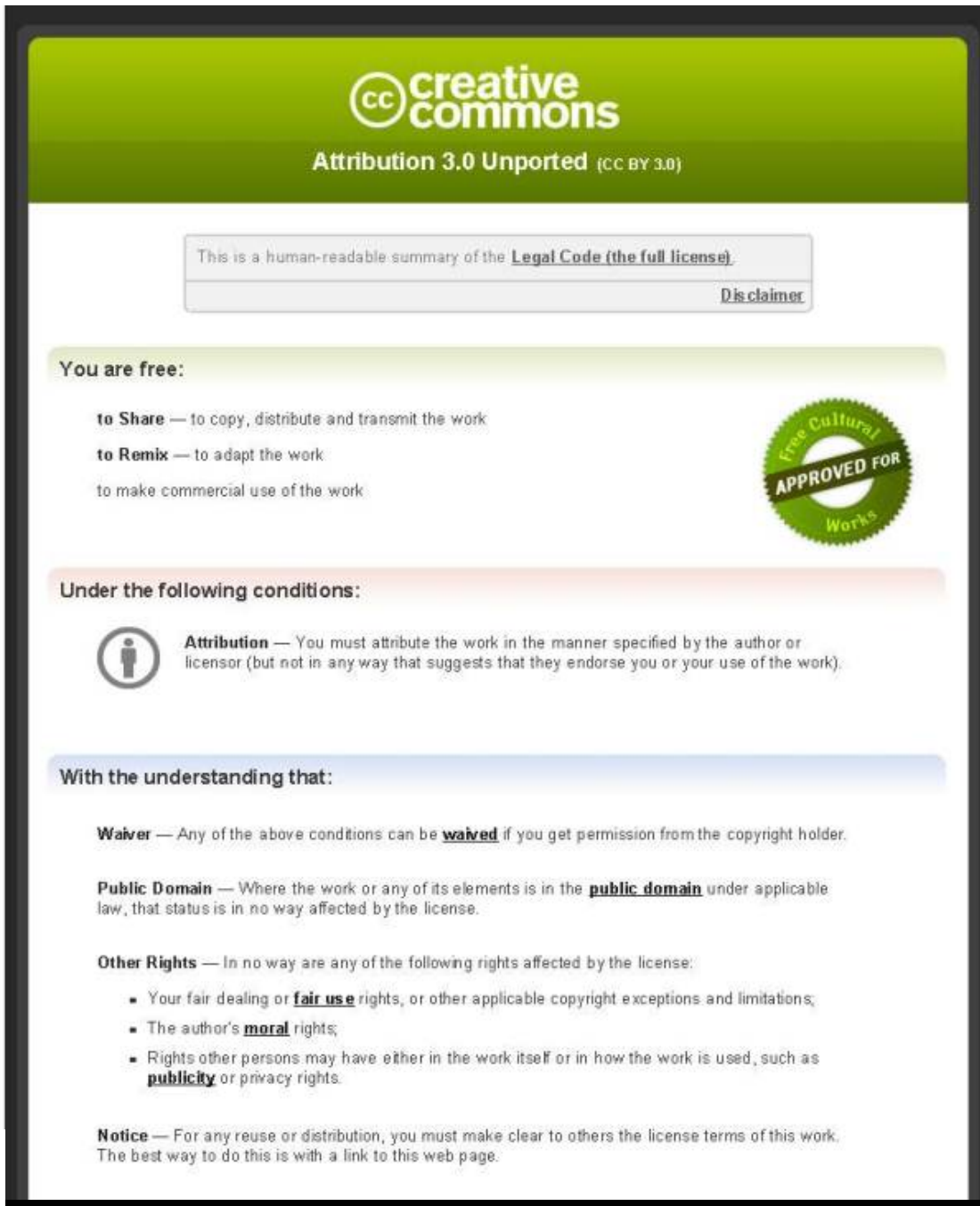




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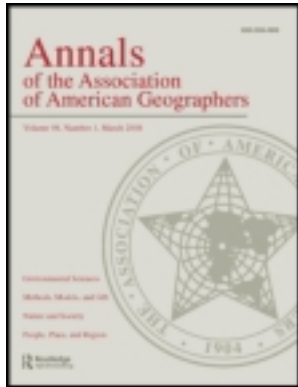
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### Enriching Children, Institutionalizing Childhood? Geographies of Play, Extracurricular Activities, and Parenting in England

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# Enriching Children, Institutionalizing Childhood? Geographies of Play, Extracurricular Activities, and Parenting in England

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Geographical research on children, youth, and families has done much to highlight the ways in which children's lives have changed over the last twenty-five years. A key strand of research concerns children's play and traces, in the Global North, a decline in children's independent access to, and mobility through, public space. This article shifts the terrain of that debate from an analysis of what has been lost to an exploration of what has replaced it. Specifically, it focuses on children's participation in enrichment activities, including both individual and collective extracurricular sporting, cultural, and leisure opportunities in England. The research reveals that middle-class children have much higher participation rates in enrichment activities than their working-class counterparts. Parents value enrichment activities in very similar ways across the class spectrum—seeing them as fun, healthy, and social opportunities. The ability to pay for enrichment, however, means that it is incorporated into, and transforms, middle-class family life in ways not open to working-class families. Nevertheless, support across the class spectrum for these instrumental forms of play that institutionalize childhood in school, community, and commercial spaces leads to calls for subsidized provision for low-income children through schools. The article thus traces the “enrichment” and “institutionalization” of childhood and draws out the implications of this for how we think about play, education, parenting, and class in geography. *Key Words:* children's geographies, concerted cultivation, geographies of education, parenting, social class.

儿童、青少年与家庭的地理研究，致力于凸显儿童生活在过去二十五年来改变。该研究的重要部分之一便是考量儿童的游戏，并追溯全球北方儿童减少中的接近公共空间的独立管道，以及通过该空间获得的能动性。本文将该辩论场域自“我们失去了什么”转向探讨“什么取代了它”。本研究特别聚焦英国儿童的丰富性活动参与，同时包含个人及团体的课外运动、文化及休憩机会。研究显示，中产阶级的儿童相对于工人阶级的孩童而言，大幅具有更高的丰富性活动参与度。在不同的阶级光谱中，家长重视丰富性活动的方式是一致的——将这些活动视为趣味、健康与社交的机会。但能够负担丰富性活动的经济能力，却代表着丰富性活动纳入并改变了中产阶级家庭的生活，但这些管道却无法开放给工人阶级的家庭。然而不同阶级对于这些将学校、社区及商业空间的儿童时期制度化的工具化游戏形式的支持，导致了透过学校系统对低收入儿童的参与提供补贴之呼吁。本文于此追溯儿童时期的“丰富化”与“制度化”，并从中汲取有关我们如何在地理学中思考游戏、教育、养育以及阶级的意涵。关键词：儿童地理，协同教养，教育地理，养育，社会阶级。

La investigación geográfica relacionada con niños, jóvenes y familias ha contribuido mucho en destacar las maneras como las vidas de los chicos han cambiado durante los pasados veinticinco años. Un cabo clave de la investigación a este respecto se relaciona con el juego de los niños e indica, en el Norte Global, una declinación en el acceso independiente de los niños al espacio público y a su movilidad a través del mismo. Este artículo cambia el escenario del debate, reemplazando el análisis sobre lo que se ha perdido con una exploración de aquello que lo ha reemplazado. Se enfoca específicamente en la participación de los niños en actividades enriquecedoras en Inglaterra, incluyendo a la vez oportunidades individuales y colectivas extracurriculares en aspectos deportivos, culturales y de esparcimiento. La investigación revela que los niños de clase media tienen tasas de participación mucho más altas en actividades de enriquecimiento que sus contrapartes de la clase obrera. Los padres valoran las actividades enriquecedoras de modo muy similar a través del espectro de clases—considerándolas como oportunidades divertidas, saludables y sociales. Sin embargo, la capacidad de pagar por el enriquecimiento significa su incorporación en la vida de la familia de clase media, transformándola, en términos no accesibles para las familias de clase obrera. No obstante, el apoyo que se presta a través del espectro de clase para estas formas

instrumentales de juego que institucionalizan la niñez en la escuela, la comunidad y los espacios comerciales, lleva a las peticiones de ayuda subsidiada para niños de ingresos bajos a través de las escuelas. Así el artículo explora el “enriquecimiento” y la “institucionalización” de la niñez y saca a flote las implicaciones que esto tiene sobre nuestra forma de pensar el juego, la educación, crianza y clase en geografía. *Palabras clave: geografías de los niños, cultivo concertado, geografías de la educación, crianza, clase social.*

Geographical research on children, youth, and families has done much to trace the ways in which children’s lives have changed over the last twenty-five years. The field has roots in the late 1960s and 1970s, but it grew to critical mass during the 1990s (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011), an era that saw the blossoming of what has become an enduring interest in the changing nature of children’s play. Valentine’s (1996a, 1996b) research, which built on earlier traditions (e.g., Hart 1979), played an important role in mainstreaming research into children’s outdoor play and their independent mobility in urban and rural space. Conceptually, she highlighted the adultist nature of public space, showing how wider reservoirs of ideas about childhood (see Jenks 1996) are enrolled in the discursive construction of this sphere as a place of risk for “angelic” young children or a place put at risk of disruption by “devil-like” teenagers. Empirically, Valentine and McKendrick (1997) explored the importance of these ideas in local parenting cultures, as mothers (and to a lesser extent fathers) of primary-aged<sup>1</sup> children sought to manage their youngsters’ independent use of public space. In so doing, they traced a pattern in which children’s freedom to play out in, and travel through, their local neighborhoods declined in the last decades of the twentieth century, notwithstanding the ability of some children to subvert adult restrictions (Valentine 1997; Valentine and McKendrick 1997).

The impact that fears about traffic accidents and stranger danger, and concerns about the control of public space, have on children and young people’s ability to play, hang out, and move through public space continues to be of geographical interest through to the present day. From the late 1990s onward, the influence that the new social studies of childhood had in geography can be seen in the way these studies started to explore children’s perspectives on these issues, either independently or alongside that of their parents (O’Brien et al. 2000; Tucker and Matthews 2001). Such research teased out variations among children (differentiated by age, class, ethnicity, gender, and location) in their experience of restrictions on, and in some cases freedom around, outdoor play and mobility in different types of public space (Karsten 2005; Mitchell, Kearns, and Collins 2007; Brown et al. 2008; Cope 2008; Kato 2009; Larsen, Gilliland, and Hess 2012). Parents’ per-

spectives remain important, however, reflecting both the feminist roots of children’s geographies (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011) and parental influence on the experiences of children (Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans 2011; Tezel 2011; Alparone and Pacilli 2012).

What emerges from this research is a picture of childhood in the Global North where many children—often middle-class, female, younger, and ethnic-minority children—have more restricted outdoor play opportunities and independent use of public space than in previous generations. Instead of playing out, these children are now increasingly likely to play in the home and garden, with some being channeled into commercialized play spaces and supervised clubs and activities (Leander, Phillips, and Taylor 2010). Much of the empirically rich literature charts what has been lost in terms of children’s outdoor play and independent mobility through an analysis of the changing socio-spatial organization of children’s play (or alternatively identifies particular social groups for whom this has enduring meaning). By contrast, there is a paucity of research in children’s geographies on what has been gained or, more appropriately, what has replaced greater levels of outdoor play. Katz (2008, 10–11) argued that anxiety over political economic futures in the Global North has led to an intensification of parenting and a “super-saturation of resources in particular children,” resulting in the phenomena of the “overscheduled child” whose every minute is filled with productive activities designed to ensure their success in a changing world. Empirical studies that begin to trace parents’ perspectives on, and children’s growing participation in (or exclusion from), organized clubs and activities, however, are very few and far between in geography (Skelton 2000; Mattsson 2002; Karsten 2005).

This article aims to redress the balance in the geographical literature on children’s play and use of public space. We share the widespread concern about children’s declining access to public space in the Global North but contend that it is now crucial to consider what is replacing this through a contemporary focus on organized clubs and activities. We follow the United Kingdom policy context in referring to these as enrichment activities (Training and Development Agency for Schools 2007), as the diverse sports opportunities (from archery, to football,<sup>2</sup> martial

arts, swimming, etc.), uniformed organizations (e.g., Brownies/Cubs<sup>3</sup>), and cultural activities (including chess, dance, drama, languages, and music classes) offer children the opportunity to learn new skills beyond the standard education curriculum. These take place both on school premises (e.g., at lunchtime, at the end of the school day, or on weekends) and in a wide range of other public spaces (including community halls, leisure centers, sports clubs, and theaters). Some school-based clubs are run free of charge by teachers, some on- and off-school-site activities involve the voluntary participation of other adults and are run on a not-for-profit basis, but many in- and out-of-school activities are part of a fast developing industry of commercially provided enrichment opportunities.

A reading of the sociological and educational literature allows us to set geographical interest in enrichment activities in a broader academic context. Lareau's (2000, 2002) much-cited work on American family life has played a crucial role in placing enrichment activities on the social science agenda. Her ethnographic work highlights how different cultural logics of parenting in middle-class and working-class and poor households shape children's daily lives in distinct ways. Middle-class families in her study, regardless of race, tend to engage in "concerted cultivation" (Lareau 2002, 748), deliberately fostering children's talents through enrichment activities and engaging them in extensive reasoning (see also Vincent and Ball 2007; Stefansen and Aarseth 2011). The effect of this demanding rota of enrichment activities both immediately in terms of a rather frenetic pace of life and longer term in the development of social and cultural capital has led others to call for it to be labeled as childhood work (Levey 2009). Lareau and Weininger (2008) also highlighted the huge amount of work that concerted cultivation involves for parents, especially mothers, as preparation for, transportation to, and attendance at these activities come to dominate middle-class family life (Lareau 2002; Lareau and Weininger 2008). There are links here to the nascent geographical literature where the growth of activities has produced a focus on parental chauffeuring for children's leisure (Mattsson 2002) and the emergence of what Karsten (2005, 286) labels a "backseat generation."

In working-class and poor households, by contrast, the dominant cultural logic of parenting emphasizes "the accomplishment of natural growth" (Lareau 2002, 748). These parents strive, sometimes in difficult circumstances, to ensure that their children are safe, fed, and loved, as this will allow them to grow and thrive into adulthood. The implication of this cultural logic of

childrearing is that children are expected to follow adult directives, but they have greater control over their more relaxed daily lives, which include time for independent free play in their neighborhood and greater extended-family contact (Lareau 2000). Vincent, Ball, and Braun (2010) argued that this approach to parenting is also evident among working-class mothers in Britain who see their role as caring for, rather than teaching or developing, their children. The normalization of intensive approaches to mothering—which as we saw in the case of concerted cultivation earlier actually depend on middle-class agenda and resources—means that these working-class mothers "are vulnerable to being understood as deficient" as they are seen to be failing to "ensure the child's optimum intellectual development" (Vincent, Ball, and Braun 2010, 132).

The risks that working-class mothers face need to be understood in a context where enrichment activities are not simply seen to be fun but to have long-term consequences. Much of the sociological research draws on Bourdieu (2008) in identifying how organized clubs and activities can accrue children valuable cultural capital (e.g., knowledge of high culture through music lessons, language skills, competence in elite sports) as well as social capital (through the wider networks they make; Lareau 2000; Levey 2009; Stefansen and Aarseth 2011). Vincent and Ball (2007, 1071), for example, traced the ways in which middle-class families with preschool children in London seek to reproduce their class advantage through the development of a "Renaissance child"; that is, one who has acquired intellectual, social, and physical skills through diverse enrichment activities. In this sense, we may cast enrichment activities as literally enriching, not simply as they broaden a narrow school curriculum but because they are central to the social reproduction of middle-class advantage in changing and uncertain times (Vincent and Ball 2007; Katz 2008).

Educational research across the compulsory school-age spectrum demonstrates that enrichment activities are also entwined in the accrual of educational capital, a form of cultural capital that is institutionalized through measures of academic success (Bourdieu 2008). Notwithstanding fears about the impact that overscheduling might have on children's school work, participation in enrichment activities has been shown to be positively associated with social adjustment, civic engagement, and, crucially, increased educational achievement (Fredricks and Eccles 2010; Mahoney and Vest 2012). Indeed, in England the Labour government of 1997 to 2010—which pursued a characteristically roll-out form of neoliberalization, championing public spending that has long-term benefits in terms of

economic prosperity and social inclusion—sought to raise educational attainment by stimulating school-based participation in enrichment activities through its Extended Services initiative. The policy continues, albeit in a diluted form, under the current rollback neoliberalism of the Coalition government and its self-styled austerity politics (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012; see Cummings, Dyson, and Todd [2011] on the United States). The importance of enrichment activities is, however, something that geographical work on education, like that in children's geographies, has been slow to analyze. Studies of individual enrichment activities are beginning to emerge, and Mills's (2012, 2013) work on the scouting movement is notable here, but cross-cutting analyses of diverse enrichment activities are lacking. Addressing this lacuna will contribute to the development of a field that has a long-standing interest in formal educational environments but where informal learning is starting to attract more attention (Holloway and Jöns 2012; Mills and Kraftl 2014).

Informed by this literature, this article places analysis of enrichment activities, which are instrumental and institutionalized forms of play, center stage in geographical debates about children's changing place in public space. Our first objective is to provide quantitative data on middle- and working-class children's participation in enrichment activities that happen on and off the school site. On the one hand, this adds statistical data to a trend that sociologists have so far tended to explore through qualitative means. On the other hand, it foregrounds the different locations of provision, highlighting the relative importance of state schools as providers of, and settings for, enrichment activities alongside services that are provided at off-school sites through the voluntary and commercial sector. Our second objective—drawing on both the feminist tradition of parenting research in children's geographies (Aitken 2009; Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans 2011) and the broader social science literature on parenting cultures (Lareau 2002; Vincent, Ball, and Braun 2010; Stefansen and Aarseth 2011)—is to explore parents' perspectives on enrichment activities. Specifically, we investigate what value parents attach to enrichment activities for children; their role in resourcing children's participation; and their views on state schools as places for the institutionalization of childhood play.

## Methodology: Researching Enrichment

Our concern is children's participation in enrichment activities and the views and experiences of their parents. Lareau's seminal work explored the importance

of enrichment activities in American family life, and our study complements this by considering the lives of middle- and working-class groups in the English Midlands. Hortonsire,<sup>4</sup> the English local authority where this study takes place, contains schools serving children from different class backgrounds, and overall the authority roughly conformed to national averages in terms of the number of children receiving free school meals<sup>5</sup> (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). Children were living in a mixture of large urban, smaller urban, and rural communities. These settlements were less ethnically diverse than England as a whole: Over 95 percent of residents were white British, compared with the national average of 87 percent (Office for National Statistics 2005).

Our empirical study in Hortonsire included research with middle- and working-class parents. Defining social class is always contentious, but here we follow Irwin and Elley (2011), who combined a wider community assessment with an individual measure to assign parents to a class position. The result is that we label parents as middle class if their children attend a school with an economically advantaged intake (our community measure) and their household's primary wage earner's employment falls into managerial and professional occupations (our individual measure). We label parents as working class if their children attend a school that draws in more financially impoverished communities and their household's primary wage earner was in a routine or manual occupation (or had never worked or was long-term unemployed).<sup>6</sup> This twofold approach allows us insights into parents' individual and community context, but terms such as middle class and working class should always be used with care. It is noteworthy, for example, that ours is a regional, white middle-class sample rather than one located in a global city. Equally, our working-class sample contains both families who were "managing to cope" and, with 47 percent of these households having no one in paid work, those who were "struggling to cope" (Vincent, Ball, and Braun 2008, 70).

We present the results of a broad-ranging questionnaire survey of middle- and working-class parents with children in Years 2 (ages 6–7) and 6 (ages 10–11) in seventeen primary schools that included questions about parental attitudes to, and children's use of, enrichment activities ( $n = 321$ ; middle-class = 160; working-class = 161; response rate > 40 percent in both areas). The survey data were subject to chi-square analysis to compare middle- and working-class patterns. The survey was followed up with twenty-six semistructured interviews (fourteen middle-class; twelve working-class) with parents exploring their attitudes in greater detail.

**Table 1.** Middle-class and working-class children's participation in enrichment activities

Middle-class children		Working-class children					
Number of activities		% of children		Number of activities		% of children	
0	<b>1.9</b>			0		<b>22.2</b>	
1–2	<b>19.6</b>			1–2		<b>51.6</b>	
3–4	<b>36.1</b>			3–4		<b>19.6</b>	
5+	<b>42.4</b>			5+		<b>6.5</b>	
In school		Off school premises		In school		Off school premises	
Yes	<b>70.1</b>	Yes	<b>94.9</b>	Yes	<b>56.1</b>	Yes	<b>52.0</b>

Note: Values shown in bold type indicate differences significant at the 5% level.

The gender-neutral term *parent* obscures some important trends in our data. In total, 93 percent of these parents who returned the questionnaire were women, as were all of our interviewees (although on occasions they also chose to have another family member present for parts of the interview). In general, we use the term *parent* in relation to the quantitative data to include the fathers who returned the questionnaire but refer specifically to mothers where this is relevant in relation to the qualitative data.

Mothers for interview were selected from questionnaire respondents who volunteered to reflect the types of family formation and background evident in each class group. In terms of family formation, all of the middle-class sample were in two-parent families, and eleven of the fourteen mothers were in paid employment (as education and health care professionals, private sector managers, designers, etc.). Two thirds of the working-class interviewees were living in two-parent families, and one third were lone parents; three of the twelve mothers were in paid employment (all as part-time cleaners). Mothers in the middle-class sample were most often in their forties, and mothers in the working-class sample tended to be in their thirties. All were white British, a reflection of the ethnic makeup of the area where the research took place. The interviews were all fully transcribed and to ensure anonymity interviewees have been allocated pseudonyms.

## Children's Enrichment Activities, Parenting Practices, and Social Class

### Enrichment Activities: Patterns of Participation

Enrichment activities are an important feature of many primary-aged children's lives: 88 percent of children across our sample were involved in either

individual extracurricular activities (e.g., musical instrument lessons) or a collective cultural, leisure, or sporting club. Sociological research has highlighted class-differentiated cultural logics of parenting that see that middle-class families place more emphasis on concerted cultivation of children through enrollment in enrichment activities (Lareau 2000, 2002). Our results confirm that an emphasis on social class is indeed warranted, as patterns of participation vary in a statistically significant fashion between middle- and working-class children. Table 1 shows that 98 percent of middle-class children participate in enrichment activities, with 79 percent taking part in three or more per week. By contrast, 74 percent of working-class children are involved in two or fewer activities per week, with 22 percent participating in none at all.

Indeed, the relative importance of social class in shaping unequal participation in enrichment activities (Vincent and Ball 2007) is further evidenced when we consider other differences between children. Children's age—and specifically in our study whether they were in Year 2 or in Year 6—was not significant in shaping rates of participation in enrichment activities. Previous studies have shown that girls are either more (Newman et al. 2007) or less (Karsten 1998) likely to take part in enrichment activities, but in our study children's gender makes no difference to participation rates.<sup>7</sup> Equally, children's ethnicity appears, as in Lareau's (2000, 2002) research, to be of no consequence, although it is important to note that our study reflects the whiteness of the area and our ethnic minority sample is therefore too small to allow statistical analysis. Family formation was diverse among the working-class families in this study (59 percent two-parent families; 41 percent one-parent families), but this was not associated with variations in participation rates. Family formation was more homogeneous in middle-class families (94 percent two-parent

families) and the small number of lone-parent families means that statistical comparisons cannot be made.

The quantitative data thus show that class is the most important form of social differentiation shaping variations in the use of enrichment activities. Previous research has highlighted the growth of commercial out-of-school activity providers and class differences in participation rates (Coulton and Irwin 2009; Levey 2009), but here we emphasize the importance of considering the mixed economy of provision—including that organized by state, voluntary, and commercial organizations—in both in-school and out-of-school contexts. An examination of these data reveals that middle-class children have greater access to enrichment activities than their working-class counterparts both in school (70 percent vs. 56 percent) and, even more starkly, off school premises (95 percent vs. 52 percent). The picture is without doubt one of class difference, but the lower level of class differentiation for in-school activities, and the fact that without these 48 percent (rather than the current 22 percent) of working-class children might not have access to any enrichment activities, underscores the importance of taking school-based provision seriously as it ameliorates, although does not eliminate, class-based inequality in the English context.

Nonetheless, these working-class children have much less access to out-of-school enrichment activities than their middle-class counterparts. Many out-of-school activities are provided by voluntary organizations or commercial providers on a semipermanent basis, meaning that children can—having tried a number of activities and finding one they like—have an ongoing commitment to it. The uniformed organizations, for example, have different age tiers through which children can progress (e.g., Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorer Scouts; The Scout Association 2012). Equally, in sporting contexts, children can progress through various grades using suitable outside providers:

[T]he children always, from the end of their first jabs [injections] when they were babies, we took them swimming. . . . When they were three they had proper swimming lessons . . . when she was eight, she'd already done her bronze, silver, and gold medallions and she was doing her Honours. . . . I says well let's take you to a swimming club, and we took her [and her younger siblings] to a swimming club . . . and ever since we've just continued [daughter now in Year 6], and I mean they all really enjoy it and they do a lot of competitions and it's become our life really. (Christine, middle class)

Some in-school activities do also have longevity, especially those where parents are paying commercial

providers for a service delivered in school (e.g., modern foreign language clubs run by specialist companies). Many school-based activity clubs, especially those that are subsidized or run free of charge, are only open to specific year groups to manage demand and delivery and are designed to provide children with a taste of an activity over the course of a half-term or term (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012):

[W]ell they've both done the cooking club, and they've both done the art club, and they've both done the origami club. But as I say it just depends as and when they come, and when they bring the letters home, I sign them, if they want to do them . . . there's nothing available at the moment [for Year 2 son]. (Diana, working class)

This role is valuable across the class spectrum, and the activities are very popular, but in a context where fewer working-class children have access to out-of-school activities, they are more likely than their middle-class counterparts to find themselves in a series of taster events rather than building up skills through long-term commitment to an activity. Moreover, the somewhat capricious availability of clubs at school means that they move into and out of enrichment activities; thus, although our survey shows at a snapshot in time 22 percent of working-class children were not in extracurricular clubs or activities, the qualitative data revealed that many had done clubs in the past and intended to do so in the future when suitable activities became available.

Children's participation in enrichment activities is shaped by social class, as middle-class children have much greater access to in-school and out-of-school activities than their working-class counterparts. In this context of unequal access, it is pertinent to explore what value parents think these activities have in their children's lives.

### Valuing Enrichment Activities

Current research suggests that middle-class parents place greater emphasis on concerted cultivation than their working-class counterparts, who adopt a model of natural growth, a fact evidenced by the greater participation of middle-class children than working-class children in enrichment activities (Lareau 2000, 2002). Indeed, some argue that ensuring your child's participation in a suitable array of activities has become a middle-class parental responsibility in a context where intergenerational class reproduction is no longer understood to be guaranteed (Vincent and Ball 2007; Katz 2008). Our research, by contrast, shows that the similarities in middle- and working-class parents'



**Table 2.** What does your child get from the organized activities he or she does?

	Middle class	Working class
Fun	95.5	92.4
Friends	91.0	88.6
Chance to try something new	85.8	79.5
Self-esteem/self-confidence	87.7	80.3
Social skills	91.6	85.6
Exercise	<b>91.0</b>	<b>81.8</b>
Skills for the future	<b>76.8</b>	<b>65.2</b>
Play in a safe environment	<b>71.0</b>	<b>81.1</b>

Note: Values shown in bold type are significantly different at the 95% level.

attitudes toward enrichment activities are more striking than their subtle differences (Levey 2009).

The most common answer middle- and working-class parents gave when asked what they thought children gained from enrichment activities was fun (see Table 2). Enrichment activities were seen to give children the opportunity to try something new, which is both enjoyable in itself, and because it offers an alternative to TV, games machines, or playing out in the immediate locality. This suggests that there is a degree to which parents view their children as beings rather than simply becomings and want to ensure that their current everyday life is enjoyable. Previous research suggests that East Asian children have less autonomy in their choice of enrichment activities than North American children (Bidjerano and Newman 2010), but in our English study, parents' emphasis on fun underpinned a general willingness to allow children a voice in the activity choices. Some parents sought out new things and asked whether their children wanted to try them, and many parents tried to respond to children's initiatives (Stefansen and Aarseth 2011):

[H]e sort of showed an interest and we encouraged him to do [it] and he's enjoyed it, so we've carried on with it. . . . And I think we try and encourage him. And because he's interested, we want him to do the things he's interested in. (Hannah, middle class)

I've always thought activities is down to what the child wants to do, I don't think the parent has a say in the matter really. Obviously the parent signs the consent form to make sure it can get the child on, but at the end of the day it's if the child wants to do it, they should do it. (Samantha, working class)

Enrichment activities are not only seen to be a happy place for children; parents also see them as a healthy activity. Significantly more emphasis is placed on enrichment activities as a source of exercise by the middle

classes, but 82 percent of working-class parents still cite this as a benefit (see Table 2). Exercise is seen to be good for children in the here and now and parents—who have been shown to have a key role in motivating children across the age range to be physically active (Zecevic et al. 2010)—are keen to encourage it through a range of activities:

[T]hey're not sporty in terms of they don't really like football and things like that, and I think well [names nontraditional sport] is a physical activity that they like doing. And the same with fencing, it's a physical activity he does like doing. So I'd rather encourage them to do that than do none . . . it's a physical [activity] and it's not sitting in front of the television. (Alice, middle class)

I like her doing sport stuff because she's keeping herself fit and like, girls are very funny about their weight. . . . So I like it that she's doing the exercise. (Kirsty, working class)

Swimming stands apart from other forms of exercise in the way parents discuss it. Middle-class parents not only saw this as a source of fitness but also characterized it as a crucial "life skill" that it went without question that their children should and would acquire; by contrast, working-class parents were more likely to bemoan the fact that their children did not have adequate access to something they also viewed as a basic skill (see next section). The longer term impacts of childhood physical activity were only referred to by a small minority of middle-class parents who viewed their children as potentially healthy becomings as well as beings (Evans 2010), emphasizing the ongoing benefits of getting children used to participating in sport so they continued to have a healthy relationship with exercise into adulthood.

Enrichment activities are also seen to be an appropriate place where children can hang out with their friends (see Table 2). Valentine's (1996a, 1996b) early research identified children as both at risk in and as a risk to adult public space, and Karsten (2002) noted how new leisure spaces—including those used as sites for enrichment activities—have opened up and are seen as suitable domains for children to occupy in the city. Children's safety is a concern expressed significantly more often by working-class parents, but 71 percent of middle-class parents also agree that one of the benefits of enrichment activities is that they give children a safe place to play. It is noteworthy that these spaces not only provide children with a safe place away from dangerous strangers and traffic but they are also sometimes viewed as a way of keeping older children from dangerous activities themselves. This working-class mother, for example, alludes to both as she expresses her desire

for more enrichment activities for her ten-year-old child:

[F]or exercise, variety, keep him occupied, keep him out of trouble, wear him out a bit, because he's always full of energy. . . . I know he's safe up there as well, he's not walking the streets. I know where he is, I know he's safe. (Debbie, working class)

This twofold sentiment was sometimes expressed by middle-class mothers, but others cast enrichment activities as an important way children can have a social life outside the home, rejecting the notion that children in their locality needed distracting from hanging around on the street:

[M]aking him, you know having a social life outside the home is really important . . . [but] I mean even the teenagers that live in the area don't hang around on the street corners here . . . it's not really a problem. (Alice, middle class)

Hanging out with friends in enrichment activities is not only seen to be fun and safe, however, but it is also viewed by parents as a way of extending children's social networks and developing their social skills. Enrichment activities outside the school are particularly valuable in developing children's social capital (Bourdieu 2008), as they can meet new children; for example, those from other local primary schools who might also attend their secondary school.<sup>8</sup> More important, these activities are valued by middle- and working-class parents as they provide a venue in which children can develop their social skills (see Table 2). Confidence can be gained by going and doing something independently without parental supervision. More specific skills—such as mixing harmoniously, teamwork, and being a good winner and loser—can also be taught and learned in these environments (N. L. Holt et al. 2011). The cultivation of these skills, alongside technical abilities in particular activities, is the reason middle- and working-class parents think activities help develop children's self-esteem and confidence (see Table 2). More middle-class parents (77 percent) than working-class parents (65 percent) identified enrichment activities as providing children with skills for the future, but in both cases the qualitative data show that the skills they think hold future value in secondary schooling and working life are those of self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability to cope with diverse social situations:

[I]t's about having confidence to be able to try new things. . . . Just confident I hope, and yeah, being able to try new things and not being afraid of different groups and different

social groups . . . it's helping them so then when they go to secondary school. . . . And I just think that's good, it just helps them cope better with life. (Jenny, middle class)

A bit more confident, not so bothered about going out doing things with different people, making new friends. Obviously when she gets older it will give her that boost to go and do what she wants, what sort of work or whatever she's interested in. (April, working class)

There is then a purpose to this fun, as Vincent and Ball (2007) argued in the context of preschool enrichment activities, as in the eyes of most middle- and working-class parents they not only develop children's social but also their cultural capital (Bourdieu 2008).

The much higher levels of participation among middle-class than working-class children do, however, result in one key attitudinal difference between these groups. A total of 49 percent of middle-class parents agree that *some* children in their area do too many organized activities and need more free time and free play, a view shared by only 16 percent of their working-class counterparts. Mothers' networks with other mothers in middle-class areas (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson forthcoming) keep them informed of the vast array of state, voluntary, and commercial activities available for their children. In a context where children could be enrolled into multiple activities every day of the week, these mothers were aware of the potential dangers of overscheduling their children (Katz 2008) and had to decide how many activities were appropriate for their children and family:

[I]t's a bit like being a grown up, it's having a work-life balance, it's having activities and spare time balance for a child, you can kind of go too over the top with it if you're not careful. . . . I think because [small town's] quite a sort of middle-class area, the children here are very fortunate, there's an awful lot on offer. (Eve, middle class)

Working-class parents by contrast found it much more difficult to access enrichment activities, and for them the issue was not overscheduling but in some cases a paucity of stimulating activities:

[A club or activity] Gives them something else to learn doesn't it, do you know what I mean, or, because [Year 2 daughter] gets bored a lot sometimes as well when she comes home from school, you know if she don't play with her friends, not playing in her room, she goes, "I'm bored." "I can't help it love, I'm bored, that's life isn't it?" (Fiona, working class)

The current literature suggests that middle-class cultural logics of parenting, which envisage children as a

project to be developed through concerted cultivation (Lareau 2000, 2002; Vincent and Ball 2007), underpin the greater participation of middle-class children in enrichment activities. This study demonstrates that parents across the class spectrum place similar value on enrichment activities because they are fun, healthy, and socially beneficial in the here and now, with some benefits being seen to extend into children's immediate and longer term futures. The fact remains, however, that participation rates are very different—leading to differences in attitudes to over- (and indeed under-) scheduling children—and we therefore go on to consider how children's enrichment activities are resourced in the context of class-differentiated family lives.

### Resourcing Enrichment

Much of the literature to date has focused on class-differentiated cultural logics of childrearing as an explanation for uneven patterns of participation in enrichment activities (Lareau 2000, 2002; Stefansen and Aarseth 2011). This emphasis not only underplays the significant similarities in parents' values discussed earlier, but it also obscures the importance of diverse resources required to make participation a possibility. Clubs and activities often have fees associated with them and sometimes also involve the purchase of specialist equipment (e.g., football strip, shin pads, and boots; costumes for dance shows; etc.). These fees vary in scale: Some school activities are free, activities such as football or uniformed organizations cost around £2 a week, public swimming lessons are approximately £4 a week, and a weekend morning of dance, drama, and singing costs more than £300 a term.<sup>9</sup> Middle-class families in our study had varied financial resources, and although some spent £50 a week on enrichment activities for a child, others assembled a more inexpensive array of activities. Finances were considered, but as one mother explained: "It does have an influence, but it wouldn't stop them doing things if they wanted to do something" (Sally, middle class). Similarly, some working-class families also put together a mixture of economical activities for their children, but many, and especially those households where no one was in paid work, found all but the free or cheapest activities (e.g., school clubs at 50p per week) prohibitively expensive (N. L. Holt et al. 2011). Unlike in middle-class families, limited resources prevented children from participating in certain activities:

It's money, it is money. I mean they'd love to go swimming . . . but with swimming lessons, because we've got two kids,

it's a lot of money for what they ask for . . . if I had a lot of cash, I'd take them swimming or get them to do swimming lessons, I'd book them straight away. (Marie, working class)

In addition to these direct fees and equipment charges, the convenience and cost of transport was also an issue. Most middle-class parents had access to a car to transport children to enrichment activities if they were off the school site; for them distance is not frictionless but it is something that can be overcome. Many working-class families did not have access to a car; using public transport, perhaps with other young children in tow, can be very difficult, and those on the lowest incomes also found public transport costs prohibitively expensive.

Differential access to financial resources emerges in this study as the key reason why patterns of enrichment activity vary between middle- and working-class children. This is not a cultural issue rooted in different attitudes toward parenting as previous sociological research has suggested (Lareau 2000, 2002; Vincent and Ball 2007); it is one that reflects structural inequalities and the impoverished position in which many of these working-class families were raising their children. These different financial contexts do mean, however, that middle- and working-class parents subsequently have to draw on a differing range of other resources. The middle-class families in the study had the means to pay for enrichment activities, but participation also involves a considerable amount of labor on the part of parents, in particular, mothers (Lareau and Weininger 2008). Local mothering networks (Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans 2011; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson forthcoming), alongside printed sources and the Internet, are crucial in obtaining information about enrichment activities and weighing the relative merits of different providers. Parents whose children do multiple activities or who have several children can spend much of their "leisure" time preparing children for and transporting them to enrichment activities (Mattsson 2002; Karsten 2005). Ride sharing with other parents or having grandparents help can spread the load, but the work falls mostly on parents, in particular, mothers. Women were often happy to do this seeing it as an integral part of their mothering identity, but the demands of a complex mix of enrichment activities can become too much, especially when we consider that only 22 percent of the middle-class households in our survey had a full-time homemaker (see also Lareau and Weininger 2008):

[W]hat was going on then was too much, the Brownies, the swimming, the Taekwondo, the cello, the tag rugby.<sup>10</sup> And it was too much because we couldn't keep up . . . it was affecting our work, not our work, but our ability to actually do the hours that we were required to do in a day, because we had to get back to get [daughter] to take her there . . . we couldn't sustain that. (Felicity, middle class)

Chauffeuring children between activities is a labor-intensive process for these middle-class parents (Mattsson 2002), making family life more child-centered as adults are left with less free time for other interests. Chauffeuring is not the only time commitment, however, as some parents remain at children's activities to encourage them (e.g., watching sports matches) or because there is not sufficient time to go home before having to return to collect the child. In a context where parents stay, children's activities can become social activities for middle-class parents (Lareau and Weininger 2008); for example, providing an opportunity for a chat and a coffee with other mothers while their children attend swimming or dancing lessons. Moreover, some parents commit time, energy, and enthusiasm by organizing activities; for example, helping run sporting clubs or uniformed organizations, to support their children:

[A]ll of his friends were in Cubs, and I rang up and I said can he go to Cubs, and they said not unless you become a leader, because there's such a big waiting list. So I then decided (!) that I would become a Cub Scout leader and do that, in order for him to be able to go to Cubs, because all his friends in his class went and he felt a bit left out. (Georgina, middle class)

In this way, children's activities can become integral to the organization of their parents' lives both on a daily basis and in terms of the broader activities to which they commit themselves.

Working-class parents in this study were likely to have fewer financial resources available for enrichment activities. In some cases, where parents can afford activities they have experiences in common with their middle-class counterparts. Lower income levels and therefore participation rates—especially in activities off school premises through which much of this experience is formed—means that this is not the case for many parents, however, who therefore experience the resourcing and nonresourcing of enrichment activities in other ways. Instead of sourcing information through mothering networks, for example, we see a much greater emphasis among working-class mothers on the need to return letters quickly to school, sometimes at children's behest, to secure them a place in a class:

They're both obsessed with music and dancing, so anything to do with dance at school, straight away I have to sign the form. They even now bring their pencils out [into the playground] for me to sign it there and then on the day that they bring the letter home . . . obviously it's first come [first served]. (Lisa, working class)

The fact that working-class parents cannot afford as many activities means that these have much less impact on their day-to-day lives (Lareau 2000). A parent might have to reorganize his or her school run to collect a child later one night a week, for example, if he or she attends a club at school, but children's activities are much less likely to become the central feature in the organization of family time.

The previous section demonstrated that middle- and working-class parents have similar attitudes toward enrichment activities, but as we have shown here their varied ability to pay for, and transport children to, them is crucial in shaping differential patterns of use. Middle-class parents generally have greater financial resources with which they can pay for activities, but children's participation is also then dependent on parental, and often maternal, labor. Parents' efforts in terms of preparing for, taking children to, and watching them at activities, as well as in some cases in helping run these, has a fundamental impact on the use of time and space in middle-class families. The financial constraints on working-class families mean that children cannot access as many enrichment activities and their impact on family life is consequently less evident.

### **Institutionalizing Enrichment; Institutionalizing Childhood?**

In a context where parents have similar attitudes toward enrichment activities but where not all parents can pay for their children to access activities, schools in England have an interesting role to play. The previous Labour and, to a much lesser extent, the current Coalition governments in England support the provision of enrichment activities through schools (Cummings, Dyson, and Todd 2011; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012). This practice enjoys extremely high levels of parental support: 86 percent of middle-class and 88 percent of working-class parents think school is a good place to provide enrichment activities. Parents view schools as a "safe environment" (Amanda, working class) for their primary-aged children: Middle- and working-class parents emphasize that children are accustomed to and comfortable in this space; and working-class parents in particular also emphasize that they trust

schools to keep children safe from dangerous strangers. The fact that this trusted domain is at the heart of the community is also positively beneficial as children do not have to travel to activities off the school site:

[I]t means you don't have to take them out of school and then take them to somewhere else, they're there consistently from 9 o'clock until 4.30, 5 o'clock, and I think that's a good thing. . . . It's a nice environment to be in, and she's with people that she knows. No I personally think it's better than picking her up at half [past] 3 and then driving her somewhere else to do something that's similar. (Isabel, middle class)

[I]t's safety and like I know where she is and like, like she hasn't got to fuff about coming back [home] and going out again. (Kirsty, working class)

In this context, the institutionalization of childhood—as more of children's play takes place in a state-controlled environment rather than freely in the outdoor urban or rural space—is positively welcomed by parents. Moreover, open-ended answers from the questionnaire survey suggest that this institutionalization of childhood creates a positive attitude toward school as children come to associate it with fun activities. Schools are thus seen as an appropriate location for extracurricular activities, and their provision further enhances the attractiveness of this space to children.

Formal education, we should make clear, is still seen as school's primary purpose, but there was near universal agreement among the interviewees that it was beneficial if they offered enrichment activities. Teachers could, it was recognized, take a role in running these, but middle- and working-class parents were sensitive to staff workloads: "I think teachers have quite a lot on their plates as it is without doing extra activities!" (Helen, middle class); "I think the teachers do enough at the moment, bless them!" (Debbie, working class). They were thus open and indeed used to vetted outside providers coming into schools to provide enrichment activities. What is striking is that parents did not just envisage school as a good place for their own children to do enrichment activities. There was also concern expressed across the class spectrum that children from low-income backgrounds should not be priced out of these clubs run by external providers. This mother is clear that if such enrichment activities were charged for at a commercial rate, low-income lone parents such as her would not be able to afford them:

[I]t would be too expensive, that's why a lot of the kids go to them, the parents let them go because it's either free or it's cheap. You're in an area that's a lot of single

parents and a lot of, it's a council [social housing] estate . . . knowing my situation and how I struggle, I think they do [need help to pay for them]. . . . It's the chance to do it isn't it? It's socializing, the exercise, the learning side of it, the discipline. . . . It's the confidence they get from it as well, and the fun. (Debbie, working class)

Her concerns were also shared by a number of middle-class mothers who would not themselves benefit from state-subsidized provision:

I would imagine there will still be pupils who have free school meals and whatever [at our middle-class school] . . . I don't think they should charge then. I think schools in deprived areas, or areas where people have less financial means, that should be provided anyway. And the reason I think that is that that may be the only chance of activities that those children get. . . . I think that's about creating the rounded child, I think those activities would add something, it would help their confidence, it would give them skills in other areas. (Georgina, middle class)

Although the self-styled austerity politics of the Coalition government in England (and in particular their desire to reduce public spending on welfare payments) has led to benefits claimants being labeled negatively as lazy and work shy (Williams 2013), in the case of primary-aged children, parents across the class spectrum are more likely to voice the need for socially redistributive practices to promote child development.

In this study, then, parents were happy that more of children's time should be spent in institutional environments and indeed thought that the state had a role in making this a possibility for children whose parents could not afford to pay for it.

## Conclusions

The development of research into children, youth, and families over the past twenty-five years has been one of the success stories in our discipline. This has foregrounded changes in the nature of childhood, with one of the most important in the Global North being the decline in children's freedom to play in, and move through, public space (Valentine 1996a, 1996b; Leander, Phillips, and Taylor 2010). This article reshapes geographical debate about children's play by shifting attention from what has been lost toward an analysis of what is replacing their independent use of public space. Our research demonstrates that enrichment activities—including both individual but more often collective cultural, sporting, or leisure classes or groups—now feature in many children's lives but that

middle-class children have greater access to these than their working-class counterparts.

This growing importance of enrichment activities (Vincent and Ball 2007) points to a change in the nature of childhood in the Global North, with children spending more time in activities organized by adults in school, community, or commercial spaces. What is particularly fascinating is that this institutionalization of childhood, albeit inflected with class differences, is valued by parents in our study. Many parents regret the impacts that traffic, unattractive environments, and fears about stranger danger have on children's freedom to roam, but this is not the only reason they positively welcome institutionalized enrichment activities for their children. They regard these activities as fun, healthy, and socially beneficial for children both now and in the longer term. Middle-class parents can generally afford to pay for these activities, which then involve mothers, in particular, in considerable amounts of labor (Lareau and Weinger 2008) and fundamentally reshape the daily socio-spatial organization of family life (Mattsson 2002). Working-class parents tend to find it much harder to pay for activities, meaning that activities are less important in structuring their family time-space. Nevertheless, parents across the class spectrum share an understanding that these enjoyable and instrumental forms of play (Levey 2009) help children develop networks and skills for the future. This belief that activities enrich children's lives underpins their support for state-subsidized provision to level access to this particular playing field.

These results have implications for how we think about play and education, parenting, and class in geography. First, they highlight the need to explore the connections between play and learning in the research agenda in children's geographies and geographies of education. Children, this study shows, are not simply being excluded from public spaces. Changing practices and discourses surrounding childhood (Holloway and Valentine 2000) and, in particular, the emphasis on children as current and future projects in economically insecure times (Katz 2008), come to mean that enrichment activities in schools, community, and commercial premises are seen as attractive and positively beneficial spaces for middle childhood by parents. These institutional spaces afford a suitable setting for instrumental forms of play that are not only understood to be fun in the present but also as literally enriching through the impact the accrual of social and cultural capital can have on children's future adulthoods (Vincent and Ball 2007; Bourdieu 2008). Future research into

children's changing relationship with public space must therefore engage with (at least) two sets of discourses about childhood. Constructions of childhood that envision children as potential angels or devils who require seclusion or exclusion from our streetscapes continue to matter (Valentine 1996a, 1996b), but ideas about childhood that cast children as current and future projects who can be positively developed through their sequestering into informal (as well as formal) learning environments in diverse institutional spaces now require increased attention. Moreover, this spotlight on enrichment activities—which sit outside the formal curriculum but are located both within and outside of schools—highlights the need for debate about informal learning in geographies of education (Holloway and Jöns 2012; Mills and Kraftl 2014), and its mixed economy of neoliberal state, voluntary, and commercial provision. The landscape of children's play is changing in class-differentiated ways, and we need to give due attention to the ways in which informal learning environments are reshaping children's playscapes and educational geographies in the Global North.

Second, the study points to the need to pay more attention to parents in our studies of children, youth, and families. At first reading this might seem an odd argument, as one of the roots of children's geographies lies in feminist research with parents, but the wider influence of the new social studies of childhood in the twenty-first century has seen more emphasis being placed on the views and experiences of children as autonomous social actors (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011; L. Holt 2011). Although we wholeheartedly support the need to engage with children's views (and, indeed, will be writing elsewhere on their perspective on enrichment activities), we need to ensure that the balance does not tip too far in that direction and away from an understanding of the geographies of parenting. The roots of parenting research emerged in studies of women's employment and local parenting cultures (England 1993; Valentine 1997; Gilbert 1998), but although there has been some important and innovative work produced on parenting in changing socioeconomic and technological contexts (Madge and O'Connor 2006; Aitken 2009; Wainwright et al. 2011), there is now a need for a renewed focus on intrafamilial intergenerational relations. On the one hand, parents, as this study shows, have an important influence on the lives of their children, in this case on children's free time, and if we want to fully understand children's lives we need to explore parents' views, capacities, and constraints as they are (often) key social actors in children's lives.

On the other hand, parenting also matters because it can fundamentally change the nature of parents' lives. Geographers have to some extent engaged with the tensions between parenting and paid work, particularly in respect to mothers. Shifts in the cultural practices around parenting, and in particular the rise of intensive mothering, means that geographers now need to ask new questions about how raising children is shaping the lives of socially differentiated parents, and to explore the consequences of this for the changing spatiality of family life.

Finally, the results point to the importance of, but also potential pitfalls in, thinking through class in the geographies of children, youth, and families and beyond (Dowling 2009). This study highlights the importance of a class analysis by showing how different the lives are of children, and parents, born into different socioeconomic circumstances. There are dangers, however, in highlighting how different neighborhoods become characterized by different classed cultures of childhood and parenting. Lareau's (2000, 2002) work has been hugely influential in stimulating debate about middle-class practices of concerted cultivation and working-class attention to the achievement of natural growth. She does not judge these cultures as better or as worse, but she does use them to explain how class-differentiated families come to lead different lives. The danger inherent in this is that it underplays the importance of structural factors in the emergence of these cultures and detracts attention from the impact political-economic changes—for example, in the form of neoliberalization—might have on their reproduction over time. In our study, middle- and working-class parents' values are similar, but their differing financial resources result in divergent participation levels in enrichment activities. Recognizing that these working-class children are excluded from some activities by poverty rather than parental choice is important, not least because these activities can play a role in the social reproduction of class advantage by helping children develop social and cultural capital and enhancing their education attainment (Katz 2008; Mahoney and Vest 2012). Thus, in exploring the importance of class we need to hold in tension the fact that local classed cultures of parenting do indeed emerge and that these can have important consequences, with a recognition that these cultures also have structural roots (which themselves are open to change over time). To do otherwise leaves the door open to cultural explanations of different parents' choices that obscure the importance of wealth and poverty in their decision-making processes.

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## Notes

1. Primary schools educate children from ages four to eleven.
2. Football is referred to as soccer in the United States.
3. Brownies and Cubs are the younger divisions of the Guide and Scout movement in the United Kingdom.
4. This is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the local authority.
5. Free school meals are available to children whose parents are eligible for certain means-tested benefits.
6. Free school meal rates were used to categorize schools as higher income and low income. Parents' individual class position was calculated through the questionnaire survey using standard UK government techniques to make the research useful to policymakers with whom we worked. We privileged the class position of the main wage earner in making this assessment as they have the biggest influence on the economic circumstances of the household, and this allowed us to assess households consistently (rather than according to who completed the questionnaire).
7. In some families, but far from all, gender does shape the types of activities deemed suitable for boys and girls.
8. Secondary schools educate children from ages eleven to sixteen or eighteen.
9. £1 is approximately US\$1.60.
10. Tag rugby is a noncontact form of this sport.

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