

## Social Class and the Transition to Adulthood

Differences in Parents' Interactions with Institutions

Annette Lareau and Amanda Cox

Although the importance of social class in family life has preoccupied social scientists, it has failed to capture the attention of the general public (New York Times 2005). A body of research on social class and the family finds that middle-class individuals, defined either by education (i.e., having a college degree) or by occupation, typically have different family histories than working-class individuals (Kohn and Schooler 1983). More specifically, as Carlson and England, Cherlin, McLanahan, and others in this volume show, researchers have found class-based differences in the likelihood of marriage, divorce rates, household structures, lifespan, and health outcomes. In addition, social class has been found to be a factor in the character of childrearing (see Crosnoe and Cavanaugh 2010 for a review). While the importance of social class in family life has been documented since the classic studies by Robert and Helen Lynd (1929, 1937) in *Middletown*, Americans generally lack an awareness of social class (New York Times 2005).

As researchers have documented social-class differences in family life, increasing attention has been given to the transition to adulthood, as youth move from adolescence into the world of work (Furstenberg 2010). There are social-class differences in the timing and nature of the transition, particularly in terms of residential independence from family of origin, marriage, work, childbearing, and other signs of adulthood (Settersten, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut 2005). Many studies focus on class differences as the reason youth achieve (or don't achieve) key outcomes in adulthood. However, we have less insight into the crucial social processes through which these outcomes are produced. Indeed, social scientists have also developed a truncated understanding of how social class shapes the life chances of youth. There is a tendency among researchers to focus on the characteristics of youth. This individualistic approach discounts the degree to which youth are embedded in a social context. Notably, it fails to recognize sufficiently the role that parents play in situating their children, interacting with institutions, and transforming the circumstances that their children experience. Hence, it is

important to study variations in the role of parents in their children's development, particularly in terms of their interactions with institutions such as high schools and colleges. In addition, we pay more attention to the material transfer of resources from parents to youth (as done by Schoeni and Ross (2005), who show that middle-class parents provide more material resources to their young children than do working-class parents. Others show that class differences in parents' interactions with institutions (Conley 2001). Beyond material resources, we also pay attention to differences in class-based cultural resources that parents have about institutions and how they have received less attention.

In this chapter we draw on a qualitative study of middle-class and working-class American families to suggest that the social class of parents has a significant impact on the lives of young adults by influencing their sons' and daughters' institutional experiences. We highlight three key class-based resources that middle-class parents and youth had more access to than working-class parents and youth had: first, middle-class parents had more knowledge of the inner workings of key institutions and how to navigate them related to getting into and succeeding in higher education and the workforce; second, middle-class parents and youth had more detailed understanding of the strategies and options available to them; and third, middle-class parents and youth had more frequent and effective interactions with institutions. Some of the working-class and poor parents and youth had these resources but their efforts were less frequent and effective. We also discuss how these factors (i.e., global knowledge, case-specific knowledge, and effective interactions) as constituting class-based resources influence youth's outcomes in their interactions with institutions. In the remainder of the chapter, we suggest that parents' interactions with institutions, as they helped their children in two key ways: first, by providing them with resources and to solve problems, which we discuss in detail; and second, in addition to focusing on youths' individual characteristics, we believe that parents' interactions within the home, we believe that these interactions are the forestall problems and to solve problems.

After discussing our research methods and findings, we present two case studies of a white middle-class young man and a working-class young woman, Wendy Decker, to illustrate how they differed in their global knowledge, case-specific knowledge, and effective interactions in their children's institutional experiences. We conclude the study, to suggest that these class-based



ference as the youths transitioned into adulthood. In particular, while all parents were able to foresee problems, middle-class parents were able to forestall problems much more effectively than were working-class and poor parents. In addition, all of the youth encountered problems in institutions during their transition to adulthood. However, middle-class parents had more resources for trying to solve these problems than did working-class and poor parents. In the conclusion we stress the importance of embedding the family in a broader social context, as well as the drawbacks of middle-class parents' childrearing strategies.

#### METHODOLOGY

To capture the social processes that family members experience, as well as the meaning of the processes, it is essential to use qualitative methods of participant-observation and in-depth interviewing. This chapter draws on re-interviews with twelve young adults and their families approximately ten years after the young people's participation in an ethnographic study, "Unequal Childhoods," about variations in family life and children's activities (Lareau 2003). This unique data set has a number of important advantages. The original ethnographic study provided a rich portrait of the rhythm of family life. The interviews, a decade later, build on the original observations while providing a chance to assess the situation in the families a decade later as the youth were in the process of transitioning to adulthood. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the original study. The families were white and African American and lived in a large Northeastern city or the suburbs of the city (see Table 6.1 for a breakdown of the race and class of the participants in the study, as well as the definition of social class). A more intensive observational phase was then completed with twelve of these families; there was an effort to select families that were roughly comparable across race and class (i.e., one poor girl from a deeply religious family and one middle-class girl from a similar family). (For more discussion of the criteria for selection and the methodology, see Lareau 2003.) Each family was observed for about three weeks, usually on a daily basis.

Over the years, Annette Lareau kept in touch with the families through annual holiday cards and small gifts. A decade after the original study, she located all twelve families, interviewed all of the target children, and conducted separate interviews with the youths' mothers, fathers, and siblings.<sup>1</sup> The interviews of the target young people took place in their parents' homes, except for one (Garrett Tallinger's), which took place in his dorm room. Family members were paid (see Figure 6.1). The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. For data analysis we created codes for key themes (e.g.,

#### Original study

- Classroom observations in three public schools in the Northeast, one racially mixed city school and two in the suburbs, with attention to the racial makeup of the third schools.
- In-depth interviews with educators and mothers of 10-year-olds.
- Most of the families came from the three observationally rich (racially white poor and black middle class) cases.
- Most of the data were collected in the period 1991-1993.

#### Observations of 12 families

- Nine of the 12 families (but neither of the black class families) came from the classrooms; respectively, 63 percent (asked 19 to 20 questions).
- Usually 20 visits to each family, usually daily or every other day.
- Most visits lasted 2-3 hours but sometimes longer.
- One overnight visit per family.
- Families were paid, generally \$350, at the end of the study.
- Worked in racially diverse teams of 2 or 3, shared notes with the families.
- Wrote field notes for 5-12 hours after each visit.

#### Follow-up study

- Two-hour tape-recorded interviews with "target" children (and their spouses or serious boyfriends or girlfriends for a few).
- Family members were paid an honorarium (\$75).
- Interviews generally took place in the homes of the target children.
- Interviews 2003-05; reached all 12 families, a 100 percent response rate.
- Most children remember the study but have only a few memories.

Figure 6.1. Methodological details of study follow-up study.

education decisions, work, perceptions of college applications, independence) and we also read and reread the interviews in the coded material. Amanda Cox, who worked on the coding with a researcher on the research project. All names are pseudonyms of comparable colleges and have removed colleges attended by the youth.<sup>2</sup>

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Original study

- Classroom observations in three public schools (one predominantly white suburban school in the Northeast, one racially mixed city school in the Northeast, and there is no description of the racial makeup of the third school).
- In-depth interviews with educators and mothers and fathers of 88 children who were 9 and 10 years old.
- Most of the families came from the three observed schools; the remaining children (especially white poor and black middle class) came from social service programs or informal networks.
- Most of the data were collected in the period 1993–95, but some were collected earlier and later.

Observations of 12 families

- Nine of the 12 families (but neither of the black middle-class families) came from the classrooms; response rate of people we asked was 63 percent (asked 19 to get 12)
- Usually 20 visits to each family, usually daily in the space of one month
- Most visits lasted 2–3 hours but sometimes longer
- One overnight visit per family
- Families were paid, generally \$350, at the end of the study
- Worked in racially diverse teams of 2 or 3, sharing visits to the families
- Wrote field notes for 5–12 hours after each visit

Doing the fieldwork

- No question that we were disruptive, but families adjusted
- Yelling and cursing increased, especially on the third and tenth days
- Children generally liked our visits, said it made them feel "special"
- Kept in touch with the families over the years by sending a Christmas card with monetary gift to the child

Follow-up study

- Two-hour tape-recorded interviews with "target child" and mother, father, one sibling, and a spouse or serious boyfriend or girlfriend for a total of 38 interviews.
- Family members were paid an honorarium (\$75 for target young person, \$50 for others).
- Interviews generally took place in the homes of the families.
- Interviews 2003–05; reached all 12 families, a few family members not interviewed.
- Most children remember the study but have only a hazy memory of specific events.

Figure 6.1. Methodological details of study for "Unequal Childhoods" and follow-up study.

education decisions, work, perceptions of parent role, disappointments, college applications, independence) and coded the interviews accordingly. We also read and reread the interviews in order to understand the context of the coded material. Amanda Cox, who was not involved in data collection, worked on the coding with a researcher who was involved in the original research project. All names are pseudonyms, and we have substituted names of comparable colleges and have removed identifying information about the colleges attended by the youth.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 6.1  
*Distribution of the 12 youth in the follow-up study, by social class and race*

<i>Social class</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>African American</i>
Middle class	Melanie Handlon	Stacey Marshall
	Garrett Tallinger	Alexander Williams
Working class	Wendy Driver	Tyrec Taylor
	Billy Yanelli	Jessica Irwin*
Poor	Katie Brindle	Tara Carroll
	Karl Grooley	Harold McAllister

NOTES: In the original study, a total of 88 families were interviewed; 12 of these families were also observed. Since the 2003–05 follow-up only focused on the families that were observed, we have only included data on these 12 families. For additional information see Lareau 2003.

Middle-class children are those who live in households in which at least one parent is employed in a position that either entails substantial managerial authority or centrally draws upon highly complex, educationally certified (i.e., college-level) skills.

Working-class children are those who live in households in which neither parent is employed in a middle-class position and at least one parent is employed in a position that has little or no managerial authority and that does not require highly complex, educationally certified skills. This category includes lower-level white-collar workers.

Poor children are those who live in households in which parents receive public assistance and do not participate in the labor force on a regular, continuous basis.

\* Biracial girl: black father and white mother.

Longitudinal studies using qualitative methods are rare (Burawoy 2003). It is useful that Lareau was able to reach all twelve of the youth in the intensive phase of the original study, as well as to triangulate their information with separate interviews with other family members.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the labor-intensive nature of qualitative research means that researchers must make hard choices. Depth of research almost always comes at the expense of breadth of the sample. The longitudinal nature of the research further compounds this problem. This study has a small sample, twelve families, and focuses on the transition to adulthood within those families. Nevertheless, the study's value is apparent in that the patterns we found are highly consistent with findings from studies using nationally representative data (Settersten, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut 2005); but the findings offer much more depth and insight into social processes than nationally representative data sets can provide. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative studies tend to focus on the actions of youth alone. Yet, since families operate in social contexts, it is important to consider how parents and youth negotiate with institutions outside the home. Also, we show that the strategies that parents adopted when their youth were in the transition to adulthood were highly consistent with strategies they followed when their children were 10 years old. This kind of longitudinal insight is rare. We see the results as helping to improve our conceptual models about the ways in which social class has an impact on family life, particularly in terms of the largely hidden advantages that many middle-

class parents provide for their children in schools and other social institutions.

#### CLASS AND THE TRANSITION TO A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES

Research in the sociology of the family has focused on the outcomes of individual youth, but there has been little attention to the institutions surrounding family life and how these institutions shape and are shaped by these outcomes. In this chapter, we explore how class differences in the institutions surrounding family life and these institutions shape and are shaped by these outcomes. In this chapter, we explore how class differences in the institutions surrounding family life and these institutions shape and are shaped by these outcomes. In this chapter, we explore how class differences in the institutions surrounding family life and these institutions shape and are shaped by these outcomes.

#### *Turning Points and Interventions:*

When Garrett Tallinger was in fourth grade, his family moved from an urban home on a leafy cul-de-sac in a large Northeastern city to a large League college (where they were both at the time) to enter high school, his parents, Garrett's mother and father, moved to a much larger new home in a suburb. Mr. Tallinger's workplace. Their income was in the middle of American families. In 2003, Mr. Tallinger was a high school job; he frequently traveled for work. Mr. Tallinger's mother was a nurse.

Garrett Tallinger, now a basketball player on a private university, has been a star player since he was a child. When Garrett was 10 years old, his parents spent a great deal of time and effort helping him pursue his interests. His parents gave him a wide range of activities and experiences often dictated the daily and weekly activities of his life, including Garrett's two younger brothers. His parents' work-related experiences within their own families and their parents possessed valuable knowledge of how to navigate institutions such as high schools and colleges. These and other institutions played an important role in Garrett's life through high school and into college.

TABLE 6.1  
Follow-up study, by social class and race

	African American
Elite	Stacey Marshall
Upper	Alexander Williams
	Tyrec Taylor
	Jessica Irwin*
	Tara Carroll
	Harold McAllister

These families were interviewed; 12 of these families were also included in the families that were observed, we have only information on these families (see Lareau 2003).

\*Families in which at least one parent is employed in a highly or centrally drawn upon highly complex, edu-

catory position in which neither parent is employed in a position that has little or no managerial or professionally certified skills. This category includes

families in which parents receive public assistance and do not have a high school diploma.

Qualitative methods are rare (Burawoy 2000) and difficult to reach all twelve of the youth in the study, as well as to triangulate their experiences with other family members.<sup>3</sup> Of course, qualitative research means that the depth of research almost always comes at a price. The longitudinal nature of the study is a strength. This study has a small sample, but the transition to adulthood within those families is apparent in that the patterns of findings from studies using national surveys (e.g., Furstenberg, and Rumbaut 2005); but it does not provide insight into social processes that surveys provide. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative methods focus on the actions of youth alone. In these contexts, it is important to consider the role of institutions outside the home. Also, the strategies adopted when their youth were young are highly consistent with strategies they use when they are years old. This kind of longitudinal research helps to improve our conceptual understanding of how social class has an impact on family life, and the hidden advantages that many middle-

class parents provide for their children by negotiating their experiences in institutions.

#### CLASS AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES

Research in the sociology of the family has largely been devoted to the life outcomes of individual youth, but there has been less attention paid to the institutions surrounding family life and the interactions between families and these institutions. In this chapter, we show that the strategies parents adopted mattered.<sup>4</sup> Class differences in the global and specific information possessed by parents, and how they intervened in institutions, had consequences. Working-class parents were able to foresee and forestall some key problems and untie important knots in their children's lives. However, there was a striking pattern of more aggressive intervention by middle-class parents in predicting and preventing problems and solving problems than among working-class and poor parents. In our follow-ups with these families, the middle-class youth (although over the age of 18) seemed younger, more dependent, and more child-like than working-class youth.

##### *Turning Points and Interventions: Garrett Tallinger*

When Garrett Tallinger was in fourth grade, his family lived in a large suburban home on a leafy cul-de-sac in the predominantly white suburb of a large Northeastern city. Both of his parents had graduated from an Ivy League college (where they were both athletes). As Garrett was getting ready to enter high school, his parents, Garrett, and his two younger brothers moved to a much larger new home in an elite development to be closer to Mr. Tallinger's workplace. Their income placed them in the top 10 percent of American families. In 2000, Mr. Tallinger had a high-level managerial job; he frequently traveled for work. Ms. Tallinger worked in fundraising.

Garrett Tallinger, now a basketball player on a top-ranked basketball team at a private university, has been a talented athlete since he was a young child. When Garrett was 10 years old, his parents spent a great deal of time and effort helping him pursue his interests and skills and providing him with a wide range of activities and experiences. Garrett's schedule of activities often dictated the daily and weekly rhythm of the Tallinger family, including Garrett's two younger brothers. Backed by their own educational and work-related experiences within largely middle-class contexts, Garrett's parents possessed valuable knowledge of the ways in which "gatekeeping" institutions such as high schools and colleges work. Their understanding of these and other institutions played an important role in their ability to guide Garrett through high school and into college.

TABLE 6.1  
Selected life characteristics of intensive-study child participants, at age 20–21

	White		African American	
Middle-class families	<i>Garrett Tallinger</i>	<i>Melanie Handlon</i>	<i>Alexander Williams</i>	<i>Stacey Marshall</i>
	High school graduate College student Recruited by 2 Ivy League schools to play basketball; attends small private college on basketball scholarship; earns A's and B's	High school graduate Cosmetology school student Attended community college one semester ("hated it")	High school graduate College student Accepted early decision to Ivy League school; has been admitted to medical school at same elite university; earns B's, some A's	High school graduate College student Accepted at Ivy League school, but attends public university on basketball scholarship; earns mostly B's (2 C's in biology)
Working-class families	<i>Billy Youelli</i>	<i>Wendy Driver</i>	<i>Tyrec Taylor</i>	<i>Jessica Irwin (biracial)</i>
	High school dropout Earned GED Works full-time; is apprentice in painters' union	High school graduate Accepted at small Catholic college; chose not to attend Stay-at-home mother; is pregnant; has 2-year-old; husband is in Navy	High school graduate Started community college, did not finish 1 <sup>st</sup> semester; took 1 year off; has completed 1 semester Works full-time in construction	High school graduate College student Solicited by dozens of colleges due to PSATs in 1300s; attends small Tier 3 school on full scholarship; art major; dean's list
Poor families	<i>Karl Greeley</i>	<i>Katie Brindle</i>	<i>Harold McAllister</i>	<i>Tara Carroll</i>
	High school dropout Took GED classes; did not take GED test Works full-time (nights), stocking grocery store shelves	High school dropout Married, separated; has 2-year-old (father is not current husband) Works full-time, cleaning houses Lives with mother and brother	High school dropout Has been working at chain restaurant full-time since age 15; noon to 9 p.m. shift; 2-hour commute to work (4 buses) Lives with brother and his family	High school graduate Community college student, but now taking time off; wants to be a nurse; failed biology twice, C's in science courses Works full-time (3–11 p.m.) as caretaker for disabled people

When Garrett entered high school nearly 1,000 miles from where Tallinger was quick to learn about the school. When she visited Garrett's future public school, she got detailed information about the college.

I was appalled [when I visited the local school]. I asked how many kids go to [out-of-state] programs. . . . they probably thought, "Who is this Northern hussy coming [laughs] But they couldn't tell me why they go mostly to [in-state] schools. So, [I asked] to the Stanfords or the MITs?"

As Garrett began high school, she took the "most rigorous" courses, and she was confident of her son's academic capabilities with Garrett's guidance.

In talking to the guidance people, I saw that she was enrolling in the honors courses). But, she was well informed about the school's education.

Ms. Tallinger was well informed about the school's education:

One of the things I did know was that what is available in a high school, at least of what's available, that's a strike against the transcript. And so I wanted Garrett to take the most rigorous [course] that was available.

His junior year Garrett took Advanced Placement (AP) calculus, and AP English literature, as well as AP history offered by his high school.

Just as Ms. Tallinger oversaw an array of academic transitions and decisions, Garrett's mother also oversaw the complicated (and highly strategic) transition to a tier collegiate basketball program. As Ms. Tallinger acquired a complex understanding of the program as the "very political" recruiting process.

We sent marketing packets to a lot of schools out there. So those guys come out there, so having them with their name out there, they do all these rankings of deal. And then the coaches go to a school and they watch him.

Table 2  
Study child participants, at age 20–21

African American	
<i>Alexander Williams</i>	<i>Stacey Marshall</i>
High school graduate	High school graduate
College student	College student
Accepted early-decision to Ivy League school; has been admitted to medical school at same elite university; earns B's, some A's	Accepted at Ivy League school, but attends public university on basketball scholarship; earns mostly B's (2 C's in biology)
<i>Tyrec Taylor</i>	<i>Jessica Irwin (biracial)</i>
High school graduate	High school graduate
Started community college, did not finish 1 <sup>st</sup> semester; took 1 year off; has completed 1 semester	College student
Works full-time in construction	Solicited by dozens of colleges due to PSATs in 1300s; attends small Tier 3 school on full scholarship; art major; dean's list
<i>Harold McAllister</i>	<i>Tara Carroll</i>
High school dropout	High school graduate
Has been working at chain restaurant full-time since age 15; noon to 9 p.m. shift; 2-hour commute to work (4 buses)	Community college student, but now taking time off; wants to be a nurse; failed biology twice, C's in science courses
Lives with brother and his family	Works full-time (3–11 p.m.) as caretaker for disabled people

When Garrett entered high school after he and his family relocated to a state nearly 1,000 miles from where Garrett had lived as a young child, Ms. Tallinger was quick to learn about the local high school and its curriculum. When she visited Garrett's future public high school, Ms. Tallinger sought detailed information about the colleges attended by the school's graduates:

I was appalled [when I visited the local public high school]. It's ugly. It's far away. I asked how many kids go to . . . get recruited for Division I [athletic programs]. . . . they probably thought . . . they probably were wondering, "Who is this Northern hussy coming in here and asking these questions?" [laughs] But they couldn't tell me where kids went to school. . . . they all went mostly to [in-state] schools. So, [I asked], "How many would go to the Ivies, to the Stanfords or the MITs?"

As Garrett began high school, Ms. Tallinger encouraged him to take the "most rigorous" courses, and she shared her desire and her sense of her son's academic capabilities with Garrett's high school guidance counselors:

In talking to the guidance people, I said, "I think he's capable of honors [i.e., enrolling in the honors courses]. But, obviously you-all need to decide that. . . ."

Ms. Tallinger was well informed about the global standards in higher education:

One of the things I did know was that the more competitive colleges look at what is available in a high school, and if you're not taking the most rigorous of what's available, that's a strike against you in terms of their evaluating your transcript. And so I wanted Garrett, as is true with all my kids, I want them to take the most rigorous [course] that they're possibly capable of taking.

His junior year Garrett took Advanced Placement (AP) economics, AP calculus, and AP English literature, as well as the highest levels of physics and history offered by his high school.

Just as Ms. Tallinger oversaw and shepherded Garrett through various academic transitions and decisions, Garrett's father guided his son through the complicated (and highly strategic) process of being recruited by a top-tier collegiate basketball program. As Mr. Tallinger reports, his guidance required a complex understanding of the inner workings of what he describes as the "very political" recruiting process:

We sent marketing packets to a lot of schools. There are a lot of recruiting websites out there. So those guys come and see kids play, and I got to know a lot of those guys, so having them write about your kid is important. Get his name out there, they do all these rankings, it's very political networking kind of deal. And then the coaches go to all of these tournaments and these camps and they watch him.

Mr. Tallinger described his understanding of the strategy involved on both sides of the recruiting process, the universities' and the athlete's:

All these schools send you letters. So the first thing they look for: did you respond to the letter quickly, 'cause they're all trying to measure interest. So, what happens is both sides are playing the game: the schools tell you they have a priority list of kids they want. They do their best not to tell you where you are on that list. They want every kid to think he or she is number one, and we do the same thing on this end. I mean our strategy was to never [tell] a school he wasn't interested 'cause they start talking to each other. So if you tell a school of a certain kind, "I don't want to go there," they say [to other schools], "Well, don't bother to recruit him."

In addition to his quickly learned knowledge about the recruiting process, Mr. Tallinger was also knowledgeable about the likelihood of Garrett's receiving financial aid from an Ivy League university that was recruiting Garrett "very hard." Mr. Tallinger knew that Ivy League universities do not offer athletic scholarships and that his family's income of \$175,000 placed them above the school's financial aid cut-off. With three children, he knew an Ivy League school was unaffordable.

The involvement of the Tallinger parents is similar to the role that they had played in Garrett's academic and athletic affairs when he was a 10-year-old. For example, when Garrett was in early elementary school, he missed the IQ cut-off for his school's gifted program by just a few points. Upon receiving the news that Garrett would not be able to join the program, the Tallingers insisted that Garrett be retested at what they felt would be a more appropriate time for him to perform at his best. Garrett was retested, but his score was again not high enough to qualify him for his school's gifted program.

Like their knowledge of how institutions work, Ms. and Mr. Tallinger's knowledge about Garrett in particular was valuable as they helped him navigate the transition from high school to college. They had a nuanced understanding of how Garrett might fare when compared with other students and athletes. Ms. Tallinger reported:

He never cracked 1200 on the SATs. So, that was tough—familiar. 'Cause I didn't test well either, and did well in school. Obviously [I] felt for him. He didn't . . . what did he get on the ACT . . . I think he got a 27 or a 28, so that was a little bit better.

Mr. Tallinger was also aware that Garrett would not have shined at Princeton in the way that he did at Villanova:

While I think Garrett would have done okay academically [at Princeton], I think Villanova is a better fit. Garrett is a good student, but he's not a brilliant kid. So he would have gotten by at Princeton, whereas [at] Villanova you

know he was, he got the academic at highest GPA on the basketball team, went to the student athlete academic committee. . . . It wasn't just the basketball team, the whole school. . . . The opportunities he wouldn't have gotten at Princeton. . . . Other academic opportunities that Villanova [has] probably actually a better fit.

Mr. Tallinger also thought that after Villanova would help Garrett land

Garrett himself also had a sense of how his standards differed:

I was real worried about it [i.e., his SAT score]. I was at Stanford at the time. And 1190 isn't . . . 1140, but still it's only . . . if you're at Stanford that's why I wanted to get 1200 real high. . . . Villanova], their standard's not as high.

In addition to their academic knowledge about their son's basketball shooting percentage (70% reported) and how he compared with other players recruited by the same universities. For example, as "a stretch":

I think U. Conn. would have been a good fit. . . . They were recruiting him. And they came to Villanova afterwards and he goes, "You know, I was hoping he was 6'6". But we had another one." I had no problem with that.

Garrett's parents had both general knowledge about basketball and an ability—with a cold and critical eye—to assess their son's situation. They also had deep knowledge that was not confined to college. This can be seen in their discussion of Garrett's post-college basketball options. . . . In addition to playing on a basketball team that was ranked nationally, Mr. Tallinger felt that Garrett had a chance of being drafted professionally in the NBA upon graduation.

Well, realistically, if it went very well, he could get drafted by an NBA team . . . [but] playing in Europe would be enough to play in the NBA. I mean, he's probably be one of those guys that's not drafted. . . . They are called "free-agent tryouts," probably in Europe for a few years or something.

ing of the strategy involved on both universities' and the athlete's:

the first thing they look for: did you guys're all trying to measure interest. So, [the game] the schools tell you they [They do their best not to tell you where did to think he or she is number one, I mean our strategy was to never [tell] they start talking to each other. So if you want to go there," they say [to other] him."

knowledge about the recruiting process, about the likelihood of Garrett's re- the university that was recruiting Gar- that Ivy League universities do not family's income of \$175,000 placed ut-off. With three children, he knew

parents is similar to the role that they athletic affairs when he was a 10-year- arly elementary school, he missed the n by just a few points. Upon receiving le to join the program, the Tallingers [they felt would be a more appropri- e. Garrett was retested, but his score im for his school's gifted program. ations work, Ms. and Mr. Tallinger's was valuable as they helped him navi- college. They had a nuanced under- in compared with other students and

n, that was tough—familiar. 'Cause I school. Obviously [I] felt for him. He . . . I think he got a 27 or a 28, so that

rett would not have shined at Princ- eton:

okay academically [at Princeton], I is a good student, but he's not a bril- it Princeton, whereas [at] Villanova you

know he was, he got the academic award on the basketball team. He was the highest GPA on the basketball team, and he's been selected [to be on the] student athlete academic committee. . . . He was selected to represent Villanova, not just the basketball team, the whole university. So, those kinds of oppor- tunities he wouldn't have gotten at Princeton. Now obviously Princeton's got other academic opportunities that Villanova doesn't by far, but I think it's [i.e., Villanova's] probably actually a better fit.

Mr. Tallinger also thought that after graduation the booster club networks at Villanova would help Garrett land an attractive job in business.

Garrett himself also had a sense of how his SAT scores would help or hinder his chances of acceptance into various colleges and universities and how their standards differed:

I was real worried about it [i.e., his SAT score] 'cause I was trying to get into Stanford at the time. And 1190 isn't . . . I mean, they did accept a kid with an 1140, but still it's only . . . if you're trying to get into Stanford, you need . . . that's why I wanted to get 1200 real bad. I mean, and then coming here [to Villanova], their standard's not as high.

In addition to their academic knowledge, Garrett's parents also knew their son's basketball shooting percentage ("56 percent for his career," Mr. Tallinger reported) and how he compared with other high school athletes being recruited by the same universities. For example, Mr. Tallinger saw some schools as "a stretch":

I think U. Conn. would have been a stretch ability-wise for Garrett, but they were recruiting him. And they came to see him play, and the coach called me afterwards and he goes, "You know, we know you told us he was 6'4". We were hoping he was 6'6". But we have three 6'4" kids, and we don't need another one." I had no problem with that. So you move on.

Garrett's parents had both general knowledge of how institutions worked and an ability—with a cold and critical eye—to assess the weaknesses of their son's situation. They also had detailed information about institutions not confined to college. This can be seen in how the Tallingers weighed Garrett's post-college basketball options. Although Garrett was currently playing on a basketball team that was ranked among the top twenty-five in the nation, Mr. Tallinger felt that Garrett would not be "good enough" to play professionally in the NBA upon graduation from college:

Well, realistically, if it went very well for him, he'd probably be trying to make an NBA team . . . [but] playing in Europe. [I'm] not sure if he's quite good enough to play in the NBA. I mean, hopefully he'll get better. He'll probably be one of those guys that's not drafted by the NBA, but gets him what are called "free-agent tryouts," probably ends up playing in Europe or South America for a few years or something.



his chances of making it to the NBA. . . . plans, Garrett said, "Probably still . . . NBA hopefully. But if not, overseas

Garrett through the various academic intered from early childhood and into out how the institutions worked and face of these institutions played a key and outcomes. Both their knowledge il and of Garrett's "case" in particular it contributed to the transmission of amilies in this study: parents' (often s in which their children participate. t to take the "most rigorous" courses ing to Garrett's high school guidance table of honors," Ms. Tallinger was onflict would have prevented Garrett tature and AP calculus:

ile because they went into this new i take the AP English and AP calculus, is like, "C'mon, this is not—you gotta believe Garrett's the only person this is or these kids to maximize their opportu-around." So that I did fight for.

allinger intervened to maximize Gar- In. Tallinger played an active role in basketball court. The summer after lz. Tallinger negotiated to get Garrett that would "give him the visibility" ruiters from top-tier collegiate bas- l-known athletic company, Garrett's who was eventually drafted into the hool. Mr. Tallinger was grateful for uch a successful team—"I have north- aphis Warriors," he said—but he felt playing time to "get the exposure" done anything to increase Garrett's

ally do. But I did only because . . . they as saying to [the coach], "Well, that's wasn't the only one—[where] "this is

like their last shot. If they don't get seen this summer, then it's over." . . . These juniors-to-be didn't seem remarkably better than the seniors-to-be. The whole point in the AAU [summer league] teams is to get kids seen by college coaches. . . . So that I didn't understand: why you would play these young kids when you got kids who wanted and needed scholarships sitting on the bench. . . . I guess they kind of listened. His playing time went up some.

Thus, Mr. Tallinger's intervention appeared to increase by "some" Garrett's playing time in front of college recruiters.

Later that year, when Garrett was being actively recruited to play Division I college basketball, Mr. Tallinger again used his knowledge of the inner workings of the recruiting process to intervene when he felt that the process had taken a turn that was not to Garrett's advantage:

University of Kansas was recruiting him at one point, and then we didn't hear from them for a while. And [I] called the coach and just—I was getting bolder as the thing went on—and said, like, "What's up?" [The coach said,] "Oh, we were told that the recruiting on him was closed." I was like, "Who told you that?" . . . and Kansas—not to say they would have ultimately offered him a scholarship—they stopped recruiting [Garrett] because someone told them that they didn't have a shot.

The Tallingers' parental interventions did not end when Garrett was accepted to play basketball for a highly ranked collegiate team. His parents both continued to offer him valuable guidance as they shepherded him through the process of choosing a college major. Ms. Tallinger reported one such instance:

I guess it was some point in freshman year, [Garrett] wasn't sure he wanted to continue to major in business or stay in the business school. He's thinking he wanted to be a math teacher and wanted to . . . major in education. We said, "Okay, that's fine." Don, of course, again being the more pragmatic, said, "If that's all you want to earn for the rest of your life . . . as a teacher. . . . But give yourself the most options when you come out of school." . . . Anyway, so on his own he came to the decision that he's gonna stay in the business school and sort of shift emphasis to marketing.

In the end Garrett Tallinger did not miss the opportunity to be recruited by several top-ranked college basketball programs, nor did he fail to "give himself the most options" a few years later when choosing a college major and a potential career path. His parents' knowledge and understanding of institutions and of their son's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the standards and expectations of these institutions eased Garrett's negotiations and transitions at school, within his elite basketball club, and throughout the college recruiting process. When they felt that Garrett's experience within an institution was not what it should be, Ms. and Mr. Tallinger did not hesitate



we explain below after discussing the factors constituted class-based cultural resilience and forestall problems and untie

her

10-year-old, grew up in a white working-class neighborhood, interested in visiting with family, playing sports, and attending social events. After Wendy's parents separated, her mother, and her older brother, moved to a new town. In fourth grade, her father had died and her mother moved to a new town before the birth of their daughter, Wendy. Wendy grew up living in a small town in the Northeast. Ms. Driver worked as an administrative assistant and worked in a unionized position. Wendy's mother had a few social activities, but unlike Garrett Tallinger's, her mother had a very busy family life, and Wendy's mother and father encouraged Wendy to develop skills but as and "keep her off the street."

Wendy's father was a young man, a fighter, and another child on the way. Her father was in the Navy, he introduced her to Ryan, who was on a submarine six months at a time. Her father was a high school graduate that she had planned a marriage proposal. Her father had her heart set on a big wedding, but her father died for the baby." Her parents helped her plan a small wedding took place when her father was 1 year old. Wendy lives about 100 miles from Ryan is out at sea, Wendy and her father have stretches of time.

Ms. Driver have intervened in her daughter's life. Ms. Driver has been particularly helpful in "fighting" for Wendy and in giving her a model she hopes to

my child. If my mom can do it, then I can do it. I was in the hospital and fighting for me all the time. They told me and my Mom is like, "No, she's fine."

Her mother were devoted parents when Wendy

was a child. They assessed the specifics of their daughter's situation, and they frequently intervened to help her. For example, at the end of eighth grade Wendy was not admitted to the magnet high school of her choice. She was redirected to the neighborhood school which, with metal detectors, a high dropout rate, and occasional fights, was widely characterized as a "bad" school. Ms. Driver was extremely concerned. Wendy's "Pop Pop" (i.e., her paternal grandfather) paid the \$3,000 annual tuition to send her to the Catholic high school that Wendy's mother and sisters had attended. Wendy reported that her eighth-grade counselors were not supportive of the idea:

The eighth-grade counselor told my mom that they would be wasting their money. Because I wouldn't make it. And when I got down there I struggled freshman year. That's when the counselor started coming . . . and I had different people coming and giving me tests and talking about it, telling the school, "This is what you have to do to cope with my disability." And it just like made it so much easier. But even my freshman year in high school, I had teachers tell me to quit now, just to drop out and to try to get my GED by myself. And that just made me and my mom push even harder.

The high school arranged for tests to be read to Wendy and allowed her to provide verbal answers. With this system in place, Wendy earned a place on the honor roll. Later in her high school years, when multiple knee surgeries kept Wendy out of school, Ms. Driver coordinated with the school to have tutors work with Wendy so she would not fall behind in her studies. Wendy graduated.

Wendy's parents also helped her in her personal life. When Wendy and Ryan began dating during her senior year in high school, after she and Ryan became close, Ms. Driver sent Wendy to the doctor to get birth control. In November after she graduated from high school, Wendy (unexpectedly) became pregnant. Wendy did not believe in abortion. Her mother was firm on this point as well: "We don't believe in abortion, and there's no issue about giving the baby up for adoption. If it came down to it, me and Mack would have taken it," Ms. Driver said definitively.

Ms. Driver intervened and had a frank conversation with her future son-in-law before he married Wendy to determine if he was willing to accept the responsibility of being a father:

I'm not one to hide my feelings. And I said to Ryan—we were sitting on the couch—and I said, "I want to ask you something. . . . The first thing a lot of young guys say is, 'It's not mine, and they take off, and you never see them again.'" I said, "Don't." I said, "If you have any doubt in your mind [and if you think that] this child is not yours, there's the door. You can walk out now, and you do not have to come back."

Ms. Driver's intervention was an effort to avert a disaster in the future. She spoke to Ryan directly:

I said, "I do not want two months from now, five months from now, six months from now you [to] say to her [that] this is not your child. If there is any doubt in your mind at all, or if you have second thoughts that you don't want this child. . . ."

Contributing \$5,000 (more than Wendy had wanted them to contribute) to the big wedding, Ms. and Mr. Driver also assisted in the planning and preparations for it. Both parents like their son-in-law. Ryan's troubled past, which includes heavy drinking and arrests for possession of a pipe bomb, as well as Wendy's difficult relations with Ryan's mother (who refused to attend either of the weddings) do not seem to trouble Mr. and Ms. Driver. They are very optimistic about the future. When asked directly what would happen if Wendy and Ryan separated or divorced, they are quick to indicate that Wendy always has a home with them. As Mack, Wendy's stepfather, says:

Oh, she's more than welcome to come home. . . . We'd just have to make arrangements and make the house bigger probably. [Laughs] But we'd discuss it, and everything would be fine.

Since Wendy moved away from home, Mack has been an invaluable source of transportation. Like her mother, Wendy does not drive. Wendy lives four hours from her childhood home, and although public transportation between the two cities exists, it is not convenient and, with the baby, not ideal. At least once a month, and sometimes more often, Mack makes the eight-hour roundtrip drive to fetch Wendy and Clara. Thus, Ms. Driver and Mack continue to help Wendy and Ryan by providing child care, transportation, and emotional support. All in all, Wendy characterizes her family as "awesome." She says, "They are what I would want. If I need anything, I can call them."

Wendy has warm relations with her parents and, like Garrett, sees her parents as very helpful to her. However, we found differences in the kind of help provided by middle-class parents in relation to institutions and that provided by working-class and poor parents. We found that working-class and poor parents possessed important kinds of information about institutions, but middle-class parents had even more, including information that was often highly specialized and customized to the specific case of their child. This pattern also was present, in a different fashion, among the young adults themselves. Specifically, compared to Garrett, Wendy had limited global information about key matters involving institutions, and her information was much more general. For example, throughout high school and then during the college admission process, there were many moments when

Wendy's learning disability was discussed. Ms. Driver had a list of institutions that offered a program for students with learning disabilities, including the provision of a note taker, additional time on tests, and other supports. There are many different types of learning disabilities, but Wendy had only a vague understanding of it

AL: Did you learn the name of what

Wendy: No, they call it LD.

AL: Do you know what LD stands for?

Wendy: Learning Disability.

In high school Wendy's learning disability was not a barrier to completing her school work. She reported, "I never had any trouble. I tell my good friends, 'Look, I am retarded' is rarely, if ever, used by people with a learning disability. While on the one hand Wendy's disability, she was not fluent in the context of higher education.

A similar pattern existed for Wendy. Ms. Driver, who possessed deeper and more detailed knowledge of the structures and specific knowledge of the inner workings of key institutions, was able to guide Wendy's educational trajectory. Ms. Driver relied on professionals who had detailed knowledge of the system. The Drivers' lack of detailed knowledge of the system and their reliance on school personnel and professionals at colleges. With the assistance of her friends and family, Wendy had been able to navigate her learning disability, Wendy had been able to get into a college. Her mother very much wanted her to go to college. Ms. Driver guided the family through the college admission process.

Ms. Driver: She had to go to a private school because of her disability. Because she couldn't get into a public school, she had to go to a private school. She wanted a college that would have other students with disabilities. She went up to . . . where'd she go?

AL: Brockport?

Ms. Driver: Yeah. She didn't get accepted.

Ms. Driver passionately wanted her daughter to attend a college with knowledge of higher education systems. A variety of institutions were included under the umbrella of "colleges" among colleges that preoccupied the Drivers. Ms. Driver did not fixate on Wendy's relative characteristics or in relation to other students. The Drivers' focus was on Wendy's relative characteristics and her ability to succeed in higher education.

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Wendy's learning disability was discussed. Wendy was admitted to a college that offered a program for students with learning disabilities and included the provision of a note taker, additional time on tests, and other learning supports. There are many different types of learning disabilities, but Wendy had only a vague understanding of the nature of her own:

AL: Did you learn the name of what your disability was?

Wendy: No, they call it LD.

AL: Do you know what LD stands for?

Wendy: Learning Disability.

In high school Wendy's learning disability made it difficult for her to complete her school work. She reported, "And then finally I got the nerve up to tell my good friends, 'Look, I am retarded. I can't do this.'" The term "retarded" is rarely, if ever, used by professionals today to describe a learning disability. While on the one hand Wendy understood that she had a learning disability, she was not fluent in the categories and terms used by educators.

A similar pattern existed for Wendy's parents. Unlike the Tallingers, who possessed deeper and more detailed global knowledge of institutional structures and specific knowledge of their son's relative place and options within those structures, Ms. Driver often had incomplete information about the inner workings of key institutions, and her knowledge about the specifics of Wendy's educational trajectory was vague and partial. Therefore the Drivers relied on professionals who had specialized training in such areas. The Drivers' lack of detailed knowledge about key institutional structures and their reliance on school personnel were evident when Wendy applied to colleges. With the assistance of her friends and an accommodation for her learning disability, Wendy had been able to graduate from high school. Her mother very much wanted her to go to college, and the high school counselor guided the family through the college application process:

Ms. Driver: She had to go to a particular college that would help her with her disability. Because she couldn't get into another college. They [the high school] want[ed] a college that would have other children with disabilities who need help. She went up to . . . where'd she go? Brockport maybe?

AL: Brockport?

Ms. Driver: Yeah. She didn't get accepted there.

Ms. Driver passionately wanted her daughter to go to college. Her global knowledge of higher education systems was limited; for her, a wide variety of institutions were included under the term "college." The differences among colleges that preoccupied the Tallingers did not preoccupy her. Nor did she fixate on Wendy's relative chances of acceptance at various schools or in relation to other students. The Drivers were guided by Wendy's high

school counselor, who selected the schools to which Wendy would apply and then helped Wendy with the applications. Wendy's parents were powerful emotional supports for her, but since she was being guided by the counselor, they did not become involved with the application process. Hence it is not surprising that Ms. Driver did not know Wendy's SAT scores or her high school grade-point average.

Other steps in the college application process that were extremely important to middle-class parents such as the Tallingers were less salient to the Driver parents. For example, neither Mr. nor Ms. Driver could recall the names of the colleges to which Wendy had applied. They could only remember the names of the towns in which the colleges were located. Similarly, although Ms. Driver and Mack had driven Wendy to the college she planned to attend, had filled out a financial aid form for the school, and had had numerous conversations about the school, Ms. Driver could remember the name of the town (Reading) but not the name of the college (Alvernia) to which Wendy had been admitted:

Ms. Driver: She got accepted up in West . . . West Reading. I can't think of the name of [the college]. It had an "A" like that.

AL: West Reading?

Ms. Driver: Up in West Reading. And they accepted her there.

Unlike the Tallingers, who memorized a great deal of ancillary information, including exact tuition costs, financial aid awards, and the gap between the two at the various colleges to which Garrett had applied, what the Drivers focused on was what they would be required to pay, which amounted to \$1,000 per month (i.e., \$12,000 per year).

Neither Ms. Driver nor Mack had ever been to college, nor had anyone in their immediate families. Thus it is reasonable that their understanding of the general structure of the college application process would be minimal. For example, Mack had been surprised to learn that colleges do not return application fees, and Ms. Driver misunderstood a key communication during a fall visit to the college to which Wendy was later admitted:

It was really shocking because of the interview. The person we met with was very nice and looked at her grades and SATs and all that stuff . . . and when we left they said, "Well, we will see you in a couple months for [the] reception." And we were ecstatic!

Having thought that Wendy had been accepted, Ms. Driver continued:

When we left we had to go down to the front desk. And they said, "We'll be calling you." And I said, "What do you mean you'll be calling me?" [They said,] "Well, we'll give you a call or a letter to let you know if you're accepted."

And I'm like, "She's accepted." They said, "You know, she was accepted." They said, "You know, she was accepted."

Ms. Driver and Wendy had not known the details of the college application process, wherein students receive acceptances and rejections in the spring. In the end, however, Wendy did not feel very "stressed" during the summer. In June she told her parents that

I couldn't see myself. . . . I applied to make her happy. . . . I had a scholarship because I had a scholarship. . . . I said, "What?" [I said,] "I do not want to."

Wendy was concerned that she did not get accepted in college:

Every day I would tell her, "Mom, it's not fair to leave her boyfriend Ryan]. I don't want to go to college because I don't know how I would personally take it in high school, and they were having [SUNY Geneseo] and she dropped out of college in January and dropped out of Rutgers. . . . I didn't want to fail, which

Wendy had worked in two different part-time jobs during the summer before school. After she decided not to go to college, she explored the option of attending the local community college. She reported speaking with someone in a local business who

I even applied to community. I was given a scholarship. I applied. I went down. They wanted me to go to a [learning disability] program, and I had

When Wendy ran into some difficulties with her own learning disability complications as her own to overcome, she did not request their help in solving the problem. She reported that she did not put her in a class for which she was not prepared. She was told that she had to take remedial classes, which she found seemed unreasonable to her given her background.

I want to go to a class to get credit first. I want to go to a class to get credit first. If I paid for the [learning disability] program, I would have to talk to the guy . . . and they didn't want

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And I'm like, "She's accepted." They're like, "What?!" I said, "They said she  
was accepted." They said, "You know that's not a promise."

Ms. Driver and Wendy had not known that there is a "season" to the college  
application process, wherein students apply in the fall and are notified of  
acceptances and rejections in the spring.

In the end, however, Wendy did not go to college. She reported being  
very "stressed" during the summer following her high school graduation,  
and in June she told her parents that she was "not going":

I couldn't see myself. . . . I applied to make my mom happy. I did everything  
to make her happy. . . . I had a scholarship. That made it into a bigger deal  
because I had a scholarship. . . . I said, "I am not going." [My mom] said,  
"What?" [I said,] "I do not want to go."

Wendy was concerned that she did not have the academic skills to succeed  
in college:

Every day I would tell her, "Mom, it is not that [i.e., that Wendy did not want  
to leave her boyfriend Ryan]. I don't want to go away." I tried to explain to  
her I wasn't going because I didn't want to fail. Because if I failed, I didn't  
know how I would personally take it. . . . My friends were in honors classes  
in high school, and they were having problems [in college]. My friend went to  
[SUNY Geneseo] and she dropped out, and then she went to community col-  
lege in January and dropped out of there, and now she is supposed to go to  
Rutgers. . . . I didn't want to fail, which I knew would happen.

Wendy had worked in two different part-time jobs all the way through high  
school. After she decided not to go to Alvernia, she continued working. She  
explored the option of attending the local community college in January. She  
reported speaking with someone in a learning disability program:

I even applied to community. I was going to community in January. I had ap-  
plied. I went down. They wanted me to go to night school: it was a whole free  
[learning disability] program, and I had to go for six months.

When Wendy ran into some difficulties with the program, she saw these  
complications as her own to overcome. Unlike many of the middle-class  
youth when faced with similar issues, Wendy did not involve her parents;  
nor did she request their help in solving her problem. Wendy's placement test  
did not put her in a class for which she would receive college credit. Instead  
she was told that she had to take remedial (non-credit) courses. This decision  
seemed unreasonable to her given her honors in high school:

I want to go to a class to get credit first. They said, "No." They wouldn't do  
it. If I paid for the [learning disability] program then I could do it. . . . I tried  
to talk to the guy . . . and they didn't want to hear it!

Wendy felt that the program did not understand the nature of her disability:

They wanted me to live with a bunch of kids with ADHD or [who were] bad. I'm not bad—I'm a good student. I have a learning disability. I can't read or write. I can write. I can't spell. I can write a word down and he doesn't understand it, but I do. Basically he told me "No, this is what [you] have to do." I just got upset.<sup>1</sup>

Wendy wanted to enroll in a program at the community college similar to the one that she had been offered at Alvernia:

[At Alvernia] I would have been in a regular class. [There would have been a] note taker and testing accommodation: [for a] three-hour test I would have six hours. The teacher could read the test to me. [I would] have chances to retake the test to get a better grade. Alvernia was going to have that plan.

The lack of flexibility at the community college bothered Wendy. She did not go back. Unlike Garrett Tallinger, she did not even consider involving her parents in her interactions with the community college. When asked if she had considered having her parents go to the community college to help her, Wendy visibly bristled at the idea, noting that she has adult status and these institutional interactions are her responsibility:

Because I was old enough to make my own decisions. I knew what was wrong with me. My parents could have come down, and they [i.e., the program officers] basically would have told them the same thing. I didn't want that. I am 18. I am old enough to make my own decisions!

Wendy hopes, at some point, to go back to school, to get "my degree," to "take night classes," and to get a degree in "early childhood education" so that she can run a day care center in her own house.

Although Wendy did not, in the end, go to college, it is striking how much the Drivers depended on the high school counselor and other professionals throughout the college application process. Moreover, there is a clear parallel between the approach of the Drivers to educational institutions when Wendy was in high school and when she was in fourth grade. For example, when Wendy was not reading by the time she had reached the fourth grade, Ms. Driver welcomed the efforts of educators at Lower Richmond School to determine the reasons underlying Wendy's difficulties with language-based activities. Taking Wendy to the eye doctor, listening to her read, and helping her with her homework, Ms. Driver promptly and precisely followed each recommendation by Wendy's teachers and the reading specialist at Lower Richmond. However, when these efforts led to only minimal improvements in Wendy's reading skills, Ms. Driver was hesitant to pursue any course of action beyond those suggested by school personnel: "I don't want to jump into anything and find out that it's the wrong thing," Ms. Driver reported at the time.

In sum, Wendy (correctly) sees life. In many different ways they to improve her situation. However, the institutional involvement of the Tallingers and the actions of the two young adults and goes out with his friends; Wendy is running a household and caring for a more experienced, and more mature Wendy and many of the other women seems younger, less exposed to the

#### PARENTS' USE OF CLASS-BASED FORESEEING AND FORESTALLING UNTYING KNOTS

All of the parents in the study who were in the class made a difference in the resources and strategies they adopted as their children sought information about institutions, and in particular "case" within an institution. These parents drew on these resources as they sought to foresee and forestall problems as they arose (and that arose). In this section, we draw on the experiences of Wendy Driver, as well as on the experiences of the other parents in the study, to suggest that these differences in parental resources and strategies as the youths transitioned to adulthood were able to foresee and forestall problems much more effectively than middle-class parents. In addition, all of the youths in the study, to as "knots," in institutions during their transition to adulthood had more resources

#### *Foreseeing and Forestalling Problems*

Familiar with educational institutions and their resources, our study proactively tried to alter the ways in which children functioned. They were often able to foresee and to redirect their actions before they arose and to redirect their actions to prevent the potential problems from arising. For example, Garrett's mother had a clear

understand the nature of her disability of kids with ADHD or [who were] had a learning disability. I can't read or write a word down and he doesn't understand. "No, this is what [you] have to do." I

at the community college similar to Vermont:

regular class. [There would have been a] [for a] three-hour test I would have six to me. [I would] have chances to retake was going to have that plan.

college bothered Wendy. She did not did not even consider involving her community college. When asked if she to the community college to help her, ng that she has adult status and these ability:

own decisions. I knew what was wrong down, and they [i.e., the program of- the same thing. I didn't want that. I am decisions!

ick to school, to get "my degree," to e in "early childhood education" so e own house.

id, go to college, it is striking how school counselor and other profes- in process. Moreover, there is a clear vers to educational institutions when e was in fourth grade. For example, e she had reached the fourth grade, ators at Lower Richmond School to ly's difficulties with language-based or, listening to her read, and helping omptly and precisely followed each ind the reading specialist at Lower led to only minimal improvements in isitant to pursue any course of action incl: "I don't want to jump into any- ng." Ms. Driver reported at the time.

In sum, Wendy (correctly) sees her parents as being very proactive in her life. In many different ways they gathered knowledge and they intervened to improve her situation. However, there were key differences in the institutional involvement of the Tallingers and the Drivers, as well as between the actions of the two young adults. For example, Garrett lives in a dorm and goes out with his friends; Wendy is married and is responsible for running a household and caring for a toddler. In key ways, Wendy seems older, more experienced, and more mature than Garrett, who in comparison with Wendy and many of the other working-class and poor youth in the study, seems younger, less exposed to the world, and more dependent.

#### PARENTS' USE OF CLASS-BASED RESOURCES: FORESEEING AND FORESTALLING PROBLEMS AND UNTYING KNOTS

All of the parents in the study wanted the best for their children, but social class made a difference in the resources parents were able to draw on and the strategies they adopted as their children entered adulthood. We see global information about institutions, specific information about their child's particular "case" within an institution, and the propensity to intervene in institutions as constituting class-based cultural resources that parents drew on in their interactions with institutions such as schools. We find that parents drew on these resources as they helped their children in two key ways: to foresee and forestall problems and to untie knots (i.e., to solve problems that arose). In this section, we draw on the case studies of Garrett Tallinger and Wendy Driver, as well as on the experiences among the other youth in the study, to suggest that these class-based cultural resources made a difference as the youths transitioned into adulthood. In particular, while all parents were able to foresee problems, middle-class parents were able to forestall problems much more effectively than were working-class and poor parents. In addition, all of the youth encountered problems, what we refer to as "knots," in institutions during their transition to adulthood; however, middle-class parents had more resources for solving these problems.

##### *Foreseeing and Forestalling Potential Problems*

Familiar with educational institutions themselves, middle-class parents in our study 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. For example, Garrett's mother had a clear understanding of academic tracking.



wanted her son to be in "the most forestall a potential problem: that (well) would not have the strongest ms. Similarly, Garrett's father strarecruitment process; he negotiated team to "give him the visibility" id tournaments where he would be th coaches on the phone to convey focus only on one or two schools; est to coaches in a wide variety of d have options. Similarly, Garrett's ands of institutions, of the specific il catastrophic problems that could at a school allowed them to criti-strengths. They sought a situation academically and athletically, even ege.

talling problems that we observed her middle-class youth in our study. middle-class Marshall family, when rder to ensure that Stacey was well lleges, her mother spoke regularly rding Stacey's course selection, and \$500 ten-day summer science pro- entered college, Ms. Marshall cor- basketball coach about her exer- d during the summer before Stacey arshall instructed her daughter in s arranging for a consultation with courses. At other times Ms. Mar- herself so as to prevent potential d medical school after completing gy during her first semester in col- out of calculus" because "you don't hen you can never dig yourself out ty to avoid taking a class that Ms. t interest:

me one night at eleven o'clock. And course." I said, "Stacey." [Laughs] is? Do they even give you a descrip- c." But she . . . was on the computer;

she could see that there were seats in this class; the time was right. I said, "Sometimes you can be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. This course may have an interesting name but, one, it sounds like yeah, you'd be watching movies, but, two, you'll probably be writing about [them]. You have these other courses where you will be writing. You are telling me that you don't like to write."

Other middle-class parents reported similar patterns of frequent intervention aimed at preventing potential problems from arising. National reports also echo this pattern. Indeed, some colleges are working to develop formal programs to "push parents out" of their children's college lives in order to facilitate the development of independence in college-aged youth (Gabriel 2010).

Working-class and poor parents also foresaw and forestalled problems in key areas of their children's lives. For example, at the end of eighth grade, when Wendy was not admitted to the magnet high school of her choice, Ms. Driver anticipated the educational disadvantages that Wendy might face by attending her neighborhood public school, which had a high dropout rate and frequent fights, and she arranged instead for Wendy's grandfather to pay the tuition for Wendy to attend the Catholic high school. When Wendy became sexually active, Ms. Driver sought to forestall an unplanned pregnancy by seeing that her daughter used birth control, and when Wendy became pregnant, Ms. Driver proactively sat her future son-in-law down for a frank discussion about his willingness to accept the responsibility of being a father and husband.

Like the Drivers, the other working-class and poor parents in the study anticipated and helped their children avoid potential problems. For example, Mr. Yanelli, a white working-class father, helped his son Billy buy a car when he needed transportation in order to work as a house painter in the painters' union. The mother of Katie Brindle, who grew up in a poor family, gave Katie work cleaning houses so Katie would be able to pay her bills when her husband went back to jail. However, working-class and poor parents appeared to be heavily dependent on professionals in their institutional interactions (e.g., with educational institutions, health care institutions, and criminal justice institutions).

Despite the Drivers' attempts to foresee and forestall problems in Wendy's life, they did not possess information about colleges or about Wendy's potential "fit" with them that would allow them to intervene effectively to help Wendy navigate key turning points. For example, the Drivers lacked the nuanced knowledge of the higher education system that might have helped them assess and augment the advice that Wendy was receiving from her high school guidance counselor. Without this knowledge, Wendy's parents were dependent on the guidance counselor's selection of possible schools for

Wendy and were not prepared to help customize the college fit in ways that the Tallingers and other middle-class parents in the study did.

Unfamiliar with the inner workings of these institutions, working-class and poor parents found it difficult to forestall difficulties by intervening. For example, Mr. and Ms. Yanelli could tell in sixth grade that Billy's schooling was not going well. They were sick with worry. Ms. Yanelli wanted to move Billy to a private school, but the tuition would be difficult for the Yanellis to afford, and Ms. Yanelli was convinced that Billy would not be admitted. She wasn't able to resolve the problems that Billy faced at school, and her efforts to encourage Billy to stay in school were not effective. Eventually Billy dropped out of high school in the tenth grade. Thus, although the Yanellis foresaw problems, they were unable to prevent them.

#### *Untying Knots*

As youth moved through institutions, they inevitably became entangled in "knots." Some of these knots were small, and others were large. Youth injured themselves and needed surgery, encountered conflicts in the scheduling of high school courses, had unplanned pregnancies, or dropped out of high school or college. Put differently, some knots were relatively inconsequential, and others had the potential to knock a child off of a life trajectory. Although the parents of all of the young adults in the study attempted to help their children untie knots as they transitioned into adulthood, untying knots in their children's education often required that parents possess detailed information about how institutions worked, specific information about their young adult's "case" within the institution, and the belief that intervention was appropriate. As we have discussed above, these resources were unequally distributed among the families by social class.

As the middle-class youth transitioned into adulthood, their knots tended to be smaller than those of their working-class and poor counterparts, but their parents tried vigorously to help their children untie them. When a scheduling conflict threatened to prevent Garrett from taking both AP English and AP calculus, Ms. Tallinger pressured Garrett's high school to reschedule the courses; and as Garrett's interest in playing college basketball developed, his father spoke to Garrett's coach about increasing his playing time and later initiated contacts with college coaches to generate interest in Garrett. Alexander Williams' mother, a middle-class African American woman, also helped untie a knot for her son: when Alexander was in college and his summer internship fell through at the last minute, Ms. Williams helped him develop a new plan for the summer that would allow him to develop his pre-med interests and skills as well as his résumé.

There were some problems that middle-class parents could not fix. After Stacey Marshall got a C in a pre-med course, her mother wasn't able to

untie the knot that was Stacey's low at home from her mother, Melanie. In a middle-class family, stopped attending school officially withdraw, and failed the semester only let their children find their way, and hope for the best. Thus being middle-class from facing important challenges. In their children's institutional lives, they were able to intervene with officials in instances when they ran into significant problems, middle-class parents were able to untie knots and facilitate their children's progress.

Like the middle-class parents, the working-class parents attempted to untie knots for their children. Wendy could not attend school after knee surgery, but Wendy could graduate from high school and enroll in the classes she wanted. She did not look to her parents for guidance, and she did not get involved. It is easy to see why, such as Garrett Tallinger's mother who submitted documentation of her illness to a psychologist to test her, or paid private tuition for one semester. However, Wendy, who was not aware of those options. Since she was "growing up" on her parents for help; and in a way that her parents would do anything different than her, Wendy she entered the labor market as a high school graduate with college credits that might have helped her, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut 2000.

In some instances working-class parents attempted to untie knots for their children. For example, in the case of recreational use of marijuana, but during his time as a house painter, he was subjected to random drug tests turned up "hot," Billy was extremely anxious about these tests. He used his own union membership to smooth the way through the violations, Billy should have been dismissed, but he was not kicked out.

Like Billy, Tyrec Taylor, a young man from a working-class family, benefited from his parents when he transitioned into adulthood. Tyrec attended a public middle school where he excelled

help customize the college fit in ways that middle-class parents in the study did.

Parents of these institutions, working-class parents, often forestall difficulties by intervening. For example, I tell in sixth grade that Billy's schooling was a source of worry. Ms. Yanelli wanted to move Billy to a private school because she thought that Billy would not be admitted to the public school. Ms. Yanelli thought that Billy faced at school, and her efforts to help Billy at school were not effective. Eventually Billy moved to a private school in seventh grade. Thus, although the Yanellis tried to prevent them.

For middle-class parents, they inevitably became entangled in their children's lives, and others were large. Youth intervention often encountered conflicts in the scheduling of activities, or dropped out of high school, or had unplanned pregnancies, or dropped out of high school. For middle-class parents, these knots were relatively inconsequential. For working-class and poor parents, a knot could knock a child off of a life trajectory. For middle-class parents, young adults in the study attempted to untie their own knots. For working-class and poor parents, untying often required that parents possess resources that middle-class institutions worked, specific information about the institution, and the belief that they could help. As I have discussed above, these resources are unevenly distributed by social class.

For middle-class parents, when they transitioned into adulthood, their knots were relatively small. For working-class and poor parents, their knots were large. For middle-class parents, they often tried to help their children untie them. For working-class and poor parents, they often tried to prevent their children from taking on knots. For example, I tell in sixth grade that Garrett's high school coach pressured Garrett's high school coach to increase his playing time. For middle-class parents, they often tried to help their children untie them. For working-class and poor parents, they often tried to prevent their children from taking on knots. For example, I tell in sixth grade that Garrett's high school coach pressured Garrett's high school coach to increase his playing time. For middle-class parents, they often tried to help their children untie them. For working-class and poor parents, they often tried to prevent their children from taking on knots. For example, I tell in sixth grade that Garrett's high school coach pressured Garrett's high school coach to increase his playing time.

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school without a basketball team. Although he was doing well academically, Tyrec pleaded with his mother to allow him to leave the charter school to go to Lower Richmond High, which had a basketball team. His sophomore year his mother relented. Tyrec's grades immediately plummeted, and he did not qualify academically to play. Tyrec started hanging around with friends that his parents did not approve of, and he was arrested in a juvenile offense. His father, using a credit card, hired a lawyer and Tyrec was released without charges. Tyrec's mother tried to send him back to the charter school he had been attending, but the school was full. An application to another charter school was also turned down because it was too late in the academic year, and this second school was also full. (Tyrec's low grades were also a concern.) Tyrec's mother pleaded with Tyrec's father to put him in a private school. In the end, Mr. Taylor took out a loan to cover the private school tuition of approximately \$4,000. Tyrec graduated, but in his junior and senior years, although colleges visited his school, he never ended up taking the SAT or applying to college. As Tyrec explains, his mother wanted him to go to college, but it did not work out:

AL: And when you finished that, did anyone talk to you about the possibility of going to college?

Tyrec: Yeah they came to our school. Colleges came to our school. I could have went to SUNY Geneseo, but I never really like took no SATs. I wasn't really thinking about going away to no university. I could have. My mom and them probably wanted me to, but I was like . . . after high school I really wanted to do what I wanted to do.

Tyrec reports, "My mom and them kept trying to get me to go to school." However, Tyrec's mom's approach differed in key ways from that of the Marshall and Tallinger families. She felt that in crucial ways the decision was fundamentally up to Tyrec; her actions were less interventionist than those of the middle-class families. In short, although Tyrec's parents were able to untie some knots in their son's educational trajectory, they were unable to untie others.

Although the interventions of working-class and poor parents such as the Drivers, Yanellis, and Taylors were consequential in helping their youth transition to adulthood, when faced with knots related to educational institutions the parents of the working-class and poor youth in the study were often less equipped than their middle-class counterparts to untie them.

Harold McAllister, a young African American man who grew up in a poor family, failed to untie a knot in high school that contributed to his leaving school without a diploma. Like Tyrec, Harold's passion in life was basketball. He desperately wanted to play on his high school's basketball team but wasn't selected. Harold's own efforts to resolve the situation—by

talking to the coach and by to his being put on the team know exactly why Harold is is that he was not chosen for being hugely consequential deferred to educators to res the benefit of interventionist class parents. Harold began basketball. He got off work In the end, he dropped out was ranked below Harold in college ball, Harold is not pl for him.

It is possible, of course, t and that he wasn't as skilled less, when institutional confli were more likely to understa ticular circumstances and co The parents of working-class and material support, but me dren's behalf with institution

#### CONCLUSION

As the children moved from school, and beyond, they exp of high school, not consideri getting pregnant, and marryi people's lives. Some were mor

As McLanahan and othe have documented important s life. In contrast, social scienti behaviors of youth, such as tir about school (see Walpole 20 to introduce "intervening vari and Hauser, 1997). Nonethei tions rather than on parents' di tions function or the highly id behalf of their young adults. T crucial ways the research has a The ways that parents shape a conceptualized. There are sig



in the strategies that parents bring to bear when negotiating their children's institutional lives than studies acknowledge.

In addition, we do not fully understand the kinds of informational resources that parents bring to the table. In analyzing the transition to adulthood, researchers have focused more often on the key outcomes—college graduation, employment, marriage, birth of the first child—than on the process (Settersten, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut 2005). Such research does not necessarily reveal how parents are able to transmit advantages across generations.

In our longitudinal interviews it was clear that the parents in all social classes loved their children and wanted the best for them. Most of the working-class and poor parents aspired to college for their children. Although not the focus of this paper, there is ample evidence of devotion and sacrifice on the part of the working-class and poor parents for their children as they scraped together scarce resources for food, shelter, and transportation, encouraged their children to do their best, activated their networks to find employment, and generally sought to offer advantages to them. Thus, within the limitations of this sample, we did not see striking differences—at least in terms of what we learned through interviews—in the kinds of devotion parents showed to their youth or the level of material sacrifice they made for them.

Where we did see differences, however, was in parents' interactions with institutions. Although all of the parents loved their children deeply, middle-class parents' interactions with institutions were linked to their more *global information* about how educational institutions worked, more *specific information* about the strengths (and weaknesses) of their child's situation, and a *greater belief in and history of intervening* in educational matters than working-class and poor parents. Since all of the youth faced challenges, turning points, and dilemmas as they aged, the class differences in parents' actions affected how they confronted those challenges. All of the parents wanted to foresee and forestall problems. All of the parents also wanted to help their children untie knots in their children's lives. But to do that, parents needed very detailed "insider" information about how educational institutions work. Parents could not plan for or prevent a problem if they did not know it might arise. Similarly, untying knots in children's educational careers required that parents had detailed information about how institutions worked, an understanding of their child's particular case in relation to the institution, and the belief that parental intervention was appropriate.

What is striking from these interviews is the degree to which middle-class parents consistently and aggressively gathered information, were preoccupied (in some cases almost obsessed) with the college application process, intervened in little and big ways, and were a constant resource for their

young adults. And their interventions included contacting coaches, and institutions. In contrast, Harold McAllister, who had a major snag in his basketball career in high school, is hard to know for certain, but it seems likely that he who approached institutions in the first place, there might have been a different outcome.

We found class differences in parents' general level as well as class differences in how they evaluate the specific "fit" between their children and institutions. We found class differences in the kinds of interventions young adult children. Middle-class parents *problems and to work successfully* in educational institutions. In some instances, the interventions seemed to be more effective than in working-class and poor families.

Researchers make a mistake when they treat parents' interventions as neutral and parents' compliance as an indication of the value parents place on education. A better approach would be to try to understand the edge and expertise that facilitate parents' ability to understand and comply with institutional standards. College employee that Wendy had a deep understanding of a fundamental aspect of the college system. He told him to stay at his current high school and to manage his son's academic and athletic life. In his family, his parents took charge of his education and guide their son in the right direction.

At the same time, we should not be surprised that adopted by middle-class parents. Clearly, it is plain that middle-class parents' efforts to support the development of their independent children in the study seemed older than those of working-class youth (see Lareau 2011).

By definition, the professionals and college-bound class. Policymakers are also college-bound. As such, many of the stratification system are "taken for granted" and not to articulate. But the invisible nature of these standards is us to the somewhat arbitrary and hidden standards. Nor should it lead us to ignore

to bear when negotiating their children's knowledge.

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young adults. And their interventions were not exclusively in the realm of education. Garrett Tallinger's father learned about the athletic recruiting system, contacted coaches, and intervened to get his son more playing time. In contrast, Harold McAllister, who also had a passion for basketball, hit a snag in his basketball career in high school and was unable to overcome it. It is hard to know for certain, but it seems likely that if Harold had had parents who approached institutions in the way that Garrett Tallinger's parents did, there might have been a different outcome for Harold.

*We found class differences in parents' institutional knowledge at a general level as well as class differences in parents' knowledge of and ability to evaluate the specific "fit" between their children and institutions. We also found class differences in the kinds of interventions parents made for their young adult children. Middle-class parents were more likely to anticipate problems and to work successfully to untie knots along their youths' trajectories. In some instances, the interventions that middle-class parents made seemed to be more effective than the interventions attempted by working-class and poor families.*

Researchers make a mistake when they treat the standards of institutions as neutral and parents' compliance with these institutional standards as an indication of the value parents place on their children's success. A better approach would be to try to unpack the forms of cultural knowledge and expertise that facilitate parents' ability to understand, "decode," and comply with institutional standards. When Ms. Driver told an Alvernia College employee that Wendy had been "accepted," she misunderstood a fundamental aspect of the college admission process. When Harold's father told him to stay at his current high school, he was depending on the school to manage his son's academic and athletic trajectory. In contrast, in Garrett's family, his parents took charge of such matters, not relying on the school to guide their son in the right direction.

At the same time, we should not ignore the drawbacks of the strategies adopted by middle-class parents. College administrators sometimes complain that middle-class parents' efforts to help their children can thwart the development of their independence. Indeed, the working-class and poor children in the study seemed older and more mature than the middle-class youth (see Lareau 2011).

By definition, the professionals who work in institutions are middle class. Policymakers are also college graduates and are employed in professional occupations. As such, many aspects of the sorting mechanisms in the stratification system are "taken for granted" and are hard for individuals to articulate. But the invisible nature of these standards should not blind us to the somewhat arbitrary and historically specific nature of the standards. Nor should it lead us to ignore the ways in which parents' social



se standards. By unpacking the ways and transform the "choices" that their to improve our knowledge of one of reproduction of inequality in American

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#### NOTES

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1. One set of parents, Mr. and Ms. Williams, declined; one father, Mr. McAllister, was in poor health; and one husband, Katie Brindle's husband, was hard to schedule and then was in jail. In some families Lareau interviewed additional people: in the McAllister family, for example, a cousin who had lived with the family at the time of the study.

2. In the presentation of quoted material, we have in some instances eliminated false starts and filler words including "um," "so," "uh," and "mmm." In a few instances we have reordered speech for clarity if we felt the meaning would not be changed.

3. Yet the data set has important and difficult limitations: there is no observational data; there are no interviews with critical educators; there is no independent confirmation of the reports of the family members by the institution; and the reports are retrospective. Still, a key point of this chapter is to analyze class differences in this small, non-random sample. There are not any signs that the methodological limitations of the study were more prominent with some families than others.

4. The selection of the two cases presented in this section was guided by the following factors. We began by considering possible working-class or poor families. In order to make a comparison with middle-class families, we wanted a working-class or poor family in which there was as much institutional contact as possible. The Drivers, Carrolls, and Taylors had more contact with institutions than other working-class and poor families, in part because their youth had made some contact with colleges. We also wanted, if possible, a youth who was reasonably typical of our sample (and national patterns). Ideally we wanted to compare youth of the same racial and ethnic backgrounds and for whom we had interviews with all of the parents. Once we took into account these factors, the Wendy Driver/Garrett Tallinger comparison was our best option. For a comparison of Tara Carroll and Stacey Marshall, see Lareau and Weininger 2008.

5. Wendy also said: "I had to go to community and take a test. You had to go back down and they put you up into a different section. Of course I was the only little white girl there. I was the only white girl." Later in the interview, however, she insisted that the key factor was not that she was the only white girl (which "didn't bother me," she said) but that she could not move into classes where she would receive college credit.

6. Put differently, working-class and poor youth did not have the cultural resources that had the potential to produce "profits" in a particular sector.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Family Change, Public Response,  
and Social Policy in an Era of Complexity

*Timothy M. Smeeding and*

As summarized in the introductory chapter of this book, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed dramatic changes in family structure that have served to increase the complexity of the link between marriage and children. In the Western world, the family has been notably weakened. More people spend time living in one or more marital households, more people have partners, and children often experience changes in family structure of origin by the time they reach age 18. More children spend time living apart from at least one of their parents, and more children in labor markets hungry for college graduates.

These family changes are of great concern to researchers and policymakers concerned about the family, particularly because they are expected to play in the care and well-being of children. One of the oldest institutions in Western society, marriage, has long been documented to have strong associations between family stability and positive outcomes for adults and children (Nock 1998; Waite and Gallagher 2000). However, it is not clear whether which marriage and family stability have merely associated with other individual characteristics that promote positive outcomes—emerging family structures which are associated with worse outcomes, or whether ongoing changes in family behavior are the cause.

The growing complexity and instability of family structure has led to interest to researchers and policymakers with respect to the effects of family change and instability. Racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience family change within marriage—and to have all of their children born to unmarried parents (Carlson and Furstenberg 2006), and more children are born by family change and instability. For example, in 2009, 40 percent of children were born to unmarried parents.