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THE EFFECTS OF CONCERTED CULTIVATION ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

JEREMY BRANDON REDFORD
Bachelor of Science, Longwood University, 2001

Director: DR. JENNIFER JOHNSON
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SOCIOLOGY

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
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Abstract

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By Jeremy Redford, Master of Science.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007.

Major Director: Dr. Jennifer Johnson
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Anne Lareau (2003) argues that parents' child-rearing practices have a profound effect on academic and later occupational success for children, even holding constant such important factors as gender, race and school effects. She says that social class impacts these child-rearing practices and that middle-class families use a specific type of practice called *concerted cultivation*. Concerted cultivation involves parents organizing children's daily activities, using reasoning skills in talking with children, and teaching them how to interact with the institutions around them. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988, the current study tests the theoretical validity of concerted cultivation. Results show that concerted cultivation significantly predicts both student

GPA and standardized test scores. Amongst the elements of concerted cultivation, parent and student habitus, in the form of expectations, play the largest roles.

Introduction

The following paper is about the impact that concerted cultivation, a specific parenting practice identified by Lareau (2003), has on the academic success of eighth graders in 1988. While there is plenty of research that delves into how different types of parenting practices impact academic success (for reviews see Spera, 2005; Hill and Taylor, 2004), many studies define parenting practices and parent involvement differently. Similarly, many quantitative studies on children's academic achievement focus on a narrow set of behaviors that leave out other important factors. For example, parent involvement studies do not focus on children's extracurricular activities, or studies on cultural capital leave out parent involvement variables such as talking with children or participating in school events. In the daily experiences of families, these behaviors are intertwined and not separate. In addition, the behaviors and experiences of families are shaped by their social structural location. As will be shown, the uniqueness of Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation is that it captures all these important variables.

Lareau's argument is a continuation on the debate regarding how social class impacts academic achievement. Certainly, social class continues to play a significant role in determining the life chances of youth (Bowles and Gintis, 2003). While many may believe that success is determined by innate traits, Bowles and Gintis (2002) find that intelligence plays only a small role in earnings from one generation to another and that background factors such as parent's race, wealth, and income are significant factors that

can predict later earnings. Education is rightfully at the center of these discussions regarding inequality because it is supposed to be the equalizing institution of our society. However, even in schools social class impacts success. This impact can occur discretely by schools reinforcing middle class values, such as teachers sanctioning the dress of lower income youth (Morris, 2005). Other times class impacts the way that parents interact with the schools (Diamond and Gomez, 2004), while still other times schools track children of lower social class status to take more vocational classes to prepare them for lower-level service occupations (Ainsworth and Roscigno, 2005). Indeed, social class has been found to be a powerful predictor of academic success across all ethnicities (Blair and Madamba, 1999).

One way that social class impacts academic achievement is through tracking. Schools channel students to take particular classes, steering some students towards classes that may be more beneficial towards getting into a good college and others towards classes that teach them valuable skills that the student can use to get a job after high school. Theoretically, it is reasonable that some students through their intelligence and efforts would lead them to take one track over another. However, student social class status impacts this track placement, with lower class students enrolling in vocational classes disproportionately more than their middle class peers (Ainsworth and Roscigno, 2005). As Ainsworth and Roscigno, (2005: 276) state, “poor students are funneled into all types of vocational education classes, and this involvement...increases the likelihood that these students will drop out of high school...” These differences between middle class students and their lower class counterparts begin to play themselves out well before

the high school years. Entwisle et al. (2005) found that even in first grade higher SES students had better grades than lower SES students. These differences at such an early age can manifest themselves later on in high school when students are assigned track placements (Alexander et al., 2007).

One can look at these differential track placements as a way that schools reinforce inequalities in the broader society. Lucas (2001) argues that middle class parents understand the importance of these track placements better than lower class parents do because they most likely have college degrees and understand the importance of being placed into the higher tracks. He goes on to say that parents' disadvantaged class background lowers the chances of their children taking more challenging courses in high school and argues that the reason is because of class conflict: "when a level of education is universal, social background may matter for qualitative dimensions of education" (Lucas, 2001: 1678). If everyone goes to school, then parents from an advantaged status will ensure that their kids get an advantage through other means (Lucas, 2001). School officials can certainly play a big role in this inequality through their perceptions of students. Condron (2007) found that higher class students were more likely to be viewed by school officials as having superior skills than lower class students.

Other studies confirm that teachers can perceive students as being good or bad based on appearance and dress. Morris (2005: 106) found that "teachers used the term *middle class* to imply that a student was a good student. Many would point out a student whom they considered intelligent and then tell me that the student's parents had middle-income occupations." Morris (2005) also noted that the style of dress was a cue for the

teachers about what class a student comes from. Therefore, teachers make predictions about students based on appearance. In another ethnographic study, Carter (2003: 148) also found that “students seen as unintelligent did not conform to the dominant expectation of clothing and deportment that teachers associate with intelligence and diligence.”

Class also shapes the way that schools are funded. Kozol (1991) documents how money to schools is unevenly distributed through local property taxes. Poor inner-city neighborhoods, obviously, have small tax bases and therefore the schools suffer. Parents see this, and those with the resources to choose what school their child goes to will most likely choose the better funded schools. Middle class parents are certainly more assertive in seeking out ideal schooling conditions. Diamond and Gomez (2004) found that middle class African American families spent more time choosing what school their child would go to while working class African American parents chose schools that were near where they lived. This focus on education was mirrored in Lareau’s (2003) study and supported that middle class African American families had more in common with other white families of the same social class than with black families of lower class status. Working class parents, on the other hand, are more likely to have a combative approach to the school professionals, while middle class parents play a more supportive role (Diamond and Gomez, 2004). This should not be a surprise since these middle class families spend so much effort in selecting a good school to begin with (Diamond and Gomez, 2004). However, when there is a problem middle class parents, through their network ties,

respond as a collectivity (Horvat et al., 2003). Lower class parents respond to problems on an individual basis (Horvat et al., 2003).

While class shapes academic achievement through school funding, student tracking, parent interaction and teacher-student perceptions, important resources are gained in the home (Coleman, 1987). As an example, recent research has begun to explore learning done in the summer months while school is not in session (Burkham et al., 2004). The findings reveal that differences in learning increase dramatically during the summer months; higher SES students learn more than low SES students and that schooling actually helps to diminish this difference (Downey et al., 2004; Alexander et al., 2007). Alexander et al. (2007) argue that these learning discrepancies have a cumulative effect and are one of the reasons that lower SES students are placed in lower schooling tracks by the time that they enter high school. They state, “Our results show how out-of-school learning during the elementary grades is linked to the year 9 achievement gap by family SES: a gap that, in turn, separates college track youth from non-college track youth” (Alexander et al., 2007: 173).

Therefore, there is a puzzling piece that is missing from the literature. As previously discussed, class shapes academic outcomes for students, with children coming from higher SES families obtaining more educational success. But recent research has found that these learning gaps increase during the summer months when school is not in session. Once school is back, these learning differences decline a bit. Why? The research on summer learning differences contributes to our understanding on the relationship between social class and academic achievement because the literature seems

to be pointing to behaviors and activities that occur in the home. In other words, the literature seems to be signaling that it is something that the parents are doing to create a distinct advantage for their children. These differences vary by social class.

Contributing to this debate, Lareau (2003) argues that social class impacts parenting practices, which therefore affects children's academic achievement.

The current study seeks to test Lareau's (2003) hypothesis that a specific parenting practice called concerted cultivation impacts student academic success. Because Lareau's (2003) study was an ethnographic study, this study attempts to operationally define Lareau's (2003) theoretical concepts of concerted cultivation and quantitatively test them using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. The current study asks does concerted cultivation impact student academic outcomes in standardized math and reading scores and self-reported GPA. The second question is if concerted cultivation does have an impact, then how much variance in GPA and standardized test scores is explained through the concerted cultivation measures.

Similar to Lareau, I argue that concerted cultivation positively impacts academic achievement, holding constant race, SES, sex, marital status, and family size. My study will add to the literature on how parenting practices affect academic success by quantitatively defining her concepts and testing them using a nationally representative sample that can be generalized to the entire population. Concerted cultivation will be operationally defined using four theoretical concepts from Lareau's work: cultural capital, habitus, parent involvement, and the organization of daily life. The next section outlines in greater detail Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation and how she says this

impacts children. A literature review will follow the explanation of concerted cultivation with an emphasis on the most current research on each of the four dimensions of concerted cultivation: cultural capital, habitus, parent involvement, and the organization of daily life.

Review of Annette Lareau

Annette Lareau (2003) argues in her book Unequal Childhoods that social class influences parenting practices, which therefore affects how children and parents interact with institutions. Her ethnographic study provides a glimpse into the lives of families that quantitative data cannot reveal. She argues that middle and upper-class parents raise their children under a parenting practice she calls “concerted cultivation.” As Lareau (2003) says:

“it is [the] economic and social resources that are key in shaping child-rearing practices; as parents’ own social class position shifts, so do their cultural beliefs and practices in child-rearing.” (251)

“concerted cultivation entails an emphasis on children’s structured activities, language development and reasoning in the home, and active intervention in schooling.” (32)

These subsets of concerted cultivation, which I will label cultural capital, habitus, parent involvement, and the organization of daily life, are distinctly different in lower-class households, which Lareau argues raise their children under a different logic called the *accomplishment of natural growth*. In lower class households, life is less structured and parents allow children more freedom to play with friends. Parents in these households view their main obligation to their children as providing safety and a place where they can naturally grow into their own person. The child is not looked at as a project to be

developed and catered to (see Figure 1 for a comparison of concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth).

These differences play themselves out in a child's school life. Middle class parents are not intimidated confronting professionals in institutions, while lower-class parents show a "sense of constraint" that the children see and ultimately mimic (Lareau, 2003). This often means that middle class parents, mostly mothers, are eager to volunteer at school functions and play a more active role in their child's schooling (Lareau, 2000; Desimone, 1999). If problems arise, middle class parents intervene immediately, and they are not afraid to criticize school officials because parents look at them as equals. This is drastically different in lower-class families, who are intimidated by teachers and look at them as superiors (Lareau, 2000). Therefore, lower class parents do not criticize teachers' actions, but refer to teacher's and other school personnel's expertise as knowing what is best for their child (Lareau, 2000).

Figure 1. Typology of Differences in Child Rearing*

	Child-Rearing Approach	
	<i>Concerted Cultivation</i>	<i>Accomplishment of Natural Growth</i>
Key Elements	Parent actively fosters and assesses child's talents, opinions, and skills	Parent cares for child and allows child to grow
Organization of Daily Life	Multiple child leisure activities orchestrated by adults	"Hanging out," particularly with kin, by child
Language Use	Reasoning/directives Child contestation of adult statements Extended negotiations between parents and child	Directives Rare questioning or challenging of adults by child General acceptance by child of directives
Interventions in Institutions	Criticisms and interventions on behalf of child Training of child to take on this role	Dependence on institutions Sense of powerlessness and frustration Conflict between child-rearing practices at home and at school
Consequences	Emerging sense of entitlement on the part of the child	Emerging sense of constraint on the part of the child

* Taken from Lareau, 2003: 31.

Lareau's work is an important contribution to the existing literature on parenting practices and academic success. For example, most studies focus on particular types of parent involvement and behavior (e.g., Bean et al, 2003; Rhea and Otto, 2001; Domina, 2005; Amato and Fowler, 2002) and either leave out other important behaviors or define similar concepts (i.e. "parent involvement") differently. More importantly, her

ethnographic study shows how social class impacts child-rearing strategies. Parents' mundane actions, such as enrolling children in extracurricular activities and teaching them how to interact with representatives in institutions, shape the development and career trajectories of young children. These actions vary by the family's social structural location.

The following sections are divided in three parts. The first section highlights cultural capital. This concept is discussed because Lareau used the theory of cultural capital as a tool to guide her own research. A review of the literature will show that cultural capital increases students' academic achievement. The significance of habitus, which is the dispositions that are inherited by the child from the family, on academic achievement will also be discussed. This is an important piece of cultural capital theory that is just beginning to get attention from researchers. I will add to the literature by showing that habitus, in the form of parent and student college expectations, has a significant impact on schooling outcomes. The second section discusses how the different types of parent involvement effects academic achievement. Lareau (2003) found that parents who practiced concerted cultivation were more involved in children's schooling than those who were not. Three main types of parent involvement emerge from the literature: at-home involvement, at-school involvement, and parental monitoring. Many studies operationally define parent involvement differently. However, in this study, all are included in the analysis to show the different ways that parents involve themselves in their children's academic lives and how each of these types of involvement fit into the larger framework of concerted cultivation. The final section

discusses the impact that extracurricular activities have on academic achievement.

Lareau (2003) called this the organization of daily life because children whose parents adopted concerted cultivation enrolled their children in many activities that controlled the pace and schedule of the family's daily life. Lareau (2003) argued that these activities taught children valuable skills that they could later use in institutional settings. I will argue the same, showing that these activities boost test scores and GPA.

CULTURAL CAPITAL

Pierre Bourdieu coined the term cultural capital to describe the different tastes and habits of specific social classes, demonstrating how these characteristics reinforce power relationships between those who possess desirable cultural attributes and the institutions that reinforce them (Bourdieu, 1983; 1973). Specifically, cultural capital is the possession and reproduction of cultural goods that is unique to specific social classes, which provides dispositions that are inherited from the family to the child (Bourdieu, 1983; 1973). Bourdieu (1973) sees this as the way class reproduces itself. Bourdieu's (1983; 1973) analysis of the French social classes shows that those among the higher echelons of French society possessed different dispositions towards art, music and entertainment. Within these social classes, parents actively teach children to value particular cultural symbols. Social class influences the family's tastes and dispositions, which subsequently influences how families raise their children and how these children do in school (Dumais, 2002). This "cultural" make-up plays itself out in the classroom and gives students of higher classes an advantage over their lower-class counter-parts. When children go to school, this cultural capital learned at home helps the student obtain

academic credentials and effects how parents respond to teachers (Lareau, 2000; Dumais, 2006). In addition, teachers, who largely hold middle-class values, treat students differently according to which class they come from (Condron, 2007; Carter, 2003).

Following Bourdieu's work, much research has operationalized cultural capital consistently in terms of "high-brow" participation in cultural activities, such as museum attendance, going to art classes, and going to the opera (Dimaggio and Mohr, 1985; Kaufman and Gabler, 2004; Dumais, 2002). While Bourdieu implied that these cultural values are passed on early in the child's life, Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) found that the later one participates in cultural practices (between the ages of 12 and 17), the greater the effect on academics. In addition, their indicators found mixed results about how cultural capital was passed to child; that is, whether cultural capital can be accumulated in the school even though it may be lacking at home (what the authors call "cultural mobility"), or whether it comes from the home and obtaining it later on is fruitless (what they call "social reproduction"). While there was support for their *social reproduction* model, the *cultural mobility* model had a more significant effect on academic success (Aschaffenburg and Maas, 1997). Others have found that cultural capital can be used for mobility rather than social reproduction (Dumais, 2006).

This means that cultural capital may not operate exactly how Bourdieu theorized; in some cases cultural capital may be obtained later in life. Nonetheless, cultural capital has been found to be an important factor in academic success (Kalmijn and Kraaykamp, 1996). Orr (2003) found that cultural capital plays a mediating role between wealth and academic success. Kaufman and Gabler (2004) found that parent museum going, a

common indicator of cultural capital, had the most impact on children going to an elite college. As Dumais (2002: 53) states, “it is the parents who hold the key to children’s cultural participation by paying for lessons; [and] providing transportation to and from classes.” Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996: 32) found a similar relationship between cultural capital and class, stating that “cultural capital plays an important role in the transmission of socioeconomic advantages across generations.”

Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) found gender differences between men and women with regard to cultural capital, but they found that women actually have more cultural capital than men do. DiMaggio (1982: 198) found similar results, and explained women’s higher cultural participation by stating, “[w]omen who wish to be recognized as eligible partners for men from high status backgrounds may need cultural capital to a greater extent than men who wish to achieve in the world of work.” Some of this variation can be due to social class because cultural participation is about the same for males and females among the lower SES cohort, but there is a difference in higher-SES families with girls participating in more cultural activities than boys (Dumais, 2002: 59). Also, lower-SES kids are more likely to take part in “onetime activities” (Dumais, 2002). Nonetheless, cultural capital has a positive impact on educational attainment for both males and females (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985).

Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) found that racial differences in cultural capital are largely explained by SES. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) found that black students were less likely to have educational resources and cultural capital in the home when compared to whites, but that these differences were largely explained through

the respondents' social class. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999: 170) found that "black and low-SES students receive less return for cultural and educational resources partly because of proximate evaluation of teachers and the longer-term institutional evaluation and related consequences of tracking." Carter (2003) documents the struggles that poor, inner-city African American youth have in "acting black" in casual settings with friends and trying to interact with middle class teachers. In fact, Carter (2003) says that there are dominant and non-dominant forms of cultural capital, and that these students were aware of these barriers. For example, the students interviewed mentioned they spoke differently between their employer and friends (Carter, 2003).

One important theoretical concept in Bourdieu's cultural capital theory is habitus, which are the dispositions towards "what is comfortable or what is natural" that a child inherits from the family's place in the social structure (Lareau, 2003: 275). Dumais (2006: 85) points out how habitus influences educational practices, stating that "[c]hildren from lower SES backgrounds, who are surrounded by family members and adult neighbors who have not attained a post-secondary education, internalize the belief that college is not for them." Dumais (2002) found a significant positive effect on a *student's* habitus, which was measured by students' aspirations towards a prestigious job, and academic success. Dumais (2002: 55) found that "regardless of gender, high expectations lead to higher grades." In a later study, Dumais (2006) looked at younger children in kindergarten and found that *parent* habitus, defined as the amount of education a parent expected the child to receive, has a significant effect on teacher evaluations. Dumais (2006: 100) found that "parents' expectations for college...has a

consistent effect on teachers' evaluations of students' ability levels." Parent expectations have also been found to be a significant contributor to children's first grade achievement and overall academic achievement (Entwisle et al., 2005). Dauber et al (1996) found that parent expectations had a significant impact on whether sixth graders enrolled in higher level math and English courses.

Lareau used cultural capital theory as a guide to her research project. While she did not use the traditional measures of cultural capital, such as museum attendance, she did make a strong argument that the cultural repertoire of parents are important factors in determining later academic success for children. This cultural capital was seen in the different parenting practices in lower and middle class families. In an earlier study called Home Advantage, Lareau (2000) found that parents interacted with schools differently according to what social class they belonged. Lower class parents felt more intimidated by school personnel because these parents viewed them as superiors. This finding overlaps with her finding in Unequal Childhoods, where she notices that lower class parents are cautious around professionals (the "sense of constraint"), whereas middle class parents know how to maneuver around institutional barriers to get what they want (Lareau, 2003). This difficult relationship can involve classroom behavior. Carter (2003) documented the difficulty that inner-city African Americans have interacting with middle-class school teachers who the students felt treated them differently because of the way that they dressed. Condrón (2007: 151) found that "teachers' evaluations of students' academic skills are indeed associated with students' ascribed and background attributes."

From the literature, one can gather that there are hidden barriers for students' academic achievement. These barriers often are subtle cultural cues on "how to act" around certain individuals, but they also run deeper into the expectations that one has for the future. These dispositions are inherited by the family and conform along class lines. This study will further investigate the relationship that cultural capital and habitus has on academic success by showing that cultural capital works with other activities, namely parenting practices and extracurricular activities to give children a distinct advantage in school. The next section will discuss in more detail the literature on parent involvement and how different parenting practices impacts academic success.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In Lareau's (2003) study, parents who practiced concerted cultivation were actively engaged in every facet of their children's lives. Through this engagement, parents attempted to instill qualities in their children that would be later useful for academic and occupational success. While the previous section outlined how parents' cultural capital are important factors in determining later academic success for children, this section describes what research has found regarding how parenting practices influence academic success.

Spera (2005) did a review of the literature regarding parent involvement and academic achievement and noted that studies have defined parenting practices several ways. The first is generally parent involvement, which includes participating in school events such as the PTA or other volunteer activities; the second type of practice is parental monitoring, which includes adult supervision, including making sure homework

is done; the final way that studies have used parenting practices is defining it as the goals that parents have for their children, such as how far the parents want the child to go in school (Spera, 2005). On a theoretical level, this overlaps with Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, discussed in the previous section because this should coincide with social class status. In other words, a parent's expectation for how far he or she wants their child to go will vary by what class the family occupies. Others have also noted that there are several different types of parent involvement (Ho and Willms, 1996). In another review, Hill and Taylor (2004: 162) found that parenting practices vary according to social class, noting that "parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in schooling than parents of lower socioeconomic status." Both reviews noted that involvement is related to academic achievement (Spera, 2005; Hill and Taylor, 2004).

Fan and Chen (2001) performed a meta-analysis on parent involvement studies and found that parent involvement has a positive impact on a child's academic achievement. Fan and Chen (2001) found that of all the parent involvement variables, parent supervision had the least impact on grades, while a parent's expectations had the largest impact on grades. Of the several types of parent involvement studied by Ho and Willms (1996: 136), they also found that "home supervision" had only a small impact on academic success. Family size does effect parent involvement. The number of siblings has an effect on how well parents contact the school and discuss matters with their children, while the more siblings a family has increases the amount of supervision in the home (Ho and Willms, 1996). There are also differences in family structure, with two

parent families setting household rules and participating in school more, while single parent families are more likely to have interactions with the school (Ho and Willms, 1996). These differences between two-parent households and single-parent families were found by Amato and Fowler (2002: 711), who found that “parental monitoring was positively associated with grades and negatively associated with behavior problems,” but the authors did not find this relationship in two-parent households.

Coleman (1988) views this parent involvement as a type of social capital, defined as those social bonds that are formed between people and their communities that produce action (in this case, a child’s education) through obligations, expectations, trustworthiness, reciprocity, norms, and closure. He says that this has a positive impact on a child’s academic success by ensuring that norms involving good grades are enforced via a network of other parents and community members. Coleman (1987) supported his analysis by using social capital to explain differences in the lower drop out rates in Catholic schools. He says, “social capital outside the family was of greatest value for children without extensive social capital in the home” (Coleman, 1987: 36). Therefore, the benefits of social relationships not only extend to the disadvantaged, but these relationships could possibly compensate for their disadvantaged status.

Others support Coleman’s thesis. Pong et al. (2005: 946), measuring different parenting styles across different ethnicities and generations, found that, “[f]or all parenting practices, expectation and trust appear to be the most important in boosting school performance.” Carbonaro (1998) found a positive relationship between parents knowing other parents and whether a student dropped out of school. While the outside

community is important, the relationships that are established inside the home are important as well. Rhea and Otto (2001) find that parents' talking with their children about school has a significant effect on a child's belief that they have the ability to meet their educational goals. Domina (2005) looked at how parent involvement, defined from volunteering at the school to helping with homework, influenced academic achievement and emotional health. She found that parent involvement actually had a negative impact on academic performance, but a positive effect on a child's emotional health. In an earlier study, McNeal (1999) found similar mixed results, showing that parent involvement is a better social control mechanism, rather than a conduit for a child's academic achievement. Still, the majority of research seems to show that parent and community involvement enhances educational success (i.e., see Spera, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Hill and Taylor, 2004 for reviews).

As previously discussed, Bourdieu (1973) and Lareau (2003) agree that parent involvement is important, but they add that parent social class impacts the way that parents involve themselves in their child's schooling. Entwisle et al. (2005) found in their longitudinal study that SES persisted as a dominant factor in determining how far children went in school. Others such as Amato and Fowler (2002: 712) argue that parenting practices operate independently of parent SES, race, or "family structure." This paper argues to the contrary; social class shapes the way that parents involve themselves in their children's schooling. Domina (2005) found a small relationship showing that parent involvement may help lower SES kids more in educational outcomes. McNeal (1999), meanwhile, found a distinction between parent involvement

and social class, showing that “parent involvement’s positive effect of raising achievement and reducing problematic behavior tends to be a valid presumption predominately for members of middle and upper socioeconomic standing.” This finding supports Lareau’s thesis that middle class values are reinforced in institutional settings.

Hill et al. (2004) found a relationship between parents' education and parents' reports of academic involvement. Also of importance, they found that “adolescents with parents with higher education levels had higher educational aspirations” (Hill et al., 2004: 1499). This notion that parent expectations are important for the future academic success of children is an important point that emerges from the literature. Barone (2006: 1050-1051) found in an analysis of several countries that “in every country ambition represents an important determinant of achievement... [t]his suggests that social ambitions are shaped not only by class, but also by parental educational credentials.” Parent involvement for those parents who have less education can positively effect a child’s aspirations, but these feelings of wanting to go far in school do not translate into actual academic achievement (Hill et al., 2004: 1500). This finding was also found by Desimone (1999), who found that talking with children about plans for after high school had no impact on educational outcomes for lower class families but there were significant findings for middle class families.

While parent involvement with the school is important, parents talking with their children about school has a significant effect on a child’s belief that they have the ability to meet their educational goals (Rhea & Otto, 2001). In addition, spending time with kids and talking with them has a positive impact on grades (Amato & Fowler, 2002).

Desimone (1999) found that parent volunteering at the school had the most impact on grades for “White and middle-income students” and “PTO involvement was a stronger predictor of grades for Black students than for any other racial-ethnic minorities or for low income students.” Contact with the school is not always a positive sign of academic progress. Ho and Willms (1996) found that the more contact that parents have with the school is associated with lower achievement levels for students, which implies that the child is having behavior problems or there are academic problems occurring.

In Lareau’s study, parents were by far more involved in middle class households. This is not to say that lower-class families did not care about their children, because they did. However, parents who adopted the parenting practice of concerted cultivation assertively involved themselves in their children’s lives, shaping their children’s attitudes towards education and work. The children developed skills that they used to gain advantages (i.e. cultural capital) in school and other institutional settings. These advantages originated in the daily parental involvement exercised by middle class families. This study will add to the literature by incorporating all types of parent involvement. Most studies focus on just one particular type. For example, one study may define parent involvement as talking with children and another will define it as involvement with the school. This makes it difficult to compare findings because in fact both studies are describing two different types of involvement. The current project focuses on the three prevalent types that emerge from the literature. In addition, the current study will further explain how this involvement is intertwined with the cultural capital of the family and the children’s daily activities to create concerted cultivation,

thus showing that these three forms of parent involvement positively impact standardized scores and GPA.

The next section delves into the final subset of concerted cultivation, which is the organization of everyday life. It is these activities that occupies the most time of these middle class children.

ORGANIZATION OF DAILY LIFE

While the previous two sections have dealt with cultural capital and parent involvement, both topics that deal with parent's actions, this last section concentrates on the extra-curricular activities that children engage in. Lareau called this the "organization of everyday life" because in middle class homes these structured extracurricular activities dictate the family's schedule and pace. Lareau argues that these activities teach kids how to perform "on-stage" and under pressure. In addition, children learn skills that will later be useful in white collar positions, such as making eye contact with others.

Hofferth and Sandberg (2001: 306-307) found that children spend 18% of their time in "structured activities," and these activities "were linked to both cognitive and emotional development." Sports participation was shown to have a positive impact on standardized scores (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001). Kids say that they participate in extracurricular activities for several reasons: it helps them gain understanding about their strengths and weaknesses, for the social activity that is involved, and "to please other people in their lives, such as their parents and coaches," while still others say that their extracurricular activities give them something to do (Fredricks et al., 2002: 81). Many kids said that through their involvement "they learned lessons and values, including the

importance of discipline, getting along with others and working as a team, responsibility and the importance of deadlines, dealing with disappointments, and the value of hard work and perseverance” (Fredricks et al., 2002: 84).

This research is echoed in other studies. Hansen et al. (2003: 40-41) also found that extracurricular activity leads to ‘overcoming fear and anxiety’ and learning how to interact with others. They found that a range of activities, from involvement in religious organizations to sports provided children with many benefits. They conclude, “students reported higher rates of experiences involving goal setting, problem solving, effort, and time management in youth activities than in hanging out with friends and in required academic classes” (Hansen et al., 2003: 48). They also found that these activities provided “leadership” skills (Hansen et al., 2003: 49). Once again, Lareau found similar results in her study- children learn skills that they will later use for occupations.

McNeal (1995) looked at whether the prestige of student’s activities effected whether they dropped out of school. He found that athletics decreased the likelihood of students dropping out the most and that “fine arts activities” had a smaller but still significant effect on dropping out of school. Broh (2002) looked at what type of extracurricular activities had an impact on educational attainment and found that “interscholastic” (school teams) sports and involvement in music had the best impact of all activities on GPA and standardized test scores (see also Eccles et al., 2003). In Broh’s (2002) study, there appears to be a difference between types of school related activities. Playing “intramural” sports had a negative impact on grades; the other activities that Broh (2002) studied did not show as good results as music and interscholastic sports. For

example, “[p]articipating in the student council does help students improve their grades but not their test scores” (Broh, 2002: 84). However, Eccles et al. (2003) found positive academic outcomes for all these extracurricular activities, such as the performing arts, clubs, and volunteering in addition to sports with regard to student GPA. Kaufman and Gabler (2004) found that those who played on these interscholastic teams were more likely to go to college, but they did not find this relationship in intramural sports. Kaufman and Gabler (2004) offer as an explanation the fact that colleges are more likely to recruit those who play in interscholastic sports. They also find that “certain types of music and arts training, as well as participation in student government and public service, are indeed related to college enrollment” (Kaufman and Gabler, 2004: 162).

Mahoney et al. (2006) found that for both whites and blacks participating in organized activities increased academic outcomes and reduced problematic and risky behavior. Eitle and Eitle (2002) found that black males and white males participate in different activities, with blacks more likely to play basketball and football in school and whites more likely to participate in such sports as track, baseball, and swimming, and they conclude that the lack of cultural capital is the reason for this difference. They state, “black males participate in basketball if they do not have the cultural advantages that will help them succeed scholastically” (Eitle and Eitle, 2002: 139). A similar relationship was found for football, but there were no racial differences- both white and black males who lacked cultural capital are more likely to play football (Eitle and Eitle, 2002). For blacks and whites, playing these two sports was negatively associated with educational attainment (Eitle and Eitle, 2002).

Lareau (2003) hypothesized that the benefits of these daily organizational activities would result in children's comfort in navigating institutions and provide them with valuable skills (i.e. making eye contact, try-outs that emphasize performance, working with others as a team) that they could later use in middle class occupations. Indeed, research has begun to investigate the benefits of softer skills not associated with intelligence (Heckman and Rubinstein, 2001). Condrón (2007: 154) found that some of these skills can help students academically by helping them get placed "into higher-ranked reading groups." As previously mentioned in the cultural capital section, these attitudes and dispositions may be mediated by a family's structural location.

Existing literature properly shows the benefits of these extracurricular activities, but these activities have not been placed in the context of concerted cultivation. This study will do so and show that households who practice this child-rearing strategy will have children who have higher test scores and GPAs. In conclusion, the four elements of concerted cultivation, cultural capital, habitus, parent involvement, and the organization of daily life, should combine and create a significant advantage for families who practice such a parenting style.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The following research project tests Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. This study will add to the existing literature by further explaining how child-rearing practices influence academic achievement. Most studies that seek to explain academic achievement begin by isolating variables in order to see how much one theoretical concept impacts a dependent variable.

In real life, these variables do not operate independently of one another. Concerted cultivation captures these theoretical concepts and shows how they are all interwoven with one another. Through this lens, the current study will shed light on the larger theme that Lareau addressed: that social class is beneficial to young children more than through financial transfer alone. Social class impacts parenting practices, and the daily, mundane experiences of middle class youth offer them both individual and institutional advantages.

RESESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1. What is the relationship between measures of concerted cultivation and self-reported GPA and standardized test scores, controlling for race, family size, SES, marital status, and sex?

H1: Lareau (2003) found that the practice of concerted cultivation gave children the upper hand in institutional settings. Therefore, it is hypothesized that parents and children who score higher on concerted cultivation will have children who have higher GPA's and standardized test scores.

2. What is the relationship between cultural capital and GPA and standardized test scores?

H2: Given the research that shows cultural capital's positive impact on academic success (Bourdieu, 1983; 1977; Dimaggio, 1982; Dimaggio and Mohr, 1985), it is hypothesized that those parents who participate in cultural activities will have children who have higher GPA's and standardized test scores.

3. What is the relationship between habitus and GPA and standardized test scores?

H3: Since habitus is the natural dispositions that a child receives from the family, it is predicted that families with dispositions geared towards their children gaining a college education will have children who score higher on test scores and GPA. Dumais's (2006; 2002) two studies found significant positive effects on both a parent's habitus and a child's habitus. In other words, parents who pass on their high educational standards to their children will have children who achieve academically.

4. What is the relationship between measures of parent involvement (monitoring, at-home involvement, and at-school involvement) and GPA and standardized test scores?

Given that Lareau (2003) found that middle class parents were far more involved in their children's schooling, from being unafraid of school officials to seeking out learning opportunities, it is hypothesized that high scores on the three measures of parent involvement will predict high scores on student standardized test scores and GPA.

H4: Studies have shown that parents talking with children can boost academic achievement (Rhea & Otto, 2001; Amato & Fowler, 2002). This at-home parent involvement is predicted to increase student standardized test scores and GPA.

H5: At-school parent involvement is expected to also increase academic achievement through test scores and GPA. This type of involvement has been studied intensively by Coleman (1987; 1988) as a form of social capital that helps students succeed. Desimone (1999) found positive outcomes for this type of parent involvement as well.

H6: The final type of parent involvement, parent monitoring, has had some mixed results. Fan and Chen (2001) found that this type of involvement had the least impact on academic success among all the other types of parent involvement. Amato and Fowler (2002) found that monitoring was beneficial to academic in single-parent households but not two-parent households. Nonetheless, it is expected that this type of involvement will still have a positive impact on academic achievement.

5. What is the relationship between the organization of everyday life and GPA and standardized test scores?

H7: Lareau found that those who operated under concerted cultivation had children who participated in several extra-curricular activities. She hypothesized that these activities gave children valuable skills that could be later used in institutional settings, especially the job market. Others have also documented the benefits of children participating in these events (Fredricks et al., 2002; Hansen et al., 2003). It is hypothesized that the more activities children participate in the higher they will achieve on test scores and GPA.

Method

RESEARCH DESIGN

The following research was a secondary data analysis from the National Education Longitudinal Study that followed students through their educational careers starting in 1988, when the participants were in 8th grade (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). This data set was used because the researcher wanted to obtain a representative sample of students who were as close in age to Lareau's sample as possible. Lareau's sample was composed of third graders, while this one was composed of eighth graders. The students, as well as teachers, parents and school personnel, were surveyed every two years afterward. Using a "two-stage stratified probability design," a nationally representative sample of all 8th grade students in 1988 was produced (U.S. Department of Education, 1990: 9). 1,052 public (N=815) and private schools (N=237) participated (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). After the schools were randomly selected, students were randomly selected within the schools to produce a total sample size of 24,599 8th grade students in 1988 (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). The goal was to follow eighth graders through time and collect data on educational paths (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). To gather such data, parents, teachers, students, and school administrators completed separate surveys. Only the parent who was the most knowledgeable about the student's academic affairs completed the survey (U.S. Department of Education, 1990).

The benefit of using such a study was that it was a nationally representative sample of eighth graders that would be difficult to obtain through other means. This would allow any findings to be generalizable to the entire United States population. However, using this data set as a secondary source meant that the current report relied on available survey questionnaire data (Neuman, 2000). For example, the NELS sought to gather information on eighth grader's educational experiences by asking the students themselves in addition to teachers, parents and school administrators. However, by using existing data, validity problems could arise because the questions chosen to measure the independent and dependent variables may not have been measuring the actual behavior being studied (Neuman, 2000). Since the researcher did not develop the survey questionnaire, existing questions had to be used that may or may not measure the actual concepts of "concerted cultivation." In a similar vein, Lareau's study was qualitative and the present study is quantitative, which means that I measured concerted cultivation differently. However, I tried to stay as close to her definition of concerted cultivation that was previously mentioned in order to ensure that the variables selected from the NELS data set measure similar behaviors that Lareau (2003) described.

MEASURES

Independent Variables. There were four indexes used for measuring concerted cultivation. Several of the indexes included items which were presented in matrix format with Yes-No alternatives. For these variables, I treated respondents who skipped the item to have not participated in that activity. For example, the organization of daily life had a total of sixty-two items in Yes-No matrix questions. For those who did not answer a

question, a value of zero was given to signify that the respondent did not participate in that activity. This same method was also applied to the cultural capital index, the organization of daily life index, parent school involvement index, and the parent monitoring index.¹ I treated the at home parent involvement index differently, because the component items had a range of possible responses indicating the frequency of an activity (e.g., from “not at all” to “regularly”). If a respondent did not answer one of these items, I assigned a missing value.

Cultural Capital. Two questions were used to measure cultural capital. The first asked parents, “Do you or your eighth grader take part in any of the following activities?” Activities were: “borrow books from the public library,” “attend concerts or other musical events,” “go to art museums,” “go to science museums,” and “go to history museums.” Parents could answer “Yes” or “No” for themselves or their children, so each activity had a possibility of yielding two points for the participant. The last question asked, “Has your eighth grader attended classes outside of his or her regular school to study any of the following?” Activities were: “art,” “music,” “dance,” “language,” “religion,” “the history and culture of his/her ancestors,” “computer skills,” and “other.” Parents could answer with a “Yes” or “No.” A Cultural Capital index was created using these measures.

Habitus. The last two questions for cultural capital were measures of a child’s habitus in the form of future expectations. *Parents* were asked “How far in school do you expect

¹ I also constructed these indexes treating no response as a missing value. Regression analyses with the lower number of cases (N=10,937 for GPA and 10,985 for standardized test scores) were substantively similar to the regressions using the indexes that treated no response as no participation.

your eighth grader to go?” Responses ranged from “less than a high school diploma” to “Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree.” The response categories were collapsed so that “will finish a 4-5 year degree” and anything more were given a value of one, and everything less, from “finish a two-year program” and less was given a value of zero. Dumais (2006) used a similar measure of habitus. The second part of this asked *students* for their idea about how far they will go in school. This question asked, “As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get?” Responses ranged from “won’t finish high school” to “will attend a higher level of school after graduating from college.” Similar to the parent question, these responses were collapsed in order to directly measure those who at least strove towards a college degree. Those who answered “will attend college,” but did not specify whether they planned on graduating from college were given a value of zero. In addition, those who specified lower educational paths were also coded as zero. Those who specified that they planned on finishing college and above were given a value of one. In an earlier study, Dumais (2002: 51) used the NELS to study *student habitus*, operationally defined as “students’ occupational expectations.” However, using the child’s response to educational expectations should tap into habitus the same, and it also allowed for a statistical comparison between whether parent habitus or student habitus was more significant in predicting educational outcomes.

Parent Involvement. For the current study, parent involvement was operationally defined by three indexes called parent monitoring, at-home parent involvement, and school parent involvement. These were separated to be consistent with the existing literature on parenting practices and to also statistically distinguish between these

different types of practices (Ho and Willms, 1996). It is also important to note that the measures of parent involvement were not exact measures of what Lareau described. As previously discussed, this was a consequence of using existing survey data. In her study she made note that parents who adopted concerted cultivation used reasoning instead of directives to help children solve problems. There were no questions in the survey instruments that tapped into such language use, but there were questions that drew on the frequency of discussions between parent and child, especially regarding school matters. Following are the descriptions of the three indexes for parent involvement. Afterwards, the rest of the indexes for concerted cultivation will be discussed.

Parent Monitoring. Students were asked, “How often do your parents or guardians do the following?” Responses were: 1) check on whether you have done your homework, 2) require you to do work or chores around the home, 3) limit the amount of time you can spend watching TV, 4) and limit the amount of time for going out with friends on school nights.” Responses ranged from “never” (0) to “often” (3). The response categories were collapsed so that people who answered “sometimes” and “often” were recoded into the same response, and people who responded “rarely” and “never” were put in the same response category. This was done so that this question had the same number of response categories as the last two questions in this index (see below). Otherwise, this question would have greater weight than the other two.

The last two questions are responses by parents. Parents were asked, “Are there family rules for your eighth grader about any of the following?” The rules were: 1) “what programs he/she may watch,” 2) “how early or late he/she may watch television,”

3) “how many hours he/she may watch television overall,” 4) “how many hours he/she may watch television on school days.” Responses could be “yes” or “no.” In addition, parents were asked, “Are there family rules that are enforced for your eighth grader about any of the following activities?” These activities were: 1) “maintaining a certain grade point average,” 2) “doing homework,” and 3) “doing household chores.” Once again, the responses were either “yes” or “no.” An index was created using these variables by summing all the responses. Scores on the index could range from zero to eleven.

At-Home Parent Involvement. Eighth graders were asked how often they discussed with their parents since the beginning of the school year 1) choosing classes, 2) school activities, and 3) material covered in class. Responses ranged from “Not at All” (0) to “Three or More Times” (2). The last three questions for this parent involvement category asked similar questions to parents. They were: 1) “How often do you or your spouse/partner talk with your eighth grader about his or her experiences in school?” 2) “How often do you or your spouse/partner talk with your eighth grader about his or her plans for high school?” 3) “How often do you or your spouse/partner talk with your eighth grader about his or her educational plans for after high school?” Responses for all three questions ranged from “not at all” to “regularly.” The response categories for these questions were collapsed similarly to those mentioned in the parental monitoring index because of the same issue. These questions had four response options, while the former question answered by the eighth graders only had three response options.

In order to correct this so that the three questions answered by the parents were not given more weight than those asked of the eighth graders, the response categories

were collapsed for the questions answered by the parents. On the survey, they could have answered, “not at all,” “rarely,” “occasionally,” and “regularly.” The “not at all” and “rarely” responses were collapsed into one category so that only three responses were possible, just as it is for the student questions. After doing this, an index was created by summing all the responses. The possible range for the index was from zero to twelve. When constructing the indexes, Cronbach’s alpha showed weak reliability between the questions in the at home parent involvement index. In order to correct for this, the last three variables in the index were deleted, which created a more reliable measure between the questions (Cronbach’s alpha=.723). The three questions dropped were from the student survey that were related to at home parent involvement.

School Parent Involvement. Parents were asked “Do you and your spouse/partner do any of the following at your eighth graders school. Responses were either “No” (0) or “Yes” (1), and the activities included: 1) “belong to a parent-teacher organization, 2) “attend meetings of a parent-teacher organization, 3) “take part in the activities of a parent-teacher organization, 4) “act as a volunteer at the school,” and 5) “belong to any other organization with several parents from your eighth grader’s school.” The School-Parent Involvement Index was created using these questions. The response range was from zero to five.

Organization of Daily Life. To measure the organization of daily life, two questions were used. Students were asked ,”have you or will you have participated in any of the following school activities during the current school year, either as a member, or as an officer (for example, vice-president, coordinator, team captain)?” There were

twenty one possible activities, including: 1) “science fairs,” 2) “school varsity sports,” 3) “intramural sports,” 4) “cheerleading,” 5) “band or orchestra,” 6) “chorus or choir,” 7) “dance,” 8) “history club,” 9) “science club,” 10) “foreign language club,” 11) “other subject matter club,” 12) “debate or speech team,” 13) “drama club,” 14) “academic honors society,” 15) “student newspaper,” 16) “student yearbook,” 17) “student council,” 18) “computer club,” 19) “religious organization,” and 20) “vocational education club.”

Another question asked students, “have you or will you have participated in any of the following outside-school activities this year, either as a member, or as an officer (for example, vice-president, coordinator, team captain)?” Ten activities were listed, which were: 1) “scouting,” 2) “religious youth clubs,” 3) “hobby clubs,” 4) “neighborhood clubs or programs,” 5) “boys’ clubs or girls’ clubs,” 6) “non-school team sports,” 7) “4-H,” 8) “Y or other youth groups,” 9) “summer programs, such as workshops or institutes in science, language, drama, and so on,” and 10) “other.” Students answered these questions by answering “did not participate” (0), “participated as a member” (1), or “participated as an officer” (2). These variables were added together to create an organization of daily life index, which ranged from zero to sixty-two.

After creating five indexes: 1) parental monitoring, 2) at home parent involvement, 3) at school parent involvement, 4,) cultural capital and 5) the organization of daily life, and adding the parent and student habitus variables, a larger index was created to represent concerted cultivation. In order to weight each index equally within the larger concerted cultivation index, each index was converted to a range of zero to one. This was done by summing each variable within an index and multiplying that sum by

one divided by the number of questions in that particular index
(INDEX=[1/n]*[Var.1+Var.2=Var.3...]). This gave a range for each index based on a zero to one scale.

Dependent Variables.

Academic Success. Two measures were used to measure academic success. The first measure was an average of self-reported grades for English, math, science and social studies. This variable was created by the NELS by averaging the responses given by students regarding their grades in each of the four subject areas and combining each response into one variable. Each reported grade was “equally weighted” (NCES, 1990: AppendixD-14).

The second measure for academic success was a “standardized test composite for reading and math” (NCES, 1990: AppendixD-15). Students in the study were given standardized tests developed by the Educational Testing Service in these subjects in order to get a more independent measure of academic progress separate from the self-reported grades provided (NCES, 1990). For the reading test, respondents were given 21 minutes to answer 21 questions concerning readings. The math test had 40 questions and students had to complete them in 30 minutes (NCES, 1990). The NELS created a composite variable that combined the scores of these two tests.

Control Variables.

Sex. Sex was used from the student questionnaire, but if that was left blank, then NELS used the “school roster” (NCES, 1990: Appendix D-4). If that was missing, an inference was made by looking at the respondent’s name. If a sex could still not be

determined, “this variable had a value of 1 or 2 randomly assigned” (NCES, 1990: Appendix D-4). This affected about .5 percent of the sample.

Race. Race was used by the student’s response. Since this study was testing Lareau’s theory of concerted cultivation, and since she interviewed only whites and African-Americans, these were the only two races studied in the analysis. Responses were recoded so that zero equaled African-American and one equaled white. 625 students were confused on the race question and accidentally selected “American Indian” when they should have responded “White, not of Hispanic origin.” In order to correct this NELS used the parent responses to race for these students.

SES. Respondents’ family socio-economic status (SES) was controlled for using questions reported by the parents regarding income, parent education status, and “occupation” status. Both parents’ education were used, both parents’ occupations, and income were used to compute the socio-economic status composite variable. “Occupational data were recoded using the Duncan SEI scale...Each nonmissing component (after any necessary recoding) was standardized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. Nonmissing standardized components were averaged yielding the BYSES composite” (NCES, 1990: Appendix D-10). The composite was computed using questions answered by the parents. If all the parent data was missing, then NELS used answers provided by the students. This affected 8.1 percent of the sample. The numerical range for SES is -2.97 to 2.56.

Marital Status. Marital status will be controlled for. This variable was created straight from the parent’s response to marital status. While there were several possible

responses to this question, a dummy variable was created so that married was equal to one, and all other responses equaled zero.

Household Size. NELS used both responses from the parent and student questionnaires to calculate the family size composite variable.

Sample Weights, Flag Variables, and Missing Variables

The sample weight, termed the "base year questionnaire weight," was applied in the current analysis. The weight "is calculated from the design weight (RAWWT) for the student questionnaire adjusted for the fact that some of the selected students did not complete the questionnaire. RAWWT is the reciprocal of the conditional selection probability for the student, given that the school was selected into the base year sample, multiplied by his or her school's design weight" (NCES, 1990: Appendix D-1). For the study analysis, this population weight was divided by 124.5 in order to base the weights on the sample size and obtain correct frequencies and confidence intervals. Two flag variables were inserted in the analysis to flag and make sure that the parent questionnaire, the student questionnaire and the student standardized tests were available. This was done because questions from the parent questionnaire, the student questionnaire, and the student tests are all used in the current study. In addition, all missing data and/or multiple response codes were taken out of the analysis and treated as missing values. Multiple response codes were issued in instances when respondents answered more than once to questions that only merited one answer.

DATA ANALYSIS

I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 15.0 to run the statistical procedures. First, I will report the descriptive statistics for all variables. Then, I will report regression analyses on concerted cultivation and the two dependent variables. Afterwards, I will show results separating the concerted cultivation index in order to investigate which facets of concerted cultivation influence academic achievement the most.

Figure 2: Model Summary with Control Variables

<u>Control Variables</u>	+ Concerted Cultivation Index	
<i>Race</i>	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	<i>Parent Involvement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White vs. Black 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring ▪ School Involvement ▪ Home Involvement
<i>Sex</i>		
<i>Marital Status</i>		<i>Organization of Daily Life</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Married vs. Non-Married 		<i>Habitus</i>
<i>SES</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How far do you expect your child to go? (parent) VS. ▪ How far do you expect to go? (student)
<i>Family Size</i>		
Dependent Variables: GPA and Standardized Scores in Math and Reading		

Results

DEMOGRAPHIC SAMPLE

The present sample consisted of an even divide of male and female students with 50 percent each. Fifteen percent of the sample students were African Americans, while 85 percent were whites. As previously discussed, all other races and ethnicities were left out of the current analysis. The average household had 4.5 members, with 77 percent of parents reporting to be married. As previously discussed in the methods section, the indexes were converted to a 0-1 scale so that each individual index had equal weighting in the overall Concerted Cultivation index. From Table 1, one can see the means for each index. There appears to be more involvement by parents in the home (parent monitoring and at home involvement), than there does at the school. Looking at the organization of daily life index, students in the sample do not appear to participate in many extracurricular activities, but there is participation nonetheless. The low average for this index is probably due to the large number of possible responses-62. Fifty-eight percent of eighth graders expected to get a four-year college degree and 66 percent of parents expected their child to get a college degree. The cultural capital index had a mean of .36. The concerted cultivation index had a range of .02 to 6.15 with a mean of 3.41. Student self-reported GPA has a range from .50 to 4.0 with a mean average of 2.9. Standardized test scores have a range from 30.71 to 75.81 with a mean average of 50.22.

Table 1: Sample Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parent SES	21,923	-.110	.761
Parent Monitoring Index	21,686	.699	.209
At Home Parent Involvement Index	21,414	.731	.245
Parent-School Involvement Index	21,925	.264	.301
Organization of Daily Life Index	21,925	.086	.081
Expect 8th grader to at least obtain a 4-year degree (1=yes)	21,801	.580	.494
Plan on graduating from college (1=yes)	21,808	.661	.474
Cultural Capital Index	21,925	.358	.223
Concerted Cultivation Index	21,021	3.408	1.226
Student GPA	21,710	2.900	.755
Standardized Test Scores	21,922	50.221	9.994

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Table 2 shows the correlation between concerted cultivation and student self-reported GPA. The relationship between concerted cultivation and student GPA is statistically significant and fairly strong ($r=.457$). In addition, concerted cultivation is also fairly strongly related to parent SES status ($r=.542$). Family size and concerted cultivation are not related. Race and concerted cultivation are not related. Lareau (2003) found a similar result in her study, with middle class African American families practicing concerted cultivation the same as middle class white families. Table 3 shows the multivariate regression analysis of the effect of concerted cultivation on student GPA. The regression analysis significantly predicts student GPA, ($F(6, 17450)=882.144$, $p<.001$), explaining 23 percent of the variation. All beta coefficients are significant except for family size. All other variables in the model are significant at the .001 level.

The standardized regression coefficients show that concerted cultivation has the largest impact on student GPA within the model, with a beta of .393. One standard deviation unit increase in concerted cultivation equals a .393 standard deviation unit increase in a student's GPA score. The second largest predictor of student GPA is SES with a standardized beta of .096, which means that a one standard deviation unit increase in SES contributes to almost a .1 standard deviation unit increase in GPA. The results support the current hypothesis that concerted cultivation is associated with higher student GPA scores.

Table 2: Correlations for Concerted Cultivation and GPA (N=17,457)

	GPA	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Concerted Cultivation (1)	.457					
Parent Marital Status (1=Married) (2)	.146	.148				
Base Year Family Size (3)	-.003	-.022	.258			
SES Composite (4)	.332	.542	.269	-.035		
Is Respondent White? (1=yes) (5)	.096	.026	.273	-.04	.246	
Gender (1=male) (6)	-.103	-.035	.012	-.001	.030	.012

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .001$, except for 3 by GPA (ns), 2 by 1 ($p < .01$), 3 by 1 ($p < .01$), 6 by 2 (ns), 6 by 3 (ns), 6 by 5 (ns).

Table 3: Regression for Concerted Cultivation and GPA (N=17,457)

	B (s.e.)	Beta	T-Ratio
Concerted Cultivation	.241* (.005)	.393	49.195
Parent Marital Status (1=Married)	.090* (.013)	.050	6.753
Base Year Family Size	-.001 (.004)	-.001	-.178
SES Composite	.098* (.009)	.096	11.456
Is respondent White? (1=White)	.107* (.015)	.049	6.933
Gender (1=Male)	-.141* (.010)	-.094	-14.078

* $p < .001$

$R^2 = .233$, $p < .001$

Table 4 shows the correlations for concerted cultivation and standardized test scores. The relationship between concerted cultivation and standardized test scores is statistically significant and fairly strong ($r=.442$). Concerted cultivation is not related to family size or race, and gender, while significant, still has a very weak relationship ($r= -.052$). However, concerted cultivation remains related to SES ($r=.542$). The highest correlation for standardized test scores is with SES ($r=.448$), while the second highest correlation is with the concerted cultivation index.

Table 4: Correlations for Concerted Cultivation and Standardized Test Scores (N=17,599)

	Test Scores	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Concerted Cultivation (1)	.442					
Parent Marital Status (1=Married) (2)	.155	.148				
Base Year Family Size (3)	-.044	-.024	.257			
SES Composite (4)	.448	.542	.270	-.037		
Is Respondent White? (1=Yes) (5)	.278	.027	.272	-.051	.247	
Gender (1=Male) (6)	-.052	-.035	.012	-.001	.028	.011

Note: All relationships are statistically significant at $p<.001$, except for 6 by 2 (ns), 6 by 3 (ns), and 6 by 5 (ns).

*Standardized Reading and Math Composite Test Scores

Table 5 shows the multivariate regression analysis of the effect of concerted cultivation on standardized test scores. The regression analysis significantly predicts

standardized test scores ($F(6, 17592)=1265.508, p<.001$), explaining 30 percent of the variance. All variables are significant predictors of standardized test scores at the .001 level except for parent marital status, which is not statistically significant, and family size, which is significant at the .05 level. The standardized regression coefficients show that concerted cultivation has the largest impact on test scores with a beta of .311. One standard deviation unit increase in concerted cultivation equals a .311 increase in test scores. Parent SES has the second largest impact with a beta of .229. Race has an impact on standardized test scores as well, having the third largest impact among all the variables. Being white increases test scores by .214 standard deviation units. Nonetheless, the results support the current hypothesis that concerted cultivation is associated with higher standardized test scores. The next series of analyses will dissect the concerted cultivation index in order to see what aspects of concerted cultivation impact student academic achievement the most.

Table 5: Regression for Concerted Cultivation and Standardized Test Scores (N=17,599)

	B (s.e.)	Beta	T-Ratio
Concerted Cultivation	2.518** (.061)	.311	40.943
Parent Marital Status (1=Married)	-.159 (.168)	-.007	-.951
Base Year Family Size	-.119* (.050)	-.016	-2.365
SES Composite	3.100** (.107)	.229	28.854
Is respondent White? (1=Yes)	6.121** (.193)	.214	31.649
Gender (1=Male)	-.993** (.126)	-.050	-7.895

**p<.001

*p<.05

R²=.301, p<.001

Table 6 shows the correlation matrix for the elements of concerted cultivation, in addition to the control variables, and student GPA. Among all the elements of concerted cultivation, the habitus variables display the strongest correlation with GPA, with both having a positive correlation of .407. This shows that the higher ones aspirations for schooling (both parent and student), the more likely he or she will have a higher GPA. At home parent involvement has a weak correlation with GPA ($r=.133$), and parent monitoring has no association ($r=.008$). Cultural capital, the organization of daily life, and parent-school involvement all had relatively weak associations with GPA, ranging from .188 (org. of daily life) to .265 (cultural capital). All the elements of concerted cultivation had positive coefficient values, meaning that the higher each element, the more GPA would increase.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix For Concerted Cultivation Elements and GPA (N=17,457)

	Base Year GPA	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
At Home Parent Involvement Index (1)	.133											
Parental Monitoring Index (2)	.008	.235										
Parent-School Involvement Index (3)	.210	.205	.163									
Expect 8th grader obtain at least a 4-yr degree (1=yes) (4)	.407	.239	.044	.258								
Student-plan on graduating from college (1=yes) (5)	.407	.171	.046	.184	.489							
Organization of Daily Life Index (6)	.188	.087	.066	.142	.127	.147						
Cultural Capital Index (7)	.265	.268	.168	.381	.356	.280	.150					
Parent marital status (1=married) (8)	.146	.052	.065	.159	.085	.074	.028	.132				
Base year family size (9)	-.003	.056	.084	.059	.042	.048	.027	.034	.258			
SES composite (10)	.332	.182	.062	.331	.448	.368	.103	.496	.269	.035		
Race (1=white) (11)	.096	.040	.090	.041	.015	.026	.057	.144	.273	.049	.246	
Gender (1=male) (12)	.103	.023	.035	.009	.028	.053	.040	.071	.012	-.001	.030	.012

Note: All relationships are statistically significant at $p < .001$, except for: 2 by GPA (ns), 9 by GPA (ns), 12 by 11 (ns), 11 by 6 ($p < .01$), and 4 by 5 ($p < .05$).

Table 7 shows the multivariate regression model of the elements of concerted cultivation and student GPA. The regression analysis significantly predicts student self-reported GPA ($F(12, 17444)=534.801, p<.001$) and explains almost 27 percent of the variance. All elements of concerted cultivation significantly predict student GPA with the exception of at home parent involvement. Parent monitoring is significant as well, but in an unexpected way. It was hypothesized that parent monitoring would have a positive impact on GPA, but this data is showing that monitoring has a negative impact. However, the beta of $-.038$ demonstrates only a weak link between these variables. Parent school involvement has a significant, positive impact on GPA at the $.001$ significance level. However, this relationship is weak as well (Beta= $.051$). The effect is positive, as predicted.

The habitus variables have the largest impact on student GPA. For the parent habitus variable (beta= $.210, p<.001$), one standard deviation unit increase in parent expectations is associated with a $.210$ standard deviation unit increase in standardized test scores. The higher parents' expectations for their children, the more likely that their children will have higher GPAs. Student habitus has a similar, large impact on GPA (beta= $.230$). This variable has the largest impact of all the other concerted cultivation variables on GPA. One standard deviation unit increase in student habitus is associated with a $.230$ unit increase in standardized test scores. The higher students' academic expectations, the more likely they will have a higher GPA. The organization of daily life had a similar significant positive relationship with GPA (beta= $.106$). The standardized regression coefficient reveals that an increase in one standard deviation in the

organization of daily life is associated with a .106 standard deviation unit increase in a student's GPA. Cultural capital has little impact on GPA (beta=.031).

Table 8 presents the correlations of the elements of concerted cultivation and standardized test scores. At home parent involvement has a very weak relationship with standardized test scores ($r=.080$). Similarly, parent monitoring has a very weak relationship ($r=-.039$). Parent school involvement has a fairly weak relationship with standardized test scores in reading and math ($r=.191$). Once again, the two habitus variables stand out as the strongest relationships among all the elements of concerted cultivation (parent habitus, $r=.424$; student habitus, $r=.386$). These relationships had about the same strength as SES ($r=.448$) and in the expected direction. The higher the expectations for parents and students, the higher students' standardized test scores. Organization of daily life has a much weaker relationship with standardized test scores than it did with GPA ($r=.077$). Cultural capital has a moderate relationship with standardized test scores ($r=.353$). Participation in cultural activities is associated with higher standardized test scores.

Table 7: Regression for Concerted Cultivation Elements and GPA (N=17,457)

	B (s.e.)	Beta	T-Ratio
At Home Parent Involvement Index	.032 (.022)	.010	1.445
Parental Monitoring Index	-.143** (.026)	-.038	-5.546
Parent-School Involvement Index	.126** (.018)	.051	7.029
Do you expect your eighth grader to at least obtain a 4-year degree (1=Yes)	.321** (.012)	.210	26.071
Do you plan on graduating from college (1=Yes)	.369** (.012)	.230	30.122
Organization of Daily Life Index	1.044** (.066)	.106	15.910
Cultural Capital Index	.106** (.028)	.031	3.859
Parent Marital Status (1=Married)	.111** (.013)	.062	8.506
Base Year Family Size	.003 (.004)	.005	.783
SES Composite	.087** (.009)	.085	10.024
Is Respondent White? (1=Yes)	.101** (.015)	.047	6.627
Gender (1=Male)	-.123** (.010)	-.082	-12.499

**p<.001

*p<.01

R²=.269, p<.001

Table 8: Correlation Matrix For Concerted Cultivation Elements and Standardized Test Scores (N=17,599)

	Test Scores	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
At Home Parent Involvement Index (1)	.080											
Parental Monitoring Index (2)	-.039	.237										
Parent-School Involvement Index (3)	.191	.206	.164									
Expect eighth grader to at least obtain a 4-year degree (1=yes) (4)	.424	.238	.044	.258								
Plan on Graduating from College (1=yes) (5)	.386	.170	.046	.184	.490							
Organization of Daily Life Index (6)	.077	.088	.066	.141	.129	.148						
Cultural Capital Index (7)	.353	.266	.168	.380	.357	.280	.150					
Parent Marital Status (1=married) (8)	.155	.052	.065	.159	.085	.074	.030	.132				
Base Year Family Size (9)	-.044	-.057	.084	.058	-.044	-.049	.026	-.037	.257			
SES Composite (10)	.448	.181	.062	.330	.448	.367	.106	.498	.270	-.037		
Is Respondent White? (1=yes) (11)	.278	-.041	-.090	.041	.018	.026	-.057	.144	.272	-.051	.247	
Gender (1=male) (12)	-.052	.023	.036	.009	-.028	-.054	-.040	-.072	.012	-.001	.028	.011

Not: All relationships are significant at $p < .001$, except for 12 by 3 (ns), 11 by 4 ($p < .05$), 12 by 8 (ns), 12 by 9 (ns), 12 by 11 (ns).

Table 9: Regression for Concerted Cultivation Elements and Standardized Test Scores (N=17,599)

	B (s.e.)	Beta	T-Ratio
At Home Parent Involvement Index	-1.96** (.279)	-.046	-7.024
Parental Monitoring Index	-3.032** (.323)	-.060	-9.390
Parent-School Involvement Index	.161 (.223)	.005	.721
Do you expect your eighth grader to at least obtain a 4-year degree (1=Yes)	4.367** (.154)	.216	28.363
Do you Plan on Graduating from College (1=Yes)	3.836** (.153)	.180	25.090
Organization of Daily Life Index	-.174 (.818)	.001	.213
Cultural Capital Index	5.531** (.344)	.122	16.085
Parent Marital Status (1=Married)	.271 (.163)	.011	1.664
Base Year Family Size	-.042 (.049)	-.006	-.856
SES Composite	2.486** (.108)	.184	22.956
Is Respondent White? (1=Yes)	5.591** (.189)	.196	29.515
Gender (1=Male)	-.628** (.123)	-.032	-5.113

**p<.001

R²=.344, p<.001

Table 9 presents the multivariate regression analysis of the effects of the elements of concerted cultivation on standardized test scores. The multiple regression model

significantly predicts standardized test scores ($F(12, 17,599)=769.31, p<.001$), explaining 34 percent of the variance. After controlling for SES, parent marital status, family size, race, and gender, at home parent involvement significantly predicts standardized test scores ($\beta=-.046, p<.001$), but this relationship is relatively small and in the unexpected direction. It was hypothesized that home parent involvement would increase test scores, but the current model shows that this involvement actually decreases test scores, albeit at a very small impact. Parental monitoring also has a weak but negative impact on standardized test scores ($\beta=-.060, p<.001$). Parent school involvement does not significantly predict standardized test scores ($\beta=.005$).

Once again, the two habitus variables stand out in their strength for predicting standardized test scores, just as they did for GPA. Parent habitus had the largest impact of all the variables in the model, including the control variables ($\beta=.216, p<.001$). The higher parent expectations, the higher students' standardized test scores. Similarly, student habitus has a positive impact on standardized test scores ($\beta=.180, p<.001$) and has about the same impact as SES ($\beta=.184, p<.001$). The higher students' expectations, the higher their standardized test scores. Interestingly, the organization of daily life does not predict standardized test scores as it did for GPA ($\beta=.001$). Cultural capital, on the other hand, does significantly predict standardized test scores ($\beta=.122, p<.001$). The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next section.

Conclusions

The current study has found evidence that supports Lareau's argument that concerted cultivation positively impacts academic achievement. Lareau (2003) argued that the parenting practices adopted by middle class families gave children institutional advantages over lower and working-class children. Lareau called this parenting practice concerted cultivation, stating that these parents' daily involvement in children's lives prepared them for middle class, white collar jobs. Middle class parents used reasoning skills in the home, they enrolled their children in numerous age specific structured activities, and they taught their children how to intervene in institutional settings. The current study attempted to operationally define Lareau's conceptual definitions of concerted cultivation using a nationally representative sample of eighth grade students in 1988 in order to see if her results could be found in a larger sample. This final chapter will be broken down by beginning with a discussion on how concerted cultivation was associated with student GPA and standardized test scores. Following this there will be a discussion on the impact of the elements of concerted cultivation on these two measures of academic success. Finally, limitations to the current study will be discussed.

CONCERTED CULTIVATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The results support Lareau's findings that concerted cultivation is associated with higher academic achievement, with the concerted cultivation index significantly predicting both GPA and standardized test scores. These findings were fairly robust given that concerted cultivation had the largest impact of all the variables for both GPA and

standardized test scores, including race and parent SES. For GPA as the dependent variable, concerted cultivation was by far the most influential in the model (see Table 2). Parent SES and race played a much smaller role in predicting student GPA in comparison to concerted cultivation. For standardized test scores as the dependent variable, the results remained the same, with concerted cultivation having the largest impact. However, race and parent SES played a much more meaningful role in this type of academic outcome, indicating that these control variables are still important contributors, even taking into account concerted cultivation.

Lareau (2003) hypothesized that middle class parents practiced concerted cultivation, helping their children succeed in institutional settings. Her argument was twofold: 1) that this parenting practice was dependent on the family's social class and 2) that concerted cultivation was independent of race, meaning that middle class African Americans practiced similar parenting styles (concerted cultivation) as middle class whites. When running the multivariate regression analysis, parent SES, race, family size, marital status, and student gender were controlled for by being placed in the model. Therefore, concerted cultivation remained the most powerful predictor even taking into account these important variables.

The larger context of the issues Lareau raised centered upon how class impacts the life chances of young children. Specifically, is it the schools that reinforce inequality, or are there differences that occur in the home lives that make middle class children more likely to succeed than their lower class counterparts? Lareau argued that it is the parenting practices that primarily shape the chances of success for children, and that the practice of

concerted cultivation is mediated by a family's social structural location. The practice of concerted cultivation plants the seed for later occupational success. This study has found tentative support for her claim that concerted cultivation offers students an academic advantage. The concerted cultivation index was fairly strongly correlated with social class, and the index significantly predicted both GPA and standardized test scores in reading and math, two separate measures of academic success.

Lareau (2003:250), writing in the conclusion of her own study, states,

“it was the interweaving of life experiences and resources, including parents' economic resources, occupational conditions, and educational backgrounds, that seemed to be most important in leading middle-class parents to engage in concerted cultivation and working-class and poor families to engage in the accomplishment of natural growth.”

This study supports that claim. The fairly strong correlation between socio-economic status and the concerted cultivation index, in addition to concerted cultivation having the largest impact for both academic outcomes after controlling for SES, race, gender, marital status, and family size, demonstrates evidence that this parenting practice is a mediating variable between social class and academic achievement. The lack of a relationship between concerted cultivation and race also demonstrates evidence that supports Lareau's claim that this parenting practice operates independently of race. Indeed, the current study's larger sample size offers considerable support for Lareau's overall thesis that the parenting practice of concerted cultivation depends upon one's social class position, and that concerted cultivation helps children's academic success. The next section will discuss the elements of concerted cultivation.

CONCERTED CULTIVATION ELEMENTS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Once the elements of concerted cultivation were dissected, some interesting and conflicting results were found. The parent and student habitus variables emerged as the most significant components in the models for both GPA and standardized test scores, indicating that parents and students who have high expectations do indeed perform better on these two measures of academic achievement. These results support earlier research on habitus (Dumais, 2006; 2002) and reinforce the importance of parent and student dispositions on academic achievement. It is difficult to speculate what it is about expectations that lead to these higher outcomes, although both habitus variables are fairly strongly related to SES. It could be that habitus, in the form of expectations, is the conduit between parent involvement and student academic success. By involving themselves in their child's schooling through concerted cultivation, parents may be setting the standards to which their children will be accountable without overtly saying so. Lareau found that middle class families who practiced concerted cultivation were not intimidated in institutional settings and expected these institutions to cater to their specific needs. The two habitus variables may have been tapping into this "entitlement" attitude practiced by parents and students. Parents who practice concerted cultivation expect schools to help their children succeed, and as Lareau found, these parents will intervene if necessary when they feel that schools are not doing their part.

One of the more surprising findings of the current study is the negligible impact that the three parent involvement indexes played in predicting both GPA and standardized test scores. One of Lareau's central tenets was that parents who practiced concerted

cultivation involved themselves in their children's daily lives and that this involvement precipitated in academic achievement. This study found no such relationship once the elements of concerted cultivation were broken apart. At home parent involvement had no significant relationship with GPA, and actually had a negative significant relationship (albeit, a very weak relationship) with standardized test scores. Meanwhile, parent monitoring had negative relationships with both student GPA and standardized test scores. Parent school involvement had no relationship with standardized test scores and a negligible one with student GPA. However, these results should be treated with some skepticism. This will be further addressed in the limitations of the study.

For GPA, the organization of daily life was the only other meaningful predictor among the elements of concerted cultivation. However, these structured activities had no impact on standardized test scores. Lareau argued that these activities "teach children crucial life lessons," such as learning to get along with others, and how to "develop the ability to perform in public" (Lareau, 2003:60-61). She goes on to say that, "many of the activities in which middle-class children routinely participate replicate key aspects of the workplace" (Lareau, 2003:64). This study cannot determine whether extracurricular activities teach life skills that become important for middle class success, but it did show that participating in structured activities helps student GPA, but not standardized test scores. Broh (2002) found similar results and found that academic success (in the form of higher test scores and GPA) differed according to the type of activity the student participated in. It could be that there are types of activities that gear students more towards academic and occupational success. While Lareau emphasized the number of activities

that students participated in, it could be that certain activities are more important than others in facilitating concerted cultivation. Future research should further distinguish what these different activities are.

For standardized test scores, other than the habitus variables, cultural capital was the only meaningful predictor variable among the elements of concerted cultivation. Interestingly, this variable did not significantly predict GPA as hypothesized. Studies that research cultural capital commonly use GPA or years of education, not standardized test scores, which make the present results that much more surprising. Similar to the parent involvement variables, the nature of the cross-section study could hide the positive benefits of cultural participation. The impact cultural capital has could actually be much larger on GPA if this were a longitudinal study. In addition, the higher betas for cultural capital, race and SES for standardized test scores may imply that there is a cultural bias on standardized tests that offers an unfair advantage to students from higher social classes. These relationships need to be further investigated by future research. The next section will explore the limitations to the study.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The results presented should be taken as tentative support for Lareau's theory for several reasons. First, the current study is cross-sectional, so the data represents one year in the students' lives. Inferences made cannot be causal because this study does not employ a longitudinal design. The factors that were found to be less influential, such as parent school involvement, parent monitoring, and at home parent involvement, could be very meaningful at earlier or later stages in a child's development. Eighth grade, when

students are approximately 12-13 years old, could be a time when parents begin to involve themselves less in their children's school lives. The current research cannot determine this, so it would be unwise to say that these three parent involvement variables do not matter. This involvement could vary by a child's age. Sandefur et al. (2006), using the same NELS data set as the current study, but employing a longitudinal design, found similar measures of parent involvement to positively impact the likelihood of children enrolling in a four-year college program. Taking this in conjunction with the previously discussed benefits of parent involvement, it is likely that parent involvement while students are in eighth grade does not drastically increase eighth grade scores, but it does positively influence scores and success across time.

Second, the children in the present sample were older than those in Lareau's sample, which was composed of third-grade students. Future research investigating concerted cultivation should try to begin with younger children, and ideally, employ a longitudinal design so that these students can be followed through their educational careers. Lareau (2003) argued that concerted cultivation prepared students for later occupational success in white-collar jobs. Finding a data set that followed students from early in elementary school through the college years would be ideal, and it would also allow for a more conclusive verdict on the impact that concerted cultivation has on life outcomes.

Another shortcoming of the current study is the datedness of the data used. The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 began in 1988 and followed students through the year 2000, when many would have graduated from college and found jobs.

While this data may be a good source for a longitudinal study, it may limit the generalizability of the current findings because of its age. In other words, the findings presented may be a good snapshot of eighth grade students in the year 1988, but not in the year 2007. Many changes have taken place in the broader society since then, such as the age of the internet and the “No Child Left Behind Act.” Another shortcoming involves Lareau’s project as well. Concerted cultivation may not be applicable to other “non-traditional” households, such as gay and lesbian households. Current research seems to argue over the impact that coming from a lesbian or gay household has on the child (Stacey and Biblarz, 2001), rather than on whether these families have different child-rearing strategies. Ethnographic research would be helpful in this area.

Similar to Lareau’s study, the current study only investigated white and African-American households. Future research on concerted cultivation need to incorporate other ethnic groups in order to see if there are differences in parenting practices across ethnicities. Finally, habitus needs to be investigated more conceptually than it presently is. Following past research by Dumais (2006,2002), habitus was operationally defined as parent and student expectations. In the current study, these two variables stood out as the strongest and most consistent variables amongst all the elements of concerted cultivation. Other research has also found that expectations can lead to higher achievement. Sandefur et al. (2006) found that high parent expectations led to a greater likelihood that children would enroll in a four-year college institution. However, it is not enough to say that high expectations lead to higher grades, so therefore all parents and students need to do is have high expectations. Social life is far more complex, and research should focus on teasing

out what leads parents and students to have high expectations. Recent research has already started this endeavor. Davis-Kean (2005) found that parent expectations are a mediating variable between parent education and student academic achievement.

This study contributes to the literature on parenting practices and academic success by showing tentative support for Lareau's argument that concerted cultivation helps student's academic achievement. Concerted cultivation positively influenced both standardized test scores and student GPA, while the habitus variables proved to be the most important elements of the concerted cultivation index. Future research should continue the effort in explaining how social class and parenting practices influence student academic careers. Parent actions matter, but these actions are very often impacted by the conditions within which the family resides, making it difficult for families of lesser means to meet the expectations that educators demand. When there is involvement by these families, it is often not the level that teachers and school officials want. More effort should be taken to help teachers and other school officials understand the specific needs and circumstances of needier families so both can work towards the mutually shared goal of success for children.

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