It's the Only Thing I Can Do: Intensive Mothering and Sustainable Lifestyles

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Abstract

Why do mothers practice a sustainable lifestyle? While existing literature views motherhood as a motivating factor that encourages women to adopt sustainable practices, this article conceptualizes women's desire to live sustainably as an outcome shaped dialectically with the material experience of mothering. Drawing from interviews with eight mothers who self-identified as interested in living sustainably, this study shows that intensive mothering creates time scarcity in mother schedules, discouraging women from acting upon their ecological concerns, and exacerbates their reliance on eco-intensive options. Women adopt sustainable practices to compensate for their current inability to create institutional changes through political channels. By investing in the immaterial qualities of these practices, women pass on cultural resources that enable their children to facilitate institutional changes. Mothers' efforts in cultivating children's eco-friendly dispositions are not only a symbol of "good" mothering but also a marker of the boundary between the household and the market. My findings contextualize the formation of ecologically oriented taste within the experience of mothering and present an alternative approach to understanding why women engage in a sustainable lifestyle. This article also holds insights for explaining the relationship between engagement in a sustainable lifestyle and participation in the formal political process.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable lifestyles include a set of practices by which people attempt to reduce their ecological impact. A prominent approach to addressing environmental problems is through adopting sustainable consumer practices such as recycling, using energy-efficient lightbulbs, and avoiding driving. Feminist scholars have focused on understanding the impact of a sustainable lifestyle on women and identifying the points of tension in implementing this lifestyle (Kennedy and Dzialo 2015; McRagor 2014; Cairns et al. 2014). Conceptualizing motherhood as a motivating factor for women to engage in sustainable practices, feminist scholars demonstrated how sustainable lifestyle intersect with class and gender, ratchet up the standard of "good" mothering, creating a sense of personal insufficiency, and reproduce gender boundaries by normalizing care work as women's unpaid work (MacKendrick 2018; Cairns et al. 2013; Cairns et al. 2014; Bobel 2002; Parker and Morrow 2016). However, resting on the assumption that women's attitude towards solutions to environmental problems are antecedent to their actions, these studies did not ask how women respond to the practical challenges associated with living sustainably. Thus, these scholars missed the opportunity to understand how mothering experience shapes women's ecologically oriented tastes. By allowing respondents to identify and describe how they integrate ecological concerns into their everyday lives, this paper asks: how has the experience of mothering influenced women's desires to live sustainably? How has mothering experience influence women's implementation of sustainable practices? How do women conceptualize their responsibility towards environmental protection?

Drawing from interviews with eight upper-middle class mothers who self-identified as interested in living a sustainable lifestyle, this article applies a cultural approach to understanding how mothering experience influences women's ecologically oriented taste. A cultural approach

conceptualizes taste as constructed in dialogue with the material experience, and highlights instances of belief-situation mismatch, where actors' dispositional responses to a situation are challenged (Strand and Lizardo 2015). These instances create opportunities for actors to reconstruct their involvement in a situation, thus are useful to illuminate the formation process of ecologically oriented tastes. Findings suggest that intensive mothering undermines women's abilities to incorporate ecological concerns in their lives rather than encouraging them to engage in a sustainable lifestyle. First, since intensive mothering requires mothers to dedicate a copious amount of time and energy on childrearing, it creates time scarcity in mothers' schedule, restricting women's ability to actualize their sustainable aspiration through formal political channels. Second, since intensive mothering encourages women to put the child's needs and desires before their own, mothers often resort to conventional practices to secure the child's well-being. Mothers compensate for their inability to respond to ecological concerns through formal political channels by incorporating eco-friendly practices in their lives. However, when confronted with the challenges of consistently implementing sustainable practices, mothers rely on a narrative of distinction to distance themselves from the mass market options and describe the kind of children they want to raise. Children's ability to embody environmental sensibility is a symbol of "good" mothering and a testament to the time and cultural resources mothers invest in the childrearing process. Thus, mothers' investment in concerted cultivation, a middle-class rendition of intensive mothering (Lareau 2011: 386), marks the boundary between household and market, reinforces the ideology of intensive mothering by perpetuating the idea that the time and effort mothers invest in childrearing is beyond market valuation.

These findings indicate that rather than encouraging women to actualize sustainable aspirations through purchasing eco-friendly products, the experience of intensive mothering

continually reminds women of the insufficiency of individual actions in addressing environmental problems. However, despite understanding that personalized lifestyle changes have a limited impact on reducing the overall level of human environmental impact, women's ability to exert institutional influence is conditioned by their engagement in intensive mothering. This experience leaves women to feel that implementing sustainable practices and setting a good example for their children is the only thing they can do to contribute to environmental sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Political Ramification of Sustainable Lifestyle

Adopting a sustainable lifestyle is a popular approach to addressing environmental problems, yet the political ramifications of sustainable practices such as recycling and purchasing organic food are contested. Scholars critical of the sustainable lifestyle argue that it reduces the solution to environmental problems to market-based and individualized responses (e.g., Maniates 2002; Szasz 2007; Johnston 2008; Guthman 2008b; Carrier 2008). Reliance on a consumer-based strategy not only masks the complex structural processes that generate environmental problems but also enables corporate actors to co-opt the environmental movements (Humphery 2010; Guthman 2008b). For example, companies profit from greenwashing campaigns to appeal to ethical consumers despite their actual environmental track record contradicting the image they project (Jones 2019; Muldoon 2006). Stakeholders in alternative markets romanticize the local as resistance, despite adopting the neoliberal rationality of consumer choice, localism, entrepreneurialism, and self-improvement (Guthman 2008). These processes create "green governmentality," where the state creates a neoliberal subjectivity through a sustainable lifestyle, manipulating citizens to conform to its current state of environmental regulation (Brand 2007;

Hobson 2013). Under these circumstances, people engage in sustainable practices to satisfy their immediate environmental concerns and become apathetic toward political solutions (Szasz 2007: 201). While revealing the limitations of an individualized approach to mitigating environmental problems, the critical literature on sustainable consumption rests on the assumption that people's pro-environmental behaviors are subservient to their environmental beliefs rather than conditioned by their experience. These arguments confused the process of creating neoliberal subjectivity with the effect of the process.

Other scholars have argued against the critical literature by pointing to empirical evidence that ethical consumption does not preclude collective actions (e.g., Lorenzen 2012; Micheletti and Stolle 2008; Willis and Schor 2012; Baumann, Engman, and Johnston 2015). Rejecting the dichotomy of public and private, individual and social, Willis and Schor (2012) argue that such characterization represents a category error, conflating market with consumption, individual with private, essentializing activities in the consumer market as inherently lacking political significance. Albeit political consumption is a phenomenon that is restricted to a narrow segment of the population who has the cultural and economic capital to fulfill this consumption practice, engagement in political consumption is strongly correlated with conventional political behaviors (Baumann, Engman, and Johnston 2015; Willis and Schor 2012). Ethical consumers often view their practices as an extension of their identity, social network, and political action (Connolly and Prothero 2008; Willis and Schor 2012; Carfagna et al. 2014). Although environmentally conscious actors often downplay political ideas while recruiting people to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, this is part of a pragmatic "lifestyle change strategy" that actors employ to reach a wider audience, rather than a genuine lack of political interest (Lorenzen 2014a). Additionally, the conventional conception of activism presumes it to be an activity that occurs outside of the home, thus

obfuscating the community-building work that is primarily undertaken by women (O'Shaughnessy and Kennedy 2010). These studies highlight the importance of going beyond understanding consumption as merely the act of purchase and understanding how the commercialized approach to solving environmental problems create tension in other areas in people's lives and challenge how they perform other tasks.

Echoing the critical scholarship, feminist scholars have expressed concerns for the implication of personalized politics on the radical approach of political mobilization and argued that a sustainable lifestyle works to privatize environmental problems through commodity solutions, which relies on the unpaid labor of women (Sandilands 1993; Kennedy and Dzialo 2015; MacGregor 2014; Smith 2010). The primary focus of this body of literature is to understand the impact of a sustainable lifestyle on women. In this view, the personalized responsibility of sustainability infiltrates mothering experience, increasing domestic work expectations, elevating the standard of "good" mothering, perpetuating the idea that it is women's individual responsibility to mitigate the effect of environmental problems or solving these problems (Carrier 2008). Existing research has identified time, information, and money as the tension points women experience as they attempt to make consumption choices that are both good for their children and for the environment (Cairns et al. 2014). The authors concluded that these experiences lead women to perceive that the inability to live up to the ideal is a personal failure, thus reinforcing individualization and feminization of environmental responsibility. Here, feminist scholars inherited the critical scholars' confusion between the process of creating neoliberal subjectivity with the effect of the process. These narratives describe one potential effect of a sustainable lifestyle, rather than its actual effect.

Recent work in cultural sociology demonstrates that beliefs are produced in a dialectic fashion with actions, rather than antecedent to actions. Strand and Lizardo (2015) argue that actors reconstruct their involvement in a situation when their dispositional response to a situation is challenged. Within the context of sustainable consumption, people who cannot act on the dominant ideals for environmental protection adjust their expectations to align with their actions (Kennedy and Givens 2019). Following these studies, I propose an alternative approach to understanding the challenges women experience as they attempt to live a sustainable lifestyle. I conceptualize these challenges as cases where sustainable consumer subjectivity challenges women's dispositional response as mothers. By unpacking these cases, I demonstrate that women's desire to attend to their children's needs and desires frequently undermine their ability to enact a sustainable lifestyle, encouraging them to attend to the needs of the child by choosing eco-intensive options. The inability to implement a sustainable lifestyle consistently constantly remind women of the insufficiency of individual actions. Through personalized approaches, women cultivate children's ability to embody environmental sensibility and afford children with the knowledge and ability to voice their concerns through institutional channels.

Mothering and Burden of Sustainability

Studies in environmental sociology have found that women are more likely to adopt sustainable practices than men (Hunter, Hatch, and Johnson 2004; McCright and Xiao 2014; Carfagna et al. 2014; Papaoikonomou 2016). Although living a sustainable lifestyle is often framed as "easy" and "enjoyable" (Johnston 2008; Johnston and Cairns 2012), the experience of maintaining a sustainable lifestyle is often burdensome for women. A number of scholars exploring the impact of sustainable lifestyle on women argue that in a household setting, the

gendered household division of labor associates women with motherhood and the responsibility of family work, positioning them to care for and respond to their families' health needs. Thus, the work of adopting environmentally friendly practices disproportionately falls on women (e.g., Davidson and Freudenburg 1996; MacGregor 2014; Plumwood 1993; Sandilands 1993; MacKendrick 2018; Bryson et al. 2016; Bobel 2010).

In particular, women's experience of implementing a sustainable lifestyle reflects and aligns with the imperative of "intensive mothering" (Hays 1996), a form of mothering approach that is "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive" (8). Drawing on analyses of the gender inequality in housework and childcare (Hochschild 1989; DeVault 1991) and the historical trajectory of "sacralization" of childhood (Zelizer 1985), Hays argues that intensive mothering consists of three elements, all of which conflict with the rational, utility-maximizing role one is expected to perform in the public realm. First, intensive mothering demands mothers to be the central caretakers of the children, providing consistent nurturing for their children. Second, it requires mothers to spend a copious amount of time, energy, and resource in the childrearing process. Third, it requires mothers to separate the logic and practice of professional paid work and childcare, regardless of whether or not they are engaged in paid work. Thus, the ideology of intensive mothering leaves the work of mothering outside of market valuation, normalizing mothering as gendered and unpaid work (Hays, 1996: 8). As a result, modern-day mothers are confronted with conflicting demands on their time and energy as well as conflicting ideas of how they should behave.

Empirical research has illustrated how the ideology of intensive mothering encourages women to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Mothering experience not only resulted in women's heightened awareness of environmental risks, but it also encourages them to respond to those risks

through personalized approaches. Mothers respond to potential health risks by investing more time and energy in domestic labor. For example, women who practice urban homesteading are often motivated by the idea of selfless devotion to children's wellbeing (Parker and Morrow 2016). Women who carry out "natural mothering" also deliberately rescind into traditional gender roles and conduct most of the work in household self-provisioning[1] (Bobel 2010). Women also respond to perceived health risks through consumption. In response to the ubiquity of potential chemical harms, women practice complex precautionary consumption routines to eliminate health risks to children and construct an ideal motherhood project through consumption (MacKendrick 2014). This response is derived from the desire to protect the purity of children's bodies (Cairns, Johnston, MacKendrick 2013). Additionally, the imperative of intensive mothering encourages women to practice caring consumption, meaning that women are expected to consume to meet the need and desires of others (Thompson 1996). Cairns et al. (2014) argue that eco-consumption is a new form of caring consumption since women are not only consuming to meet the needs and desire of the children, but also the needs of the planet. The authors used the concept of "eco-mom" to capture mothers' desire and experience of making consumption decisions that are both good for the planet and their children. They argued that this ideal elevates the standard of "good" mothering and reproduces class boundaries since it requires considerable cultural and financial capital to fulfill (Cairns et al. 2014). Furthermore, the experience of maintaining a sustainable lifestyle can be an emotionally absorbing experience for mothers. While attempting to protect the purity of children's

[1] "Natural mothering" refers to a mothering approach where women reject almost everything that facilitates mother-child separation. Women practice "natural mothering" voluntarily rescind into performing traditional gender roles and minimize their reliance on modern institutions. This concept is not to be confused with Lareau's (2011) concept of "natural growth," where parents aim to provide providing basic care for the child and allowing them to mature.

bodies through consumption, mothers frequently encounter a pervasive sense of uncertainty of their options and a sense of personal insufficiency (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013; Cairns et al. 2014). These findings indicate that a sustainable lifestyle is a financially and practically burdensome ideal that reproduce mothers as natural caregivers and reduces women's ecological concerns to the individualized actions. However, while demonstrating the practical challenges mothers encounter while attempting to live up to an ideal sustainable lifestyle, these studies view motherhood and sustainable lifestyle as mutually reinforcing. Thus, they neglect the fact that different cultural performances of "good mothering" may shape how women engage in a sustainable lifestyle.

Following Hays, Lareau (2011) explored how parenting practices differ across social classes. Lareau argues that while mothers of all classes might share the ideology of intensive mothering, the practice takes different forms across different social classes (386). Lareau contrasted the parenting practice among middle-class parents with that of the working-class parents. Middle-class parents practice "concerted cultivation," a form of parenting approach that encourages parents to "actively foster and assess the child's talents, opinions, and skills" (Lareau: 2011, 31). By contrast, working-class and poor parents practice the "accomplishment of natural growth." Parents focus on providing basic care for the child and allowing them to mature (Lareau: 2011, 31). In addition to providing food and shelter for their children, parents with higher socioeconomic status also place a considerable emphasis on providing opportunities for their children to participate in organized leisure activities, encourage reasoning and negotiation at home, and actively foster children's ability to interact with institutions (Lareau: 2011, 31). Parents with lower socioeconomic status tend to see a clear distinction between adult and child (Lareau: 2011, 3). They allow children to control their own times, expect children to follow their directives at

home, and rarely interact with institutions on children's behalf or foster children's ability to interact with institutions (Lareau: 2011, 31).

Lareau's work indicates that although middle class parents are rich in economic and cultural capital, their parenting approach is also marked by a hectic pace. How does mothering experience influence mothers' adoption of sustainable practices? By examining mothers' experience of living sustainably, this article develops a new theoretical understanding of the relationship between intensive mothering and sustainable lifestyle. I demonstrate how intensive mothering undermine mothers' ability to implement a sustainable lifestyle by creating time scarcity and competing expectations of women's behavior. These experiences both limited women's participation in the political process and shaped the sustainable practices they choose to adopt.

Time Pressure and Sustainable Lifestyle

Existing studies in environmental sociology and economics have shown that time pressure influence households' allocation of time and resources, encouraging the members of households to choose timesaving yet eco-intensive products and practices, such as driving (Schor 2010; Jalas 2002). A number of factors contribute to time scarcity in mothers' schedules. First, the pressure to increase productivity by working long hours lead households to allocate less time in family life and leisure (Godbey, Lifset, and Robinson 1998). Second, parenting also influences the family's allocation of time. Having children reduces the amount of leisure time for both men and women (Stalker 2011), suggesting that parenting is a time-consuming enterprise. Additionally, there is a persistent leisure gap between mothers and fathers, as mothers often engage in childcare and family work (Hochschild 1989; Craig and Mullan 2013). These studies suggest that mothers are encouraged to consume goods and services with high ecological impact.

Although the sustainable consumption literature has documented how the attempt to live a sustainable lifestyle created pressures for women to balance competing demands on their times (Shove 2003; MacKendrick 2014; Cairns et al. 2014), how this time pressure shapes the ecological practice women elect to adopt is neglected in the literature.

DATA AND METHODS

The analysis is based on a dataset comprised of rich narratives obtained from in-depth interviews with mothers who live in four neighborhoods in the Greater Boston, Massachusetts, area. The four neighborhoods selected — Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, Roxbury, and West Roxbury — are geographically adjacent and described by respondents as good neighborhoods to raise children. In each case, participants were asked to discuss why they are interested in living a sustainable lifestyle, how have they implemented this lifestyle and the reward and challenges associated with this experience. The interviews were conducted at the participants' home, office, or local coffee shops, and they lasted from 50 to 90 minutes. All respondents were asked to complete a short survey at the end of the interview to record necessary sociodemographic information. Initially attempting to examine how mothers with different class backgrounds incorporate ecological concerns in their everyday lives, the research design aims to capture a wide range of mothering approaches as well as ways in which mothers incorporate ecological concerns in their everyday life. Thus, I recruited the initial interview participants by posting recruitment flyers in the areas' natural food stores, second-hand shops, coffee shops, libraries, local parenting listservs, and community centers. Additional participants are recruited through snowball sampling. The recruitment was subsequently interrupted by COVID-19. From February 2020 to May 2020,

I posted recruitment information on several Facebook groups, but this attempt ultimately did not generate any response.

The analyses are based on interviews with eight mothers who are demographically homogenous, and the final interview generated little new information, indicating that I had reached saturation. Overall, all respondents are white, affluent, and highly educated. All of the participants have children under the age of 12 living at home. All mothers were married, and seven of them are living with a male partner. One respondent is stay-at-home mothers, one respondent works from home, and six respondents are either working full time or are currently obtaining their postgraduate degrees while working part-time. The household income for all the respondents is above the neighborhood average. Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents, N=8

	N	%
Work hour		
20 to 30 hours	2	25%
30 to 40 hours	3	37.5%
40 to 50 hours	1	12.5%
50 hours or more	1	12.5%
NA	1	12.5%
Number of children		
1	2	25%
2	5	62.5%
3	1	12.5%
Age of children		
0-5	8	53.3%
6-10	5	33.3%
11 or older	2	13.4%
Race		
White	8	100%
Education		
Four-year college	2	25%
Postgraduate or professional degree	5	62.5%
Some postgraduate education	1	12.5%
Household Income (dollars)		
50,000 to 75,000	1	12.5%
100,000 to 150,000	6	75%
150,000 or more	1	12.5%
Property Ownership		
Owner	6	75%
Renter	2	25%

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

The interview began with broad questions to identify the basic living conditions of the respondents. These questions include household composition and the division of labor at home. I then used follow-up questions to elicit specific ways in which they incorporated ecological concerns in their daily lives and the reward and challenges associated with these practices. I then asked whether the respondents socialize with others around their interest in sustainability and why

they are or are not doing so. Respondents self-identified sustainable practices in which they are engaged. These practices include composting, recycling, avoiding plastic, purchasing organic food and eco-friendly products, cycling and using public transportation, growing their own food, installing solar panels, buying second-hand products, and reducing the overall level of household material consumption.

All interviews were digitally recorded; I transcribed the interview verbatim and conducted line-by-line coding using Atlas.ti. This study employs an analytically inductive approach using grounded theory (Charmaz 2000). I began the coding process with an initial round of open coding on the transcripts, focusing on the rewards and challenges of living sustainably. Next, I conducted a second round of coding to trace the emerging themes in mothers' descriptions of their practices. Doing so allows me to examine the relationship between respondents' taste and practice. Interview narratives emphasized mothers' effort to distance themselves from mass-market options. Despite living in areas with plenty of opportunities to live a sustainable lifestyle, respondents experience a lack of time to implement sustainable practices widely and consistently. In the next section, I describe the characteristics of the neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

This study took place in four geographically adjacent neighborhoods — Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury — in the Southwest Boston area. Interviewees described their neighborhoods as "hip," "crunchy," "rough around the edge," and having a community feeling. According to the most recent census data (Boston Planning and Development Agency 2019), the population in West Roxbury is predominantly White (69.4%), affluent, and highly educated. Most people have at least a bachelor's degree (52.9%) compared to the Boston average of 47.4 percent.

The median household income was $80,804. Compared with West Roxbury, the population in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale are more diverse. Although over half the population was white, there is a sizable black and Hispanic population in both neighborhoods. Residents of Jamaica Plain are also highly educated and affluent. 64.6 percent of the population have at least a bachelor's degree, and the median household income was $84,446. 44.8 percent of the population in Roslindale has at least a bachelor's degree, which is similar to the city's average. The median household income in Roslindale is $76,667. Compared with residents in the other three neighborhoods, residents of Roxbury are less educated and much poorer. Roxbury is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Boston, with a median household income of $27,721. Most residents in the area are black (51.5%), and 22.2 percent of the population has at least a bachelor's degree. Figure 1 to 3 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods.

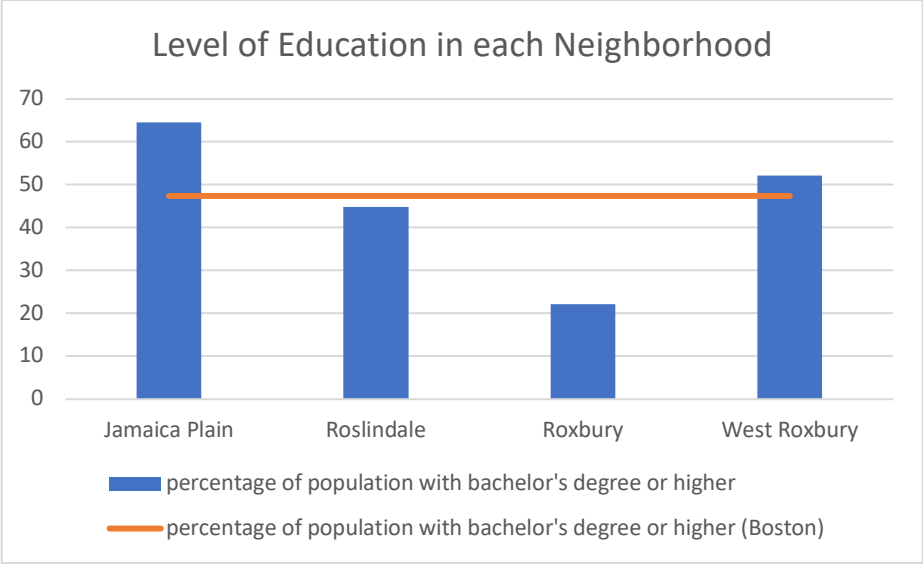

Figure 1. Level of education in each neighborhood in the study

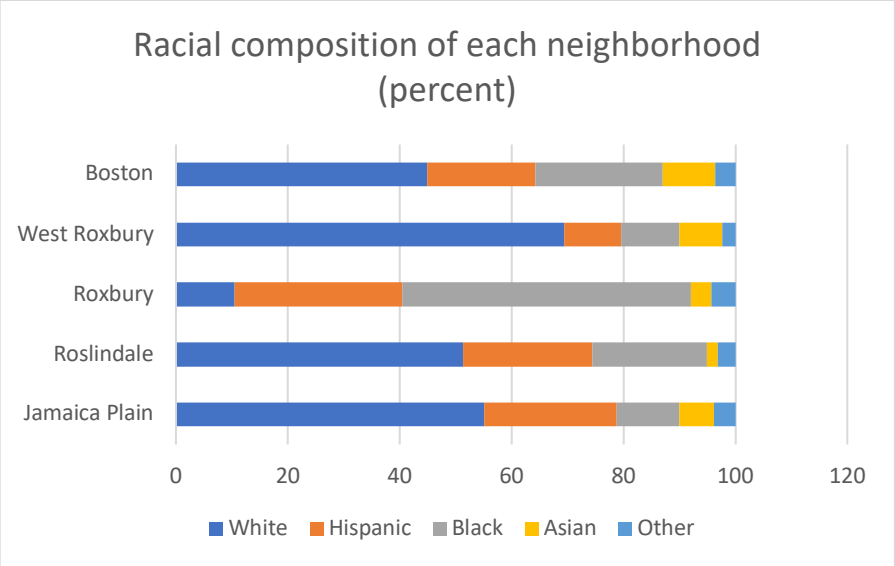

Figure 2. Racial composition of each neighborhood in the study

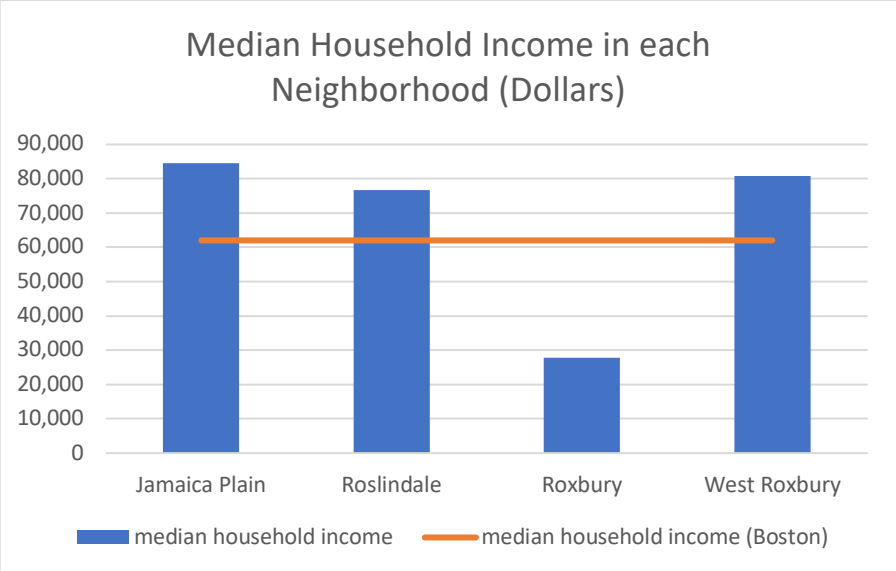

Figure 3. Median household income in each neighborhood in the study

Studies in ethical consumption have highlighted the importance of place. The presence of sustainable options provides access and opportunities for residents to implement a sustainable lifestyle, and it also shapes geographically based consumption culture, shaping residents' engagement in a sustainable lifestyle (Johnston, Rodney, and Szabo 2012; Kennedy, Krogman, and Krahn 2013). In the case of Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Roslindale, and West Roxbury, the local identity has always been intertwined with nature. Once all part of the independent town of Roxbury, these neighborhoods were rural farming communities that supply fresh food to the city of Boston. Eying on the area's bucolic setting, wealthy estate owners of the 19th century began building vacation homes in these areas to escape the alienating effect of urbanization (Von Hoffman 1996: 8). In the late 19th century to early 20th century, these areas underwent rapid urbanization after the construction of railroads and streetcars (Warner 1978). During this period, transcendentalist thinkers and progressive reformers, who revered nature and advocated for experimental living, women's suffrage, workers' rights, educational innovation, among other causes, moved to these areas and contributed to the area's flourishing civic spirit (Encyclopedia Britannia 2020, Von Hoffman 1996: 22).

Wary of urban development projects, residents often sought to preserve their local identity by defining their connections with the green spaces surrounding the area. In the late 19th century, residents of Jamaica Plain — particularly the wealthy estate owners and middle-class residents — pressured the city's park commission to modify the design of Franklin Park to accommodate the activities of the residents (Von Hoffman 1988). From the 1960s to 1970s, residents of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury protested against and effectively stopped the construction of the Interstate 95, a twelve-lane highway, in their neighborhoods. The highway fund and the abandoned construction spaces were subsequently used to reroute the subway line along the neighborhoods, and to build

Southwest Corridor Park, a linear park that contains a bike path linking the southwest neighborhoods to downtown Boston (Southwest Corridor Park 2020). The rally against highway construction also left behind a now annual festival that celebrates "what can be accomplished when people of all traditions, cultures, ages, and beliefs come together" (Spontaneous Celebrations 2020). In the 1990s, faced with the inner-city decline and rising environmental injustice, Roxbury residents, particularly youths, became engaged in the environmental justice movement (Faber 2016, Agyeman 2005). These movements sought to integrate the struggles for environmental racism with concerns for displacement (Alternative for Community and Environment 2020).

Today, surrounded by a number of parks, these neighborhoods provide plenty of opportunities for residents to engage in outdoor recreational activities. These green spaces also provide the infrastructure for the city's primary bike routes, which supports long-distance travel throughout the city (City of Boston 2017). Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of open spaces and bike paths in these neighborhoods.

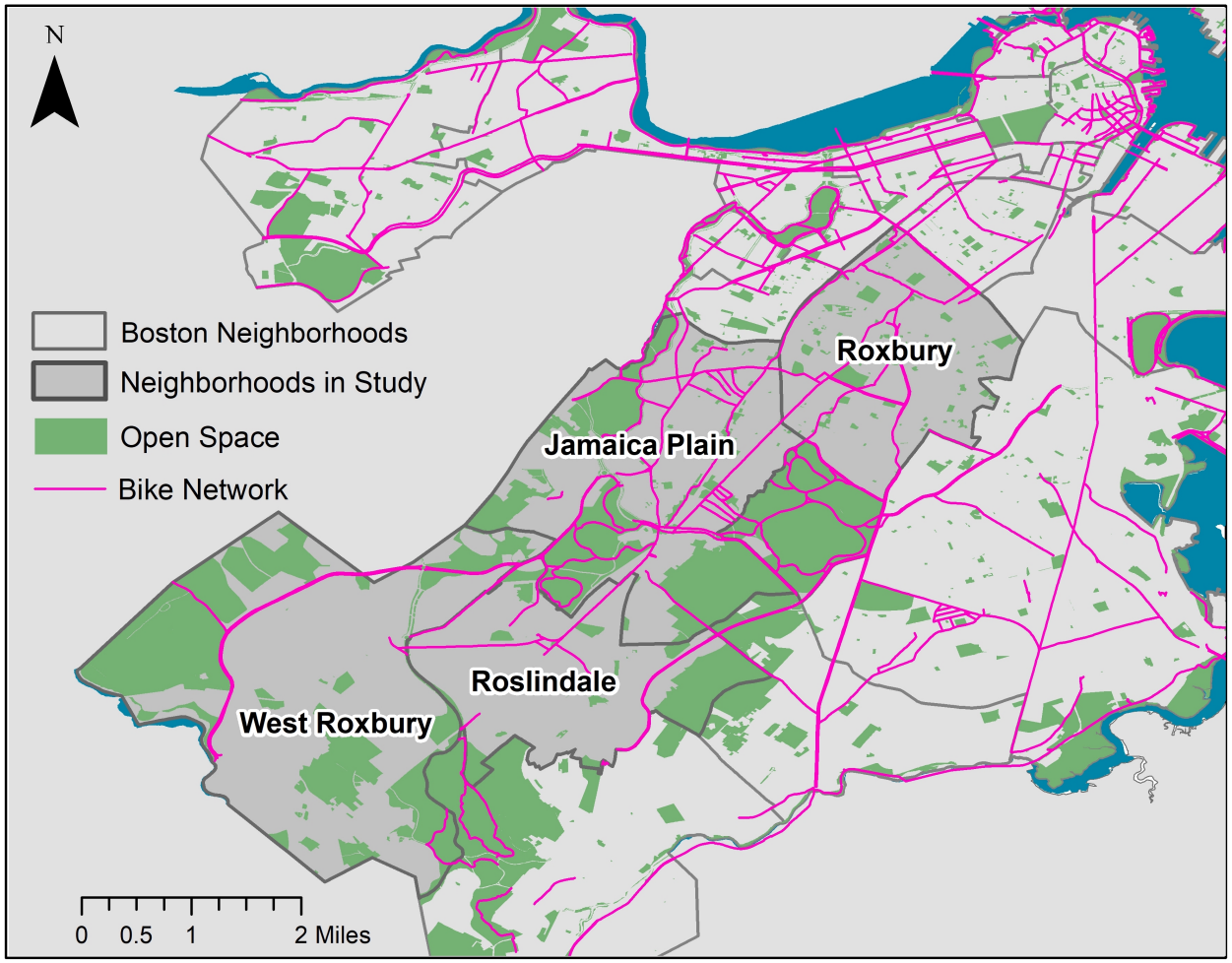

Figure 4. Location of the study area and distribution of open spaces and bike paths in Boston (Note: The map is created by Jessica Bolin and Xiaosu Tian)[2]

Respondents highly value these infrastructures, since they allow families to organize locally bound leisure activities, an alternative to the eco-intensive long-distance vacations. Mothers also use these infrastructures to cultivate children's affinity towards nature, allowing them to explore in nature under adult supervision. Additionally, these neighborhoods have a plethora of locally

[2] Data retrieved from https://data.boston.gov/dataset/existing-bike-network/resource/3419eea5-2b61-405c-b411-1fcdd22704b4; https://data.boston.gov/dataset/open-space; https://data.boston.gov/dataset/boston-neighborhoods/resource/71f0ceba-fb32-4251-a8a7-b8bc19d2f921)

owned businesses, providing local residents with the opportunity to opt-out from the mass market. Each of the neighborhoods has its own commercial centers, lined with locally owned bakeries, coffee shops, craft beer breweries, ethnic restaurants, and second-hand shops. In addition to a Whole Food Market located on the north side of Jamaica Plain, these areas also provide easy access to vibrant farmers' markets. Some respondents also took advantage of the abundance of community gardens in these neighborhoods to grow their own food.

FINDINGS

It's the Only Thing I Can Do

All respondents in the interviews acknowledge the necessity of political actions in addressing environmental problems. They contend that much of the burden of addressing these issues need to be placed on corporations and government entities. However, mothers find it challenging to participate in political activism consistently. Dana, a working mother of two boys under the age of four explained that she is not as active in political advocacy as she used to be, and she attributed her current non-participation in political activism to the need to take care of her children:

> I mean... there are obviously other things you can do in terms of like political activism and that, but it's difficult to attend marches and rallies and you have two young children and both parents working and... you don't have family around to say 'OK, I'm going to go strike for Friday, can you mind the kids,' because the support isn't there, so those larger political things have to... you know, I'm not as involved as I used to be, and I will again, once the kids are like got a little bit bigger.

Dana's narrative excerpt illustrates mothers see a clear distinction between adopting sustainable practices and voicing their concerns through political channels. While they view political activism as a more effective approach of addressing environmental problems, their involvement in the

childcare process created time pressures, limiting their participation in the formal political process. Dana and other mothers in the interviews are not dismissing the possibility of undertaking an activist role in the future, but this line of action appears unrealistic in the immediate future when taking care of young children takes up a lot of their time.

In acknowledging that structural changes need to be made to address environmental problems, respondents expressed the idea that much of the processes that lead to environmental problems escape their immediate control. The inability to influence these processes through formal political channels led mothers to contemplate how they could contribute to environmental sustainability. Fiona, a working mother of two girls, explained the rationale behind why she adopts sustainable practices:

> It's like riding in a train that you have no control over the direction of where the train is going. And yeah, we can see what's coming and there's an argument over 'should we maybe turn the train into different directions?' And... and we can see, I mean, as far as I'm concerned, it's pretty clear where we are going… So, I alternate between guilt and denial. Instead of coming in and out, it's like you're coming in and out of kind of an awareness of how my actions... and trying to course correct and do things as I can and build on that awareness.

Fiona's account illustrates that through making lifestyle changes, mothers attempt to retain a sense of control to a problem over which they have little control. Mothers adopt a sustainable lifestyle to compensate for their current inability to address environmental issues through formal political channels, and to do at least *something* in response to the environmental crises.

The Contradictions of Living Green

> *I try to focus on things that I can do that don't take me extra time. Like buying renewable energy credits. – Emma*

None of the mothers believe that they are doing all of the housework. They explained that the housework arrangement at home is more or less equal, and it ebbs and flows within a year and throughout the years. However, mothers do believe that they are the manager of the house, having to plan and designate tasks to members of the household, and they also spend more time with the children and pay more attention to their needs and desires than their partners do. All mothers in the study highlighted that having children makes efforts to implement a sustainable lifestyle a challenge. On the one hand, mothers believe that making personalized changes is the only way they could reasonably integrate ecological concerns into their lives, on the other hand, the reality of living an ecologically-oriented lifestyle often conflicts with other areas of mothers' lives, so that they cannot always implement environmentally-conscious practices. Mothers experience contradictions in three ways. Firstly, a sustainable lifestyle is time-consuming and labor-intensive, which creates competing demands on mothers' time. Secondly, mothers frequently concede to conventional practices to accommodate their children's needs and desires. Thirdly, the rejection of material objects creates an additional burden for relational work, discouraging mothers from making sustainable choices. The gap between mothers' desire to live sustainably and their actions exemplifies the practical distance between intensive mothering and a sustainable lifestyle.

Despite living in neighborhoods with plenty of opportunities to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, mothers still find planning and executing everyday sustainability tasks requires a lot of time and effort. Beth, a working mother of a three-year-old boy, attributed her inability to consistently engage in sustainable actions to the time and effort it takes to plan and execute everyday sustainability tasks:

> If you have the reusable things you have to take the time to wash it. You can't just grab the snacks and run out of the door because they're ready for you. You have to think about it before and plan... So if I know we're going somewhere early in the morning, like we have

> to leave the house early and get out the door quick, like the night before I have to stay up late and make sure... you know... the snacks are where they need to be…

The time-consuming feature of sustainable practices often creates competing demands for mothers' time, pushing them to adopt timesaving yet eco-intensive practices. Emma, who used to work professionally for a sustainability organization, recalled that she had to buy prepackaged snacks for her children so she could attend to their needs while getting her work done. After becoming unemployed, Emma attempted to adopt a low-waste lifestyle, only to find that doing so while volunteering at the local church, finding another job, and taking care of her children to be stressful: "I wish you know... and I sort of mean I'm not working now, I thought 'oh, I'm gonna have all this time to be this environmentalist now, I can make all these like choices,' but um... it still takes a lot of time." Mothers' experience reflects the compositional effect of consumption on ecological outcomes. Schor (2010) notes that on a household level, activities with low ecological impact tend to be more time-consuming. When confronted with time scarcity, members of households tend to consume to timesaving yet eco-intensive goods and services. While the compositional effect of ecological impact is often discussed in relation to work hours, women's engagement in childcare and housework further intensifies their experience of time scarcity, creating more pressure for them to consume relatively more environmentally harmful goods and services.

The time commitment mothers make to implement sustainable practices becomes problematic when they consistently fail to create desired outcomes, such as ensuring the children's wellbeing and reducing the family's ecological impact. Failure to achieve these objectives lead mothers to question the time commitment they make to these practices and seek alternative approaches to actualize their objectives. Mothers navigate the time-consuming feature of a sustainable lifestyle by choosing practices that do not require an additional time commitment. One

way of doing so is to choose practices that allow them to accomplish other tasks. Abby, a stay-at-home mother of three children under the age of four, attempted to use cloth diapers for her children out of the desire to minimize the ecological impact her family generates. However, Abby eventually abandoned the practice because she could not stop the cloth diapers from leaking. The ineffectiveness of cloth diapers in fulfilling its most basic function made Abby feel absurd to commit so much time to the practice: "I was like I am a college-educated woman, this is supposed to clean up pee if it can't do that if I can't figure it out and it can't clean up pee, I am not going to spend weeks on this. I spent like two or three weeks on trying to do it, I was like I'm not going to continue." Abby navigates cloth diapers' ineffectiveness by began toilet training for her children when they were 18 months old, which is earlier than the U.S. average age of 32.5 months for girls, and 35 months for boys (Schum et al. 2002). To Abby, the time she dedicates to beginning toilet training for her children is an effective use of her time, compared with the time she dedicates to troubleshooting and cleaning cloth diapers. This process allows her to reduce the amount of waste generated from diapers and frees her from worrying about diapers sooner.

Mothers also navigate the time-consuming nature of sustainable practice by purchasing eco-friendly products. Like Abby, Beth also used reusable diapers for her son out of the desire to reduce her family's ecological impact of diapers. Noticing that using cloth diapers means increasing the amount of water and electricity used, Beth feels like she is making progress in one aspect of her sustainability commitment by sacrificing another part of it. In this light, the time and effort she dedicates to using cloth diapers seemed out of place:

> So eventually it becomes we were staying up super late to make sure we had enough diapers for the next day. And... like running... so I was like ‘is this actually better for the environment,’ because we have to run the dryer like four times. So eventually we were like we have to go to bed earlier and I don't think we are making the impact we want to with this.

After stopped using reusable diapers, Beth switched to using Seventh Generation diapers, an eco-friendly product that promises to create less toxic waste in the production process by using sustainably harvested plant-based pulp and not using chlorine. Beth believes that shifting to purchasing an eco-friendly brand frees her from the labor-intensive and time-consuming process of washing the diapers, and it helps her achieve the goal of lessening her family's ecological impact.

The second contradiction mothers experience is that sustainable practices often conflict with mothers' desire to ensure children's well-being. As a result, mothers frequently find themselves conceding to eco-intensive practices to accommodate their children's needs and desires. Heather, a working mother of two girls in elementary school, believes that conventional food products and industrial organic products sold at supermarkets do not contribute to sustainability. She finds it frustrating that she has to purchase these products to accommodate her daughter's food taste:

> I think if I was like just cooking for myself or myself and my wife, like. We can eat more simply or just like, you know, we're not as like… picky or like, you know… It's like my kids will only eat certain vegetables, so broccoli, you know, it's just like, not available all year round, you know, or it's like big organic that's not that sustainable or whatever.

In this scenario, Heather's desire to put together a more environmentally friendly diet for her family is impeded by her consideration of the child's preference. Rather than demanding that her daughter eat seasonally available vegetables, Heather knows from experience that her daughter will only eat certain kinds of vegetables. Thus, Heather concedes to purchasing conventional products or industrial organic products to accommodate her daughter's food taste.

The third way mothers experience the contradiction is that choosing to live an environmentally friendly manner can be socially costly. In distancing themselves from practices with high environmental impact, women frequently need to reconcile their values with those of

other people's. The process of living an environmentally friendly lifestyle is often accompanied by the experience of performing relational work. These experiences generate a feeling of frustration and encourage mothers to make eco-intensive choices. Four mothers in the study described birthday parties as a challenging situation to be sustainable. In these scenarios, mothers contemplate how to minimize the environmental impact of the party while providing their child and the guests with a good experience. Beth recalls her experience of finding eco-friendly cups for her son's birthday party:

> What did I struggle with last year... the plates were fine, those were easy to find, but cups that were... like paper either recyclable or compostable, with the lids, because it was a bunch of three-year-olds, you know. So it was just like "Oh, I see why people just get the juice pouches," because... it was very hard and they were expensive and weird size.

Birthday parties is also associated with an influx of material goods. While acceptance of material goods often creates challenges for mothers to maintain the material simplicity of the household, rejection of the presents often has relational strings, subjecting mothers to maintain existing relationships by conducting relational work. Fiona finds that rejecting gifts disrupts her relationship with the gift-givers, and she frequently contemplates how to stop others from buying gifts for her children without upsetting the relationship:

> In some ways what I'm doing is cool because I'm raising my kid and sort of an extended family network. But it's also hard because I'm having to navigate other people's values, which are different from mine. And, and I... yeah. So, and… and we have to keep the… the sort of obligational ties that we need to maintain, for those relationships to mean to be smooth.

As guests of birthday parties, mothers frequently feel pressured to buy gifts for other children, which contradicts their belief in material simplicity. Dana explained that she often makes a donation in the children's name instead of buying them a birthday present. Dana is aware that not everyone understands her intention:

> You know with gift-giving is a tradition, and it's meant to be a little like social relationships in that and to kind of disrupt that by like giving a voucher or not... the kids don't understand why they got a certificate and somebody else got a toy, you know that kind of way, so um... that can be hard as well.

At times, Dana finds herself navigating who would appreciate this gesture and who would feel insulted by it. This relational contemplation is accompanied by Dana's desire to protect her children's exposure to the potential repercussions of her action: "… The thing is that you definitely don't want your like kids to be impacted by that, oh 'your mom, you never got me a present' kind of thing, so that's something that I'm wary of." Dana's experience shows that the complex relational context in which mothers are embedded often makes mothers' attempt to live a sustainable lifestyle socially costly for them and their children. These experiences encourage mothers to participate in an eco-intensive lifestyle.

Distinction Making

As the preceding section illustrates, mothering experiences discourage women from incorporating ecological concerns in their everyday life. Mothering experience creates time scarcity in women's schedules, restricting their ability to both actualize their sustainable aspirations through formal political channels and incorporate environmentally friendly practices in their everyday life. The demand for mothers to prioritize the needs and desires of children also encourages mothers to make eco-intensive choices. In this sense, the contradictions mothers experience created a belief-situation mismatch, in which the experience of mothering impedes the action imperative of implementing sustainable practices. Confronted with the challenges of consistently implementing sustainable practices, respondents articulate their desire in "end-in-view" form, turning their ecologically oriented tastes into educational resources for their children. In this process, mothers condemn waste, disavow what is available in the mass market, and

promote the ecologically oriented practices in which they are engaged as having a lower environmental impact than conventional practices.

While mothers rely on a narrative of distinction in discussing all of the sustainable practices in which they are engaged, this narrative is most pronounced in their discussion about plastic objects. Mothers distance themselves from plastic, sometimes use moralizing language such as "garbage" and "junk" to describe objects made of plastic. Plastic objects are thought of as cheap, pervasive, and have poor quality. These conceptions lead respondents to believe that it is wasteful to purchase plastic objects. For example, Beth expressed her distaste towards plastic by comparing plastic toys with wooden toys: "When we buy him toys we try to be mindful about like... getting wooden things and renewable things, but you just can't control the plastic, just like the thing that don't last long and end up in the garbage." Beth distanced herself from plastic objects by highlighting the pervasiveness of the polluting material. In dismissing plastic objects as having poor quality and wasteful, Beth distanced herself from a low cultural capital position of lacking the knowledge over the life cycle of material objects in modern industrial society. By contrast, Beth exhibits her knowledge on the subject by conceptualizing wooden toys and toys made with renewable materials as longer lasting and more environmentally friendly than plastic toys. In this process, Beth established a connection between the knowledge of material flow and the wooden toys, reconfiguring wooden toys into an item with objectified cultural capital. At the same time, Beth was able to portray her action of purchasing wooden toys as being more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic toys.

Mothers also use plastic's problematic nature to pass on the knowledge about the material and teach children about their proper management. All of the respondents recycle, and three of them compost. Respondents mainly seek to reduce household waste by reducing household plastic.

Abby uses recycling to teach her daughter about the environmental benefits of the practice and cultivate her ability to differentiate material objects:

> You know when I take the kids downstairs to the blue bin it gives me a sense of pride that I can share with my children. My daughter asks: "Where does this box go? Does it go into the black one or the blue one?" I'd say, "It goes to the blue one because they can reuse it and they can make it into other things." It gives me pride to know that I'm teaching them about these things and I'm doing as I should to doing my part, you know, to take care of the environment and to take care of them, I guess.

In this scenario, the problematic nature of plastic allows Abby to teach her child about how to recycle. By showing her daughter where plastics belong in the waste management system, Abby passed on her knowledge of waste management as information and embodied practice.

Mothers are also critical of the mass market, contending that it encourages consumerism by celebrating indulgence. In these cases, other people's consumption decisions represent the mass-market logic of actualizing one's desire through consumption. For example, although Fiona understands that buying gifts is her mother-in-law's way of showing love, Fiona still finds the fact that she has bought her daughter eight dolls problematic: "… It's sort of reading this consumer culture, right? You sort of like, if you want something, just go and get it." Fiona believes that her mother-in-law's action represents a sense of indulgence encouraged in the mainstream consumer culture. By contrast, Fiona believes that it is important to cultivate children's sense of restraint, allowing them to reject the expectation of the mass-market by understanding the consequence of their actions as well as their own needs: "A child should have one doll, in my opinion. And I don't need more than that, right? There's only so many… sort of situations is set up that you can create." In condemning excess, Fiona reduces material possessions into the immaterial and moral qualities she associates with the kind of children she wants to raise. Being able to afford the products but choose not to allows the respondents to signify a sense of discrimination and control. The sense of

discrimination is emblematic of the respondents' extensive knowledge of the production process, the ecological impact of everyday actions, and knowledge about one's own needs and desires. A sense of control allows the respondents to tacitly differentiate themselves from those who are too poor to indulge in the mass-market, and the mass-market consumers who lack awareness of the ill effects of their consumption choices.

Raising the ecological citizen

The process of distinction making enabled women to materialize their ecological concerns into a set of objectified and embodied cultural capitals. Mothers expressed the desire to raise children who are respectful to nature and have the necessary knowledge and ability to make environmentally responsible choices. Respondents draw on these cultural resources to articulate the kind of children they want to raise, and they also use these cultural resources in the childrearing process to actualize this sociability.

Mothers repeatedly train children's to be proficient in embodying environmental sensibility in everyday life. Respondents cultivate children's affinity towards nature by carrying out family's leisure activities in local public green spaces, organizing trips to local community supported agriculture (CSA) farms, and involving children in their efforts to compost and maintain gardens. Children frequently assist the family's efforts in recycling, meal preparation, and ensuring household light and water are turned off when not being used. Through these efforts, mothers also prepare children to embody a sense of ease in a future that is potentially marked by material scarcity. In Fiona's words:

> Our generation is living incredibly unsustainably and that's what feels comfortable and normal. But for the next generation, they're not going to be able to do all these things and that if they have a world, and so I want my kids to be used to like to not feel like that level

> of shock when they're like not able to use the washing, when they have to use a washing line instead of an electric dryer, when they have to like...there are going to be hard choices that people have to make…

While mothers' desire to make lifestyle choices that are both good for the children and the environment creates an unrealistically high standard of "good" mothering (Cairns et al. 2014), children's ability to embody environmental sensibility also become a symbol of "good" mothering. For example, Abby contrasted other children's action of destroying nature with how she expects her children to behave:

> There are some kids in my sister's park who cut down a tree. Like just for the hell of it. Like I'm just like "why?" My children, I hope would never do anything like that because like I said, just leave the bug be, like he's doing his own... work, leave him be. I hope to raise them to be respectful, so I hope… I hope my impact isn't just my actions, I hope that I raise... I take my vocation as a mother very seriously.

In articulating the kind of children she wants to raise, Abby portrayed the idealized children who respect nature as a result of mothers' effort to educate and influence her children. "Good" mothers are the ones who show their children how to respect nature and help them develop an environmentally conscious disposition, rather than permitting them to engage in environmentally destructive behaviors.

Mothers also use environmentally friendly products and practices to discuss environmental problems with the children. These conversations frequently connect personal behavioral level discussions such as the environmental benefits of cycling compared to driving, to the structural and policy level discussions such as the implication of the Trump administration's environmental policy. Mothers present personal level sustainable practices as an actionable step towards achieving broader policy goals, and they believe that this strategy keeps children informed about environmental issues without causing them emotional distress. For example, previously working professionally in a sustainability organization, Emma has extensive knowledge about the

complexity and severity of the current level of ecological crisis and the complexity of its solutions. However, when discussing these problems with her daughter, Emma intentionally downplays the complexity and severity of environmental problems: "… I've tried to um... talk about energy and um... and you know, not get her... you really don't want kids to be worried too much, you know it has to be age-appropriate, you can't be like 'the world is going down the…' you know you have to make it like... a little more positive... I mean like actionable." In using sustainable lifestyle to facilitate her daughter's interest in environmental problems, Emma presents engagement sustainable practices as a personal environmental responsibility within a broader range of political actions.

Respondents whose children are in school also reinforce this narrative by bringing their children to marches and rallies and encourage them to express their ecological concerns through institutional channels. Mothers engage in these efforts to show that in addition to living a sustainable lifestyle, there are other ways one could engage in the effort of environmental protection. As Grace, a mother who recently brought her seven-year-old daughter to the Climate March, explained: "So I just want to show that, well that you can... yeah. Take action. There... there is opportunity also in climate change. I don't know. Yeah, that it doesn't have to all be gloom and doom." Grace hopes her daughter Alice could become an environmental activist one day. In addition to discussing environmental problems with Alice and cultivating her disposition towards sustainable practices such as composting and riding bicycles, Grace also encourages Alice to suggest to the school that it should create a composting program. The school took Alice's advice and implemented a composting program, and Alice got an award from the school for suggesting the idea.

Mothers' approach to educating children about environmental issues reflects the middle-class parenting approach of concerted cultivation. Parents consciously foster children's linguistic competence and their ability to interact with institutions in everyday life (Lareau 2011). This childrearing approach not only allowed the respondents to distinguish themselves from mothers who do not consciously foster children's ability to embody environmental sensibility, it also allowed them to mark the boundary of the household from other social relations. When asked what they hope to achieve by living a sustainable lifestyle, all mothers answered that they want to set an example for their children, hoping that their children would grow up understanding the importance of respecting nature. Mothers believe that spending time with children and cultivating their environmental sensibility and disposition is more important than consistently making ethical purchases. For example, Emma problematized the pressure for mothers to make sustainable purchasing decisions by arguing that spending time and sharing value with children is equally important, if not more important than buying sustainable products for them:

> Our society sends a pretty big signal like the minute you know you're having a baby it's about consumption and like buying new things um so I think... that's like you know... and then you're kind of sending these mixed messages like you should buy all these new things but they should be organic and safe and clean. So there's the buying of things and the things... becomes this big pressure, but the values and the times you're spending with your children somehow isn't as important.

Emma's account reflects mothers' conception that while sustainable products can be purchased, the value mothers share and the time they spend with children cannot be easily measured in monetary term. Thus, children's ability to embody environmental sensibility is symbolic to the time and values mothers share with the children in the process of concerted cultivation. The time and resources mothers invest in cultivating children's eco-conscious disposition not only

reinforces the ideology of intensive mothering by perpetuating the idea that the work of mothering is beyond market valuation, they also mark the boundary between the household and the market.

DISCUSSION

Contrary to previous studies on motherhood and sustainable lifestyle, which focused on one specific area (e.g., organic food consumption, elimination of household toxins) or one particular way (e.g., urban homesteading, "natural" mothering) in which mothers choose to implement a sustainable lifestyle, this study allowed the participants to identify and describe ways in which they integrate ecological concerns into their everyday life. This approach contextualized the participants' eco-friendly preferences within the experience of mothering. This study yields several different findings from previous studies on motherhood and a sustainable lifestyle. First, whereas previous studies find that intensive mothering motivates women to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, this study finds that women's desire to prioritize children's wellbeing often creates time scarcity in mothers' schedules. The felt imperative to put the child's need first discourages women from undertaking ecological concerns since these concerns often directly undermine women's ability to ensure children's wellbeing. Consequently, the experience of mothering undermined women's ability to actualize their sustainable aspiration through formal political channels. It also restricted their ability to implement a sustainable lifestyle consistently. While Szasz (2007) argues that consumers who engage in sustainable practices are mired in the arduous process of actualizing a lifestyle project, treating lifestyle change as a substitute for political activism, findings demonstrate that participants adopt sustainable practices to compensate for their current inability to facilitate policy changes through formal political channels. In attempting to live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, mothers often concede to conventional practices in light of the

practical constraints imposed by intensive mothering. Thus, women's limited participation in political activism did not stem from their engagement in a sustainable lifestyle, but their involvement in intensive mothering.

Secondly, while a sustainable lifestyle is often criticized for encouraging mothers' individualized responses to environmental problems, findings suggest that women's desire to make environmentally responsible choices often has to give way to their children's needs and desires. The challenges women encounter while attempting to live a sustainable lifestyle led them to recognize that they cannot mitigate environmental problems alone. For example:

> If society as a whole doesn't change, it's really hard to change as an individual within the society and to try to live it out. And it's easier to be more resilient as an individual if you don't have kids, but it's harder to control how those kids are... kids bring you into more relationship with people. (Fiona)

Mothers also problematized the felt pressure to make sustainable purchasing decisions and argued that sharing values and spending time with children is more important compared with purchasing eco-friendly products. Women utilize objects and practices to cultivate children's ability to enact an environmentally conscious lifestyle and as a material basis upon which they carry out discussion about environmental problems with their children. In some cases, this process affords children the knowledge and ability to ecological concerns through institutional channels. Through investing time in concerted cultivation, mothers draw a boundary between home and the market and expect the latter to conform to the needs of home.

Thirdly, this study adds a cultural dimension to existing literature on time use and ecological outcomes. Findings show that when mothers are confronted with time scarcity due to the childrearing process, not only do they choose more eco-intensive goods and services, they also question the cultural narrative that led them to engaging in sustainable actions in the first place.

Although mothers in this study did not question that they have responsibility towards environmental protection, they are engaged in the process of considering what responsibility they should bear and to what extent. Recent study in environmental sociology shows that people who have less economic and cultural capital to enact the dominant ideal of environmental protection experience a sense of "eco-powerlessness" (Kennedy and Givens 2019). While lacking neither economic capital nor cultural capital, respondents in this study are also experiencing a sense of "eco-powerlessness," contending that personalized sustainable practices are "the only thing they could do" to contribute to environmental protection. Future study could more carefully examine how time influence the political contrasts within each social class.

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