, parenting classes) *and* community work. They ensure that life is never *too* busy or chaotic for their kids; they make economic sacrifices like turning down promotions (or stepping down) so that they can "be there for their kids when they need them" (Tanya). They advocate for their children in school and other institutional settings, but with less focus on seeking competitive advantages and more focus on creating environments that uphold fairness, equality and truth.

In doing this work, parents in my study create the conditions for political consciousness and engagement to arise (nurturance, autonomy), in hopes that a sense of social responsibility and resistance to injustice will eventually "take root." Whenever the time comes that their kids identify changes they want to see in their communities, they will be equipped with a support

system, and they will seek change “from the heart” (Marisa) rather than from a place of protecting an unfair advantage. Middle-class “concerted cultivation,” for all its sacrifices of time and money, does not leave time to teach these important lessons of fostering community. While they emerge from childhood with a “sense of economic entitlement,” my findings suggest that progressive working-class parenting leads children to develop a *sense of political empowerment*.

The parenting described of the working-class activist parents in my study calls to mind that of Black activist othermothers, whose struggles and victories Hill-Collins (1991) and Naples (1998) explored. The parents I spoke to had complicated the basic notion of “reproductive labor” by refusing to accept or model for their children a life of alienation.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study point to specific sources of constraint felt by working-class individuals who identify as politically progressive, and how these constraints stand in the way of developing political consciousness. However, my findings also speak to the multiple levels of social change that working-class parents can produce when their primary goals involve nurturing themselves, their children *and* the communities they live in. This multi-level support strategy is how parents can establish a politics of care in their communities. There are several key findings in this study that call for further attention, both in sociological research and in our actual communities.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study is that it was dependent solely upon self-reporting of parenting approaches, and I met with parents at only one point in time. There was limited observation of natural family dynamics. This makes rapport with parents a critical part of the study, yet there was also limited time for building a strong rapport. A bias of social desirability was likely present; parents often hold themselves up to a particular standard of what constitutes a “good” parent. For my sample, this could lead to omission of “actual” parenting practices that are considered negative or unhealthy. It is impossible to determine actual parenting practices without conducting any type of observation; this is one reason I focus on “approaches” which speak also to parents’ vision and goals of parenting. Regardless, it would add validity to the findings were it possible to gather the perspectives of children, both now and later in adulthood, as Lareau did. More longitudinal, multi-generational studies are needed on this topic in order to explore long-term dynamics of social/ideological reproduction.

The small sample size created some demographic limitations. The sample of the study was racially homogeneous because no Black women or men responded to my online recruitment post. This may be because the residents of the town are 83.2% white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). There was only one father figure (and he was male) who responded to my post. The age of parents might also have impacted approaches to parenting, but I was unable to explore generational effects. For example, Mick mentioned that he was in his late 40s and had grown up as a “latch-key kid,” something that is often understood as a historically specific experience that might influence parenting. In many respects, I was unable to acquire a sample that could speak to diverse social influences. Another limitation that limits the analysis is that five out of the seven parents happened to be single parents, though I did not seek out this characteristic.

Even though the current study did not seek children’s perspectives, it is worth mentioning that children were present in three of the seven interviews, and in another interview, the daughter was not present but shared with me a broad assessment of her mom’s parenting before the interview. In Kristin’s interview, her youngest child Joel (age 7) was present. He was nonverbal, and I sensed he was shy; his mom set him up with something to watch on her phone which allowed him to be entertained. Marisa’s 5-yr-old daughter, Mia, was happy to talk; she made a few remarks during the interview, but most of her interjections were not directly related to the topic. Katie’s interview was the only one in which the child present (Jaqueline, age 14) actively listened for the entire extent of the interview, “weighing in” somewhat frequently. This allowed for some triangulation and external confirmation of her mother’s claims. Willingness to bring allow one’s children to enter an interview about parenting shows that the parents share a sense of transparency with their children and that they want their kids to feel comfortable and be present in conversations that involve them. This is a finding in itself since it contradicts the style of

working-class parenting that Lareau portrays, in which there are clear boundaries between adults and children in conversation (2011). Including kids in adult conversations is an important part of developing autonomy and was more of a middle-class tendency in *Unequal Childhoods*. To Marisa and Katie, however, the interview process itself was an opportunity for parents to model a cooperative experience with someone representing an institution of learning. Occasionally, Jacqueline expressed disagreement with her mother's interpretation and shared how she viewed a situation differently. Most of the time, these interjections were welcomed by Katie and Marisa; none of the parents asked their children to be quiet or leave the room.

To elicit the most honest and genuine responses, I listened with free attention and "empathic neutrality" during interviews (Patton 2002, p. 50). This essentially meant listening with curiosity and supportiveness, rooted in respect. I viewed my role as listening for understanding and was careful to never comment in ways that could be felt as issuing a judgment. Given that I am a parent of several children, I am aware of some of the common day-to-day issues of parenting as well as the fear of others judging one's parenting. I feel I successfully conveyed this in the recruitment process and was therefore able to build a rapport with informants who, in my view, were happy to have their parenting efforts recognized.

Future research on this topic would benefit from a much larger sample size. This would allow for comparison between politically varied groups, such as conservative, progressive, and moderate parents. A larger, more diverse sample would also allow for more exploration of gender and racial differences, both in parents and children. Researchers could meet with families not just in their homes, but also incorporate participant observation as Lareau and her research team did. This would mean joining parents as they go out in the community as they do activism, as well as learning more about how kids participate when they go along. Finally, as the current

project demonstrates, there is much insight to be gained by combining class and political analysis in future research on parenting approaches.

A progressive worldview, and the caring that it entails at its core, creates a disruption in the social reproduction of inequality. The progressive working-class parents in my study did not focus their energies on educational credentials or economic outcomes but rather on social and political outcomes. This reflects their own political view that human needs take priority over economic needs. The parents I interviewed are working to break the cycle of capitalist immiseration by practicing a politicized ethos of care in their parenting; many of them extended this ethos beyond family life, into community building efforts and local politics. The goal of parenting for these working-class progressives is to nurture their children, in hopes that they will nurture themselves and their communities. Part of this means teaching kids to be “present” with themselves and others (Hazel), and part of it is teaching kids how to access real information, so that they are equipped to “continue the struggle” against tyranny (Mick). Progressive working-class parents hope that their kids will develop knowledge of institutional structures so that they can one day “put legs on their heart” (Tanya); they can effectively model this process through their own political activism.

When the parenting approaches of progressives reflect their politics, kids can develop the sense of empowerment that is needed to mitigate corporate tyranny and its social harms. This empowerment entails a form of resistance that is rooted in a sense of autonomy, a nurturance of self and others, and a strong political consciousness – aspects found in today’s working-class families.

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APPENDIX A: SCREENING INSTRUMENT

1. Do you have children living at home? Please circle one.
 - a. Yes- all of the time
 - b. Yes- some of the time
 - c. No

2. Please list the ages of all children. _____

3. How many people live in your household? _____

4. Do you co-parent with another person(s) who lives in your household?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. Please circle the range that best reflects your household income before taxes.
 - a. \$0-\$15,000
 - b. \$15,001-\$30,000
 - c. \$30,001-\$45,000
 - d. \$45,001-\$60,000
 - e. \$60,001-\$75,000
 - f. \$75,001-\$90,000
 - g. \$90,001+

6. What is **your** educational attainment? Circle all that apply.
 - a. Some high school
 - b. High school diploma or GED
 - c. Vocational or trade school certificate
 - d. Some college
 - e. 2-yr college degree

- f. 4-yr college degree
- g. Higher than a 4-yr degree
- h. Other, please specify _____

7. What is the educational attainment of your **co-parent**, if applicable? Circle all that apply.

- a. Some high school
- b. High school diploma or GED
- c. Vocational or trade school certificate
- d. Some college
- e. 2-yr college degree
- f. 4-yr college degree
- g. Higher than a 4-yr degree
- h. Other, please specify _____

8. What is **your** occupation, if applicable?

9. What is the occupation of **your co-parent**, if applicable?

10. How do you describe your political orientation, in a few words?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your family. What's your homelife like?
2. How do you describe your philosophy of parenting, or your general approach? What are your goals as a parent?
3. Going beyond your "general" approach, I'd like to ask you to talk about some specific areas of parenting. How do you address the following areas:

- Time – structure or routine? Activities?
- Behavior Management (Motivation, Discipline, Reward/Punishment)
- Emotional Guidance
- Fostering Interactions with Others/Relationships
- Managing Consumption/Information (oversight of food, toys, games, tech, social media, current events)

4. Do you approach your parenting with your political values in mind? If so, what does that look like? If not, why not?

OR (if already addressed in the above questions):

It sounds like, in a lot of ways, you approach your parenting with your political vision in mind.

Would you say that's accurate? Could you say more about why you do that?

5. Do you experience any challenges in merging your parenting approach with your politics? If so, where do those arise from?

- Upbringing/ Knee-jerk reactions/ Internal conflicts
- Nature of job/work stressors
- Economic factors?

6. What does it mean to you to be part of the "working-class"?

7. How and why did you become a progressive? Is there a story behind that? What does your political identity mean to you? What influences brought you here?

- Education?
- Work-related experiences?
- Other experiences?
- Friends/relationships?

8. Considering all we've talked about, how do you view your role as a parent in this community and in society? What is the most important thing you can do as a parent?

10. Was there anything you wanted to add about your parenting that we didn't really touch on?