18-Sep-2013

Dear Dr. Calarco:

The reviews are now in on your revised manuscript, "Coached for the Classroom: How Parents and Children Negotiate the Transmission of Class Cultures." We appreciate the substantial work put into revising the manuscript. We solicited reviews from previous reviewers as well as new reviewers. Both we and the reviewers felt that the manuscript had moved very much in the right direction. There remains, however, substantial and important room for improvement, making it difficult for us to move comfortably forward. We would, however, like to offer the opportunity to revise and resubmit the manuscript once again. We do want you to know that we were on the fence between R&R and rejecting your paper in this round. We also want you to know that this is the last revision opportunity and it is still possible that your manuscript will be rejected if the important concerns we discuss below are not attended to carefully.

We therefore encourage you to take time to digest these reviews and to address each of the suggestions the reviewers and editors make, either in your revisions or in an accompanying revision letter. Several issues emerge from the reviews that seem particularly salient.

Framing: The framing of your manuscript still needs attention in several respects. Please consider reviewer 2's concerns about (a) the main question becoming obscured in the last revision, and (b) some disconnect between key literature and your empirical analysis. There was also agreement between reviewers 5 and 6 that you need to do a better job of articulating the novelty and significance of your contribution in the front-end of the manuscript, and also in the conclusion (see below). ASR is sociology's flagship journal and it publishes cutting-edge research that makes a clear and important contribution to the literature. At this point, both the reviewers and the editors see deficiencies in your manuscript along these lines and thus we hope you will take this comment very seriously. If you believe that your manuscript cannot move further in this direction, then perhaps you should consider submitting your paper to another journal.

Conceptual issues: Reviewers are still troubled that there is not a convincing explanation for differential class transmission—i.e., why are working-class and middle-class parents transmitting different cultures of school behavior? This concern comes through in the comments of reviewers 2 and 6. The latter encourages you to sharpen your definition of "middle-class" and this will help in establishing answers to the class effect question above. We also believe that your speculation on this question would be aided by thinking in terms of class structural position coupled with class-specific learning processes, much like that which you applied to the students studied in your project.

Analysis: The main issue here is your use of the vignettes. Reviewer 2 found the vignette discussion difficult to follow and reviewer 5 asks that you clarify the role of the vignettes (in your methods discussion) and then use them consistently through the analysis. We think reviewer 5's request will go some distance in establishing the clarity that reviewer 2 did not find. We also ask that you carefully consider 5's sense that you attribute too much positive intentionality in reading the actions of working-class parents.

Conclusion: Please work to clearly establish your main findings (per reviewer 4) and articulate the novelty and significance of your contribution. As we state above, these are very important considerations for ASR.

Length: At 12,539 words, your current manuscript is pushing the limit for this project. Given that one of the reviewers did note that the paper was too long, we must ask that the next revision be no longer than the current manuscript and we believe a shorter manuscript (around 11,750 words) is even more desirable. Any additions should be offset by cuts elsewhere in the manuscript.

We imagine that our request for another round of revision and resubmission is not the outcome you were hoping for. At the same time, we want to communicate our enthusiasm for the topic and for your approach and hope that these comments and suggestions for revision make for a tighter overall manuscript, as well as one that can stand the test of rigor.

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Thank you for giving us the opportunity to consider the manuscript for publication in ASR.

Sincerely,
Larry W. Isaac and Holly J. McCammon
Editors, American Sociological Review
ASR@vanderbilt.edu

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 4
Comments to the Author
This is a much improved paper, in particular much better use is made of the data in this revised paper, including observations. I think the reduced theoretical remit which loses the broad emphasis on advocacy and instead focuses on middle class children's supported problem-solving is a real improvement, making the paper conceptual tighter and more convincing. The claims the paper is making are now measured and grounded in the data. I would like to see the very short conclusion return and spell out the main findings of
the study, at present it mainly deals with the mediations of teachers and children, but this is a very small suggested amendment to a good and convincingly argued paper

Reviewer: 2
Comments to the Author
This version of the manuscript is a substantial revision. I commend the author for his/her efforts. It is clear to me that the author thought seriously about the Reviewers' and Editors' comment and made a significant effort to address them. Unfortunately, I find this version of the manuscript to be less compelling than the first. The main question that originally motivated the author—about how parents instill in their children class-based behaviors that contribute to broader patterns of inequality—seems to have gotten lost. Instead, the author focuses on convincing us of a more theoretical point: that class is actively transmitted, not passively internalized. I agree with this view and like this take, but I think the story of the paper is and should be about families. What will makes this paper and the findings potentially fresh—which the author should unveil only after the author introduces this question and explains how we can only partially answer it given the state of the research and our overreliance on socialization perspectives—is that the author looks at the things parents actively do and the ways that children respond to these efforts. As such, the paper feels disconnected from the literature on how families rear children in different ways that ultimately reproduce advantage, and the role of schools in all this. To make this connection, the author needs to highlight why among the two different approaches to parenting, one are better for navigating the school system and attaining a high position within the socioeconomic system.

In addition, I also think the analysis of this matter has become overburdened by nuance—about the moderating role of teacher, schools, and peers. What I did like, however, was the focus on children's agency, although I think the emphasis of this section missed an excellent opportunity. It is here, in the examples of children's resistance, that culture is negotiated and ultimately bought

into. Children can be especially stubborn, and so by drawing out the processes by which children resist but then come to accept parent's lessons on how to behave in school, we can see culture being transmitted.

I also found the mention of the vignettes difficult to follow. This is important data that, in the previous manuscript, was explained nicely. Yet in the new manuscript, the author refers to social class differences in how parents respond to the vignettes without ever explaining what they are or why the author asked the questions he/she did. I presume these changes were done in the interest of space, but it seems like in the new version, this data analysis is incomplete.

Ultimately, I think this paper has a great idea, but may not have the data to execute it. The parenting interview data that was taken out of the new manuscript was interesting and rich—it just didn't convey the interactional processes the author advertised. I think a possible different direction for this paper would be to the return to the first version but argue that the innovation of the paper is in looking at culture as something parents are acutely aware of, reflective of values (something the author rightly states that scholars are reluctant to discuss or acknowledge), and consciously work to transmit. We may not see the transmission process, but we can hear what parents consciously think, and how their children do in fact respond to their efforts—even if they push back at first. In other words, what I am saying is I think the author is still on to something here and should not give up, but the paper needs a fresh direction. This is one suggestion.

In making these changes, there is one other thing the author still needs to answer and that is why do middle-class parents insist their children ask for help, while working-class parents see that behavior as disrespectful and encourage their children to do things on their own. There has to be more to it than what parents pick up in the workplace. There is also likely a story here about power hierarchies. Middle class parents think their children are more on the level of their teachers and encourage them to treat them with respect, but not deference, while the working class parents seem to think this will hurt their kids in some way—perhaps it is not the street smart approach and could get them in trouble in the "real world"—as one parent referred to it. I think this really needs to be explored if we are to buy into the author's argument that parents of different classes do teach their children to behave differently in the classroom.

Reviewer: 5
Comments to the Author
Coached for the Classroom: How Parents and Children
Negotiate the Transmission of Class Cultures
ASR-13-093.R1
In this paper, the author explores the process by which social class cultures are transmitted intergenerationally. Using qualitative data, the author argues that class cultures are transmitted from parents to children in three ways: (1) goal-oriented messages; (2) explicit instruction; and (3) modeling and mirroring behaviors. In each domain, there are differences in the cultural transmission among working- and middle-class families. Because the author seems concerned primarily with illustrating a social process, he/she does not discuss in detail what the consequences are of these different modes of cultural transmission. Instead, he/she aligns his/her analyses with Kohn, Bourdieu, and Lareau, leading to the impression cultural transmission is an integral part of social reproduction. The authors' writing is clear and he/she convincingly shows that he/she has access to rich data. The core of the analyses is well organized and convincing (by core I mean the section that runs through pg. "Cultural Contingencies" on pg. 27).

That said, the current version of this paper is not suitable for publication in ASR. My assessment is that the author can further improve this paper by more clearly articulating the concept of culture; being explicit about the sociological significance of these findings. Below, I detail my concerns.

1.   With respect to framing and argumentation, the author does not sufficiently address the "So What?" question in the introduction to the paper, nor in the paragraph that serves as a preview to the data analysis/findings. By not being more clear or repetitive on this issue, I asked myself: Is the transmission of culture important because it provides a window into social reproduction? Is it important because it simply highlights the process by which children acquire their cultural styles? I'd like to see more explicit consideration of the significance of these findings. I understand that the author may be reticent to go down the path of social reproduction; however, he or she should more clearly indicate which literatures he or she is engaging and state what is new in these analyses. As it is, the current piece appears as an extended empirical illustration of the process by which Annette Lareau's concepts of constraint and entitlement are inculcated.

2.   On a similar point, a more thorough consideration of culture is needed in the framing of the paper. If the author wishes to argue that he/she is illustrating the process by which culture is transmitted, I would like him/her to be more explicit about what culture is. The most recent comprehensive statement on this debate is the following (and more generally in that special issue): Lamont, Michele, Mario Luis Small, and David J Harding. 2010. "Introduction: Reconsidering Culture and Poverty". The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 629(1):6-27. I strongly encourage the author to engage with this piece.

3.   This paper is too long. I do not consider this a trivial issue, or one that can be solved by mere editing. Indeed, this is a critical issue for two important reasons. First, on a practical level, journals are limited in terms of the length of what they can publish. Second, on an empirical level, the author's level of ambition in these analyses runs the risk of diminishing returns. By the time I got to the section on Cultural Contingencies: Children's Agency, I found my attention lagging and, more importantly, beginning to question whether the author would be better served by including some of these materials in a separate paper. I understand that the length of this paper and comprehensiveness of analyses likely reflects requests from earlier reviewers. I would encourage the author to develop a strategy for addressing reviewers' queries and diagnosing the reviewers' concerns without considerably lengthening the paper. This can typically be done by stating clearly at the outset what the paper's contribution is and making sure that this goal can be accomplished within the context of a journal article. My suggestion, with respect to length, is to write two separate papers—with the second focusing on how kids' challenge, resist, and/or modify parental messages. In addition, I ask that the author truncate and simplify the discussion and conclusions, as well.

4.   I found the incorporation of the vignettes to be distracting and problematic. I understand that they play an important role in building the authors' argument and constitute one more data point. I would, however, ask the author to better explain what this data point adds to the totality of the analyses (methodologically). He or she can do this by adding another sentence in the Methods Section about their empirical and/or epistemological value. Given that the author has put so much work into these vignettes (including both quantitative and qualitative summary tables) I would also encourage him/her to draw on the data more thoroughly and consistently. In the current draft, this portion of the data feels both tacked on and overwhelming. I encourage to author to find a solution that makes the incorporation of this data more intuitive and useful.

5.   With respect to the earlier draft of the paper (which I did not read), I feel like the author has sufficiently responded to reviewers' earlier requests (I read these reviews in detail) for tighter alignment between framing and data. He/she did so by incorporating more interactional data and more data highlighting the children. I also note that the author has made improvements to the organization of the paper, both by spelling out the analytic model (and stages/components of

cultural transmission) and by using sub-headers to effectively move the analyses along.

6.   Analytically, I think the author has not yet nailed the labels for her two categories of problem solving, nor has he/she spelled out the content of these two categories (or their significance). What I see at work is the following: Middle-class kids are coached to make sure they get their needs met (customization, entitlement), while working-class kids are coached to hold back, be quiet, and to not act in ways that could be considered bothersome (constraint). In the first instance, the author's labels do not reflect my read of what the parents are doing. I feel that the author, for reasons that are understandable, gives too much credit to working-class parents and makes them appear quite sympathetic. The data, though, also show some working-class parents in a less-favorable light: while the author is clear about this as when quoting the WC parent who says the homework is too hard and that he is wiped out at the end of the day, she seems more generous in her opening quote of Ms. Webb, whom the author characterizes as trying to teach a lesson about success when her daughter asks for iced tea mix, rather than a short-fused and frustrated parent. This, then, leads to a second difference between the author and I in interpretation: I am not entirely convinced that these WC parents' goals are to prepare their children for success. The author, I think, attributes too much (positive) intentionality to their actions. I see these parents as exhausted, disempowered, cranky, and many other less flattering things, which the author is either hesitant to point out or interprets differently given a more intimate relationship with the data. On paper, though, the parent who refused to take her child to the library does not come off as trying to teach her child a valuable lesson; she comes off as exhausted, if not lazy or selfish. Again, the author has more ground than I to interpret the data. I was not there and did not hear or see the interactions first hand. I believe the author can deal with my concern by relabeling her terms in a way that does not attribute such positive connotations for the preparation for the future (i.e., inculcating them to show respect). Either that or the author can more convincingly show that WC parents are consciously preparing their children for success and do have ambitions for them.

Reviewer: 6
Comments to the Author
"Coached for the Classroom: How Parents and Children Negotiate the Transmission of Class Cultures," American Sociological Review Ms. 13-0093-R1

The author uses original interview and observational data to explore intergenerational transmission of class cultures to white working- and middle-class children. The article is well written and addresses an important topic. It appears that the author has done a good and thorough job responding to the first round of reviewers (who were remarkably consistent in their recommendations). I especially appreciated the new observational data on children's responses to parents' problem-solving advice; without these data on activation of class cultures in schools, the arguments advanced in the paper would be much less persuasive to me. More specific comments follow.

Framing and Research Design

The up-front framing should do more to emphasize the paper's contribution to understanding the uptake of class cultures and their activation in schools. Because observations were conducted in schools (rather than at home), little direct evidence is available on parent-child interactions. But the paper provides lots of good data on how students respond to and interpret their parents' coaching. This is an important contribution.

I suggest that the author devote more attention early in the paper to justifying his/her definition of "middle class." Why distinguish college-educated managers/professionals from all others? Responding to this question will require more discussion of the mechanisms by which class affects childrearing practices: Why do middle-class parents advocate "supported problem solving" more? Does this reflect their privileged position in a vertical hierarchy, the nature of their work tasks, or both?

-	One conceptualization of social class effects focuses on ranking in a status hierarchy: Lower-status parents know that they are low in the cultural pecking order and they feel intimidated by representatives of middle-class institutions, such as schools. These parents teach their children to go it alone because they don't trust those higher up to help – and perhaps because they don't feel worthy. High-status parents have a stronger sense of belonging in a school setting; they believe that their children are entitled to teachers' help and they convey this to their children. This emphasis on upper-class entitlement and belonging is closer to depictions of class transmission by Lareau and Bourdieu.

-	Another conceptualization, more reminiscent of Kohn, is based on the argument that parents hold "different beliefs about the skills and strategies necessary for success" (page 2). From this perspective, working- and middle-class jobs differ in their task content, particularly in their self-directedness, and these qualitative differences in work roles affect personality and child-rearing practices. Adopting this conceptualization would imply that self-directed work environments lead parents to value "supported problem solving" – a seeming contradiction that the author addresses in the Discussion section.

These theoretical issues warrant more attention early in the paper because they are relevant to the research design, specifically to the operationalization of social class.

Effects of classroom culture

The classroom observations and interviews with teachers suggest that student help-seeking is culturally normative within schools. This means that working-class parents are sending counter-normative messages to their children. Is this important?

To what extent are the life lessons that working-class parents' teach their young children attributable to the middle-class culture of educational institutions? Might these parents expect and request more support from their working-class peers (in other contexts)?

Looking forward

Is it possible that working-class parents' emphasis on self-help might eventually offer their children a route to upward mobility? Despite the obvious costs of independent problem solving (i.e., less adult support), developing these skills might offer later advantages – for example, in competing against children of "helicopter parents" for jobs requiring self-direction.