Parenting for a Digital Future

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Context:

This chapter will be the third in our book on parenting and digital media. The book seeks to understand how parents orient themselves and their children towards digital media – in their present lives and imagined into the future. In previous chapters, we will have considered how media panics about the effects of pre-digital and now digital media and 'screen time,' have always raised parents' fears and sometimes their hopes, necessitating shifts in family practices and public policy. At best seen as time-wasting and at worst as spreading licentiousness and violence,[1] when television first arrived there were fears that it would have a "devastating effect on family relationships and the efficient functioning of the household," that it would ruin children's eyes and brains, or even cause cancer.[2] Unfolding debates over digital media during the writing of our book share much of the same hyperbole – from proclamations that smartphones have 'ruined a generation'[3] or that social media has 'ended conversation'[4] to contrasting claims that parents must help their children gain '21st century skills' or risk being left behind.[5] Understanding how parents respond to these polarised visions – of the disastrous potential effects and yet also the promise of new technologies – is one of the central motivations of our book.

We contend that imaginaries of the future are important for understanding present practices, for parenting is itself inherently future-oriented: each act of parenting has a double meaning – as an intervention in the present and an effort to bring about a particular future, even if this cannot be fully named. So parents create 'projected futures,'[6] by "*tacking back and forth* between futures, pasts and presents, framing templates for producing the future."[7] To explore these themes we engaged in a variety of research methods. This chapter draws primarily from our in-depth interviews of 73 families in London in 2015-2016. We recruited families with dependent children who were highly diverse in socio-economic status, family composition, ethnicity and age of child(ren). We included parents from a wide variety of different ethnic and religious communities, living on annual incomes ranging from under £15,000 per year to well over £100,000.[8]

Beyond recruiting a diverse range of families, we also proactively sought out families who, in one way or another, had confronted the idea of a 'digital future' with distinct purposes or from a distinct perspective. This included parents of children who had in some sense 'voted with their feet' by attending a digital media and learning programme – including code clubs, media arts, and digital making programmes. Parents were interviewed face-to-face, generally at home (two thirds of the families) where we also asked for a 'media tour' of their homes, paying attention to their digital devices and how they narrated their use, although some we met for an interview in a public setting if they preferred. Some interviews were conducted with the whole family together.

Sometimes we talked to parents both with and without their children joining in; sometimes we talked to parent and child separately. Where possible we observed the children in the coding or digital media class, sometimes also interviewing their teachers.

Chapter 3 – Social class and inequality

Throughout our interview with Cecilia Apau, the desktop computer in the corner of the room has been flashing. The black screen is alarmingly cut with bars of irregularly pixelated bright colours – the tell-tale signs of a virus. Two of her three children are playing on a supermarket-brand tablet and a smartphone, with another tablet lying broken in the corner. The apartment is high up on the tower block of a large council estate and is sparsely but comfortably furnished. In the small lounge, as well as the four screens already mentioned there is also a flatscreen television looming over an old stereo – also broken. When we ask Cecilia, a single parent who works as a cashier in a low-cost grocery, what happened to the computer, she shrugs, unsure of what's wrong or how to fix it.

The Thiebault family's lounge is also organised around the focal presence of a large flatscreen television. But their penthouse apartment in a luxury gated development near the Thames resembles an antiques shop, filled carefully curated *objets d'art* as well as some of the 15 top-of-the-range screen devices they have scattered through the house – games consoles to tablets, TVs and laptops. But to father Michel Thiebault, a high-ranking corporate executive in a technology company and stay-at-home mother Josephine, the cost was negligible.

These two families represent some of the contrasts in family life in London, and yet there are some similarities. Both are migrant families, common in London. Cecilia Apau came to London from West Africa, Michel and Josephine Thiebault from Western Europe. Both homes are filled with technology, albeit of very different kinds – in the case of the Apaus the most affordable, and therefore with more restricted capacity, and adding up to a much more significant percentage of Cecilia's limited income. The Thiebaults, by contrast, think little of upgrading their devices to the latest models. Although their lives are different in many respects, both homes are nonetheless inhabited by digital-media enthusiast children, including sons (13-year-old Marc Thiebault and eight-year-old Eugene Apau) who are currently learning to code. Yet this interest, too, looks very different in its pursuit. Marc is excited about attending an expensive coding summer camp at a top London university to learn Python, and is now fantasising about study robotics at university.[9] Eugene attends a free weekly after-school programme at his under-resourced primary school to learn the introductory coding programme Scratch – but despite initial enthusiasm became bored and anyhow, the volunteer-run club only lasted a term.[10]

In this chapter, we examine how parents' access to resources – economic, certainly, but also cultural and social – influence how they approach digital media in their own and their children's lives. While a few of the families we interviewed were living well below the poverty line, and a few were earning almost inconceivably high salaries, most were not hard to characterise loosely as middle class or working class. Yet nearly all of these homes were filled with digital *stuff*, testament to the society-wide rise in consumerism linked to the digital.[11] Thus on the one hand, we discuss the enduring importance of social class in explaining how inequalities in digital resources now contribute to the reproduction of social advantage and disadvantage, as notably theorised by Pierre Bourdieu[12]. And on the other hand, we explore the ways in which sufficient

money and related resources ('economic capital') or even educational achievements ('cultural capital') do not necessarily determine whether a home is 'media rich' or culturally 'rich' or not.[13]

In her influential book, *Unequal Childhoods,* Annette Lareau draws on Bourdieu's analysis in differentiating the practices of American middle-class and working-class parents in order to explain how inequality is reproduced through the aggregate outcome of individual parents drawing on unequal starting points and resources in each seeking to do their best for their child.[14] As she argues, it is precisely through their often anxious but supposedly fulfilling busyness that they thereby drive an ever-larger wedge between their families and those living in poorer circumstances. Related analyses have focused critically on 'intensive'[15] parenting[16], seemingly the status quo[17] although the result can be exhausting, guilt-ridden or disempowering[18] even for those who seem to engage in them willingly and from a position of privilege. Broadly, we agree with this analysis, for our fieldwork reveals many ways in which digital media have become co-opted in the self-interested competition for future achievement, such that parents with more resources are much better positioned than those with lower incomes or education to support their children's pathway to a digital future, as for any other kind of future. But we also question and complicate the account in several ways.

First, we show how parental practices of 'concerted cultivation' now occur well beyond just middle-class families, thereby both extending the reach of the concept and repudiating Lareau's contention that, by contrast, working class families rely on an assumption of 'natural growth.' Across the range of our families, including many poor and marginalised families, we find parents making considerable efforts to 'cultivate' their children, albeit in diverse ways and with different outcomes. For example, Cecilia Apau explained to us that she bought the now virus-ridden computer "because my daughter [Esi, 12] needed to use the computer for homework" and she bought the tablets had been purchased so that the children could practise "maths, spelling, reading, anything … I want them to learn every day, to improve their reading." Cecilia downloaded an app recommended by a teacher at Esi's former primary school to help her prepare for the year-end standardised tests. Indeed, she had downloaded around 20-30 apps that she deemed 'educational', and although she could not say whether or what her children were learning as a result – though nor could the middle-class families we interviewed, so opaque is the promise of the digital,[19] and so ambivalent, therefore, are parents about its value. Nonetheless, perhaps because they lack other cultural resources, for poorer parents - who have not themselves managed to do better than their own parents but who hope for better for their children, the digital often suggests a promising innovation worth taking a chance on. [20] By contrast, for middle class parents, technology suggests a change from their childhoods that often seems worrying, uncertain.

Even though some parental anxieties readily crystallised around digital media, we also found that some parents – across income levels – particularly sought to deploy digital media as agents of concerted cultivation, seemingly keen to capitalise on this putative new means of providing children with a competitive advantage (or, at least, preventing their falling 'behind'). This is particularly evident in the current fashion for 'coding.' But in some families, parents' own self-critical reflections lead them to try to rein in their anxieties, being acutely aware of the costs to domestic harmony and child agency of driving both themselves and their children to ever greater achievement as 'good parents' or 'successful' children. Yet other families seemed to find it fairly straightforward to strike a balance between present pleasures and future aspirations, and it is a

mark of how influential are the popular discourses about heightened parental anxieties that we were sometimes surprised to find ourselves visiting calm and cheerful families – including those confidently at ease with their children's (often moderate) digital media activities.

In suggesting that working-class parents are more concerned to support their children's achievement than sometimes thought, we do not mean to argue that the cultures of parenting among middle class and working-class families are converging nor, especially, that the outcomes for children are becoming more equal. Social statistics over the past half century reveal little if any intergenerational social mobility overall within British society. So it is likely that despite all her efforts, Cecilia's children will not get as far ahead as she hopes, though she may succeed in her efforts not to let her children fall behind. For it seems that inequality in Britain is not rising either, though for sure it is as significant as in past decades.[21] The exception, of course, is that London along with other 'global cities'[22], is home to a growing segment of the very rich, partly because of the high salaries paid in the capital city but more because of the growing importance of accumulated wealth.[23] The Thieibault family illustrate this, and it is no accident that we recruited a number of these families in DigiCamp, an expensive summer camp to that teaches children digital skills.

There are two added complications to be explored in this chapter. One is that, in London, especially among families who are poor or otherwise marginalised, socioeconomic status is closely intertwined with patterns of migration and ethnicity. Yet parents who lack institutionally-recognised forms of cultural capital (access to higher education, confidence with official bodies, familiarity with elite tastes) may nonetheless have access to forms of 'subcultural capital',[24] for example grounded in minority ethnic or religious cultures, which they deliberately cultivate in their children even though it brings them few advantages in the majority culture. Consider Afua Osei and Kwame Tuffuor, whose family life is structured around their being Jehovah's Witnesses, and who welcome the convenience of the Jehovah's Witness app to provide religious resources for their three children. These parents prioritise maintaining their subcultural capital and harness digital media's 'long tail' of niche contents and services to this end. Yet their children are unable to 'convert,' in Lareau's term, the knowledge gained at home or in their community into value that is recognised and rewarded by schools, universities or employers.

The other is that, perhaps because London is home to well-established creative industries[25] like art, music and theatre and also emergent industries like technology and games design, a fair few of our fieldwork families were highly educated and yet living on relatively or very low incomes. More often than not, they were pursuing alternative visions of the good life – choosing work for its intrinsic rewards, often self-employed, often doing creative labour of some kind – by contrast with the lawyers, academics, architects or dentists in our fieldwork. Or as Bourdieu describes,[26] they inhabit "the most indeterminate zone … towards the cultural [rather than economic] pole of the middle class', often having 'invented' their positions to take advantage of recent changes in the economy and its emerging opportunities for "the increasing role of the symbolic work of producing needs" even though this promises only a risky future. This emphasis on 'creativity' or 'passionate work''[27] is illustrated in the interview with the Bardem family, below. In these cases digital media may be seized upon by these parents as affording an innovative 'workaround' that brings rewards through the deployment of cultural knowledge without too much need for money, drawing on a technology that can itself be imagined as alternative, creative and, crucially, as

providing a now publicly-valued pathway to a digital future for either themselves or their children or both.

Below the poverty line

To get to the door of the Mohammed family's council-flat in a mid-rise block in South London, one has to pass through a series of security gates, check points, and down several long halls. Near a major intersection and overlooking a commuter station ferrying people into central London, the building is covered in slowly accumulating grime, testifying to neglect as well as proximity to a busy road. Leila Mohammed answered the door and took us to through to the kitchen where she told us about her journey to the UK from East Africa and her lively daughters Nareen (10) and Safia (8), born in London. As a single mother earning less than £15,000 a year working as an in-home care assistant we had assumed that Leila had wanted to be interviewed in part for the honorarium on offer, and yet she seemed taken aback at the voucher, then asking whether she could use it to buy a bicycle for her daughters.[28]

Leila alluded to past troubles with Nareen and Safia's father, saying that things are "very busy especially when you're a single mum, it's very difficult. I don't have anyone next to me." After waking up early for prayers and then preparing everything for day, a childminder collected the girls and took them to school[29] so that Leila could head to her job taking care of a severely disabled boy in another part of South London. She was overstretched, exhausted. At the weekends Leila paid for her daughters to go to Koran school on Saturdays and on Sundays to extra Maths and English tuition, taking a considerable chunk of her very limited income. She explained, there's "no free in this country" but the money was worth it because:

> I don't read so much and I didn't know how to write and I didn't know how to... so now [the girls are] teaching me writing because I want a good education okay, I know they need it, to buy food, buy clothes, a lot of... it's not easy to handle the payments I pay both £300.

Leila had high hopes for her daughters in the future, calling Nareen "my engineer" and musing that Safia might want to be a doctor. During school holidays Leila spent time and money taking her daughters to the large brand-new shopping centre to the city farm/petting zoo and the museums in Central London. She had also, with the help of the children's paternal grandfather, purchased a computer – a solid desktop that looked at a glance about five plus years out of date. Leila was glad not to have to go to the library or to a friend's house to use a computer, necessary to demonstrate she was job searching to the Job Centre. The girls also used the computer for homework – although Leila was vague about exactly what they did waving her hand and saying 'literacy.' Leila let Nareen use her phone occasionally, but after hearing from a friend about a £200 bill the friend had received after giving her kids her phone, Leila was wary.

The family had various problems with the computer, and often Leila turned to Nareen for help. Once, she recalled, Nareen had fixed the computer by taking the front off of the hard-drive and doing something Leila didn't quite understand, but was impressed by. Leila did little to mediate (explain, discuss, evaluate with her daughters) the content they engaged with online[30] but she monitored their time carefully. She said:

> Last time in the news I heard the man say more than two hours… the scientists said no more than two hours. So one hour I say stop… do what you want… stay, go out, writing or what you want, more than one hour and a half on the computer and on the TV, it's not good sense.[31]

Although the technology they had was in many ways limited, and the activities their children engaged in were few, proportionate to the time and resources they have available both Cecilia Apau and Leila Mohammed were substantially investing in their children's futures.[32] And they embraced technology to do so, as part of providing the "basic conditions"[33] for academic success at home, along with sending their children for extra tuition, buying academic workbooks etc.[34] But insofar as the digital devices were often limited in their capacity or even non-functional, the result was also missed opportunities and wasted resources. Although popular advice to parents about 'screen time' occasionally makes reference to the cost of purchasing, updating and maintaining digital media at home, there is nonetheless little acknowledgement of how access to high-quality – or even adequately functioning – resources is far from a given.[35] Like the Apau and Mohammed children, 28% of children in the UK live in households defined as living in poverty.[36] And many of them face problems of poor connections; unpaid bills or insufficient data plans on their mobile devices.[37] Digital media access, therefore, is not simply a yes/no issue but rather that families connect at all points along the 'access rainbow.'[38]

Elite families, elite skills

French parents Michel and Josephine Thiebault originally came to London for Michel's high-level corporate job. The Thiebault's access their property through a private gate with its own porter and security system, which has the effect of cutting them off from the more mixed nearby area although they have an expansive view of the river Thames. Their penthouse itself is stately and generous, marble walls encompass gilded antiques and some expensive-looking taxidermy – everything is in its place.

For Michel, an executive in the IT sector, teaching his sons about technology was not just about "embracing the digital trend" but was as basic as understanding the mechanics of a bicycle to improve your cycling:

> If you take just the bicycle, the fact you know how it works helps you understand, can you accelerate, can you start, can you turn, can you do this or can you do that? And when it doesn't work you understand why it didn't work and you don't repeat the same mistake… It is the same with the digital environment, if you don't understand how it works, you are going to struggle in your life.

Josephine shared Michel's enthusiasm, signing the boys up for technology camps and sitting on the board of DigiCamp, the intensive – and expensive - summer technology camp where we first met Marc (13) in his Python II class. These parents and children were sufficiently digitally literate in that they could – and had - set up a 'smart home' with interconnected devices, parental filters and monitoring systems although, as Marc told us, the sons had already found ways to "ways to engineer around" them. From a young age Marc had taught himself Java to create mods in Minecraft and was following along with Code Academy tutorials on YouTube to continue his Python class and create his own "RPG" (role player game). His digital skills were a source of

personal pride and he scoffed at school friends who "just have an iPhone… they just play on it, but they don't even know how it works."

Looking into their sons' futures, Michel and Josephine were quietly confident of their ability to support their sons as indeed they had already been so active in 'brokering' their current opportunities.[39] Michel anticipated a world of "sensors… artificial intelligence systems" and noted that "if you don't understand a piece of that, you are going to be completely lost." Unlike the "pathetic" others who "don't have a clue about computing" and who use computers uncritically (he evocatively described bank tellers as acting "like robots") and for whom this technology may come to look "magical," Michel saw his sons as having superior knowledge calling their already-advanced digital skills as those which "any gentleman should have."

Although Michel and Josephine championed their son's activities, DigiCamp founder Suzanna had told us that initially it was quite a task convincing the high-income parents who could afford her camps that it was worth it. Unlike in the US (where Suzanna was from) and where the word 'engineering' has a more skilled connotation, Suzanna felt that at first UK and European parents thought 'engineering'

> Was a dirty job and they basically thought you were digging up roads and fixing oil leaks, machine parts… When I first started my camp, a couple of parents said to me... why would I want my kid to learn technology? I don't want them to be the guy who sits in the basement fixing the email.

In recent years, Suzanna commented, there had been a 'transition' or 'rebranding' in the UK where British and European parents are now associating engineering with 'Steve Jobs' and 'entrepreneurship.' Responding to growing pressure from students and from parents, DigiCamp added a class to help students bring the apps they had developed "to market" by helping them optimize their products on the App Store and beyond. [40] Suzanna attributed this shift to "ambitious parents" who "don't necessarily want their kids to be a programmer, but... they don't want them to be excluded because they haven't understood that stuff." Suzanna's camp also offers more 'creative' courses too –a rapid prototyping course or a classes (targeted towards girls) on wearables.

In distinguishing future entrepreneurs from programmers and those from makers, one can see how for some children, coding will lead to the digital equivalent of blue-collar jobs[41] – 'learning to labour' as Paul Willis put it decades ago, while for others it will support them to jobs that prioritise making, creating, and tinkering, while still others will become high level corporate execs. Then there's those in the middle for whom the digital seems to destabilise the processes of social reproduction on which the middle classes could once rely. Ironically, Suzanna herself encapsulates many of these tensions since we soon learned that DigiCamp was still in start-up mode and needed to make more money to prove its model and Suzanna was a long way from her previous comfortable salary. And yet despite these struggles she said she was happy having left her job in finance to work more flexibly, and had rented a desk in one of the corporate-owned co-working spaces cropping up across the city.

Living creatively

Not fitting neatly into polarising accounts of middle versus working class families, some families presented us with a confusing array of class symbols. They had high 'cultural capital' in that they had pursued advanced degrees, and privileged 'creativity' as a core present and future family value. Many earned low or precarious incomes and lived in cramped and over-filled homes or some in crumbling houses they had inherited and struggled to maintain. The Bardem family lived in a small flat above a parade of shops in South London. As soon as we walked through the door we bumped into papier-maché sculptures made by father Jacob – masks, Star Wars figures, a shark and more – swinging from the low ceiling. He had worked as a photographer but had re-trained as a paramedic after recurring unemployment. Both parents had art degrees. Daisy trained in silver-smithing and metalwork at art college and worked for a time for a jeweller, but found it hard to make a living doing things other than basic repairs. Having found that her peers from college had gone on to do uninteresting work like "restoring old railings" and that you almost inevitably "have to end up making things that you don't really want to do," she became a stay-at-home mother to Matthew (8), Declan (6) and Nico (3) and threw herself into her family life.

The house had three computers – an old desktop that Jacob kept because it worked with his similarly out-of-date photo scanner, a more recent desktop and a laptop that Daisy mainly used for "general browsing." They also had a tablet and both parents had smartphones, but although Matthew had begun asking for one his parents agreed it that at eight it was too early. Indeed, his school had asked children not to bring in phones although Daisy had some sympathy for children who "might be walking home on their own". In the evenings, the boys sometimes watched films, although Jacob pointedly says, "if it's on they'll watch it. If you give them a reasonable or better alternative, they'll take it."

Although Daisy and Jacob limited the boys' access to their smartphones and tablets during the week (although the boys told a different story, saying they watch *Doctor Who* on the tablet in the mornings sometimes…), they were more liberal at the weekend and when needed. So on long car trips to visit Daisy's family in Wales or when the boys waited for each other at swim lessons the tablet filled the time. Daisy and Jacob had strong opinions about the games their children played. They liked *Monument Valley*, a 'steampunk' style game that Daisy had downloaded because she likes games that are "nice to look at" but admitted that she wasn't as knowledgeable about "playability." Daisy compared notes with the other mothers, deciding Matthew was too young for his friend's game that Jacob described as "*Grand Theft Auto* for kids." The parents were happy that the boys played *Minecraft* but lacked knowledge of the game – for example not sure if they were playing in 'social' (with others) or 'creative' (only themselves) mode. Daisy was less happy on noticing that Declan had downloaded the game *Zombie Annihilation*, explaining to his mum "there'll be people coming around." What they disliked was when the boys demanded the tablet without thinking. Daisy described "Declan will say, wake up on Saturday, it's the weekend, can I go on your, on your computer. That's what he'll say straight away."

As Daisy was the main caregiver much of the boys' digital competence came through her. Only recently she explained to Declan how she bought things online; Declan told us how she "got [a ninja costume] on the internet" and that it will soon be delivered in a box. He also knows it is usually his mum who chooses the games for the iPad, though once a "soldier fighting game" seemed to magically appear on the iPad when he was visiting his grandparents. Declan was excited that granny and grandpa had allowed him to play (perhaps because, as he says, they "know nothing" about the iPad). Although Daisy was less than thrilled about how much her

parents allowed the boys access to 'screen time,' Declan also recounted how his grandfather was helping him build a playhouse and normally they like to "make stuff" together.

Overall, the family has found a balance between embracing and resisting digital media in their lives. When they embraced it was partly pragmatic – a matter of going along with the children's enthusiasm in playing with friends, at their grandparents, at the weekends, but it is also led by their creative interests, evident in Daisy's curating of apps and games, and in how the family talked about digital media. Their resistance similarly mixed the common parental anxiety about screen time and violent games with the family's particular pleasure and competence in crafting, artisan and artistic activities.

Looking into the future, Jacob imagined:

> The iPad and the laptop is the thing of today, it's the notebook of today and that's what they're using.... It's only a matter of time before that is, you know, integrated into the desktops integrated into window panes and windscreens of cars…. I'm not going to shy away from it, I take it as it comes, but the sadness I'm going to feel is when, you know, their grandchildren say to me, can you explain to me 'books'?

However, although Jacob and Daisy anticipated a kind of 'digital future' and were working to prepare their children for this, their main efforts were directed towards non-digital ways of being, creating, learning, and interacting. Daisy appreciated how video games helped their sons learn, including exercising 'patience' in having to try the same moves over and over again or in needing to make "quick decisions" but she couldn't imagine enjoying a game with her sons in the way they all sat down around the board game, *Cluedo*. Jacob thought computers would be essential for his sons – musing that all of Nico's homework will likely be online by the time he gets to school – but his ambivalence at what might be lost was clear. As so often in our fieldwork, we saw how family practices and meanings in the present were framed by imaginative activities of both looking back and looking forward.

In emphasising creative and 'human' ways of being,[42] these parents are not ignoring digital skills but ultimately working to create, as Margaret Nelson puts it, "adaptable children with multifaceted skills and abilities."[43] For many of the 'creative' families the emphasis lies on creative expression and self-fulfilment – what Lynn Schofield Clark calls "expressive empowerment"[44] – more than on financial success. The parents' values are paramount and often implicitly understood by the children, so media choices are made and rules established according to their particular criteria and assessment of what is aesthetically pleasing, creatively supportive, *interesting*. But as with all parenting discussions, there is an element of performativity in these conversations, since parents' philosophies are variously circumvented by children's peers, grandparents and siblings, and undermined by the practical constraints of time, skill and energy.

Making privilege count

We found very few low-income families in our study engaging in what Lareau called 'natural growth' – indeed, contra her theory of class, it is perhaps the low-income but educated creative families like the Bardems that come closest – in their romantic emphasis on "a spontaneous childhood" instead of economic success. Rather, across the range of families, parents were

working hard to support their children and provide them with a variety of opportunities even though they had very limited resources. Many too, again regardless of income, complained about their children's lives having become more mediated and commercial, but nonetheless justified their choice to introduce more technology into their homes in terms of its educational and social benefits, present and the future.[45] But it was also possible see how although these parents were engaged with their children they were not equally able to help their children capitalize on their investments. And while it is possible that in poorer families, digital technologies seem to offer 'educational' advancement, this may not necessarily bring either direct instrumental benefit or knowledge that they can convert into value in school or elsewhere.

Facilitating children's future opportunities requires considerable time, emotional and financial resources from parents. Insofar as such intensive practices now characterise poorer as well as more privileged families, one wonders whether this will be to the distinct benefit of those poorer families, given they are particularly in need. We cannot know the long-term outcomes for the children whose families we visited, but any optimism is tempered by Lareau's account of how concerted cultivation in the middle-classes generates a sense of entitlement. Lareau found that, through the activities involved in concerted cultivation, middle-class parents were able to transmit to their children an understanding of the 'cultural logic' of institutions and how to 'game' these.[46] So middle-class children were taught to navigate the structures and rules in their schools and later universities and employment, and negotiate new and advantageous paths in ways that working-class children were not.

As a result, middle class families are more often able to transmit their 'differential advantage' to their children.[47] Working class parents were less likely than middle-class parents to believe that among their 'crucial responsibilities' are the elicitation of "their children's feelings, opinions and thoughts,"[48] were more likely to assert strong boundaries between children and adults, and were less likely to negotiate with children or spend time and resources establishing leisure-time pursuits for them. Meanwhile families from working class or "non-dominant" communities are often more at odds with the "dominant set of cultural repertoires," "out of synch with the standards of institutions," even perceived by middle class professionals as "deficient"[49] or indeed "troubling."[50]

Consider how the families discussed in this chapter managed whether and how their hopes for and investments in their children are communicated to or with the educational institutions their children participate in. Neither Leila Mohammed nor Cecilia Apau seemed to have a clear line of communication open to their children's teachers, and in the case of Leila there seemed to be no indication that her significant investment of time and money in finding extra tuition and support for Safia and Nareen was at all acknowledged by their school. Jacob and Daisy Bardem, on the other hand, were able to talk with relative ease about what their children were learning at school, had variously pressured their teachers on points of support as needed for their sons. Marc and Josephine Thiebault had gone to even greater extremes, actively attempting to mould their son's educational experiences (in choosing private schools and camps like DigiCamp, and then taking on leadership roles within these) to their particular needs and desires.

Where these families are consonant with Lareau's theories is on the point of 'conversion' – although we can't know which of these families will have 'successful' children in the future we can see where the parents' efforts were more and less impactful. None of this is passive as all of

these parents were active in trying, but not always able to convert their efforts to advantage. Similar studies of low-income parents also found those who were engaging in "active cultivation"[51] aiming "to make the most of a child's life by fostering education and learning" resulting in a "family environment that actively and effectively supports children's well-being and academic achievement".[52] In her second edition, Lareau responds to 'concern' from readers that her formulation of "'natural growth' underemphasises all the labour that mothers and fathers do to take care of children" by underscoring that yes, working-class parents do work hard to support their children, but that they "did not seem to view children's leisure time as their responsibility; nor did they see themselves as responsible for assertively intervening in their children's school experiences."[53] The case of Leila Mohammed seems to amply refute this with all of her careful planning of Safia and Nareen's leisure time and her concern for their learning, even if we agree that these strategies were not recognized by or had any impact on the other institutions of her daughter's lives.

Thus we argue against a 'deficit' based approach.[54] All the families discussed in this chapter "are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge."[55] Rather than supporting interventions based on "overgeneralized" understandings of low-income families, Kris Gutierrez and Barbara Rogoff argue that educators need ground interventions in the understanding that families bring with them their own diverse 'repertoires of practice' based on their past experiences, practices and values.[56] Low-income families may not be able to communicate their practices to schools, and are often overlooked in educational interventions,[57] but there is nonetheless evidence that a "two generation" or "whole family" approach can have enduring impact.[58]

At issue is not only misunderstandings or missed connections in the present, but also how these bear out into the future. Writing more recently, but revisiting some of the families from her earlier work, Lareau charts the almost exhaustive lengths that *both* middle class and working class parents go to to support their children, but also how the middle-class parents "intervene" more strategically on their children's behalf because they are have a more intimate knowledge of how institutions work, and can create interventions specific to the outcomes they desire. There is much evidence of this in our account of the Thiebaults, and in middle class or wealthy families throughout this book. So the better resourced parents:

> Proactively tried to alter the conditions under which their children functioned. They were often able to anticipate potential problems before they arose and to redirect their children or intervene strategically to prevent the potential problem from altering a child's trajectory.[59]

Cox and Lareau call this "untying knots" or "forsee[ing] and forestall[ing] problems". Thus, returning to our discussion of 'anticipation,' if parents like the Thiebault's are better able to visualise the outcomes they desire for their children (in part because they have to some extent been exposed to or lived through them themselves), they are better able to position their children to achieve these.

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The chapter and book will conclude with this exploration of how the role of anticipation of future institutions plays out in the present, and questioning of how families could be better supported. We will also make a point of contextualizing whether how and whether there is evidence that

digital media play a role in 'levelling the playing field' for families like the Apaus and Mohammeds, and if not what might be done differently.

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1 (Critcher, 2003)

2 (Spigel, 1992. Spigel describes the adoption of television as a space of 'family togetherness' and yet popular media also presented this "new machine as a kind of modern Frankenstein that threatened to turn against its creator and disrupt traditional patterns of family life" p.9.)

3 (Sonia Livingstone, 2018; Twenge, 2017)

4 (Turkle, 2011)

5 (Commission;, 2017)

6 (Tavory & Eliasoph, 2009: p. 910)

7 (Adams, Murphy, & Clarke, 2009: p. 246)

8 Throughout our book we refer to 'low income' parents as those with yearly household incomes of less than £25,000, 'middle-income' as those with incomes ranging from £25,000 - £100,000 per year, and 'high income' as more than £100,000 per year.

9 Add note re these different programming languages and the differences between them, what it says about one boy vs the other that they would have access to one or the other

10 (Resnick et al., 2009)

11 (Buckingham, 2011; Pugh, 2009; Schor, 2004)

12 (Bourdieu, 1986)

13 (S. Livingstone, 2007; S. Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016)

14 Lareau (2011) based her now-widely influential theorization of parenting and social class based on intensive fieldwork with the families of nine and ten year old children. She came to differentiate between what she described as "concerted cultivation," the practices of middle class parents, and "natural growth" as the practices of working class parents. According to Lareau, "concerted cultivation" describes how middle-class families consistently intervene in the educational experiences of their children. These parents (often, although not always, mothers) concertedly place their children in a series of environments in which they are exposed to new skills, connections and ideas. From sports clubs to math tutors, drama classes to chess clubs, these middle class children often lead rigorously-scheduled lives – occasioning a sense in both children and indeed in their parents that time is a precious and illusive commodity (Ochs & Kemer-Sadlik, 2013; Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008). Thus "busyness" is "fetishized" as middle class parents assemble an ever-increasing menu of activities, which have both an anticipated future-benefit are also status-markers in the present (Kris D. Gutiérrez, Izquierdo, & Kremer-Sadlik, 2010; Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010).

15 (Hays, 1998)

16 (Jaysane-Darr, 2013 explains how Sudanese refugee parents were given 'parenting classes' on arrival in the US and how different conceptions of 'good mothering' were brought into conflict in these courses, as the Sudanese women had to acculturate themselves to particular White, middle-class American parenting values)

17 (Faircloth & Murray, 2014; Furedi, 2008; Hartas et al., 2014)

18 (Orgad, 2016; Perrier, 2012)

19 (Marsh et al., 2015)

20 (Of higher-income parents, only 30% say they are 'very' or 'somewhat' likely to use digital media (including computers, tablets and TV) for educational purposes, but this number rises to 52% for lower-income parents. From Katz & Levine, 2015; Wartella, Rideout, Lauricella, & Connell, 2013).

21 (Office for National Statistics, 2017)

22 (Sassen characterises the global city as at the dense intersection of multiple cross-border dynamics and tensions, and with its transnational and hypermobile population contributing to a sense of creative opportunity yet also instability and intense inequality as well as an ambivalent relation to place. Notably for our present purposes, "the concept of the global city brings a strong emphasis on the networked economy because of the nature of the industries that tend to be located there: finance and specialized services, the new multimedia sectors, and telecommunications services" p.40. Sassen, 1991)

23 (Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014)

24 (Kennedy et al., 2009; S. Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Thornton, 1995)

25 (As noted by the Sutton Trust London is distinctive in the job creation opportunities it offers especially in the technology sector - as well as for its recent and substantial improvements in school achievement, contributing to social mobility. Boston Consulting Group, 2017; The government's own assessment of social mobility in Britain agrees, noting that "The capital provides more opportunities for its residents – including its poorest ones – to progress than elsewhere" (p.iv) although the most deprived there still struggle. Social Mobility Commission, 2017)

26 (Bourdieu, 1986: p.343)

27 (Beck, 2000; McRobbie, 2016)

28 We offered a post office voucher for 40 pounds, which Leila intended to use at a budget store, but even then it probably would not have fully purchased a bike, as she intended.

29 Leila was thus largely invisible to her daughter's teachers, in part because she is not physically present at the school for drop-off but also because even when she was she was rushed and unlikely to stay and converse with the teachers. And although her English is good – the 90-minute interview was conducted in English – she was shy about speaking in official settings. See also (Sennet & Cobb, 1993).

30 (Beyens & Eggermont, 2014)

31 Here she refers to the widely-known American Academy of Pediatrics '2x2' guidelines (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011) that had said children should only watch two hours a day of television (no television at all for under-twos). This has since been revised in 2016 (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016) to be less prescriptive.

32 (Lynn Schofield Clark, 2013)

33 (Mayo & Siraj, 2015, p. 54)

34 (Dermott & Pomati, 2015)

35 (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016a)

36 Based on having a household income of less than 60% of the median income for household size see (Child Poverty Action Group, 2018).

37 (Rideout & Katz, 2016)

38 (L. S. Clark, Demont-Heinrich, & Webber, 2005)

39 (Barron, Martin, Takeuchi, & Fithian, 2009; Hamid et al., 2016)

40 (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016b)

41 (Thompson, 2017)

42 (Miller & Sinanan, 2014)

43 (Nelson, 2010, p. 31)

44 (Lynn Schofield Clark, 2013)

45 (Pugh, 2009 writes "many parents regard the commercialization of childhood with concern even as they participate in it" p.x)

46 (Lareau, Adia Evans, & Yee, 2016)

47 (Lareau, 2011: p.5)

48 (Lareau & Cox, 2011)

49 (Alper, Katz, & Clark, 2016; te Riele, 2006)

50 (Ribbens McCarthy, Gillies, & Hooper, 2013)

51 (Mayo & Siraj, 2015)

52 (Lareau, 2011: p.49)

53 (Lareau, 2015)From Lareau 2nd edition, note 2 on p385

54 (K. Gutiérrez, D., Zitlali Morales, & Martinez, 2009)

55 (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2004)

56 (Kris D. Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003)

57 For example, there are only a few brief mentions of parents in (Selwyn, 2014).

58 (Roque, 2016)

59 (Lareau & Cox, 2011: p.153)