

Parents, Middle-class-ness, and Out-of-School Art Education

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Abstract

This article explores the intersections of middle-class parenting practices and out-of-school art education. Drawing on the work of Lareau (2003) and Kusserow (2004) it argues that middle-class parents use a particular logic of parenting that involves the ongoing cultivation of children in hopes of promoting future security and life advantage. I argue that out-of-school art education is often taken up within this parenting practice in ways that serve the cultivation of both general and specific middle-class values.

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With him, I have enrolled him in a variety of different courses up until this year, trying to find one that would inspire him. We did creative movement, we did karate this year, and I never could find the right one. And finally a light went on and he discovered painting and drawing and pottery. And for him art, and being able to represent his thoughts, has become a huge opening. It's a form of expression that he's never had before, and he's just excited by it, which is nice to see. Its been interesting to watch him. He has a passion. (Parent interview transcript, Christa, in Lackey, 1997, p. 144)

The quotation above is an excerpt from an interview conducted in the course of my² dissertation project, completed over ten years ago. The speaker, given a fictitious name, is the mother of a six-year-old boy who was at the time enrolled in a children's art class at the West Side Center, a pseudonym for a recreation facility located in an established upper-middle-class, tree-lined neighborhood in Vancouver, British Columbia. The perspectives of parents were not really central to the dissertation, which explored more widely how various actors interacting in two community centers within socio-economically and culturally different neighborhoods, viewed and experienced leisure art programming relative to the more dominant center agendas that promoted sport and fitness. This particular quotation, however, was mysteriously compelling to me at the time, and lingered in the back of my mind for years. I was drawn to it in part because I recognized myself, a white middle-class woman like Christa, in the seemingly

² Although this is a dual-authored article, to avoid confusion it is written from the perspective of the first author.

systematic and almost urgent way in which this mother spoke about finding “the right” activity for her child, one that would match his interests and ignite something (what?) in him. I wondered at the way in which it implied a deeply careful almost scientific observation of her son, both “who” he was and how he responded to each of the experiences that she had him “try on.” I puzzled at why a six-year-old would need a “passion.” More than these, however, was my sudden recognition of her—and my own—taken-for-granted construction of what “good” parenting entailed with respect to children’s education, broadly conceived. The presumption was that good parents took seriously a felt responsibility for seeking supplemental, out-of-school educational experiences that were unique to their children’s personalities. A revelation came when I realized that this parenting practice that seemed normal to me, and was also something about which I felt mysteriously driven, was in fact a cultural assumption, not universal, and arguably grounded in my own middle-class-ness. That the ultimate ‘fit’ in the case of Christa’s son turned out to be an out-of-school art class, cemented her words in my memory and caused me to ponder how these out-of-school forms of art education might be caught up in middle-class parents’ agendas in both general and specific ways.

The purpose of this article is to explore some of the intersections between a particular logic of middle-class parenting and the use of out-of-school art education to foster socialization and cultural capital³. I suggest that middle-class parents use extra-

3 In the Editor’s Introduction to Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production*, Johnson (1993) offers the following definition of cultural capital: “Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation of or competence in deciphering cultural relationships and cultural artifacts....The possession of this code, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutional education).”(p.7)

school art educational programming to promote children's classed values and privilege in general. These parents also, however, view out-of school art education as contributing in distinct and particular ways to sought-after middle-class characteristics for their offspring. In this moment of crisis for public school education, within which school art is persistently constrained by practices of standardization and vulnerable to defunding and de-schooling, scholars and educators increasingly seek ways to re-imagine and re-locate places of learning as well as to forge coalitions with organizations in out-of-school sites (Ellsworth, 2005; Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010). While non-school settings do hold vast potential for re-thinking and invigorating art education, they simultaneously provide fields of play that permit those who already hold power and resources opportunities to activate privilege and maintain inequities in informal ways.

Art educators need to understand the complexity of the social and political environments in which our practices play out and which inevitably mold the nature of our work. Moreover, in general, academics have tended to study working-class realities and oppression, often from the perspective of the "other". We have much less frequently turned our lenses on middle-class-ness and, given that academe is arguably a middle-class domain, on ourselves. We need to look more closely at taken-for-granted middle-class assumptions and forces that permeate and influence our field as well as at the potential complicity of art education practices with the maintenance of inequality. Without making these presumptions and practices more visible, they remain resistant to critique and correction.

This article unfolds by first sharing perspectives about how one might think about 'class' in the 21st Century. I introduce some ways that "middle-class-ness" in particular

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has been described, and note connections between middle-class-ness, parenting, and education. I draw in particular on Lareau's (2003) notion of concerted cultivation as a parental logic that helps to explain middle-class parents' behaviors in selecting out-of-school activities for their children. I argue that parents perceive and use out-of-school art education programming in efforts to promote values, foster cultural capital, and activate privilege for their children in ways that align broadly with middle-class values but that are also seen as specific to art education. In other words, I suggest that non-school art education is used by parents both as a general tool among many others and as one that is seen as holding a unique contribution to the perpetuation of middle-class advantage for the next generation. I illustrate theoretical arguments about this stance with excerpts from interviews with middle-class parents whose children were enrolled in a particular Saturday morning art program during 2004 and 2009. (Appendix)

Class in the 21st Century

The notion of class is a complex and contested construct. As Noblit (2007) notes, popular discourse often frames the United States as a class-less society. Alternatively, he acknowledges that some postmodern scholars view class as merely one of many narratives that run through people's lives, and as such dismiss its usefulness as an analytic category. Noblit and Ball (2003) suggest that traditional conceptions of class grew from modernist thought and reflect social and economic relations at the time of industrialization. They concur, therefore, that such theory may be less applicable in a world profoundly changed by corporate globalization, mass media communication, and

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new social and institutional structures. In particular, they acknowledge the need to examine the ways in which class is inevitably experienced and intertwined with gender, ethnicity, race and other categories of identity and oppression. Rather than dismissing class as a tool of analysis, however, they assert the need to complicate and re-conceptualize it in light of these multiple positions and in consideration of an altered social and economic environment.

In part the issue is whether one views class as an economic or psychological condition. A common way of assigning people to class categories, for example, has been according to levels of education, income, occupation, and wealth (ownership of property). Ball (2003) conceptualizes class as reflected by such categories but emphasizes the ways in which people make sense of and experience class membership. He suggests that while class is not merely a psychological phenomenon, it nevertheless reflects sets of taken-for-granted assumptions that frame the ways in which we see ourselves in relation to others. His view is that class is achieved and enacted or performed, and therefore best understood in the context of daily life and descriptions of it. He draws on the work of Bourdieu (1984) in which class stems from habitus⁴, an enculturated set of family values, goals, deportment and language that are so engrained as to be assumed normal and natural. Habitus plays out as individuals use cultural knowledge (cultural capital) as a vehicle for identifying oneself as a member of a

4. Lareau (2003) describes Bourdieu's notion of habitus: "Pierre Bourdieu provides a context for examining the impact of social class position. His model draws attention to conflict, change, and systemic inequality, and it highlights the fluid nature of the relationship between structure and agency. Bourdieu argues that individuals of different social locations are socialized differently. This socialization provides children, and later adults, with a sense of what is comfortable or what is natural (he terms this habitus). These background experiences also shape the amount and forms of resources (capital) individuals inherit and draw upon as they confront various institutional arrangements (fields) in the social world." (p. 275)

particular social class, and social knowledge (social capital) to navigate social networks in ways that accrue benefits.

In work that focuses on the worlds of white middle-class women in Britain, Byrne (2006) agrees that class is often visual and visible in “how people look and behave..., how they move through the streets, where they go and what they do”(p.105). She cites Kuhn, however, in arguing that while class is demonstrated in actions it is also engrained and embodied as a sense of self: “Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, [and] at the very core of your being.” (Kuhn 1995: p.98/Byrne p.106). Moreover, Byrne notes, class is inscribed. While she is careful to acknowledge the multiple ways in which class intertwines with other notions of identity and the many types of class both within and across classed categories, the social expectation and responsibility for inculcating children with particular kinds of values and attitudes generally fall to parents and often, as Byrne’s work demonstrates, especially to mothers.

Middle-class-ness, Parenting and Education

Although class is experienced as a psychological condition, economic circumstances create the context and parameters within which cultural capital, including middle-class cultural capital, can be exchanged for social benefits. The ways in which the economic and psychological intermingle in classed experience is evident in attempts to describe the nature of “being middle-class”. Both Ball (2003) and Ehrenreich (1990) portray middle-class-ness as an insecure state of being “ in”, but also struggling to stay

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within, the middle ground in terms of economic and social status. Ehrenreich (1990) describes middle-class-ness as a state of continuous “fear of falling”. Ball frames being middle-class in terms of recurring themes of dread and confidence. He depicts it as a position of relative privilege in which one has resources that can be activated, but also as a state of increasing insecurity and anxiety about the possibility of losing one’s social position. This sense of vulnerability is further exacerbated by the volatile workplace market of 21st century economic globalization and its accompanying discourses promoting a belief that one needs to engage in continuous skill acquisition and the selling or promotion of the self to employers. Current economic conditions and persistent popular discourses about the disappearing middle-class in the United States contribute to a feeling of unease.

Out-of-School Education and General Middle-class Perspectives

Perhaps surprisingly, this sense of anxiety about the future was often evident when I interviewed middle-class parents about their intentions in enrolling their children in Saturday morning art classes. In this interview context, and more than ten years after my interview with Christa, a parent in the Midwestern United States explained why finding a child’s “passion” is so important:

If they are passionate about something, even in a troubled world, they will succeed. Especially in the world today, there are so many bad things and if they can be passionate about something positive, and get excited about it, and do a good job at it, and feel good about themselves about it afterwards, and make a

difference, I guess they will succeed. At least if they try an assortment of things maybe something will just spark them. Maybe they will follow up on it. (Kim, parent interview transcript, 2009)

In other words, for this mother, finding a child's passion is grounded in worry about her child's future and propelled by an effort to secure her child's happiness and success in years to come. This parent, like many others, saw out-of-school art classes not merely as fun or leisure but as contributing to their children's future security.

For Ball, the uneasy economic environment in which we have been living encourages the intensification of what he calls "positional competition" (Ball, 2003, p. 20) in a struggle for the reproduction of class status and social position. In such an environment, parents use their economic, social, and cultural capital resources—their property and financial means; their social and family connections; and their learned dispositions and cultural knowledge—in attempts to support their children. Effectively, if unconsciously, these parents compete with others in a game devoted to improving the odds that current circumstances will be maintained or improved in the future.

Ball's (2003) large study of middle-class parents in Britain and North America, for example, describes their intense work and research surrounding decisions involving university choice. He reveals ways in which these parents are able to activate their various skills and resources—their comfort with speaking to teachers and administrators, and their various professional and social networks—to help their children successfully navigate complicated college application processes and to guide them toward individually designed but economically satisfactory careers.

Because those in the middle-classes generally lack extensive wealth via property ownership or inheritance, education (formal, non-formal and informal) becomes an extremely important vehicle of capital. Ehrenreich actually defines middle-class-ness as “all those people whose economic and social status is based on education rather than on the ownership of capital or property” (p.12). Streaming practices, Gifted and Talented programs, as well as magnet and private schools are sought within the credentialed system of schooling, while a multiplicity of children’s out-of school programming can serve the purpose of promoting cultural capital in leisure time.

Lareau’s (2003) work, which also draws on Bourdieu, seeks an understanding of how privilege and disadvantage is maintained and reproduced in the context of daily life in the United States. Her extensive ethnographic study involved ‘hanging out’ during leisure time with diverse kinds of families—poor, working class, middle-class, and upper-middle-class—in order to experience the day to day realities and family cultures of each. Her findings suggest that middle-class parents and working class parents tend to base child rearing practices on different but equally logical assumptions and values, each with advantages and drawbacks for their children. The practices of middle-class parents, however, tend to imbue children with social skills and psychological perspectives that prepare them for school success and life in more advantaged circles. The dilemma is that the socialization that Lareau (2003) calls ‘home advantage’ is framed as personal accomplishment that merits social rewards.

Lareau argues that middle-class families appear to base child rearing practices on an assumption of the need for ‘concerted cultivation’ of the child. Parents, and particularly mothers, see the need to engage children continually in discussions and

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activities geared toward their social and intellectual development. Children are taught to look adults in the eye when speaking to them and to expect adult attention and respect. In the vein of 'hovering helicopter parents' (Gibbs, 2005) the middle-classes are deeply involved in children's lives, intervening in both in and out-of-school activities on children's behalf. These children's lives are often busy to the point of frenzy. Their free time is filled with organized activities of a wide range, and the parents devote extensive time and financial resources to supporting their activities. Much day to day life is spent preparing to go to organized programs or waiting to get picked up. Lareau suggests that these middle-class families engender in their children not only the assumption that adults are there to attend to them, but a general sense of entitlement in which material goods and special leisure activities come to be taken for granted as an ordinary part of life.

Certainly there were many parallels between the perspectives of parents with whom I spoke and the middle-class parenting logic that Lareau articulates. Interviews suggested that parents were uniformly active in orchestrating and managing children's out-of-school educations and took very seriously the job of selecting activities for their children: "Well, I think [these kinds of programs] are very important. We never look at them cavalierly. I think they allow [children's] development in many areas". (Jack and Diana, parent interview transcript, 2009)

The sense of extreme busy-ness that Lareau documented in her work also characterized family life as parents described it to me:

He's booked. It's an amazingly busy life. We are struggling with that all the time.....He gets homework: there is a huge pile of that. He does very well in

school—he's very advanced for his age. [After an extended daycare program at school] he comes home...around 5:30 or 6:00. He falls asleep. He plays the cello.... (Parent interview transcript, Emily, 2004)

My two oldest daughters are involved in band and choir and Girl Scouts. The older one, who is enrolled in Saturday Art School, is also athletic and plays across the country on softball teams. So they are very busy children. Usually in the evening they have either a music lesson or a practice and then once a week they have a Girl Scout meeting. In the evenings we are always doing homework. (Parent interview transcript, Connie, 2004)

Some parents did tell me that they wanted their children to be busy because it demonstrated industriousness and a productive use of leisure time, middle-class values in themselves. More parents, however, explained the many activities in which their children were involved in terms of cultivation for the future:

I want her to be exposed to a lot of different things to see what her interests are...I don't want to force her to like academics and that's it. Now days if you are really good at something you can make a living....as long as you are really good. I want to expose her to a lot of things like sport, and music, and science. She'll be a...well-rounded person in the future. It will help her [both intellectually and socially]. (Parent interview transcript, Sonya, 2009)

We do try to get them involved in as many things as possible,[things] that are interesting and diverse....This mixing of the kind of things they do is important to me so they get exposed to lots of different things. I don't want them to just play basketball....I think it is a matter maybe of exposing them to lots of different

things so that they can pick and choose and return to things in the future or not.

(Parent interview transcript, Ron, 2004)

Here the logic is that deliberately exposing children to many organized activities, including art, will foster “well-rounded-ness”, an advantage that may contribute to social comfort in a wide variety of settings. It may also, however, increase the odds that a child will find a special interest that might be developed into a vocation or be useful in some unknown way in the future.

These descriptions may well read as commonplace and unsurprising to many middle-class readers. A key part of Lareau’s argument, however, is that in the same way that “whiteness” is often assumed to be a neutral rather than a raced experience, middle-class-ness is often presumed to be normal, natural, and “class-less” or unaffected by particular classed values and realities. She makes the assumptions of middle-class parenting visible by contrasting them with what she describes as an alternative logic of parenting used by the working class and poor families who participated in her study and who she describes as embracing the promotion of children’s natural and spontaneous growth. Working class parents, she suggests, are concerned about their children’s education and provide for them in the best ways in which they can. These parents do not hover, however, and their children are encouraged to deal independently with conflicts they may encounter in or out of school wherever possible. Leisure time is not filled with adult-organized programming. Adults and children move in more separate spheres, and adults do not constantly engage children in conversation and stimulating structured activity meant to cultivate their social and intellectual skills. As a result children of these families may participate in more self-

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initiated and unsupervised leisure activities and even have more opportunities to rely on their own imaginations to counteract boredom.

I do not suggest that middle-class parents take up practices of cultivation with a conscious intention to maintain or improve the family's classed position, thereby deliberately advantaging their own children and disadvantaging others. Lareau's work and supporting research by Ball, however, do offer potential paths for making sense of how seemingly innocuous and pleasurable children's out-of-school art activities come to be viewed by middle-class parents as reflecting very high stakes. They suggest a way to understand how art education is taken up as one tool among others, a general good, within a much wider pattern of behavior of competitive position taking and cultivation that seeks middle-class advantage and fosters future social and economic security for children.

Middle-class-ness and the Particular Appeals of Non-school Art Education

Middle-class parents also seek out-of-school art education for the specific advantages that they believe it provides. The themes around this use of extra-school art have to do with personal freedom, creative self-expression, and the ways that middle-class parents perceive these in the context of fostering a particular psychology in their children. In this section I draw on the ethnographic work of Kusserow (2004), who also studied parents living and raising children in different socioeconomic contexts in the United States. Like Lareau, she argues that poor, working class and middle-class parents conceptualize children differently and therefore nurture them differently. Their

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perceptions are, of course, logically grounded within the economic conditions and social environments that they each navigate.

Kusserow's (2004) study of pre-schools located in three different New York communities proposes that parents of different social classes actually have different views and promote different versions of 'self' in their children. Middle-class families fostered what Kusserow deemed a 'soft' permeable psychology, while working class and poor families fostered a psychology that included a tougher, arguably more protective outer shell meant to ward off harm that was everywhere in their children's environments.

[Middle-class] parents stressed the child's cultivation of ... emotions and the development of a good sense of self as crucial foundations for being happy and successful. The child must fully acknowledge and honor... emotions, tastes, and desires so that [he/she] can find the right societal outlet for them. The energy of true desire, authentic preference, feelings and tastes will naturally motivate her to be good at what [he/she] loves. If [he/she] does not know and have confidence in [his/her] unique feelings and preferences, [he/she] will have little momentum to carry [him/her] forward in a quite competitive society. (p. 84)

Among the working class and poor families in Kusserow's study, however, the vulnerability involved in expressing personal feelings was not to be encouraged and might even be dangerous.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Kusserow found alignments between middle-class parents' notions of a 'soft' individualistic self with beliefs about the importance of creativity and children's art:

Creativity was seen as extremely important as an outlet for emotional expression. Given the importance of the unfolding and puffing out of the emotions and feelings of the self, creativity became prized for the way it was an outlet for the child's subjectivity. Creativity was a perfect channel for the release of one's true self, a catalyst in the individuation process. If creativity is encouraged, a stronger self emerges, one that has fully explored its own domains and knows what it wants and needs. It is hard for a child to unfold without knowing what he wants. Creativity is an assertion of the child's unique personality through color, light, paint, voice, song, design, and so on.... (p. 96)

These themes of using out-of-school art classes as means of both expressing the true self and molding a child's personality were also evident in parents with whom I spoke. One parent, for example, spoke about her child as being a "perfectionist" and needing open-ended artmaking experiences to counteract that tendency. An important strand in these conversations also, however, had to do with the importance of providing children with a site of personal freedom in the context of expressing the true self:

I want her to develop; I want to see her for who she is, which is something that I don't think that I was offered. ...she has that interest in art [and] I would like to develop that as much as I can. And at the same time [I want] to expose her to other things. But I won't force her to do things that she is clearly not interested [in]....[I want her to be] able to see things through different eyes, different perspectives, growing in her own confidence....And... I think there is definitely [the issue of building] self esteem. (Parent interview transcript, Connie, 2004)

In selecting children's out-of-school programming, many parents felt strongly that children should not be forced to participate in any activity. Forcing children to attend a program in which the child does not wish to participate is not only difficult for the adult, it is counter-productive in uncovering children's special interests and developing their unique abilities. In this same vein, there seemed to be a high valuing for art experiences that foster independence and the free expression of a unique self. Frequently, the claimed need for children's freedom was a response to perceived restrictions in school in general and even in school-based art education.

I think art is a great way for my daughter, well, for anyone, but especially for this particular child, just to express who she is. I think sometimes in school that's hard to do because maybe there's not...as much freedom to express themselves.because the day to day school routine is so rigorous now with academics and things. The creative aspect is kind of gone. (Parent interview transcript, 2004, Connie)

Oh, at school I just think it is...a little more regimented because they have to get certain things at certain times, otherwise they're not following the curriculum. And they might have [a] little more liberty here....They sent home these things for the parents, like magnets and bookmarks and things and they [said] it was your child's design. [But] every kid had the same design. I didn't realize it until I saw a magnet on a friend of mine's refrigerator and went, 'that looks just like my son's magnet!' [And I thought] this isn't what art class is about; it's about freedom of expression and learning different ways of doing things. (Parent interview transcript, Kim, 2009)

Developing the child's authentic self involved cultivating children's perceived special abilities and interests. Byrne (2006) refers to the interesting tendency to talk about children's special interests as something that children have a right to develop and "more as a special need—for a 'gifted' child—rather than as a desire on the part of the parents" (p.123). Certainly this development grows from parents' observations of and careful responses to their child's apparent natures:

She is seven years old. She has always loved art. We call her our sensitive artist type because she is always caring for others and looking at the world. She is very reflective for such a young age...I guess she has always had a strong affinity for art, so we take it a little more seriously. (Parent interview transcript, Janice, 2009)

My six-year-old and my eleven-year-old are both in the program. My [eleven-year-old] daughter is very interested in art. She wants to be a fashion designer when she grows up....My youngest daughter brought the [flyer] home....and I saw she was interested. She had said before that she would like to take some kind of art classes [at the university].

(Parent interview transcript, Carry, 2004)

While these children may certainly have interests in art, it is difficult to know whether their interests are actually unusual. Parents may not be aware of what constitutes average interest and development in visual art, or the fact that many and even most children enjoy some aspect of artmaking at some point.

Conclusion and Implications

Turning attention from school-based to out-of-school educational sites fosters a re-conceptualization of the field of education. As Ellsworth (2005) argues, re-examining the “places of learning” fundamentally challenges our constructions of knowledge, learning, and pedagogy. Schubert (2010) suggests that a view of education and curriculum as pertaining only to schools is myopic. He argues that the significant curricular questions are not about what people learn in schools, but how people learn to become who they are and how they build their lives. Such questions must, he suggests, move beyond the limits of school institutions. At the same time he acknowledges the complex political forces that flow through out-of-school pedagogical sites. While some educators seek alternative spaces for progressive social action and reconstruction, non-school contexts can also serve conservative ends that buttress dominant and oppressive agendas.

In this article I have looked at parents’ practices of enrolling children in out-of-school art courses through a deliberately sociological lens. Using the ethnographic studies of Lareau (2003) and Kusserow (2006) I have argued that middle-class parents assume a classed notion of what constitutes good parenting. This in turn propels parents to work at cultivating particular values, knowledge, and skills through an out-of-school curriculum in hopes of securing future happiness and advantage for their children. As forms of commodified education positioned in leisure realms, extra-school art classes are available to parents who have both the economic resources and socio-cultural motivation to select them on behalf of their children. Moreover, the discourses

surrounding non-school recreational programming tend to dismiss them as worthwhile sites of education, diverting attention from what I argue are actually significant educational realms.

I have suggested that out-of-school art classes are used by parents both in ways that align with general middle-class values as well as ways that view art as uniquely appropriate. I have depicted out-of-school art education as caught up in parents' senses of obligation to systematically pursue and manage an extra-school curriculum for their children. These parents describe art classes as one of many diverse activities that fill their children's out of school time, satisfying a middle-class valuing for a busy and structured life, but also providing flashpoints of interest that might be developed and become an advantage in later employment or social circles. To the extent that art is popularly perceived as fostering personal self expression requiring a kind of freedom from constraints, these classes seem to fulfill a middle-class need to foster children's unique characteristics, distinguishing them from the crowd and making them special in a competitive world. I suggest that as economic conditions continue to be uncertain and if the arts and creative approaches to learning continue to be pushed out of schools, extra-school art activity will increasingly be a key site for cultural capital acquisition. To the extent that middle-class parents can activate their resources in obtaining out-of-school art experiences as cultural capital for their own children, one wonders how motivated they will be to argue for a strong in-school art education.

This study seems to hold a number of implications for art educators. Those of us who use out-of-school art educational environments for pre-service art teacher education need to consider the complex tacit environments that we provide both for

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novice educators and the children they teach. Significantly, we need to remember that using out-of-school environments for art education does not merely change its location but can alter the meanings that art activities hold. We need to analyze the extent to which our programs may be caught up in parenting agendas that make us complicit in advantaging already advantaged children. It seems imperative that we seek out ways to invite and encourage the participation of children from a range of social and economic circumstances into our classes and to honor parenting logics other than those of the middle-class in our curricula.

In general, the extent to which middle-class assumptions permeate our field seems ripe for further research. While I do not assume that every art educator views her or himself as middle-class, I suspect that most art educators can recognize and describe how class has been an influence in their lives in general as well as how class has affected their connections to art and their attractions to art education as a career. I assert that middle-class values and assumptions permeate the field of art education in ways that have been neither fully brought to light nor appropriately confronted. I suggest that a focus on middle-class-ness in art education offers a point of entry through which to reflect on ourselves as educators and to examine the multiple contexts in which out-of-school art education occurs, but also to analyze some of the most taken-for-granted assumptions and practices in our field.

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Appendix

The Participants and the Research

In this article, we interlace excerpts from open-ended parent interviews with scholarship that helps to interpret and analyze them. The excerpts were taken from 13 interviews conducted with 14 parents whose children were at the time participating in a Saturday Art School held at a large Midwestern university. Seven interviews were completed in 2004 and six were completed in 2009. Although all parents of children (over 200 in all) enrolled in the Fall 2004 and Fall 2009 programs were invited to participate, these were the only parents to respond, a fact likely due, at least in part, to these parents' very limited free time.

Of the Saturday School parents who participated, three interviewees were men and eleven were women. They listed their occupations and those of their spouses as university professor, registered nurse, outside salesman, graphic designer, manager, electrical engineer, building contractor, independent consultant, small business owner, artist, consultant, student, stay-at-home mother, university staff, graduate student, psychiatrist, retired, and currently unemployed. All but two identified themselves as, at minimum, second-generation residents of the United States. Interviews were approximately 30-45 minutes long and consisted of 8 to 10 open-ended questions in which parents were asked to describe the kinds of activities in which their children were involved in out-of-school time, how they went about selecting out-of-school activities, and why they decided to enroll their children in the Saturday morning art program.

Interviews were each transcribed verbatim, coded repeatedly, and systematically

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analyzed for emerging themes and insights related to the research questions.

Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the confidentiality of those who took part.

The data reflect the perspectives of a small set of self-selected parents whose children were involved at the time in a particular out-of-school art educational site. This does not mean, however, that what can be gained from this project is without meaning or value. Readers will need to consider the extent to which the words of these parents ring true in light of situations with which they are familiar. Certainly there are more and different stories that can be told from these data. Yet we suggest that those we have selected for discussion here do raise significant questions for art educators and imply avenues for further research.

Also in the tradition of qualitative methodological orientations, we wish to make our subjectivities as researchers and co-authors more transparent. Our perspectives reflect those of individuals with Ph.D.'s in Curriculum Studies (Art Education) and Political Science, respectively. We are of Northwestern European ancestry, white, and our classed backgrounds are complicated by the influences of both middle-class and working class enculturation. We have also been married for a very long time. These circumstances allow us not only to take advantage of our individual academic backgrounds, but to reflect on ways in which class has permeated and caused tensions in our relationship, our work together as parents, and our experiences in higher education. Perhaps more significantly, as researchers this project allows us to turn the lens on ourselves, interrupting a prevalent pattern in which academics study "others." We are grateful to the parents who participated in our interviews and often see ourselves and our own behaviors in their words. This recognition is also, therefore, an

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acknowledgment of our own potential complicity in middle-class practices that have promoted privilege for our own children.