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the joy of cooking?

31

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time pressures, trade-offs to save money, and the burden of pleasing others make it difficult for mothers to enact the idealized vision of home-cooked meals advocated by foodies and public health officials.

t's a hot, sticky Fourth of July in North Carolina, and Leanne, a married working-class Black mother of three, is in her cramped kitchen. She's been cooking for several hours, lovingly preparing potato salad, beef ribs, chicken legs, and collards for her family. Abruptly, her mother decides to leave before eating anything. "But you haven't eaten," Leanne says. "You know I prefer my own potato salad," says her mom. She takes a plateful to go anyway.

Her 7-year-old son takes medication for ADHD and often isn't hungry until it wears off, usually right before bedtime. Leanne's 1-year-old daughter gets fussy when her mom cooks, and looks for attention. Her husband doesn't offer much help; his contribution involves pouring barbecue sauce on the ribs, which Leanne calls "working his magic." Leanne wipes her brow and mutters to herself about the $80 she spent on ingredients. By the time she's finished cooking, she says, "I don't want to eat!"

In the fight to combat rising obesity rates, modern-day food gurus advocate a return to the kitchen. Michael Pollan, author of *Cooked*, and America's most influential "foodie-intellectual," tells us that the path to reforming the food system "passes right through the kitchen." *New York Times'* food columnist Mark Bittman

agrees, saying the goal should be "to get people to see cooking as a joy rather than a burden." Magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and television personalities like Rachael Ray offer practical cooking advice to get Americans into the kitchen, publishing recipes for 30-minute meals and meals that can be made in the slow cooker. First Lady Michelle Obama has also been influential in popularizing public health messages that emphasize the role that mothers play when it comes to helping children make healthy choices.

The message that good parents—and in particular, good mothers—cook for their families dovetails with increasingly intensive and unrealistic standards of "good" mothering. According to the sociologist Sharon Hays, to be a good mom today, a woman must demonstrate intense devotion to her children. One could say that home-cooked meals have become the hallmark of good mothering, stable families, and the ideal of the healthy, productive citizen.

Yet in reality, home-cooked meals rarely look this good. Leanne, for example, who held down a minimum-wage job while taking classes for an associate's degree, often spent her valuable time preparing meals, only to be rewarded with family members' complaints—or disinterest. Our extensive observations and interviews with

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mothers like Leanne reveal something that often gets overlooked: cooking is fraught.

feeding the family

Over the past year and a half, our research team conducted in-depth interviews with 150 Black, White, and Latina mothers from all walks of life. We also spent over 250 hours conducting ethnographic observations with 12 working-class and poor families. We observed them in their homes as they prepared and ate meals, and tagged along on trips to the grocery store and to their children's check-ups. Sitting around the kitchen table and getting a feel for these women's lives, we came to appreciate the complexities involved in feeding a family.

While Pollan and others wax nostalgic about a time when people grew their own food and sat around the dinner table eating it, they fail to see all of the invisible labor that goes into planning, making, and coordinating family meals. Cooking is at times joyful, but it is also filled with time pressures, trade-offs designed to save money, and the burden of pleasing others.

Wanda and her husband, Marquan, working-class Black parents of two young girls, were constantly pressed for time. Both were employed by the same fast-food chain, but in different rural locations 45 minutes apart. They depended on Wanda's mother, who lived 30 minutes away, for childcare. During the five weeks we spent with them, their car was broken down and since they did not have enough money to repair it, they relied on a complex network of friends and family members for rides. Their lives were further complicated by the fact that they didn't know their weekly schedules—what hours, shifts, or even days they would be working—until they were posted, sometimes only the night before. Once they learned their shifts, they scrambled to figure out transportation and childcare arrangements.

Wanda liked her job, but her unpredictable schedule made it difficult to cook regular meals the way she wanted to. This time dilemma was also hard for Leanne, who worked for the same fast-food corporation as Wanda and Marquan, but in an urban area that lacked reliable public transportation. Sometimes, Leanne would take a taxi to work only to find out that business was slow and she was not needed. At other times, she was asked to work late. Because of this, Leanne and her family had no set mealtime: cooking and eating were often catch-as-catch-can.

Wanda's and Leanne's situation is increasingly common. As real wages have stagnated, many households depend on every adult family member working, sometimes in multiple jobs and jobs with nonstandard and unpredictable hours, to make ends meet. Since the 1960s, working women have cut back on household tasks, including cooking and cleaning, according to sociologist Liana Sayer. Even so, balancing paid work and unpaid work at home, women today have less free time than they did a generation ago; and, in line with heightened expectations of motherhood, they now report spending more time engaged in childcare than did mothers in the 1960s. It's not surprising that they struggle to find time to cook.

And, of course, cooking isn't just about the time it takes to prepare the meal. It also involves planning ahead to be sure the ingredients are on hand, and it means cleaning up afterwards. Samantha, a single White mother of three, was blunt when we asked her if she liked cooking. "Not really," she said. "I just hate the kitchen . . . having to come up with a meal and put it together. I know I can cook but

> While some wax nostalgic about a time when people grew their own food and sat around the dinner table eating it, they fail to see the invisible labor that goes into family meals.

it's the planning of the meal, and seeing if they're going to like it, and the mess that you make. And then the mess afterwards. . . . If it was up to me, I wouldn't cook."

Though the mothers we met were squeezed for time, they were still expected to produce elaborate meals cooked from scratch. Even the middle-class women we talked with, who enjoyed regular work hours and typically shared the household work with a partner, said they lacked the time to cook the way they felt they should. Most got home from work around six o'clock, and then attempted to cook meals from scratch (as the experts advise) while their children clamored for their attention.

between time and money

Greely, a married middle-class White mother of one child, had recently started her own catering company. She was working long hours during the week to get her business off the ground, and reasoned that taking time on the weekend to prep vegetables and lunches would help her create ideal meals. She explained, "I feel [that] when I have the time, I enjoy cooking. And when it's so compressed and after a stressful day, it's kind of horrible. I feel like, because I'm not able to spend as much time with Adelle now, I don't want to spend an hour cooking after I pick her up from school every day. You know, like it's fine sometimes, but I want to be able to sit down and help her with her homework or help her finish her Valentines for her classmates or whatever that may be. I was supposed to soak black-eyed peas last night and I forgot."

The mothers we met who were barely paying the bills routinely cooked—contrary to the stereotype that poor families mainly eat fast food—because it was more economical. Isis, a poor single Black mother, told us that she got tired of cooking, but continued to do so to save money. "If I don't cook then they'll go get something out to eat," she said. "But then that's wasting money."

Yet being poor makes it nearly impossible to enact the foodie version of a home-cooked meal. The ingredients that go into meals considered to be healthy—fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats—are expensive. A recent study of food prices around the globe found that it costs $1.50 more per day—or about $550 a year per person—to eat a healthier diet than a less healthy diet.

The cost of healthy ingredients is not the only barrier. Many of the poor mothers we met also lacked reliable transportation, and therefore typically shopped just once a month. As a result, they avoided buying fresh produce, which spoiled quickly. Mothers also struggled to prepare meals in small trailers or apartments with minimal space. We observed homes without kitchen tables or functional appliances, infested by bugs and rats, and lacking basic kitchen tools like sharp knives, cutting boards, pots, and pans.

The idea that home cooking is inherently ideal reflects an elite foodie standpoint. Romantic depictions of cooking assume that everyone has a home, that family members are home eating at the same time, and that kitchens and dining spaces are equipped and safe. This is not necessarily the case for the families we met.

During the month we spent with Flora, a poor Black mother who was currently separated from her husband, she was living with her daughter and two grandchildren in a cockroach- and flea-infested hotel room with two double beds. They prepared all of their food in a small microwave, rinsing their utensils in the bathroom sink. Many of the families we met lived in trailers or homes with thin

Being poor makes it nearly impossible to enact the foodie version of a home-cooked meal.

walls that provided little protection from the outside elements. Some homes had holes in the floor or walls, making it nearly impossible to keep pests out. Claudia, a married Latina mother of four, was battling a serious ant invasion in her home. She watched in horror as the ant poison her 12-year-old son was scattering around the trailer's perimeter drifted through an open window and settled on the food she was preparing at the kitchen counter.

Still, mothers felt responsible for preparing healthy meals for their children and keenly experienced the gap between the romanticized version of cooking and the realities of their lives. When asked what an "ideal world" would look like for her, Ruth, a widowed Black mother of two, said she would like to have a bigger house that included a "bigger stove, and kitchen, and refrigerator so I can cook a little more and do what I need to do to cook healthier. Give me the money to provide for them a little healthier." With more money and space, Ruth could cook the elaborate meals she loves.

To our surprise, many of the middle-class mothers we met also told us that money was a barrier to preparing healthy meals. Even though they often had household incomes of more than $100,000 a year, their membership in the middle-class was costly. While they did not experience food shortages, they were forced to make trade-offs in order to save money—like buying less-healthy processed food, or fewer organic items than they would like. For low-income mothers, the trade-offs are starker: they skipped meals, or spent long hours in line at food pantries or applying for assistance, to make sure their children had enough to eat. .

food fights

"I don't need it. I don't want it. I never had it," exclaimed 4-year-old Rashan when his mom served him an unfamiliar side dish. Rashan's reaction was not uncommon. We rarely observed a meal in which at least one family member didn't complain about the food they were served. Some mothers coaxed their children to eat by playing elaborate games or by hand-feeding them. One middle-class mother even set a timer, telling her son that he had to eat as much of what was on his plate as he could before the time ran out. Feeding others involves taking multiple preferences into consideration, and balancing time and money constraints.

Rather than risk trying new and expensive foods that might prove unpopular, many low-income mothers opted to cook the same foods again and again. They reasoned that it was better to stick with foods' (often processed) that they knew their families would eat, rather than risk wasting money and food.

Giselle, a single Black mother of two, worked two part-time jobs to make ends meet. There was little room in the food budget to experiment with new or expensive foods. When it came time to decide what to make for supper, Giselle played it safe. She explained, "Because I don't want to cook something [they won't like] because I'll, like, waste the food. Right? Waste the food."

Low-income mothers tended to avoid using recipes, because the ingredients were expensive and they weren't sure if their families would like the new dishes. Instead, they continued to make what was tried and true, even if they didn't like the food themselves. Sandy, a White mother of two, tried hard to cook around her boyfriend's preferences. She liked fish, but her boyfriend didn't. So she ignored her food interests in order to "do something for my whole house." Sociologist Marjorie DeVault also found in her book *Feeding the Family* that women considered men's needs, sometimes above all others, when it came to preparing meals.

For middle-class mothers, cooking was about more than negotiating preferences for certain foods. They felt that offering new foods was

crucial for developing their kids' palates—even if the process sometimes led to food fights. Their stories suggest that cooking like Pollan and other experts prescribe is time consuming and stressful. Some spent significant amounts of time reading the literature on the latest and best healthy foods, seeking out and trading new healthy recipes, and reworking the food budget to include more organic food—leading to greater anxiety about cooking and serving food.

For Elaine, a married White mother of one child, cooking involved high stakes. She and her husband worked full time, and Elaine's efforts to make meals from scratch rarely ended happily. She spent time prepping food on the weekends in order to cook ideal meals during the week. She explained, "When we get home, it's such a rush. I just don't know what happens to the time. I am so frustrated. That's why I get so angry! I get frustrated 'cause I'm like, I wanna make this good meal that's really healthy and I like to cook 'cause it's kind of my way to show them that I love them, 'This is my love for you guys!' And then I wind up at the end just, you know, grrr! Mad at the food because it takes me so long. It's like, how can it take an hour for me to do this when I've already cut up the carrots and the celery and all I'm doing is shoving it into a bowl?"

Even the extensive prep work that Elaine did on the weekends didn't translate into a relaxing meal during the weekday. Instead, like so many mothers, Elaine felt frustrated and inadequate about not living up to the ideal home-cooked meal. Their stories suggest that utopian family meals are nearly impossible to create, no matter how hard mothers try.

thinking outside the kitchen

The vision of the family meal that today's food experts are whipping up is alluring. Most people would agree that it would be nice to slow down, eat healthfully, and enjoy a home-cooked meal. However, our research leads us to question why the front line in reforming the food system has to be in someone's kitchen. The emphasis on home cooking ignores the time pressures, financial constraints, and feeding challenges that shape the family meal. Yet this is the widely promoted standard to which all mothers are held. Our conversations with mothers of young children show us that this emerging standard is a tasty illusion, one that is moralistic, and rather elitist, instead of a realistic vision of cooking today. Intentionally or not, it places the burden of a healthy home-cooked meal on women.

So let's move this conversation out of the kitchen, and brainstorm more creative solutions for sharing the work of feeding families. How about a revival of monthly town suppers, or healthy- food trucks? Or perhaps we should rethink how we do meals in schools and workplaces, making lunch an opportunity for savoring and sharing food. Could schools offer to-go meals that families could easily heat up on busy weeknights? Without creative solutions like these, suggesting that we return to the kitchen en masse will do little more than increase the burden so many women already bear.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Alison Alkon, Daniel Block, Kelly Moore, Catherine Gillis, Nicole DiNuccio, and Noel Chavez. 2013. "Foodways of the Urban Poor." *Geoforum* 48: 126–135.

> Argues that cost, not lack of knowledge or physical distance to food stores, is the primary barrier to healthy food access, and that low-income people employ a wide variety of strategies to obtain the foods they prefer at prices they can afford.

Kate Cairns, Josée Johnston, and Norah MacKendrick. 2013. "Feeding the 'Organic Child': Mothering through Ethical Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 13: 97–118.

These authors coin the term "organic child," and find that middle-class mothers preserve the purity and safety of their children through the purchase of organic foods.

Marjorie DeVault. 1991. *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Argues that cooking (and "food work" more generally) is a form of care work that helps to maintain class and gender divisions.

Julie Guthman. 2007. "Can't Stomach It: How Michael Pollan et al. Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos." *Gastronomica* 7(2): 75–79.

Critiques proponents of the local food movement for reinforcing apolitical and elite values, while offering no suggestions for how to change the food system in an inclusive way.

Sharon Hays. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

An important book on the expectations modern mothers face to spend intensive amounts of time and energy raising their children.

Liana Sayer. 2005. "Gender, Time, and Inequality: Trends in Women's and Men's Paid Work, Unpaid Work, and Free Time." *Social Forces* 84: 285–303.

Uses nationally representative time use data from 1965, 1975, and 1998 to analyze trends and gender differences in time use.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the ideal that this research is reacting to, and identify some of the ways that the reality falls short of the ideal.
2. Name and discuss some of the particular struggles that poor families face when trying to prepare home-cooked meals.
3. The last paragraph of the article suggests some ways to circumvent these problems. Using one of their suggestions (or coming up with one of your own), brainstorm and describe how that solution would work, or identify any problems you see with it.

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working-class growing pains

32

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how do working-class men and women navigate the transition to adulthood amid economic insecurity and social isolation? research finds that young adults experience fear of intimate relationships, low expectations of work, and widespread distrust of institutions as they come of age.

In a working-class neighborhood in Lowell, Massachusetts, I sat across the kitchen table from a 24-year-old White woman named Diana. The daughter of a dry cleaner and a cashier, Diana graduated from high school and was accepted into a private university in Boston. She embarked on a criminal justice degree while working part-time at a local Dunkin' Donuts, taking out loans to pay for her tuition and room and board. But after two years, Diana began to doubt whether the benefits of college would ever outweigh the costs, so she dropped out of school to be a full-time cashier.

She explained, "When I work, I get paid at the end of the week. But in college, I would have had to wait five years to get a degree, and once I got that, who knows if I would be working or find something I wanted to be." Now, close to $100,000 in debt, Diana has forged new dreams of getting married, buying a home with a pool in a wealthy suburb of Boston, and having five children, a cat, and a dog—by the time she is 30.

But Diana admitted that she can't even find a man with a steady job to date, let alone marry, and that she will likely regret her decision to leave school: "Everyone says you can't really go anywhere unless you have a degree. I don't think I am going to make it anywhere past Dunkin' when I am older, and that scares me to say. Like it's not enough to support me now."

Living with her mother and bringing home under $275 per week, Diana is stuck in an extended adolescence with no end in sight. Her yardsticks for adulthood—owning her own home, getting married, finishing her education, having children, and finding a job that pays her bills—remain spectacularly out of reach. "Your grandparents would get married out of high school, first go steady, then get married, like they had a house," she reflected. "Since I was 16, I have asked my mother when I would be an adult, and she recently started saying I'm an adult now that I'm working and paying rent, but I don't feel any different."

What does it mean to "grow up" today? Even just a few decades ago, the transition to adulthood would probably not have caused Diana so much confusion, anxiety, or uncertainty. In 1960, the vast majority of women married before they turned 21 and had their first child before 23. By 30, most men and women had moved out of their parents' homes, completed school, gotten married, and begun having children. As over a decade of scholarly and popular literature has revealed, however, in the latter half of the twentieth century traditional markers of adulthood have become increasingly delayed, disorderly, reversible—or have

been entirely abandoned. Unlike their 1950s counterparts, who followed a well-worn path from school to work, and courtship to marriage to childbearing, men and women today are more likely to remain unmarried; to live at home and stay in school for longer periods of time; to switch from job to job; to have children out of wedlock; to divorce; or not have children at all.

> Working-class youth are growing up in a world without jobs, without community, and without trust.

long and winding journey

Growing up, in essence, has shifted from a clear-cut, stable, and normative set of transitions to a long and winding journey. This shift has been greeted with alarm, and the Millennial Generation has often been cast as entitled, self-absorbed, and lazy. In 2013, for example, *Time* magazine's cover story on "The Me Me Me Generation" headlined: "Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents." And a poll conducted in 2011 by the consulting firm Workplace Options found that the vast majority of Americans believe that Millennials don't work as hard as the generations before them. The overriding conclusion is that things have gotten worse—and that young people are to blame.

But this longing to return to the past obscures the restrictions—and inequalities—that characterized traditional adult milestones for many young people in generations past. As the historian Stephanie Coontz reminds us, in the 1950s and '60s women couldn't serve on juries or own property or take out lines of credit in their own names; alcoholism and physical and sexual abuse within families went ignored; factory workers, despite their rising wages and generous social benefits, reported feeling imprisoned by monotonous work and merciless supervision; and African Americans were denied access to voting, pensions, and health care.

The social movements for civil rights, feminism, and gay pride that emerged during subsequent decades erased many of these barriers, granting newfound freedoms to young adults in their wake. In many ways, young people today have a great deal more freedom and opportunity than their 1950s counterparts: women, especially, can pursue higher education, advance in professional careers, choose if and when to have children, and leave abusive marriages. And all young adults have more freedom to choose a partner regardless of sex or race.

As psychologist Jeffrey Arnett argues: "More than ever before, coming of age in the twenty-first century means learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person, capable of making choices and decisions independently from among a wide range of possibilities." But that's not the whole story. Just as many social freedoms for young people have expanded, economic security—stable, well-paid jobs, access to health insurance and pensions, and affordable education—has contracted for the working class. Meanwhile, the growing fragility of American families and communities over the same time period has placed the responsibility for launching young adults into the future solely on the shoulders of themselves and their parents.

For the more affluent young adults of this "Peter Pan Generation"—those with a college fund, a parent-subsidized, unpaid internship, or an SAT coach—the freedom to delay marriage and childbearing, experiment with flexible career paths, and pursue higher education grants them the luxury to define adulthood in their own terms. But working-class men and women like Diana have to figure out what it means to be a worthy adult in a world of disappearing jobs, soaring education costs, shrinking social support networks, and fragile families.

From 2008 to 2010, I interviewed 100 working-class men and women between the ages of 24 and 34—people who have long ago reached the legal age of adulthood but still do not feel "grown up." I went from gas stations to fast-food chains, community colleges to temp agencies, tracking down working-class young people, African Americans and Whites, men and women, and documenting the myriad obstacles that stand in their way. And what I heard was profoundly alarming: caught in the throes of a merciless job market and lacking the social support, skills, and knowledge necessary for success, working-class young adults are relinquishing the hope for traditional markers of adulthood—a home, a job, a family—at the heart of the American Dream.

My conversations with these men and women uncovered the contours of a new definition of working-class adulthood: one characterized by low expectations of loyalty in work, wariness toward romantic commitment, widespread distrust of social institutions, and profound isolation from and hostility toward others who can't make it on their own. Simply put, growing up today means learning to depend on no one but yourself.

work and love amid inequality

Pervasive economic insecurity, fear of commitment, and confusion within institutions make the achievement of traditional markers of adulthood impossible and sometimes undesirable. The majority of the young people I spoke with bounce from one unstable service job to the next, racking up credit card debt to make ends meet and fearing the day when economic shocks—an illness, a school loan coming out of deferment—will erode what little stability they have.

Upon leaving high school, they quickly learned that they shouldn't expect loyalty or respect from their jobs. Jillian, a 26-year-old White woman, started out as a line cook, making $5.50 an hour the year she graduated from high school. Under the guidance of her manager, she worked her way up the line until she was his "right-hand man," running the line by herself and making sure everyone cleaned up their stations at the end of a long day. When Bill died suddenly from a heart attack, the owner waited to hire a new manager, causing a year of skeleton crews, chaos, and back-breaking 70-hour workweeks.

Jillian knew that she was lucky to have all those hours a week to work, especially in the recession, and she didn't complain: "you basically worshipped the ground they walked on because they gave you a job. You had to keep your mouth shut." But when Jillian pushed for changes and the owner snapped, "You won't get respect anywhere else, so why expect it here?" She quit. "I thought I had it going good for a while there. But everything really came to a screeching halt, and I bought a car, and now not having a job . . . I feel like I'm starting over."

Indeed, growing up means learning that trusting others, whether at school, home, or work, will only hurt them in the end. Rob is a 26-year-old White man whom I met while recruiting at a National Guard training weekend in Massachusetts. Rob told me his story in an empty office at the armory because he was currently "crashing" on his cousin's couch. When he graduated from his vocational high school, he planned to use his training in metals to build a career as a machinist: "Manufacturing technology, working with metal, I loved that stuff," he recalled longingly. As he attempted to enter the labor market, however, he quickly learned that his newly forged skills were obsolete.

> Coming of age means learning to depend only on yourself.

"I was the last class at my school to learn to manufacture tools by hand," he explained. "Now they use CNC [computer numerical controlled] machine programs, so they just draw the part in the computer and plug it into the machine, and the machine cuts it. . . . I haven't learned to do that, because I was the last class before they implemented that in the program at school, and now if you want to get a job as a machinist without CNC, they want five years' experience. My skills are useless."

Over the last five years, Rob has stacked lumber, installed hardwood floors, landscaped, and poured steel at a motorcycle factory. His only steady source of income since high school graduation has been his National Guard pay, and although he recently returned from his second 18-month deployment in Afghanistan, he is already considering a third: "I am looking for a new place. I don't have a job. My car is broken. It's like, what exactly can you do when your car is broken and you have no job, no real source of income, and you are making four or five hundred dollars a month in [military] drills." He explains his economic predicament: "Where are you going to live, get your car fixed, on $500 a month? I can't save making 500 bucks a month. That just covers my bills. I have no savings to put down first and last on an apartment, no car to get a job. I find myself being like, oh what the hell? Can't it just be over? Can't I just go to Iraq right now? Send me two weeks ago so I got a paycheck already!"

Insecurity seeps into the institution of family, leaving respondents uncertain about both the feasibility and desirability of commitment. Deeply forged cultural connections between economic viability, manhood, and marriage prove devastating, as men's falling wages and rising job instability leave them uncertain about the meanings of masculinity in the twenty-first century. Brandon, a 34-year-old Black man who manages the night shift at a women's clothing chain, explained matter-of-factly, "No woman wants to sit on the couch all the time and watch TV and eat at Burger King. I can only take care of myself now. I am missing out on life but making do with what I have."

For working-class women who have grown up shouldering immense social and economic burdens on their own, being responsible for another person who may ultimately let them down doesn't feel worth the risk. Lauren, a 24-year-old barista who was kicked out of her father's house when she came out as a lesbian, has weathered years of addiction, homelessness, and depression, finally emerging as a survivor, sober and able to pay her own rent. She has chosen to remain single because she fears having to take care of someone else.

"I mean, everybody's life sucks, get over it! My mom's an alcoholic, my dad kicked me out of the house. It's not a handicap; it has made me stronger. And I want someone who has, you know, similarly overcome their respective obstacle and learned and grown from them, rather than someone who is bogged down by it and is always the victim." As Lauren suggests, since intimacy carries with it the threat of self-destruction, young working-class men and women forgo the benefits of lasting commitment, including pooled material resources, mutual support, and love itself.

Children symbolize the one remaining source of trust, love, and commitment; while pregnancies are usually accidental, becoming a parent provides motivation, dignity, and self-worth. As Sherrie, whose pregnancy gave her the courage to break up with her abusive boyfriend, explained: "You have a baby to take care of! My daughter is the reason why I am the way I am today. If I didn't have her, I think I might be a crackhead or an alcoholic or in an abusive relationship!" Yet the social institutions in which young adults create families can work against their desire to nurture and protect their children.

Rachel, a young Black single mother, joined the National Guard in order to go to college for free through the GI Bill. However, working 40 hours a week at her customer service job, attending weekend army drills, and parenting has left her with little time for taking college classes. Hearing rumors that her National Guard unit may deploy to Iraq for a third time in January, she is tempted to put in for discharge so that she is not separated from her son again. However, her desire to give her son everything she possibly can—including the things she can buy with the higher, tax-free combat pay she receives when she deploys—keeps her from signing the papers: "I am kinda half and half with the deployment coming up. I could use it for the money. I could do more for my son. But I missed the first two years of my son's life and now I might have to leave again. It's just rough. You can't win."

distrust and isolation

Common celebrations of adulthood—whether weddings, graduations, house-warmings, birthdays—are more than just parties; they are rituals for marking community membership and shared, public expressions of commitment, obligation, rights, and belonging. But for the young men and women I spoke with, there was little sense of shared joy or belonging in their accounts of coming of age. Instead, I heard story after story of isolation and distrust experienced within a vast array of social institutions, including higher education, the criminal justice system, the government, and the military. While we may think of the life course as a process of social integration, marked by public celebrations of transitions, young working-class men and women depend on others at their peril.

> Soaring education costs and shrinking support networks make it difficult to gain the skills and knowledge needed to build a secure adult life.

They believe that a college education will provide the tools for success. Jay, a 28-year-old Black man, struggled through seven years of college. He failed several classes after his mother suffered a severe mental breakdown. After being expelled from college and working for a year, helping his mom get back on her feet, he went before the college administration and petitioned to be reinstated. He described them as "a panel of five people who were not nice." As Jay saw it, "It's their job to hear all these sob stories, you know I understand that, but they just had this attitude, like you know what I mean, 'oh your mom had a breakdown and you couldn't turn to anyone?' I just wanted to be like, fuck you, but I wanted to go to college, so I didn't say fuck you." When he eventually graduated, when he was 25, he "was so disillusioned by the end of it, my attitude toward college was like, I just want to get out and get it over with, you know what I mean, and just like, put it behind me, really." He shrugged: "I felt like it wasn't anything to celebrate. I mean I graduated with a degree. Which ultimately I'm not even sure if that was what I wanted, but there was a point where I was like I have to pick some bullshit I can fly through and just get through. I didn't find it at all worthwhile."

Since graduating three years ago, with a communications major, Jay has worked in a series of food service and coffee-shop jobs. Reflecting on where his life has taken him, he fumed: "They were just blowing smoke up my ass—the world is at my fingertips, you can rule the world, be whatever you want, all this stuff. When I was 15, 16, I would not have envisioned the life I am living now. Whatever I imagined, I figured I would wear a suit every day, that I would own things. I don't own anything. I don't own a car. If I had a car, I wouldn't be able to afford my

daily life. I'm coasting and cruising and not sure about what I should be doing."

Christopher, a 24-year-old who has been unemployed for nine months, further illustrates how distrust and isolation is intensified by bewildering interactions with institutions. As he put it, "I have this problem of being tricked. . . . Like I will get a phone call that says, you won a free supply of magazines. And they will start coming to my house. Then all of a sudden I am getting calls from bill collectors for the subscriptions to *Maxim* and *ESPN*. It's a run around: I can't figure out who to call. Now I don't even pick up the phone, like I almost didn't pick up when you called me."

Recently, Christopher was taxed $400 for not purchasing mandatory health insurance in Massachusetts, which he could not afford because he was unemployed, and did not know how to access for free. Like many of my respondents, he lacks the skills and know-how to navigate the institutions that frame the transition to adulthood. He tells his coming-of-age story as one incident of deception after another—each of which incurs a heavy emotional and financial cost. But while he acknowledges that he has not achieved the traditional markers of adulthood, he still believes that he is at least partially an adult because of the way he has learned to manage his feelings of betrayal: "I ended up the way I am because of my experiences. I have seen crazy shit. Like now if I see someone beating someone up in the street, I don't scream. I don't care. I have no emotions or feelings." Growing up hardened against and detached from the world, and dependent on no one, Christopher protects himself from the possibility of trickery and betrayal.

remaking working-class adulthood

The working-class men and women I spoke with lack the necessary knowledge, skills, credentials, and money to launch themselves into a secure adult future, as well as the social support and guidance to protect themselves from economic and social turmoil. But despite their profound anger, betrayal, and loss, they do not want pity—and they do not expect a handout. On the contrary, at a time when individual solutions to collective structural problems is a requirement for survival, they believe that adulthood means taking responsibility for one's own successes and failures. Emma, who works as a waitress, praised her grandfather who worked his way up digging ditches for a gas company; she says it is now up to her to "take what you are given and utilize it correctly." Similarly, Kelly, a line cook who has lived on and off in her car, explains, "Life doesn't owe me any favors. I can have a sense of my own specialness and individuality, but that doesn't mean that anybody else has to recognize that or help me accomplish my goals."

This bootstrap mentality, while highly praised in our culture, has a darker side: blaming those who can't make it on their own. Wanda, the daughter of a tow-truck driver who wants to go to college but can't afford the tuition, expresses anger at her parents' lack of economic support: "I feel like it's their fault they don't have nothing." Working-class youth have little trust even in those closest to them and—despite the social and economic forces that work against their efforts—they blame themselves for their shortcomings.

Julian, a young Black man, is a disabled vet who is unemployed, divorced, and living with his mother. Describing his inability to find a steady job and lasting relationship, he tells me: "Every day I look in the mirror, and I could bullshit you right now and tell you that race has something to do with it. But at the end of the day looking in the mirror, I know where all my shortcomings come from. From the things that I either did not do or I did and I just happen to fail at them." They believe that understanding their shortcomings in terms of structural barriers to mobility is a crutch; both Blacks and

Whites are hostile toward others who do not take sole responsibility for their own failures.

John, a 27-year-old Black man who sells shoes, explained: "Society lets it [race] affect me. It's not what I want to do, but society puts tags on everybody. You gotta be presentable, take care of yourself. It's about how a man looks at himself and how people look at him. Some people use it as a crutch, but it's not gonna be my crutch." That is, while Black men and women acknowledge that discrimination persists, they see navigating racism as an individual game of cunning. All make a virtue out of not asking for help, out of rejecting dependence and surviving completely on their own, mapping these traits onto their definitions of adulthood. Those who fail to "fix themselves" are met with disdain and disgust—they are not worthy adults.

This hardening against oneself and others could have profound personal and political consequences for the future of the American working class. Its youngest members embrace self-sufficiency, blame those who are unsuccessful in the labor market, and choose distrust and isolation as the only way to survive. Rather than target the vast social, economic, and cultural changes that have disrupted the transition to adulthood—the decline of good jobs, the weakening of unions, the shrinking of communities— they target themselves. In the end, if they have to go it alone, then everyone else should, too. And it is hard to find even a glimmer of hope for their futures.

Their coming-of-age stories are still unfolding, their futures not yet written. In order to tell a different kind of story—one that promises hope, dignity, and connection—they must begin their journeys to adulthood with a living wage and the skills and knowledge to confront the future. They need neighborhoods and communities that share responsibility for launching them into the future. And they need new definitions of dignity that do not make a virtue out of isolation, self-reliance, and distrust. The health and vibrancy of all our communities depend on the creation and nurturance of definitions of adulthood that foster connection and interdependence.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Andrew Cherlin. 2009. *The Marriage Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today.* New York: Vintage Books.

> Traces the transformation of American families over the past century and points to alarming class-based differences in marriage patterns.

Kathryn Edin and Timothy J. Nelson. 2013. *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

> Sheds light on the experiences of low-income fathers and their struggles to care for their children despite their lack of jobs and rocky relationships with their children's mothers.

Frank F. Furstenberg, Sheela Kennedy, Vonnie C. McLoyd, Rubén G. Rumbaut, and Richard A. Settersten Jr. 2004. "Growing Up Is Harder to Do." *Contexts* 3: 33–41.

> Provides a comprehensive overview of the delayed transition to adulthood for working-class youth.

Jacob Hacker. 2006. "The Privotization of Risk and the Growing and Economic Insecurity of Americans." http://privatizationofrisk.ssrc.org.

> Documents the recent cultural and political shifts in the United States that have demolished social safety nets and promoted self-reliance, untrammeled individualism, and personal responsibility.

Arne L. Kalleberg. 2009. "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers." *American Sociological Review* 74: 1–22.

> Explains how and why working-class jobs have become increasingly scarce, insecure, and competitive.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the system working against working-class young adults?
2. The author uses qualitative interviews to look at the transition to adulthood. What kind of information do these interviews add that some quantitative work may miss?
3. How can policy-makers ensure that the policies they are creating to foster economic growth reach all members of the population?

marrying across class lines

spring 2015

even when married couples think childhood class differences are in the past, those factors shape how each spouse tackles tasks and allocates resources.

Christie, a cheerful social worker in her mid-40s, told me about the first time she met her husband, Mike. It was more than 30 years ago, when they were in junior high school. She used to watch Mike as he wiped off the tables before the next round of students entered the school cafeteria. She thought he was cute and smart. And she was not fooled by his job—she knew that it was people like her who usually cleaned tables, not people like Mike. In fact, her father worked on the maintenance crew at their school.

Mike's father, by contrast, was a productive professor who authored famous books and traveled the world attending conferences and giving lectures. As Christie knew, Mike washed tables in exchange for being allowed to go to the front of the line to collect his food, not because he needed the money.

When the couple began dating, their class differences became obvious. Her parents rarely bought new items; their cars were used and the ping pong table they gave her for Christmas was put together with items they found. Pop-Tarts were her favorite food, but one that they could rarely afford. Mike's family bought expensive new cars, went on annual vacations, had cable TV, and had enough money left over to tuck a good amount away in Mike's trust fund. But while they had grown up with different amounts of resources, by the time we talked, Christie did not feel that their differences mattered. Over 25 years of marriage, they shared a house, a bank account, a level of educational attainment, and, later, three children. Their lives had merged, and so had their resources. To Christie, their class differences were part of their pasts, and, in any case, never mattered much: "I don't think that it was the actual economic part that made the tension for Mike and I. It was personality style more than class or money."

Christie was one of the 64 adults in 32 couples I interviewed about their marriages, their current families, and their pasts. In order to focus on how class background matters in a small sample, all respondents were White college-educated adults in heterosexual marriages. Half were like Christie—they had grown up in the working class. The other half were like Mike—they had grown up in the middle class. All were married to a partner whose class origin was different than their own. My goal was to discern how what most respondents, like Christie, did not think mattered—their class background—was related to their ways of attending to their own lives and to their marriages. Although respondents tended to think their class differences were behind them, irrelevant to their current lives, instead they left a deep imprint that their marriage, their shared resources, and their thousands of days together did not erase.

social class and family life

It is common knowledge that families located in different social classes develop different ways of going about daily life. Such differences were made famous in the 1970s by sociologist and psychologist Lillian Rubin in her classic book *Worlds of Pain*. Rubin interviewed couples and demonstrated that the texture of family life, as well as ideas of what it means to be a good parent, child, and spouse, are all shaped by the resources and jobs available to families. Later, sociologist Annette Lareau offered another in-depth look, observing that the daily interactions between parents and children, and, to some degree, between adult members of the family, differed by social class. Middle-class parents, she found, tended to manage their children's lives, while working-class parents more often let their children grow. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu also observed wide class differences. He theorized that class not only shapes family life, but also individuals' ideas and instincts about how to use resources, spend time, and interact with others. Sociologists do not see each family as wholly unique, but shaped by the resources available to them in their class position.

Such work suggests that people like Christie and Mike, who grew up in different social classes, were likely to have different experiences of family and develop different ideas about a "good life." However, when scholars of social class and family life conduct research, they usually focus on the divide between college-educated couples and everyone else. This divide *is* critical for understanding inequality, but it is problematic to simply call couples like Christie and Mike a college-educated, middle-class couple. The label erases the fact that Christie and Mike spent two decades in a class apart, and that upwardly mobile people like Christie may carry their ideas of family and a good life with them into their marriage and the middle class.

Indeed, simply referring to Christie and Mike as a college-educated, middle-class couple ignores that Christie knew what it was like to grow up with limited savings, watch a parent go to a job that was consistently framed as a means to an end, and grow up in a family that expressed their emotions immediately and intensely. It ignores that Mike knew of none of these things. He knew, instead, of family safety nets, jobs that were enjoyed beyond their financial ends, and emotions that were rationalized and guarded.

When social scientists ignore these background differences, they present only differences *between* college-educated and high school–educated couples, overlooking differences *within* college-educated couples. And when married couples ignore these differences, they ignore that the class of each partner's past organizes and shapes the contours of their marriage.

the organization of difference

Christie believed that her differences from Mike were driven by their personalities. She wasn't wrong. What she did not realize, however, was that what she called their personalities were, in turn, related to their class trajectory. People like Christie—born into the working class but now college educated—tended to prefer taking what I call a *laissez-faire* approach to their daily lives. They preferred to go with the flow, enjoy the moment, and live free from self-imposed constraints. They assumed things would work out without their intervention. People like Mike—those born into the middle

> Although respondents tended to think their class differences were behind them, they left a deep imprint that their marriage, shared resources, and thousands of days together did not erase.

class—instead tended to prefer to take what I call a *managerial* approach to their daily lives. They preferred to plan, monitor, organize, and oversee. They assumed that things would not work out without their active intervention.

The people I interviewed did not just apply laissez-faire and managerial tendencies to one aspect of their lives, but *seven*. When it came to how to attend to their money, paid work, housework, time, leisure, parenting, and emotions, middle-class-origin respondents tended to want to plan, organize, and oversee. Working-class-origin respondents more often preferred to let things take their own course without as much intervention.

Take, for example, how Christie and Mike thought about money. When I met them, they had shared a bank account for over two decades, but they did not share ideas of how to use the money in it. Referring to money, Christie repeatedly told Mike: "Live for the day!" Growing up, saving for long-range plans was not possible. Christie's family had to spend what they had to pay their bills today. A small amount in savings was also normal to her as a child, and continued to be normal to her as a college-educated adult. Christie said that she learned from her parents' experience that worrying about money was unnecessary: even without much money, things would work out. Now that she and Mike were both college-educated professionals who earned much more than her parents, this seemed especially true. Free from concerns over necessities, she now made a point to be free from worrying about money.

Mike, however, grew up in a family with more money and more options. His family could pay for their daily needs, then choose how to save for college tuition, retirement, rainy days, and leisure. For him, thinking about how to manage money was normal and he learned that management could make a difference. As an adult, Mike budgeted, monitored their current expenditures, forecasted their future expenses, and worried about whether he was earning enough. When Christie told him to "live for the day" and worry less, he reported responding: "I see that. But at the same time, we had three kids in college, and we're in our mid-forties. We have a lot of expenses." He felt that Christie's laissez-faire philosophy was reasonable, but he felt more comfortable with a managerial one.

Their differences also extended to work. Christie grew up observing her father work in a job as a maintenance worker at her public school while her mother did unpaid labor at home. There was no career ladder for her father to climb. Hours were circumscribed by a time clock and putting in more hours would not lead to more status or opportunities. Mike also saw his mother doing unpaid home labor, but observed his father, a professor, on a career ladder—from graduate student, to assistant, associate, and then full professor. More hours could lead to more books published, more prestige, and more opportunities to share his ideas.

Such differences likely shaped Christie's and Mike's ideas of work. Mike felt he had to prod Christie, a social worker, to not be "status quo"—to work longer hours and think about how moving to a new place might give them opportunities to get ahead. Christie, for her part, admired Mike's dedication to work, but did not understand it. Mike owned his own business. He worked long hours (despite not being paid by the hour) and he constantly felt pressure to achieve more. Christie asked him to work fewer hours and have more faith that his business would do fine without his planning, strategizing, and long

> Just as taking the person out of the class did not take the class out of the person, a marriage was not a new beginning that removed the imprints of each partner's class past.

hours. So, just as Mike asked Christie to take a more managerial approach to work—one where she organized and planned her career trajectory—Christie asked Mike to take a more laissez-faire approach—one where he put in less time, did less planning, and assumed his career would be okay. Though each understood the other's perspective, neither adopted it. Christie maintained her hands-off approach to work. Mike maintained his hands-on one.

This hands-on/hands-off, or managerial/laissez-faire divide organized many other aspects of their lives. Mike wanted to manage the division of housework by putting "more structure in the whole idea of who is going to do what" around the house. Christie wanted each to do the household tasks as they got around to them. Mike preferred to manage his feelings—to slowly process and weigh how to express them. Christie felt it was more genuine to express emotions as they were felt and in the way they were felt. Christie summarized their differences when she described Mike as Type A, driven, and organized—all things that she felt she was not.

Some of the differences that Christie and Mike expressed might sound like gender differences. Gender certainly shapes *how much* time each spouse spends on each task and *how much* power they have over decisions in different spheres. But with the exception of the highly gendered spheres of housework and parenting in which it was mainly women who followed the managerial/laissez-faire divide, class origin alone shaped how each partner wanted to tackle each task and use each resource. Take, for example, Leslie and Tom. They proudly proclaim that they are nerds: they met at a science fiction convention, continued their courtship through singing together in a science fiction–themed choir, and, as a married couple, engage in role-playing games together.

Their shared interests and college degrees, however, could not mask the lingering ways their class backgrounds shaped their lives and their marriage.

Leslie, a fit 40-year-old with short brown hair and glasses, was raised by a graduate school–educated middle-manager and a college-educated homemaker. She attended private school with the sons and daughters of celebrities, judges, and politicians—where, she said, "famous and rich people were the norm." Her husband, Tom, a shy, dark-haired 40-year-old, grew up as the son of a high school–educated security guard and a nurse. He attended public school. While their childhood class differences certainly could have been wider, they still mapped onto ways of organizing their lives. Leslie, like Mike, preferred a managerial approach to her life—scheduling, planning, organizing, and monitoring. Tom, like Christie, felt that a hands-off approach was a better way to live.

The differences that Leslie and Tom described about money mirrored those that Mike and Christie expressed. Leslie stated simply: "I'm the saver and he's the spender." But it was not just how much Tom spent that bothered Leslie, it was also that Tom did not actively think about managing their money. Leslie complained: "I do the lion's share of work. Beyond the lion's share of the work . . . balancing stuff, actually paying the bills, keeping track of things, saying we need to have some goals. Both big picture and small picture stuff." She said that Tom did not manage money; he spent without thinking.

Tom knew of Leslie's concern: "She worries a lot more about money than I do. About how we're doing . . . I think she would like it if I paid more attention to what our expenses are and how the money is going out." They had been having these debates for the past 20 years,

Class origin shaped how each partner wanted to tackle each task and use each resource.

but their differences had not gone away. Leslie said she still couldn't get Tom to set financial goals or think about how each expense fit in with their overall plan. Their compromise was that Tom checked with Leslie before making big purchases. But this was not an optimal solution for Leslie, who called herself the "superego"—the one who still had to make the decisions about how to manage their money, about what they really needed and what they could forgo. Tom still assumed it would all work out, that a hands-off approach would do just fine.

Leslie also noted that she took a managerial approach to work, whereas Tom took a laissez-faire one. At the time of the interview, Leslie was a college-educated, part-time secretary at her children's school. Tom was a college-educated computer programmer. Though Leslie's job was less prestigious, she found much more satisfaction in it, talking about the sense of accomplishment she had at work, the meaning of doing good work, and her goals for the future. She was not sure what her next career move would be, but she knew one thing: "I want to get somewhere." Tom didn't want to get anywhere with work. Leslie cried as she explained: "He's been at the same job for quite awhile and only moves when forced to."

Leslie clarified that her concern was not about how much Tom earned, but about his approach to his career: "I can totally understand being content. It's more that sometimes I just don't know what he wants and I'm not sure he knows. And this may sound dumb, but the actual goals, what they are, worry me less than not having any." To Leslie, careers were to be managed. Goals were to be created and worked toward. Tom did not have the same sense.

Their differences also extended past what is directly related to class—money and work—to other parts of their lives. Like Mike, Leslie wanted to structure housework more than Tom

did, so she delegated tasks and monitored his work. Tom, like Christie, figured the housework could be done when he got to it, without as much of a schedule. Leslie and Mike liked to plan and organize in general. However, while Mike appreciated that Christie got him to pause his planning and "stop to smell the roses," Leslie was upset that Tom did not plan. She expressed it as a deficiency: "If you plan, if you're a planner, you do that mental projecting all the time. You're thinking ahead, saying, 'What's going to happen if I do this?' I really don't think he does that. I don't know if it's because he doesn't want to, it's too hard, he doesn't have the capacity, I don't know. But he just doesn't do that." Tom defended his approach: "She definitely wants more structure in things we do, more planning. I'm more of a 'Let's just do it' [person] and it will get done the best way we can get it done."

Leslie also insisted that their children's time be structured by adults, guided by routines, and directed at learning-related outcomes. But Tom, again, questioned this approach: "Leslie thinks they need more structure than they really do." As such, when he was in charge of parenting, he did not ask their daughters to have a regular reading time or strict bedtime. He did not view each of the kids' behaviors as in need of monitoring, assessing, or guiding. As sociologist Annette Lareau observed of people currently in the working class, Tom, who was born into the working class but no longer a member, felt that the kids would be fine without parents' constant management.

navigating difference

The laissez-faire/managerial differences that couples like Christie and Mike and Leslie and Tom navigated were common to the couples I interviewed—college-educated couples in which each partner grew up in a different class. The systematic differences that these couples

faced meant that class infused their marriages, usually without their knowledge. These differences, however, were not experienced in a uniform way.

Most of the people I interviewed appreciated their spouse's differences, or at least found them understandable and valid. A minority of couples, however, found their differences to be more divisive. In these couples, middle-class-origin respondents disdained their spouse's attitudes and asked their spouse to change.

Christie and Mike were one of the couples who dealt with their differences with respect and even admiration. Mike did not always agree with Christie's laissez-faire approach, but he appreciated her sense that he sometimes needed to manage less and live in the moment more. Christie sometimes found Mike's managerial style frustrating, but she also admired how organized he was. She appreciated how well Mike had done in his career and respected that he needed more planning, organization, and monitoring to feel secure. They preferred different approaches, but they saw the benefits of the other's way and tried to accommodate their partner's differences.

Leslie and Tom did not navigate their differences with such ease. Leslie defined Tom's hands-off approach as deeply flawed. As such, her strategy was to get him to change—to get him to do things in a more managerial way. But her strategy left them both unhappy. Tom resented being asked to change; Leslie fumed that Tom would say he would change, but did not. She explained: "Mostly what happens is he says, 'You're right. That would be better.' But the implementation is just not always there." Leslie remained frustrated with what she saw as the inadequacy of Tom's style, and Tom remained frustrated that Leslie did not see the benefits of living a life that was less structured, scheduled, and planned. Asking for assimilation was a failed strategy, both in that it did not work and in that

respondents said that it left them disappointed and dissatisfied.

Regardless of how they navigated their differences—with respect or demands for change—couples like Mike and Christie and Leslie and Tom had to navigate the subtle ways that the class of their pasts still shaped their lives and their marriages. The decades that each couple was together, their shared college degrees, and their shared resources did not erase the fact that the middle-class-origin partners preferred to take a managerial approach to their lives while working-class-origin partners favored a laissez-faire one. Just as taking the person out of the class did not take the class out of the person, a marriage was not a new beginning that removed the imprints of each partner's class past.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. *Distinction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

> Offers a theoretically sophisticated examination of how social class is related to tastes, worldviews, and dispositions.

Marcia Carlson and Paula England, eds. 2011. *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

> Charts demographic changes that have occurred between families in different social classes.

Annette Lareau. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

> Explains how parenting styles differ by social class.

Lillian Rubin. 1976. *Worlds of Pain*. New York: Basic Books.

> Provides a detailed account of how marriage, parenting, and work are related to social class, especially for the working class.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do the laissez-faire and managerial approaches differ in terms of how people prefer to organize their daily lives? Do you think these distinctions make sense?
2. Think about your own life and class background. Do you think whether you grew up working class, middle class, or upper class has shaped how you approach your education and career plans?
3. Pretend you are a counselor working with couples who come from different class backgrounds. What advice might you give to couples to help them come to agreement about managing their finances?