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## Lithuanian Working-class Parenting Styles: Normalising Concerted Cultivation

Artūras Tereškinas\*

### Abstract

Social scientists distinguish different cultural approaches to childrearing, related to the social class positions of the families. The middle-class childrearing style is often described as 'concerted cultivation', and the 'accomplishment of natural growth' defines practices prevalent among working-class and poor families. The repertoire of concerted cultivation that manifests middle-class privilege often involves hectic schedules of adult-organised activities and treats children as projects to be developed. The accomplishment of natural growth is based on a more open-ended schedule of children not strictly controlled by adults. Both concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth are underresearched in the Lithuanian and Eastern European context, where social stratification of family life experienced substantial changes in the last three decades.

Based on 23 biographical interviews with Lithuanian working-class parents, the article analyses their different childrearing styles and parenting values. By examining how they organise and structure their children's everyday life, I demonstrate that most working-class parents are committed to concerted cultivation based on tight everyday schedules and regimented activities. I argue that Lithuanian parents tend to activate middle-class parenting values by practicing concerted cultivation that functions as their attempt to fit the neoliberal norms of achievement, competitiveness and instrumentalism, and the ideology of intensive or 'good' parenting.

**Keywords:** childrearing, parenting values, concerted cultivation, the accomplishment of natural growth, class, Lithuania.

### Introduction

The relation between parenting practices and the reproduction of social class has been extensively analysed during the last several decades (Lareau, 2002; Devine, 2004; Reay, 2005; Cheadle & Amato, 2011; Vincent, 2012; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016). In analysing it, social scientists distinguished different cultural approaches to or cultural repertoires of childrearing related to the social class positions of families. According to Annette Laureau (2002; 2003), middle class, working class, or poor families follow a different cultural logic of childrearing. Middle-class parents engage in concerted cultivation by deliberately encouraging children's cognitive and social skills. On the contrary, most working-class and poor parents favour the so-called accomplishment of natural growth that allows for children's spontaneous development. In other words, a hectic schedule of adult-organised activities is imposed on middle-class children, while working-class and poor children enjoy "a more open-ended agenda that is not heavily controlled by adults" (Lareau, 2003, p. 68). Concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth have come to be thought of as markers of class-rooted behaviours and class-based habitus.

These two strategies could be described as different parenting styles that enable parents to transmit differential advantages to children. As analysed by some scholars, both concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth cover four main areas: perceptions of parental responsibilities, language patterns, leisure activities, and school involvement (Lareau, 2003; Bodovski & Farkas, 2008). In some other cases, in examining different parenting styles, most attention is paid to the ways daily life is organised, the use of language and social connections (Lareau, 2002, p. 752–753).

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Although parenting is increasingly associated with different discourses and imperatives, concerted cultivation as a childrearing strategy is most often conceived of as a version of good parenting. In contemporary Western countries, it is usually attributed to middle-class families (Vincent & Ball, 2007; Berg & Peltola, 2015; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016).

This article focuses on the parenting styles of Lithuanian working-class families. I have chosen the organisation of children's leisure and extracurricular activities, the dynamics of freedom and control in managing children's time, and the understanding of parental responsibilities and good parenting as the main facets of a parenting style. These allow me to grasp how social class interacts with parenting priorities that, in turn, reflect classed values and dispositions.

In undertaking this task, I should emphasise that little is known about how family life transmits advantages and disadvantages to children through different cultural approaches to childrearing in Lithuania. The relationship between class and parenting is a relatively new field of study, and the transmission of social class status through childrearing has not been analysed in the country. Most published studies do not distinguish between class-based parenting strategies (Tereškinas, 2005; Šumskaitė, 2014). Other works focus on social inequalities and single parenting (Maslauskaitė & Platūkytė, 2019), divorce and parenting (Tereškinas & Maslauskaitė, 2019; Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2017) and father-child relationships after a parental union dissolution (Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2020). Thus, the article will enable us to better understand how the class position of a family will provide children with experiences that affect their opportunities and choices and will contribute to the discussion of class-based parenting in Lithuania.

How do working-class parents structure the daily lives of their children? To what degree do they involve themselves in children's leisure? How do parents define their roles and responsibilities in their children's lives? The article also looks into the ways that parents attempt to reconcile their children's control and freedom in their everyday lives.

The article consists of four parts. It begins by introducing the key concepts which frame this analysis: concerted cultivation, the accomplishment of natural growth and class. It then briefly describes the research methodology and the research context. In the main body of the article, using data from 23 biographical interviews with working-class parents, I will discuss their attitudes towards parenting and their ways of organising their children's lives. Finally, I conclude with some observations on the importance of concerted cultivation in shaping working-class parenting priorities and strategies. I hope that my study will shed light on the processes that affect parenting strategies within working-class families and will start a long-overdue discussion on the relation between class and childrearing values in both Lithuania and Eastern Europe.

## **Theoretical background: concerted cultivation, the accomplishment of natural growth and class**

The body of literature that focuses on parenting and childrearing styles shows that parenting is a classed activity (Duncan, 2005; Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Gilles, 2007). Most studies draw on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework in which family functions a mechanism of accumulating and transmitting capital between generations (Bourdieu, 1986; 1996; 2010). Bourdieu describes social classes as social groups that share similar living conditions and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986). People of different classes are positioned in social space according to the volume and composition of the different kinds of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 231). In Bourdieu's theory, class is defined not only by economic but also by cultural indicators, while cultural aspects of social inequality reproduction are highlighted (Sjödén & Roman, 2018, p. 765). Various cultural and social resources including parenting practices and values also point to a family's social class (Gillies, 2005).

Despite the continuing critique of the concept (Wrigley & Dreby, 2005, p. 232), class remains a significant conceptual tool and explanatory framework for the complexity of everyday social

experiences. However, it is necessary to see class in the context of other structural categories such as gender, race and age and notice the diversity and specificity of classed experiences within either the working-class or middle-class milieu (Gilles, 2007, p. 160). While looking at classed experiences, one does not have to assume that all within certain classes behave the same way.

In her ethnographic study of childrearing practices, Lareau argues that class is a key influence in shaping cultural approaches to parenting. She proposes the theory of concerted cultivation, which demonstrates how class works through a particular style of childrearing. According to her, the highly organised activities and parents' active participation in the development of their children's skills, interests, and behaviours are characteristic of concerted cultivation that serve as a mechanism of transferring middle-class status to their children (Lareau, 2003; also see Bodovski & Farkas, 2008). Concerted cultivation promotes children's skills and attitudes that could lead to greater school success as compared to working-class and poor children (Carolan & Wasserman, 2015, p. 169). Similarly, Melvin L. Kohn and Carmi Schooler (1983) argued that class membership influenced parents' approaches to childrearing: the middle class valued self-direction among children, while working-class parents favoured conformity to an external authority.

Lareau conceptualises the parenting practices of working-class families prevalent in lower-income and working-class families as the 'accomplishment of natural growth' oriented towards children's spontaneous development. Both parenting styles – concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth – are "deep seated, relatively stable childrearing dispositions" (Lareau & Weininger, 2008, p. 120).

These different styles of parenting are particularly visible through the organisation of daily life (involving children in structured activities vs. letting children spend time unsupervised), the use of language (middle-class parents are more inclined to reason with children, while working-class and poor parents more often issue directives), the social networks that families use (middle-class families as more connected to friends and kin networks than those of working-class), and how parents interact with such institutions as schools (Vincent & Maxwell, 2016, p. 272). Here it should be emphasised that language use also plays into the differences in the organisation of daily life: middle-class families often rely on reasoning, negotiation and discussion, while working-class parents prefer directives and disregard children's opinions and judgements (Lareau, 2002). Most importantly, Lareau and others demonstrated that different parenting styles reinforce social class-based cultural patterns, habits and skills and develop children into a particular kinds of social subjects. Later research confirmed her conclusions (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008).

Concerted cultivation could also be called the interventionist approach to childrearing that encourages careful planning and managing of children's lives to ensure that children become responsible citizens (Vincent & Ball, 2007). Some researchers argue that the philosophy of concerted cultivation, which prioritises achievement, competitiveness and instrumentalism, reflects neoliberal subjectivity and the ideology of intensive parenting or mothering (Gilles, 2007; Vincent et al., 2013). In this subjectivity, individuals alone are responsible for their lives and the acquisition of social and cultural resources as a way to gain advantage (Ball, 2010; Vincent et al., 2013). Moreover, children are increasingly treated as projects to be managed and developed with very limited boundaries for their independent activities. Heavily controlled by adults, they follow hectic daily schedules organised by their parents.

It should be added that concerted cultivation as a childrearing style has also been influenced by professionals who work with children, including teachers, children's rights specialists and councillors. These professionals have developed parenting guidelines and standards of how children should be raised. This childrearing style could also be influenced by family and children's rights policies, particularly in European countries, that emphasise the development of parenting skills and the provision of children with opportunities to advance talents and interests in organised ways (Vincent, 2012). To be rewarded as parents, individuals attempt to comply with these professional standards and policy initiatives (Bowles & Gintis, 2002).

Although concerted cultivation is, above all, a middle-class phenomenon, according to some scholars due to the prevailing neoliberal ideology of intensive or good parenting even working-class parents increasingly adopt this childrearing style that could help them reproduce social advantages (Bennet et al., 2012; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016; Sjödin & Roman, 2018). Disadvantaged parents attempt to carefully manage their children's everyday lives; they cultivate their talents and have high educational expectations for them (Cheadle & Amato, 2011). Thus, concerted cultivation becomes a parenting style that sometimes crosses class boundaries.

Despite the prevalence of concerted cultivation in society, it should be emphasised that in my analysis I do not consider either concerted cultivation or the accomplishment of natural growth as an intrinsically superior parenting style. Each style has its drawbacks. Concerted cultivation often exhausts both parents and children, while the accomplishment of natural growth might impede children's success in dominant institutions (Lareau, 2002, p. 774).

## Methodology

My analysis is a part of a broader research project "Families, Inequalities and Demographic Processes" that investigates socio-economic inequalities, family structures and social policies related to the 1970-1984 birth cohort. The respondents of this cohort started their life course under the conditions of emerging neoliberal capitalism and social transformations in the decades beginning from 1990, during the transition from socialism to capitalism. Although this cohort represents a new epoch of Lithuanian families, it has not been analysed sociologically. Moreover, there is no research conducted on parenting styles practiced by this cohort.

The paper is based on 23 biographical interviews conducted with 14 Lithuanian mothers and 9 fathers. These interviews were selected from a total sample of 88 interviews carried out within this research project from April 2018 to January, 2019. In terms of age, interviewees ranged from 35 to 48 years old.

The researchers used an interview guide with eleven sets of questions focusing on different aspects of family lives, ranging from family history to parenting styles and childrearing practices. For this article, I chose the parts of the interviews that focused on the management of children's everyday lives, their pastime, and extracurricular activities. Questions were also asked about the futures that parents envisioned for their children. Information about the whole family situation was also gathered. The median duration of the interviews was two hours. The face-to-face interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed.

The researchers wanted to produce a purposive sample of contrasting groups of middle-class, working-class, and poor parents, meaning that the sample is nonrandom; the researchers recruited interviewees purposively and carefully. It should be mentioned, at the outset, that among the working-class there were no poor families whose adult members did not participate in the formal economy regularly. Unemployment, violence, alcoholism, and encounters with children's rights organisations were characteristic of poor families that could be ascribed to the ones at risk of social exclusion.

From the social categories of middle class, working class and poor, I chose working-class families based on detailed information that each respondent provided on their educational background, the nature of their employment, social networks, and cultural tastes. This means that I have considered a range of characteristics including occupation, education, family background, social networks, household income, and housing status in classing these parents. During the interviews, detailed questions about their parents' economic, cultural, and social capital were asked to allow me to better locate the respondents' original and current position in social space.

Working-class respondents had manual or service jobs, lower education, fewer social networks and were less inclined to participate in cultural practices such as reading books, listening to music

or visiting museums and galleries. It should also be emphasised that interviewees were explicitly asked about their social class and their place in Lithuanian society, but in assessing their class position I also drew on Bourdieu's (1986) ideas on social class. Therefore, besides their educational background, employment, and self-identified social class position, the respondents' access to various forms of economic, cultural, and social capitals were also important. I argue that this classification is sufficient for analysing the relation between parents' class positions and their parenting values.

Although the category of class is sometimes called a 'zombie category' or 'shell institution', (Duncan 2005, p. 74; also see Gillies, 2005), it remains relevant to people's lived experiences and could serve as a useful research instrument. The pragmatic use of the terms 'working class' and 'middle class' in this article allows me to grasp the experience of living class in the day-to-day process of raising children. Drawing on data from the biographical interviews with working-class parents, I sought to identify the part that childrearing style played in parental strategies for class reproduction.

In my analysis, I use theory-guided qualitative research in which the theory of concerted cultivation serves as a guide to studying the interrelation of class and childrearing. This type of research not only allows me to explore working-class parents' experiences, perceptions and attitudes but also to look for evidence that disconfirms the previous research as well as to seek evidence that supports the already established theory (Gilgun, 2005). As previously mentioned, I measure concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth by using three identifying themes or patterns related to the following areas: the organisation of children's leisure and extracurricular activities, the dynamics of freedom and control in managing children's time and the understanding of parental responsibilities and 'good parenting'. Sometimes this approach is called 'deductive qualitative analysis', which researchers use to test a theory on different cases (Gilgun, 2004; also see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Without limiting the interpretation of data, this type of approach helps me understand the impact of class on the choice of different childrearing styles and vice versa.

## **Between different childrearing styles**

My analysis of 23 biographical interviews with working-class respondents attempts to uncover two main approaches behind the organisation of daily lives that reflect the previous research in the field. In this article, I ask whether working-class parents consider the concerted cultivation of their children an essential aspect of good parenting or do they opt for other parenting styles. Is concerted cultivation increasingly accepted by working-class parents as a dominant parenting style? How do parents monitor and intervene in their children's everyday lives? What constraints within their class milieu work against their attempts to manage children's lives?

### ***Sticking to the accomplishment of natural growth***

A very small part of working-class respondents (only four out of 23) was attached to the organisation of daily life that Annette Lareau (2003) called the 'accomplishment of natural growth'. Their children had a comparatively relaxed and slow pace of life. Although children had certain boundaries, their behaviour was not controlled by their parents. In the words of 40-year old Jaroslavas, "[children] have a total freedom; they would call me and say that they would return late because they had a meeting... We do not regulate [their lives]." He also reiterated that freedom was a necessary precondition of a happy childhood: "Well, a child has to feel freedom, unfettered freedom..." According to the respondent, he was not responsible for managing his children's leisure and he let them to engage in their self-initiated activities.

Asked about the dynamics of freedom and control, the same respondent explained that control did not work in his family and that the accomplishment of natural growth was more productive in equipping his children with necessary social, cultural and emotional skills: "Now they have full freedom, previously we tried to control them but our control did not work, it only made me angry.

And I decided to give them full freedom and it calmed me down.” This father did not conceive of their children as possessing a sense of entitlement. On the contrary, according to him, to achieve anything worthwhile they had to be independent and prone to hard work.

Choosing between freedom and control sometimes depended on these parents’ inability to activate economic, social and cultural resources for their children’s advantage because of different obstacles such as financial hardship or simply the lack of time. The parents of this group often unsuccessfully struggled to overcome class disadvantages and restrictions brought by their limited stock of material, social, cultural and emotional resources. 46-year-old Laima said that when her two children wanted to get involved in extracurricular activities, she did not have enough money for them and later her children were reluctant to choose activities. Her son became more interested in spending time playing computer games than attending sports or dance training.

It is possible to gather from this interview that the respondent did not have enough time, money and emotions to invest in her children despite her commitment to their welfare. Therefore, she attempted to compensate for the experiences of disadvantage by drawing rather wide boundaries for her children’s behaviour. In Laima’s words, “Well, I am not a crazy mother who tries to busy children to such a degree that they don’t have free time. Somehow, I always remember how nice it was not to do anything in my childhood. They get very tired at school...” Thus, she advocated children’s leisure choices such as computer games or just browsing the internet and refused to control them. “Let them educate themselves,” was her motto.

Parental emphasis on personal autonomy and self-initiated leisure activities, as demonstrated in previous research (Weininger & Lareau, 2009), distinguished this group of working-class respondents. The lack of motivation was another trait observable in the everyday lives of working-class children who were granted independence and autonomy. Although children had sufficient time for self-initiated leisure activities, in 42-year-old Loreta’s words, “My children have enough free time, even when I offer them some occupations or something else, I don’t know... they lack motivation and they simply don’t want to do it. I offer them to go to the pool or some similar activity but they [refuse].”

Supporting children’s natural growth was part of working-class parents’ efforts to meet their children’s basic needs. Working-class parents viewed their children’s development as ‘natural’ and ‘spontaneous’. Instead of managing their children’s lives, these respondents let them play independently and did not strictly structure their educational or recreational activities. Some respondents said that the most important thing for them was being together with their children even if they did not do anything. They enjoyed idleness, spending time at home, and simply watching television.

It is possible to argue that the lack of economic, social and cultural resources might have also influenced the choice of the accomplishment of natural growth. However, the respondents of this group did not consider themselves bad parents because, as Lareau argued in her research (2002), working-class parents’ commitment to natural growth also required a lot of effort.

### ***Pressures of concerted cultivation***

However, the biggest share of working-class respondents rejected the accomplishment of natural growth and treated their children as projects to be developed. Their children were engaged in a hectic schedule of leisure activities. For instance, extracurricular activities such as sports, dancing, language learning, and playing musical instruments, were popular. In contrast to the first group of parents, their children were involved in a large number of organised activities. The respondents thought that exposing children to different activities was beneficial. 38-year-old Ramunė told that after returning to Lithuania from emigration her daughter attended everything possible: ballet, gymnastics and music lessons. Currently, her daughter went to a music school.

Although they allowed choices for extracurricular activities, these respondents nudged their children in the 'right' direction. If the children chose certain activities, they had to attend them throughout the whole school year. In the words of 41-year-old Rūta, when they got tired of extracurricular activities, she let her children skip them but only for a short while. Afterwards, they had to continue doing what they had chosen earlier.

46-year-old Rasa said that extracurricular education was very important because children needed to test themselves and choose favourite activities that would benefit their future. The extracurricular activities were also instrumental in transmitting life skills to children. While the children of the first group enjoyed more independence, in this group, children's lives were viewed as learning opportunities. According to 45-year-old Rimas, his sons had very little time because both studied or attended high school and were involved in different sports. The whole family usually got up at 5am to take the children to sports training, after which they would go to school. In his words, "he has been working as a taxi driver for his children for ten years now..."

In the words of 44-year-old Kamilė, her daughter excelled in everything she did including street dancing. She was very active and bold in her informal education choices that helped her. Similarly, 33-year-old Miglė, a single mother, bragged about the achievements of her 10-year-old daughter who attended sports, board games, ballroom dancing, football and other classes. Her daughter's day was a good example of a hectic schedule: "She is busy all week from Monday to Friday. She has extracurricular activities every day but they are well-coordinated: she goes to some by herself and I drive her to others..." However, in the respondent's view, her child's involvement in too many activities was beneficial even for her school grades. As this respondent's pronouncements demonstrate, concerted cultivation served as a way of "increasing children's prospects of future success in education and employment" (Sjödén & Roman, 2018, p. 765; also see Vincent & Ball, 2007).

Most respondents were concerned about their children's physical and emotional wellbeing and attempted to ensure that they had the skills to cope with everyday challenges, for instance, the incidences of injustice and bullying at school. 38-year-old Gabrielė stated that her son chose IT club and English language training himself. She wanted him to get involved in sports training because of self-defence necessary at school: "It was my initiative. I said, 'Go, son, exercise, it is necessary to defend yourself because there could be various incidences at school'."

Asked about character traits that she wanted to instil in her child, 44-year-old Kamilė enumerated the sense of responsibility, boldness, and self-confidence:

I want her to be responsible in anything she does, bold, I mean, to overcome any fears and complexes... I would like her to be more confident, that's why I always repeat that she is both beautiful and intelligent, you need to tell it over and over again... I want her to be honest but most of all I want her to be more self-confident.

44-year-old Marijonas thought that responsibility was also an important character trait but it also concerned parents who had to help children solve their problems. In his words, "If a conflict or something else happened in school, you sat down with [your child] and resolved the issue... Generally, we talk a lot with our children." In this regard, concerted cultivation was a part of good parenting that, in its turn, reflected a neoliberal attitude of responsabilisation where parents alone were responsible for the "development of the children's intellectual, social, cultural, physical and emotional skills" (Vincent & Maxwell, 2016, p. 273).

The respondents in this group conceptualised the dynamics of freedom and control in childrearing differently from those in the first group. They argued that children should be managed in every sphere including school and leisure. Although parents talked about children's choices, they frequently indirectly structured and controlled these choices. In 37-year-old Olegas's words, parents had to look after children and show an interest in them: "You need to control children, to make them do homework and see that they observe the curfew." Another respondent, 45-year-old



Rimas, argued that younger children needed more control. When his two sons grew older, he “gave them a little more freedom” because he started to trust them.

Even in choosing extracurricular activities, the balance between freedom and control had to be retained. 33-year-old Miglė said that her daughter had chosen some extracurricular activities herself but she suggested to her some other activities which, in the end, also worked. This helped her to promote her daughter’s decision-making skills and foster her curiosity and creativity. This respondent subjected her daughter to constant manipulation and directions to increase her life chances. Activities that Miglė involved her child in were designed to give her a social advantage. In searching for social advantage, this working-class parent attempted to do ‘middle-class work’.

A range of key factors was instrumental in overcoming disadvantage by way of concerted cultivation. They included parental involvement in regulating children’s leisure activities, instilling an understanding of the importance of education, and cultivating strong emotional relations with them. Even the lack of material resources did not prevent these parents from achieving their goals. In this regard, concerted cultivation was considered not only as a way of fighting class disadvantage but also as a part of good parenting.

In describing good parenting, 37-year-old Olegas argued that besides providing material support, a good parent not only spends a lot of time with their children but also communicates with them. However, because of his busy job, he could not afford enough time for his two children.

Other respondents described good parenting similarly. According to 45-year-old Rimas, “good parents are those who spend more time with children. If you want to have good relationships [with children], you have to devote some time to them.... Besides, if you’re not interested in their activities, you won’t have anything in common with them.” Asked about the crucial things in childrearing, 41-year-old Rūta said that the main thing for her was good communication with children and finding pleasure in small things. Even if they did not have enough money, she and her husband would find ways to go out with their children and engage in some pleasurable activities.

35-year-old Aušra emphasised the sense of constant support that parents provided to children as one of the most significant traits of good parenting. She also mentioned openness and talking with children as a way to make their lives happy and successful: “[Good parents] take care of their children who are not afraid of talking to them and being candid with them... Such relationships are very honest and sincere.” According to 44-year-old Kamilė, “I do know that you have to spare a minute to the child for her to become happier...” In 46-year-old Laima’s words, “Perhaps you should devote all your attention to a child... I pay a lot of attention to my children, their opinions are important to me, we often deliberate and negotiate... Compared to my childhood, now I care much more about my children’s opinions.” Here it should be emphasized that the respondent practiced deliberation and negotiation, often described by researchers as essentially middle-class values used to ‘raise middle-class children’ (Gillies, 2005, p. 838).

### ***Submitting to the middle-class parenting style***

As the biographical interviews demonstrate, although there existed a slight variation between working-class respondents in their ability to effectively activate class resources for their children’s benefits, most working-class parents practiced the principles of concerted cultivation that was essentially the middle-class parenting style. To manage their children’s lives, they enrolled them in a variety of organised activities, advocated rather strict control of their lives and felt responsible for their leisure. Moreover, these respondents associated concerted cultivation with good parenting based on communication, deliberation and sharing pastime with children. Thus, concerted cultivation for them was an essential aspect of good parenting.

Only a small fraction of working-class respondents practiced the childrearing style that could be called the accomplishment of natural growth (independent play, unstructured recreational activities, free time for self-initiated activities). Most parents employed concerted cultivation even

if they encountered financial and material shortages. Some parents did not have enough time to coordinate children's activities, or experienced 'time poverty' (Sjödin & Roman, 2018, p. 775). Nonetheless, they embraced the ideology of good parenting manifested in concerted cultivation (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2003). Thus, it is possible to speculate that their attempts at concerted cultivation depended more on respondents' beliefs and attitudes towards parenting rather than their socioeconomic constraints.

My research confirms Val Gillies's idea that parenting styles, in this case concerted cultivation, could be separated from a class position when despite structural and other constraints parents are able to exploit opportunities and develop their children's middle-class values (Gillies, 2005, p. 840). In other words, it is difficult to attribute the chosen style of childrearing to family income, the respondents' education, or professional occupation. It seems that the normative idea of good or intensive parenting permeated the respondents' everyday practices. Despite the limited resources, these parents cultivated children's skills and abilities necessary for their survival in the world of normative middle-class values.

## Conclusion

In this article, I analysed how parenting values and childrearing styles, particularly that of concerted cultivation, were attached to class cultures. In examining childrearing styles, I focused on the organisation of children's leisure and extracurricular activities, the dynamics of freedom and control in managing children's time, and the understanding of parental responsibilities and 'good' parenting.

The research shows that the so-called middle-class parenting style could be attributable to working-class families. Thus, my findings are not entirely consistent with previous studies on concerted cultivation because the social class was not necessarily related to working-class parents' propensity to practice what is called the accomplishment of natural growth. On the contrary, the article offers an account of the unpredictable ways in which social class affects childrearing styles. In other words, the respondents' structural location does not always determine their childrearing practices and parenting values. This finding points to the indeterminacy of social life and the diversity of parenting values and orientations within the working class.

First, most working-class respondents sought to ensure that their children's time, including extracurricular activities, was spent productively. This childrearing approach created a frenetic pace for both parents and children. Only a small fraction of working-class parents typically allowed their children more freedom and did not attempt to enrol them in many extracurricular activities. The predominant majority of parents placed more emphasis on control and discipline as a way of managing children's time. They longed for an exhaustive schedule of organised activities for their children and made a deliberate effort to cultivate their children's cognitive and social skills.

These parents thought of concerted cultivation as a strategy of good parenting based on professional parenting guidelines and the neoliberal understanding of individual responsibility (Hays, 1996; Guendouzi, 2005; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). They felt personally responsible for developing their children's talents and skills. The choice of concerted cultivation reflects the conviction that parents are "responsible for generating their children's biographies through the development of the children's intellectual, social, cultural, physical and emotional skills" (Vincent & Maxwell, 2016, p. 273). It was also believed that this kind of parenting could become a path to social mobility. Concerted cultivation was considered a way to resolve the issue of social disadvantages "by inculcating middle-class values at the level of the family" (Gillies, 2005, p. 838).

On the one hand, it could be argued that concerted cultivation has been normalised as a parenting strategy for all (Vincent & Maxwell, 2016), therefore, parents unable to practice it were often described as engaged in inadequate parenting. For this reason, the failure to practice concerted

cultivation would result in a feeling of guilt and self-blame. On the other hand, the research shows that Lithuanian parenting culture and childrearing values partly crossed class boundaries. The relationship between the resources held by these parents and the childrearing practices they pursued was not straightforward but rather complicated. The detailed analysis of the interview data revealed a lack of internal homogeneity among the working-class experiences. The diminished relevance of class for most parents' childrearing practices in my sample was an important finding in my study.

Moreover, as Val Gilles argues, the “uncritical adoption by the state of concerted cultivation as the gold standard of childrearing is at the very least open to question.” According to her, concerted cultivation might be disadvantageous and risky to working-class parents because of their limited access to the economic, social, and cultural resources necessary to inculcate middle-class values. These individualistic values based on achievement, competition, entitlement, and instrumentalism might cause social alienation among children's peers (Gilles, 2007, p. 152-153). Despite these warning remarks, parents in my research largely associated concerted cultivation with advantages rather than risks and vulnerabilities.

I should also mention some limitations of my study. Firstly, the three chosen measuring aspects might not always capture the cultural logic of childrearing. Secondly, the boundaries between concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth are not clear-cut and some parents engaged in concerted cultivation might fall back on the accomplishment of natural growth due to their exhaustion, time poverty, and significant changes in income. Thirdly, the conscious choice not to include poor families may have also influenced the research results. I did not include them because most poor families were at risk of social exclusion (for instance, parents were unemployed, received unemployment benefits and had some addictions), and the cultural logic of their childrearing was radically different from both working and middle-class families. Differently from their working-class counterparts, poor families were rarely committed to provide their children not only with care and comfort but also with basic amenities. This finding differs from previous research on child poverty and poor families (Lareau 2003; Mason 2003). Thus, the Lithuanian poor families would require a comprehensive separate study.

Instead of drawing simple structural divisions between working and middle classes, it is possible to hypothesise that the normalisation of concerted cultivation refers to more nuanced parental social identities. In continuing the tradition of qualitative research on childrearing dispositions, values, and practices, we have to not only look at the complex ways that social class affects parenting strategies and vice versa but also analyse why middle-class parenting strategies are made normative. It could contribute to further research into parenting and the reproduction of social (dis)advantages.

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