
In this ethnographic account of the current dynamics of family life, Lareau convincingly argues that social class produces both blatant and covert differences in the way children are raised, with potential long-term effects on a child’s potential to succeed in American society. Building on initial observations of 88 third and fourth grade children from middle-class, working-class and poor families, the study team selected twelve racially diverse families across these three socioeconomic classes for intensive observations. Each family was visited about 20 times over a month-long period. During these 2 to 3 hour visits, the study team observed and conversed with the parents, target children, and siblings to explore whether the life experiences of the nine and ten year old children were shaped by their social location.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section chronicles the pace of daily life for these children and their families; the second section examines the varied use of language within the home; and, the final section investigates the ability of parents to influence the larger institutions that affect their children. Within each section, individual chapters detail the pattern of life for a specific family. Encasing these stories are two introductory chapters that summarize the core class differences in child rearing beliefs and practices that emerged; and, a final chapter analyzing how these class differences in parenting strategies originated and their implications for future policy. The author includes some useful appendices that provide a concise description of the study’s methodology and a valuable discussion of the inherent challenges of ethnography that should be of great interest to students and scholars engaged in qualitative research.

In the introductory chapters, we learn that the influence of social class on childhood emanates from two distinct parenting strategies: the concerted cultivation approach of middle-class parents and the fa-
cilitation of natural growth approach of working class and poor parents. After introducing and defining these concepts, the second chapter provides the background for the study and elucidates some of the ways in which social inequality restricts the type of schooling and parenting that children receive.

Part I, Organization of Daily Life, takes us into the homes of three families. In the middle-class family of Garrett Tallinger, family life is governed by a busy schedule of organized, extra-curricular activities, carefully selected to enhance Garrett’s development. Unlike Garrett, Tyrec Taylor’s working-class family lives at a slower pace, where children engage in a variety of informal activities, typically without adult supervision. Katie Brindle’s poor family closely resembles the other poor and working class families in the study. Katie’s mother focuses her time and energy making sure the family gets through the day but gives Katie great freedom to play with friends and family. This section addresses how a sense of entitlement begins to appear among the middle-class children, who are shielded from monetary concerns, as compared to working and poor families, where the constraints due to insufficient funds are openly acknowledged.

In Part II, Language Use, Lareau details how verbal interactions between parents and children vary by social class. The parents of Alexander Williams, a middle-class child, rely heavily on verbal reasoning as a discipline strategy and as a method to cultivate Alexander’s verbal abilities. In contrast, Harold McAllister lives in a poor family with less emphasis on talking and much greater use of verbal directives to guide his behavior. Although Harold appears to gain greater respect for adults, Lareau concludes that these different experiences will give Alexander a future advantage, especially in his ability to negotiate with adults.

The effects of these strategies can be clearly seen in Part III, Families and Institutions. The stories of Stacey Marshall, Melanie Hanlon, Wendy Driver and Billy Yanelli depict the relative ease with which middle-class parents intervene with schools and other institutions on behalf of their children while working-class and poor parents afford greater respect and, consequently, more authority to such professionals. In the final chapter, Lareau asserts that the concerted cultivation approach of middle-class parents, with its reliance on verbal skills and sense of entitlement, results in persistent advantages for their children as they enter the worlds of school and beyond. The accomplishment of natural growth approach of the working-class and poor parents, emphasizing child autonomy and clearly defined adult-child
boundaries, fosters creativity and respect, but not the kind of assertiveness valued in US society.

Lareau strives to present a balanced portrait of life in these families, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the different child-rearing approaches. Even though the concerted cultivation approach gives children more advantages, Lareau notes that it is not without costs to the child and the family. Similarly, the natural growth approach yields some clear benefits in terms of strong family ties and active, engaged children.

Two important themes emerge. First, the divide in parenting styles appears between the middle-class parents and the two economically disadvantaged groups of working and poor parents. Second, race does not play as strong a role as social class location though the effects of racial segregation and discrimination are noted. In a society where issues regarding social class are downplayed, this book reminds us of the power of economics and related resources, such as education, to shape behavior and expectations, with long-term consequences for children.

This book is a timely contribution to the study of children’s lives. Though repetitious at times, the rich descriptions of these families and their interactions illuminate the ways, both large and small, social class can lead to unequal childhoods. While additional research is needed to confirm these results, the clear writing and provocative findings make this an excellent choice for scholars, educators, students and policy-makers.

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This edited collection brings together a set of chapters that tests the gateway hypothesis. The volume comprises sixteen chapters divided
into four substantive sections plus an overview and conclusion that cover (1) Recent substantive findings: What do we know about stages of drug use, risks, and protective factors? (2) Impact of prevention interventions: A test of the progression hypothesis; (3) Methodological issues and approaches: Advantages and limitations of alternative methods; and (4) Animal models and biological processes: Implications for drug progression. Contributors include researchers from a number of different disciplines ranging from social work and psychology to neuropharmacology and preventative medicine.

In Kandel’s definition of the term, the gateway hypothesis encompasses the notion that “there is a progressive and hierarchical sequence of stages of drug use that begins with tobacco or alcohol, two classes of drugs that are legal, and proceeds to marijuana, and from marijuana to other illicit drugs, such as cocaine, metamphetamine, and heroin” (Overview, p. 1). She notes in her overview that the gateway hypothesis lacks universal acceptance—in part because it is already well known that many users of cigarettes and alcohol do not progress to illicit drugs. She presents many research questions regarding the gateway hypothesis that could lead to a deeper understanding of drug abuse and addiction, but then underscores that such questions are not the focus of this book, which is designed only to examine the progression aspect of the hypothesis.

The book achieves considerable depth in exploring its narrow theme, but for those interested in a more thorough and critical understanding of drug involvement, the book is sharply limited. It does represent an exploration of the gateway hypothesis via a “juxtaposition of epidemiological, intervention, animal, and neurobiological studies,” an undertaking that that “represents a new stage in the evolution of drug research, an evolution in which epidemiology and biology inform one another in the understanding of drug abuse” (p. 11). What could have been a major strength becomes instead a weakness because the authors of the individual chapters do little to make their work accessible to those not familiar with the techniques and language of their disciplinary approach.

Most notably in the methodology section, some authors have crafted their chapters in such a manner that they will interest only those already well acquainted with the statistical techniques presented. In some cases, the presentation style seems intentionally designed for readers who enjoy plodding through tables that are incomprehensible without extensive references to the text. Take, for example, the chapter entitled “Log linear sequence analyses: Gender and racial/ethnic
differences in drug use progression.” This chapter contains five tables in the body of the chapter and two in the appendix. These tables include columns with entries such as Model 1, Model 2, Model 5A, Model 5D–6D, and so on, with no clear explanation of what the models represent. Table 9B in the Appendix spans three pages and includes references to 19 separate models, where Model 19 is Model 15 +A*S*S*R. The text contains a succession of sentences that require careful deciphering and the reader’s ability to keep track of which model is which, such as

The proportion of individuals in the scale type, who take one of the pathways of progression hypothesized by Model 5B–6D, is decomposed into two components: the estimated proportion that results from chance occurrence among those whose progression patterns is random and the estimated proportions of scale type persons not explained by chance occurrences. (Yamaguchi and Kandel, p. 202)

In other chapters that could have a broad appeal to a wide range of practitioners and researchers, such as the chapters that deal with evaluations of school based programs, the authors provide insufficient detail. They report on the outcomes of the evaluation research without providing adequate descriptions of the program contents. Without having access to this information, readers will find it difficult to assess the extent to which the gateway hypothesis and its corollaries formed the basis for the success of the programs.

The book is designed for the specialist who is already well versed in the literature. The tone and complexity of the book make it inaccessible for all but the most advanced graduate students. For researchers and teachers interested in adding content on drug use and abuse to their own research or teaching, the book does not provide sufficient syntheses of the materials. For researchers and practitioners concerned with family and economic issues, the book does not include enough careful analyses of the role of family relationships and economic resources in shaping the extent to which adolescents use different types of legal and illegal substances. The dynamics of family and economic issues are also not adequately addressed in examining the extent to which adolescents move from using one type of substance to another. Nor do the contributors provide more than a cursory examination of how family and economic factors decrease or increase the risks for adolescents to move from initial use to subsequent abuse of these substances. These factors are of secondary importance in testing the progression hypothesis.
The conclusions of the book are guarded. At the end, the reader learns that a progression does exist for some adolescents from cigarette and alcohol use to marijuana use to the use of hard drugs. No claims are made that these associations can be re-classified as causal factors. The reader also has considerably more knowledge about how mice react to different drugs, but scant information on how adolescents in countries outside of the United States fit into the gateway hypothesis. Although the authors recognize that claims of causality are difficult to establish, their proposed research agenda focus on the continued search for evidence to provide support for “causal” pathways. They advocate for more research on animals, but not for more cross-national research—although they do recognize that cultural contexts are likely to be important and merit additional research attention. Also absent are any research suggestions that would systematically attempt to assess (or in any way question or challenge) the effects of U.S. drug policy on the stages and pathways of drug involvement.

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