

**A Seasonal Research Design Examining Macro-Level Factors and Micro-
Understandings of Parent Engagement and Children's Literacy Achievement**

by

Cathlene Hillier

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfilment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Sociology

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2018
© Cathlene Hillier 2018

EXAMINING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

Supervisor(s)	Dr. Janice Aurini Associate Professor, Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies, Sociology Sociology & Legal Studies, University of Waterloo
Internal / Other Member	Dr. Scott Davies Professor, Canada Research Chair Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto Adjunct Professor, Sociology & Legal Studies, University of Waterloo
Internal Member	Dr. Owen Gallupe Associate Professor Sociology & Legal Studies, University of Waterloo
Other Member	Dr. Linda Quirke Associate Professor Department of Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University
External Examiner	Dr. Melissa Milkie Professor Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
Internal-external Member	Dr. Christina Parker Assistant Professor Social Development Studies, Renison University College, University of Waterloo

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes a seasonal mixed methods approach to studying parent engagement and its influence on children's literacy achievement. I draw on quantitative and qualitative data collected as a part of the Summer Learning Project in Ontario, Canada (see Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014). My research is informed by Bourdieu's (1998; 1990 with Passeron) and Lareau's (2000, 2011) theories of educational inequality to understand parents' and schools' responses to parent engagement in children's education. In addition to making empirical and theoretical contributions to the sociology of education, I include recommendations for educational policy.

My quantitative analysis in chapter two tests the hypothesis that family resources and practices positively affect literacy achievement using data for a non-random sample of 1, 671 students (grades 1-3) from 92 schools. Multilevel linear models are employed to compare the influence of family involvement at school and home on students' achievement on two outcomes: 1) snapshot of children's cumulative learning in the spring; and 2) measure of children's growth (or loss) in literacy during the summer. Out of 15 parent engagement measures, I find that only three (parents' aspirations, home resources and discussions of school with children) are positive predictors of children's spring literacy outcomes and that none predict summer literacy growth/loss. In interactions of socioeconomic status (SES) with each parent engagement measure, only volunteering at school was significant for spring literacy outcomes, this form of involvement benefitted lower-SES families. Overall, family SES remains a powerful predictor of achievement for both spring literacy and summer growth. I conclude with a discussion of my findings within three mechanism of parent engagement: cultivation ethic (goal driven approach to child's education through provision of resources, extracurricular activity, aspirations, and discussion school with children), realist reaction (reacting to a child's achievement by hiring a tutor and/or increasing reading and homework time with child), and expressive logic (parent involvement that is done out of interest or enjoyment on the part of the parent, such as volunteering at the child's school or participating on school council).

My third chapter uses the three mechanisms (cultivation ethic, realist reaction, expressive logic) of parent engagement (from chapter two) to speculate why certain parent engagement measures have positive, negative, or no effect on students' literacy achievement. In this paper, I use these three mechanisms as my conceptual framework along with categories from Ontario's Ministry of Education parent engagement policy as a guideline for analysis. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with 90 parents and 37 school staff (teachers, administrators, support staff), I consider parents' and teachers' alignment with each other and policy. I find that parents are more likely to discuss their engagement within categories in the cultivation ethic and realist reaction which are generally home-based activities. Conversely, teachers place more emphasis on school-based categories in the expressive logic. Further, within each mechanism there are nuances between working- and middle-class parents and how they perceive certain types of engagement such as homework help and reading with children (e.g., frustrating versus enjoyable). My findings illuminate the microprocesses of teachers' and parents' perceptions of parent engagement within the expectations outlined in the policy and how they differ in school-centric versus a home-centric focus. I conclude with considerations for policy and programming.

The fourth chapter draws on 27 photo-interviews with children (aged 5-8; including three sets of siblings) paired with 24 semi-structured interviews with their parents. Interviews focus on parents' and children's understandings of future education, and how these understandings translate into actions within the home learning environment and engagement in schooling. Taking into consideration parents' education and income, I examine the differences between parents who hope their child will obtain a high school education (HSE) and parents who seek post-secondary education (PSE). The interviews uncover the types of conversations about future education that do (or do not) occur at home. Children whose parents have HSE aspirations talk less about future education and are generally less involved in their children's schooling. Parents who have PSE goals for their children are more likely to have conversations about future education with their children; these parents display a more interconnected approach with their child's education at school and at home. They link schooling to future socioeconomic mobility, job security and satisfaction with their career and lives. I also find an internalization process occurring with children where higher parental aspirations positively influence children's approach to schooling. Regardless of academic achievement, children are more likely to comply with literacy activities presented by parents or create learning opportunities for themselves when they see themselves as good readers and are less frustrated with reading. While more proactive, lower-SES families with PSE aspirations are anxious about their children's future and are heavily dependent on resources, information, and social connections provided by schools and the community. I conclude with policy recommendations for reaching students and parents earlier with career and post-secondary education experiences and information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been blessed with many supporters as I pursued a doctoral degree. This is my humble attempt at thanking them.

This project started with an email to Dr. Linda Quirke (my M.A. advisor) stating that I was applying to the University of Waterloo's Sociology and Legal Studies department for their Ph.D. program. She encouraged me to contact her friend and colleague, Dr. Janice Aurini. Little did I know then how fortunate I would be for this advice! Dr. Aurini has been an excellent advisor and colleague. Her knowledge of the sociology of education and strength in theory and methods has been a valuable source of guidance as I worked through the various aspects of my research.

I had a superb dissertation committee whose collective strengths and expertise made me a better researcher and writer. Along with Dr. Aurini, I am immensely grateful to Drs. Scott Davies, Owen Gallupe, and Linda Quirke for their guidance and support. And, an extra thank you to Drs. Aurini and Davies for including me in the Summer Learning Project. I really feel fortunate for all the opportunities I have had working with you on this study. Thank you!

The path to the Ph.D. was started and encouraged by my husband, Chad, who believes in my potential as an academic scholar more than I do myself. His love and support through the hundreds of times I said I was going to quit and his "picking up the slack" with childcare and housework is the reason I was able to complete this degree. I am glad you asked to sit by me in the undergraduate course where we first met!

To my children, Caiden, Cavan, and Chelsea. I thank you for providing smiles, hugs, and needed distractions when the process proved frustrating. Even when you wondered if my involvement in a "summer setback" study was going to ruin summer for children everywhere, you still wanted me to succeed. For you, I include a quote from a beloved book: "What a year it has been! Hopefully your heads are all a little fuller than they were... you have the whole summer ahead to get them nice and empty before next year starts..." (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 17). You see, even Dumbledore was concerned about children losing what they have learned during the summer! I hope, from watching me complete this degree, that you have learned to always keep learning and reading.

Friends and family have been a source of encouragement along the way. I thank my mother, Janis, for all the sacrifices she made while raising my sister and I on her own while working full-time as a teacher. It was your dedication to the low-SES communities in which you taught that inspired my passion for this research. Thank you for raising me to be a reader and for passing that love of reading to my children. I thank my in-laws, other family members, friends (old and new) for their support and encouragement through the years.

Lastly, thank you to all of the people who participated in the data collection for this study.

Examining Committee Membership	ii
Author’s Declaration.....	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables	x
List of Abbreviations	xi

Chapter 1 Introduction

Inequality and Parent Engagement in a Seasonal Perspective	1
The Problem with Parent Engagement.....	3
The Importance of Summer Time	6
The Orientation of the Dissertation	7
Conclusion.....	13

Chapter 2 Examining Parent Engagement and Student Literacy Achievement through a Multilevel Seasonal Learning Design

Introduction	15
Theoretical Considerations and Previous Research	18
Data and Methods	24
Setting and Sample.....	25
Measures	27
Missing Data	31
Descriptive Data on Parent Engagement by Key Factors	34
Multilevel Models	40
Findings	41
Limitations	49
Discussion	50
Conclusion	59

Chapter 3 “It’s more than just helping your kid with homework anymore”: Comparing parents’ and teachers’ understanding of parent engagement in Ontario in light of educational policy

Introduction	60
Three Mechanisms of Parent Engagement.....	64
Teachers’ Perceptions of Parent Engagement.....	66
Research Setting and Sample.....	68
Analytical Approach.....	71
Policy Context	74
Findings: Alignment with categories found in parent engagement policy.....	76
Summer Learning and Parent Engagement	101
Discussion	102

Limitations	113
Conclusion.....	113

Chapter 4 “They’re my investment”: Parents’ and Children’s Aspirations and Parent Engagement in Schooling

Introduction	116
Literature Review	120
Methodology.....	127
Research Setting and Sample	128
Process and Methods	131
Analytical Approach	134
Findings	136
Discussion	167
Limitations	181
Conclusion	183

Chapter 5 Conclusion: Accounting for Quantity and Quality in Parent Engagement

Introduction	184
Summary of Main Findings	184
Summary of Policy Recommendations	187
Summary of Main Contributions	195
Suggestions for Future Research	197
Final Thoughts	200
References	202
Appendix A: Parent Survey	239
Appendix B: Parent Interview Schedule.....	247
Appendix C: Teacher Interview Schedule.....	249
Appendix D: Interview Demographic Form.....	251
Appendix E: Photo Interview: Instructions	252

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
CHAPTER 2	
Figure 1. Model 4 Plot of Coefficients	46
CHAPTER 3	
Figure 1. Cultivation Ethic in Discussion of Parent Engagement	79
Figure 2. Realist Reaction in Discussion of Parent Engagement.....	89
Figure 3. Expressive Logic in Discussion of Parent Engagement	98
CHAPTER 4	
Figure 1. Chloe’s Photo	143
Figure 2. Callie’s Photo	147
Figure 3. Lily’s Photo	156
Figure 4. Amelia’s Photo	159
Figure 5. Jasmyn’s Photo	166

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
CHAPTER 2	
Table 1. Variable Definitions.....	30
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Before and After Imputation.....	33
Table 3. Family Level Descriptive Statistics by SES.....	36
Table 4. Family Level Descriptive Statistics by Child’s Gender.....	37
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of PE by Summer Participants & Controls.....	39
Table 6. Multi-level Regression of Spring Literacy Scores and Summer Growth/Loss: Models 1-3.....	44
Table 7. Multi-level Regression of Summer Literacy Scores and Summer Growth/Loss: Models 4-6.....	47
CHAPTER 3	
Table 1. School Staff Characteristics.....	69
Table 2. Parents’ Demographics.....	71
Table 3. Dimensions of Parent Engagement in Ontario’s Policy.....	76
CHAPTER 4	
Table 1. Family Demographic Information.....	130
Table 2. Children’s and Parents’ Aspirations.....	138
Table 3. Parent Reported Structure of a Typical School Day by Parents’ Aspirations and Parent Engagement.....	141
Table 4. High Engagement by Parents’ Aspirations and Mother’s Education.....	164

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EA	Educational Assistant
ECE	Early Childhood Educator
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
HSE	High School Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
MLM	Multilevel Linear Model
PIC	Parent Involvement Committee
PSE	Post-Secondary Education
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SLP	Summer Learning Program/Project

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction: Inequality and Parent Engagement in a Seasonal Perspective

Introduction

Literacy achievement gaps have long been a concern for educational researchers and policymakers. These disparities in learning are consistently found among socioeconomically disadvantaged children and have grown over time (Conley & Albright, 2004; Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Crowley, 2006; Sirin, 2005). Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have early problems in school and continue to have difficulties through their schooling (e.g., Bradbury, Corak, Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2015; Janus & Duku, 2007). Reardon, Valentino, and Shores (2012) demonstrate that while racial and ethnic disparities are gradually shrinking, socioeconomic disparities in literacy skills continue to widen (see also Gamoran, 2001; Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999). Differences in family backgrounds, and in particular socioeconomic status (SES), contribute to the inequality found in educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966; Duncan, Morris & Rodrigues, 2011; Lareau, 2002, 2011).

Parent engagement has been widely promoted by education policymakers as a solution in reducing achievement gaps (e.g., Australian Government, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2004, 2007). Parent engagement refers to the overall involvement of parents in their children's schooling such as communicating with the school, volunteering, attending school functions, and supporting learning at home (e.g., reading, helping with homework, expectations for educational achievement) (see Epstein, 1995). It is conceptualized as a means for parents to align with schooling processes and continue learning opportunities at home. Despite its intuitive appeal, researchers find mixed results when

examining parent engagement and student achievement. While some scholars discover that many types of parent engagement do not substantially improve academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Senler & Sungur, 2009), others find parent engagement has an effect depending on the subject matter, age of the child, ethnicity, and/or family socioeconomic status (SES) (Domina, 2005; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Schools are expected to be primarily responsible for formally instructing children how to read. Yet, children are exposed to literacy outside of regular school hours in their homes and neighbourhoods during evenings, weekends, and summer vacations. Some children have more literacy building opportunities than others, often due to family resources in time, ability, and philosophy of parenting (e.g., Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Kim, 2004; Lareau, 2000, 2011). Seasonal studies – which include school year and summer measures of achievement – highlight the effect of children’s out-of-school time and its influence on disadvantaged students’ decline in learning (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007; McEachin & Attenberry, 2017; Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008; Gershenson, 2013). In other words, students fare better when they are in school than during the summer months and this positive effect makes the most difference for lower-SES students.

Thus far, “summer setback” (the loss of learning students experience during the summer months) literature has highlighted this phenomenon and examined schools’ responses through summer reading programs (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2001, 2007; Borman, Benson, & Overman, 2005; Borman, Goetz, & Dowling, 2009; Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014, 2013; Paris et al., 2004). However, despite the evidence that summer is a crucial time for learning or rather “unlearning”, there has been little focus on examining parent engagement within a seasonal

learning design. If parent engagement is as influential as its advocates suggest, then it should show substantial effects on outcomes when children are not in school and their learning is almost completely dependent on family activities and resources.

The Problem with Parent Engagement

In efforts to improve student achievement, parent engagement policies seek to: improve parent-school connections; encourage the role that parents play in supporting their children's learning at home and at school; help parents acquire skills and knowledge needed to be more involved in their child's learning; and give parents a voice in school activities (e.g., school councils, parent involvement committees) (Ontario, 2010). As such, these strategies aim to bolster parents' cultural and social capital in building knowledge of educational and parenting practices and fostering networks with school personnel and other parents.

In Canada, emphasis on parent involvement traces back to the 1980s when policy outlining programs for students with special needs highlighted the importance of parents' inclusion in this process, including having parents as a part of the advisory committee (Ontario, 2010). Since then, there have been several initiatives to incorporate parents in school councils and the wider school community such as additional government funding for parent engagement programs (*Reaching Out Grants*; see Hamlin & Flessa, 2018) and the creation of a parent engagement office in Ontario (Ontario, 2010). In addition, federal policies such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* in the United States have brought parent engagement to the forefront in the discussion of education achievement gaps (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Despite the confidence placed in these endeavours, there are three critical problems identified in the literature with portraying parent engagement as a panacea for reducing

achievement gaps. First, researchers have been unable to establish a strong and consistent positive relationship between parent engagement (which include measures of cultural and social capital) and student achievement. Parent engagement has been found to vary by school level (e.g., elementary, secondary), subject matter, type of engagement (e.g., communication, homework help), and student characteristics (Catsambis, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Muller, 1995, 1998; Robinson & Harris, 2014). For instance, a meta-analysis of parent involvement found a positive association for verbal achievement outcomes, but a negative association for mathematics achievement (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008). Parental aspirations and expectations appear to have the strongest relationship to student achievement, whereas home-based interventions (including homework help) have a negative relationship or no relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (Davies & Aurini, 2013; Domina, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Reay, 2005; Senler & Sungur, 2009).

Second, many of the behaviours that are commonly associated with parent engagement, cultural capital, and social capital have “trickled down”. Aurini (2015) uses the economic term “trickle down” to describe how parenting practices associated with the middle-class (e.g., Lareau, 2011) have been adopted by lower classes. Time-use data reveal that parents at all socioeconomic strata are spending more time with their children in activities such as reading and helping with homework and are generally more engaged in all aspects of their lives (Ramey & Ramey, 2010; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004; Snellman, Silva, Frederick, & Putnam, 2015). Schneider, Hastings, and LaBriola (2018) find that, while there are wide class-gaps in parents’ financial investments in children, the class-gap is minimal when considering time investments. Further, Ramey and Ramey (2010) estimate that more educated parents have increased overall

child care by over nine hours and less educated parents have increased theirs by over four hours. Notably, some of this increase in time is attributed to changes in parenting practices such as more concerted effort to build a child's cognitive development through activities such as teaching letters, numbers, and reading to young children (Dermott and Pomati, 2015; Quirke, 2006; Schaub, 2010). Despite this increase, social class gaps in educational achievement and attainment have actually grown over time (e.g., Conley & Albright, 2004; Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Crowley, 2006; Sirin, 2005). Thus, while parenting practices that were once associated with middle-class families have indeed "trickled down", the benefits related to such practices have resulted in unequal outcomes.

Third, the mixed results presented above suggest that we have an incomplete understanding of how parental involvement affects student achievement. This largely quantitative literature has begun to shed light on the variability of parent engagement (and it is often weakly or negatively connected to student achievement). Yet, this literature can only speculate as to why so many practices we commonly associate with student achievement (e.g., reading with children, helping with homework) do not appear to help children succeed in school. More recently, micro-level studies have started to scratch the surface in examining student, teacher, and parent interactions in schooling processes (e.g., Calarco, 2011, 2014, 2018; Chin, 2000; Chin & Phillips, 2004; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012; Trainor, 2010; Ong-Dean, 2009). In so doing, they reveal inequalities in these interactions, particularly by demonstrating how students and parents enact their personal resources (their "capital") to ensure academic success.

The Importance of Summer Time

Seasonal learning studies have shown the effect that summer vacation can have on children's learning progress. When students are in school, they receive fairly equal exposure to various resources such as books, computers, and in-class instruction. However, out-of-school time depends on family resources; affluent children have more economic, cultural and social resources to draw on than their disadvantaged peers. In non-school time, children are exposed to varying levels of learning activities such as enriched conversation with adults, reading opportunities, extracurricular activities, family vacations, and help with their school work (Chin & Phillips, 2004; Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Gershenson, 2013; Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008; Kim & Guryan, 2011; Lareau, 2011). Considering the typical school calendar, summertime accounts for the longest period for inequalities in family capital and resources to really affect children's academic growth and its effects have been found to be cumulative and to be most detrimental for lower-SES children (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007; Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Heyns, 1978).

Downey (2018) outlines the important contributions that seasonal learning research has made in showing the positive effect that schools have on disadvantaged children's academic achievement (e.g., Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2009) and body mass index (e.g., von Hippel & Workman, 2016). He proposes that this type of research design has potential to examine school's influence in other types of outcomes (e.g., behavioural skills, self-regulation). In this thesis, I propose that summer offers a natural experiment to provide an in-depth focus on parent involvement and its effect on educational achievement independent of school's influence and resources.

The Orientation of the Dissertation

Epstein's (1987, 1992, 1995) parental involvement framework provides a useful starting point when examining parent engagement in schools. She promotes an integrated approach between school and home practices. This includes what Epstein (1987) refers to as a basic obligation of the parents to provide food, home, shelter, resources, and a learning environment. The school's basic obligation is to provide information to the parent about the school and their child's progress. After these basic components are provided, parents are then encouraged to become involved at the school level (e.g., volunteer in the classroom and for class trips; assist in the library or school cafeteria; attend assemblies, events, etc.) and provide learning activities at home to build on what the school is teaching and to advance their children's social and academic growth. While the overall implication of parent engagement is that strong family-school relations mitigate learning disparities among students, research suggests that parental engagement varies by gender (both parents' and child's gender [Cullen et al., 2011]; see also Schieman, Rupper, & Milkie, 2018 for a time-use study on division of parenting tasks in general), culture (Auerbach, 2007; Fan, Williams & Wolters, 2012; Marschalli, 2006) and social class (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Gonzalez & Jackson, 2013; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002).

Although this study is designed to focus on social class, I recognize that social class is not the only determinant in educational achievement gaps. Regarding gender, boys tend to lag behind girls in the early elementary years (Bradbury, Corak, Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2015), but these differences are more pronounced in boys from low-SES backgrounds (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007). To a lesser extent, I do address children's gender in chapters two and four, but SES differences are the main focus. With respect to race and ethnicity, there are still sizable gaps between black, Latino, and Indigenous students in comparison to their white

and Asian peers (Kao & Thompson, 2003). However, as mentioned previously, racial and ethnic disparities in achievement are also narrowing (Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012). In terms of children's home lives, when SES is considered along with race and ethnicity, Lareau and Horvat (1999) find that there are fewer differences between family practices by those of the same social class than by race. That is, middle-class black students are more similar to middle-class white students than they are to working-class black students. Milne (2016) makes a similar argument with a sample of working- versus middle-class Indigenous parents in Ontario. Additionally, while I make some comments about parent engagement and race and ethnicity in this thesis, the samples are just not large enough to make substantial comparisons. Thus, the papers in this dissertation mainly focus on SES, parent engagement, and children's literacy achievement.

Primary Theoretical Focus: Social class and Capital Theories

Theories of capital have informed education policy and practice. Economic, cultural, and social capital are consistently linked to gaps in educational outcomes between higher-SES and lower-SES families. Since parent engagement is often viewed as a means to partially compensate for these disparities (Bryan, 2005), I explore how these three forms of capital (see Bourdieu, 1998 for an outline of the different forms of capital) generate tangible assets (e.g., resources such as books in the home) and intangible assets (e.g., the type of "literacy environment" that is created in the home such as a child observing their parent read on a regular basis) and how these relate to educational achievement.

First, economic capital, simply defined as financial resources, includes the ability to provide children with resources such as school supplies, books, computer, and a study area in the home. Economic resources can also make a difference in the types of extracurricular activities

that a child can participate in or the provision of additional academic support such as tutoring (Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Chin, 2000; Chin & Phillips, 2004). These tangible resources that parents provide their children are often examined as crucial elements in explaining literacy gaps. For example, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) find that volume of reading is crucial in developing reading proficiency and that children must have access to a large variety of books throughout the year to ensure literacy growth (see also Kim, 2004).

Second, Bourdieu's (1998) concept of cultural capital acknowledges the other sorts of non-financial investments that parents make in their children's education. In a traditional sense, cultural capital refers to the tastes and cultural customs of the dominant class such as knowledge of the arts (e.g., classical music, literature) and awareness of social norms (how to act in a variety of contexts) and this habitus - or "way of being" - is passed on and developed in the home environment (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Since Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) original conception of cultural capital has been adapted in various ways (especially in terms of the types of high-status cultural signals researchers are identifying as cultural capital), Lamont and Lareau (1988) present a new definition of cultural capital: "widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and goods) used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion" (p. 164). Applying this definition to families and schools, higher-SES families are more likely to have the type of cultural capital that facilitates school success. They are more likely to have a greater and more nuanced understanding of how the education system works (e.g., test taking savvy, how to get a child into a gifted program), larger vocabulary, sense of entitlement, and view of teachers as equals in order to maximize advantages for their children (e.g., Chin, 2000; Childs, Finnie, & Mueller, 2010; Demerath, 2009; Khan, 2010; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In specific

relation to literacy, cultural capital can encompass differences in the “literacy environments” that are cultivated within homes. For instance, parents’ own reading behaviours (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000) and expectations that children read during summer vacation (Chin & Phillips, 2004). It can also include the extent to which students may request help from the teacher during the school year when they are struggling with school work (Calarco, 2011, 2014).

Third, social capital – connections parents have with teachers, principals, and other parents – is seen to help parents learn how schools work, academic expectations, where to get resources, and how to effectively navigate institutional processes (Coleman, 1988; Sheldon, 2002). For example, parents who are present at various school functions may signal their support of the school, form stronger relationships with teachers, and engage in more conversations about their children’s progress (Domina, 2005; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; McNeal, 1999). Higher-SES parents are more likely to participate in social capital building activities (Pallas, 2006; Ream & Palardy, 2008) and have networks that allow them to secure advantages for their children (Chin, 2000; Demerath, 2009; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Ong Dean, 2009). Parents with strong social capital networks are able to find out about extra literacy support that can be accessed via schooling or external organizations. Also, they can use their contacts to gain knowledge about how to expedite the process for getting their child literacy support or special accommodations in the classroom (e.g., Ong Dean, 2009). Ongoing parent-teacher contact can alert parents earlier regarding their child’s struggles with literacy and inform them of strategies they can use at home to facilitate reading progress.

A Seasonal and Mixed Methods Approach

This dissertation extends current research on parent engagement by using a mixed-methods seasonal research design to examine the educational experiences of at-risk children by considering parent engagement and the extent to which it influences children's literacy achievement. Much of the focus in research on parent engagement has been during the school year, and there has been little attention given to parent's educational involvement during summer. Yet, we know that children either gain in their literacy learning during the summer or experience learning loss (e.g., Davies & Aurini, 2013). Therefore, examining what families do during the summer months and if these efforts are effective is important considering that academic achievement gaps (particularly for disadvantaged students) widen during this time. Using data from a larger mixed-methods project examining summer literacy camps in Ontario schools (Davies and Aurini, 2010-2014; referred to in this document as the Summer Learning Project [SLP]), this thesis adds to the educational and social policy literature through three separate research papers.

In the first paper, I conduct a quantitative analysis using survey data of 1,671 parents (in 92 schools) to determine the influence of parent engagement (e.g., helping with homework, volunteering at school) and family resources on student literacy outcomes. To do this, I employ multilevel linear models to compare the influence of family involvement at school and home on students' achievement on two outcomes: 1) snapshot of children's cumulative learning in the spring; and 2) measure of children's growth (or loss) in literacy during the summer. In these models, family demographics, parent engagement measures, students' academic information, and school level covariates are added into models sequentially to examine their effects on each of the literacy outcomes. Additionally, in the final model, interactions of SES with each parent

engagement measure are added to assess the effect of parent engagement by family SES and to provide information about who parent involvement initiatives may benefit the most. The findings are discussed within three possible mechanisms of parent engagement: cultivation ethic (e.g., Lareau, 2011), realist reaction (e.g., Epstein, 1988), and the expressive logic. I conclude by discussing the implications that my findings have for education policy and programs.

The second paper utilizes the three mechanisms of parent engagement presented in chapter two (cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic) to speculate why certain parent engagement measures have positive, negative, or no effect on students' literacy achievement. In this paper, I use these three mechanisms as my conceptual framework along with categories from Ontario's Ministry of Education parent engagement policy as a guideline for analysis. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with 90 parents and 37 school staff (teachers, administrators, support staff), I consider parents' and teachers' alignment with each other and policy. In doing so, I ask the following questions: Do parents' and teachers' actions and understanding of parent engagement align with policy informing Ontario schools? How do parents define parent engagement? Do parents mostly react to their children's achievement, actively cultivate it, or bolster it through the various forms of parent engagement during the school year and the summer? How do teachers view parent engagement? What types of strategies are promoted by teachers? My findings illuminate the microprocesses of teachers' and parents' perceptions of parent engagement within the expectations outlined in the policy and how they differ in school-centric versus a home-centric focus. I conclude with considerations for policy and programming.

Since "parental aspirations" is a consistently strong predictor of children's achievement, in the third paper, I draw on 27 photo-interviews with children (aged 5-8; including three sets of

siblings) paired with 24 semi-structured interviews with their parents to focus on the understandings that parents and children have about future education and how these understandings are translated into actions within the home learning environment and engagement in schooling. Taking into consideration parents' education and income, I examine the differences between parents who hope their child will obtain a high school education and parents who seek post-secondary education. In my discussion, I draw on "aspirational habitus" (Baker & Brown, 2008) to highlight the ways in which a sense of the importance of higher education is conveyed in families and in the environments within which children live. I conclude with policy recommendations for reaching students and parents earlier with career and post-secondary education experiences and information, and also suggest programs in schools that could compensate for lower-aspirations or maintaining high-aspirations in the long-term.

Thus far, most research focusing on parent engagement has either been approached quantitatively or qualitatively. This approach to studying parent engagement has left many unanswered questions and fostered a lack of understanding of this complex phenomenon; therefore, the mixed methods inquiry in this thesis can serve to gain a deeper understanding of the concept by exploring the multiple perspectives of teachers, parents, and children.

Conclusion

This dissertation is presented as a collection of three articles with a similar theme. While each chapter is presented as a separate study unto itself, the entirety of this thesis presents a mixed methods analysis of parent engagement and family resources to better understand this phenomenon which has received considerable attention by researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in education. Despite this attention, and particularly the mixed results found in

quantitative research, the potential of parent engagement to positively influence children's academic achievement remains unclear. The purpose of this thesis is to offer both empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of the connection between parent engagement and children's literacy achievement.

The potential findings in my analyses can speak to educational policy and practice in three ways. First, these findings could corroborate the seasonal literature that advocates for supplementing more school-time for non-school time (e.g., summer learning programs, longer school days). Second, my findings could make suggestions to fine-tune the language used in parent engagement policies to better reflect effective strategies in advancing children's literacy achievement. Third, my findings could clarify the connections between school policy and parental practice by underscoring the technically oriented practices promoted by schools versus those that are simply included as a means of seeking legitimacy.

CHAPTER TWO: Examining Parent Engagement and Student Literacy

Achievement through a Multilevel Seasonal Learning Design

Introduction

Parent engagement¹ in children's schooling has been widely touted by education policymakers as a key factor in narrowing achievement gaps (for a review see Fan & Chen, 2001). It has received widespread support and attention from ministries of education as evidenced in Ontario's parent engagement policy and government seed grants offered for various parent group initiatives (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 2012a; see also Hamlin & Flessa, 2016). In addition, American federal policies such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* have brought parent engagement to the forefront in the discussion of education achievement gaps (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). By aligning with schooling processes and continuing children's learning at home, parent engagement is conceptualized as one solution in increasing student achievement. Despite the fanfare, researchers have found mixed results when examining parent engagement and student outcomes. Some scholars have found that many types of parent engagement do not substantially improve academic achievement (Domina, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Senler & Sungur, 2009). Others find parent engagement has an effect depending on the subject matter, age of the child, and ethnicity (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008).

Seasonal studies on educational achievement have highlighted the effect of children's out-of-school time and its contribution to the disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged

¹ The term parent engagement is used to describe parents' involvement in their children's schooling such as communicating with the school, volunteering, attending school functions, and supporting learning at home (e.g., reading, helping with homework, expectations for educational achievement or attainment) (Epstein, 1995).

students (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007; McEachin & Attenberry, 2017; Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008; Gershenson, 2013; Heyns, 1978). That is, students fare better when they are in school than during the summer months and this positive effect makes the most difference for students from low-socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds (Kim & Quinn, 2013; Raudenbush, 2008; Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015). However, Quinn, Cooc, McIntyre, and Gomez's (2016) more recent examination of national longitudinal data have found the claim that schools are "equalizers" paints too simple a picture. In their study, school year effects are initially beneficial for low-achieving groups, but in subsequent years of schooling there is a fade out effect where this equalizing effect slows down and sometimes reverses. Thus, this equalizing effect tends to be more beneficial for younger students (Quinn et al., 2016; see also Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015). Also, von Hippel and Hamrock (2016) reassess previous work done with the *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study* using a more reliable metric and find that SES test score gaps show minimal improvement over school years and that these gaps do not necessarily grow faster during the summer months.

It is reasonably more accurate to say that schools are compensatory institutions (Downey, 2016; Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015) or partial-compensatory institutions at best (Davies & Aurini, 2015). Because of differences in family background, most often associated with SES or race/ethnicity, schools can only compensate so much for these differences and thus students' family background and out-of-school time has become a crucial area of interest to researchers. Overall, within the summer learning literature, researchers have concentrated on establishing if there is indeed a "summer setback" (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007; Davies & Aurini, 2013), and whether summer programs are effective in mitigating summer's negative effect on disadvantaged students (e.g., Borman, Benson, & Overman, 2005; Borman, Goetz, &

Dowling, 2009; Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014; Paris et al., 2004). To date, there has been little focus on examining parent engagement within a seasonal learning design. When school is not in session, parents are the main providers of children's learning opportunities and are primarily responsible for structuring their out-of-school time. In addition, when school is in session, parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with their child's teacher, understand school expectations, and become a part of the school community (e.g., volunteer, attend school events).

This study tests the hypothesis that family resources and practices positively affect literacy achievement within a strategic new testing ground: summer. This applies a counterfactual approach to examining parent engagement by comparing students' cumulative achievement with summer learning (Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008; Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015). A seasonal research design is optimal in testing the effects of parent engagement because in summer students are generally away from the influence teachers and peers may have on their learning. If parent engagement is as influential as its promoters suggest, then it should show substantial effects on outcomes when children are not in school and their learning is completely dependent on family activities and resources. Drawing on a study investigating the effectiveness of summer literacy and numeracy camps offered by Ontario's public schools (see Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014), I use data on literacy achievement for a non-random sample of 1,671 students (grades 1-3) from 92 schools. Multilevel linear models are utilized to answer the following research questions:

1. Which measures of parent engagement predict students' cumulative literacy, and their summer literacy learning?
2. Which school-level practices influence literacy learning?

3. In terms of literacy achievement, which students benefit the most from parent engagement practices?

Theoretical Considerations and Previous Research

Parent Engagement and Literacy Outcomes

Parents' involvement in children's schooling is an important focus for schools, policy makers, and researchers. Of all the school subjects, reading achievement is often the most receptive to parental influences (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002) and home literacy environments are seen to be an indicator of children's early reading skills at school entry (Janus & Duku, 2007; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). In her seminal study of parenting philosophies among working-class and middle-class parents, Lareau (2011) finds that middle-class parents are more likely to adopt a logic of "concerted cultivation" where parents facilitate opportunities for each child's unique physical, emotional, and intellectual growth through intensive involvement in schooling and extracurricular activities. Accordingly, parent engagement in schooling is one of the most evident areas where this philosophy of parenting has burgeoned (Schaub, 2010; Schiffrin et al., 2013). Middle-class parents are more inclined to see children's schooling as a collaborative effort with schools, they expect to work with schools and intervene as needed to advance children's academic progress, and they see themselves as equals with teachers (Lareau, 2000). In contrast, working-class and poor parents espouse a logic Lareau (2011) dubs "accomplishment of natural growth" where parents love and take care of children's emotional and physical needs, but schooling is primarily left to schools. They entrust teachers and school staff with their children's learning.

Linked to this theory of different parenting logics, lower- and middle-class parents have different "resources" to draw on and these are often examined by utilizing capital theories in the

sociology of education. Tangible resources such as hiring a tutor or buying books can be provided by financial capital. But, intangible resources such as knowing how to navigate school processes or having a social contact who can provide crucial information on special academic programming can be attributed to cultural and social capital (see Bourdieu, 1998 and Coleman, 1988 for an overview). Moreover, middle-class parents are much more likely than working-class or poor parents to have friends or family who are teachers, know other parents in the school in their social networks, and often draw on those contacts for support and advice (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). Economic, cultural, and social capital are consistently linked to gaps in educational outcomes between higher-SES and lower-SES families and parent engagement is often viewed as a way to partially compensate for these disparities (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Bryan, 2005; Domina, 2005). This “cultivation ethic” is a philosophy of parenting that is related to SES and it can result in higher parental aspirations for their child’s future education, providing more educational resources in the home, or enrolling children in a variety of extracurricular activities. The objective, in parents’ view, is to foster a well-rounded child as well as cater to the child’s specific talents. While parents may or may not do these things with academic achievement in mind, the factors included in this group tend to have a positive relationship with educational outcomes (as noted below).

Echoing notions conveyed in capital theories, education policy and practice have sought to improve student achievement through parent engagement by: improving parent-school connections, encouraging the role that parents play in supporting their children’s learning at home and at school, helping parents acquire skills and knowledge needed to be more involved in their child’s learning, and giving parents a voice in school activities (e.g., parent involvement committees) (Ontario, 2010, 2012a). Despite the confidence placed in these endeavours, the

literature examining parent engagement and literacy achievement present mixed and sometimes contradictory results. Parent engagement has been found to vary by school level (e.g., elementary, secondary), subject matter, type of engagement (e.g., communication, homework help), and student characteristics (Catsambis, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Muller, 1995, 1998). Mainly, parental aspirations and expectations appear to have the strongest relationship to student achievement (Davies & Aurini, 2013; Englund et al., 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jeynes, 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Using an overall measure of home-engagement strategies (e.g., checking homework, reading with child), Galindo and Sheldon (2012) find a negative association between these strategies and academic outcomes. However, other studies look at the effects of these home-based interventions separately and find mixed results. Homework help is shown to have a negative relationship or no relationship in some studies (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014) and a positive relationship in others (Domina, 2005; Patall et al., 2008). Other strategies receive positive results, such as reading with the child at home and discussing school with children (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014). At-home engagement strategies could be explained by a “realist reaction” from parents (see for example Epstein, 1988). That is, parents (with varying levels of SES) react to their child’s current academic accomplishments and respond accordingly. If a child struggles with reading, the parents might read more often with the child, spend more time on homework such as learning high frequency words, hire a tutor, or meet with the teacher more often to gauge progress. The realist reaction mechanism makes sense in explaining why a measure such as homework help often has a negative relationship with achievement (for a review see Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006).

In a combined measure of school-engagement (e.g., attending events, volunteering), El Nokali, Bachman and Votruba-Drzal (2010) find a negative association, while others find a positive association with literacy achievement (Englund et al., 2004; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Breaking school-based involvement down further does not help to clarify these contradictory findings. Domina (2005) finds a negative association between attending parent-teacher conferences and achievement, while Robinson and Harris (2014) only find this negative association for children who have parents with a high school education or less. Also, attending parent council meetings has a negative association for all parents and attendance at school events is only positive for parents with a middle income (Robinson & Harris, 2014; see also Jeynes, 2005). Finally, volunteering at school only shows a small positive association (Domina, 2005)². At-school engagement strategies could be explained by an “expressive logic”. That is, parents become involved in school council, volunteer for a school trip or attend a school assembly because they want to. This mechanism is not directly related to a child’s academic performance, but rather out of parents’ availability, desires, or interests to become involved. This mechanism is useful in explaining why the influence of these variables produce mixed results on academic outcomes.

Parent Engagement and Summer Time

If parent engagement is the answer to address the disparities between lower-class and middle-class students, then its effects should be evident during the times when children are away from

² When considering the various forms of parent engagement, it is worth mentioning that reverse causation could be at play. That is, studies usually presume that parental involvement and/or parents’ aspirations are the independent variables and academic achievement is the outcome. However, there is the possibility that parents become more involved when their child is struggling (see McNeal, 2012) or feel more comfortable volunteering or having university goals for their child because their child is a high-achiever.

school. It is possible that parent engagement studies during the school year have conflated school and family effects. Seasonal research taps into a natural experiment to examine school versus family influences on academic achievement. Accounting for all non-school time, summertime is the longest period for inequalities in family capital and resources to really affect children's academic growth and its effects have been found to be cumulative. Disadvantaged children are more likely to experience a loss in numeracy and literacy skills during the summer, while advantaged children are more inclined to experience growth in these skills (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007; Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Heyns, 1978). In their longitudinal study, Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson (2007) find that summer learning loss accrued during the elementary years explain the achievement gap between high-SES and low-SES students in grade nine which affects high school track placements, high school completion, and university attendance (see also McEachin & Attenberry, 2017).

What is interesting in the summer learning research is that there is little in-depth focus on parent involvement and its possible potential in easing summer's negative effect on educational achievement.³ Overall, there are four summer learning studies that include measures of family resources and practices. First, Burkham et al. (2004) examine SES differences in summer activities (e.g., reading, trips, computer usage, and summer school) on summer learning for kindergarten and first grade. They find at-home reading activities have a small positive effect on literacy scores. Second, Borman, Benson and Overman (2005) find that parental expectations

³ Although, there is a concern about summer vacation's possible influence on children losing academic knowledge and skills. For example, Quirke's (2014) content analysis of parenting magazines finds that summer is presented as an academically "risky" time. Children are away from school for two months and parents are encouraged to keep their children reading to avoid summer "brain drain". Intensive parenting endorses a proactive stance for parents to safeguard their children against these precarious summer months.

and learning activities in the home did not explain the differences in summer achievement.

However, parents' efforts to ensure daily attendance at summer school reduced summer learning loss. Third, Slates et al. (2012) examine parental characteristics and practices linked to social and cultural capital and their effect on summer reading and math achievement within a sample of low-SES students. Within this group, they find that "exceptional summer learners" are more likely to have: mothers who do not work, summer visits to the library, parents who read to them for longer periods of time, and parents who monitor homework and have high expectations for classroom conduct during the school year.

While these three studies include measures of family practice (e.g., trips to library, learning activities) and resources (e.g., books, computer), they do not include parents' efforts at school such as communication with their child's teacher which can influence school-year learning *and* summer progress. For instance, parents who meet with their child's teacher and talk about his/her academic improvement could possibly gain insight into the types of learning activities they could do during the summer to boost their child's learning. In addition, these scholars do not compare the effect of these measures on summer outcomes versus a snapshot of literacy skills or school-year growth.

Finally, Davies and Aurini (2013) present the only study that compares the effect of these measures on school year and summer literacy scores, including an overall measure for parents' school participation. For school year literacy scores, the measure for family resources has a significantly positive effect controlling for other factors. Further, they find that family practices only explain a portion of the SES effect on literacy. For summer literacy scores, parents' aspirations for their children are the only family practice that has a significant positive effect on

summer learning. Overall, they find SES to be the most powerful predictor of summer learning and it is only partially mediated by their measures of family practices.

This paper seeks to understand more about the influence of a variety of parent engagement measures on student's cumulative literacy achievement (spring literacy) and summer growth. Below, I describe my study, present findings, and discuss the results as they relate to the literature and the three mechanisms of parent engagement as discussed above: cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic. I conclude by discussing the implications that these findings have for education policy and programs.

Data and Methods

Using the same data, I build on Davies' and Aurini's (2013) research by adding more measures for family involvement at school and home. While these scholars include a scale measuring parents' school participation, they do not include measures of parents' participation at home in terms of reading with children, helping with homework, and discussing school with the child. Notably, these are all things that teachers assert parents should be doing at home (Epstein, 1986; Lawson, 2003; see also Ontario, 2012). The purpose of the present study is to examine the individual effects of the various forms of parent engagement to parse out the forms of engagement that positively affect students' literacy achievement during summer versus previous learning. In addition, I add a level-two variable testing the influence of schools' parent engagement initiatives (e.g., parenting workshops, presentations on helping students with homework) on student achievement.

Setting and Sample

For this study, I use data collected as a part of a larger longitudinal mixed methods project on summer setback (the Summer Learning Project (SLP); see Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014). The broader objective of this study is to evaluate an intensive summer literacy learning intervention offered by Ontario's Ministry of Education for elementary students (grades 1-3)⁴. The programs are taught by certified teachers and situated within communities that exhibit more acute social and economic challenges. Using a seasonal learning design, each year students' literacy skills are tested in late June and again in early September.

Four principal sets of data are merged for the current study: literacy achievement scores (spring and fall); administrative data from schools (e.g., attendance, reading grades); parent survey (questions regarding family resources, parents' involvement in their child's school, parents' aspirations) (see appendix A for the entire survey); and school information gleaned from online resources (e.g., school enrollment).

The sample I use from the SLP consists of 1,671 cases of students (from 92 schools) that have parent survey data (with complete data on one parent's education level) and literacy test scores for spring and fall collected in 2010 and 2011. This sample includes children in both the test (those who attended the SLP) and control group (those who did not). The parents surveyed had their children enrolled in public and Catholic elementary schools throughout Ontario. In the majority of cases, surveys were filled out by mothers and female guardians or caregivers (71% female; 29% male). Children represented by the survey data were in grades one (38%), two (37%), or three (25%) (52% male, 48% female).

⁴ All data collection within the SLP received clearance from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and the participating school boards.

It is important to note that the schools chosen by School Boards to operate summer literacy programs typically have high levels of at-risk populations and, therefore, this non-random sample is not representative of the population of students within this province. Another limitation of this data set is that the survey response rate was 37 percent which can result in bias in the variety of responses (Davies & Aurini, 2013, p. 291).⁵ While, the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) has questions about family involvement at home and school, demographics, and home resources, the only cognitive test that they perform on students in grades one to three is a mathematics test (Statistics Canada, 2010). Students' literacy levels at this crucial time in their educational career are not measured, nor do they have information on both school year and summer outcomes. Further, in the NLSCY, information regarding how a child is doing in school and tallies of school tardiness and attendance are parent reported rather than from school administrative data (a more reliable measure). For the purpose of this study, despite its limitation in generalizability, the SLP contains Canada's most comprehensive data on parent engagement within a seasonal learning research design to date.

Besides being the first such Canadian study to examine parent engagement in this way, the present research intends to build on previous parent engagement literature in two key ways. First, the seasonal design of the study allows for a comparison of parent engagement on two literacy outcomes: a cross-sectional measure of spring literacy scores and summer growth/loss. This provides a unique opportunity to see the effect of parent engagement in a snapshot literacy measure compared to the academically risky summer months. Second, the multilevel aspect of the project provides contextual information on schools and the parent engagement initiatives

⁵ Notably, Davies and Aurini (2013) find that the survey responders and non-responders did not have significantly different literacy scores ($p > .05$) (p. 291). Also, the snapshot measures of achievement and findings regarding parent engagement confirm findings in other studies (as noted in the discussion section; e.g., strong influence of SES on achievement).

offered to parents. Schools have made efforts through standard fare such as open houses, meet the teacher barbecues, arts events (such as musicals, plays, etc.), family literacy days, and parent-teacher conferences. But there have also been recent initiatives to boost the involvement of parents at home; school boards are offering workshops on general parenting strategies (e.g., discipline, Internet use/dangers, developing resilience in children) and classes that specifically target literacy, numeracy, and science. As such, these strategies seek to bolster parents' cultural and social capital in building knowledge of educational and parenting practices and foster networks with school personnel and other parents.

Measures

All variable definitions and sources are listed in Table 1.

Outcome variables. Students' spring and fall literacy scores were measured using STAR Reading⁶. This timed online test determines reading achievement from 25 comprehension questions that evaluate the following skills: phonetic awareness, general reading capabilities or readiness, comprehension, and vocabulary. After children have logged on the test, they answer some initial questions with varying levels of difficulty which help the program to route students into a test which asks questions at their learning level. When the test is complete, STAR then converts the item-response scores to grade equivalent scores based on national norms. For example, a grade equivalent score of 1.3 means that a student has a reading level of the average grade one student in the third month of the school year. For summer growth, a score of - 0.25

⁶ Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading. <http://www.renaissance.com/> STAR uses Item Response Theory to estimate achievement levels from the pattern of each child's answers and each question's level of difficulty. These scores correlate with other widely-used achievement tests. STAR converts test scores to grade equivalent scores based on national norms of reading growth patterns from more than one million students in grades K-12. From this, average scores for each grade and month are created.

would represent a loss of two and one half months of literacy skills. There are two outcome measures: 1) Cumulative learning is determined by spring literacy scores. This snapshot measure includes all learning up to that date; 2) Summer learning loss or growth is determined by subtracting fall literacy scores from spring literacy scores.

Student level independent variables. The parent survey asked questions about parent involvement – which are associated with common measures of cultural and social capital – in their children’s education as well as questions about students’ dispositions toward schooling and involvement in extra-curricular activities. I use several questions from the survey as my level-1 independent variables that fall into five categories: parents’ aspirations and values, parents’ resources, home-based involvement activities, school-based involvement activities, and family/child demographics. An important measure for this study is the SES scale consisting of both parents’ highest level of education and total family income (see Sirin, 2005).⁷ Also, there is another category consisting of children’s academic information (school literacy score, average language grade on last report card, days late, days absent) garnered from administrative data, except for the “likes school” variable which is from the parent survey. At this level, I created scales for home resources (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.843) and extracurricular activities (alpha = 0.712). In addition, because some parent engagement measures are conceptually related, I used an exploratory factor analysis (EFA)⁸ to determine if there are any variables that co-vary (see Costello & Osborne, 2005). As a result of EFA, two clear factors are extracted and two new scales were created: 1) I combined the activities that parents said they did with their child several

⁷ The SES measure is centered on the group mean prior to entering it into the analytical models. I centered this predictor for to help with interpretation and because it will be used in several interaction terms (with dichotomous variables) in the final model (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

⁸ Exploratory factor analysis with a principal factor extraction and oblique rotation (keeping variables with a factor loading above 0.4), including all parent engagement variables, resulted in factor 1 having an eigenvalue of 3.120 (proportion of variance = 0.473) and factor 2 with an eigenvalue of 1.283 (proportion of variance = 0.195).

times per week: games (e.g., puzzles, board games, hide and seek), music (e.g., play, sing, dance or listen to music), sports (e.g., informal sports play at home such as catch), and watch television or play video games ($\alpha = 0.894$); and 2) I combined attended a parent-teacher meeting and met with teacher privately ($\alpha = 0.727$).

School level independent variables. Level-2 predictors include: school type (Public or Catholic school), school size, and a measure for parent education opportunities offered by schools (e.g., family literacy classes, instruction on how to help a child with homework). The information for level-2 predictors is gathered from Internet sources (e.g., school boards' and schools' websites)⁹.

Controls. Four control variables are included in the models: test interval (measuring the number of days between the spring and fall tests), cohort (2010 or 2011), grade level (1, 2 or 3), and attending the summer literacy camp.

⁹ A research assistant and I searched schools' websites and newsletters, and school boards' websites for classes, workshops, and seminars offered to parents. The search included gleaning these sites for: parent education programs, family literacy classes, adult literacy program, and classes on homework help.

Table 1: VARIABLE DEFINITIONS**OUTCOMES**

Spring literacy ^a	June literacy test score; measured in grade-month equivalents
Summer growth/loss ^a	September literacy test - June literacy test score = growth (+) or loss (-) (measured in grade-month equivalents)

LEVEL-1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**Forms of parent engagement****1) Parents' aspirations & values**

Aspirations	“What is the highest level of education you hope your child will complete?” 1 = Finish High School/Apprenticeship, 2 = Community College, 3 = University degree (e.g., B.A.), 4 = Postgraduate degree (e.g., M.A., PhD) “In a typical week during the school year, how much time does your child?”
TV time	Watch television 0 = Never, 1 = 1-4 hours, 2 = 5-10 hours, 3 = More than 10 hours
Computer time	Spend on the computer doing non-school activities (e.g., online games, Facebook, email, etc.) 0 = Never, 1 = Less than hour, 2 = 1-4 hours, 3 = More than 5 hours
Time on homework	Spend on homework/school related activities (e.g., project, study for a test) 0 = Never, 1 = Less than hour, 2 = 1-4 hours, 3 = More than 5 hours

2) Parents' resources

Home resources	Number of resources that parents said they have in the house: books, newspaper, magazines, computer, Internet, arts/craft materials, music (minimum = 1, maximum = 6)
Hired tutor	0 = no tutor, 1 = parent hired a private tutor
Extracurricular	Number of extracurricular activities child participated in past year: sports, music, art, dance, library, religious club, social group (e.g., Girl Guides), language class, tutoring (minimum = 1, maximum = 7)

3) Home-based involvement

Read with	“During this past school year, which activities did you do with your child several times per week?” 0 = no, 1 = yes
Homework help	
Discuss school	
Play games, music, sports, TV/video	

4) School-based involvement

Met teacher	0 = no, 1 = attended a parent-teacher meeting (e.g., progress report interviews), 2 = attended parent-teacher meeting and met privately with child's teacher to discuss schooling
Volunteer	“During this past school year, have you done the following at your child's school?” 0 = no, 1 = yes
School council	
Attend event	

Demographics

SES	Parent education, other parent education, household income combined from three questions on the survey: 1) What level of education have you completed?; 2) What level of education has your child's other parent completed? (1 = Elementary school, 2 = Some high school, 3 = High school)
-----	--

	graduate, 4 = Private technical college, 5 = Community college, 6 = University B.A./B.Sc., 7 = University Postgraduate); and 3) Would the total income of all household members from all sources during the last 12 months be: 1 = less than \$15,000, 2 = \$15,000 to less than \$30,000, 3 = \$30,000 to less than \$45,000, 4 = \$45,000 to less than \$60,000, 5 = \$60,000 to less than \$80,000, 6 = \$80,000 to less than \$100,000, 7 = \$100,000 to \$200,000, 8 = \$200 000 or more
Male	0 = no, 1 = yes
English spoken at home	0 = no, 1 = yes
Born in Canada	0 = no, 1 = yes
Married/common law	0 = no, 1 = yes

Academics

Average language grade ^b	Average of final reading, writing and oral communication report card grades
Days late ^b	Accumulated total from final report card
Days absent ^b	Accumulated total from final report card
Likes school	“Thinking of this past year, how much does your child like coming to school?” (0 = not at all, 1=somewhat, 2=a lot)

LEVEL-2 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Public school ^c	0 = Catholic, 1 = public
School size ^c	School’s total enrollment
School parent programs ^c	Number of parenting programs schools have: education programs, family literacy classes, instruction on helping children with homework (minimum = 0, maximum = 4)

CONTROLS

Test interval ^a	Number of days between spring and fall tests
Cohort ^a	2010 or 2011 cohort
Grade level ^b	Grade 1, 2, or 3
Attended SLP ^b	0=did not attend, 1=child attended SLP

Source of data: ^a literacy tests, ^b school records, ^c information gathered online sources such as Stats Canada, School board, and school sites. All other information is from parent surveys.

Missing Data. The parent survey and school-level items used for this study have 0.18 to 29.86 percent rates of missing data.¹⁰ In examining the missingness of data, I assumed that values were *missing at random* (Allison, 2002; McKnight et al., 2007). Of importance to this study, there is little to no missing data on parent engagement variables and students’ literacy test

¹⁰ In my examination of missingness, I decided to remove two variables from the analysis: 1) number of children in the home; and 2) school administrative records of whether a child had an individual education plan (IEP). First, only 50% of parents answered the survey question regarding the number of children living in their home. This question is near the end of the survey but other questions around it are answered, so it is difficult to determine if this data is *missing not at random* or *missing at random* (Allison, 2002; McKnight et al., 2007). Second, IEP has 65% missing data and this information was filled in by school board administrative staff, so I assume that there may be error in data entry since these data were not processed by the projects’ researchers. Nonetheless, due to the high percentage of missing values for both variables, I removed them from analysis.

scores. Also, the highest level of education for the parent who filled out the survey (usually the mother) was also complete.¹¹ Since missing predictors can produce bias, I use multiple imputation procedures in *Stata 13*¹² to compensate for missing values. This procedure accounts for the missing cases that would otherwise be discarded through listwise deletion by using the existing values of variables in the complete dataset to create plausible estimates that account for those missing values. Due to the highest rate of non-response (almost 30 percent), 30 imputations are performed (see Graham, Olchowski, & Gilreath, 2007). Importantly, my analysis uses imputed predictors, but not imputed test scores (von Hippel, 2007).¹³ Descriptive statistics for non-imputed and imputed data are listed in Table 2. For almost all variables the imputed mean is almost identical to the original mean except for those that were provided by the school boards (days late/absent). However, despite the high rate of missing values in these variables, the imputed mean for each is quite close to the original mean.

¹¹ Overall, the largest problem with missing data in this sample stems from item nonresponse on the parent surveys due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions (e.g., household income). Since my construct of SES depends on parents' responses to income and education, this is an area of concern. However, McKnight et al. (2007) note that, even if one or two measures are missing data, the other measure (in this case, parent education) can still provide information for the construct.

¹² StataCorp. 2013. *Stata Statistical Software: Release 13*. College Station, TX: StataCorp LP.

¹³ Also, because my final model includes interactions (described below), I multiplied the two variables in the interaction first and then imputed the interaction with the other variables (Allison, 2002).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Before and After Imputation

	<i>Minimum, Maximum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean (Standard Deviation)</i>	<i>Imputed Mean (SD) (N = 1671)</i>
Outcomes				
Spring literacy	0, 12.9	1671	2.227 (1.349)	Same
Summer growth/Loss	-11.4, 4.3	1671	-.018 (.735)	Same
Demographics				
SES	-4.955, 4.906	1328	-.216 (2.079)	-.216 (2.079)
Male	0, 1	1541	.493 (.500)	.491 (.500)
English spoken at home	0, 1	1614	.903 (.296)	.904 (.296)
Born in Canada	0, 1	1646	.810 (.393)	.810 (.392)
Married/Common law	0, 1	1664	.794 (.404)	.795 (.404)
Forms of Parent Engagement				
<i>1) Parents' aspirations & values</i>				
Aspirations	1, 4	1671	2.548 (.939)	Same
TV time	0, 3	1663	1.556 (.571)	1.556 (.572)
Computer time	0, 3	1657	1.648 (.889)	1.648 (.890)
Time on homework	0, 3	1656	2.028 (.552)	2.026 (.554)
<i>2) Parents' resources</i>				
Home resources	1, 6	1650	3.510 (1.068)	3.496 (1.076)
Hired tutor	0, 1	1649	.102 (.303)	.102 (.303)
Extracurricular	1, 7	1225	1.735 (.880)	1.708 (.899)
<i>3) Home-based involvement</i>				
Read with	0, 1	1671	.896 (.306)	Same
Homework help	0, 1	1671	.858 (.350)	Same
Discuss school	0, 1	1671	.899 (.301)	Same
Play games, music, sports, TV/video	0, 4	1671	2.884 (1.169)	Same
<i>4) School-based involvement</i>				
Met teacher	0, 2	1671	1.361 (.686)	Same
Volunteer	0, 1	1671	.342 (.474)	Same
School council	0, 1	1671	.096 (.294)	Same
Attend event	0, 1	1671	.821 (.383)	Same
Academics				
Average language grade	33.67, 92	1589	70.248 (9.725)	70.248 (9.725)
Days late	0, 78	1363	4.186 (8.245)	4.205 (8.309)
Days absent	0, 86	1484	9.600 (8.536)	9.691 (8.581)
Likes school	0, 2	1322	1.772 (.446)	1.775 (.451)
School level variables				
Public school	0, 1	1360	.740 (.439)	.768 (.456)
School size	77, 667	1172	323.482 (130.024)	305.769 (138.862)
School parent programs	0, 4	1297	1.208 (1.248)	1.250 (1.250)
Controls				
Test interval	42.12, 115.98	1671	85.583 (8.068)	Same
Cohort	2010, 2011	1671	2010.484 (.500)	Same
Grade level	1, 3	1671	1.868 (.782)	Same
Attended SLP	0, 1	1204	.507 (.446)	.558 (.506)

Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth.

Descriptive Data on Parent Engagement by Key Factors

Research presents parent engagement varying by certain factors including SES and child's gender (e.g., Baker & Milligan, 2013; Domina, 2005; Jeynes, 2005). Also, participation in a summer literacy program is of interest to this study since many of the children who participate in the SLP are struggling with literacy. This could be a "proxy" variable to examine if struggling learners receive more involvement from parents (e.g., "reactive hypothesis" as examined by McNeal, 2012), *or* it is possible that parents who are proactive in terms of getting their children out to summer programs may be more engaged in general and surmise that their children could use the literacy boost. Therefore, to establish the variation in parent engagement, I examine these three key factors – SES, gender, and participation in the SLP – in the following tables.

First, families from high-SES backgrounds are said to be more involved in their children's education than low-SES families (Brody & Flor, 1998; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Alternatively, Drummond and Stipek (2004) find that low-SES families consider parent engagement very important especially reading to children in the younger grades. Table 3 provides parent engagement measures by SES. It shows that there are differences in outcomes between the four SES quartiles. There are slight differences in the average outcomes for the first three groups (mean 1.970; 2.185; 2.279) and the top quartile has a more sizeable difference in comparison (2.690). Further, the third and fourth quartiles (.013; .070) show average gains in literacy during the summer months while the first and second quartiles show average losses (-.083; -.034).

In terms of parent engagement, in-school connections that are understood as more "mandatory" in nature – such as, parent-teacher meetings and attending a school event (e.g., school assembly) – are well-attended on average; with the third and top quartiles having higher

means in the following involvement activities: meet with the teacher, attend events, volunteer, and parent council.

For at-home involvement, the mean for all categories show high levels of parent engagement. The top quartile has a higher mean in discussing school with child but shows lower means for engagement in reading, homework help, and playing games, music, sports, TV/video at home. Perhaps students in the top quartile do not need as much help with reading or their school work or receive outside support with their school work (e.g., tutoring).

On average, children in the second, third, and top quartiles are more likely than the bottom quartile to receive support in the form of tutoring, have more resources, and participate in more extracurricular activities. Also, the children in the top quartile have slightly more television and computer time than their peers and spend slightly less time on homework.

Overall, in table 3, the variables measuring parent engagement reveal slight differences between the SES quartiles. In fact, in categories which would intuitively be linked to children's learning at home (e.g., reading with the child, helping with homework), the top quartile has lower means in these categories than the other three quartiles. Previous research such as Lareau's (2011) ethnography and other quantitative research suggests that parent engagement is higher for more advantaged families (e.g., Robinson & Harris, 2014). But time-diary data reveal that while higher-class parents remain the *most* "engaged", parent engagement is increasing at all levels of socio-economic status (Ramey & Ramey, 2010; Schaub, 2015). This is especially true for those activities that are widely assumed to be part of parents' academic involvement with their children, such as teaching letters, numbers, telling and reading stories (Bassok et al., 2016; Dermott & Pomati, 2016; Schaub, 2015). Notably, the top two quartiles have the highest means in the variable "parents' aspirations". This is important to highlight because, while other parent

engagement categories receive mixed results, parents' aspirations are a measure that is consistently linked to students' achievement (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001). However, it is possible that this is an instance of reverse causation; parents see their child having academic success and consequently have high expectations for future schooling.

Table 3. Family Level Descriptive Statistics by SES (N=1671)

	SES Bottom Quartile	SES Second Quartile	SES Third Quartile	SES Top Quartile	F Statistic
Outcomes (min, max)					
Spring literacy (0, 12.9)	1.970 (.068)	2.185 (.058)	2.279 (.067)	2.690 (.108)	386.76***
Summer growth/Loss (-11.4, 4.3)	-.083 (.034)	-.034 (.028)	.013 (.043)	.070 (.060)	76.14***
Level-1 Independent Variables					
<i>Parents' Aspirations & Values</i>					
Aspirations (1, 4)	2.246 (.055)	2.492 (.040)	2.720 (.045)	2.858 (.065)	820.08***
TV time (0, 3)	1.572 (.033)	1.540 (.024)	1.532 (.029)	1.625 (.041)	48.03***
Computer time (0, 3)	1.533 (.054)	1.645 (.038)	1.690 (.044)	1.769 (.063)	108.79***
Time on homework (0, 3)	2.046 (.033)	2.019 (.024)	2.032 (.027)	2.000 (.041)	11.11***
<i>Parents' Resources</i>					
Home resources (1, 6)	3.257 (.064)	3.473 (.045)	3.586 (.053)	3.781 (.080)	357.13***
Hired tutor (0, 1)	.065 (.014)	.097 (.013)	.108 (.015)	.171 (.028)	147.64***
Extracurricular (1, 7)	1.544 (.061)	1.677 (.044)	1.772 (.048)	1.948 (.074)	300.78***
<i>Home-based Involvement Activities</i>					
Read with (0, 1)	.874 (.019)	.906 (.012)	.908 (.014)	.877 (.025)	39.92***
Homework help (0, 1)	.857 (.019)	.879 (.014)	.844 (.018)	.826 (.029)	48.45***
Discuss school (0, 1)	.825 (.021)	.909 (.012)	.926 (.013)	.943 (.018)	234.21***
Play games, music, sports, TV/ video (0, 4)	2.850 (.068)	2.964 (.048)	2.888 (.058)	2.697 (.089)	85.93***
<i>School-based involvement activities</i>					
Met teacher (0, 2)	1.268 (.043)	1.334 (.030)	1.406 (.032)	1.508 (.044)	205.17***
Volunteer (0, 1)	.268 (.026)	.295 (.020)	.385 (.024)	.514 (.038)	44.641***
Parent council (0, 1)	.047 (.012)	.067 (.011)	.141 (.017)	.166 (.028)	371.99***
Attend event (0, 1)	.748 (.025)	.799 (.017)	.866 (.017)	.914 (.023)	377.21***
<i>Demographics</i>					
English spoken at home (0, 1)	.897 (.018)	.925 (.012)	.884 (.016)	.894 (.023)	65.73***
Born in Canada (0, 1)	.819 (.022)	.837 (.016)	.784 (.020)	.770 (.031)	77.59***
Married/Common law (0, 1)	.593 (.028)	.796 (.018)	.880 (.016)	.955 (.016)	1533.21***
<i>Academics</i>					
Average language grade (33.7, 92)	67.691 (.574)	70.191 (.398)	70.416 (.526)	73.602 (.693)	541.29***
Days late (0, 78)	6.019 (.647)	3.941 (.357)	3.594 (.387)	3.141 (.635)	173.52***
Days absent (0, 86)	10.793 (.580)	9.469 (.368)	9.202 (.412)	9.503 (.648)	69.03***
Likes school (0, 2)	1.741 (.031)	1.759 (.022)	1.801 (.024)	1.822 (.036)	65.66***
Attended SLP (0, 1)	.617 (.033)	.571 (.024)	.546 (.026)	.440 (.041)	176.11***

Note: Means are displayed, and standard deviations are in parentheses. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth. Data are imputed. ***p<0.001

Second, does parental involvement vary based on children's gender? In time-diary research on parents and preschool children, Baker and Milligan (2013) examine data from three countries (Canada, UK, and US) and find that parents dedicate more time, teaching concepts such as numbers and letters and reading with daughters. In contrast, Jeynes' (2005) meta-analysis of 41 parent engagement studies observe a higher overall effect size for parent involvement with boys. However, parents' expectations for their children were nearly identical for both genders. Parent engagement variables by child's gender are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Family Level Descriptive Statistics by Child's Gender (N=1671)

	Female	Male	F Statistic
Outcomes (min, max)			
Spring literacy (0, 12.9)	2.375 (.048)	2.090 (.048)	584.25***
Summer growth/loss (-11.4, 4.7)	.029 (.025)	-.062 (.026)	201.09***
Level-1 Independent Variables			
<i>Parents' Aspirations & Values</i>			
Aspirations (1, 4)	2.674 (.032)	2.431 (.033)	886.25***
TV time (0, 3)	1.570 (.020)	1.542 (.020)	30.80***
Computer time (0, 3)	1.616 (.032)	1.678 (.030)	63.43***
Time on homework (0, 3)	2.023 (.021)	2.029 (.018)	1.48
<i>Parents' Resources</i>			
Home resources (1, 6)	3.644 (.038)	3.358 (.037)	920.05***
Hired tutor (0, 1)	.097 (.011)	.107 (.011)	14.92***
Extracurricular (1, 7)	1.859 (.041)	1.567 (.034)	1369.70***
<i>Home-based Involvement Activities</i>			
Read with (0, 1)	.909 (.010)	.884 (.011)	87.32***
Homework help (0, 1)	.850 (.013)	.864 (.012)	19.54***
Discuss school (0, 1)	.904 (.011)	.895 (.011)	11.45***
Play games, music, sports, TV/ video (0, 4)	2.885 (.042)	2.882 (.040)	0.08
<i>School-based involvement activities</i>			
Met teacher (0, 2)	1.323 (.024)	1.398 (.023)	154.62***
Volunteer (0, 1)	.338 (.017)	.345 (.016)	3.40
Parent council (0, 1)	.093 (.010)	.098 (.010)	3.25
Attend event (0, 1)	.817 (.014)	.825 (.013)	5.97*
<i>Academics</i>			
Average language grade (33.7, 92)	71.100 (.368)	69.224 (.327)	473.07***
Days late (0, 78)	3.954 (.312)	4.433 (.329)	42.79***
Days absent (0, 86)	9.730 (.323)	9.654 (.325)	1.05
Likes school (0, 2)	1.843 (.017)	1.712 (.019)	1122.93***
Attended SLP (0, 1)	.540 (.022)	.575 (.019)	61.21***

Note: Means are displayed, and standard deviations are in parentheses. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth. Data are imputed. ***p<0.001 **p<0.01 *p<0.05

In term of literacy outcomes, table 4 shows that mean spring literacy scores for girls (2.375) are higher than boys (2.090). In addition, on average, girls experience slight gain (.029) in literacy skills during the summer while boys encounter loss (-.062). Parents' aspirations for girls are slightly higher. For parents' values, all categories are comparable except boys have slightly more computer time and girls have slightly more TV time. In terms of parents' resources, girls have higher means for home resources and extracurricular activities and boys are more likely to have a tutor. At home, girls are read to slightly more than boys, and boys receive more homework help. At school, on average the parents of boys visit the teacher more often. The mean for girls' language grade is higher, and girls like school more than boys do. Also, there are more boys attending summer camp.

Third, some research suggests that parents get more involved when their children are struggling in school, dubbed the "reactive hypothesis" (Epstein, 1988; McNeal, 1999, 2012). Epstein (1988) was the first to propose this as a mechanism for higher parent involvement. However, McNeal's (2012) study tested and refuted this theory, finding that parents of struggling students are not inclined to increase their involvement in their children's schooling. Also, there is the possibility that parents who have their children involved in the summer literacy camp would be more engaged than those who do not (Borman, Benson & Overman, 2005; Slaten et al., 2012). Table 5 has parent engagement measures by SLP attendance.

In this table, the control group (2.523) has higher average spring literacy outcomes than the students who attended the SLP (2.047). Notably, both groups experience loss during the summer months (Control group: -.023; SLP attendees: -.016); although this difference is not significant. Parents' aspirations are higher for the control group. The SLP attendees have slightly less computer and TV time, more time on homework, fewer home resources, and are more likely

to have a tutor. SLP attendees also have slightly lower means for all home-based involvement, except they receive more help on homework. For at-school involvement, SLP students' parents meet the teacher more, and volunteer and attend events less. This group has a lower mean for language grade and like school slightly less than the control group. So, for the children who attended the summer camp, this descriptive analysis lends some support to the reactive hypothesis; parents meet the teacher more and provide more help with homework.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of PE by Summer Participants & Controls (N=1671)

	Control	Attended SLP	F Statistic
Outcomes (min, max)			
Spring literacy (0, 12.9)	2.523 (.060)	2.047 (.041)	1467.77***
Summer growth/loss (-11.4, 4.7)	-.023 (.036)	-.016 (.022)	1.05
Level-1 Independent Variables			
<i>Parents' Aspirations & Values</i>			
Aspirations (1, 4)	2.869 (.037)	2.352 (.029)	4075.42***
TV time (0, 3)	1.563 (.024)	1.551 (.018)	5.58*
Computer time (0, 3)	1.678 (.035)	1.630 (.028)	36.64***
Time on homework (0, 3)	2.005 (.022)	2.039 (.017)	44.34***
<i>Parents' Resources</i>			
Home resources (1, 6)	3.578 (.045)	3.445 (.034)	185.11***
Hired tutor (0, 1)	.091 (.012)	.110 (.010)	50.00***
Extracurricular (1, 7)	1.702 (.045)	1.711 (.034)	1.25
<i>Home-based Involvement Activities</i>			
Read with (0, 1)	.918 (.011)	.882 (.010)	184.84***
Homework help (0, 1)	.838 (.015)	.869 (.011)	91.35***
Discuss school (0, 1)	.919 (.011)	.888 (.010)	139.93***
Play games, music, sports, TV/ video (0, 4)	2.920 (.046)	2.861 (.037)	31.15***
<i>School-based involvement activities</i>			
Met teacher (0, 2)	1.333 (.027)	1.379 (.022)	54.04***
Volunteer (0, 1)	.353 (.020)	.335 (.015)	17.33***
Parent council (0, 1)	.095 (.012)	.096 (.009)	0.18
Attend event (0, 1)	.832 (.015)	.814 (.012)	27.56***
<i>Academics</i>			
Average language grade (33.7, 92)	74.051 (.290)	67.740 (.341)	7024.54***
Days late (0, 78)	3.671 (.331)	4.527 (.302)	136.04***
Days absent (0, 86)	9.413 (.338)	9.859 (.302)	35.34***
Likes school (0, 2)	1.813 (.020)	1.752 (.018)	240.70***

Note: Mean is displayed, and standard deviations are in parentheses. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth. Data are imputed. ***p<0.001 **p<0.01 *p<0.05

Multilevel Models

My quantitative analysis is multilevel and considers the nested nature of students within schools. In this way, I account for the variability between level-1 observations (e.g., families) and the contextual variability that may exist between level-2 clusters (e.g., schools) (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). For example, families nested in schools tend to share the same neighborhood and as a result their responses may be correlated due to these similarities. Ignoring the nested nature of the data violates the independence assumption and would result in increased type one error, model misspecification, and missed opportunity to examine contextual relationships (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008; Snijders & Bosker, 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014)¹⁴.

For each of the outcome variables, I build regression models sequentially with groups of covariates. To examine the effect of SES¹⁵, the first model contains only the measure for SES and the control variables. In the second model, I add the remaining demographic measures (male, English at home, born in Canada, and marital status) to account for other family background measures' influence on literacy achievement. The third model adds the parent engagement scales (parents' aspirations and values, resources, home-based involvement, and school-based involvement). The fourth model includes the academic measures (average language grade, days

¹⁴ To determine if the data should be analyzed using standard regression technique versus multilevel modeling, I estimated an "empty model" (intercepts only) for each of the outcome variables with no predictors testing mean differences between schools (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). In determining if analysis should be multileveled, it is important to assess the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). High ICCs imply that the independence of errors assumption is violated – there is correlation between groups. For spring literacy, 37.5% of the residual variance in cumulative learning is explained by the school a child attends. For summer literacy, 12.5% of the residual variance in summer growth/loss is explained by the school a child attends. Another test to determine if multilevel modeling should be used is to estimate models using both standard regression and multilevel modeling and compare the deviance (likelihood ratio test), Akaike information criterion, and Bayesian information criterion statistics between models. All four test statistics supported the use of multilevel models in my analysis.

¹⁵ In the models, SES is a continuous variable (as opposed to a factor variable as presented in the descriptive table above), I ran the models with SES as a factor variable with three quartiles in the models and the fourth quartile as the reference category, but this did not change the results, so I decided to keep SES as a continuous variable.

late, days absent, and likes school). The fifth model adds all level-two variables: school type, school size, and the measure for parent education programs.

In the final model, I use interaction terms to analyze the variation of parent engagement by family SES. These interactions are all at level-1, except for the level-2 construct measuring parent education programs. As Domina (2005) notes, testing for the interaction between SES and parent involvement activities provides information about who parent involvement initiatives may benefit the most. If greater returns for parent engagement are related to lower-SES students, then the policies and programs promoting parent involvement are warranted in closing the gaps in educational outcomes. For all models, intercepts are random, and slopes are fixed.¹⁶

Findings

For comparative purposes, it is important to reiterate that my multilevel (MLM) regression tables display results of two outcomes: 1) A snapshot of cumulative learning (which I will refer to as spring literacy scores); and 2) Results for summer gain or loss (referred to as summer growth). ‘Spring’ outcomes are a snapshot measure of test scores in June, but it inevitably includes all cumulative learning done prior to that point in time and for comparison establishes differences in students’ learning prior to summer. For ‘summer’ outcomes, the measure captures students’ growth for the time between testing in June and September. Thus, it is possible that *time* is an important component to keep in mind in interpreting the results. A single literacy score taken in

¹⁶ Following Hox’s (2002) exploratory strategy for choosing an MLM model, I first estimated a model that includes all level-1 predictors and control variables where all parameters are fixed (as cited in Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014, p. 890). I then assess this model by looking at the impact of each predictor and by comparing this model with the empty model (no predictors). This is done by subtracting the χ^2 likelihood ratio test (deviance) value from the empty model from the χ^2 of the first model. The deviance can then be used to test model fit or lack of fit in comparison to other models (see Snijders & Bosker, 2012). Next, I assess the same model (with level-1 predictors only) but this time I compare different models where the slope for each predictor is permitted to be random one at a time. From a theoretical standpoint, I assumed that SES should be permitted to be random however this did not improve the models and as a result all parameters in the models are fixed.

spring (grade 1, 2, or 3) is a product of activities built over 6-8 years of a student's life, while summer growth is a result of activities that build in 2-3 months. Notably, snapshot scores based on longer time frames may have more variance than growth scores, particularly those based on short timelines¹⁷.

Question 1: Which measures of parent engagement predict students' cumulative literacy, and their summer growth?

Tables 6 and 7 show the results for the MLMs that are built sequentially with groups of covariates as previously outlined. Model 1, which includes controls and SES, predicts 24.6% of the variance in spring literacy scores and 10.7% of the variance in summer growth at the school level (note: Variance Partitioned Coefficients are recorded in the bottom row of Tables 6 and 7).¹⁸ Not surprisingly, socio-economic status is a significant predictor for the two outcome variables. SES – which is centered on the group mean – raises spring literacy outcomes by 0.077 (years) and summer growth by 0.026 relative to the other students in their school. In more concrete terms, this translates to 28 days and 9.5 days respectively. Considering that the school year in Ontario is usually 194 days, the SES gap for spring literacy accounts for 14 percent of the school year and summer growth equals almost 5 percent.

By adding the other family demographic variables, model 2 predicts 24.5% of the variance in spring scores and 10.4% of the variance in summer growth at the school level. The SES coefficient increases slightly for spring (28.5 days) and summer (11 days). In addition, two other demographic variables had significant effects in spring outcomes and one in summer. Most

¹⁷ Variance in learning – and the power of predictors – may be something that slowly builds over time (Email correspondence with Scott Davies, April 6, 2017; see also Downey et al., 2004).

¹⁸ Variance Partitioned Coefficient is the percentage of variance in the dependent variable explained by the higher level (in this case, school level). $VPC = \text{Between-school (Level-2 variance)} / \text{Total variance (Between-school + Within-school between student, level-1, residual)}$ (Leckie, 2010).

notably, males are over three months behind females in spring literacy and experience just over a one-month literacy loss in summer growth compared to their female peers. In spring literacy scores, students who are born in Canada fall behind their immigrant peers by 85 days.

While models 1 and 2 help set the context of family background, model 3 illustrates the effect of family resources and practices, which is important in answering the first research question.

Altogether, this model predicts 22.5% of the variance in spring literacy scores and 10.3% of summer growth at the school level. The addition of the block of parent engagement measures shrinks the SES coefficient from model 2 by almost 40% (17 days gain, spring literacy) and 9% (approximately 10 days gain, summer literacy) and decreased the 'male' effect by approximately 32% for spring (now a loss of just over two months) and 16% for summer (now under one-month loss). Also, for students born in Canada, the literacy loss in spring outcomes is slightly higher than for those who are foreign born.

In short, fifteen parent engagement covariates are included in model 3 and only 5 of them have a significant correlation to spring literacy scores, and none for summer growth. Of these, only two are positive: parents' aspirations and home resources. For each increase in parents' expectations of the highest level of education their child will attain, spring literacy outcomes increase by almost two months. Home resources had a significantly positive effect for spring literacy scores of one and a half months. Three measures show substantial negative effects for spring literacy outcomes: time on homework (42 days), hired tutor (123 days), and met with teacher (70 days).

Looking at model three, where the family resources and practices measures are added in, it is evident that even with these measures the family background variable socioeconomic status continues to be influential for both outcomes and being male is significantly disadvantageous.

Table 6. Multi-level Regression of Spring Literacy Scores and Summer Growth/Loss: Models 1-3 (N=1671, 92 schools)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>
Demographics						
SES	.077 (.016)***	.026 (.011)*	.078 (.017)***	.030 (.012)*	.047 (.017)**	.028 (.013)*
Male			-.273 (.057)***	-.092 (.037)*	-.184 (.057)**	-.077 (.039)*
English spoken at home			.154 (.124)	.010 (.082)	.088 (.123)	.027 (.085)
Born in Canada			-.233 (.103)*	-.047 (.064)	-.234 (.099)*	-.028 (.065)
Married/Common law			-.055 (.071)	-.064 (.048)	-.051 (.069)	-.068 (.048)
Parents' aspirations & values						
Aspirations					.161 (.033)***	.029 (.023)
TV time					.042 (.046)	-.021 (.032)
Computer time					.057 (.030)	-.024 (.021)
Time on homework					-.115 (.050)*	.041 (.035)
Parents' resources						
Home resources					.122 (.028)***	.003 (.019)
Hired tutor					-.337 (.088)***	-.059 (.060)
Extracurricular					.013 (.034)	.016 (.023)
Home-based involvement						
Read with					-.154 (.094)	.005 (.065)
Homework help					-.085 (.082)	-.094 (.057)
Discuss school					.171 (.099)	-.018 (.069)
Play games, music, sports, TV/video					.002 (.026)	.001 (.018)
School-based involvement						
Met teacher					-.190 (.040)***	-.015 (.028)
Volunteered					.106 (.060)	-.003 (.041)
Attended event					.127 (.074)	-.009 (.052)
School council					.001 (.093)	.048 (.064)
Controls						
Test interval	-.003 (.005)	.003 (.003)	-.003 (.005)	.003 (.003)	-.003 (.004)	.003 (.003)
Cohort	-.218 (.077)**	.018 (.046)	-.204 (.076)**	.020 (.046)	-.255 (.076)**	-.001 (.049)
Grade level	.890 (.038)***	-.046 (.024)	.889 (.038)***	-.046 (.024)	.887 (.037)***	-.039 (.024)
Attended SLP	-.612 (.078)***	.046 (.053)	-.596 (.077)***	.053 (.053)	-.506 (.075)***	.057 (.055)
Constant	440.148 (154.480)**	-34.756 (92.289)	412.469 (153.690)**	-40.827 (92.337)	512.999 (152.603)**	2.070 (97.655)
F statistic	123.35***	2.13	76.06***	2.15*	37.82***	1.26
Random-effect Coefficients:						
SD (Intercept)	.346 (.051)	.087 (.033)	.340 (.050)	.084 (.035)	.295 (.044)	.083 (.036)
SD (Residual)	1.060 (.020)	.726 (.013)	1.050 (.020)	.724 (.013)	1.016 (.019)	.722 (.013)
Variance Partition Coefficient	.246	.107	.245	.104	.225	.103

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth. Students are clustered in 92 schools. Data are imputed. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Adding in the parent engagement covariates reduces the effect of SES and gender (male) for spring literacy scores but mitigating the effects of these covariates on summer growth is much smaller, especially SES.

In summary, five parent engagement measures predict spring literacy scores. Parents' aspirations and home resources have a positive relationship with spring testing outcomes and time on homework, hired tutor, and met with teacher predict a negative relationship.

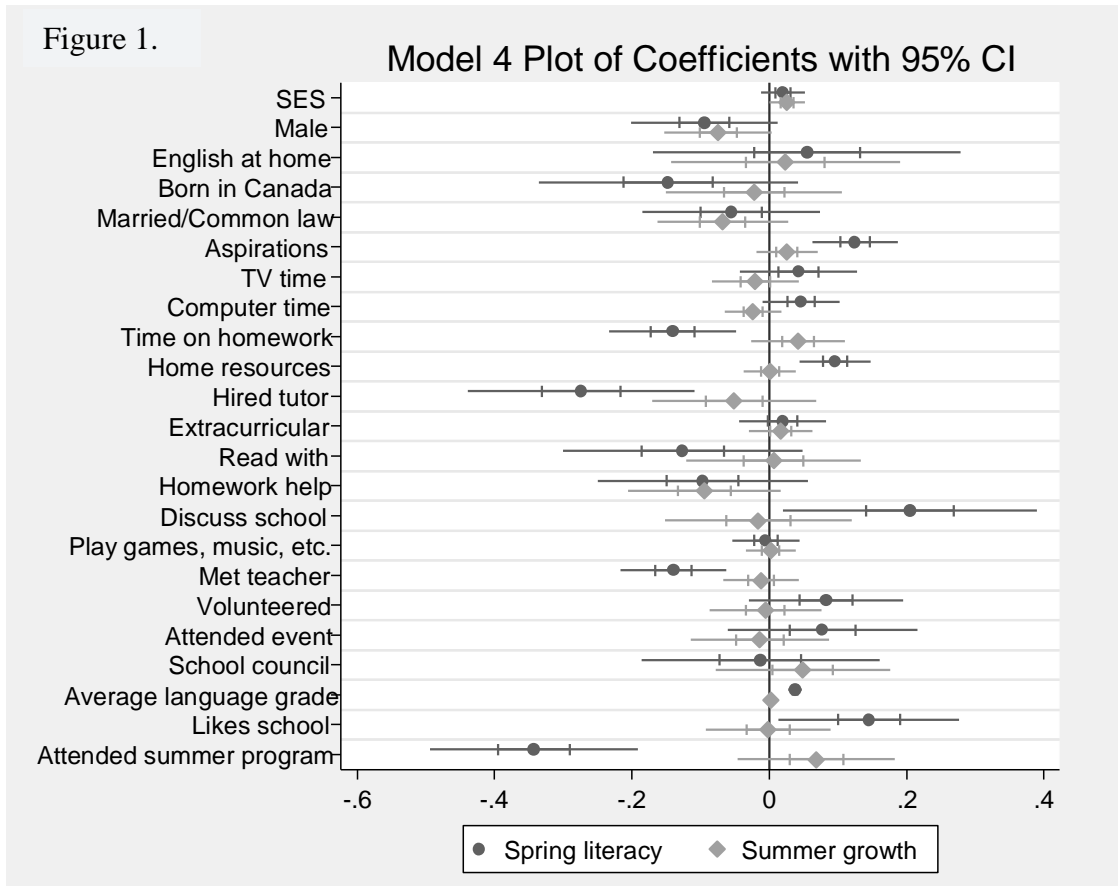
Question 2: Which school-level practices influence literacy learning?

The first thing to note is what happens to the coefficients in model 4 (table 7; also, see figure 1 below for a coefficients plot of this model; Jann, 2014) when students' academic information is added into the mix. It is important to examine this model first because the block of academic coefficients can reveal some underlying at-school strategies to raise achievement (e.g., attendance; punctuality so student does not miss instruction) (see Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

In model 4, the explained variance relating to outcomes at the school level increases for spring literacy outcomes predicting 39.1% of the variance in test scores. For summer growth, the explained variance remains the same at 10.3%. I find that all demographic covariates that had influential effects previously are not only reduced but are now rendered insignificant for spring literacy; however, SES is still significant for summer learning. In terms of the parent engagement measures for spring literacy, adding in academic covariates lessens the effect for most of the previously significant results except it increased the coefficients for time on homework and met teacher. Also, discuss school is now a positive predictor of spring literacy scores.

Average language grade – another continuous variable that is centered on the group mean – results in a 14-day gain for spring outcomes. Not surprisingly, higher grades in school correlate with higher test scores. A student liking school has a sizable positive effect on spring literacy

outcomes (53 days increase). The number of days late in the previous school year has a small negative effect on spring outcomes (3 days).



Model 5 includes the level-two (school) covariates and predicts 39.3% of the variance in spring literacy scores and only 9% of the variance in summer growth at the school level. What is of interest in this model, especially in answering the question at hand, are the measures examining the supplementary programs that schools often offer to help parents and children. These programs include workshops on discipline, nutrition, and more academically focused seminars on helping students with math and reading or incorporating science, numeracy and literacy in everyday activities. The parent engagement programs show positive effects for spring literacy scores but negative effects for summer growth; however, both are insignificant. In fact, none of the level-two covariates significantly predict either outcomes.

Table 7. Multi-level Regression of Spring Literacy Scores and Summer Growth/Loss: Models 4-6 (N=1671, 92 schools)

	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>	<i>Spring literacy</i>	<i>Summer growth/loss</i>
Demographics						
SES	.020 (.016)	.026 (.013)*	.018 (.016)	.026 (.013)*	.004 (.088)	.018 (.065)
Male	-.095 (.054)	-.074 (.040)	-.092 (.054)	-.075 (.040)	-.098 (.054)	-.080 (.040)*
English spoken at home	.055 (.114)	.023 (.085)	.052 (.113)	.028 (.085)	.065 (.115)	.024 (.085)
Born in Canada	-.147 (.096)	-.022 (.066)	-.139 (.099)	-.020 (.070)	-.153 (.099)	-.032 (.070)
Married/Common law	-.055 (.066)	-.068 (.049)	-.054 (.066)	-.064 (.049)	-.062 (.067)	-.074 (.049)
Parents' aspirations & values						
Aspirations	.125 (.032)***	.026 (.023)	.124 (.032)***	.025 (.023)	.135 (.032)***	.019 (.023)
TV time	.043 (.044)	-.020 (.032)	.046 (.044)	-.021 (.032)	.051 (.044)	-.023 (.032)
Computer time	.046 (.029)	-.024 (.021)	.043 (.029)	-.024 (.021)	.047 (.029)	-.020 (.021)
Time on homework	-.141 (.047)**	.042 (.035)	-.141 (.047)**	.044 (.035)	-.137 (.048)**	.050 (.035)
Parents' resources						
Home resources	.096 (.027)***	.001 (.019)	.100 (.027)***	-.001 (.019)	.097 (.027)***	-.002 (.020)
Hired tutor	-.274 (.084)***	-.051 (.061)	-.266 (.084)**	-.051 (.061)	-.251 (.086)**	-.072 (.062)
Extracurricular	.020 (.032)	.017 (.023)	.019 (.032)	.017 (.023)	.021 (.032)	.015 (.024)
Home-based involvement						
Read with	-.126 (.089)	.006 (.065)	-.118 (.089)	.003 (.065)	-.142 (.090)	-.005 (.065)
Homework help	-.097 (.078)	-.094 (.057)	-.099 (.078)	-.089 (.057)	-.091 (.078)	-.082 (.057)
Discuss school	.205 (.094)*	-.016 (.069)	.211 (.094)*	-.018 (.070)	.226 (.103)*	-.016 (.075)
Play games, music, sports, TV/video	-.005 (.025)	.002 (.018)	-.006 (.025)	.005 (.019)	-.006 (.025)	.005 (.019)
School-based involvement activities						
Met teacher	-.140 (.039)***	-.012 (.028)	-.133 (.039)**	-.011 (.028)	-.135 (.040)**	-.008 (.028)
Volunteered	.083 (.057)	-.006 (.041)	.080 (.057)	-.008 (.041)	.094 (.058)	-.004 (.042)
Attended event	.078 (.070)	-.014 (.052)	.075 (.070)	-.014 (.052)	.064 (.071)	-.007 (.052)
School council	-.013 (.088)	.049 (.065)	-.021 (.088)	.054 (.065)	-.011 (.089)	.049 (.066)
Academics						
Average language grade	.038 (.005)***	.003 (.002)	.040 (.005)***	.003 (.002)	.038 (.004)***	.003 (.002)
Days late	-.009 (.004)*	.002 (.003)	-.009 (.003)*	.002 (.003)	-.009 (.004)*	.001 (.003)
Days absent	.002 (.003)	-.003 (.002)	.002 (.003)	-.003 (.002)	.002 (.003)	-.002 (.002)
Likes school	.145 (.067)*	-.002 (.046)	.140 (.067)*	-.003 (.046)	.131 (.069)	-.009 (.047)
School Level Variables						
Public school			-.201 (.167)	.107 (.055)	-.193 (.162)	.107 (.055)
School size			-.001 (.0005)	.0001 (.0002)	-.001 (.001)	.0001 (.0002)
School parent programs			.118 (.076)	-.011 (.025)	.108 (.075)	-.013 (.025)
Interactions						
SES x Aspirations						
SES x Time on homework					.010 (.016)	-.014 (.013)
SES x Home resources					-.003 (.027)	.009 (.020)
SES x Hired tutor					.015 (.015)	.011 (.011)
SES x Discuss school					-.072 (.049)	.022 (.034)
SES x Met teacher					.004 (.059)	-.018 (.041)
SES x Volunteered					.0002 (.023)	.015 (.017)
					-.071 (.032)*	.002 (.024)

SES x School parent programs					-0.024 (.014)	-0.017 (.010)
Controls						
Test interval	-.012 (.005)*	.002 (.003)	-.011 (.005)*	.002 (.003)	-.010 (.005)*	.002 (.003)
Cohort	-.325 (.081)***	-.008 (.049)	-.311 (.082)***	.0003 (.049)	-.330 (.081)***	.009 (.050)
Grade level	.888 (.038)***	-.037 (.024)	.875 (.039)***	-.025 (.026)	.881 (.039)***	-.026 (.026)
Attended SLP	-.343 (.077)***	.069 (.058)	-.349 (.077)***	.073 (.058)	-.350 (.078)***	.080 (.058)
Constant	651.516 (162.444)***	16.050 (97.816)	624.233 (164.557)***	-.975 (98.744)	662.253 (163.744)***	-17.792 (99.525)
F statistic	35.81***	1.18	30.50***	1.21	24.16***	1.15
Random-effect Coefficients:						
SD (Intercept)	.604 (.164)	.083 (.037)	.605 (.130)	.071 (.041)	.560 (.125)	.073 (.040)
SD (Residual)	.940 (.025)	.721 (.013)	.935 (.022)	.721 (.013)	.935 (.022)	.718 (.013)
Variance Partition Coefficient	.391	.103	.393	.090	.375	.092

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth. Students are clustered in 92 schools. Data are imputed. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Question 3: In terms of literacy achievement, which students benefit most from parent engagement practices?

Finally, in model 6, I test if the effects of parent engagement vary by parents' socioeconomic background (only the interactions for previously significant variables are included in this model along with the only significant interaction and school parent programs). This model explains 37.5% of the variance in spring literacy scores and only 9.2% of the variance in summer growth at the school level. As shown in this final model, volunteering at the school is the only significant parent engagement interaction with SES. Because this interaction is negative, it shows a benefit for lower-SES students. Thus, for spring literacy outcomes, having a parent who volunteers in the classroom demonstrates a more favourable effect (26 days of literacy gain) for disadvantaged students than their advantaged peers. Notably, the cross-level interaction of SES by parent education programs, although negative, is not significant.

Limitations

While this study presents a new approach to analyzing parent engagement in considering its influence on summer growth, there exist limitations that could be improved upon in future research.

First, this study relies on parental reports for most of the variables of interest. While it is expected that parents are reliable indicators of their own levels of engagement, Kohl, Lengua and McMahon (2000) suggest that multiple-reporter ratings – which can include surveys from teachers and children – allow for a more valid assessment of parent engagement (see also Green et al., 2007). Also, because I do not know how teachers would rate parents' involvement levels or how teachers would rate their own advocacy of parent involvement in the class and at home, I cannot fully account for institutional effects such as how schools and teachers foster greater levels of engagement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hayes, 2011; Overstreet et al., 2005). Since teachers are a crucial link between home and school relations, greater institutional support might mitigate factors that indicate lower levels of engagement. For school parent programs, my measure only accounts for whether schools offer these programs to their parents. I do not know which parents attend these events, so I cannot test whether a parent attending a “reading with your child” workshop, for example, raises student literacy achievement. In addition, this measure does not consider the types of support that teachers may give parents (e.g., inviting parents into the classroom to observe a reading lesson). Moreover, I cannot account for the long-term effects that these school initiatives have on academic outcomes.

Second, the current study relied on cross-sectional parent survey data. Certainly, longitudinal data examining the same variables would allow for a stronger analysis of the strength of the predictors. Additionally, because parent engagement can change over time – often

waning as children get older (Catsambis, 2001; Green et al., 2007) – longitudinal data on parent engagement could not only serve to track changes in parents’ involvement but also measure how this involvement affects literacy outcomes in the long-term.

Third, this study only accounts for the effects of parent engagement on children’s literacy outcomes. It does not account for the other positive effects that involvement might have on children’s behavior (e.g., student engagement in classroom) or school attendance. In addition, parent engagement studies often do not consider the benefits that involvement or parenting workshops might have on parents themselves. Perhaps, parent programs help increase parents’ sense of efficacy; the feeling that they can in fact help their child with their struggles with literacy. The qualitative arm of the larger project this study draws from found that parents with lower education levels often experience a lack of confidence in their ability to influence positive educational outcomes in their child’s schooling (Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016).

Fourth, there are limitations in my level-two variable regarding school-based parent engagement programs. The data for this measure was collected using school board and school websites which are not always kept up to date. Future research could include a similar measure with more reliable data.

Discussion

Parent engagement is often expected to compensate for differences in family backgrounds, resources, and for those out of school times that are so risky for disadvantaged students.

Education policies emphasize parent engagement strategies such as on-going communication with the school, homework help, talking to your child about school, and reading with your child as ways to not only boost student achievement but also to promote positive attitudes toward

schooling. This paper provides a thorough investigation of various forms of parent engagement within the strategic testing ground of summer learning. It confirms patterns found in the literature that only examine the effects of parent engagement on school year or cumulative learning. In fact, my findings are even less optimistic for the assumption that parent engagement mitigates SES disparities in literacy achievement, especially when considering summer growth.

For cumulative learning (spring literacy outcomes), the finding that most of the parent engagement measures in this study are insignificant, often weak, and sometimes negatively associated is not surprising given the underwhelming and contradictory evidence found in previous literature. In model 3, the only family background and parent engagement measures that have a significant positive effect for literacy achievement are SES, parents' aspirations, and home resources. When school-level covariates are added in model 5, the strength of these covariates is lessened slightly but they remain significant and discussing school with child becomes significant. For summer growth, the only significant positive predictor is SES and its effects are consistent through models 1 to 5. Notably, two of these predictors relate to parents' economic capital: SES and home resources (e.g., parents' ability to provide resources such as books and a computer for their child). Negative associations between spring literacy scores and parent engagement include time spent on homework, hiring a tutor, and meetings with the teacher. And, male students have disadvantages in spring literacy and summer growth.

Considering these results, two key puzzles emerge from my analysis. First, why do many forms of parent engagement not have strong effects in the expected direction? And, second, what could explain the covariates that do have stronger effects? In disentangling these seemingly inconsistent results that arise in parent engagement research and the powerful effect of SES on students' achievement and parents' participation, there are three mechanisms that could underlie

these associations. These mechanisms are useful in understanding the context and specification of the various forms of involvement and why they yield the results that they do.

First, building on Lareau's (2011) work, one mechanism is the "cultivation ethic" by which parents take a goal-driven approach to their child's education that is generally unrelated to their child's actual school achievement. This ethic relates to SES and forms of involvement such as aspirations, talking to children about school, and motivation to provide extracurricular activities and resources. This is the most straightforward mechanism because it seems intuitive that parents would provide resources and offer encouragement to their children. Even though parents may or may not do these things based on their child's academic progress, the variables included in this grouping generally have a positive relationship with educational outcomes (even though the effects are not always significant).

Notably, parents' aspirations are consistently found to be a potent predictor of educational achievement (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014). However, it is difficult to determine how this variable works. There are three possible explanations. One is that students' high achievement spurs high aspirations and therefore this is an instance of reverse causation. The second explanation is that parents' aspirations have a causal effect on students' achievement. Previous research supports this connection between higher-SES, student achievement, and high aspirations but the direction of the relationship is unclear (e.g., Devine, 2004; Irwin & Elley, 2013; Lareau, 2011). Third, it is possible that the relationship is reciprocal; parents who "aspire" have children who do better, which then encourages parents to aspire higher. Thus, parents' aspirations are shaped collectively by these two mechanisms: 1) cultivation ethic, which operates

on a philosophy of parenting related to SES; and 2) a realist approach, in which parents react to a child's current accomplishments and adjust their expectations accordingly¹⁹.

In relation to the cultivation ethic, home resources and extracurricular activities are another area that could be explored further. Researchers suggest that there are little differences in what lower- and higher-class families desire to do with their children during the summer months, but rather it is the lack of resources (e.g., money, time, transportation) that dictate extracurricular activities and learning materials (Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Cheadle, 2008; Chin & Phillips, 2004; Dermott & Pomati, 2016). That is, all families want to provide these opportunities for their children, but higher-SES families are in a better position to immediately deliver these benefits because of economics, transportation, and/or more flexible work hours. However, Weininger, Lareau, & Conley (2015) find that it is not income but the mother's education level that predicts higher involvement in extracurricular activities. Thus, families with low-income and a mother with post-secondary education, are more likely to have children in sports and arts lessons than those families where the mother has a high school education or less. Nonetheless, policies that focus on closing achievement gaps or even opportunity gaps can consider ways to get learning resources to disadvantaged communities (e.g., travelling lending libraries, sports teams within walking distance). Summer literacy programs, for instance, are a prime provider of books, technological resources, and special day trips that might be scarce for students from disadvantaged families (Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014; Kim & Guryan, 2011), and home-based summer literacy programs that involve both parents and teachers have been shown to be effective (Kim & Quinn, 2013).

¹⁹ In chapter four, I will explore "parents' aspirations" in more depth.

Second, a “realist reaction” mechanism in which parents -- who may vary in the level of cultivation ethic they may have – react to their child’s academic performance and respond accordingly. For example, if a child is struggling in school, parents might meet more often with teachers to gauge progress, hire a tutor, or provide more help with homework. For the covariates which have a negative association with cumulative literacy achievement – time spent on homework, hired tutor and met with teacher – the reactive hypothesis could be the driving force. This theory proposes that when a child has greater difficulties at school parents respond by increasing their involvement (e.g., Epstein, 1988; McNeal, 2012). Parental involvement in homework is one of the most common types of activities related to parent engagement and it is also one that has been extensively researched and found wanting. My findings that time on homework has a negative relationship with literacy achievement is consistent with most of the literature (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). Other researchers suggest that it is crucial to consider not only the quantity of parental help with homework but the quality in terms of the approach (e.g., supportive versus forceful) that parents have when helping students (Moroni et al., 2015; Dumont et al., 2014). Similarly, research on progress report meetings with the teacher corroborates the negative association reported in my study (e.g., Domina, 2005) and the quality of these interactions is important to consider in future research²⁰. Though, to truly see if this mechanism could produce consistent positive effects, a longitudinal research design with a control group who do not receive the “reaction” stimulus (e.g., notice from school that their child is lagging in reading) would be ideal.

The third mechanism that could influence parent engagement activities is an “expressive logic” that is more about parent interest than it is about cultivation, reactivity, or the child’s

²⁰ Using interviews with teachers and parents, I will explore these dimensions of parent engagement more closely in chapter three.

achievement. That is, perhaps parents get involved in volunteering at the school or join the parent council because they want to get involved, it is something that interests them, or their child asked them to come on a class field trip or attend a school event (e.g., Green et al., 2007 find that parents are more likely to get involved at the child's request). These expressive forms of involvement are not necessarily done in a grand scheme to get their child ahead but rather more likely out of a parent's availability and interest. For these expressive forms of involvement – attending events, volunteering at school, and participation in school council – I find no significant effects on either outcome. Although few studies examine these involvement variables separately, these expressive forms of parent engagement have mixed results in the literature which finds negative associations for parent council meetings (Robinson & Harris, 2014), small positive effects for attending events (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014 only find significant effects for middle income families), and a small positive association for volunteering at school (Domina, 2005). Thus, when significant positive effects are found with these measures, they are weak. On the whole, these expressive variables do not have their expected effects in relation to literacy achievement and parents likely do them for other reasons beyond getting their children ahead.

In model 6, the interactions with SES were important in determining if lower-SES students benefitted more from certain types of parent engagement. The only significant interaction was SES by having a parent volunteer at the school, which showed more potential for lower-SES students' spring literacy scores. Similarly, Domina's (2005) work with national longitudinal data (U.S.) finds that volunteering in the classroom increased achievement and reduced behavioral problems for students from low-SES backgrounds. Using an experimental research design, DeCusati and Johnson (2004) find that children in the treatment group (random

selection of parents to volunteer in classroom) scored higher on word recognition. It is possible that volunteering in the classroom increases social capital among low-SES parents so that they become aware of their children's academic progress or learn of strategies of how they can help their children at home (see also Lee & Croninger, 1994; McNeal, 1999). This is an aspect of parent engagement that could be explored in future research. Particularly, it would be interesting to examine various lengths of time volunteering (e.g., is there a benefit to volunteering more often?) and different types of volunteering in the classroom (e.g., reading with children in the classroom versus being a chaperone on a field trip) and their effects on academic achievement.

Finally, it is important to highlight the variance explained in the models presented. Comparing the two outcomes, variance explained is higher for cumulative learning (spring scores) than summer growth. As previously noted, spring literacy scores are explaining all learning that has happened prior to the date of testing and summer scores are only explaining two to three months of learning. More precisely, there is greater variance and range in spring literacy than summer so that difference could lead to different patterns in outcomes. Therefore, explanatory power is decreased in the summer models. Some parent engagement covariates have an effect on spring scores but no effect on summer. In each model, most of the variance in literacy scores at the school level is unaccounted for especially in summer and differences between children for summer growth is attributed to SES. The results that school-level variance is much smaller in summer learning is found in previous research (McEachin & Attenberry, 2017; Downey et al., 2004; Verachtert, Van Damme, Onghena, & Ghesquière, 2009). In their study, Downey and colleagues (2004) find that demographic variables such race, gender, and SES only explain less than 10% of the inequality in students' learning rates. Thus, as they note there is an "unexplained" inequality that adds up to more than 90% of the total, and this

unexplained inequality is much smaller during school than during summer (see also McEachin & Attenberry, 2017). In my findings, model 3 which included the parent engagement variables along with family demographics only explained 22.5% of the variance at the school level for spring literacy outcomes (overall learning up to the testing date) and a mere 10.3% of the variance for summer growth.

Can we discover more about the unexplained variance in student outcomes? Perhaps taking an in-depth look at family practices to uncover the *quality* of interactions will help us understand why a subtle variable such as “parents’ aspirations” yields consistently positive influence on academic outcomes (e.g., Jeynes, 2005). While we know that parents from all levels of socioeconomic strata are increasing their levels of involvement in their children’s schooling and extracurricular activities (e.g., Bassok et al., 2016; Schaub, 2015), higher-SES children may benefit from a greater quality of engagement within the home such as being read to by highly educated parents or participating in conversations about more complex topics. As such, the quality of home resources, not their quantity, is probably the most consequential for academic achievement. Alternatively, it could just be a result of unpredictable occurrences. A child gets introduced to a book series that really incites a love of reading and spurs a summer of library visits to get new books. A child gets onto a competitive sports team with a demanding practice schedule, leaving little time to hone reading skills. Or, children left to their own devices during off-school hours opt for video games as the activity of choice and never read for leisure. It is feasible to speculate that it is a combination of these factors -- parents’ expectations, home learning environments (e.g., seeing parents read for leisure, expectation that reading is a part of the day), children’s own learning dispositions (e.g., love of learning, feeling that they are “good” or “bad” readers, IQ) – that creates a perfect storm in influencing achievement.

However, many of these processes are quite random and would not be captured in a survey of family practices. It may be that the “right stuff” — attributes of home environments that nurture academic achievement — is difficult to measure (see Lareau, 2015). Take into consideration the measure of reading with a child on the parent survey. Reading with children is clearly important and most parents say that they do this several times a week. However, there could be qualitative differences in how parents read with children such as a concentrated effort to work on specific competencies during a parent/child book reading session (see for example Phillips, Norris, & Anderson, 2008). Certainly, for quantitative researchers, it is challenging to uncover and measure the precise mechanisms by which home environments have their effects.

It has been postulated that when considering a concept such as cultural capital, it is important to study micro-interactional processes (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). More recently, micro-level studies have started to scratch the surface in examining student, teacher and parent interactions in schooling processes (e.g., Calarco, 2011, 2014; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012; Ong-Dean, 2009). In so doing, they reveal inequalities in their interactions, particularly by demonstrating how students and parents enact their personal resources (their “capital”) to ensure academic advantage or success. Accordingly, qualitative research in family dynamics could provide more information about how parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds engage in their children’s schooling on key measures such as aspirations, talking to a child about school, home reading, and homework help. For the three mechanisms that I present above, more research should be done to investigate the differences in home environments and what makes SES such a powerful predictor of academic achievement. My quantitative analysis sets up the need for a qualitative look at the significant predictors found here. Thus, I intend to explore these covariates further mining the qualitative data from the SLP (interviews with teachers, parents and children)

to uncover if parents mostly react to their children's achievement, actively cultivate it, or bolster it through the various forms of parent engagement during the school year and summer vacation.

Conclusion

Overall, this study set out to examine the effect of parent engagement for spring literacy outcomes (cumulative learning) versus summer growth. What does summer learning tell us about parental involvement? Despite the intuitive appeal of parent engagement and its increasing recognition in school policy, it simply lacks the kind of influence on students' literacy achievement that we want. In my analysis, there are no clear effects of parent involvement on summer learning. In fact, many of the activities that we would associate with positive benefits (e.g., reading with child) do not predict literacy achievement. Since the story here seems to come back to students' SES backgrounds, emphasizing other interventions (besides parent engagement) in literacy achievement such as summer literacy camps or after-school homework support would be beneficial. This study provides a framework for considering parent engagement within a seasonal research design. Future research could consider parent engagement and similar policy interventions and the effects on students' academic achievement both in- and out-of-school time.

CHAPTER THREE: “It’s more than just helping your kid with homework anymore”: Comparing parents’ and teachers’ understanding of parent engagement in Ontario in light of educational policy

Introduction

In the past three decades “parent engagement” has received considerable attention in a growing body of research that examines connections between parent engagement and academic achievement. Parent engagement is now a key component of many policies aimed at reducing achievement gaps (for a review see Fan & Chen, 2001; Furstenberg, 2011). Broadly, the term parent engagement is used to describe parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling.

Involvement includes communicating with the school, volunteering, attending school functions, and supporting learning at home (see Epstein, 1985, 1995). These activities are seen to give parents the tools to align with academic expectations and facilitate children’s successful movement through the education system.

Currently, most provinces in Canada include parent engagement as a key component of children’s educational success but Ontario is the only province or territory that has a formal parent engagement policy.²¹ The Ontario (2010) policy targets a broader parent, teacher, and community member readership and is directed at encouraging greater parent involvement in schools. This policy encompasses aspects found in the majority of parent engagement literature for home (e.g., reading with child, homework supervision) and school (e.g., attending school

²¹ Other provinces and territories have parent engagement guidelines (Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Alberta, Nova Scotia, PEI).

events, communication with teachers) involvement. In linking this to educational practice, teachers are encouraged to incite parental involvement and foster a welcoming school climate for parents.

How educational policies define parent engagement is an important consideration since parents and teachers may not agree on the definitions and actions associated with this term (e.g., Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Lawson, 2003; Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016). Further, researchers note that parent engagement policy tends to reinforce culturally dominant middle-class approaches to “good” parenting and parent-school relationships (Auerbach, 2007; Dermott & Pomati, 2016; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Hands, 2013; Macfarlane, 2009; Theodorou, 2007). Thus far, parent engagement has received mixed results in the scholarly literature. Research shows that parent engagement is effective depending on the type of engagement under study (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Robinson & Harris, 2014) or not significant in terms of boosting academic outcomes (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; McNeal, 2012). Despite the varied conclusions in these studies, parent engagement continues to be viewed in a positive light and intuitively makes sense to those who advocate for more parent involvement in children’s schooling (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005).

Even though the scholarly evaluation of parent engagement has presented mixed results, examining parents’ and teachers’ understanding of the concept is relevant because policy and programs that encourage greater involvement from parents reflect and reinforce our concept of what “good” parents are supposed to do. Notably, it is more likely that educational policies are primarily read by administrators and teachers rather than parents. Yet, the content of such policies represents an accepted logic of parenting culture that implies heavy involvement of

parents on all aspects of their children's lives, particularly their education (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). Further, embedded in parent engagement policies are notions of what good teachers are supposed to reinforce and integrate in their practice (Gordon & Louis, 2009). Thus, regardless of whether attending a school open house or helping with homework "works", these typical forms of involvement have become part of our cultural lexicon about what it means to be a good parent, an effective teacher, and an inclusive school. Since policy is regarded as a guideline "that attempts to constrain or channel behavior in particular directions", it is important to understand people's interpretation of policy and how these perceptions are shaped by the cultural ideals promoted in the environment (Coburn, 2016, p. 466). To date, there is no empirical study that has considered how teacher and parent efforts or understanding of parent engagement align with parent engagement policy.

In previous quantitative work (chapter two), I present three mechanisms of parent engagement (cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic) to speculate why certain parent engagement measures have positive, negative, or no effect on students' literacy achievement. In this paper, I use these three mechanisms as my conceptual framework along with categories from Ontario's Ministry of Education parent engagement policy as a guideline for analysis. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with 90 parents and 37 school staff (teachers, administrators, support staff), I consider parents' and teachers' alignment with each other and policy. In doing so, I ask the following questions: *Do parents' and teachers' actions and understanding of parent engagement align with policy informing Ontario schools? How do parents define parent engagement? Do parents mostly react to their children's achievement, actively cultivate it, or bolster it through the various forms of parent engagement during the*

school year and the summer? How do teachers view parent engagement? What types of strategies are promoted by teachers?

Presenting my results within the three mechanisms of parent engagement outlined in chapter two, I find that parents are more likely to discuss their engagement within categories in the cultivation ethic and realist reaction which are generally home-based activities. Conversely, teachers place more emphasis on school-based categories in the expressive logic. Further, within each mechanism there are nuances between working- and middle-class parents and how they perceive certain types of engagement such as homework help and reading with children (e.g., frustrating versus enjoyable). My findings illuminate the microprocesses of teachers' and parents' perceptions of parent engagement within the expectations outlined in the policy and how they differ in school-centric versus a home-centric focus. Unsurprisingly, parents' involvement in schooling is largely informed by their past experiences in schooling, availability, and sense of efficacy. Parents' enactment of capital (e.g., social, cultural) remains crucial to home reading practices, learning resources, approach to discipline and homework help, and connections with educators (see Lareau, 2011). Moreover, while educators' interviews provide predictable definitions of parent engagement which were very similar to the terminology used in the policy, experienced teachers and those who taught in low-SES contexts were more likely to promote schools as sources of building capital in families and fostering relationships with parents through more unconventional means. I find that the policy is viewed by these educators as an opportunity to focus less on "recalibrating" parenting practices and instead utilize "institutional discretionary spaces" to actively construct what parent engagement might mean for their school. In light of these findings, I conclude with considerations for policy and programming.

Three Mechanisms of Parent Engagement

Most of the research examining parents' views of parent engagement centres on determining *why* parents become involved. Parents' feelings of self-efficacy (parents feeling able to help their child), requests for help from child, time and energy are all predictors of home-based involvement (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). And, parents' social networks and specific invitations from teachers predict at-school involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Sheldon, 2002). Overall, the strongest predictor of parents' levels of engagement at home and at school is SES (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Lareau, 2002, 2011). I outline the three mechanisms of parent engagement below in light of the literature and delineate their relation to SES.

Cultivation Ethic

The "cultivation ethic" mechanism concerns a philosophy of parenting that relates to the ways that parents encourage and foster their children's cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Lareau's (2011) seminal ethnography indicates that parents' perception of school involvement is shaped by their approach to parenting. She theorizes that middle-class parents' logic of "concerted cultivation" involves active involvement in children's academic and extracurricular activities. Children have different talents and preferences that are to be supported through intensive parent involvement in school and at home. Also, middle-class parents align with schooling expectations through their knowledge about institutional processes, sense of entitlement, and view of teachers as equals to maximize advantages for their children (see also Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016; Demerath, 2009; Khan, 2010; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Conversely, Lareau (2011) notes that working-class and poor parents are more likely to adopt the “accomplishment of natural growth” logic of parenting which assumes a more hands-off approach to education. Parents provide love and other basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing but schooling is generally left to the teachers. Children’s free time is not necessarily structured or scheduled with activities, but children have more unstructured play.

While the cultivation ethic is more often espoused as an intensive approach to parenting (see Hays, 1996) rather than with the specific intention of raising academic achievement, this approach to parenting and schooling is related to SES (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008). Dimensions of parent engagement that are associated with the cultivation ethic are parents’ aspirations (of child’s future schooling), home learning environments which provides resources (e.g., books, computer) and enriching activities (e.g., learning games), discussing school with the child, and good parenting (e.g., supportive environment, rules on electronics/television). These forms of involvement are found to have a positive relationship with literacy achievement (e.g., chapter two; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Realist Reaction

The “realist reaction” mechanism suggests that parents – from all SES levels – react to children’s current academic (under)achievement by increasing certain types of involvement such as increasing time on homework, hiring a tutor, reading more often with children, or having frequent meetings with the teacher (see Epstein, 1988 and McNeal, 2012). The types of involvement associated with this mechanism often have a negative or insignificant relationship with literacy achievement (e.g., chapter two; Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Expressive Logic

The “expressive logic” mechanism suggests that there are some forms of parent engagement that parents do out of interest – rather than being related to a certain logic of parenting or in response to children’s achievement. The dimensions of parent engagement related to the expressive logic are volunteering at the school, attending school events, and participating in parent council.

Because these forms of involvement often have a negative or a weak positive effect on achievement (e.g., chapter two; Domina, 2005; El Nokali, Bachman and Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Jaynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014), parents likely do these things because they are available, interested, or their child asks them to attend a school event (e.g., field trip, assembly).

While the expressive logic is not related to SES, higher-SES parents are more likely to be involved in these forms of involvement because they are more likely to have flexible work schedules and confidence in educational settings (e.g., utilizing their social and cultural capital on parent councils; see Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009).²²

Teachers’ Perceptions of Parent Engagement

In the parent engagement literature, research on teachers’ attitudes and approaches to parent engagement reveals that while teachers like the idea of parent involvement they are concerned about the level of influence that parents may have in criticizing their work as professionals

²² It is important to note that I have designated the various forms of parent engagement within these three mechanisms based on their relationship with SES and the relationships they have with achievement in the literature. However, I realize that some forms of engagement could be categorized in more than one mechanism. For example, reading with children could be inserted in all three mechanisms. Parents may do reading with children because they enjoy doing so. They could read with a child in a concerted effort to broaden the child’s interests. Or, they may read with the child in response to a low reading grade on the child’s report card. For the purpose of this study, I classify all of the parent engagement measures in their designated mechanism based on my results in chapter two. Reading is sorted into the “realist reaction” mechanism because of its negative relationship with spring literacy scores and minimally positive relationship with summer growth (both of which were insignificant).

(Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Baeck, 2010; Epstein, 1986; Landeros, 2011; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012). However, these concerns are mostly related to middle- and higher-class parents. To avoid parents gaining too much control, teachers use strategies such as communication regarding school events, boosting parents' "role as supporters" in their child's education and promoting at-home involvement such as reading or overseeing homework completion (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Baeck, 2010).

Becker and Epstein's (1982) survey of teachers from Maryland finds that, despite the social class of parents, teachers are equally likely to use parent-engagement strategies to garner more involvement (see also Lareau, 2000). However, their belief about the effectiveness of these strategies hinges on parents' education levels (see also Ankrum, 2016; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Examining schools in low-socioeconomic neighborhoods, researchers find that parents and teachers have different views of the definitions and actions associated with parent engagement (Lawson, 2003; Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016). While teachers perceive parents' presence at school functions or progress report conferences as indicators of engagement, working-class and poor parents view engagement as evident in other ways such as visits to the library or their presence at sports events (Baker et al., 2016; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2016).

As noted in the literature above parent engagement is frequently connected to social class. Further, it is a contextual activity which is constituted in the interaction with teachers, other school personnel, and parents located in interconnected social networks and the greater environment (e.g., societal understandings of parent engagement and good parenting). I use the categories from Ontario's parent engagement policy as a guideline for analysis of the three mechanisms of parent engagement to understand more about parents' and teachers' alignment

with policy and with each other. This study offers a richer picture of alignment with parent engagement policy by providing multiple perspectives: parents, classroom teachers, administrators, and support staff (e.g., speech pathologists, educational assistants).

Methodology

Research Setting and Sample

This paper draws from three sources of data: (1) Policy statements on parent engagement from the Ontario Ministry of Education (Ontario, 2010); (2) Interviews with 90 parents; and (3) Interviews with 37 teachers. These in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the summers of 2012, 2013, and 2014 are a part of a larger mixed methods project examining summer learning programs (SLP) in Ontario schools (see Davies & Aurini, 2012-2014).²³ The intent of these interviews was to learn more about how parents and teachers define parent engagement and how these understandings inform the nature of parental engagement strategies adopted by parents and schools (see appendices B and C for interview schedules). Parents and teachers were recruited from schools who offered SLP located in relatively economically depressed neighborhoods from seven separate school sites located within three Ontario school boards (two in Southwestern Ontario and one in Northern Ontario). Interviews were conducted on site in the school resource room or library, averaging 45-90 minutes, and were digitally recorded with the permission of the interviewee²⁴. Most interviews were conducted by only one

²³ The objective of the broader study is to evaluate an intensive summer literacy learning intervention offered by the Ontario Ministry of Education for elementary students.

²⁴ Qualitative research with the SLP received clearance from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics and from the Ministry of Education. Also, for individual school boards, interview schedules and research protocols were cleared through their own board contacts. All schools, school boards, and participants are given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

member of the research team to accommodate scheduling and develop a more intimate exchange with the participant.

Teachers were recruited and interviewed on site by research team members primarily during after camp hours. Teacher interviewees include full-time teachers, occasional teachers, principals, vice-principals, school board representatives, and support staff (e.g., Speech Pathologists, Early Childhood Educators (ECE), Educational Assistants (EA), social workers)²⁵. I will use the term “teachers” in this report when referring to this group. Table 1 summarizes teacher characteristics.

Table 1. School Staff Characteristics (n=37)

	Frequency (percent)
Position	
Teacher	11 (29.7)
Occasional teacher (e.g., short- or long-term supply teacher)	9 (24.3)
Support staff (e.g., speech pathologist, ECE, EA, social worker)	9 (24.3)
Administrator (e.g., principal, vice-principal, school board representative)	8 (21.6)
Years of experience	
0-5	13 (35.1)
5-10	8 (21.6)
10-15	4 (10.8)
15-20	2 (5.4)
20 +	6 (16.2)
Missing	4 (10.8)
Gender	
Female	33 (89.2)
Male	4 (10.8)

To generate the sample of parents, researchers involved in the SLP project greeted parents on the playground each morning. We provided each parent with a recruitment flyer,

²⁵ To clarify the various roles in schools: Full-time and occasional teachers have teacher accreditation with the Ontario College of Teachers. Occasional teachers are supply teachers (covering short-term and long-term teacher absences) who have not obtained a full-time contract. Educational Assistants are hired to help in a classroom with special needs students. One EA is usually assigned to one or two students depending on students’ learning needs. Early Childhood Educators assist in Senior- and Junior-Kindergarten classrooms. They work alongside a certified teacher. Even though EAs and ECEs work in the classroom, they have their own professional associations and do not receive the same salary or status as accredited teachers. Speech Pathologists are hired by the school board to work one-on-one with students in need and provide advice for teachers. Depending on the demand, they often work with more than one school in an area. Social workers are assigned to several schools within a school board and they assist with truancy issues and concerns with Child and Family Services (e.g., neglect, abuse).

explained our study, and requested an interview (often scheduling interviews on the spot or following up with a phone call or approaching them again the next day). Parent participants include a handful of grandparents, aunts, and a step-mother who currently fill the role of primary caregiver. Throughout this paper, I use the term “parents” for all parents, guardians, and caregivers. After conducting interviews with parents, we asked them to fill out a demographic form requesting information about their ethnicity, family structure, annual family income, occupation, and highest level of education (see appendix D). Table 2 displays frequencies and percentages for the demographic data gathered from the 90 parents. The parents included in this study may not be representative and, therefore, it is not possible to generalize results and findings of this study to the population.

The most glaring limitation in this sample concerns self-selection bias. Parents’ decision to participate in the SLP and an interview may be associated with traits that affect the study. Many of the participants express similar levels of pro-school values, high levels of comfort with teachers, and commitment to their children’s education. These parents articulate the benefits of parental engagement. However, these shared value systems do not necessarily translate into a similar set of parental engagement strategies. Thus, by taking parents’ values into account (essentially “controlling for” this factor), I can examine variations in parents’ understanding of their role, and how these understandings intersect with the specific parent engagement strategies noted by teachers in the schools to which these parents are linked. It also should be noted that many of the parents we spoke to had children who are struggling readers or have diagnosed learning or behavioral difficulties and they were keen to talk about the process of procuring support and accommodations for their children. Some parents were still trying to get help for their child and were frustrated with institutional processes.

Table 2. Parents' Demographics (n=90)

	Frequency (Percent)
Education	
Some high school	7 (7.8)
High school graduate	27 (30.0)
College/trade school graduate	36 (40.0)
University (e.g., B.A., B.Sc.)	14 (15.6)
Postgraduate University (e.g., Law degree, Masters, Doctorate)	6 (6.7)
Household Income	
0 – 29,999	32 (35.6)
30,000 – 69,999	38 (42.2)
70,000 – 99,999	13 (14.4)
100,000 +	7 (7.8)
Gender	
Male	11 (12.2)
Female	79 (87.8)
Age	
24 - 29	19 (21.1)
30 - 39	44 (48.9)
40 - 49	23 (25.6)
50 +	3 (3.3)
Missing	1 (1.1)
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian	64 (71.1)
Other	18 (20.0)
Missing	8 (8.9)
Marital Status	
Single, separated, divorced	30 (33.3)
Married, common-law	60 (66.7)
Number of children	
1	12 (13.3)
2	39 (43.3)
3	30 (33.3)
4 +	9 (10.1)

Analytical Approach

Researchers involved in this project stayed for the duration of each summer day-camp (averaging two to three weeks per camp). This prolonged period in the field allowed us to gain the trust of parents, develop a deeper understanding of parent-school dynamics, and conduct classroom

observations²⁶. To incorporate member checking, we engaged in informal conversations with parents and teachers about preliminary findings in several interviews. Importantly, my field notes, time spent in the field getting to know participants, observation of SLP classes and parenting workshops (e.g., cooking healthy foods, discipline strategies), and discussion of findings with fellow researchers help triangulate the data, strengthening the validity of my findings (Denzin, 2009).

In this study, I attempt to capture parents' and teachers' understanding of parent engagement by conducting a content analysis of their alignment with categories presented in Ontario's parent engagement policy. This analysis involves three stages. For these stages, I use *NVivo11* software²⁷ to code data and compare information found in the interviews. In the first stage, I examine the policy document (Ontario 2010) to identify the categories to be used in my analysis of parent interviews.

The second stage involves a frequency count of participants who discuss the various forms of parent involvement (see Chi, 1997; Scherp, 2013). In interviews, parents and teachers were asked to describe what parent engagement meant to them. The purpose of these exchanges was to not only get at a definition of what participants consider parent engagement, but more importantly to understand the actions that they associate with that term. It should be noted that parents' interviews had some questions that guided the discussion (e.g., hopes for children's future, comfort in talking to teachers), whereas teacher interviews revolved more around strategies that teachers and schools use to involve parents. When I counted frequencies for the

²⁶ We also attended the welcome event for parents and students, parent engagement sessions, and various activities specifically designed for students (e.g., First Nations music presentation). In addition, we spent time in the classrooms assisting teachers with various literacy activities.

²⁷ QSR International, NVivo11 (2016) qualitative data analysis software.
<http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products/nvivo-11-for-windows>

various types of parent engagement, I included what parents said they did. For example, a parent might mention parent council in their definition of parent engagement but then state that they are not able to participate. Therefore, for parents, I only counted a parent engagement action if they said it was something that they do. For teachers, it was counted if they indicated that it is an action they associate with parent engagement. Undoubtedly, even though it is possible to count how often parents or teachers talk about the various forms of engagement, there needs to be consideration of the in-depth, contextual, multi-dimensional data that is found in qualitative interviews. As noted in chapter two, parents may state that they read with their children but there could be qualitative differences in *how* they read with their child. Essentially, I use the frequencies as a starting point to compare parents' and teachers' utterances of what they associate with parent engagement.

In this stage, I also categorized parents in two social class categories: working-class and middle-class²⁸. Based on other research focusing on social class, I chose to identify parents' social class by their education and occupational status (e.g., Calarco, 2018; Lareau, 2000, 2011). Middle-class families had at least one parent with post-secondary education (either a four-year college or university degree) and one parent in professional or managerial employment (e.g., teachers, scientists, physician, civil engineer). These families typically have an income of \$70,000 and above. Working-class families included high school dropouts, high school graduates, one- or two-years college certificate, trade school, or apprenticeships. Occupations in this category include food service and retail workers, day-care personnel, bus drivers, crane operators, and other similar work. These typical income for these families ranges from \$0 to

²⁸ Originally, I had divided parents into four categories: poor, working-class, middle-class, and upper-middle-class. However, because there was little difference in discussions on parent engagement between poor and working-class groups and middle- and upper-middle-class groups, I chose to simplify analysis to include two categories.

\$69,999. If couples had different education levels, I opted to categorize by the highest level of education and occupation. In the case of divorce or separation, I classified according to the parent who has primary custody. Additionally, there were some financial anomalies in the sample. Some participants experienced downward mobility as result of marriage break-up, divorce or illness. In other cases, some respondents' current financial circumstances will likely improve once they obtain employment commensurate with their level of education.

Consequently, I chose to use education as the primary indicator of social class because it has been found to be closely connected with strategies that parents use in family-school relations (see for example Calarco, 2018; Lareau, 2011; Streib, 2015).

In the third stage, content analysis of the qualitative data provides a richer picture of parents' understandings of their role in education and teachers' perspectives on involvement. At this phase, the data required little interpretation (e.g., mention of being on school council as a part of parent engagement, helping with homework). Therefore, as I analyze the transcripts, I am taking a deductive approach as I look for the presence or absence of well-established findings (e.g., parental reading behaviours) and confirm or disconfirm evidence related to the themes of parent engagement. However, I am also open to serendipitous findings and generate new themes as they emerge from the data (Berg & Lune, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, data will also be analyzed inductively as repeated patterns, differences, themes, or issues emerge from participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Policy Context

As the only province in Canada to have an official policy on parent engagement, Ontario provides a useful case study. Canada places responsibility for education at the provincial and

local level. Each province sets their own curriculum and funding. In addition, extra programs and policies are established at the provincial level and some are created at the school board level to address local needs. The Ontario (2010) parent engagement policy was created to express the province's commitment to improving education through increasing parents' support in their children's education. The goals outlined in the policy include: closing the achievement gap; removing barriers for parents who would not normally participate in parent engagement activities for various reasons (e.g., discriminatory biases, systemic barriers); and promoting specific practices that have been connected to academic achievement in research. This document portrays parents as partners in supporting children's learning in two domains -- home and school -- as noted in the following definition:

Parental involvement is a broad term and includes such things as good parenting, helping with homework, serving on school councils and board committees, communicating and meeting with teachers and volunteering in the classroom or on school trips. All forms of parental involvement are beneficial. In every form, parental involvement in education shows children that their parents care about what they are doing and learning, and that they value a good education (Ontario, 2010, p. 14, citing Ontario, 2005).

Table 3 displays the dimensions of parent engagement found in Ontario's policy and the number of times these categories are mentioned. All categories found in the policy are outlined in research promoting parent engagement (e.g., Epstein, 1995). There are four main aspects of at-school parent engagement described: school councils, attending school events, volunteering, and communication with teachers. Parent engagement at home consists of reading every day with children, helping with homework, and talking to children about school. Having high aspirations for a child's future education (e.g., post-secondary education plans) is also noted as important for academic success.

The notions of "good parenting" and "home learning environments" that foster academic achievement are more difficult to define. In relation to good parenting, the policy mentions

establishing household routines (e.g., setting times for doing homework), establishing rules about Internet use, being organized, and helping children get ready for school (e.g., packing up school bags the night before). In addition, the concept of good parenting is outlined explicitly in *Ontario's Code of Conduct* (2012b) for schools; parents are encouraged to "help their child be neat, appropriately dressed, and prepared for school"; "ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time"; and "promptly report to the school their child's absence or late arrival" (p. 6). Home learning environments encompass providing real-life learning activities that extend what is being learned at school, having interactive learning activities (e.g., playing a learning game that incorporates literacy or numeracy), and maintaining a positive attitude toward school and learning.

Table 3. Dimensions of Parent Engagement in Ontario's Policy

	Number of times mentioned*
Engagement at home	
Home learning environment	10
Good parenting	6
Aspirations	5
Daily reading	4
Discuss school	4
Homework help	2
Engagement at school	
School council	15
Communication with teachers	5
Attend school events	4
Volunteering	4

*I only include the first 17 pages of the policy in this count, since it is addressed to parents, teachers, and schools. After page 17, the document addresses policy goals for teachers, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education.

Findings: Alignment with Categories Found in Parent Engagement Policy

The discussion below categorizes these findings according to the mechanisms I present in chapter two: cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic. In this way, I can compare my quantitative findings in chapter two to what parents and teachers have to say about each form of involvement. Thus, filling-in-the-blanks to understand why certain forms of engagement

are/are not effective. Finally, I outline what parents and teachers have to say about summer learning.

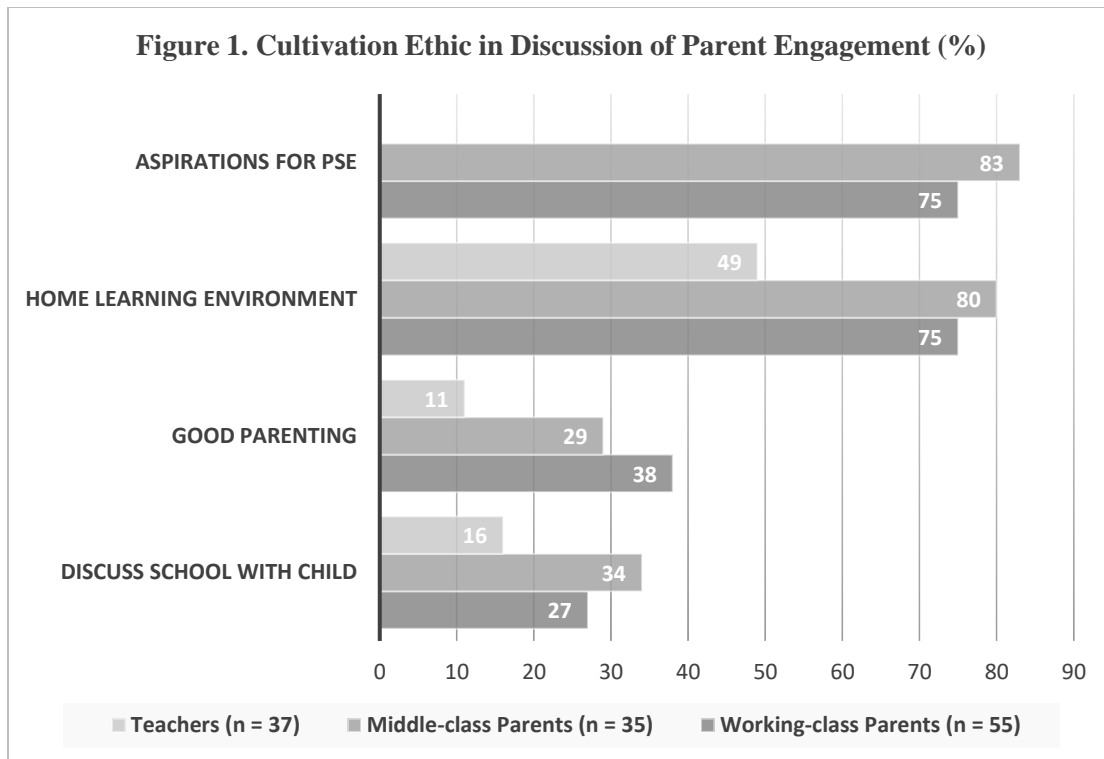
Overall, I see evidence of parents having a more home-centric definition of what it means to be “engaged” in children’s learning. Specifically, parents tend to discuss engagement within the cultivation ethic and the realist reaction. In examining these categories by social class, I find differences in how working- and middle-class parents perceive certain types of engagement such as homework help and reading. For example, seeing these activities as frustrating or enjoyable experiences. Mostly, it is clear working-class parents are dependent on schools to provide resources and advice to effectively help their children. Generally, teachers hold a school-centric view of parent engagement, discussing those forms of engagement located in the school building (e.g., volunteering) – those activities largely found with the expressive logic. Experienced teachers and those who work in low-SES contexts differ in how they view parent engagement. For them, policy on parent engagement provides opportunity to strengthen home-school relationships by using conventional (standard fare such as school assemblies) and sometimes unconventional (types of involvement not mentioned in policy) strategies.

Alignment with the Cultivation Ethic

The “cultivation ethic” is a philosophy of parenting that seeks to nurture a well-rounded child (e.g., cognitively, physically, and emotionally) as well as encouraging the child’s specific talents (see Lareau, 2011). This philosophy is often related to SES, with middle-class parents more likely to subscribe to this approach to parenting. The parent engagement actions related to the cultivation ethic found in Ontario’s policy include: having high aspirations for a child’s future

education; creating a supportive home learning environment (e.g., educational activities, providing resources); discussing school with child; and good parenting.

Figure 1 compares aspects of home engagement included in the cultivation ethic as discussed by working- and middle-class parents and teachers. Parents are more likely than teachers to talk about the various dimensions in the cultivation ethic as a part of what they consider parent engagement; with future aspirations and home learning environments discussed the most among parents. While parents are fairly equal in their mention of each of these forms of engagement, variations among social class groups are found in each of the four categories in this section. Most parents have high aspirations for their children, but working-class parents are more likely to connect these goals to children's academic performance, especially those parents who have not completed high school. In home learning environments, there are differences in working- and middle-class parents' views of the purpose of learning activities. Middle-class parents see these activities as instrumental in learning for the sake of learning versus working-class orientation toward learning with the purpose of reinforcing school lessons. Additionally, working-class parents are more likely to describe school staff providing ideas for activities to extend learning at home. Regarding good parenting and discussing school with children, both groups emphasize maintaining a positive attitude toward school, but they differ in *how* they discipline or discuss school with children.



Aspirations. The topic of parents’ aspirations did not come up in teachers’ discussions of parent engagement. Two teachers mentioned that educators should hold high expectations for students, but this was not in relation to parents. In contrast, most parents expressed the high educational aspirations they have for their children. Figure 1 reflects the percentage of parents who desire post-secondary education (PSE) for their children. The percentages of working- and middle-class parents wanting their children to pursue PSE after high school are comparable (75% and 83% respectively). However, examining these categories in the context of the interviews illuminates some differences. For some working-class parents, children’s current achievement is more likely to inform the educational goals they have for them. For example, Suzanne has taken one-year of college courses and works as a sales representative. She describes her aspirations for her son, who is two-levels behind where he should be for reading: “I would love for him to do college, but that, I’m going to leave that up to him. See where he’s at like academically-wise”. This

example suggests that aspirations may be shaped collectively by the cultivation ethic and a realist approach where parents adjust their expectations based on a child's current achievement (see chapter two). Also, within this group, most parents who had not completed high school stated that they want their children to obtain a high school diploma. For these parents, post-secondary education is seen as a bonus, but not necessarily a firm expectation.

Conversely, most middle-class parents expressed post-secondary schooling aspirations regardless of children's current achievement. To distinguish further, lower-middle-class tend to mention university or college as an option. Whereas, upper-middle-class only consider undergraduate or graduate university education as an option for their children. Finally, while it is more likely that middle-class parents discuss children's aspirations in connection with other things that they do with their child (e.g., enriched home learning environment, extracurricular activities), there are some working-class parents who also make these connections. I expand on this when I examine parents' and children's aspirations in more detail in chapter four.

Home Learning Environment. Parents and teachers emphasize the importance of school, maintaining a positive attitude about school, and extending school learning through everyday activities or fun games at home as aspects of parent engagement. Less than half of the teachers talk about the academic benefits for children when parents extend learning at home. Teachers discuss this form of involvement in terms of children being fortunate if their parents foster a strong home learning environment. That is, these teachers assert that this is not something that they see very often among the parents of their students. As Mia, an ECE in a Northern Ontario school who has two years experience and is currently pursuing a teaching degree notes, these are the “really great parents”:

And the really great parents, the ones who have fostered that relationship with you, even if it's to a very small degree, will hopefully do something to carry through at home. Like I had one child who was really, really interested in prisms and rainbows and the reflection of light. And they noticed, because we had a crystal hanging in the window, and I was telling her mother about that. And her mom went home the next day and she's like, "Oh, yeah. She talked about rainbows all night, so we started looking up rainbows and what makes a rainbow." That was the parent relationship everybody wants to have. So, some are very involved, and some are not involved at all. And they want to be very hands-off in the education aspect of it.

Only three teachers mentioned that they suggest activities that parents could do at home with their children to enhance learning. One teacher outlines the strategies his school uses to stimulate home learning opportunities. Carter, a teacher (eight years experience) at a low-SES school, says his school has tried sending home learning boxes and reading kits. These kits are successful when the children can use them without an adult's assistance. Additionally, he notes that providing students with their own passwords to access an online learning program was the strategy for at-home learning that received the greatest response.

Generally, teachers rarely mention home learning environments in discussing parent engagement. For the ones who do, it is either talked about as something that they seldom see happening or they describe home-based learning initiatives that their school has implemented or that they have recommended to parents.

All parents – by social class categories -- are almost equal in their discussion of incorporating a positive home learning environment. The activities parents use include learning games they make up or find on the Internet, buying workbooks, playing puzzles or board games, and pointing out everyday objects or experiences for “teachable moments” (e.g., having a child read the words on a sign, or reading a recipe while baking). These activities are discussed in terms of promoting children's learning at home; many of them are connected to school

curriculum. For instance, Nora (part-time childcare worker, some college) describes a hop-scotch game she created for her son to practice a word list provided by the teacher. Some parents say that they receive advice from a classroom teacher regarding activities they could use at home to reinforce classroom learning (beyond assigned homework). Working-class parents are more likely to describe the suggestions they receive from teachers and support staff (e.g., speech pathologists, family literacy centre, links on school websites). Middle-class parents found ideas online or received ideas from other parents. However, on the most part, parents from all groups appear to be generating these ideas on their own.

There are SES differences between working- and middle-class parents and their goals of orchestrating at-home activities. For working-class parents, the purpose of learning activities is related to building literacy or numeracy skills. Whereas, middle-class parents discuss learning with a broader perspective. This includes reinforcing what children are learning at school but also developing other areas where parents perceive the curriculum falling short (e.g., teaching cursive writing). Meanwhile, middle-class parents are more likely to describe an all-encompassing type of learning atmosphere in the home. Katrina, who has a Master of Arts degree, works full-time as an editor, and is a single mother of two children, outlines her approach to emphasizing the importance of education in the home:

The greatest – one of the greatest pleasures in my life has been my education, and I don't want my children to miss out on any of those pleasures, and I describe it as a pleasure. Definitely. I don't feel that the school is the most important factor in their education right now, but we live very much an intellectual kind of culture where everything that we do has additional contexts, and we talk about the meaning behind what we do and the meaning behind what we see.

Katrina's example demonstrates that it is a love of learning that she is trying to emphasize to her children and she sees learning as going beyond conventional school lessons.

Furthermore, while working-class parents are more apt to give in when children resist learning opportunities, middle-class parents describe trying different tactics to get children on board with learning (e.g., tracing letters in sand instead of writing words on paper). Working-class parents -- who express the desire to foster a learning environment that incorporates what is being taught at school -- want more guidance from the school about strategies they can use to target specific aspects of the curriculum. Marie (homeworker, high school diploma) -- a mother of three children, two of whom have experienced speech delays -- voices her need for more information:

I want to see the curriculum, I want to know what my child is learning, where they're learning it from, I want to be able to pull up the resources at home and say if they don't understand what they're learning or shapes and sizes I want to know how you're teaching my child to do long division. Growing up as we did they teach it totally different now than we were learning it. It's kind of like, you kind of feel stupid when you're trying to teach your child because you have no idea the process that they're teaching them or the tools that they're using to teach your children. I want to know the tools that you're using to teach my children, I also want to know the tools that you're not using to teach my children, so I can teach those tools as well. I want to be able to pull out all those resources. I want to be able to sit down and help my children. I want to be able to make sure that they have every opportunity that they can get. I want to make sure that I know stuff on their curriculum that they're not getting, that they haven't covered, or they're sort of covering it, if they're expanding in one thing and they're not in the other thing. I want to know how you're going to do that, so I can implement and help them at home to do it as well, throughout the summer, over break, all those things.

While Marie is asking for more information regarding the curriculum, other working-class parents want activities that they can do at home to target a child's low-reading performance or other areas that need development. In terms of getting extra support, middle-class families often mention meeting with school staff to procure ideas to address a specific academic concern or have other sources from which to get advice or help (e.g., friends who are teachers).

Good Parenting. The concept of “good parenting” was rarely mentioned by either parents or teachers. It is possible that both forms of involvement are not brought up by participants because they are just assumed to be a usual part of what parents do. Parents try to ensure regular attendance and good behavior at school.

Overall, both groups are equal in their discussion of establishing routines in the home and emphasizing school attendance and punctuality. There is no difference in the way parents discuss these facets of good parenting. However, social class groups differ in *how* parents approach matters of discipline and the aspects of good parenting that they focus on in their interviews. Working-class parents are more than twice as likely to mention that they have rules about screen time. Also, they are the only group of parents that comment on making sure children eat healthy, exercise and sleep well; although, only seven parents mention these items. In terms of school behavior, working-class parents often detailed the punishment or reward system they enforce for good or bad behavior at school. They emphasize respect and deference to school authorities. As one parent notes: “I told him not to talk in class and be very respectful.” Conversely, middle-class parents were more likely to describe conversations with children that centered on strategies to handle certain situations. For example, Naomi (Master of Science degree, biologist) talks about the strategies she and her husband (Bachelor of Arts degree, Geographic Information Systems specialist) use in helping their adopted son cope with anger and his aggressive behavior with other children at school:

We talk a lot to him about using his words, we talk a lot to him about listening and when he doesn't listen to us we try to show him what it's like when we don't listen to him. I do find that if we talk him through it a lot, then that seems to help a little bit. You have to wait until he's calmed down a little bit, but then if you talk it through and show it to him, then that seems to help. We do role playing with him. We've taken some parenting courses...I've taken Magic 1-2-3 course. I've taken a course with Pathstones on dealing

with kids with behavioral issues. We're trying to get as much information and educate ourselves and then take that information and use it to try to help [him] as well.

Like working-class parents, middle-class parents use reward systems (e.g., trip to the bookstore for having a good week at school), but they also have conversations with children about their behavior. That is, instead of enforcing a punishment for misbehavior (e.g., no video games), they would talk to the child about ways that the situation could be handled in the future.

The concept of good parenting is referenced by four teachers and the discussions revolve around the challenges of working with children from lower-SES families:

I think they face challenges with poverty, with low income in the household just in general. And then, all of the negative things that come with that, whether it's being properly clothed, with proper accommodations where they're living, with parents who are struggling to find work or to hold down several jobs. And, for me, where this isn't sort of the regular type of setting that I would work in—I work in a very different part of the district usually—so I think I look at it through a different lens. These kids compared to other kids that I interact with, seem tired to me. And I don't know really what goes on and part of me doesn't really want to know sometimes, but they appear just tired. And I would never suggest they're not loved, but just unkempt, that somebody isn't just sort of polishing them up or teaching them those sorts of life skills (Rhonda, Southwestern Ontario school board representative, 16 years experience).

There is some discussion of social class among teachers in terms of good versus bad parenting. In their view, poor parents, more so than working class parents, are likely to exhibit lower interest in children's schooling. However, more experienced teachers who have worked in low-SES settings are more likely to highlight the fact that schools must address these basic needs first before having high expectations of parent engagement. One principal in a low-SES school asked parents what they would like to learn about in parent information sessions. She found that since many families were concerned about neighborhood safety and apartment fires (there had been three fires in their community that year), she had firefighters come in to talk about fire safety and

a police officer to describe how to organize a neighborhood watch program. Additionally, she arranged to have some high school courses offered in the evenings at her school because some parents had expressed the desire to complete their secondary school diploma but did not have transportation to get to the other side of the city where they were originally offered. These parents were embarrassed to take these classes with high school students, so having the courses offered at the local elementary school solved this problem as well.

Discussing School. Discussing school was seldom mentioned by either parents or teachers. It is possible that participants just assume that talking about the school day is an obvious topic of conversation between parents and children. Although there are slightly more middle-class parents (34%) than working-class parents (27%) including this aspect of engagement in their interviews, there is little difference between parents on the themes of discussions with children (e.g., what the child learned, behavior at school, checking on homework, and reflecting on a child's feelings about certain events that occurred that day).

Again, referring to the findings on “good parenting” discussed above, the difference essentially lies in *how* parents have these discussions with children. Many parents – both working- and middle-class – describe having trouble eliciting information from their children at the end of the day, receiving the customary answer of “nothing” when they ask: “What did you do today?” Parents mention that it is helpful when teachers tell them what the class is learning about either in person or through a website or newsletter so that they can ask their children about a specific topic or activity. Amanda (BA degree, editor) states that she would like to receive more information from the teacher about what her son is learning about each day and she shares a strategy she learned about to obtain more detail from children about the school day: “I heard

the best way to deal that is [to ask] ‘What was your favorite thing to do today?’ That sort of helps to get them to say, instead of just having it so broad brush, it forces them to focus in and tell you a specific thing as opposed to just like, meh, nothing”.

Only six teachers mention “discuss school” in their definition of parent engagement. Knowing the importance of parents talking to children about their school day, Alexa -- an ECE instructor with six-months experience -- shares her strategy of purposely listing one thing that a child learned that day in front of a parent at pick-up to spark a conversation as they head home. However, the other five teachers do not state that they attempt to incite discussions about school between parents and children.

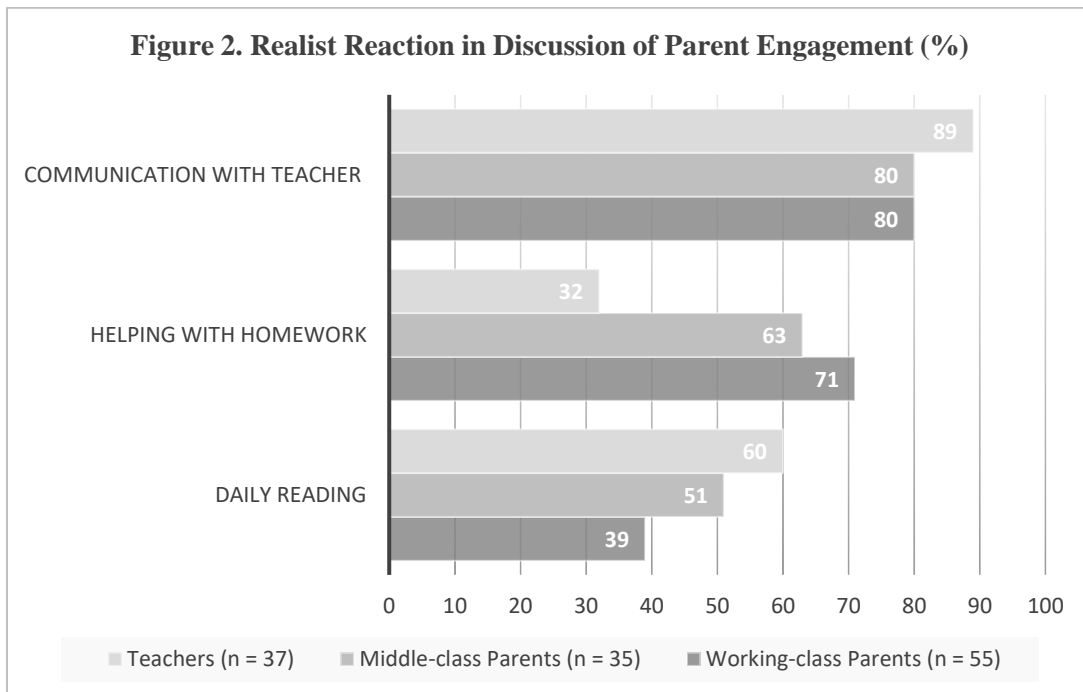
Overall, for the cultivation mechanism, parents are more likely than teachers to align with this ethic of parenting and discuss it as an important aspect of parent engagement. While this logic of parenting is often attributed to the middle-class, the qualitative differences between the two social class groups are evident in middle-class parents’ discipline based on reasoning and explanation and home atmospheres centering on “learning” rather than “schooling”. For both good parenting and discussing school, the parents – regardless of social class -- who include these forms of involvement in their definition of parent engagement connect them to emphasizing the importance of schooling and promoting a positive outlook on education. Finally, while many parents have PSE goals for their children, middle-class parents are more likely to maintain these goals despite school performance; with some exceptions, as will be discussed in chapter four. And, parents with university degrees describe undergraduate or graduate university education as the only choice.

Alignment with the Realist Reaction

The realist reaction refers to parents' reacting to their child's academic accomplishments with the aim to boost achievement (e.g., Epstein, 1988). For example, if a child struggles with reading, parents might respond by reading for longer periods of time with the child, spend more time on homework such as reading comprehension, or meet with the teacher more often to monitor progress. These parent engagement actions – related to all levels of SES – often have a negative relationship with achievement or receive mixed results, except for daily reading which often has a positive relationship with literacy achievement (e.g., Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Figure 2 compares aspects of parent engagement included in the realist reaction mechanism as discussed by working- and middle-class parents and teachers.

Teachers and parents agree that communication is an important component of engagement. Both groups tend to describe open and on-going communication as the ideal relationship between parents and teachers. However, for parents, the “on-going” aspect of communication depends on social class. Middle-class parents desire more communication from teachers regardless of whether they have concerns about their child's progress. Whereas, working-class parents only see the need for formal communication with teachers if there is a problem to address. Most teachers use the standard forms of communication with parents – face-to-face, school agendas, newsletters – with most messages relayed through the students' agendas. Phone calls are often reserved for negative news about a child's poor behavior or academic performance. Experienced teachers and those who work in low-SES communities during the school year are more likely to talk about the need to casually interact with parents to establish trust and comfort with school staff.

As shown in figure 2, teachers are more likely to talk about daily reading as an important component of parent engagement and parents tend to focus on homework. Homework and daily reading are sometimes regarded as frustrating activities by working-class parents who have struggling readers. Those who feel successful in the process often receive extra support from teachers.



Communication with Teachers. Broadly, in the policy, communication with teachers is viewed as an important social and cultural capital building component of parent engagement. Formal and informal communication with teachers provides parents information on the academic expectations of the teacher and how to effectively support learning at home. Additionally, positive communication with school staff is seen to enhance parents’ understanding of children’s academic and social needs and develop parents’ knowledge of how schools work.

Parents and teachers align in their views of the importance of communication with teachers as a crucial part of improving students’ achievement. Although the parents interviewed

feel that communication at progress report time is important, most felt that it was the more informal conversations that they had with teachers on the playground – when dropping off or picking up children – that were beneficial in building rapport and checking up on children’s behaviour and academic progress. Teachers also describe drop-off and pick-up times as one of the easier ways to chat with parents about the events of the school day or inform parents that their child has homework. While it is difficult to determine the qualitative nature of these brief exchanges, it could be that these informal discussions help parents and teachers feel more comfortable with each other and facilitate insightful conversations at other times.

Beyond playground conversations, most communication happens through students’ agenda books, that students bring back and forth to school in their backpacks. Parents, who are not able to bring their children to school themselves, find the agenda a useful way to keep abreast of what is happening at school. Most parents describe positive on-going communication with teachers and working-class parents express how grateful they are when teachers give them advice about strategies to use with struggling learners. Middle-class parents describe mutual communication with teachers as well, but they were more likely to express disappointment in those exchanges, wanting more information from teachers. These parents feel that formal meetings set up with teachers (usually at report card time) are rushed and often not very helpful. This is frustrating for parents who desire to get advice from teachers, even for those who feel that their child is doing well academically but may want suggestions for enrichment activities or seek to know more about their child’s social development. For example, Lisa, who has a BA degree and works as a team leader in a group home for adults with developmental disabilities, does not have any academic concerns about her daughter’s progress but describes her reticence in approaching the teacher to find out if she *should* be concerned about anything:

Penny's teacher has a communication book, so if I had a question or concern I can write her a note and she would write back and that was our way of communicating. I kind of wish there was more, when it comes to evaluation, where you can actually sit down and have a chat with the teacher. I wish there was more formal meeting time... Like there was only one time where we sat down for 10 minutes and even when my daughter was doing well, I still would have liked to chat more. I would have liked to know what she was doing, if she is having any challenges that I don't know about, so I can help her. But no, I just feel, that's just my personality though, I don't want to bother her. I didn't want to just walk in and talk to a teacher.

Like Lisa, other middle-class parents desire more information from teachers even when they do not have any specific concerns on their child's development and education. Although they do have informal conversations with teachers on the playground, working-class parents tend to view formal communication with the teacher as something that happens at report card time and when there is a problem that needs to be addressed. As Matthew, an unemployed single father with a grade ten education, states: "For parent-teacher interviews or open house, I come to all of those. A lot of the times throughout the school year, I really don't have anything that I approach the teachers with because I figure if there's no complaints coming from my daughter, there's no complaints coming from the school, then there's no problems". Concerning the realist reaction, parents with children who either have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)²⁹, receive extra reading support (e.g., with an out-of-class program with a group of children or one-on-one with a reading support specialist), or have behavioral issues, regular meetings are usually organized by the school. The parents of these children describe the concrete strategies they receive in their regular meetings with teachers, administrators, and school support staff (e.g., speech therapist, social worker).

²⁹ In Ontario schools, the IEP is developed for students who have been identified as exceptional. This includes children diagnosed with learning disabilities, behavioral issues, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, or giftedness. The IEP outlines the student's specific learning individualities and the school's plan for modifying or accommodating the student's unique learning needs.

Teachers' strategies to communicate with parents include: email, conversations at drop-off or pick-up time, formal meetings about progress reports, homework journals, and newsletters. Two teachers note that their principal has an "in-house policy" where there is a monthly expectation that teachers discuss a child's academic growth with parents either face-to-face or by phone. Newer teachers and teachers who work in more affluent communities tend to use the communication methods already mentioned, but teachers with more experience and those who work in lower-SES schools describe the need to build relationship with parents. They say they "hang out" with parents (e.g., playground conversations that do not necessarily have to do with their child's education) and avoid using "report card jargon" so they are regarded as accessible. Evelyn, who is the mathematics facilitator for the school board, shares that her 13 years of experience as a teacher, previous work as an ECE, and her childhood growing up in a working-class community informs her approach to communicating with parents:

I am an east end girl. So, I know the defense mechanism is "put your back up." They're survivors. They struggle. They fight. They're fighters for survival in this kind of community and this kind of neighborhood. So, when you approach somebody defensively and say, "So, your child is academically struggling." There may be a defense mechanism for parents to kind of put their back up and say, "What are you talking about?" Where that relationship is not built yet, so I can't really go and speak to you about the faults of your child or the issues that your child may have based on their academic learning because we don't have that relationship yet. Once we have the relationship and you understand who I am, you know that I'm not judging you. You know that I'm not here to say, just to label your child, but I'm here to help.

Relatedly, Evelyn describes her strategy of having a coffee house in the classroom for parents to come and socialize with each other and see what their children are learning at school. While open houses and "meet the teacher" nights are standard fare in schools, teachers like Evelyn see the primary objective of these type of events to make parents feel comfortable and establish a relationship of trust.

Homework Help. Among parents and teachers, there are mixed reviews when it comes to the effectiveness of homework help. Even though many parents mention supervising homework or helping with homework, some parents portray it as an enjoyable experience (e.g., looking for information on the Internet together), others describe the difficulties of getting children to do homework, not understanding some of the work themselves, and other obstacles to homework time (e.g., shift work, having younger children who require the bulk of parents' attention).

Among parents with the highest levels of education or income, there is little mention of difficulty with homework. This could be because these children may complete their work at school, do not need as much help with their homework, have other resources to aid them in homework completion (e.g., tutoring), or that parents simply did not mention it. Additionally, middle-class parents rarely mention resistance from their children regarding homework. Only three middle-class mothers describe difficulties in getting their children to complete homework because of learning or developmental setbacks. Consequently, each of these mothers met with their child's teacher to have the homework reduced to one or two important things they could focus on at home.

Some working-class parents are frustrated with homework because they do not know how to help their children and/or have children who struggle academically. Moreover, several parents describe homework time as a fight that often ends in the child getting privileges taken away (e.g., video game time). Sometimes the parent gives up because they want to avoid conflict over homework. Working-class parents who say they have been successful with homework help, often attribute this accomplishment to the extra support provided by the child's teacher. This is

illustrated by Joanne (some college, homemaker) who became a step-mother to two children at the age of 22:

I don't know how to get a kid to do their homework. I was the kid four years ago not doing their homework, so they [teachers] made it really easy for me, to help me guide them to do their homework because I never did my homework when I was in school. So, I understood what the kids were going through and was like, "How do I help them?" So, they were really good with that. She would give me the papers that she gave out to the kids to explain and she would give it to me so that I could explain it to Alyson at home when she needed help with something, so they were really helpful with helping them get their homework done . . . By the end of the school year Alyson realized she couldn't get away with not doing homework anymore because [the teacher] was just going to call me.

Generally, working-class parents feel efficacious in their ability to help their children when they receive guidance and support from the school and establish consistent expectations or routines in relation to homework (e.g., no screen time until homework is done).

Several teachers talk about homework in terms of social class with middle-class families being more involved and "on top of things" than working-class families. But, along with this is an understanding that working-class families may not feel able to help with homework. One of the schools that hosts the SLP offers after-school programming during the year that concentrates on building literacy and numeracy skills. As a part of the program, parents are required to attend information sessions to learn strategies to help their children at home. After these sessions, parents, children and instructors then eat a meal together to build community.

Daily Reading. Teachers assert that reading with children every day is important for literacy achievement. Almost 38% of working-class and 51% of middle-class parents said that they read to their child every day or their child is required to read to them or on their own every day. Other parents state that they read often (2-3 times per week) with their children (42% working-class

and 31% middle-class) and the remainder do not mention reading at all in the interview. For some parents, not reading daily is due to work schedules, younger children, or they do not want to fight with children who resist reading. Working-class parents of struggling readers portray reading with children as an exasperating experience. Conversely, middle-class parents' descriptions of reading at home are that it is an enjoyable time. Some parents share that they have been reading to their children since infancy and others played phonics games with their preschool aged children.

Regarding the realist reaction mechanism, the interviews with parents of struggling readers present mixed results. Some respond to children's reading difficulties – and sometimes their resistance to reading – with less reading at home; often giving up when a child refuses to read. This reaction is more often found among working-class parents. They either do not want the conflict in the home or they fear that children will end up hating reading even more. Other parents persist and respond by finding reading materials that will interest their children (e.g., comic books, comedy novels, and sports cards); particularly boys who tend to lag in reading more so than girls. Furthermore, the parents of struggling readers who feel they have made strides in reading with their children have received specific strategies from teachers and/or reading support staff (e.g., reading resource teacher, speech pathologists). In my interview with Lorraine (office administration certificate, stay at home mother of two children), she describes advice she received from her daughter's speech pathologist:

Yeah, the speech path said that she reads to her son still and he's nine and she reads more advanced books. So, I did that. We started doing that at home. We've been reading a more advanced book. We have pretty much been doing it, because I love reading. We've pretty much been doing that since she was born anyway. Just different things to do with them, like read with them. Because lately she's been wanting to read by herself so now I

know that I should still be reading with her sometimes. We've been doing that. That's my favorite thing.

The summer learning program also provided parents with strategies to help their children's literacy growth. At one of the camps, there was an introduction session for parents and children to attend on the first day. In this session, a video of a teacher using guided reading³⁰ strategies with her child was shown to the attendees. Several parents mentioned this video in their interviews and how beneficial it was to watch simple strategies that they could mimic at home. Ultimately, the parents who feel that they have been given ideas from the school are more confident in regularly reading with children at home.

Teachers encourage daily reading by sending home "book bags" (bags containing books at the appropriate reading level) and assign reading for homework. Children must bring the bags back the next day with a signature from their parent stating that they read the book together. This is a standard approach to inspiring home reading. Teachers with more teaching experience and those who work in lower-SES schools mentioned the importance of not assuming that parents will automatically know how to read with their children:

It's frustrating as a teacher, I'm not going to lie, to teach a child how to read. It's hard. So, I'm sure it's frustrating as a parent, especially if you don't have those skills. I've read up on this. I know how to teach a kid how to read. I know the process. I have all the tools around me to teach this child how to read. I have developmentally ready books for them. Here you are as a parent. You're going to the library. You don't know what you're picking. You have no idea how to choose the resources you need and you're trying to teach your kid how to read. Yeah, right. Good luck on that. What are we missing? We're missing that modeling piece. Let's do the whole gradual release of responsibility with our parents. Why are we just doing it with our students? It works with students. It works with adults. We teach them how to teach their kids (Evelyn, 13 years as a teacher and now works at the school board).

³⁰ Generally, guided reading consists of children reading a text with support from an experienced reader who guides the child through problem-solving strategies to read unfamiliar words (e.g., trying to sound the word out, determining the unknown word in the context of the story).

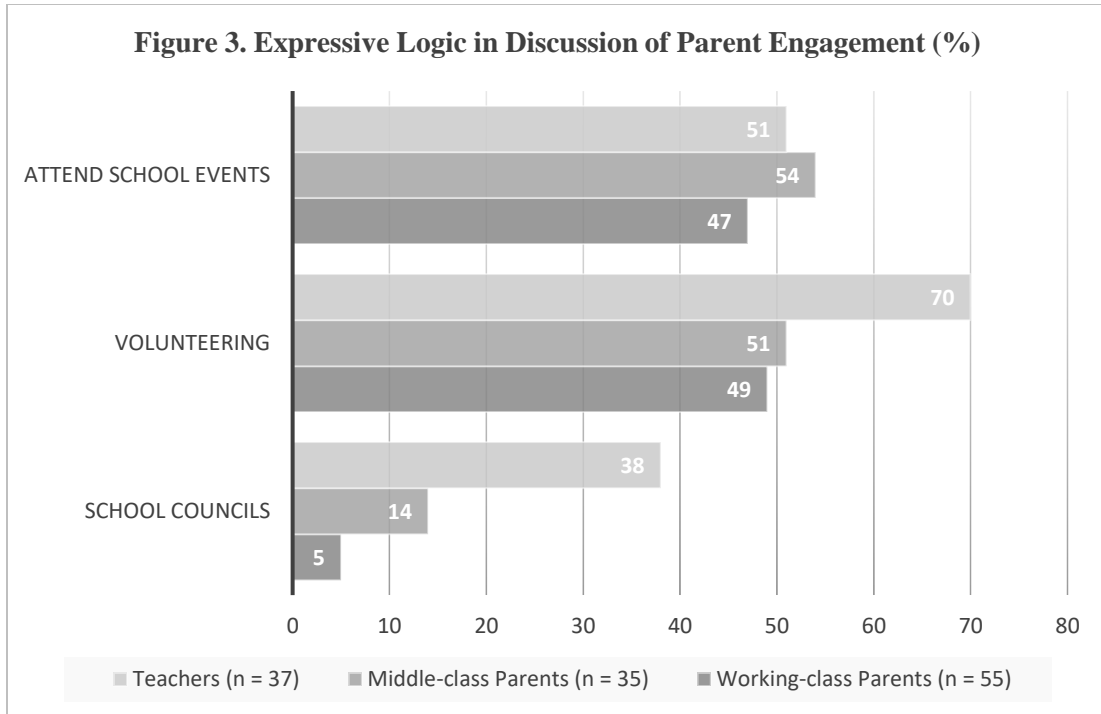
Modeling reading strategies for parents to use at home is suggested to help parents feel efficacious in working with emergent readers at home. Also, teachers describe school events where they have parents come in the classroom for “snuggle up and read” days or reading workshops where guided reading is demonstrated.

In summary, the parents and teachers align with policy stating that parent-teacher communication is an important aspect of engagement. However, middle-class parents often feel that formal teacher meetings are rushed and do not always provide the information they need. Homework and daily reading are sometimes viewed in a negative light by working-class parents who have struggling readers and feel frustrated with the process. Those who feel effective in working with their children at home often attribute this success to the advice they received from teachers.

Alignment with the Expressive Logic

The expressive logic relates to the activities that parents become involved in because it is something they enjoy or want to do. The actions in the Ontario policy that relate to this logic are becoming involved in school council, volunteering in the school, or attending a school event. This mechanism is not directly related to academic achievement, but rather out of parents’ availability or interest in becoming involved. Overall, middle-class parents are usually more involved in these categories due to their flexible work schedules or relative comfort with schools and teachers. Figure 3 compares aspects of parent engagement related to the expressive logic as discussed by working- and middle-class parents and teachers. Teachers are more likely to include these school-based forms of involvement in their definition of parent engagement. By social

class categories, parents are almost equal in their attendance of school events and volunteering efforts at the school. School council, however, is largely represented by middle-class parents.



Attend School Events. Just over half of the middle-class parents and teachers discuss attending school events as a part of their definition of parent engagement. And, just under half of the working-class parents declare that they attend events. Notably, this could be a category where parents just assume this is an unspoken aspect of parent engagement. Teachers who mention this category understand that parents’ work schedules are not always accommodating for time off to attend school events. However, they also view school events as a possible way to get parents who are uncomfortable in school settings to come into the school and meet the staff. Claire, a principal of a low-SES school, notes the food offered at school open houses and other events is one way to draw parents in. She says this level of engagement with parents is “the lowest level of parental engagement because it’s just coming in, meeting and greeting, parents are having fun, but they are not actually engaged in their children’s progress”. However, because they are trying

to engage parents who may have a negative experience with schools or who may be embarrassed about their own educational achievements, it is necessary to have these “meet-and-greets” to foster positive relationships with families. As Claire elaborates: “So, that breaking bread together with the parents, being involved with them, helping them with whatever path they choose to support their children has been critical to break down that barrier of mistrust. And having the parents more willing during the school year to come in and talk with us”.

Volunteering. Many teachers discuss volunteering in the classroom in their definitions of parent engagement. This is beneficial for teachers to obtain extra help, but they also see it as helpful for parents to see how their child is doing in the classroom in relation to academics and behavior. Parents who volunteer may have more opportunities to build rapport with the teacher and gain extra insight into their child’s progress as is noted by Katrina (MA degree, writer/editor). She explains that she cannot volunteer due to her work schedule and she feels that she is missing out on the information she might receive about her child if she were volunteering on a regular basis. As she notes:

You have to go to Track and Field Day, you have to go to the Fun Fair, you have to volunteer in the classroom when they ask. I work from home and I have meetings outside, but I’ve realized I really don’t have the flexibility to volunteer all of the time.....And I’m going to have to become sort of more normal in that maybe I volunteer once a term, but I found so far that the parents who are going to get feedback are the parents who do that kind of thing all the time, and I’m not a stay-at-home mom.

This implies that parents who volunteer gain more information about their child’s progress. Parents who volunteer frequently have a sense of ease and comfort in approaching and talking to teachers. Justine, who went to college for two years, is a homemaker and has primary custody of her three children. She describes her volunteer work with the school’s snack program. Because

her son, Gabe, has learning disabilities and behavioral problems she states in our 2012 interview that she often visits his classroom to check up on him: “I make it a point to come to the school and make sure that they know who I am, who Gabe is, what you’re getting yourself into”. In our second interview with Justine at the beginning of August 2013, she declares that she already asked who Gabe’s teacher would be in the fall and she is going to make an appointment in the last week of summer, so Gabe can meet his teacher and have a tour of his new classroom.

School Councils. Twelve parents mention parent councils in their definition of parent engagement; eight of them said that they serve on parent council. Three working-class and five middle-class parents participate in this form of involvement, but notably none of the working-class council members are from the lowest education (high school or less) or income (less than \$29,999) groups. Rather, they have some college and are in the next household income level. Further, 14 teachers discuss school councils as an important aspect of parent engagement, but the teachers who normally teach at more affluent schools were more likely to say that they had regular help from parents on councils and committees. One principal at a rural Northern Ontario school said that they do not focus on forming a parent committee because of the low turnout. Instead, they find other ways to get parents engaged that are conducive to families that do not live near the school. In contrast, a teacher from a school situated in an affluent community in Southwestern Ontario said her school needed to form two parent committees to accommodate all the parents who wanted to be involved.

Overall, there is not a large difference between social class and the parents who participate in these three types of involvement. Parents who said that they do not participate in these activities cited various reasons: work schedule, time, younger children, feeling

uncomfortable around other people's children or other parents, and not being asked to help.

Parents do not perceive these activities as a mechanism to directly boost children's achievement but rather to show children the importance of education. Similarly, teachers see these actions as sending a positive message about school to children. They discuss volunteering and attending events as beneficial for parents to understand what is happening in the classroom. This way they can see how their children act in the classroom especially for children who have behavioral issues or learning difficulties. Additionally, they can use the strategies they see teachers employing to help children at home.

Summer Learning and Parent Engagement

Continuing the various forms of parent engagement during summer break is not mentioned in Ontario's policy. However, summer learning does surface in a handful of parent and teacher interviews (14 middle-class (40%) and 23 working-class (42%) parents. Specifically, the importance of keeping children reading and learning during the summer through various activities is discussed by almost half of parents and this is evenly distributed between social class groups. This could be the influence of the summer literacy camps. For example, Jordyn (technical college, was a security guard but is currently unemployed) -- who volunteers as a lunch monitor at the school and describes her constant contact with teachers -- describes the benefits of the SLP in helping her children continue learning during summer:

By the end of the year she had definitely progressed, but she still wasn't quite up to snuff. This last year she was in grade two. She went in just a little bit behind her grade level. Now she comes out she's reading everything; all her math is everything is on par, you know. So, I can't praise the teacher enough. She had [SLP] last year, and normally I am a firm believer in the kids doing some kind of learning over the summer. Whether it's, okay, getting them new books, making sure they've got work books to work on, because I do believe that they need things over the summer . . . I honestly believe that if they don't do anything during the summer, they're going to kind of lose a little bit of what they

learned. They're going to regress a little bit. They're not going to remember what sounds certain vowels make or silly things like that we use every day. It's second nature to us right. That's why I like to keep their brains active during the summer.

The other parents are grateful for the SLP because it gets their children back into a school routine (e.g., waking up and getting ready for school each day) and it is a free camp to occupy children's summer days with instead of being "bored" at home. There were many parents who stated that if their children were not enrolled in the literacy camp they would not choose to read during the summer break. Certainly, teachers emphasize the importance of summer learning. Beyond the literacy boost, they note the added benefits of the SLP in drawing parents into the school in a more informal school setting. Renae, a speech pathologist who works at several schools within her school board, refers to the SLP as an "educational utopia" where there is less pressure on parents and children because there is no evaluation, just learning.

Discussion

School policies on parent engagement seek to boost student achievement by strengthening home-school relationships through various forms of school and home involvement. Societal and institutional expectations of what constitutes "good" parent engagement are promoted in such policies. Additionally, these documents uphold more intensive logics of parenting that are increasingly becoming the norm (Hays, 1996). This includes a "concerted cultivation" style of family life that assumes strong ties between home and school (Lareau, 2000, 2011) and a strong focus on fostering cognitive development (Quirke, 2006). This study adds to the literature by providing a comparison of qualitative interviews in relation to parent engagement policy. The goal is to examine parents' and teachers' alignment with policy and compare their ideas of what parent engagement entails.

Using categories of parent engagement listed in Ontario's (2010) parent engagement policy, I examined participants' alignment within the three mechanisms of parent engagement presented in chapter two: cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic. Overall, parents are more likely to discuss their engagement within categories in the cultivation ethic and realist reaction. Since the actions included in these mechanisms are mostly in the home environment, it is not surprising that these categories are emphasized by parents. Conversely, teachers are school-centric in their discussions of parent engagement. They place more emphasis on school-based activities associated with the expressive logic (e.g., volunteering). Both groups discuss the importance of communicating with each other but parents' feelings about the value of parent-teacher meetings are mixed. Of importance to literacy achievement, daily reading with children is an area that did not receive a lot of attention in the interviews. To clarify, the importance of reading was discussed in almost every interview but parents who read with children daily were atypical. Further, there are nuances in the perceptions that parents from different social class backgrounds have about certain types of engagement such as homework help and reading with children. Many working-class parents discuss concerns regarding their children's struggles with reading. For the parents who feel that they have not been given the proper guidance in how to help their children, assisting their children with reading or homework is often frustrating. In view of these findings, I propose three considerations for school policy and programming.

School-centric Versus Home-centric Forms of Engagement

I find that parents tend to emphasize home-centric forms of involvement as opposed to teachers' emphasis on school-centric activities. While teachers acknowledge that school barbecues and open houses do not directly enhance learning, they view these events as a vehicle to get parents

in the school and perhaps feel more comfortable with school staff. However, parents focus on home-based activities particularly with children who are struggling academically. My recommendation in this section is to make concrete examples and tools readily accessible and available to families rather than waiting for them to attend a school event and ask for assistance.

Similar to other studies, I find teachers often make sense of policy based on their own backgrounds and teaching experience (e.g., Coburn, 2004; Everett, 2012; Hillier, 2014). Teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience have definitions of parent engagement which follow the policy closely. One reason for this is that they may not have a full-time position yet and do not have their own classroom, and others have not been teaching long enough to develop different approaches. Teachers with more experience have been developing ideas of what they think parent engagement should include. They add to these definitions as they have built various strategies or “arsenals of practice” over their years of teaching (Everett, 2012). In addition to years of experience, teachers make sense of parent engagement based on their school communities. Teachers from schools in more affluent areas are inclined to define parent engagement within the policy categories because that is the type of engagement they see at their schools. Middle-class families are more likely to align with institutional expectations of parent involvement (e.g., Lareau, 2000). Teachers from schools in disadvantaged areas express their difficulty in getting parents involved, and these teachers often use different approaches. One school hosted a “coffee house” where parents could come in and socialize and after a few weeks – allowing parents time to create connections – the principal asked them if they would assist with the school’s snack program. This strategy differs from schools in affluent communities which generally send requests for volunteers via email or the school newsletter.

Interviews with principals highlight the notion that school location determines approach to parent engagement. For example, Dawn, a principal of a rural Northern Ontario school talks about how her perception of parent engagement has evolved while working in a school that has mostly bussed in children and those who come from Indigenous families living on reserves: “But parent engagement to me is no longer necessarily having parents in the building; it's having parents be aware and engaged. Even to me parent engagement is a parent reading a newsletter and doing that kind of thing. Parent engagement to me is open-ended that anything that a parent does that shows support for their child and their learning”. Dawn highlights that parent engagement does not mean that a parent must be present in the school building to engage in their child’s education. Further, Dawn’s comment is counter to the dominant emphasis on school-based involvement in the interviews.

The emphasis on school-centric forms of involvement tends to overlook how families engage at home or the various ways that schools can support home learning environments with resources and information (Auerbach, 2007; Lareau, 2000; Lawson, 2003; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2016). School councils provide a perfect example here. Compared to other forms of involvement, the Ontario (2010) parent engagement policy mentioned school councils and committees the most (see Table 3)³¹. In my sample, there are no parents in the lowest-income and education category involved in parent councils. Undoubtedly, parent councils can do a lot of good for schools, particularly in fundraising when school budgets are reduced. Yet, it remains a form of parent engagement that is overrepresented by advantaged families (e.g., Cucchiara &

³¹ This is possibly due to the push in Ontario to increase parents’ involvement in schools through the Parents Reaching Out Grants. In this program, groups of parents can apply for government funding to start Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) with the aim of addressing specific barriers to parent engagement (see Hamlin & Flessa, 2016). While the benefit of PICs is that they can be tailored to meet the needs of the community that they are in, the downside is that they are likely to attract the same parents who already served on parent councils.

Horvat, 2009) and is promoted by schools and policy. In this study, teachers in low-SES schools focus less on parent council and try to engage parents in other ways.

For home-based involvement, the parents in this study do “react” to their children’s academic struggles by spending more time on homework or reading with the children. Also, they often attend regular meetings with school staff which are usually school-initiated. In line with cultural capital research indicating that poor and working-class parents often lack the tools to effectively help their children at home (e.g., Lareau & Shumar, 1996), working-class parents (especially those with struggling readers) desired more information from their formal meetings with teachers. Milkie and Warner (2014) argue that parents feel they must protect and enhance children’s social class status through any means by “safeguarding” children’s academic, talent, and emotional well-being. Potentially the “realist reaction”, in my findings, becomes one in which middle-class parents have the resources to proactively help children with difficulties through tutors and other supports (e.g., paying for testing to detect a learning disability) whereas working-class parents often wait for the school to detect these problems and wait longer to receive support.

The parents in this study expressed a need for concrete examples and specific strategies to effectively help their children at home. Since the parents in this study are drawn from a summer learning program, many of the children that attend these programs are underperforming in reading. As such, many interviews revolved around parents’ exasperations with helping their children improve their literacy skills. Parents who felt that they were making progress in helping their children stated that they received help from schools in various ways. The teacher or support staff (e.g., reading resource teacher) may have taken an initiative to provide strategies for at-home work, the child was assigned an IEP and parents have regular meetings with the teacher

and other school staff to support the child's progress, or parents attended a session at the summer camp that provided suggestions to help children. Comments from parents and teachers in this study indicate that the parents who receive the most help and feedback are the ones who are always in the school volunteering or picking up their children every day. Previous research indicates that lower-SES parents (e.g., Lareau, 2000) and children (e.g., Calarco, 2018) rarely initiate help-seeking on their own but rather wait for schools to recognize the problem (see also Etmanski & Aurini, 2018). Since it is likely that parents, especially low-SES parents, will not seek out information on their own, school staff could take the initiative to provide accessible tools and information for parents to easily use at home.

The Ontario (2010) parent engagement policy does not mention classroom observation as a form of parent involvement, but a handful of parents and teachers talked about the opportunity to have parents observe in the classroom, which proved to be a fruitful event. Carrie, a kindergarten teacher, talks about how she found this strategy to be very helpful in providing parents with an opportunity to see strategies used in the classroom. She also found that she had more parents volunteering to help with class events by using this open-door approach. Parents who had the opportunity to observe in the classroom said that it provided them with concrete literacy activities they could do at home with their child. Notably, not all parents are able to come into the school during the day because of work or lack of child care for young children. However, there are other ways that parents could observe literacy activities in action such as the video that one of the SLP locations showed on the first day of camp. Rather than making this video (or other educational tools) a resource that is only available at schools, it could be posted online for parents to access at home or provided in an illustrated handout to send home with students.

The Possibility of Institutional Discretionary Spaces

I find that teachers in low-SES schools sometimes use creative methods to help families. In this section, my recommendation is for administrative staff and school boards to provide teachers in disadvantaged communities – especially newer teachers -- with the information for school and community resources to offer families assistance. Additionally, as the discussion below will highlight, school principals in particular can use discretionary spaces in parent engagement policy to engage families in unconventional ways.

“Discretionary spaces” is a term that refers to intentional or unintentional opportunities in educational policies where parents can influence school procedures (Davies, 2013; see also Davies & Aurini, 2015; Milne & Aurini, 2015). Accordingly, discretionary spaces allow parents the opportunity to use their capital (economic, social and cultural) to provide advantages for their children. Examining Ontario secondary schools’ implementation of progressive discipline, Milne and Aurini (2015) find that higher-SES parents are more likely to participate in disciplinary processes and enact their capital to ensure more advantageous outcomes for their child (e.g., shorter suspension). In this sample, I find that some middle-class parents use their capital to ensure their children’s educational success such as obtaining learning accommodations in a timely manner, requesting a specific teacher, or having their child moved from a split-grade to a whole grade classroom. These findings align with other researchers who have found middle-class parents manipulate special education procedures to gain favorable accommodations for their children (e.g., Khan, 2011; Ong-Dean, 2009). The SLP provides a new area of discretionary space where higher-SES parents can enrol their children even if they do not need a literacy boost. For example, Nadine, a teacher (not associated with the SLP), explains why she enrolled her daughter in the program:

My sister said to me one time, she read that middle-class are the least satisfied group because we know better, but we don't always have the means to do as much as we can. That's one reason why I put [my daughter] in this program. I know one of the goals too is sort of remediation for kids who are maybe struggling or who are learning English as another language, that kind of thing. But I thought, you know what, why shouldn't my kid get that advantage too? It was free this year. Although, I would have willingly paid. It was \$80 last year. That's still nothing, really . . . Even though I could pay for something, I think the merits of the program stand on its own. So, I want her to have that regardless.

While the SLP is open to all families, for the most part these programs were attended by children who were personally invited by teachers – those who were struggling in reading, had lower grades, and have IEPs (see Davies & Aurini, 2015).

The fact that teachers and other school staff act on behalf of parents became apparent in the data. Working-class parents who felt like they were making progress in reading with their children, helping with homework, or gaining exceptional learner status for their child (e.g., testing for learning disabilities) acknowledged help from teachers. Also, teachers purposefully targeted certain students to invite to the SLP. Building on this notion of discretionary spaces, I propose that parent engagement policies allow teachers *institutional discretionary spaces* to use a “by any means necessary” approach to involve families in schooling. Even though teachers in this sample talk about parent council in relation to their understanding of parent engagement, the principals and teachers who regularly teach at the schools in disadvantaged areas do not talk about getting parents on school councils as an indicator of parent engagement. Rather, they often have a less traditional approach to parent engagement than what is emphasized in the Ontario policy. However, they view the policy as “permission” (see Hillier, 2014) to include families in various ways, even if they are unconventional. One administrator spoke of allowing a father to make phone calls in her office because his phone services were discontinued due to unpaid bills. Another principal “pulled strings” to get a newly enrolled kindergarten student who is autistic into the summer learning program, even though it was already full. Here, these teachers push the

line of thinking about parent engagement to actively construct what parent engagement may mean for their school (e.g., having parent engagement sessions that do not centre on boosting learning, but rather on immediate concerns in the community such as apartment fires). This finding aligns with Aurini's (2012) synopsis of learning centre tutors whose interpretations of the centre's policy and institutional scripts were constructed as "rule following" rather than "rule breaking" based on their prioritization of what needed to be accomplished in each tutoring session.

The idea behind these different approaches to parent engagement is to help parents -- who might not normally come into the school -- feel comfortable in educational settings and with school staff. Thus, schools continue to offer the standard fare of open houses and parent-teacher meetings. Even though these forms of involvement are not related to achievement, school staff see them as possibilities to build relationships. Further, teachers in low-SES communities utilize institutional discretionary spaces to provide help for needy families. The ultimate goal of establishing trust with parents is to have them engaged in their children's learning, but these teachers recognize that this does not always happen naturally.

Recalibrating parenting practices?

Many parent engagement initiatives attempt to re-calibrate parenting practices. Inspired by cultural capital research, this emphasis reflects a large scholarship showing that parents vary in their approaches to childrearing and the emphasis they place on nurturing children's academic achievement (e.g., Baker et al., 2016; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Lareau, 2000).

The middle-class parents in this sample are more likely to align with the Lareau's (2011) "concerted cultivation" which emphasizes the active development of children's interests,

emotions, and cognitive-growth. This includes accessing resources that develop children's literacy and numeracy and providing their children with learning opportunities during non-school time (e.g., after-school tutoring, science camps, organized sports). Concerted cultivators are also more likely to delineate clear academic expectations which includes setting rules about electronics (e.g., iPad use, TV viewing limits), bedtimes, and curfews, as well as discussing education and career options (e.g., Catsambis & Garland, 1997; see also chapter four).

Parents who subscribe to this logic of childrearing are more likely to actively teach and model behaviours and skills that comply with schools' standards of behaviour and learning outcomes. While the working-class parents in this study do not have the financial capital to provide learning resources such as after-school tutoring, science camps, and some of the costlier after school sports, some of them talk about the learning games that they invent or get ideas from other sources to stimulate their children's learning at home. However, while there are some working-class parents in this study who align with the cultivation ethic mechanism that is promoted in parent engagement policy, there are qualitative differences in how they engage with children's schooling (e.g., tendency to defer to teacher's authority and wait for assessment rather than finding a way to obtain help for their child sooner).

Despite its intuitive appeal, efforts to recalibrate parenting practices have tended not to produce positive gains for lower-achieving students (e.g., Furstenberg, 2011; Lareau & Shumar, 1996). While not explicitly targeting poorer families, ultimately parent engagement policies attempt to improve lower-SES parents' ability to align with schools, including encouraging parents to participate in school organized events, volunteer, and communicate with educators. Rather than attempting to re-calibrate parenting practice, external support for parents and children is crucial. From a policy perspective, programs such as after-school clubs, in-school

literacy support, summer literacy camps, and public library reading programs are especially important to lower-SES families (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012). Not only is it essential that these programs are offered free or at low-cost, but they also need to be situated in the neighborhoods that need them most.

The SLP provides a low-stakes atmosphere for children to build their literacy skills and for parents to interact with teachers. Research suggests that successful summer literacy interventions include both parents and teachers working together to help children achieve (Kim & Quinn, 2013; Xu & DeArment, 2017). However, rather than placing all of the burden on parents, programs seeking to boost family literacy involvement should also consider other family members in their interventions. In line with other research, I find that low-SES children live in close proximity and regularly see grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins (e.g., Lareau & Shumar, 1996). I sometimes met these other family members during my time at the research sites. First-generation immigrants often did not have extended family close by, but there is an expectation that older siblings help younger siblings with their school work, especially when there is a language barrier (see also Robinson & Harris, 2014). When schools give an invitation for involvement – whether it’s in the form of a parent information session, meeting with the teacher, volunteering, or classroom observation – this invitation could include inviting extended family. In previous research with child photo-interviews, we found that grandparents, aunts, and older siblings often read with children, took them to the library or to other extracurricular activities (Hillier & Aurini, 2018a).

Limitations

It is important to note that this sample falls short in some ways; participants are not randomly selected, and I am only able to cautiously generalize my results to the larger population. Further, the parents in this study chose to participate in an interview. Therefore, there is reason to believe that these parents might be more engaged in their child's education than parents who did not choose to participate or whose parents do not show up on the playground at the start or end of the day. Another limitation of my sample is that I cannot make comments about race or ethnicity and parent engagement (the groups in this category are too diverse to make inferences) even though research suggests that there are cultural differences in how various groups approach parent engagement (for an in-depth examination of race/ethnicity and parent engagement, see Robinson & Harris, 2014). Despite these limitations, this paper provides insight into a needed area in the parent engagement literature by examining parents' and teachers' alignment with educational policy.

Conclusion

School policies on parent engagement implicitly seek to boost social and cultural capital through encouraging parents to make connections with their child's teacher through ongoing communication, show their child support through attending school events and volunteering, and meet other parents through school activities. Unfortunately, parent engagement initiatives have done little to stem SES effects on schooling outcomes (for a review see Davies and Guppy, 2013). Some researchers argue that such policies fail to fully recognize that it may be unrealistic and misguided to expect lower-SES families to take greater responsibility for their children's schooling outcomes, particularly given the reality that such parents are more likely to have little

education, struggle with learning problems, have mental health issues, or economic hardships (e.g., Calarco, 2018; Furstenberg, 2011; Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

Educational organizations are affected by the broader societal logics of parenting. As a result, practices such as catering to the unique child (e.g., through extracurricular activities or individualized education) and intensive parenting seep into the educational field and shape school policy that often results in middle-class advantages (for an overview see Aurini & Hillier, 2018). Researchers and policy makers often focus on the positive results of parent involvement rather than presenting a “balanced view” which would include negative results (see Lareau & Shumar, 1996, p. 34). Notably, even though parent engagement policy is not informed by the negative, mixed, and inconclusive research in this area, it is rationalized through its cultural support and provides legitimacy to schools and school boards (Scott, 2001).

While schooling outcomes fail to show promise for parent engagement policies, they remain a popular institutional response to trends in both education and parenting. Parent engagement is a difficult concept to capture and measure. Policymakers and researchers contend that the family provides a crucial foundation and ongoing support for children’s academic achievement. However, determining the combination of *what types* or *how much* school engagement is needed is difficult considering the inconclusive evidence we have thus far. Parent engagement policy that encompasses the needs of all parents would include an emphasis on schools’ and teachers’ roles in this process in providing information and support for disadvantaged families. This study shows that many working-class parents try to help their children at home – especially when their child is struggling – but they often feel frustrated in this process. Teachers with more experience and who work in disadvantaged neighborhoods often construct understandings of parent engagement that benefit disadvantaged families and utilize

institutional discretionary spaces to assist these families in getting the information and resources they need. Additionally, a focus on offering this assistance during out-of-school times (summer, after-school) would be optimal for narrowing achievement gaps. In this way, schools are partially compensatory institutions – offsetting social inequality – rather than places of reproduction (Davies & Aurini, 2015; Downey, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR: “They’re my investment”: Parents’ and Children’s Aspirations and Parent Engagement in Schooling

Introduction

Parent engagement is a complicated issue. While schools and parent engagement policies encourage parents to be involved in schooling and emphasize the importance of the home learning environment as an incubator for achievement, it is still unclear what exactly parents can do to benefit their children’s education. Rather than shedding light on the issue, research on parent engagement confuses the matter further, finding positive associations for a form of involvement (e.g., homework help) in one study and negative or no associations in another (see Jeynes, 2005 and Fan & Chen, 2001 for meta-analyses on parent engagement studies). In short, the evidence does not indicate a clear and consistent positive relationship between several parent engagement measures and student achievement.

One dimension of parent engagement that consistently predicts children’s academic achievement is “parental aspirations”. Compared to more tangible forms of parent involvement – such as reading to children, taking them to museums, or attending school events – studies find that parents’ aspirations, the highest level of education they hope their children will achieve, have a strong influence on student achievement (chapter two of this thesis; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jeynes, 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Porumbu & Necosi, 2013; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Yet, “aspiration” is as elusive as “engagement.” We know little about *how* “aspirations” influence parent-child interactions, get internalized by children, and boost achievement – *independent* of the typical measures included in quantitative studies such as home resources (e.g., number of books in the home) or learning

activities (e.g., reading with children). Merton (1949) coined the term “anticipatory socialization” to refer to social groups who modify their attitudes and behaviours to those of a group that they aspire to join (for a review, see Yamaguchi, 1998). Playacting different jobs and knowledge about the world of work begins in childhood. In early childhood, children primarily learn about occupations and future education from parents and schools (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Moreover, parents’ influence has been found to be significant in the decision to pursue a higher occupational status (Simpson, 1962). Could parents’ aspirations be a form of “anticipatory socialization” in which parents’ interactions with children are preparing them for higher educational or occupational pursuits?

While providing insight into children’s career choices in relation to their parents’, much of the scholarly literature tends to focus parents’ role, actions, and expectations for children’s achievement (see Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005 for an overview). There is a dearth of research on children’s future aspirations relative to parents *and* how they relate to parent engagement in schooling, particularly qualitative research that would look at this relationship in more depth (e.g., more detailed description of *how* a parent talks to their child about future education). Thus, delving into the *quality* of conversations, activities, and resources as opposed to their measured quantity. Studying how families start to convey ideas of future education to children is important, given the documented inequality in PSE attendance by social class and the disparity between career outcomes and income earned between those with a high school diploma and those with PSE credentials (Johnson and Hitlin, 2017; Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2011; The Pell Institute, 2016). While many studies of future aspirations include pre-adolescents and adolescents (e.g., Ule, Živoder, & du Bois, 2015), researchers recommend examining the processes of considering PSE at earlier ages with children and parents (Finnie et al., 2011;

Walton Radford, 2013). A closer look at aspirations and how they relate to home learning environments can provide important insights into policies on parent engagement and schooling, and more specifically, it can inform programs that seek to bolster students' and parents' understanding of the possibilities of future education.

This study addresses these gaps in the literature; it explores parents' and children's future aspirations, and how aspirations inform parents' approaches to engagement in schooling. I also explore whether parents' expressed aspirations translate into qualitative differences in children's orientation toward learning and schooling. Drawing on qualitative data from a mixed-methods study investigating Summer Learning Programs in Ontario, I use 27 photo-interviews with children (ages 5-8; including three sets of siblings) and 24 interviews with their parents from two urban elementary schools in lower-socioeconomic (SES) neighborhoods. Taking into consideration parents' education and income, I compare parents with high school education (HSE) aspirations to parents with post-secondary education (PSE) aspirations for their children. Child interviews, along with parents' interviews, uncover the types of conversations about future education that do (or do not) occur at home. Parents with HSE aspirations for their children talk less about future education and are generally less involved in their children's schooling. Parents with PSE aspirations for their children are more likely to have conversations about future education with their children and these parents display a more interconnected approach with their child's education at school and at home. They link schooling to future socioeconomic mobility, job security and satisfaction with their career and lives. I also find a possible internalization process occurring with children where higher parental aspirations positively influence children's approach to schooling. Regardless of academic achievement, children are more likely to comply with literacy activities presented by parents or create learning opportunities for themselves when

they see themselves as good readers and are less frustrated with reading. While more proactive, lower-SES families with PSE aspirations are anxious about their children's future and are heavily dependent on resources, information, and social connections provided by schools and the community.

Quantitative research signals a rise in *all* parents spending time with their children on learning opportunities and spending more money on resources and extracurricular activities (e.g., Bassok et al., 2016; Ramey & Ramey, 2010; Schaub, 2015). Qualitative research reveals that lower-SES parents are mimicking parenting logics once attributed to higher-SES parents (Aurini, 2015; Aurini & Hillier, 2018; Vincent, 2017) or at least *desire* to do more for their children (see for example, Bennet, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012). Even though parents are seemingly doing all the “right” things (see chapter three), lower-SES children are not receiving the same benefits as high-SES children (e.g., Burkham & Lee, 2002; Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005). As such, my findings make important contributions to educational and social stratification research. First, this paper adds an important (and often overlooked) stakeholder in the educational achievement and attainment process: the child. Increasingly research includes children, to give voice to their own perspectives on their education and their well-being (e.g., Ben-Arieh, 2005). Childhood scholars have argued that research on family practices and resources often pay little attention to the agency of children (e.g., Corsaro, 2005; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Oswell, 2013). Consequently, researchers may underestimate the influence children can have on parents' efforts at implementing learning in the home. In response to parents' expressed aspirations and expectations regarding schooling, I find children do accept or resist the literacy activities presented to them by adults, and they can generate learning opportunities for themselves. However, this is often contingent on home and school resources, and whether children see

themselves as good readers. Second, this study presents the connection between social class and aspirations through the early perspectives of parents and children. By looking at a sample of mostly lower-class parents, this study examines variations in parent engagement and home learning environments by parents' aspirations. I conclude with policy recommendations for reaching students and parents early with literacy support, and career and post-secondary education experiences and information.

Literature Review

Research on Future Aspirations: Parents

In what has been described as a “revolution of expectations” (Davies, 2005), an increasing number of parents are expecting their children to go on to higher education after secondary school. Unquestionably, two factors are associated with this increase: a highly competitive job market and growing demands by employers for formal education credentials (see for example Collins, 1979). However, this increase in expectations also relates to a third factor: the rise in intensive parenting observed in the last 30 years (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2011). In Western culture, children are viewed as “emotionally priceless” (Zelizer, 1994) and as such, they are unique individuals to be developed and nurtured through education and extracurricular activities. Lareau (2011) dubs this logic of parenting “concerted cultivation” and attributes it to middle- and higher-class parents who vigorously nurture their children’s cognitive, emotional, and physical skills and talents. This parenting philosophy relates to the expectations that parents have for their children’s futures and how they engage in their schooling. In the literature regarding social class

and parents' aspirations, two overall categories emerge: 1) parents' perceptions of the role of education and 2) the variation in support and resources that parents offer children³².

First, parents' views of the role of higher education can coincide or differ by social class. The studies discussed in this section find that *all* parents see education as important. Yet, middle-class parents are more likely to describe PSE as "a given" and vital for future success (Devine, 2004; Gillies, 2006; Irwin & Elley, 2013; Lareau, 2000; Ule et al., 2015), and as an avenue to help children find careers that they enjoy (Tomanović, 2004; Ule et al., 2015). In contrast, working-class parents discuss PSE as a way to become financially independent (Irwin & Elley, 2013; Tomanović, 2004) and a "hoped for" experience couched within the realities of current difficulties with children's academic achievement (Gillies, 2006; Irwin & Elley, 2013; Lareau, 2000; Ule et al., 2015).

Second, there are social class differences in the support and resources that parents offer children in encouraging higher education. In a study of upper-middle-class Canadian parents, Aurini (2011) finds that these parents believe part of their role in education involves setting an example of strong work ethic and emphasizing the importance of education as "valuable in itself", not just for the financial and cultural rewards it can provide. This also involves providing a "supportive environment" for children to learn, grow and develop their talents (Aurini, 2011; see also Devine, 2004). This is comparable to "emotional capital" as a resource that parents of all social classes can draw on to support and encourage academic achievement (Gillies, 2006; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Tomanović, 2004). Working-class mothers make emotional investments in their children's education by confronting bullying, defending a child who gets in trouble at school,

³² While there is research that documents the positive relationship between immigrant status, parents' aspirations and academic achievement (e.g., Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014; Li, 2004; Raleigh & Kao, 2010), this review will focus on social class.

and tempering feelings associated with low achievement (e.g., low self-esteem). For these mothers, these difficulties could dampen a child's positive view of schooling and their future educational goals (Gillies, 2006; Irwin & Elley, 2011). Regarding obstacles to higher education, working class parents feel that they have less influence over their child's future career and higher education decisions, or feelings toward education in general; educational success is highly dependent on children's autonomy (Irwin & Elley, 2011, 2013; Lareau, 2011; Mayo & Siraj, 2015).

While working-class parents are more likely to talk about emotional support as the main type of support they can offer children in higher education, middle-class parents talk about a wider variety of investments (Gillies, 2006; Irwin & Elley, 2013; Lareau, 2015; Tomanović, 2004). Notably, middle-class parents are less concerned about their capacity to support their children (e.g., financial, social connections, emotional support) in whatever educational route they choose (Irwin & Elley, 2011). Middle-class parents see value in cultivating children's talents and interests through extracurricular activities, to help children discover their aptitudes (Lareau, 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011; Tomanović, 2004). Roksa and Potter (2011) find high expectations and their measure of "concerted cultivation" (combination of child's extracurricular activities, parental involvement at child's school, and parent-child discussions regarding schooling) are positively associated with academic achievement. Similarly, Siraj-Blatchford (2010) finds a home learning environment measure (combination of learning activities done at home such as playing a math game) has a positive relationship with academic outcomes; that is, a high level of learning activities at home is associated with higher achievement levels. This relationship is not associated with SES. Low-SES parents of high-achieving students who have

enriched home learning environments are more likely to state that they want their children to go on to higher education and professional careers.

While the types of tangible resources parents provide children are often included in quantitative studies on parent engagement (e.g., extracurricular activities), concepts such as emotional investments (e.g., promoting an importance of lifelong learning) in children are not easily measured through survey research.

Research on Future Aspirations: Children

As children's knowledge of careers can be limited to the encounters that they have with people around them, the notion of *habitus* can be a useful concept to examine children's aspirations. As a part of Bourdieu's (1977, 1998) concept of cultural capital which acknowledges the other sorts of non-financial investments that parents make in their children's education (e.g., knowledge of the fine arts), *habitus* involves an awareness of social norms (how to act in a variety of contexts) and an immersion into a certain way of life. This *habitus* - or "way of being" - is passed on and developed in the home environment (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990).

In relation to educational aspirations, children may know about the employment occupations of their parents, other family members, people in their neighborhood, and from school personnel and curricula. Existing research suggests that children with higher academic ability tend to have higher career aspirations than their underachieving peers (see Creed et al., 2007 for an overview). Overall, I found three themes in the literature on children's aspirations: 1) research on adults *reflecting* on their childhood experiences and decisions to attend higher education; 2) research on children *looking forward* to their future careers; and 3) research that includes both children and parents as subjects of analysis.

First, studies interested in successful upward social mobility include adults who reflect on their childhood experiences and decisions to pursue higher education. In examining the choice to attend higher education, Reay (1998) finds that middle-class participants discuss attending university as a certainty; the possibility of attending university is not an unknown endeavor for them, as it was for working-class participants (see also Walton Radford, 2013). More advantaged participants also had the benefit of attending private schools, which assist families in applying for university and provide “institutional habitus” that fosters PSE (Reay, 1998:524). Baker and Brown (2008) discover their lower-class participants from rural Wales saw university as a “way out” from a life of socioeconomic problems (e.g., to escape living on welfare). However, this decision was not just their own; all participants expressed “deeply embedded educational aspirations and many remembered being encouraged toward educational achievement from a very young age” (p. 69; see also Robinson and Harris, 2014; Walton Radford, 2013).

Robinson and Harris (2014) refer to this as parents “setting the stage” in a child’s social environment to ensure academic success (p. 199-200). In focus groups with university students, they find that students could not indicate any specific actions (e.g., helping with homework) or events (e.g., winning first place in a speech competition) that led to them attending university. Rather, as the authors state, “Stage setting has more to do with parents’ messages about the importance of schooling and the overall quality of life that they create for their children” (p. 204-205; see also Devine, 2004). Robinson and Harris (2014) conclude that while all parents can “set the stage”, middle-class parents are better equipped with tangible and intangible resources (e.g., capital) to groom children for future success than poor and working-class parents. Walton Radford’s (2013) study of high school valedictorians’ choice of post-secondary institution finds that most students say the idea of obtaining PSE started at home at primary school age, but less-

affluent students are more likely to indicate that PSE aspirations began to form in secondary schooling.

Second, while few in number, studies asking children about future educational pursuits and careers tend to focus on whether children are realistic in their career choice or examine gender differences in career selection. Through interviews with 123 children in grades 1, 3, and 5, Auger and associates (2005) find that as children got older they were less likely to choose “fantasy” occupations (e.g., singer, actor, professional athlete), and more likely to choose professional careers. In terms of gender and career choice, older children (Auger et al., 2005) and girls whose parents have an egalitarian division of labour in the home (Croft et al., 2014) are less likely to choose careers that are gender stereotyped.

Third, research that includes both parents and children in analysis considers the link between children’s achievement and children’s and parents’ aspirations. In a quantitative study in Australia, Creed and colleagues (2007) ask children (age 12-13) and their parents about future careers and possible barriers (e.g., finances) to their goals. Not surprisingly, children have higher expectations when they perceive fewer barriers. Children’s aspirations for what they hope to achieve tend to be higher than their expectations of what will happen to them. Parents’ higher aspirations and expectations are more likely to be associated with the child’s general ability and reading achievement, than perceived barriers. Although, Bandura and colleagues (2001) discover that parents’ aspirations for their children are mediated by children’s own perceived efficacy (e.g., how they feel they do in school) and academic aspirations. Particularly, it is children’s perceived efficacy – rather than their actual achievement – that is the determining factor in their occupational goals. However, other scholars highlight that the importance of children’s agency in

relation to the expression of their aspirations must be interpreted through their locations within class, race and gender (Archer et al., 2012).

When considering the role of children in relation to future aspirations, research including parents and children has been conducted with pre-adolescents and adolescents (e.g., Creed, Conlon, & Zimmer-Gemback, 2007; Dumais, 2002; Hill et al., 2004; López Turley, Desmond, & Bruch, 2010; Reay, 1998; Ule, Zivoder, & du Bois, 2015). However, it is argued that by this time, researchers are measuring actual plans rather than parents' or children's *hopes* for the future (Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Notably, early directions for future education are often fixed by the end of elementary school (Becker & Hecken, 2009; Walton Radford, 2013). Lareau's (2011) influential ethnographic study of middle-class, working-class, and poor families provides an informative point of comparison between twelve young children (age 10) and their parents' aspirations and whether those goals are realized. In her follow-up ten years after observing these families, Lareau found that all except one of the middle-class children were enrolled in higher education and none of the working-class or poor students were currently in college (some had started but dropped out) (see also Lareau, 2015). Thus, Lareau concludes that PSE attainment is predicted by higher social class along with the parenting logic concerted cultivation (often adopted by middle-class parents as previously outlined).

Notably, none of the studies discussed above – even the ones including children – consider the link between parents' aspirations and if these aspirations are internalized by children. Hence, it is important to consider the actions, thoughts, and messages that accompany parents' aspirations and how children respond to these interactions. Also, with recent propositions that intense parenting practices (e.g., concerted cultivation) attributed to upper-middle- and higher-class parents has “trickled down” to the mainstream (Aurini, 2015; see also

Vincent, 2017) and that more and more parents see PSE as an option for their children (Davies, 2005), it is useful to revisit the link between aspirations and engagement in education. To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of “aspirations” and its possible influence on student achievement, I examine future aspirations from the perspective of children and parents in the context of research on parent engagement at home and at school in relation to children’s early literacy learning. I do so by answering the following research questions:

1. Do the expressed aspirations of parents translate into meaningful differences in children’s orientation toward learning and schooling?
2. Does it inform the pathways and opportunities for learning provided by parents?

Methodology

This study draws from a larger longitudinal mixed-methods project examining summer setback [the loss of learning that children encounter during summer vacation (Davies & Aurini, 2013)] and the effect of Summer Literacy Camps offered by Ontario public schools for students in grades 1-3 (see Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014). In 2012-2014, the qualitative arm of the project interviewed parents, teachers, support staff and administration about their experiences with the literacy camp and their perspectives on parent engagement. Since we had gathered the viewpoints of adult stakeholders, we wanted to offer students the opportunity to share their perceptions of the literacy camp they attended and home-based literacy practices. Recognizing children as social actors who take part in and contribute to their social world (McTavish, Streelasky, & Coles, 2012; Tekola, Griffin, & Camfield, 2009), in the summer of 2014 we decided to use the photo-interview method to afford children the chance to be a part of the data collection.

Photo-interview (or photo-voice) is a method used in qualitative research; participants take photos in response to one open-ended question (or theme) or a series of questions or prompts. After taking photos, participants are invited to talk with the researcher about their photos one-on-one or with a group. Photo-interview methodology is chosen as the best method for this project for three reasons. First, taking photos provides an enjoyable way for children to partake in data collection (Clark, 2010; Crivello et al., 2009; Kaplan, 2013). Second, it allows researchers to use photos as a focal point in the interview, allowing shy or hesitant children to discuss their photos, rather than questioning children directly (Capello, 2005; Punch, 2002). Third, and of specific interest to this study, photos provide a visual glimpse into home literacy and children's learning environments (see Hillier & Aurini, 2018a, 2018b).

Research Setting and Sample

For this study's sample, 27 children (ages 5 to 8) and 24 of their parents or guardians are included³³. In total, 24 families are represented, including three sets of siblings. Participants are selected from two schools in Southwestern Ontario participating in the larger study. The schools (referred to as Site 1 and Site 2) are approximately ten minutes apart and located in relatively economically depressed urban neighbourhoods. Almost 19% of Site 1 and 32% of Site 2 students receive special education services compared to 14% of the province's student population. Both schools consistently score below average on provincially required standardized tests.³⁴

³³ In total, 35 children and 118 parents were interviewed in the larger research project. Of the 35 children interviewed, only 27 children also had one of their parents complete the corresponding pair "parent/guardian" interview necessary for this paper. Also, two mothers in the sample were interviewed twice (in 2012 and 2013). In total, 51 interviews were analysed for this paper.

³⁴ Data are from *The Fraser Institute*, <http://ontario.compareschoolrankings.org> Specific links to school-level data are not provided, to protect the confidentiality of participating schools and families.

Of the 27 children, 15 are male and 12 are female. There are 4 children in grade one, 14 in grade two, and 9 in grade three³⁵. In the parent interviews, there are 17 mothers, 3 fathers, 2 grandfathers (one who provided a home for his daughter and her children and one who had guardianship of his grandchildren), and 2 step-grandmothers (both adopted their step-grandchildren). The term “parents” will refer to all adult participants in this paper. Parents and guardians completed a demographic form after each interview. This form solicited information about family ethnicity, family structure (e.g., child lives with one-parent, two parents, etc.), annual family income, occupation, and highest level of education for both parents (see appendix D). Table 1 displays the demographic information for the 24 families.

³⁵ I do not have complete data on children’s ages. In Ontario, students in grade 1 are usually ages 5 or 6, grade 2 ages 6 or 7, and grade 3 ages 7 or 8.

Table 1. Family Demographic Information (n = 24)

Background	Categories	Number (Percent)
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian	19 (79.2)
	Other	5 (20.8)
Household Type	Single, separated or divorced	10 (41.7)
	Married or common-law	14 (58.3)
Number of Children	1	5 (20.8)
	2	11 (45.8)
	3	7 (29.2)
	4+	1 (4.2)
Household Income ³⁶	0 – 29,999	12 (50.0)
	30,000 – 69,999	8 (33.3)
	70,000 – 99,999	2 (8.3)
	Missing	2 (8.3)
Mother's Highest Level of Education ³⁷	Some high school	2 (8.3)
	High school graduate	5 (20.8)
	Some college	3 (12.5)
	College/trade school graduate	9 (37.5)
	University (e.g., B.A., B.Sc.)	1 (4.2)
	Missing	4 (16.7)
Father's Highest Level of Education	Some high school	3 (12.5)
	High school graduate	9 (37.5)
	Some college/apprenticeship	2 (8.3)
	College/trade school graduate	4 (16.7)
	Missing	6 (25.0)

*Percent are rounded to the nearest tenth.

³⁶ The median household income last reported in Ontario is \$74,287. The bottom 10% of Canadian families make \$30,000 or less per year (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

³⁷ Ontario statistics, for adults ages 25-64, are: Women: 9.3% less than high school, 23.4% high school diploma, 33.3% college or trade certificate, or university certificate (less than Bachelor's degree), and 34% university degree (Bachelor's level or higher); and Men: 11.6% less than high school, 25.5% high school diploma, 33% college or trade certificate, or university certificate (less than Bachelor's degree), and 29.9% university degree (Bachelor's level or higher) (Statistics Canada, 2017b).

Process and Methods

Parent Interviews

Parent interviews were conducted during the summers of 2012, 2013 and 2014 at the two participating schools where summer literacy camps operated for 2.5 weeks. The research team spent every day at these camps getting to know teachers, students, and parents. In 2012 and 2013, at Site 1, we recruited 14 of the parents in the sample by approaching them on the playground when they dropped off or picked up their children at camp. In 2014, children were recruited first (details below) and then 10 parents at both sites, who we had not already interviewed, were invited to participate. When recruiting parents, we told them that we were interested in talking to them about their experiences with schools and teachers and their involvement in their child's education.

Parent interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview format at a quiet place in each school (usually a resource room next to the school's office area or library). Most interviews were conducted one-on-one, with a few conducted with two researchers and the parent, and one interview with a mother and father together. Each interview took approximately 45-90 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed with participants' consent³⁸. The interview schedule (appendix B) included questions about family life and parents' involvement with their child's school. Also, we ask parents about their future aspirations for their children. Since it is an important component of this paper, for educational goals we asked: "What educational goals do you have for your child?" followed by "Do you anticipate any barriers (that prevent you/your child) from realizing these goals?" We also asked questions about the

³⁸ All components of research in the Summer Literacy Camps received clearance from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics and from the Ministry of Education's Council of Ontario Directors. Also, interview schedules and research protocols were cleared through the participating school board. All participants have been given a pseudonym in this paper.

expectations and messages about schooling that parents received from their own parents. This is highly informative for understandings of parents' aspirations and feelings about education, since these notions are often shaped by individuals' narratives.

Child Interviews

In spring 2014, the two participating schools included a note in the Summer Literacy Camp application form describing our research and asked parents to consent to their child's participation in our study about children's home literacy practices. A few weeks before camp started, the schools gave me a list of students who had obtained their parents' permission. First, students were purposively recruited if we had already interviewed their parents in the previous two summers. Second, I randomly selected from those children whose parents had consented for them to participate. Since I already had signed forms with the parents' consent, the next step was to explain the project to the children and enlist their participation and consent.

Children were gathered in small groups in the library in one school and the school cafeteria in the other. At this initial meeting, I described the study, explained how children could help with the research, stated that their participation is voluntary³⁹, and outlined what confidentiality means. This introduction also included showing the children the disposable cameras, how to use them, and involved a discussion with children about photo etiquette. Our suggestion for photo etiquette was not to take pictures of people without their permission and the children suggested that this should only include appropriate (no "potty") pictures. After this introduction, some children decided that they did not want to participate in the study and other members of the research team took them back to their classrooms. The children who wanted to

³⁹ The scripted statement was: "Even though your parents have given permission for you to participate, it is your choice if you want to be a part of this project. No one will be upset with you if you choose not to participate."

take part signed consent forms and were given a small package containing a disposable camera, a page listing the photo prompts, an information sheet about the study, and our contact information to take home. In this package, as per our university's and the school board's ethics stipulations, parents were invited to participate in their child's interview if they wished.

I provided children with ten questions (see appendix E) and asked them to answer these questions through photos (e.g., take a picture of your favourite place to read).⁴⁰ After the photos were developed, I set up interviews in consultation with Summer Literacy Camp administration and teachers and conducted a follow-up interview. Of the 27 child interviews, I conducted 16 interviews at Site 1 and a research assistant interviewed two children when I could not be on site. Another research assistant interviewed nine participants at Site 2. Interviews were held in a quiet place in each school's library and lasted between 20-30 minutes. A parent was present for ten of the interviews (see Hillier & Aurini, 2018b for a discussion of the "parent effect" in children's interviews). At the start of each interview, we explained to children again that it was their choice to continue to participate in the study and that we were going to ask questions about their pictures. Children were also informed that they could skip any question or ask to come back to it later.⁴¹ With the child's permission, the discussions were digitally recorded and later transcribed.

⁴⁰ I had some concerns about the chosen methodology with the youngest children in our sample (four of them were in grade one, ages 5-6) and their capacity to use a camera in an informative way. However, similar techniques had been used by other researchers with younger children, so this alleviated my concerns (e.g., Mykkänen & Böök, 2013). Although, learning to use a disposable camera was a challenge for some children since they had never encountered this type of camera before. This proved to be a methodological challenge because some pictures did not turn out at all or were blurry. I showed children how to use the camera, however some of the children forgot to use the flash inside or used the flash when it was not needed. Poor picture quality did not limit the information obtained by asking children what they *intended* to capture in the picture. And, the photo still provided a focal point in the interview even if it did not turn out the way the child had envisioned (see also Böök & Mykkänen, 2014).

⁴¹ As a thank you for children's participation, children received copies of their photographs, a certificate stating that they participated in a University study, and a ten-dollar gift card to a local bookstore. Children did not know about this thank you gift until the end of their interview.

We asked participants to tell us about their pictures and their literacy practices at home following the photo prompt document that we had given them and using some prescribed⁴² and some impromptu follow-up questions to elicit more detail. For example, the final question in the photo-prompts asked children to take a picture that shows what they want to be when they grow up. Further probing questions to this included: “Where did you get the idea to become...? Do you know what you need to do to become...? What do your parents think about your wanting to become...?” These questions were crucial in understanding the kinds of conversations that parents have about future careers or schooling with their children.

Analytical Approach

In the analysis for this paper, I explore the intersection of what children and parents say about future aspirations. Primarily, I am interested in the ways that aspirations translate into home learning environments and literacy practices. If parents have high aspirations for their children, does this relate to the various messages about schooling promoted in the home? Does it inform the types of home learning environments parents cultivate? If children hold high aspirations for themselves, will this be evident in their responses to school and home literacy efforts? Do children accept or resist efforts by parents to influence educational activities? How is school achievement woven into the “everyday” within the home?

⁴² To test out the photo prompts and the interview schedule that would follow, two of my children (who were the same age as the children in the Summer Literacy Camp at the time) took photos in response to the prompts and I interviewed them about their pictures afterward. I did this for two reasons: First, to see how accessible and developmentally appropriate the prompts were for possible participants. And, second, to anticipate other questions that might arise in child interviews to formulate additional questions that would deepen my understanding of home literacy practices. As I was interviewing my children, I wrote down any new follow-up questions I developed in their interviews (e.g., Can you read this book all by yourself? What do you do when you come up with a word you can't read?). I then shared these questions with the rest of the research team so that we were all on the same page.

Using *NVivo11* software⁴³, coding and analysis progressed in two stages. First, I coded the transcripts and photos descriptively based on the questions from the photo-interviewing prompt considering how each child responded to these questions to get an initial sense of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994)⁴⁴. In the second stage, I coded data in light of pre-existing theories (e.g., family and child capital) and concepts using an open coding method that will also allow for new and unexpected themes generated by parents' interviews and children's photo-interviews. After this stage, I employed cross-case analysis to compare and contrast the interviewees, particularly in consideration of social class and whether parents have high or low aspirations, and to contextualize children's home reading practices (see Berg & Lune, 2012; Saldaña, 2015).

I categorized social class by considering family income and parent education (see Finnie et al., 2011 and The Pell Institute, 2016). Lower-class is categorized by family income in the bottom category (\$0-29,999), with parents having a high school education or less. Lower-middle-class is the second income category (\$30-69,999); parents may have a college diploma or some college. Middle-class is in the highest income category (\$70-99,999), with parents having college or university credentials. Not all parents fit neatly into these categories. Some parents have college education and low income, or high school education and high income. The reasons for this are varied: lack of employment commensurate with participants' education, dual versus single income households, and multi-generation households (e.g., parents and children living with grandparents). Considering this, I regard parents' occupation, education, and income as a package that informs their perspective of their children's future and present schooling. Of course,

⁴³ QSR International, *NVivo11* (2016) qualitative data analysis software.

<http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products/nvivo-11-for-windows>

⁴⁴ Photos are interpreted descriptively, based on their link with the photo-prompts and what children told us about the pictures. I inserted my own opinion on pictures comparing home resources and the relative "order" a house was in (messy vs. organized).

“class” has been defined and measured in various ways (see Lamont & Lareau, 1988 for a discussion). However, as Crompton (2006) notes, the commonality in all discussions of social class is that it involves differentiation in “human behaviours in relation to both material resources and cultural distinctions” (p. 658). This conception of class aligns well with notions of capital because it suggests that economic and material resources should not be considered in isolation, but cultural and everyday practices must be included as well. These class variations can serve to stratify educational achievement and attainment (e.g., Devine, 1998). Thus, broadly there are similarities and differences between groups by social class but the differences *within* groups should also be considered (see Roksa & Potter, 2011).

Findings

Table 2 provides a summary of children’s career aspirations and parents’ hopes for their children’s future education, potential barriers to achieving these goals, and whether a savings plan has been set up for the child. Also, household income and parents’ education are included for reference. Most children have what are considered realistic goals (e.g., teacher, nurse, and veterinarian) for their selected future occupations as opposed to fantasy occupations (e.g., race car driver, model) (see Auger et al., 2005). Most parents talk about college or university. Seven parents mention high school completion in response to the question regarding aspirations for future education. Six parents comment that they have started saving for future education. Potential barriers to aspirations mentioned by parents can be classified into three themes: 1) finances; 2) academics; and 3) developmental or personal characteristics. Besides stating that there are no barriers (n = 8), finances and academics are only mentioned by three and five parents respectively. The most cited barrier, developmental or personal characteristics (n = 9),

includes waning self-confidence in high school, peer pressure, and changing attitudes about schooling or future endeavors; which suggests that parents are acknowledging, at some point, children's agency overrides their expectations.

The next sections focus on children's and parents' discussions of these aspirations within the context of home learning environments and school engagement. Parents' and children's perspectives on aspirations and schooling will be presented by adapting three dimensions of self-determination theory: parental structure, parental control, and parental responsiveness. Mostly used in social psychology, self-determination theory is a macro-theory relating to human motivation behind the choices that people make (Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy, & Nagengast, 2014; Moroni, Dumont, Trautwein, Niggli, & Baeriswyl, 2015). I will be using the categories of this theory to structure my findings rather than using it as a theoretical framework per se. Within each of these dimensions, I consider HSE and PSE aspirations as they relate to parents' behavior regarding children's schooling, and if these aspirations facilitate children's orientations toward schooling.

Table 2. Children's and Parents' Aspirations

Child	Grade	Child's future aspiration(s)	Parent interviewed	Parent's highest level of education	Household Income	Parent's aspiration(s)	Potential barriers mentioned by parent	Parent has RESP set up
Site #1								
Ava	2	Veterinarian	Victoria ^b	M: Gr.12 F: Some college	--	University	Finances	Yes
Callie	3	Teacher or nurse	Tom ^b	M: College F: Apprenticeship	--	College or university	Developmental: Changing mind about future	No
Nathan	1	Race car driver	Tricia ^c	M: Some Gr. 11 F: Some Gr. 11	0-29,999	High school diploma	None	No
Chloe	2	Horse rancher	Matthew ^b	F: Gr. 11	0-29,999	High school diploma	None	No
Lucas	3	Artist	Bill (GF) ^b	GF: Gr. 12 GM: Gr. 13	0-29,999	High school diploma	None	No
Audrey	3	Veterinarian	Cynthia ^b	M: College F: Gr. 10	0-29,999	College or university	None	Yes
Amelia	2	Builder/ construction	Leah ^b	M: Gr. 12	0-29,999	High school diploma	Developmental: Changing attitude towards school; disliking high school	Yes
Jacob	3	Firefighter	Mary ^{a b}	M: College F: College	0-29,999	Jacob: High school diploma; Daughters: College or university	Academics: Possible learning disabilities for Jacob	No
Anthony*	3	Police officer	Gloria ^b	M: College	0-29,999	College or university	Developmental: Changing mind about future & attitude toward school	No
Avery*	2	Model		F: College				
Maya	2	Mother	Natalie ^c	--	0-29,999	High school diploma	Academics: Learning disabilities	No
Lily	1	Veterinarian	Cheryl ^c	M: Trade school F: Gr. 12	30-69,999	College or University	Finances	Yes
Jasmyn	3	Doctor	Riya ^c	M: Currently in College F: Gr. 12	30-69,999	University	None	No
Liam	2	Video game designer	Helen (GM) ^c	GM: College GF: College	30-69,999	College or university	Academics: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	No
Zoe	2	Teacher	Michael (GF) ^b	GF: Gr. 12 GM: Gr. 12	30-69,999	College or university	None	No
Oliver	2	Race car driver	Bao ^a	F: Gr. 12	30-69,999	University	None	No

Wyatt	2	Police officer	Rachel ^{a b}	M: Gr. 10	30-69,999	High school diploma	Academics: Learning disabilities	No
Dylan	2	Car dealer, Tim Hortons, firefighter, construction worker or astronaut	Hailey ^b	M: College F: Gr. 12	30-69,999	College or university	Developmental: Peer pressure in high school	No
Daniel	2	Lego designer	Charlotte ^b	M: BA, BEd F: College	70-99,999	College or university	Personal characteristics: Not a risk-taker	No
Maddie	2	Make stuffed animals	Anna ^b	M: College F: Gr. 12	70-99,999	College or university	Personal characteristics: Gives up easily	No
Site # 2								
Carter*	2	Firefighter	Layla ^c	--	0-29,999	College or university	Finances	Yes
Caleb*	3	Firefighter						
James	3	Police officer or construction worker	Jennifer ^c	M: College F: --	0-29,999	College	Personal characteristics: Confidence – feeling that he can do it	No
Evie	2	Doctor or nurse	Elizabeth ^c	M: Gr. 12	0-29,999	College or university	Personal characteristics: Self-esteem, self-doubt	No
Adam	1	Artist, teacher or work at Tim Hortons	Sandra ^c	M: Some College F: Gr. 12	0-29,999	College	Academics	No
Sofia*	1	Artist or hairstylist	Camila ^c	M: Some College F: Gr. 12	30-69,999	College or university	None	Yes
Alex*	3	Athlete or mechanic						

Notes: * = siblings in study. All children were interviewed in 2014. a = interviewed in 2012, b = interviewed in 2013, c = interviewed in 2014. M=mother, F=father, GM=grandmother, GF=grandfather. Mother or father were interviewed, unless indicated otherwise.

Parental Structure: Guidance on the Role and Importance of Education

I use the term parental structure to refer to the type of guidance that parents give children about the role of education. For future aspirations, this may involve conversations about education and parents' hopes that their children experience upward social mobility, job security, and life satisfaction. These hopes may manifest themselves in the expectations parents have for children's present education, such as in the direction a parent may give to a child for how to manage school work, reminding children about homework, or providing a quiet place to do homework. This includes how the child's day is organized beyond school, such as free time to play, reading, homework, or spending time with family. Also, rules concerning screen time, homework completion, or reading can convey to children the importance that parents place on education. In the parent interviews, we asked parents what a typical evening would look like during the school year. Table 3 provides representative answers from parents with HSE and PSE aspirations according to what I deemed lower and higher parent engagement.⁴⁵ Using the four examples listed in table 3, this section will discuss how parents talk to their children about future aspirations, the structure that is provided in the home, and children's responses to this structure.

⁴⁵ I categorized parents in the higher engagement group if they consistently connect with the school and facilitate learning at home through guidance on schoolwork either by having rules regarding schoolwork or helping children with reading or homework when they need it. However, it should be noted, higher engagement in this paper does not necessarily mean that parents initiate all that they do at school or at home. For many of the parents in this sample, regular meetings and learning activities at home are encouraged by the school; this is especially true for students who have an Individual Education Plan or who have been identified as not progressing in reading as expected. Lower engagement does not mean that parents do not do these things, but that the engagement is inconsistent.

Table 3. Parent Reported Structure of a Typical School Day by Parents' Aspirations and Parent Engagement (PE)

	HSE aspirations		PSE aspirations	
Lower PE	Chloe	School TV Dinner TV Bath Book Bed	Callie	School TV Supper TV or play with friends Homework Read a book with father Bed
Higher PE	Wyatt	School Free time (while mother makes dinner) Dinner Homework Bath Quiet time Bed	Audrey	School Homework or free time (while mother makes dinner) Dinner Back to homework (if she is unable to do it on her own) or free time Bath Reading together and talk about the day Bed

Note: The information in this chart is representative of parents' answers given in response to the question: "During the school year, what might a typical night look like for your child(ren) when they come home from school?"

HSE Aspirations

The one experience that I always keep telling my daughter about is if somebody ever tells you that being out of school is better than staying in it, don't listen. Stay in school, finish it.

(Matthew, Chloe's father)

Most parents in this study hope that their children will exceed their own life outcomes. Of the 24 families represented, 11 parents express that they view education as a way for their children to accomplish this goal. This sentiment is shared by parents with both HSE and PSE aspirations, but for those who did not graduate from high school, this belief that education is a way for children to have a better life is felt more acutely. For them, graduating from high school is the first hurdle to overcome; seeing their children surpass their accomplishments is an important goal. After stating high school as the main goal, some of these parents mention college and university but these are added as icing on the cake and not a necessity. Parents with HSE aspirations talk about their own educational experiences with their children as a cautionary tale.

Chloe (age 7) and her father, Matthew provide an example of lower parent engagement and HSE aspirations. Matthew is a single father with sole custody of Chloe. After Chloe was taken away from her mother for neglect, under the direction of child services Matthew took cooking and parenting classes to gain custody of his daughter. Matthew, who dropped out of high school in grade 11 and lives on government assistance, talks about his own struggles with school and how he got “mixed in with the wrong group”. Matthew articulates that he would like Chloe to complete high school and secure a government job. Chloe shares with me that she wants to be a cowgirl and have a ranch with horses for her future occupation. She got the idea from games she plays with her friends during recess. When I asked how she would pay for food and supplies for the horses, she said she would run a lemonade stand. Further, she informed me that talking about future employment is too serious of a topic: “Yes, and, also I’m not a big fan of going ‘Oh, dear God, I need a job’ like somebody goes. That is really, annoying, that I know”.

Matthew describes his daughter as smart and says she loves school. He does not need to have any rules regarding homework or reading since he feels that she will tell him if she needs help. A typical school day for Chloe includes watching TV after school and reading a book before bed (see table 3). Extracurricular activities are too expensive for Matthew’s budget and he says the free programs are too far away since they need to use public transportation. In my interview with Chloe, she shares she would like to take swimming lessons but that she has not been able to do them because they are too busy visiting friends and family. She describes her favorite activity to do with her father is to watch him play video games. She also enjoys reading with her grandmother when she visits which is not very often since her grandmother has been in and out of the hospital in the past year. At home, she mostly reads books on her own and asks her father for help when she encounters a difficult word.

When asked how much she reads during the school year, she said it depends on how busy the week is, but she completes reading if it is assigned for homework. During summer, she said that she only reads at Summer Literacy Camp because she's too busy playing with friends. Inside the home, Chloe's favorite place to read is her father's room because she likes being near him when he is on the computer. She also likes the living room because there is a cabinet with books and craft supplies (figure 1). Most of the books are provided by Chloe's grandmother and other



Figure 1. Room in Chloe's apartment with a cabinet which contains books and craft supplies. Also, the television in the photo represents her favorite thing to do after school and on weekends.

extended family members. Despite these resources, Chloe indicates that she does not read very much at home and she takes the lead from her father in not being overly concerned with learning at home:

Interviewer: So, when you want to learn about something new, is it something— do you come up with the idea? Like, “Oh, I want to learn more about this” or does your dad come up with it? “Oh, Chloe I think you should learn about this thing, let’s talk about this.”

Chloe: It’s only school.

Interviewer: School?

Chloe: Because basically all me and my dad worry about is having fun time and family and pets.

Thus, by taking the cue from her father regarding learning at home, Chloe internalizes two messages. The first message is that learning is something that is done at school. This is evident in the fact that Chloe rarely chooses to read at home unless it is assigned as homework. Second, learning is detached from being an enjoyable experience. While it was clear in the interview that Chloe enjoys school, “worry[ing]” about learning at home is not linked to “having fun”.

Wyatt (age 7) and his mother, Rachel, provide an example of higher parent engagement and HSE aspirations. Rachel is a single unemployed mother of six children who lives with her parents. Rachel says that she did not listen to her parents when they told her to finish high school, so she tries a different approach with her children. Rather than telling them that they must stay in school, “I ask them what they want to be when they grow up, well you have to stay in school. Oh mom, I want that car, you need to stay in school and go to college, get a job, and buy that car”. In his interview, Wyatt says that he wants to be a police officer when he grows up because they put people in jail. A typical night during the school year, as described by Rachel, includes free time, homework completion, and quiet time before bed (see table 3). She cannot afford extracurricular activities for her children and transportation is a problem since she does not drive. In addition to the Summer Literacy Camp, her children go to free camps and activities offered by a church in the city that provides transportation to these events.

Rachel was interviewed in 2012 and 2013. In 2012, she describes sending her mother in to talk to the teacher because she was uncomfortable and felt she was judged for being a young mother. In 2013, she moved in with her parents and transferred her children to a new school. At this new school, Rachel describes two developments that made her more comfortable in entering the school. First, the teachers and principal helped Wyatt receive extra resources to help him with his reading development and they connected Rachel with professionals to have Wyatt

diagnosed with a learning disability. This was a relief for Rachel who felt that she needed help in working with Wyatt's speech and reading difficulties. Second, in the process of developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP)⁴⁶ for Wyatt, she is required to attend monthly progress meetings with the school's principal, Reading Resource teacher, and the classroom teacher. Rachel explains that these meetings make her feel like she is a partner in her son's education since school staff request her advice on strategies that she has found work with Wyatt at home:

Yeah, and like [previous school] did not help him much there and he just got so much better with the help at [current school]. And I like the fact that instead of them doing it, they bring the parents in and so they get input from both because like they say, "You know your child best." Right? So, this year he has A's on his report card, which is a big step for him.

Rachel also describes getting help from Wyatt's teachers so that she can help him with his math homework. Wyatt – who had some attention difficulties in the interview and was often distracted – describes his family's favorite pastime as playing video games together. Wyatt says that his mother does not read with him very much but that she helps him read when he asks for help. Wyatt does not choose to read on his own for pleasure. Rather, he only reads when asked by the school or his mother.

While Rachel is more engaged in her child's learning than Matthew, much of her involvement is initiated by the school. Because Wyatt has an IEP, the school has more contact with Rachel and provides information about learning activities she can do at home to reinforce what Wyatt does at school. Like other children in the HSE group, neither Wyatt nor Chloe demonstrate initiative in reading on their own or getting an adult to read with them. Most of the reading that they do is connected to school work or summer camp.

⁴⁶ In Ontario schools, the IEP is developed for students who have been identified as exceptional. This includes children diagnosed with learning disabilities, behavioral issues, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, or giftedness. The IEP outlines the student's specific learning individualities and the school's plan for modifying or accommodating the student's unique learning needs.

PSE Aspirations

I have a job. I like my job. I go to my job. It does what I need it to do but it's not a career. . . I don't love it. I could have been something else. I didn't pick it and that's what I want for them, to pick something just that they love.

(Elizabeth, Evie's mother)

Parents who believe strongly that PSE is the best option for their children express a desire to have discussions with their children about the importance of education. When children express what they would like to do, these parents tell children the type of training required for that vocation and/or that they need to stay in school and do well in school. Other conversations with children revolve around the importance of PSE to find an enjoyable career and not struggle like their parents.

Callie (age 8) and her father, Tom, provide an example of lower parent engagement and PSE aspirations. Tom is retired, and his wife works full-time as a nurse. Callie is an only child. Similar to the parents discussed above, Tom relies on the school to inform him if Callie is behind in her physical and cognitive progress. He describes concerns he had about Callie's speech development when she was younger. He said that he told her classroom teacher that he thought she had a speech impediment and he waited for the school to inform him that there was a problem. When he did not hear back from the school, he assumed that everything was fine. Tom relays his own difficulty in high school where he felt a teacher was putting him down and made him feel "dumb" because he was in the 4-year trades program instead of the 5-year university track. He believes his parents were not supportive of his schooling and he describes a strained relationship with them. Consequently, Tom does not want to force Callie into a specific occupation but thinks she will likely become a nurse like her mother. In her interview, Callie had a lot to say. She told me about her recent trip to Ottawa where she went to a museum with her parents; she had also gone to sleep away camp this summer. Callie also listed "teacher" along

with “nurse” as possible future career interests. She “plays teacher” at home with a chalkboard and learning charts her mother supplied (figure 2). When asked how she got the idea to become a nurse she said, “my mom wants me to be a nurse”. For teacher, she said she wants to go to the country where she has visited her mother’s family to start her own missionary school.



Figure 2. Callie’s picture showing that she wants to become a teacher. Callie said her mother provides all the learning posters that are on the wall.⁴⁷

During the school year, a typical night for Callie involves watching TV, playing with friends, doing homework, and reading a book with her father before bed (table 3). She also has piano, tennis, and language lessons in the evenings and on weekends. Tom complains that Callie watches too much TV but does not have a house rule to regulate TV time. He likes the Summer Literacy Camp because he said if she was at home she would watch TV for most of the day. Callie said that she reads every day and sometimes more than once in a day if she has a chapter book that she really enjoys. Now that she can read on her own, Callie says her father does not

⁴⁷ Faces and names of people or places are pixelated and eyes are blacked out in pictures to ensure confidentiality. I have permission from parents and children to publish photos that are de-identified.

read with her very much unless she has reading for homework and needs help. Besides the literacy camp, Callie is enrolled in a summer reading program at the library and has piano lessons. She says she watches TV if there are no friends around to play.

Audrey (age 8) and her mother, Cynthia, provide an example of higher parent engagement and PSE aspirations. Cynthia has a college diploma in interior design and worked part-time cleaning houses before taking maternity leave. She has three children and lives common-law with the father of her third child. Cynthia's mother runs a daycare out of her home, so her children go there when she works or if she volunteers at Audrey's school. Cynthia describes Audrey as an active child who loves to play outside, ride her bike, and read. Her only concern in Audrey's studies is her spelling; Cynthia says they have been working on her writing and spelling at home with activities she finds online. When asked about future education plans for her children, Cynthia says she and her father have already been planning for it financially:

I would love to see them go to college or university, definitely graduate high school, because that's very important. But college and university I would really love for them to see it. We actually have an education fund that we set. So that's between me and my Dad, we have that set up so I'm hoping that they pursue that, and I can help them with that and they do what they want, what they enjoy.

Cynthia shared that she liked school up until high school, and due to feeling overwhelmed, very shy, and quiet, she took longer to complete high school and college. At the time of the parent interview (2013), Cynthia shared that she does not discuss this topic a lot with Audrey but that she has talked to her about college:

She knows about college, and she says she wants to become a vet, veterinarian, like all of us say when we're little. But she does have that in her mind, that she wants to go to college and she wants to do this and she's going to help animals. So, to me, I like that, because at least it's showing motivation and dreams. So, that really makes me happy.

When I interviewed Audrey the following summer, she still plans to become a veterinarian and she knows she needs to go to college to train for this job.

A typical night during the school year for Audrey involves free time, homework, reading together, and discussing the day (see table 3). Cynthia says that this daily routine -- reading and talking about the school day -- is a special time for her and Audrey; since Cynthia has younger children, this routine gives her a time to connect with her oldest child. On weekends, Audrey has soccer. During summer, Audrey has the Summer Literacy Camp and she is enrolled in her local library's summer reading program, which has her committing to reading for a certain amount of time each day. Her family visits the library once each week where she gets books and plays computer games.

Even though Callie's father (Tom) is not as involved with the school as Audrey's mother (Cynthia), Callie and Audrey each talk about reading on their own, reading with parents, and getting involved in reading programs at their local library. While all four parents highlighted in this section talk about reading, parents with PSE aspirations are more likely to have a rule about reading every day, and their children talk about this expectation in their interviews. For example, Daniel (age 7) tells us that his mother (who is a teacher) says that he cannot see a movie unless he has read the book first (e.g., *Harry Potter*) and that his parents have a house rule about reading: "We need to read. Mom and Dad make a rule, we need to read two books before we go on electronics". Overall, daily reading is emphasized more in the homes with PSE aspirations.

Parental Control: Pressure from Parents Versus Children's Autonomy

As opposed to parental structure, which implies a gentler guidance, parental control refers to a stronger pressure that parents may exert to reinforce schooling. This pressure can be incited for

any number of reasons, such as a child struggling in school, economic difficulties in the family, or the neighborhood where families live. Children can either comply or push back and resist parents' efforts. Thus, it is important to consider the interwoven relationship between children, parents and their environment. Children's development (including educational growth) is an ongoing "transactional process" – the environment affects children and they in turn affect their environment and so on (Dumont et al., 2014; Sameroff, 2009). This section considers parental control within two environmental pressures in relation to parents' aspirations and children's schooling: 1) parents' own concerns that their children will "end up like them"; and 2) concerns about their neighborhood's influence on children's future choices.

HSE Aspirations

I'd just like to see him go further than I did, at least you know, graduate high school. That's what I would like to see. Me and his father, neither one of us graduated high school.
(Tricia, Nathan's mother)

Most parents with HSE aspirations exert little control when it comes to their children's schooling. Schooling is left to the experts – the teachers – and if there is a problem with school work or behaviour, then parents expect to hear from the school. As Matthew notes, "I figure if there's no complaints coming from my daughter, there's no complaints coming from the school, then there's no problems." Matthew has not expressed any concerns with reading with Chloe or getting her to do her homework. However, other parents describe reading and homework as a struggle that often results in unfinished schoolwork.

Nathan's (age 6) mother Tricia says that she does not want her three children to drop out of high school like she and her ex-husband did. She describes the difficult time she had in elementary and secondary school. She was teased because of a noticeable physical feature; this

harassment resulted in her dropping out of high school. Even though her mother and sister went to college, Tricia did not return to complete her secondary education. She describes her busy home life as a single mother, with Nathan in school and two toddlers at home. Because of the demands of the younger children, Tricia states that she cannot help Nathan with his reading or schoolwork and because he gets frustrated and resists, she does not want to push the issue:

Um, he could do a little better. I know he gets very frustrated when it comes to, if he can't figure out what a word is, trying to help him sound it out. Um, I've just come to learn that if he – I don't want to fight with him and I don't want to push him into it at home and push him away from reading. . . So, I've explained to his teachers that it's very hard for me to get him to sit down and read at home, so whenever he has a chance to read at school, push him towards reading.

Although teachers have asked her to read with him at home, Tricia says she feels comfortable in telling them that she cannot do it. She adds that he practices his reading when he reads words on the screen while playing video games. She feels that having a more relaxed approach to school work helps to keep the peace at home.

Even though Nathan seems to have freedom at home in determining time spent on reading and homework, he did not have as much latitude in the photo-interview process. Tricia sat in on Nathan's interview with me and interjected several times to clarify his answers.⁴⁸ As such, she exerted control in the interview; she appeared concerned with how she would be perceived as a mother (see Hillier & Aurini, 2018b). Nathan shared that he would like to go to the library more often, and that he does not get to choose the books his mother orders from the school. He mentioned that he plays teen-rated video games, and that he would like to go to the

⁴⁸ Although not originally intended in the research design, the involvement of parents in ten of the child interviews and in the data collection when cameras went home with children resulted in some interesting discussions between parents and children (see Hillier & Aurini, 2018b for a discussion of the "parent effect" in interviews with children). This parent involvement in data collection gave me insights into the parent-child relationship. Because the photo prompts were sent home with children, both children and parents knew the questions that would be brought up in the subsequent interview.

park more often. Tricia countered each of these statements with explanations. When I asked Nathan about when he plays video games at home, Tricia jumped in and clarified, “He can't play them after dinner and that’s the rule. After dinner there is no video games. . . And then, it's whatever else needs to get done, cleaning rooms”. Beyond mentioning that she wants her children to graduate from high school and go further in schooling than her and her ex-husband, there was no indication in either Tricia or Nathan’s interview that they had ever had conversations about the importance of schooling or that it is prioritized in the home.

Maya (age 7) is an only child who lives with her mother, Natalie (a shipper), her father (a delivery truck driver) and three other adult family members. Natalie describes her family as lazy and Maya as “mute” which is why she decided to sit in on Maya’s interview. Natalie discusses Maya’s problems with being bullied, and says the school is not doing much about it. Her solution is to teach Maya how to fight back. Natalie says Maya has always been behind in her speech development and school progress. Although, Natalie says Maya’s reading has improved greatly, and that Maya loves reading text messages and words on the TV screen. Maya only reads at home if it is assigned for homework. Natalie said Maya would be at home watching TV during the summer, if she was not in the Summer Literacy Camp.

Maya was not overly chatty in the interview but was able to communicate her answers. Beyond discussing problems with bullying, Natalie and Maya do not have many discussions about present or future schooling. In the interview with Maya, Natalie was surprised at her daughter’s photo in response to the photo prompt “Take at least one picture of something that shows what you want to be when you are grown up”. Maya took a picture of a young relative who is pregnant.

Natalie (mother): Is that what you want to do when you grow up? Have a baby?
Maya (daughter): Yeah. Going to be a mother.

Natalie: But, you also have to have what, when you do that? What does mommy say you have to have? [Pause] Come on. What does mommy say you have to have before you have a baby? What does mommy do every night?

Maya: Work?

Natalie: Is that something you have to have when you have a baby?

Maya: No. Somebody's gotta babysit. I'm going to be stay home.

Natalie: Oh. No. You're going to get your butt kicked.

Maya: Mom.

Natalie: Maya, you have to have a job before you can have a baby. To save up. Cause they need food. Otherwise they cry all the time like you. You were one colicky baby. Yeah, the question was kind of loaded.

Despite being taken aback by Maya's aspiration to be a young mother, Natalie makes it clear in the moment that this is not something she promotes. Even though children like Maya and Nathan may have lost some autonomy in the interviews with their mothers' presence, they were still able to communicate their thoughts. Additionally, they seem to have more control over what they do and do not accomplish at home in terms of learning; they resist efforts parents may exert in relation to reading. And, because their parents are tired from shift work in Maya's case, and dealing with younger siblings in Nathan's case, it is easier for parents to concede.

PSE Aspirations

It's like it's so hard for him and he gets really discouraged about that, but we try to instill like you need school. You need to go to school. You need to learn in school and you need to stay in school because I am making you go to college.

(Jennifer, James' mother)

Parents with PSE aspirations also want to see their children surpass their accomplishments. These parents promote the potential of education in helping children pursue an enjoyable career. This finding is especially prevalent among working-class parents who see their work in more instrumental terms. It pays the bills, but it is not necessarily the occupation they would choose, if they had more education or the opportunity to advance and feel challenged. Lily's (age 6)

mother, Cheryl reflects on schooling, her life, and how she would like things to be different for her three daughters:

Oh no, no, no, [laughs] I was not a good student at all. So, I think a lot of it is I get anxious because I want her to do better than I did because I know the downfall of not getting the education, not going through the schooling. You know because I don't mean to put myself down, but I'm a school bus driver at 38. I want her to be able to get the job that she wants . . . That was very important to me. From the beginning, I actually sat down when she was a year old and started her education plan. Uh, with all my kids, they all have a savings, education savings. And we also put away about, when we can, about five dollars a week for them for when they get older and when they start going to college. That way they can buy books. They can have the extra money if they need it.

The desire to help their children improve their lives heightens the pressure parents feel to help their children understand the importance of education. Cheryl describes working with Lily on reading and homework as “a fight”. However, she established it as part of their daily routine that must be done. In addition to reading with her three daughters, she describes herself as a reader, and says she reads in front of her children often. She also mentions the importance of reading during the summer with her children: “During the summer, if I don't read to them, they don't read at all”. Cheryl takes her children to the library and has them enrolled in low-cost gymnastics and swimming lessons near their house. Cheryl brings her daughters with her to visit at a local nursing home where she volunteers because as she notes: “everybody calls for volunteering now anyways”. Cheryl has regular communication with the school about Lily's progress. After struggling with Lily to complete homework, Cheryl set up consequences based on Lily's motivation and attitude toward homework. With this system, Lily either loses or gains free time with her friends.

Cheryl describes her own parents' approach to schooling as “hands off” and feels that if she had been pushed a little more, she would have done better herself. Consequently, she urges Lily to read and do her homework:

Well they were more hands off. They were like do your best that's all we ask of you. And, obviously, I'd like to be a bit more hands on. I find sometimes...I'm like okay just do it—you've got to do the work yourself. It's your responsibility but I'm finding like, for example, with Lily it's not working because, uh, she won't read. And she used to get her homework papers home and I'm like, okay well it's your responsibility to do them, you know you need to do this. And she's not—I find it's not working with her because she won't do the homework if she doesn't have somebody standing there going, you need to sit down and do it. So, I think it's changing me, so I want to make her. I want to kind of push her more and I keep telling the girls, I'm like, you need your education, you need to go through college, you need—if you want to do these jobs, if you want to be a vet you have to do the college, you have to do the education. You're going to be in school for a while.

Cheryl states that she does not want her children to repeat her mistakes and she wants to encourage her daughters to go further in schooling than she did. This includes Lily taking opportunities that are available to her now. For instance, Lily did not want to go to the Summer Literacy Camp because she found out a friend was not going. The day before the program started, her mother gave her an ultimatum: “And I actually told her if you don't go to the program you will be staying in the house the entire day for the program time because we're not, you know, this is a great opportunity for you and we're not throwing it away basically”. Lily went to the literacy camp and loved it. She was quite animated in her interview telling us what she learned at camp. Lily tells us that her mother reads to her and her sisters every night (figure 3).



Figure 3. Lily's photo to show her family's daily reading routine.

Beyond the context of home, parents who have PSE goals for their children worry about their communities the influence of the environment on their children's life choices. For example, Hailey – a single mother of two boys who works for the school board as an Educational Assistant⁴⁹ – expresses her concerns about the messages her sons receive in an area where they see many families “on government assistance”:

Well, I would love for them to go to a college or university, whichever they like. Depending on what it is they want to do. I want them to be able to succeed in life and to be able to go on and be independent on their own which you don't see very often. You know, if they have to live at home to pay off their debts, that's fine with me. They can sleep in the basement. But no, I would like them to be able to be financially stable on their own because there's a lot of people who can't, and they depend on the system and I don't want them to be like that, especially living in the area that we do. There's so many people who would bring them down from that and I think that's not something I would want for them. I want them to succeed in life and to be able to see the world and to travel and do whatever it is that they want because they can. But they need the education to be able to do that.

In addition to concerns that their children will view young motherhood and living on government assistance as viable options, pressure from the environment also comes through, in parents'

⁴⁹ The position of “Educational Assistant” (EA) falls well below teachers in terms of autonomy or pay. An EA helps students in a classroom alongside the teacher, but it is considered a low-level position by comparison.

experiences of precarious employment and scraping by each month. It was clear in the time I spent at the Summer Literacy Camps that job security was a concern among many participants, and parents with PSE aspirations see this as a potential safeguard against insecure employment. For parents, this is an experience that understandably comes up in their discussion of their hopes for their children. James' mother, Jennifer, who attended community college, talks about her own difficulties with employment and her desire for her sons not to struggle in life:

I want him to be better than a construction worker. Like I wouldn't care, you know either way, but I want him to have a good job. I want him to be okay... Like I went to – I did college. I didn't finish after high school, but I went back, and I got my legal secretary degree. But even with that because now that my youngest is going [to school] full-time, I can't even find a job with that. Like they want five plus years experience. I'm like dude, like what's the point of going to college when you can't even go out and get a job... Like I'm on ODSP⁵⁰ for right now and just living like month to month is brutal. It's just – it's horrible. And I don't want them to live like that.

Finally, unlike in middle-class neighbourhoods, in the communities where these families live, children are not surrounded by adults who have white collar, professional careers. Other than the two children who said they want to have the same career as one of their parents (Callie “nurse” and Alex “mechanic”) and the three children who listed teacher as a possible occupation (Callie, Zoe, and Adam), none of the children said that they knew a family member or friend who had the occupation that they named. Thus, children's and parents' aspirations are not necessarily based on having familiarity or firsthand experience or knowledge. However, most children select careers that they see around them in the community (e.g., teacher, police officer, hairstylist, construction worker, and working at a coffee shop) and others are inspired by jobs they see on television.

⁵⁰ Ontario Disability Support Program

Parental Responsiveness: Interactive Involvement in Schooling

Parental responsiveness refers to parents' interactive involvement in children's schooling – parent engagement. This interaction is evident in the home learning environment and parents' actions (e.g., learning activities, reading) related to their children's education.

HSE Aspirations

If you're not focused on your school, your kid's school then they're not going to focus. They're not going to want to go to school. So, I think you should be there 100%, as much as you can, not necessarily 100%. You know, make sure they get up for school, make sure they have their breakfast or whatever it is.

(Leah, Amelia's mother)

The seven parents who express a desire for their children to attain HSE describe their relationship with their child's school as good. Two parents describe minimal contact with their children's school. Chloe's father (discussed above) and Lucas' grandfather who thinks Lucas has speech and learning delays but is waiting for the school to initiate learning accommodations. The other five parents rely on the school for assistance with their children's reading difficulties and/or learning disabilities. They describe the difficulties they have helping their children with reading and homework. These parents mention that the teachers often ask them to read or to do extra work with their child. However, parents cite inconsistent work schedules, weariness, younger children, and frustration as reasons for disregarding these requests.

Amelia (age 8) works with the reading resource teacher at school and receives guidance about reading at home. Her mother, Leah, is a single parent who lives with her mother, sister, and Amelia. Leah is the first in her family to complete high school and she hopes that Amelia will do the same. Leah works full-time as a cashier. Leah only goes into the school upon the teacher's request. She shares that the school has asked her to read with Amelia more often, but that she just does not have the time. She sees parents' role in education to make sure children are

ready for school each day and complete their homework. Leah says the school has been very helpful in enlisting Amelia in a reading program and she has noticed improvement. Amelia told me that she would like to be a construction worker when she grows up. She mentions trying to read at home on her own, and she took a picture of the card that the school's reading resource teacher gave her (figure 4) to use at home when she comes to an unfamiliar word:

Amelia: I sound it out first, use all my strategies, I have two strategies – I have this one right here [points to the photo, figure 4] and I have another one that I did in grade 2 but I mostly like this one.

Interviewer: So, you go through all these steps? And the very last step is to ask somebody, is that the very last step?

Amelia: And that's when I do it.

Amelia says her mother will sit down and read with her if she is really struggling with a book.

She says she does not own very many books because they are too expensive, but that she goes to the public library almost every week with her mother.

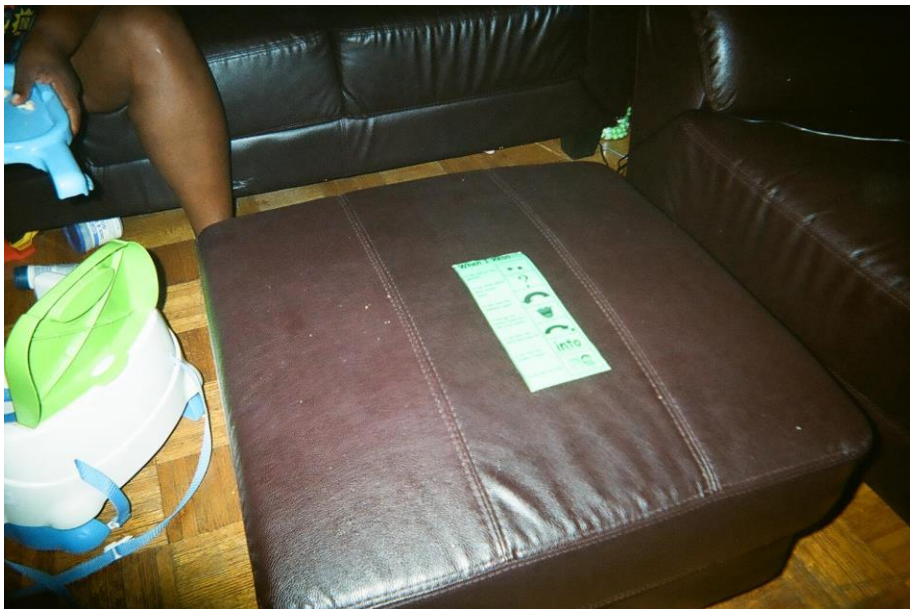


Figure 4. Amelia's card from the reading resource teacher.

In contrast, Jacob's (age 8) mother, Mary is the only parent with HSE aspirations who describes the parent's role in education as equal to the school and she uses the word

“partnership” to describe that relationship. Mary has a college diploma and was previously employed as a personal support worker. Mary was proactive in getting her son the help that he needs prior to entering school. She has PSE aspirations for Jacob’s sisters, but high school completion plans for Jacob, because of his learning disabilities. At the time of the interview, Mary was separated from the father of her three children and had primary custody of them. Mary started going to a Family Literacy Centre (FLC) and Baby’s Best Start Program (BBSP) when her daughters were babies and Jacob was a toddler, and she got her children into a free preschool program. An employee at BBSP suggested that she take Jacob to speech therapy and socialization classes and provided her with the necessary information. At the FLC, she said the staff member there was always bringing her pamphlets regarding free programs she could get her kids into and helping her find transportation.

After speech therapy and further testing, Jacob was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; Mary notes that he struggles with reading. Mary describes difficulty in getting Jacob to read at home, so now she turns off the volume on the TV and puts closed captioning on to get him reading. She buys him Lego themed reading books, anything that will spark his interest in reading. Mary explains that she asked the school to test him for learning disabilities, but she was informed that the school does not do this until grade three: “He’s going into grade three this year. I’ll be standing there going ‘When can we test him? I’d like him on the list now’.” As co-ordinator of the school snack program, Mary is at the school often and describes herself as “on-call” for her children at any time. Jacob took a lot of pictures of his favorite TV shows on the TV screen and he says his mother and aunt help him with reading at home. However, he does not initiate reading on his own.

On the whole, parents with HSE aspirations align with Lareau's (2011) "accomplishment of natural growth" logic of parenting. In this, the school's role is to teach children and parents are responsible for loving the child and providing basic needs such as clothing, shelter, and food. Even though Leah is not very proactive in her daughter's education, Amelia is able to use reading strategies she learned at school. Amelia does not read much at home, apart from reading assigned by teachers. This is common among the children whose parents have HSE aspirations. If parents or teachers are not requiring home reading, very few children read on their own.

PSE Aspirations

I try to engage as much as possible in their school lives because I know what goes on in there and I want to make sure that they're getting out of it what they need to get out of it . . . I'd love for them to love what they do, and I think education is the only way.

(Hailey, Dylan's mother)

Of the 17 families in my sample who have PSE aspirations for their children, 11 engaged in *both* school and home learning. These 11 parents share that their children also have reading setbacks and/or learning disabilities, but most of them describe an interconnected approach between what happens at school and at home with their child's learning. For example, Elizabeth and her common-law husband have three daughters and earn less than \$30,000. Elizabeth has a high school diploma and works in hospitality at the local university. To Elizabeth, parent engagement means being there, helping with homework, doing activities, and having conversations. She feels that the school's role is to "provide a safe environment for my child to learn to the best of their ability" and the parent's role is to "start them out with the moral fiber and the standard, expectations, that kind of thing and reinforce what the teachers teach . . . if I didn't do my work properly, then the school can't do their job properly. You know like all cogs in the wheel have to be turning in the same direction".

Elizabeth's middle daughter, Evie (age 7), attended the Summer Literacy Camp. Evie was having trouble with reading, writing, and even though her language grades in the previous year were As and Bs, Elizabeth is concerned about her reading comprehension. The routine during the school year is that Evie comes home and does her reading independently and then her parents help her with her reading response questions assigned by the teacher. There are only two reading responses required by the teacher each week, but Elizabeth has Evie complete five for extra practice. Elizabeth has conversations with her daughter about school. She checks in with teachers often and chats with them in the mornings before school. Video games are only allowed on weekends and they are a reward for having a good week at school behavior-wise (e.g., Elizabeth says Evie can be silly in class sometimes and laugh at inappropriate moments or talk too much).

For home activities, Elizabeth sings, reads, and has puppet and stuffed animal shows with her daughters. A typical summer day with no summer camp includes getting outside and walking, riding bikes, or skip rope, and getting together with friends in the afternoon to play or go to a public pool. When asked how she comes up with the ideas for activities to do with her children, she says: "I kind of did all the things I wish my parents had done with me". As a child, Elizabeth was diagnosed with dysphonetic dyslexia; Elizabeth's parents struggled to teach her. She shared that she did not learn how to read completely on her own until she was almost twelve. She "lost the drive" to continue with her schooling because of the frustration she and her parents felt with schoolwork. As a result, she pushes through with her children's schooling because she does not want them to feel exasperation or to give up on school. Elizabeth states her primary role is to make sure that her children are successful and have the best opportunities. She says this is the reason why she emphasizes education and regular reading at home:

Yeah, yeah, I don't want to look back and think I could have done so much more if I was given a little bit more motivation, and instead of pouring that energy into myself and making my life super great you know and missing time with my kids, I'd rather just invest in them and give them that. Yeah, they're my investment. I want to see them smile. I don't know. Isn't that what every parent wants?

Elizabeth describes Evie as a “self-motivated” child who reads every day on her own. In addition, one parent always reads with her at bedtime. Evie confirmed this in her interview and came across as a very confident child. She describes her trip to a nearby theme park and family trips to the beach. Evie sees herself as a reader and brings a book with her in a purse wherever she goes. She says she used to dislike reading but now she reads all the time. She says her mom and dad taught her how to read, and that she still needs help sometimes when she reads chapter books: “There is a lot of hard words so, sometimes I sound with mom and dad and sometimes I sound them out because some are really small words that I can sound out but some of them are really big.”

The parents in my sample with PSE aspirations and high engagement align more closely with Lareau's (2011) description of middle-class “concerted cultivators”, even though many of them could be considered working class or poor. They see their children as an investment and demonstrate their high expectations for their children in their actions. In these families, for the most part, children engage in home reading willingly. Anthony (age 8), whose mother is an early childcare educator, is the only child who is completely resistant to his mother's efforts to read at home. He noted in the interview that he hates reading, never reads at home, and is at the bottom of his class. Understandably, the children who fight reading at home may struggle with it the most, but many of these parents persist in working with their children to improve their literacy skills.

Because higher parent engagement is often associated with mother’s education (see Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015), table 4 compares the children and parents who are engaged in both school and home learning activities by parents’ aspirations and mother’s education. Even though the families in this sample are largely lower-class, the higher-engaged parents who have PSE aspirations generally have education that involves trade school, some college and higher.

Table 4. High Engagement at Home and School by Parents’ Aspirations and Mother’s Education

Mother’s highest level of education	HSE Aspirations		PSE Aspirations	
	Parents (n=2)	Children (n=1)	Parents (n=11)	Children (n=11)
Some high school	1	-	-	-
High school	-	1	2	3
Some college or trade school	-	-	2	4
College	1	-	6	3
University	-	-	1	1

*Note: Parents and children in this chart are not all from the same family. Some parents have children who are not engaged and three children who are highly engaged have parents who are not.

In four of the less engaged families with PSE aspirations, English is their second language. For these parents, even though their engagement at the school is low (e.g., they rarely talk to the teacher, they do not attend many school events) and they are often unable to help with reading or schoolwork at home, they have high educational expectations for their children. In fact, for two children – Jasmyn and Oliver – parents mention university as the only option for future education; they see no barriers to this coming to fruition. As a first-generation immigrant to Canada, Bao relates his father’s message about schooling in Vietnam to his son Oliver: “Like my father always says, ‘School is the key to open to your future.’ So, that’s what we were taught, and I teach them the same thing”. He shares that even though he and his wife did not go to university, their extended family attended university and have professional careers. In my lively interview with Oliver (age 7), he describes how his father prompts him to complete math workbooks on the weekends and he lets him play what Oliver calls “mideo” games (math +

video) as a reward. Since I knew about this emphasis on math, I asked Oliver what his father thinks of his plans to become a race car driver. Oliver replied that he has not talked about jobs with either of his parents, but he has discussed higher education with his uncle. In relating his conversation with his uncle about his daughter (Oliver's cousin) who attends an American college, Oliver told me that he was going to go to university and work hard to get a high GPA. Additionally, Oliver shared that his parents ensure he always finishes his homework; if he needs help, he asks his older brother or sister.

Jasmyn's mother, Riya, also describes a somewhat disconnected approach to schooling. Riya explains that Jasmyn (age 8) takes the initiative to read and do homework on her own. Riya and her husband are immigrants from India; they both work full-time. Riya also attends classes at a local community college. She only meets with the teacher when requested; since teachers do not express concerns with Jasmyn's progress, Riya and her husband only need to see the teacher once or twice each year. Jasmyn's parents buy her a large *Canadian Curriculum* workbook to keep her academically engaged during the summer. Jasmyn creates her own learning opportunities, such as creating a writing journal over the summer to record her ideas (figure 5). She described to me the many books she reads which include both picture books and beginner novels. Jasmyn's older sister assists her with schoolwork and reading unfamiliar words. In addition, Jasmyn attends her public library's reading program and cajoles her older sister to take her to the library to attend special activities there.



Figure 5. Jasmyn's summer journal.

The parents with university or college aspirations for their children describe their efforts at school or home in helping their children succeed academically. They also discuss creative ways of finding affordable extracurricular activities at the local community centre or asking a relative to bring their children to an event. Their children also exhibit resourcefulness in getting relatives or friends to take them to events. Also, most of these children see themselves as readers, read on their own, comply with parents' efforts at home-based literacy activities, and generate learning opportunities for themselves.

Discussion

Education scholars have puzzled over the consistent, quantitative finding that parents' aspirations predict student achievement (e.g., Fan, 2001; Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2009; Teachman & Paash, 1998). Specifically, the query is about the direction of the influence of parents' aspirations. Do high aspirations influence children's school performance? Or, do parents raise their expectations when children bring home good grades? Considering this puzzle, researchers speculate that parents' aspirations could translate into differences in home learning environments among families (Archer et al., 2012; Englund et al., 2004; Fan, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). In this paper, I focus on a group of mainly lower-class parents and children, asking them about distant future education plans. The longitudinal outcomes of my participants remain to be seen, but quantitative research on students' PSE trajectories demonstrates that low-income students rarely attend PSE (e.g., Finnie, 2012; Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2011). This study offers a glimpse into the early education plans of parents and children. Importantly, beyond the description of home environments and parent engagement by parents' aspirations, I present children's understanding of present and future education and consider the extent to which they absorb parents' aspirations and adjust their own school engagement accordingly.

This study shows that lower-class families with PSE aspirations engage more in their children's education than those with HSE aspirations. While parent involvement at school and at home are measured by quantitative research, this study reveals the micro-interactions that are connected to parents' aspirations such as the conversations they have with children about future and present schooling, the persistence that parents may have regarding daily reading, and the quality of the learning that happens in the home beyond homework assigned by the teacher. Additionally, I find that children sometimes internalize the messages they receive from parents

about education. Children of parents with PSE aspirations had positive approaches to schooling and accepted parents' efforts at literacy activities in the home if they saw themselves as good readers. Moreover, these children sometimes created learning opportunities for themselves such as taking the initiative to attend a library reading program, writing stories at home, or reading on their own.

Education has made inroads in offering parents more access to schools and teachers. In these changes, schools encourage more involvement from parents in general (e.g., participation in parent councils). More specifically, schools offer parents participation in important decisions regarding children's education such as the accommodation process (e.g., developing an IEP). However, even with the intention to include all parents, inequality often seeps back into the process through middle- and upper-class families gaining advantages for their children in various ways (see Aurini & Hillier, 2018 for a discussion); such as using their knowledge and resources to secure immediate academic accommodations rather than undergoing a long administrative process (e.g., Ong Dean, 2009). Indeed, even with expanding choices and opportunities in higher education (e.g., more funding options), the educational attainment gap by social class remains (Corak, Curtis, & Phipps, 2011).

Boudon's (1974) work is useful to understand why expanding options do not always result in upward social mobility for low-SES students. He proposes that logics of action at certain "branching points" – or educational decision-making points – have the greatest effect on social mobility. For example, Boudon's first branching point is the decision to choose either the academic or vocational stream in high school. This choice affects the variety of choices that a student would have at the next branching point. Additionally, all other factors being equal, children with high-SES backgrounds tend to have the most advantageous outcomes since they

most likely have the capital (e.g., economic resources, knowledge of each level of schooling, social connections) to make optimal choices at each point (Davies & Aurini, 2015). Building on Boudon's *Rational Action Theory*, Goldthorpe (1996) hypothesized that young people generally aspire to their parents' education level. In this, social mobility is not necessarily related to barriers or access to higher education but rather is explained by advantages or disadvantages associated with one's social class position (e.g., economic, cultural, and social resources; see also Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993). He proposes that class resources – particularly economic resources – influence the decisions families make at each branching point. A critique of Goldthorpe is that he places too much emphasis on families' economic resources without adequate consideration of cultural (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977, 1998) and social (e.g., Coleman, 1988) resources that families draw on at these crucial decision-making points (see Devine, 2004).

Notably, Boudon's (1974) first proposed branching point occurs at the end of elementary school. However, expanding educational options have presented branching points earlier in children's educational careers (e.g., tutoring, summer enrichment programs) (Davies & Aurini, 2015). While this paper does not examine a major decision-making point, I consider parents' and children's aspirations and the literacy related actions associated with those future hopes. Contrasting a classic view of cultural reproduction (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977), I find that lower-SES families are not lacking capital, and they do have "aspirational habitus" (discussed below). Additionally, a "rational action" view (e.g., Goldthorpe, 1996) that primarily believes family decisions are economically driven is too narrow and does not consider how people's experiences and contexts shape their educational and occupational horizons. I find that most low-SES parents in my sample do not state finances as a possible barrier to their children's future education. Rather, the children's temperaments, learning dispositions, and feelings about school may be

obstacles to PSE goals. Further, parents' own biographies are strong indicators of their involvement in their children's education and the hopes they have for their children's future.

Because the children in this study are emergent readers and many of them struggle with literacy, I consider parents' incremental decisions and/or actions in how to help their child learn to read and the provision of a home learning environment that acts as a stimulus for achievement during out-of-school times. Undoubtedly, crucial decision-making points (e.g., the choice of university major) influence the opportunities that students can pursue at each educational or vocational tier. Lareau (2015) argues that these important "life moments" have been focused on by educational researchers (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2014; Mullen, 2010). Yet, perhaps when considering children's educational (dis)advantages, it is the seemingly mundane events that can "create opportunities or solidify stages in a life path" (Lareau, 2015, p. 2). These everyday activities are difficult to capture in survey data, since it is most likely not one "magical practice" that predicts achievement but rather a slow accumulation of skills and the totality of many interactions between parents, children, and schools. Perhaps, the inculcation of the importance of education and the actions or messages that accompany that belief are subtly built on within the home. Moreover, it is plausible that children's personalities and attitudes toward schooling are influenced by parents' aspirations. Through interviews with parents and children, this paper offers a glimpse into the minute decisions made by parents and children to support literacy in the home.

Unsurprisingly, the parents in this study believe in the importance of education and want their children to be happy and successful in life. The parents who desire PSE for their children talk about its possibilities in providing secure employment and a satisfying career. In terms of home learning environments, data from this study support much of the pre-existing research

examining differences between lower- and middle-class families' perceptions of their role in education, and the actions that accompany that logic (e.g., Lareau, 2011). Often, lower-class parents are deferential to teachers and depend on them to provide guidance regarding home learning activities; they do not see the need to maintain contact with teachers unless they detect a problem with their child's progress (see Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016). Yet, my findings suggest that parents' orientation toward school engagement is not solely determined by social class but also varies by their aspirations for their children.

A large body of literature focuses on the transmission of capital (e.g., financial, social, cultural; see Bourdieu, 1998) from parents to children and the advantages this capital provides in educational processes and outcomes (e.g., Chin, 2000; Jaeger, 2011; Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011). In addition to economic advantages, students from middle- and higher-class families benefit from their use of social (e.g., von Otter & Stenberg, 2015) and cultural capital (e.g., Calarco, 2018). The embodiment of cultural capital is Bourdieu's (1984) notion of *habitus*, which can refer to the habits, skills, and dispositions from which a person may draw. Habitus can affect the level of comfort that person may feel in various social situations, including higher education. Habitus is not static; the theory allows for individual agency and change (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; see also Reay, 2004). For example, the successful and unsuccessful transformation of habitus is investigated in university students (Jack, 2014, 2016; Lehmann, 2012, 2013) and middle-class individuals (Baker & Brown, 2008; Reay, 2004) who grew up in working-class families. In relation to educational goals, habitus involves more than just stating that present and future education is important – the micro-processes of parents passing on advantages to their children are well-documented and yet we are still learning more

about the nuances of how these advantages are conferred (e.g., Calarco, 2018; Lareau, Adia Evans, & Yee, 2016; Tomanović, 2004).

Baker and Brown (2008) extend Bourdieu's notion of habitus and relate it to people's feeling of belonging (or not) in higher education. They propose the term *aspirational habitus* as a sense of the importance of higher education that children receive from their family and community. In this sense, it is not just an "aspiration", but rather an understanding throughout childhood that they would one day pursue PSE. Building on this theory, I find aspirational habitus surfacing in four ways among my participants: explicit, implicit, contextual and intergenerational. First, explicit aspirational habitus consists of direct messages that parents give their children about future education. Second, implicit aspirational habitus is indirect messages that parents give children through the home learning environment and its connection with their present education. Third, contextual aspirational habitus is comprised of messages that children receive from the community in which they live. Finally, intergenerational habitus is the role that parental education and their own biographies play in shaping how parents think. In these various reworkings of aspirational habitus, parents initiate a form of "anticipatory socialization" (Merton, 1949) and prepare children for higher educational pursuits.

First, explicit aspirational habitus was found in almost all the interviews but particularly among parents who have PSE aspirations for their children. It could be argued that this study is pre-mature and the children I interviewed are too young to seriously contemplate or talk about future educational plans. However, my interviews with children reveal the extent to which conversations about education occur at home. Parents' interviews further illuminate the details of these exchanges. For some families, it is evident that these conversations happened before and for others, the interviews incited conversations on this topic for the first time. Parents with HSE

aspirations use their own biographies to tell children “don’t be like me, finish high school”. Parents with PSE aspirations not only want their children to surpass their occupational status and achievements but to also understand that higher education might well be the key to rewarding and satisfying occupational experiences and heightened employment security (Tomanović, 2004; Ule et al., 2015). Consequently, parents with PSE aspirations talk to their children about more than their own regrets in their life choices; although, some participants feel this acutely. Rather, they emphasize the education children may need for their desired careers and the importance of going further in education as the surest strategy to have an enjoyable life. However, due to the age of children in this study, all parents admit that these conversations are at their beginning stages and will be more intentional as children get older. Presently, future education or careers are brought to the forefront when children talk about what they would like to be when they grow up, or when parents emphasize to children that doing well in schooling today will help them in the future (e.g., the importance of literacy or numeracy).⁵¹

Second, implicit aspirational habitus was clearly evidenced in parents’ and children’s descriptions of their school engagement and home learning environments. In examining parents’ interviews, like Lareau’s (2011) working-class parents, I find that parents with HSE aspirations are more apt to see a clear separation between their role and the school’s role. Parents offer emotional support in response to a child feeling that they are unsuccessful in school, or when the

⁵¹ Willis’ (1977) resistance theory suggests that working-class youths and their families reject the emphasis on higher education and the promotion of it as a vehicle to social mobility. Rather, education is viewed as incompatible with their possible future occupations and the kinds of behaviors and identities valued in their community (for a review, see Davies, 1995). In an empirical test of Willis’ theory with Ontario data, Davies (1995) finds that anti-school sentiments were more likely to be associated with gender – specifically at-risk and male students – than with social class. In a similar vein, I find that low-SES parents’ emphasis on PSE and the explicit messages that they communicate to their children is a desire that they would exceed their parents’ accomplishments; performing well in school is crucial to this expectation. Also, younger children (as opposed to Willis’ youths) tend to have more positive views of school. Further, Calarco (2018) finds resistance more frequently among middle-class students and working-class students are more compliant to teachers’ rules and expectations.

child encounters bullying (Gillies, 2006; Irwin & Elley, 2011). Any learning activities offered at home are often directed by the teacher in response to strengthening a child's vocabulary or reading comprehension (e.g., by asking a parent to work on high-frequency words with their child) (Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016; Lareau, 2011). However, children who exerted resistance and displayed frustration often thwarted parents' efforts. In this group, the children who were the most vocal in contesting homework and reading at home were boys who struggled with reading – akin to Davies' (1995) secondary students (as noted in the previous footnote).

In contrast, those who have PSE aspirations for their children are more likely to have an interconnected approach to school, instigate home learning activities, and discuss future education with their children (Lareau, 2011; Roksa and Potter, 2011). They were more prone to have reading embedded in their everyday schedule. Furthermore, because child interviews were conducted during summer vacation, it is even more evident how much reading occurs when teachers are not directing students and parents regarding the importance of reading at home. For all families, summer reading is not as consistent as reading during the school year, but parents with PSE aspirations appeared to sense the importance of summer reading. However, these activities are often captured in quantitative surveys. A key finding in my study that is unmeasured in surveys relates to child capital (the human, social, and cultural capital that a child possesses) and the connection between parents' aspirations, their persistence in presenting learning activities, and children's amenability to learning at home. Some of the children in these families demonstrate initiative in home-based literacy activities partially in providing opportunities for themselves through social connections (e.g., getting a relative to take them to the library) or through their compliance with adult-initiated routines (e.g., rules related to daily reading) (see also Chin & Phillips, 2004). Notably, in the absence of parents' aspirations – and

the actions related to these future hopes – children would not comply to these higher expectations since they would have nothing to comply with!

Third, contextual aspirational habitus is crucial to studying parents' and children's aspirations in the contexts where families live, learn, and make decisions (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014; Schneider, Hastings, & LaBriola, 2018). Studies have considered the ways in which middle-class parents choose where they live, including the schools and other resources available in a specific location (e.g., Lareau & Goyette, 2014). However, many of the families in this study do not have the luxury of being highly selective regarding the neighborhood where they live. The schools at both sites are new buildings with excellent facilities in terms of resources offered to families. One of the schools has a family literacy centre available to the community. For the most part, parents are satisfied with their neighbourhood schools; school quality was not raised as a concern. Instead, parents fret about their children's future education because they want them to live in a better neighborhood. In addition, they worry that the community they reside in will negatively influence their children's future education, such as children perceiving living on government assistance or becoming young mothers as normal. In this way, parents acknowledge children's agency in future education and recognize the barriers to PSE that children will encounter in their environment (e.g., peers, waning self-esteem in adolescence) (Irwin & Elley, 2011, 2013; Mayo & Siraj, 2015). Although, parents' aspirations for their children can serve as a protective factor against the various subcultures that would de-align students from schooling as a priority (e.g., street culture, peer groups; see for example Willis [1977] as discussed by Davies [1995]).

The parents in my sample hope that their children see their parents' lives and use their examples as impetus for upward social mobility. These aspirations are influenced by the context

in which children live. This is evident in the various careers children chose for their future occupation; they selected typical jobs in the community around them (e.g., firefighters, police officers, working at *Tim Hortons*). The children's plans are based on what they learn in the home and from the community around them. Middle-class children's social environment includes professionals with higher education and lower-class parents are often limited in the information that they have on PSE. Although some parents talk about the competitive job market, many are not aware of the differences in university majors and/or college programs and their potential in leading to secure employment (Walton Radford, 2013).

Fourth, intergenerational aspirational habitus considers the role that parents' education and their own biographies play in shaping how parents think about their children's education. In relation to their own upbringing, parent participants are divided: some state their own parents encouraged higher education and were supportive of them and those who felt that their parents did not support them or foster a positive outlook on education. Some are forging new ground in the type of involvement they have in their children's education. Many parents with PSE aspirations say they have invested more time and effort (e.g., reading with children, providing learning resources and activities at home) than their parents did with their education; possibly, in response to the changing ethos of what is expected of parents regarding their children's education (see Jezierski and Wall, 2017). In short, these parents may not be as highly engaged as higher-class parents as reported in other studies (e.g., parent council involvement, being a constant presence in the school; see for example Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009) but they see themselves as highly involved. This is an important point to make because it supports the notion that the social construction of "good parenting" implies different things for different families (see Gillies, 2005).

Beyond parents' narratives, parent education – particularly maternal education – has been cited as a strong predictor of children's achievement (e.g., Baker, 2018; Magnuson, 2007), attainment (e.g., Johnson and Hitlin, 2017; Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2011), involvement in extracurricular activities (e.g., Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015), and time spent in learning activities with children (Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012). While the two schools in the sample are situated in relatively economically depressed neighborhoods, there are parents in the sample who have a college or university education or are attending courses in night school. Some of these participants are experiencing downward mobility due to relationship break-up, divorce, illness, or the economy. Their economic prospects will likely improve once they find employment commensurate with their education (Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016). Parents' economic situations can be indicative of the material resources that are available to children in the home, and finances often dictate where families live. However, research finds that parent education influences how parents structure the home environment and interact with their children to encourage achievement (e.g., Davis-Kean, 2005). Further, Weininger, Lareau, and Conley (2015) find that maternal education predicts the activities that children are enrolled in, more so than income. Thus, economic difficulties do not necessarily limit parents' involvement in children's educational growth.

We know from numerous parent engagement studies that parents who have attended college or university often hold high educational aspirations for their children (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2015; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Englund, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Moreover, these parents are more able to align with institutional expectations (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Calarco, 2014, 2018; Lareau, 2000, 2011), feel more confident in helping their children with homework, and use more positive kinds of help (Dumont et al., 2014). For the most part, the parents in my

sample who have some post-secondary education along with PSE aspirations for their children are more engaged in school and home activities. Also, the children of these families are engaged in the learning opportunities presented to them by teachers or parents. Chin and Phillips's (2004) use the term "child capital" to theorize children's acceptance or resistance to the learning opportunities afforded by their parents and others (see also Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014). In a previous analysis of the entire child interview sample, my colleague and I find while some participants are proactive in the learning opportunities they provide for themselves (e.g., reading on their own, keeping a journal, persuading an older sibling to walk them to the library), many are dependent on the structure and resources provided by parents and schools (Hillier & Aurini, 2018a). However, important to this study, parents' aspirations seem to have an effect on the acceptance of learning activities promoted at home and at school.

This study presents the connection between social class and aspirations through the early perspectives of parents and children. Previous quantitative research suggests that lower-class high achieving children have more enriched home learning environments (Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Roksa & Potter, 2011; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Conversely, this study finds that the lower-class parents who had PSE aspirations for their children do not indicate that their children are high achievers any more than those with HSE aspirations. Further, children from both groups experience reading difficulties and setbacks. Yet, despite these struggles, there is a subset of parents who are determined that their children will attend PSE. In this sample, there is no indication that parents' aspirations wholly depend on academic achievement.

The findings in this paper point to several implications for education policy and programming. Policies that seek to encourage parent engagement should consider providing school- and community-based resources and information families need to support their children's

education. Compared with higher-SES families, lower-class families do not have as much capital (economic, cultural, social) to activate in providing learning opportunities for their children. Research in programs that support students such as extracurricular activities and peer programs emphasize the potential they have in raising social and cultural capital (e.g., Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Cox, 2017; Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014). Also, lower-class parents whose children attend pre-school and extracurricular activities tend to be more engaged and learn from other parents in these programs building social capital (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Parents in the present study report feeling empowered when school personnel included them in educational decisions (e.g., changes made to a child's reading program) and regarded them as the experts in their children's lives.⁵²

In addition, we observed the summer programs in the broader Summer Literacy Camp project not only offering learning activities for children but also parent sessions that built social and cultural capital. Recent research finds that working-class and poor parents are more open to schools offering parenting classes than their middle- and upper-class counterparts, who have more social connections to draw on for advice when they encounter difficulties (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014). Further, summer learning camps keep children and parents "plugged in" during the unstructured summer months (Hillier & Aurini, 2018a; see also Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001). Even home-based summer reading interventions significantly benefit lower-income children (Kim & Quinn, 2013). In the larger study related to this project, an evaluation of the Summer Literacy Camp finds that even a short two- or three-week program over summer vacation can slow or reduce summer setback for lower-SES students (e.g., Davies and Aurini, 2010-2014). Lower-SES families need the learning opportunities and resources, that schools and

⁵² This relates to DiMaggio's (1982) notions of cultural mobility; that schools can be places of building family capital.

communities provide. Children – particularly those who are motivated, resourceful, and informed – can draw from these resources too. In most families, it was the child who came home with the information on the Literacy Camp and told parents that they wanted to go. In the other cases, teachers targeted the parents of struggling readers and emphasized the benefits of the program for their children.

More specific to this study, educational policy and programs can target aspirational habitus at the elementary school age rather than waiting until secondary school. Thus, to my dimensions of aspirational habitus proposed above, I would insert a fifth dimension from Reay, David and Ball (2001): institutional habitus. They theorize that institutional habitus – the influence of school and peer groups – is an intervening factor accounting for the effects an educational organization can have on high school students’ decisions about PSE. This theory can be extended to future research on the possibility of schools being places of social mobility (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982) for elementary aged children. In relation to early literacy, this study revealed the importance of children’s ability to see themselves as readers. Schools, and particularly educators, have an integral role in helping struggling readers perceive themselves as good readers and students. Robinson and Harris’ (2014) focus groups with university graduates revealed that the perception of being “good students” was an important part of their decision to continue on with schooling.

Examining institutional habitus at the elementary level would answer a call for research on the other ways that schools may be compensatory beyond academic outcomes (see Downey, 2018). Also, the concept of institutional habitus could be extended to other initiatives such as university and college outreach to primary school children, such as sports programs, campus tours, and science in the classroom. Career days could bring in professionals from the

community to talk about their work. These outreach efforts could build aspirational habitus and provide children with the opportunities to see various careers and understand more about PSE, such as the various types of degrees or diplomas they can pursue with university or college credentials. Additionally, Bozick and colleagues (2010) find that when secondary school students maintain long-term PSE aspirations, they are more likely to attend post-secondary schooling. Therefore, schools and teachers could foster this longevity in lower-class students' and parents' high aspirations by providing information and support (e.g., addressing their learning needs, offering learning opportunities outside of school time) (see also Khattab, 2015).

Limitations

Three main limitations should be considered when evaluating this study. First, when talking about children's aspirations, a longitudinal research design would be valuable. There will be developmental differences in future plans as children get older and there could be changes to how parents see the educational prospects of their children as they progress through schooling. Critiques of research in aspirations indicate that participants are generally optimistic about their future when asked at one point in time, but longitudinal results can measure sustained confidence or a decline in optimism (Raleigh & Kao, 2010).

Second, a large majority of the children in this study come from disadvantaged families; this study design is useful for within-class comparisons but difficult to compare between social classes. Other researchers have found children from middle-class families have more resources at their disposal, know how to utilize capital to their advantage (Chin & Phillips, 2004), and are coached by parents to persist in obtaining help from the classroom teacher when needed (Calarco, 2011, 2014). As such, it is reasonable to assume that middle-class children have higher

aspirations and know more about the type of education or training they would need to pursue a certain career. Also, middle-class parents have been found to see their children as “projects” to be honed and developed (Lareau, 2011; Vincent & Ball, 2007; Zelizer, 1994). A middle-class child could declare she wants to be an engineer and consequently her parents might enroll her in a summer camp that focuses on science and technology; this camp experience might solidify this interest.

Third, I focus on social class because it predicts parents’ aspirations; I lacked an adequate sample to consider race/ethnicity or immigrant families. Researchers have found that parents’ aspirations differ by race/ethnicity and immigration status (e.g., Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014; Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Li, 2004; Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Two children in my sample – from first generation immigrant East Asian and South Asian families – were highly engaged in schooling themselves but had parents that were not engaged in school or at home literacy activities. Dumont and colleagues (2014) find that students whose parents are immigrants experience both restriction in their education (e.g., losing privileges for low achievement) and positive support (e.g., rewards for doing well), and less parental responsiveness regarding homework. Future research could examine this phenomenon further among immigrant families: how high aspirations turn into high achievement in students without high levels of “parent engagement” (as it is commonly defined in Western nations). Perhaps implicit aspirational habitus is more prevalent in these families – the understanding that PSE goals are expected above all else.

Conclusion

As Devine (1998) notes, it is not fair to say that working-class families have a “poverty of aspirations”, but they do make decisions within the context of their lives as they understand them (31; see also Devine, 2004 and Hoxby & Avery, 2013). Families act within their current social landscape and within their previous schooling experiences. Children’s and parents’ discussions are nested in their experiences and environment. The primary focus of aspirational research has been on parents and adolescents (e.g., Hoxby & Avery, 2013). This study indicates that parents and children start talking about the possibility of PSE at early ages. However, leaving direction about post-secondary education solely to parents and children will only continue to exacerbate the gaps in lower- and middle-class PSE attendance due to the inequalities in capital (Walton Radford, 2013). Reaching both children and parents at earlier ages with the resources to support their aspirations will help to build aspirational capital in lower-class families. Future research can consider the possibilities that curricular and extracurricular programs have on strengthening parents’ and children’s future educational horizons.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion: Accounting for Quantity and Quality in Parent Engagement

Conventional wisdom maintains that increased parental engagement in children's schooling equals increased academic achievement (Levitt & Dubner, 2005). If this is true, the increase in parents' involvement as evidenced in time diary data should be an indicator that increased time with young children should directly result in higher educational outcomes *and* achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students should be narrowing (e.g., Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2015; Ramey & Ramey, 2010; Schaub, 2015). However, this is not the case. Rather, achievement gaps are growing, not decreasing, particularly for children from lower-SES backgrounds (e.g., Reardon, Valentino, and Shores, 2012).

The three papers in this thesis offer a different perspective on parent engagement in children's literacy achievement with the objective of providing a more thorough understanding of a phenomenon that has gained traction as a way to boost children's educational outcomes. As a result of this mixed-methods seasonal research design, I expand on previous theoretical understandings of parents' involvement in their children's schooling and I offer policy suggestions in an effort to strengthen school policy and programs offered to families. In this conclusion, I present a summary of my main findings, policy recommendations, and suggestions for future research on parent engagement.

Summary of Main Findings

The first paper tests the hypothesis that family resources and practices positively affect literacy achievement within a seasonal research design. For the first outcome measure – snapshot of

children's cumulative learning in the spring – only three out of 15 parent engagement measures are positive predictors of children's spring literacy outcomes. In relation to the "cultivation ethic", parents' aspirations, home resources and discussions of school with children all have positive associations with children's spring literacy scores. Conversely, there are three measures that show substantial negative effects for spring literacy outcomes: time spent on homework, hiring a tutor, and meetings with the teacher. These forms of involvement can be described as a "realist reaction" where parents' react to child's academic achievement. In the "expressive logic" (e.g., volunteering, school council and attending school events), there are no significant effects on spring literacy scores. The second outcome measure of children's summer literacy growth or loss is even less encouraging for the promotion of parent engagement practices. No family resource and practice measures predict summer literacy growth/loss. In interactions of socioeconomic status (SES) with each parent engagement measure, only volunteering at school was significant for spring literacy outcomes, this form of involvement benefitted lower-SES families. Overall, family SES remains a powerful predictor of achievement for both spring literacy and summer growth.

In the second paper, I use the categories of home and school involvement found in Ontario's Ministry of Education parent engagement policy. These categories provide a guideline for analysis of 90 parent and 37 school staff (teachers, administrators, support staff) interviews to examine parents' and teachers' alignment with each other and policy. I present my results in the three mechanisms of parent engagement introduced in chapter two: cultivation ethic, realist reaction, and expressive logic. I find that parents are more likely to discuss their engagement within categories in the cultivation ethic and realist reaction which are generally home-based activities. Conversely, teachers place more emphasis on school-based categories in the

expressive logic. Further, within each mechanism there are nuances between working- and middle-class parents and how they perceive certain types of engagement such as homework help and reading with children (e.g., frustrating versus enjoyable). I find parents' involvement in schooling is largely informed by their past experiences in schooling, availability, and sense of efficacy. Parents' enactment of capital (e.g., social, cultural) remains crucial to home reading practices, learning resources, approach to discipline and homework help, and connections with educators (see Lareau, 2011). For working-class parents, capital provided by the school such as information and resources to help their children and connections to community services are important in facilitating their feelings of efficacy in helping their children. For the most part, educators' interviews provide predictable definitions of parent engagement that were closely aligned to the terminology used in the policy. However, experienced teachers and those who taught in low-SES contexts were more likely to promote schools as sources of building capital in families and fostering relationships with parents through more unconventional means. I find that the policy is viewed by these educators as an opportunity to focus less on "recalibrating" parenting practices and instead utilize "institutional discretionary spaces" to actively construct what parent engagement might mean for their school.

For the final paper in this "sandwich" thesis, I centre in on a consistently strong predictor of academic achievement: parents' aspirations. To do this, I draw on 27 photo-interviews with children (aged 5-8; including three sets of siblings) paired with 24 semi-structured interviews with their parents. In analyzing parents' and children's understandings of future education, I examine the differences between parents who hope their child will obtain a high school education (HSE) and parents who seek post-secondary education (PSE). My findings illuminate the early conversations about future education that occurs between parents and children. Overall,

parents with HSE aspirations feel that school is important, but they talk less about future education and are generally less involved in their children's schooling. Conversely, parents with PSE aspirations for their children have more conversations about future education with their children and these parents display a more interconnected approach with their child's education at school and at home. They link schooling to future socioeconomic mobility, job security and satisfaction with their career and lives. I also find an internalization process occurring with children where higher parental aspirations positively influence children's approach to schooling. Regardless of academic achievement, children are more likely to comply with literacy activities presented by parents or create learning opportunities for themselves when they see themselves as good readers and are less frustrated with reading.

Each of these papers highlights both the effects and mechanisms of parent engagement from the perspectives of three key stakeholders in schooling processes: children, parents, and teachers. My first paper identifies the parent engagement measures that positively and negatively predict children's literacy achievement, my second paper considers parents' and teachers' understandings of parent engagement and their alignment with policy and each other, and my third paper illuminates parents' and children's future aspirations and how these goals influence home learning environments. In each paper, I make recommendations for school policy and practice based on my findings. A summary of these suggestions is outlined below.

Summary of Policy Recommendations

In their book, *Freakonomics*, Levitt and Dubner (2005) examine data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study and conclude: "But it isn't a matter of what you do as a parent; it's who you are" (p. 175). Essentially, parents' education and income matter more for children's academic

outcomes than what parents do to foster cognitive growth. This is counter to what parent engagement policies are promoting – the more you do the better your child’s academic chances will be. With this in mind, I take a cautionary approach to providing school policy and programming recommendations based on my findings. I realize that motivations behind parents’ involvement are mixed and this is reflected in the three mechanisms discussed in chapters two and three; some parents are “cultivators”, some parents are “reactors”, and others are motivated by the “expressive logic”.

While the parents who do engage in such practices may improve their children’s academic outcomes, there is less support that externally-driven school policies can effectively change parents who otherwise do not engage in such parenting practices. That is, programs that attempt to alter parents who do not “naturally” subscribe to these practices or have the skill-set to effectively execute these practices have not managed to improve children’s academic outcomes (see Furstenberg, 2011 and Hartas, 2015). As Furstenberg (2011) argues, “[I]t is unrealistic to build a policy to reduce educational inequalities by mobilizing parents to adopt and mimic the techniques of most motivated and capable families . . . The less affluent – especially low-income – families need access to better schools, better trained teachers, and more instruction time to compensate for skills not acquired in the home” (see also Phillips, 2011).

Research on parent engagement often presents it in an “either-or quality”; it is either discussed in an uncritical fashion acclaiming the benefits of parent engagement, or it is portrayed in a completely critical light noting how it benefits some groups over others (Cucchiara & Horvat, p. 999). Thus, in my suggestions, I try to take a balanced view of parent engagement. That said, I present the following summary of suggestions for policy and programming with the understanding that social inequality cannot be solely addressed at the school or family level.

Certainly, identifying literacy problems earlier in children's academic careers may help to stem some SES effects in literacy achievement. However, it has been noted that there are SES gaps before children even enter school (e.g., Janus & Duku, 2007; Nolan et al., 2011). Therefore, along with educational support for low-SES children, systemic inequalities in society also need to be addressed. For example, providing decent-wage jobs, secure employment for low-SES families, and high-quality preschool care are three areas that could be improved upon (see Hartas, 2015, Holliday et al., 2014, and Bradbury, Corak, Waldfogel, & Washbrook, 2015 for a full discussion). Nevertheless, the recommendations that I make below are based on what schools can do to help families in these emergent literacy years. The policy recommendations in each paper can be summarized within the three mechanisms of parent engagement first presented in chapter two.

Cultivation Ethic

In chapter two, my quantitative findings point to three positive predictors of cumulative literacy achievement which are related to the cultivation ethic: parents' aspirations, home resources, and discussions of school with children. These forms of engagement are related to parents' SES. Lower-SES families often do not have as much capital (economic, cultural, social) to activate in providing learning opportunities for their children. Policies that focus on closing achievement gaps or even opportunity gaps can consider ways to provide learning resources in disadvantaged communities (e.g., travelling lending libraries, sports teams within walking distance). Also, since discussing school with a child was found to positively influence cumulative literacy scores, after-school activities or homework programs could add a component to their agenda where leaders engage in conversation with each child about what the child is learning.

I suggest, in chapter four, that educational policy and programs can target aspirational habitus at the elementary school age. “Institutional habitus” – the influence of school and peer groups – can be an intervening factor where schools can influence and provide information to children about future occupations and post-secondary education (see Reay, David, & Ball [2001] for their discussion of aspirational habitus with secondary school students). Also, institutional habitus could be developed by other initiatives such as university and college outreach to primary school children (e.g., sports programs, campus tours, and science in the classroom). Field trip guides and guest speakers that are a regular part of the school year could incorporate a discussion on their own experiences and the education that they needed to obtain that career.

Realist Reaction

In chapter two, I find negative associations between spring literacy scores (cumulative learning) and three parent engagement measures: time spent on homework, hiring a tutor, and meetings with the teacher. I proposed that the reason for these negative results are possibly attributed to the fact that parents are reacting to their children’s poor academic performance. My qualitative findings reveal that low-SES families are reacting by increasing help with homework, having more meetings with teachers to discuss progress, and sometimes by reading more with children. These parents express a need for more information from teachers on how to effectively help their children. Additionally, children are important actors in this process as they can comply with or reject parents’ and schools’ efforts to engage them with learning. To make parent-teacher meetings more productive, perhaps teachers could have a list of resources (online resources and community programs) available for parents to take home.

In terms of homework and/or reading at home, schools could offer concrete examples and tools easily accessible for families – especially for those families who do not attend school events. For example, an online video with suggestions on how to effectively read with children in a way that helps them feel successful in the process rather than frustrated. As opposed to simply focusing on “decoding” the words (e.g., sounding out new words) research suggests that “meaning-related talk” – discussing a child’s interests in relation to the story – during parent-child shared book reading lengthens the time that children will maintain interest in reading (Hindman, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014). Further, teachers could provide some useful information to children themselves. Amelia, one of the child participants discussed in chapter four, uses a laminated card she received from her reading resource teacher who runs a special out-of-classroom reading group for struggling readers. This card has the steps that Amelia should follow when she comes across an unfamiliar word. Parent interviews reveal that these programs often have waiting lists. To help children in the meantime, teachers could not only teach these strategies in their classrooms (which some of them do, according to child interviewees), but they could also provide these laminated step-by-step reading cards for all students to bring home.

In an ethnographic study of children’s help-seeking behavior in classrooms, Calarco (2018) finds that, like their parents, working-class children are less likely to actively seek help in the classroom. On the other hand, she finds that middle-class children negotiate advantages (e.g., clarification during a test that an answer is correct) for themselves by following their parents’ coaching and seeking help in the classroom by any means necessary. She suggests that middle-class parents should be encouraged by schools to adopt more equitable practices – such as not intervening to gain special privileges for their children. However, realizing that this would be difficult to implement on a large scale, she suggests that teachers start saying no to students’ and

parents' requests. To add to this, I find that teachers in low-SES schools sometimes use creative methods to help families. Parent engagement policy provides the permission for "institutional discretionary spaces" for teachers in disadvantage communities to find new ways beyond the traditional parent engagement strategies to engage families. To encourage this extra help to lower-SES families, school boards and principals can supply easily accessible information to teachers regarding school and community resources to offer families assistance.

Expressive Logic

In the quantitative findings, an interaction of SES and volunteering has a slight benefit for lower-SES students' cumulative literacy scores (spring scores). This could be related to the social and cultural capital that parents may receive from connecting with teachers more often and observing classroom interactions and activities (see also DeCusati & Johnson, 2004; Lee & Fischer, 2017; McNeal, 1999). Qualitative interviews with parents who do not volunteer revealed that they feel they may be missing out on some insider information garnered from being in the school or classroom on a regular basis. Further, parents who do volunteer appeared to be more comfortable with approaching teachers and principals with requests for help or information to help their child. If there are indeed benefits to volunteering that relate to academic outcomes, perhaps schools could make volunteering more accessible such as allowing younger siblings to join parents when they chaperone a field trip. Also, several low-SES parents said they did not volunteer because no one asked them. Teachers could make a point of calling parents they do not see on school grounds to see if they would like to volunteer at any point in the school year and what types of activities interest them.

In teachers' interviews, there is an emphasis on school-based forms of involvement as an avenue to get parents in the school and feeling comfortable with school staff. However, the parent interviews suggest that they are concentrated on home-based efforts. Realistically, if teachers are waiting for all low-SES parents to eventually enter the school, it will likely not happen. Parent engagement policy and efforts to get parents involved in school councils could be more focused on helping parents with what they are doing at home. Or, more effectively, providing school-based programs for children that do not rely on parents' efforts alone (see discussion on summer learning below).

A Note on Summer Learning

There are no significant parent engagement measures in my multilevel regression models with summer literacy growth as the outcome. Overall, the quantitative findings flag the importance of SES as a predictor of achievement and this is especially pronounced when children are not in school. Summer learning research points to the compensatory effect – or at the very least a partial compensatory effect – that schools have on low-SES children's achievement (Davies & Aurini, 2015; Downey, 2016, 2018). Since the story here seems to come back to students' SES backgrounds, emphasizing other interventions in literacy achievement such as summer literacy camps, after-school homework support, or extending the school year would be beneficial. Summer literacy programs often provide children with books, technological resources, and special day trips that might be scarce for students from disadvantaged families (Davies & Aurini, 2010-2014; Kim & Guryan, 2011). Also, home-based summer literacy programs that involve both parents and teachers have been shown to be effective (Kim & Quinn, 2013).

In my observations and conversations with parents and teachers, it is evident that the SLP provides an atmosphere for children to build their literacy skills and for parents to interact with teachers in a setting that is more relaxed than during the school year. Additionally, it is clear from the interviews with children that these camps kept them “plugged in” to reading specifically, and learning in general, during the summer months when they might otherwise “check out” (Hillier & Aurini, 2018a; see also Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997). This is especially true for those children who do not see themselves as good readers and who do not receive that extra push at home to read. Also, interviews at the SLP confirmed the involvement of other family members in children’s lives. It would be beneficial for summer programs – and other programs such as after-school homework clubs – to tap into these other people in children’s lives who bring them to these programs and possibly support them in other ways such as encouraging future education and talking to children about school.

In terms of the effectiveness of summer literacy interventions, Davies and Aurini (2016) find in the longitudinal quantitative results for the Ontario Summer Learning Program that the literacy growth students experience during the summer is positive, but not strong or consistent. And, these effects do not necessarily benefit the poorest students (Davies & Aurini, 2015; Davies, Aurini, & Milne, 2016). Also, they find that summer camp attendees keep pace with the control group and have improved school attendance (compared to controls) but they fall behind the control group in school grades. Conversely, the research team’s experience “on the ground” tended to be more consistently positive (see also Milne, Davies, Aurini, & Hillier, 2017). There are two possible reasons for this: 1) The STAR testing used to evaluate students’ literacy skills did not align with the curriculum in the summer programs; so, the positive effects are underestimated; and 2) The program had more of a *qualitative* positive effect. That is, its main

effects engaged a population of students and parents who might otherwise be disengaged during the summer months (e.g., Hillier & Aurini, 2018a).⁵³ Therefore, as Davies and Aurini (2016) suggest, support for those students in the summer camps could be extended in the school year to ensure the positive benefits of the program are not lost or diminished. Additionally, students attending these camps in consecutive years tend to benefit more. So, it is recommended that schools encourage previous attendees to return each summer.

Summary of Main Contributions

This study contributes to the parent engagement literature in the four main ways. First, it provides a framework for investigating parent engagement in a seasonal learning design. Future research could test my findings further by examining parent engagement and its influence on summer verses cumulative or school-year outcomes. It could also be explored through the three mechanisms of parent engagement. Particularly, longitudinal research would be useful in examining the effect of the various parent engagement mechanisms. The non-findings in this study – especially for summer growth – actually challenge a lot of what we hear about parent engagement. Are we putting a lot of resources into something that is not doing much?

Second, the mixed-methods approach of this study provides an opportunity to qualitatively explore both the findings and non-findings in the quantitative analysis. Strictly qualitative studies, provide us with an insightful look into poor, working- and middle-class homes, but the qualitative approach may not allow the researcher to verify that all the things considered an advantage influence achievement. It may be that in the long-range these things are consequential, but it is difficult to detect in a short-time frame. Quantitative research

⁵³ This discussion expands on reflections on the SLP in email correspondence with Scott Davies (July 30, 2018).

alone can only get at the quantity of a form of parent engagement such as time spent on homework or homework help but does not get at the quality of homework interactions. For example, I find homework time to have a negative effect on cumulative literacy achievement. My qualitative interviews reveal that working-class parents are finding this a frustrating endeavor and rely heavily on teachers for support. Whereas, the middle-class parents that express frustration with homework go to the school to have the amount of homework reduced. This raises an important concern that could be explored in future research. Is homework help from parents a futile endeavor?

Third, teachers who work in low-SES schools see the need to change our view of what parent engagement is and actively construct what parent engagement means for their school. The concept of “institutional discretionary spaces” and how teachers use different approaches to involving parents is an interesting finding that I intend to explore further through an institutional framework such as “inhabited institutionalism”.

Fourth, this study adds to the social stratification literature by considering parents’ and children’s aspirations for future education and careers with a particular focus on working-class parents. Aurini (2015) notes that logics of parenting such as Hays’ (1996) intensive parenting and Lareau’s (2011) concerted cultivation have trickled down and working-class families are increasingly emulating these parenting logics. Additionally, Milkie and Warner (2014) propose that the rise of a competitive marketplace compounded with precarious employment results in parents intensifying their involvement in children’s academic and extracurricular lives as a form of “status safeguarding” to ensure their children are successful. My study adds some empirical teeth to both the “trickle down” and “status safeguarding” theories. All parents want their children to be successful and to do better than they did, and they strive to help their children

through increasing their involvement in various aspects of education. But this increase in engagement also includes a focus on the quality of engagement – making sure that activities are tied to everyday learning (such as asking a child to read the words on a sign at the store) and parents who have post-secondary aspirations talk about the conversations they have with children about future schooling. The photo-interviews with the children are an important component here. I find that children do internalize messages about education – children whose parents have post-secondary aspirations tend to be more engaged themselves, but this may depend on their perception of themselves as good readers. What is yet to be determined – for the families in this study – is what will result from “intensification” on the part of parents and “internalization” by children in terms of educational attainment.

Suggestions for Future Research

In relation to the cultivation ethic, researchers suggest that it is the lack of resources (e.g., money, time, transportation) that dictate extracurricular activities and learning materials in the home (Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Cheadle, 2008; Chin & Phillips, 2004; Dermott & Pomati, 2016). However, other research points to the mother’s education level – not income – that predicts higher involvement in extracurricular activities (Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015). In chapter four, I find that parents with PSE aspirations for their children are more likely to have mothers with high school diplomas or some college education. These mothers are more proactive in finding low-cost and free activities for their children. Also, the children of these families generate learning activities for themselves or find ways to attend local programs (e.g., library summer reading programs). Future research could consider this concept further and discover the ways that parents and children find out about these resources. Also, in relation to

children's aspirations, longitudinal research could measure sustained confidence or a decline in optimism as schooling progresses. If children lower or raise their expectations for future schooling, at what point does this happen? Additionally, the concept of institutional habitus can be extended to future research on the possibility of schools being places of social mobility (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982) for elementary aged children.

Additionally, children seeing themselves as readers and generating learning activities for themselves is another area for future research. In chapter four, I propose that there is an internalization process happening where parents' expectations for present and future schooling influence children's home literacy activities and particularly their acceptance of parents' efforts to foster learning in the home. However, what is beyond the capacity of this study is the consideration of the influence of peers and teachers on these learning processes and building cultural capital. Classroom observation considering Collins' (2004) theory of "interaction ritual chains" would be useful in examining classroom processes of enabling children to see themselves as readers and the importance of these interactions in boosting children's learning (see Davies & Rizk [2018] for a discussion on Collins' theory and its possibilities for educational research).

For the realist reaction, the longitudinal effects of parent-teacher meetings could be examined further. In qualitative interviews, I discovered that the children who had IEPs, or received other forms of additional support, were the ones whose parents met more often with the teacher. These parents expressed that these meetings are beneficial, make them feel efficacious in helping their children at home, and they see their child's reading improving. A longitudinal study of parent-teacher meetings – with a control group of parents who do not need to meet frequently with the teacher (child is not lagging in reading) – might reveal long-term positive

effects for students. Also, the quality of parent-teacher interactions could be considered in future research. In the interviews, many parents feel that drop-off and pick-up times have been useful in getting information about what a child is learning and their progress. It would be useful to gauge the quality of these informal interactions and compare them to formal progress report meetings. In terms of homework and reading, the effectiveness of online resources and information provided in hard copy format is something that could be explored in future research. Are they used by parents who do not regularly attend school events or meet with teachers? Are they beneficial?

In relation to the expressive logic, the interaction with SES and volunteering (noted above) suggests an aspect of parent engagement that could be explored in future research. For example, it would be interesting to examine various lengths of time spent volunteering (e.g., is there a benefit to volunteering more often?) and different types of volunteering in the classroom (e.g., reading with children in the classroom versus being a chaperone on a field trip) and their effects on academic achievement. Does volunteering create another type of “opportunity gap” where the parents who are able to volunteer generate benefits for their children? Also, the concept of institutional discretionary spaces with teachers in low-SES communities could be examined further. What are the different types of strategies used by teachers? What have teachers found to be most effective? How do teachers construct different views of parent engagement for their school?

For summer learning, research suggests that school-based resources available to children are cut-off during the summer months (for example, see Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson’s [1997] “faucet” metaphor), I find that this is also true for families who need school connections and resources to help them keep their children engaged and reading during the summer months.

Thus, the longitudinal benefits of summer interventions should be explored further. This includes the benefits that these types of programs may have for families.

Final Thoughts

The legacy of the Coleman report (Coleman et al., 1966) maintains that schools alone cannot close achievement gaps. Children's academic success, and educational attainment, is tied to their family background (see also Bradbury et al., 2015). The push for an increase in parent engagement is a response to growing achievement gaps and the understanding that family matters. What parents do with their children does matter, but it is not a reliable source to overcome inequality in education (Hartas, 2015). *What does this study tell us about parent engagement?* Despite its intuitive appeal, it simply lacks the kind of influence on students' literacy achievement that we want. In fact, many of the activities that we would associate with positive benefits (e.g., reading with child) do not predict literacy achievement. Since the story seems to come back to SES backgrounds, we should be putting our efforts into emphasizing school-based interventions rather than placing the burden on parents.

It is useful to consider why parent engagement receives the attention that it does, despite the mixed, inconclusive, and weak results found in quantitative research. Developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978), in effort to consider schools as institutional rather than technical organizations, new institutional theory is often used to examine how schools interact and relate to the larger environment (e.g., Labaree, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). New institutionalism is a useful theory to draw on to explain why policies like Ontario's (2010) parent engagement policy is established and endures in educational organizations. The parent engagement policy in Ontario is not strictly enforced or monitored; in new institutional terminology, it is "loosely coupled"

with practice (see Spillane & Burch, 2006). Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978) theorize that loose coupling allows schools to “integrate multiple and conflicting goals, while awarding them legitimacy and trust” (Aurini, 2012, p. 373). Parent engagement has received a great amount of attention by researchers and policy makers. Consequently, maintaining legitimacy through incorporating such a policy allows schools to be perceived as advocating for the benefit of students and their families (see Davies & Zarifa, 2009; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). In this way, they are including (or appearing to include) one of their key stakeholders in the educational process: parents. Thus, while attending a school open house or participating on school council does not result in academic gains, they remain common institutional responses to involving parents in school activities.

The emphasis on parent engagement appears to be growing, not lessening (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). Nonetheless, policy makers and schools can decide to place primary focus on school-based reforms rather than placing the onus on parents. The Summer Learning Program that serves as the basis for the data in this study is a start in helping to alleviate “bottlenecks” in educational gaps. The preschool and early elementary years are very important in children’s academic careers and can be consequential in later learning such as entering high school (Bradbury et al., 2015). The evidence in this thesis suggests that opportunities and resources from the school and community can help to smooth the path for low-SES children to have access to a variety of learning prospects. From a policy perspective, programs such as after-school clubs, in-school literacy support, summer literacy camps, and public library reading programs are especially important to disadvantaged families. Not only is it essential that these programs are offered free or at low-cost, but they also need to be situated in the neighborhoods that need them most.

References

- Acar, E. (2011). Effects of social capital on academic success: A narrative synthesis. *Educational Research and Reviews, 6*(6), 456-461.
- Addi-Raccah, A., & Arviv-Elyashiv, R. (2008). Parent empowerment and teacher professionalism: Teachers' perspective. *Urban Education, 43*(3), 394-415.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of Education, 70*(2), 87-107.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Olson, L. S. (2001). Schools, achievement, and inequality: A seasonal perspective. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 171-191.
- (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review, 72*(2), 167-180.
- (2014). *The long shadow: Family background, disadvantaged urban youth, and the transition to adulthood*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Allington, R. L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (2003). The impact of summer reading setback on the reading achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan, 85*(1), 68-75.
- Allison, P.D. (2002). *Missing data: Quantitative applications in the social sciences*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Anderson, K.J., & Minke, K.M. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *The Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 311-323.
- Ankrum, R.J. (2016). Socioeconomic status and its effect on teacher/parental communication in schools. *Journal of Education and Learning, 5*(1), 167-175.

- Archer, L., DeWitt, J., Osborne, J., Dillon, J., Willis, B., & Wong, B. (2012). Science aspirations, capital, and family habitus: How families shape children's engagement and identification with science. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(5), 881-908.
- Areepattamannil, S., & Lee, D. H. (2014). Linking immigrant parents' educational expectations and aspirations to their children's school performance. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 175(1), 51-57.
- Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education*, 42(3), 250-283.
- Auger, R. W., Blackhurst, A. E., & Wahl, K. H. (2005). The development of elementary-aged children's career aspirations and expectations. *Professional School Counseling*, 8(4), 322-329.
- Aurini, J. (2011). How upper-middle class Canadian parents understand the transmission of advantages. *Education and Pedagogy*. 23(60). 19-43.
- (2012). Patterns of tight and loose coupling in a competitive marketplace: The case of learning center franchises. *Sociology of Education*, 85(4), 373-387.
- (2015). *Why the adoption of middle-class practices fails to help lower-class children catch up: The limits of "trickle-down" parenting culture* (book proposal).
- Aurini, J., & Hillier, C. (2018). Re-Opening the black box of educational disadvantage: Why we need new answers to old questions. In J. Mehta & S. Davies (Eds.), *Education in a new society: Renewing the sociology of education*, pp. 309-333. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Aurini, J., Milne, E., & Hillier, C. (2016). The two-sides of vigilance: Differentiating lower and higher levels of parent engagement. In Wolfgang Lehmann (Ed.), *Education and society: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 90-103). Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2012). *Family-school partnerships framework: A guide for schools and families*. Retrieved from <http://www.familyschool.org.au/pdf/framework.pdf>
- Baker, D.P. (2018). Social theory and the coming schooled society. In J. Mehta & S. Davies (Eds.), *Education in a new society: Renewing the sociology of education* (pp. 61-82). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Baker, M., & Milligan, K. (2013). Boy-girl differences in parental time investments: Evidence from three countries. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Found at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18893>
- Baker, S. & Brown, B.J. (2008). Habitus and homeland: Educational aspirations, family life and culture in autobiographical narratives of educational experience in rural Wales. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48(1), 57-72.
- Baker, T.L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R.J. (2016). Identifying barriers: Creating solutions to improve family engagement. *School Community Journal*, 26(2), 161-184.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development*, 72(1), 187-206.
- Bassok, D., Finch, J.E., Lee, R., Reardon, S., & Waldfogel, J. (2016). Socioeconomic gaps in early childhood experiences: 1998 to 2010. *AERA Open*, 2(3), 1-22. DOI: 10.1177/2332858416653924

- Becker, H.J., & Epstein, J.L. (1982). Parent involvement: A survey of teacher practices. *The Elementary School Journal*, 83(2), 85-102.
- Becker, R., & Hecken, A. E. (2009). Higher education or vocational training? An empirical test of the rational action model of educational choices suggested by Breen and Goldthorpe and Esser. *Acta Sociologica*, 52(1), 25-45.
- Ben-Arieh, A. (2005). Where are the children? Children's role in measuring and monitoring their well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 74(3), 573-596.
- Bennett, P.R., Lutz, A.C., & Jayaram, L. (2012). Beyond the schoolyard: The role of parenting logics, financial resources, and social institutions in the social class gap in structured activity participation. *Sociology of Education*, 85(2), 131-157.
- Berg, B.L. & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences, 8th edition*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bianchi, S. M., Robinson, J. P., & Milkie, M. A. (2006). *Changing rhythms of American family life*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bodovski, K., & Farkas, G. (2008). "Concerted cultivation" and unequal achievement in elementary school. *Social Science Research*, 37, 903-919.
- Böök, M.L., & Mykkänen, J. (2014). Photo-narrative processes with children and young people. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies*, 5(4.1), 611-628.
- Borman, G. D., Benson, J., & Overman, L. T. (2005). Families, schools, and summer learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 131-150.
- Borman, G. D., Goetz, M. E., & Dowling, N. M. (2009). Halting the summer achievement slide: A randomized field trial of the KindergARTen Summer Camp. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(2), 133-147.

- Boudon, R. (1974). *Education, opportunity, and social inequality: Changing prospects in western society*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.
- (1990). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- (1998). The forms of capital. In A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, & A. Stuart Wells (Eds.), *Education: Culture, economy and society* (pp. 46-58). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bozick, R., Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., Dauber, S., & Kerr, K. (2010). Framing the future: Revisiting the place of educational expectations in status attainment. *Social Forces*, 88(51), 2027-2052.
- Bradbury, B., Corak, M., Waldfogel, J., & Washbrook, E. (2015). *Too many children left behind: The U.S. achievement gap in comparative perspective*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Braun, V., & Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brody, G. H., & Flor, D. L. (1998). Maternal resources, parenting practices, and child competence in rural, single-parent African American families. *Child development*, 69(3), 803-816.
- Brofenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.

- Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling*, 219-227.
- Burkam, D.T., & Lee, V.E. (2002). *Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.
- Burkam, D. T., Ready, D. D., Lee, V. E., & LoGerfo, L. F. (2004). Social-class differences in summer learning between kindergarten and first grade: Model specification and estimation. *Sociology of Education*, 77(1), 1-31.
- Calarco, J. M. (2011). "I need help!" Social class and children's help-seeking in elementary school. *American Sociological Review*, 76(6), 862-882.
- (2014). Coached for the classroom: Parents' cultural transmission and children's reproduction of educational inequalities. *American Sociological Review*, 79(5), 1015-1037.
- (2018). *Negotiating opportunities: How the middle class secures advantages in school*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cappello, M. (2005). Photo interviews: Eliciting data through conversations with children. *Field Methods*, 17(2), 170-182.
- Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education*, 5(2), 149-177.
- Catsambis, S., & Garland, J.E. (1997). Parental involvement in students' education during middle school and high school. *Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk*, Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED423328.pdf>

- Cheadle, Jacob E. (2008). Educational investment, family context, and children's math and reading growth from kindergarten through the third grade. *Sociology of Education*, 81(1), 1-31.
- Chi, M.T.H. (1997). Quantifying qualitative analyses of verbal data: A practical guide. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 6(3), 271-315.
- Childs, Stephen, Finnie, Ross, & Mueller, Richard E. (2010). Family environment, family habits, and children's cultural experiences: Is there a link to participation in post-secondary education? In Finnie, Ross, Frenette, Marc, Mueller, Richard E., & Sweetman, Arthur (Eds.), *Pursuing higher education in Canada* (pp. 243-268). Montreal & Kingston: Queen's-McGill University Press.
- Chin, T. (2000). "Sixth Grade Madness" Parental Emotion Work in the Private High School Application Process. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 29(2), 124-163.
- Chin, T., & Phillips, M. (2004). Social reproduction and child rearing practices: Social class, children's agency, and the summer activity gap. *Sociology of Education*, 77(3), 185-210.
- Clark, A. (2010). Young children as protagonists and the role of participatory, visual methods in engaging multiple perspectives. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1-2), 115-123.
- Coburn, C.E. (2004). Beyond decoupling: Rethinking the relationship between the institutional environment and the classroom. *Sociology of Education*, 77, 211-244.
- (2016). What's policy got to do with it? How the structure-agency debate can illuminate policy implementation. *American Journal of Education*, 122, 465-475.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, s95-s120.

- Coleman, J.S., Campbell, E.Q., Hobson, C.J., McPartland, J., Mood, A.M., Weinfeld, F.D., & York, R.L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Collins, R. (1979). *The credential society: An historical sociology of education and stratification*. New York: Academic Press.
- (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Conley, D., & Albright, K. (2004). *After the bell: Family background, public policy, and educational success*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Cooper, C.E., & Crosnoe, R. (2007). The engagement in schooling of economically disadvantaged parents and children. *Youth & Society*, 38(3), 372-391.
- Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3), 227-268.
- Cooper, H., Robinson, J.C., & Patall, E.A. (2006). Does homework improve academic achievement? A synthesis of research, 1987–2003. *Review of Educational Research* 76(1), 1 – 62.
- Corak, M., Curtis, L.J., & Phipps, S. (2011). Economic mobility, family background, and the well-being of children in the United States and Canada. In T.M. Smeeding, R. Erikson, & M. Jäntti (Eds.), *Persistence, privilege, and parenting: The comparative study of intergenerational mobility* (pp. 73-108). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Corsaro, W. (2005). *The sociology of childhood, second edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

- Costello, A. B., & Osborne, J. W. (2005). Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation, 10*(7). Retrieved from <http://www.pareonline.net/pdf/v10n7.pdf>
- Covay, E., & Carbonaro, W. (2010). After the bell participation in extracurricular activities, classroom behavior, and academic achievement. *Sociology of Education, 83*(1), 20-45.
- Cox, A.B. (2017). Cohorts, “siblings,” and mentors: Organizational structures and the creation of social capital. *Sociology of Education, 90*(1), 47–63.
- Creed, P. A., Conlon, E. G., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2007). Career barriers and reading ability as correlates of career aspirations and expectations of parents and their children. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70*(2), 242-258.
- Crivello, G., Camfield, L., & Woodhead, M. (2009). How can children tell us about their wellbeing? Exploring the potential of participatory research approaches within young lives. *Social Indicators Research, 90*(1), 51-72.
- Croft, A., Schmader, T., Block, K., & Baron, A. S. (2014). The second shift reflected in the second generation: Do parents’ gender roles at home predict children’s aspirations? *Psychological Science, 25*(7), 1418-1428.
- Crompton, R. (2006). Class and family. *The Sociological Review, 54*(4), 658-677.
- Cucchiara, M.B., & Horvat, E.M. (2009). Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*(4), 974–1004.

- Cullen, S.M., Cullen, M.A., Band, S., Davis, L., & Lindsay, G. (2011). Supporting fathers to engage with their children's learning and education: An under-developed aspect of the Parent Support Adviser pilot. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(3), 485–500.
- Dauber, S. L., & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner city elementary and middle schools. In N. F. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 53–71). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Davies, S. (1995). Reproduction and resistance in Canadian high schools: An empirical examination of the Willis Thesis. *British Journal of Sociology*, 46(4), 662-687.
- (2005). A revolution of expectations? Three key trends in the SAEP data. In R. Sweet & P. Anisef (Eds.), *Preparing for post-secondary education: New roles for governments and families* (pp. 149-165). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- (2013). Three forms of cultural capital and one strategic testing ground. Invited talk at the Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- Davies, S., & Aurini, J. (2010-2014). Research reports for the summer literacy learning project in Ontario schools. Retrieved from http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/summer_literacy.html
- (2013). Summer learning inequality in Ontario. *Canadian Public Policy*, 30(2), 287-307.
- (2015). The impacts of discretionary spaces in schooling: Do they reproduce inequality, equalize opportunity or partially compensate for society? Oral presentation at the *American Sociological Association Annual Meeting*. Chicago, IL, United States.
- (2016). Summer learning over time: Findings from the Ontario longitudinal study. Presentation to *Ontario's Ministry of Education* (July 27, 2016).
- Davies, S., Aurini, J., & Milne, E. (2016). Contextualizing summer learning inequality: The view from Canada. In Alexander, K., Pitcock, S., & Boulay, M. (Eds.), *The summer slide:*

- What we know and can do about summer learning loss* (pp. 55-69). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Davies, S., & Guppy, N. (2013). *The schooled society: An introduction to the sociology of education*. (3rd ed). Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, S., & Rizk, J. (2018). The three generations of cultural capital research: A narrative review. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(3), 331-365.
- Davies, S., & Zarifa, D. (2009). New institutional theory and the Weberian tradition. In Cynthia Levine-Rasky (Ed.), *Canadian perspectives on the sociology of education* (pp. 3-16). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davis-Kean, P.E. (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: The indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2), 294–304.
- Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H.B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(4), 653–664.
- DeCusati, C.L.P., & Johnson, J.E. (2004). Parents as classroom volunteers and kindergarten students' emergent reading skills. *Journal of Educational Research*, 97(5), 235-246.
- De Graaf, N. D., De Graaf, P. M., & Kraaykamp, G. (2000). Parental cultural capital and educational attainment in the Netherlands: A refinement of the cultural capital perspective. *Sociology of Education*, 73(2), 92-111.
- Demerath, P. (2009). *Producing success: The culture of personal advancement in an American high school*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Denzin, N. K. (2009). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: Routledge.
- Dermott, E., & Pomati, M. (2016). 'Good' parenting practices: How important are poverty, education and time pressure? *Sociology*, 50(1), 125-142.
- Deslandes, R., & Bertrand, R. (2005). Motivation of parent involvement in secondary-level schooling. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 98(3), 164-175.
- Devine, F. (1998). Class analysis and the stability of class relations. *Sociology*, 32(1), 23-42.
- (2004). *Class practices: How parents help their children get good jobs*. Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press.
- DiMaggio, P. (1982). Cultural capital and school success: The impact of status culture participation on the grades of US high school students. *American Sociological Review*, 47(2), 189-201.
- Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of Education*, 78(3), 233-249.
- Downey, D.B. (2016). Schools, families, inequality: Strong empirical patterns in search of strong theory. In K. Alexander, S. Pitcock, & M. Boulay (Eds.), *The summer slide: What we know and can do about summer learning loss* (pp. 11-22). New York: Teachers College Press.
- (2018). Schools as great distractors: Why socioeconomic-based achievement gaps persist. In J. Mehta & S. Davies (Eds.), *Education in a new society: Renewing the sociology of education*, pp. 334-344. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Downey, D. B., von Hippel, P. T., & Broh, B. A. (2004). Are schools the great equalizer? Cognitive inequality during the summer months and the school year. *American Sociological Review*, *69*(5), 613-635.
- Downey, D. B., Von Hippel, P. T., & Hughes, M. (2008). Are “failing” schools really failing? Using seasonal comparison to evaluate school effectiveness. *Sociology of Education*, *81*(3), 242-270.
- Drummond, K. V., & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in children's academic learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, *104*(3), 197-213.
- Dumais, S.A. (2002). Cultural capital, gender, and school success: The role of habitus. *Sociology of Education*, *75*(1), 44-68.
- Dumont, H., Trautwein, U., Nagy, G., & Nagengast, B. (2014). Quality of parental homework involvement: Predictors and reciprocal relations with academic functioning in the reading domain. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *106*(1), 144-161.
- Duncan, Morris & Rodrigues, (2011). Does money really matter? Estimating impacts of family income on young children's achievement with data from random-assignment experiments. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*(5), 1263-1279. doi: 10.1037/a0023875
- Elliott, S., Powell, R., & Brenton, J. (2015). Being a good mom: Low-income, black single mothers negotiate intensive mothering. *Journal of Family Issues*, *36*(3), 351-370.
- El Nokali, N. E., Bachman, H. J., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010). Parent involvement and children's academic and social development in elementary school. *Child development*, *81*(3), 988-1005.

- Englund, M. M., Luckner, A. E., Whaley, G. J., & Egeland, B. (2004). Children's achievement in early elementary school: Longitudinal effects of parental involvement, expectations, and quality of assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(4), 723-730.
- Entwisle, D. R., Alexander, K. L., & Olson, L. S. (1997). *Children, schools and inequality*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- (2001). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review, 72*(2), 167-180.
- Epstein, J.L. (1985). Home and school connections in schools of the future: Implications of research on parent involvement. *Peabody Journal of Education, 62*(2), 18-41.
- (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*(3), 277-294.
- (1987). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(2), 119-136.
- (1988). Homework practices, achievements, and behaviors of elementary school students (Report No. 26). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.
- (1992). School and family partnerships. Report no. 6. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED343715>
- (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701-712.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research, 95*(5), 308-318.

- Erikson, R., & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1993). *The Constant Flux*. Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks.
- Etmanski, B., & Aurini, J. (2018). "Teacher knows best?": Parents' approach to warning signs of early literacy problems. Presentation at the XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology, Toronto, Ontario.
- Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 70(1), 27-61.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1-22.
- Fan, W., Williams, C. M., & Wolters, C. A. (2012). Parental involvement in predicting school motivation: Similar and differential effects across ethnic groups. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 105(1), 21-35.
- Ferlazzo, L. (2011). Involvement or engagement. *Educational Leadership*, 68(8), 10-14.
- Finnie, R., Childs, S., & Wismer, A. (2011). *Under-represented groups in postsecondary education in Ontario: Evidence from the Youth in Transition Survey*. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
- Finnie, R. (2012). Access to post-secondary education: The importance of culture. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(6), 1161-1170.
- Furstenberg, F. (2011). The challenges of finding causal links between family educational practices and schooling outcomes. In Duncan, G.J., & Murnane, R.J. (Eds.), *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances*, p.p. 456-483. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

- Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and home connections and children's kindergarten achievement gains: The mediating role of family involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(1), 90-103.
- Gamoran, A. (2001). American schooling and educational inequality: A forecast for the 21st century. *Sociology of Education, 74*(Extra Issue: Current of Thought: Sociology of Education at the Dawn of the 21st Century), 135-153.
- Gershenson, S. (2013). Do summer time-use gaps vary by socioeconomic status? *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(6):1219-1248. DOI: 0002831213502516.
- Gillies, V. (2005). Raising the 'meritocracy': Parenting and the individualization of social class. *Sociology, 39*(5): 835–853.
- (2006). Working class mothers and school life: Exploring the role of emotional capital. *Gender and Education, 18*(3): 281–293.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (1996). Class analysis and the reorientation of class theory: The case of persisting differentials in educational attainment. *British Journal of Sociology, 47*, 481–505.
- Gonzalez, R.L., & Jackson, C.L. (2013). Engaging with parents: The relationship between school engagement efforts, social class, and learning. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice, 24*(3), 316-335.
- Gordon, M.F., & Louis, K.S. (2009). Linking parent and community involvement with student achievement: Comparing principal and teacher perceptions of stakeholder influence. *American Journal of Education, 116*(1), 1-31.

- Graham, J.W., Olchowski, A.E., & Gilreath, T.D. (2007). How many imputations are really needed? Some practical clarifications of multiple imputation theory. *Prevention Science*, 8(3), 6-213.
- Green, C.L., Walker, J.M.T., Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., & Sandler, H.M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 532–544.
- Grolnick, W. S., Benjet, C., Kurowski, C. O., & Apostoleris, N. H. (1997). Predictors of parent involvement in children's schooling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 538-548.
- Grolnick, W. S., & Slowiaczek, M. L. (1994). Parents' involvement in children's schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child Development*, 65(1), 237-252.
- Guryan, J., Hurst, E., & Kearney, M. S. (2008). Parental education and parental time with children. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 22(3), 23–46.
- Hamlin, D. & Flessa, J. (2016). Parental involvement initiatives: An analysis. *Educational Policy*. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0895904816673739>
- Hanafin, J., & Lynch, A. (2002). Peripheral voices: Parental involvement, social class, and educational disadvantage. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(1), 35-49.
- Hands, C. (2013). Including all families in education: school district-level efforts to promote parent engagement in Ontario, Canada. *Teaching Education*, 24(2), 134–149.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2013.786893>
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Journal of Educational Research*, 50 (3), 277-289.

- Hartas, D. (2015). Parenting for social mobility? Home learning, parental warmth, class and educational outcomes. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30(1), 21-38.
- Hayes, D. (2011). Predicting parental home and school involvement in high school African American adolescents. *The High School Journal*, 94(4), 154-166.
- Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradiction of motherhood*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Heyns, B. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., & Pettit, G. S. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. *Child Development*, 75(5), 1491-1509.
- Hill, N.E., & Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740-763.
- Hillier, C. (2014). “But we’re already doing it”: Ontario teachers’ responses to policies on religious inclusion and accommodation in public schools. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 60(1), 43-61.
- Hillier, C., & Aurini, J. (2018a). The summer reading blues: Children’s accounts of summer literacy practices. In Patrizia Albanese, Lorne Tepperman and Emily Alexander (Eds.), *Reading Sociology: Canadian Perspectives, Third Edition*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- (2018b). What role does the ‘parent-effect’ play in child-centered research? A photo-interview study of home reading practices. *Qualitative Research*, 18(4) 492–509.

- Hindman, A.H., Skibbe, L.E., & Foster, T.D. (2014). Exploring the variety of parental talk during shared book reading and its contributions to preschool language and literacy: evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort. *Reading and Writing, 27*, 287–313. DOI 10.1007/s11145-013-9445-4
- Holloway, S.L., & Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2014). “Any advice is welcome isn’t it?”: Neoliberal parenting education, local mothering cultures, and social class. *Environment and Planning, 46*, 94 – 111.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Battiato, A.C., Walker, J.M.T., Reed, R.P., DeJong, J.M., & Jones, K.P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(3), 195-209.
- Horvat, E. M., Weininger, E.B., & Lareau, A. (2003). From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(2), 319-351.
- Hoxby, C., & Avery, C. (2013). The missing "one-offs": The hidden supply of high-achieving, low-income students. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Spring*(1), 1-65.
- Ice, C.L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. (2011). Linking parental motivations for involvement and student proximal achievement outcomes in homeschooling and public schooling settings. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(3), 339-369.
- Irwin, S. & Elley, S. (2011). Concerted Cultivation? Parenting Values, Education and Class Diversity. *Sociology, 45*(3), 480–495.
- (2013). Parents' hopes and expectations for their children's future occupations. *The Sociological Review, 61*(1), 111-130.
- Jack, A. A. (2014). Culture shock revisited: The social and cultural contingencies to class marginality. *Sociological Forum 29*(2), 453-475.

- (2016). No Harm in Asking: Class, Acquired Cultural Capital, and Academic Engagement at an Elite University. *Sociology of Education*, 89(1), 1-19.
- Jaeger, M.M. (2010). Does cultural capital really affect academic achievement? *Centre for Strategic Research in Education*. Working Paper Series CSER WP No. 0001. Available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038040711417010?journalCode=soea>
- James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing childhood*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Jann, B. (2014). Plotting regression coefficients and other estimates in Stata. *The Stata Journal*, 14(4), 708-737. Available at <http://www.stata-journal.com/article.html?article=gr0059>
- Janus, M., & Duku, E. (2007). The school entry gap: Socioeconomic, family, and health factors associated with children's school readiness to learn. *Early education and development*, 18(3): 375-403.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, 40(3), 237-269.
- Jeziarski, S., & Wall, G. (2017). Changing understandings and expectations of parental involvement in education. *Gender and Education*, 1-16.
- Jimerson, S., Egeland, B., & Teo, A. (1999). A longitudinal study of achievement trajectories: Factors associated with change. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(1), 116-126.
- Johnson, M. K., & Hitlin, S. (2017). Family (dis) advantage and life course expectations. *Social Forces*, 95(3), 997-1022.
- Kalil, A., Ryan, R., & Corey, M. (2012). Diverging destinies: Maternal education and the developmental gradient in time with children. *Demography*, 49, 1361-1383. DOI: 10.1007/s 13 524-012-0129-5

- Kao, G. & Thompson, J.S. (2003). Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 417-442.
- Kaplan, E.B. (2013). *“We live in the SHADOW”*: Inner-city kids tell their stories through photographs. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Khan, S.R. (2011). *Privilege: The making of an adolescent elite at St. Paul’s school*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Khattab, N. (2015). Students’ aspirations, expectations and school achievement: what really matters? *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(5), 731–748. doi: 10.1002/berj.3171
- Kim, J. (2004). Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 9(2), 169-188.
- Kim, J. S., & Guryan, J. (2011). Addressing socio-economic disparities in non-cognitive and cognitive skills through summer book reading: Results from a longitudinal randomized experiment. Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*, Washington, D.C.
- Kim, J.S., & Quinn, D.M. (2013). The effects of summer reading on low-income children’s literacy achievement from kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analysis of classroom and home interventions. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(3), 386-431.
- Kisida, B., Greene, J. P., & Bowen, D. H. (2014). Creating cultural consumers: The dynamics of cultural capital acquisition. *Sociology of Education*, 87(4), 281-295.
- Kohl, G. O., Lengua, L. J., & McMahon, R. J. (2000). Parent involvement in school conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38(6), 501-523.

- Kraaykamp, G., & Van Eijck, K. (2010). The intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital: A threefold perspective. *Social Forces*, 89(1), 209-231.
- Labaree, D.F. (2012). *Someone has to fail: The zero-sum game of public schooling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lamont, M., & Lareau, A. (1988). Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments. *Sociological Theory*, 153-168.
- Landeros, M. (2011). Defining the ‘good mother’ and the ‘professional teacher’: parent–teacher relationships in an affluent school district. *Gender and Education*, 23(3), 247-262.
- Lareau, A. (2000). *Home advantage: Social class and parental involvement in elementary education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, 67(5), 747-776.
- (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life, 2nd edition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- (2015). Cultural knowledge and social inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 80(1), 1-27.
- Lareau, A., Evans, S.A., & Yee, A. (2016). The rules of the game and the uncertain transmission of advantage: Middle-class parents’ search for an urban kindergarten. *Sociology of Education*, 89(4), 279-299.
- Lareau, A., & Goyette, K. (Eds.) (2014). *Choosing homes, choosing schools*. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lareau, A., & Horvat, E.M. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion race, class, and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72(1), 37-53.

- Lareau, A., & Muñoz, V. L. (2012). "You're not going to call the shots": Structural conflicts between the principal and the PTO at a suburban public elementary school. *Sociology of Education*, 85(3), 201-218.
- Lareau, A., & Shumar, W. (1996). The problem of individualism in family-school policies. *Sociology of Education*, 69 (special issue), 24-39.
- Lareau, A., & Weininger, E.B. (2003). Cultural capital in educational research: A critical assessment. *Theory and Society*, 32(5/6, Special Issue), 567-606.
- (2008). Time, work, and family life: Reconceptualizing gendered time patterns through the case of children's organized activities. *Sociological Forum*, 23(3), 419-454.
- Lawson, M. A. (2003). School-family relations in context parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. *Urban Education*, 38(1), 77-133.
- Leckie, G. (2010). Introduction to multilevel modeling. *Centre for Multilevel Modeling, University of Bristol*. Available at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmm/software/support/workshops/materials/multilevel-m.html>
- Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 193-218.
- Lee, V.E., & Croninger, R.G. (1994). The relative importance of home and school in the development of literacy skills for middle-grade students. *American Journal of Education*, 102(3), 286-329.
- Lee, A., & Fischer, M.J. (2017). Advantaged/disadvantaged school neighborhoods, parental networks, and parental involvement at elementary school. *Sociology of Education*, 90(4), 355-377.

- Lehmann, W. (2012). Working-class students, habitus, and the development of student roles: A Canadian case study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(4), 527-546.
- (2014). Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: Successful working-class university students. *Sociology of Education*, 87(1), 1-15.
- Levine, K.J., & Hoffner, C.A. (2006). Adolescents' conceptions of work: What is learned from different sources during anticipatory socialization? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 21(6), 647-669.
- Levitt, S.D., & Dubner, S.J. (2005). *Freakonomics: A rogue economist explores the hidden side of everything*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc.
- Li, J. (2004). Parental expectations of Chinese immigrants: A folk theory about children's school achievement. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7(2), 167-183.
- Little, R.J.A., & Rubin, D.B. *Statistical analysis with missing data, 2nd Edition*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- López Turley, R. N., Desmond, M., & Bruch, S. K. (2010). Unanticipated educational consequences of a positive parent-child relationship. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(5), 1377-1390.
- Macfarlane, K. (2009). Navigating a treacherous game: conceptualising parental engagement in contemporary Queensland schooling. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(5), 563-576.
- Magnuson, K. (2007). Maternal education and children's academic achievement during middle childhood. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1497-1512.
- <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1497>

- Marschalli, M. (2006). Parent involvement and educational outcomes for Latino students. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(5), 1053-1076.
- Mayo, A., & Siraj, I. (2015). Parenting practices and children's academic success in low-SES families. *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(1), 47-63.
- McDowall, P.S., & Schaughency, E. (2017). Elementary school parent engagement efforts: Relations with educator perceptions and school characteristics. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 110(4), 348-365.
- McEachin, A., & Atteberry, A. (2017). The impact of summer learning loss on measures of school performance. *Education Finance and Policy*, 12(4), 468-491.
- McKnight, P.E., McKnight, K.M., Sidani, S., & Figueredo, A.J. (2007). *Missing data: A gentle introduction*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- McNeal, R.B. (1999). Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. *Social Forces*, 78(1), 117-144.
- (2012). Checking in or checking out? Investigating the parent involvement reactive hypothesis. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 105:79-89.
- McTavish, M., Streelasky, J., & Coles, L. (2012). Listening to children's voices: Children as participants in research. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 44(3), 249-267.
- Merton, R.K. (1949). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: Free Press.
- Meyer, J., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340-63. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/stable/2778293>
- (1978). The structure of educational organizations. In M. Meyer et al. (Eds.), *Environments and Organizations* (pp.78-109). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Milkie, M.A., Nomaguchi, K.M., & Denny, K.E. (2015). Does the amount of time mothers spend with children or adolescents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77, 355-372.
- Milkie, M.A., & Warner, C.H. (2014). Status safeguarding: Mothers' work to secure children's place in the status hierarchy. In Linda Ennis (Ed.), *Intensive mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.
- Milne, E. (2016). "I have the worst fear of teachers": Moments of inclusion and exclusion in family/school relationships among Indigenous families in Southern Ontario. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53(3), 270-289.
- Milne, E., & Aurini, J. (2015). Schools, cultural mobility and social reproduction: The case of progressive discipline. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 40(1), 51-74.
- Milne, E., Davies, S., Aurini, J., & Hillier, C. (2017). Indigenous focused summer literacy learning programs in Ontario: A mixed method assessment. Oral presentation at the *Canadian Sociological Association at Congress of the Humanities* (May 30, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, Canada).
- Moroni, S., Dumont, H., Trautwein, U., Niggli, A., & Baeriswyl, F. (2015). The need to distinguish between quantity and quality in research on parental involvement: The example of parental help with homework. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 108(5), 417-431.
- Mullen, A. L. (2010). *Degrees of inequality: Culture, class, and gender in American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

- Muller, C. (1995). Maternal employment, parent involvement, and mathematics achievement among adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57(1), 85–100.
- (1998). Gender differences in parental involvement and adolescents' mathematics achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 71(4), 336-356.
- Mykkänen, J., & Böök, M. L. (2013). Photographing as a research method – Finnish children's views of everyday life. In E. Oinonen & K. Repo (Eds.), *Women, men and children in families. Private troubles and public issues* (pp. 169–194). Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Nolan, B., Esping-Anderson, G., Whelan, C.T., Maitre, B., & Wagner, S. (2011). The role of social institutions in intergenerational mobility. In Smeeding, T.M., Erikson, R., & Jäntti, M. (Eds.), *Persistence, privilege, policy and parenting: The comparative study of intergenerational mobility* (pp. 331-368). New York: Russell Sage.
- Ong-Dean, C. (2009). *Distinguishing disability: Parents, privilege, and special education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2005). *Parent voice in education project report*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/parentVoice.pdf>
- (2010). Parents in partnership: A parent engagement policy for Ontario schools. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE_Policy2010.pdf
- (2012a). Parents matter. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/getinvolved.html>
- (2012b). The provincial code of conduct and school board codes of conduct. Policy/program memorandum No. 128. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf>

- Oswell, D. (2013). *The agency of children: From family to global human rights*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Overstreet, S., Devine, J., Bevans, K., & Efreom, Y. (2005). Predicting parental involvement in children's schooling within an economically disadvantaged African American sample. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(1), 101-111.
- Pallas, A. (2006). The effects of schooling on individual lives. In Hallinan, Maureen (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Education* (499-525). New York: Kluwer/Plenum.
- Paris, S. G., Pearson, P.D., Cervetti, G., Carpenter, R., Paris, A.H., DeGroot, J., & Bashore-Berg, T. (2004). Assessing the effectiveness of summer reading programs. In G. D. Borman & M. Boulay (Eds.), *Summer learning: Research, policies, and programs* (pp. 121-161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Patall, E.A., Cooper, H., & Robinson, J.C. (2008). Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 78*, 1039-1101.
- Phillips, L.M., Norris, S.P., & Anderson, J. (2008). Unlocking the door: Is parents' reading to children the key to early literacy development? *Canadian Psychology, 49*(2), 82-88.
- Phillips, M. (2011). Parenting, time use, and disparities in academic outcomes. In Duncan, G.J., & Murnane, R.J. (Eds.), *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances*, p.p. 207-228. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2011). The role of familial habitus in shaping children's views of their future employment. *Children's Geographies, 9*(1), 111-118.
- Pomerantz, E., Grolnick, W. S., & Price, C. E. (2005). The role of parents in how children approach school: A dynamic process perspective. In A. J. Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), *The handbook of competence and motivation* (pp. 259–278). New York, NY: Guilford.

- Porumbu and Necsoi (2013). Relationship between parent involvement/attitude and children's school achievements. *Social and Behavioral Science*, 76,706-710.
- Posey-Maddox, L., & Haley-Lock, A. (2016). One size does not fit all: Understanding parent engagement in the contexts of work, family, and public schooling. *Urban Education*, 1-28. DOI: DOI: 10.1177/0042085916660348.
- Punch, S. (2002). Research with children: the same or different from research with adults? *Childhood*, 9(3), 321-341.
- Pushor, D. (2012). Tracing my research on parent engagement: Working to interrupt the story of school as protectorate. *Action in Teacher Education*, 34(5-6), 464-479.
- Quinn, D.M., Cooc, N., McIntyre, J., & Gomez, C.J. (2016). Seasonal dynamics of academic achievement inequality by socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity: Updating and extending past research with new national data. *Educational Researcher*, 45(8), 443-453.
- Quirke, L. (2006). "Keeping young minds sharp": Children's cognitive stimulation and the rise of parenting magazines: 1959-2003. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 43(4), 387-406.
- (2014). How you should spend your summer vacation: Parenting advice regarding children's time in summer, 1985-2013. Paper presented at the *American Sociological Association's Annual Conference*, San Francisco, California.
- Rabe-Hesketh, S., & Skrondal, A. (2008). *Multilevel and longitudinal modeling using Stata*. College Station, Texas: Stata Press.
- Raleigh, E., & Kao, G. (2010). Do immigrant minority parents have more consistent college aspirations for their children? *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(4), 1083-1102.
- Ramey, G., & Ramey, V.A. (2010). The rug rat race. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring 2010, 129-176.

- Raudenbush, S.W. (2008). Advancing educational policy by advancing research on instruction. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(1), 206–230.
- Raudenbush, S.W., & Eschmann, R.D. (2015). Does schooling increase or reduce social inequality? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 443–70.
- Ream, R.K., & Palardy, G.J. (2008). Reexamining social class differences in the availability and the educational utility of parental social capital. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(2), 238-273.
- Reardon, S.F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G.J. Duncan & R.J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither opportunity: Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Reardon, S.F., Valentino, R.A., & Shores, K.A. (2012). Patterns of literacy among U.S. students. *The Future of Children*. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d337/b5bc4e54e325ffd1a67610b38279ad78ef39.pdf>
- Reay, D. (1998). “Always knowing” and “never being sure”: Familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 13(4), 519-529.
- (2004). “It's all becoming a habitus”: Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 431-444.
- (2005). Doing the dirty work of social class? Mothers’ work in support of their children’s schooling. *The Sociological Review*, 53(2), 104-116.
- Reay, D., David, M., & Ball, S. (2001). Making a difference?: Institutional habituses and higher education choice. *Sociological Research Online*, 5(4). Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/5/4/reay.html>

- Robinson, K., & Harris, A.L. (2014). *The broken compass: Parental involvement with children's education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rodriguez, E. T., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2011). Trajectories of the home learning environment across the first 5 years: Associations with children's vocabulary and literacy skills at prekindergarten. *Child development*, 82(4), 1058-1075.
- Roksa, J., & Potter, D. (2011). Parenting and academic achievement: Intergenerational transmission of educational advantage. *Sociology of Education*, 84(4), 299–321.
- Roscigno, V.J., Tomaskovic-Devey, D., & Crowley, M. (2006). Education and the inequalities of place. *Social Forces*, 84(4), 2121–2145.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Sameroff, A. (2009). The transactional model. In A. Sameroff (Ed.), *The transactional model of development: How children and contexts shape each other* (pp. 3–21). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/11877-001
- Sayer, L. C., Bianchi, S. M., & Robinson, J. P. (2004). Are parents investing less in children? Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(1), 1-43.
- Schaub, M. (2010). Parenting for cognitive development from 1950 to 2000: The institutionalization of mass education and the social construction of parenting in the United States. *Sociology of Education*, 83(1), 46-66.
- (2015). Is there a home advantage in school readiness for young children? Trends in parent engagement in cognitive activities with young children, 1991–2001. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13(1), 47-63.

- Scherp, H. (2013). Quantifying qualitative data using cognitive maps. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 36(1), 67-81.
- Schieman, S., Ruppner, L., & Milkie, M.A. (2018). Who helps with homework? Parenting inequality and relationship quality among employed mothers and fathers. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 39, 49-65.
- Schiffrin, H.H, Liss, M., Geary, K., Miles-McLean, H., Tashner, T., Hagerman, C., & Rizzo, K. (2013). Mother, father, or parent? College students' intensive parenting attitudes differ by referent. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23(6), 1073-1080.
- Schneider, D., Hastings, O.P., & LaBriola, J. (2018). Income inequality and class divides in parental investments. *American Sociological Review*, 83(3), 475-507.
- Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and Organizations, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sénéchal, M., & LeFevre, J. A. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child development*, 73(2), 445-460.
- Senler, B., & Sungur, S. (2009). Parental influences on students' self- concept, task value beliefs, and achievement in science. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 12(1), 106-117.
- Sheldon, S.B. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 102(4), 301-316.
- Simpkins, S.D., Weiss, H.B., McCartney, K., Kreider, H.M., & Dearing, E. (2006). Mother – child relationship as a moderator of the relation between family educational involvement and child achievement. *Parenting: Science & Practice*, 6(1), 49-57.
- Simpson, R.L. (1962). Parental influence anticipatory socialization, and social mobility. *American Sociological Review*, 27(4), 517-522.

- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010). Learning in the home and at school: How working class children 'succeed against the odds'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(3), 463-482.
- Sirin, S.R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 417-453.
- Slates, S. L., Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Olson, L. S. (2012). Counteracting summer slide: Social capital resources within socioeconomically disadvantaged families. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 17(3), 165-185.
- Snellman, K., Silva, J.M., Frederick, C.B., & Putnam, R. (2015). The engagement gap: Social mobility and extracurricular participation among American youth. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 657(1), 194-207.
- Snijders, T.A.B., & Bosker, R.J. (2012). *Multilevel analysis: An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling (2nd Edition)*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Spera, C., Wentzel, K.R., & Matto, H.C. (2009). Parental aspirations for their children's educational attainment: Relations to ethnicity, parental education, children's academic performance, and parental perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 38, 1140-1152.
- Spillane, J. P., & Burch, P. (2006) The institutional environment and instructional practice: Changing patterns of guidance and control in public education. In Meyer, H.D., & Rowan, B. (Eds), *The new institutionalism in education*, p.p. 87-102. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Spillane, J.P., Reiser, B.J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387-431.

- Statistics Canada (2010). *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. Cycle 8 Survey Instruments 2008-2009 - Book 1 - Parent, Child and Youth. Retrieved from:
http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr.pl?Function=getInstrumentList&Item_Id=88288&UL=1V&
- (2017a). Household income in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census. Retrieved from:
<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170913/dq170913a-eng.htm>
- (2017b). Education highlight tables, 2016 census. Retrieved from:
<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/edu-sco/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=11&Geo=00&View=2&Age=2>
- Stevenson, D. L., & Baker, D. P. (1987). The family-school relation and the child's school performance. *Child development*, 58(5), 1348-1357.
- Streib, J. (2015). Marrying across class lines. *Contexts*, 14(2), 40-45.
- Tabachnick, B.G., & Fidell, L.S. (2014). *Using multivariate statistics (6th Edition)*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Teachman, J.D., & Paasch, K. (1998). The family and educational aspirations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60(3), 704-714.
- Tekola, B., Griffin, C., & Camfield, L. (2009). Using qualitative methods with poor children in urban Ethiopia: Opportunities & challenges. *Social Indicators Research*, 90(1), 73-87.
- Theodorou, E. (2007). Reading between the lines: exploring the assumptions and implications of parental involvement. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 1(0), 90 – 96.
- The Pell Institute (2016). Indicators of higher education equity in the United States: 2016 historical trend report. Retrieved from:

- http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2016_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf
- Tomanović, S. (2004). Family habitus as the cultural context for childhood. *Childhood, 11*(3), 339-360.
- Trainor, A.A. (2010). Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education home-school interactions. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(1), 34-47.
- Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia: A century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ule, M., Živoder, A., & du Bois-Reymond, M. (2015). ‘Simply the best for my children’: patterns of parental involvement in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 28*(3), 329-348.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2004). Parental involvement: Title I, part A: Non-regulatory guidance. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.doc>
- (2007). *Engaging parents in education: Lessons from five parental information and resource centers*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/pntinv.html>
- Verachtert, P., Van Damme, J., Onghena, P., & Ghesquière, P. (2009). A seasonal perspective on school effectiveness: evidence from a Flemish longitudinal study in kindergarten and first grade. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice, 20*(2), 215-233.
- Vincent, C. (2017). ‘The children have only got one education and you have to make sure it’s a good one’: Parenting and parent–school relations in a neoliberal age. *Gender and Education, 29*(5), 541-557.

- Vincent, C., & Ball, S.J. (2007). 'Making up' the middle-class child: Families, activities and class dispositions. *Sociology*, 41(6), 1061–1077.
- von Hippel, P. (2007). Regression with missing Ys: An improved strategy for analyzing multiply imputed data. *Sociological Methodology*, 37(1), 83–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9531.2007.00180.x>
- von Hippel, P., & Hamrock, C. (2016). Do test score gaps grow before, during, or between the school years? Measurement artifacts and what we can know in spite of them. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2745527>
- von Hippel, P., & Workman, J. (2016). From kindergarten through second grade, U.S. children's obesity prevalence grows only during summer vacations. *Obesity*, 24(11), 2296-2300.
- Von Otter, C., & Stenberg, S. Å. (2015). Social capital, human capital and parent–child relation quality: interacting for children's educational achievement?. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(7), 996-1016.
- Walton Radford, A. (2013). *Top student, top school?: How social class shapes where valedictorians go to college*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Weininger, E.B., Lareau, A., & Conley, D. (2015). What money doesn't buy: Class resources and children's participation in organized extracurricular activities. *Social Forces*, 94(2), 479–503.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Xu, Y., & De Arment, S. (2017). The effects of summer school on early literacy skills of children from low-income families. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(1), 89-98.

Yamaguchi, K. (1998). Rational-choice theories of anticipatory socialization and anticipatory non-socialization, *Rationality and Society*, 10(2), 163-199.

Zelizer, V.A. (1994). *Pricing the priceless child: The changing social value of children*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Zellman, G.L., & Waterman, J.M. (1998). Understanding the impact of parent school involvement on children's educational outcomes. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91(6), 370-380.

APPENDIX A

The Ontario Summer Learning Project: Parent Survey

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE OUR SURVEY. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTION IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO DO SO. WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE SURVEY, PLEASE PLACE IT IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOPE, SEAL, AND HAVE YOUR CHILD TO RETURN IT TO THEIR TEACHER.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your responses will be confidential. You may skip any item that you do not wish to answer.

A. STUDENT INFORMATION

1. What grade was your child enrolled in this past year?
 1
 2
 3
 Other: Please specify: _____
2. What is your child's date of birth? ____ / ____ / ____
month day year
3. Is your child on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?:
 Yes
 No If no, skip the next question
 I don't know
4. Thinking of this past year, how much does your child like coming to school?
 Not at all
 A little
 Somewhat
 A lot
 Quite a lot
 Not sure

B. AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

1. During this past school year, did your child participate in clubs or organized activities after school?
 Yes, at school
 Yes, in the community
 Yes, in both the school and community
 No

2. During this past school year, approximately how many hours per week did your child participate in organized extracurricular activities? (Note: Include only the time spent at the activity, not driving time etc.)

- 1-2 hours per week
- 3-6 hours per week
- 7-10 per week
- Other: Please specify _____
- Not Applicable

3. During this school year, what types of organized extracurricular activities did your child participate in? Please check all that apply:

- Sports
- Music, Art or Drama
- Library program
- Religious or cultural (e.g., choir)
- Social Groups (e.g, Girl Scouts)
- Language instruction/immersion
- Tutoring
- Not applicable
- Other: Please specify _____

4. During this past school year, briefly explain why your child did extracurricular activities during the past school year:

5. Have you ever hired a private academic tutor for any of your children?

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, why did you hire a tutor? Please select all that apply:

- To 'catch up'
- To 'get ahead'
- To maintain skills
- To improve grades
- Other: Please specify _____
- Not applicable

7. During this past school year, which activities did you do with your child several times per week? Please check all that apply:

- Read stories/books
- Help with homework
- Discuss school (e.g., friends, school work etc.)

- Play games (e.g., puzzles, board games, hide and seek)
- Play, listen, sing or dance to music
- Play sports or other related activities (e.g., play 'catch')
- Take child to public facilities such as libraries, museums and parks
- Attend organized play group or drop-in community centre program
- Eat dinner together
- Watch television or play video games
- Other: Please specify: _____

8. Does your child use or play with any of the following resources at your home? Check all that apply:

- Books
- Newspaper, magazines
- Computer
- Internet
- Arts/craft materials
- Musical instruments
- Other: Please specify _____

9. In a typical week during the school year, how much time does your child spend on homework or school related activities (e.g., project, studying for a test)?

- 0 (None)
- 1-4 hours per week
- 5-10 hours per week
- Other: Please specify _____

10. In a typical week during the school year, how much time does your child watch television?

- 0 (Never)
- 1-4 hours per week
- 5-10 hours per week
- Other: Please specify _____

11. In a typical week during the school year, how much time does your child spend on the computer doing non-school activities (e.g., online games, MSN, Facebook, email, etc.)?

- 0 (Never)
- 1-4 hours per week
- 5-10 hours per week
- Other: Please specify _____

12. In a typical week, how much time do you (and/or your spouse) usually spend interacting with your child (includes talking, meals, entertainment, sports etc.).

- 0 (None)
- Less than 5 hours
- From 6 to 10 hours
- From 11 to 20 hours
- More than 20 hours

13. During this past school year, how often do you allow your child “free” or unstructured play time of at least 30 minutes (alone, with other children or with adults)?

- Daily
- Several times per week
- One time per week
- Never
- Not sure

14. During this past school year, have you done the following? Please check all that apply:

- Attended a parent-teacher meeting
- Met privately with your child’s teacher to discuss his/her schooling
- Met privately with your child’s school principal to discuss his/her schooling
- Volunteered at your child’s school
- Participated in your child’s school parenting council
- Attended an event at your child’s school (e.g., play)
- Other: Please specify_____

C. SUMMER ACTIVITIES

1. Thinking about this summer, what type of child care will you use? Please select all that apply:

- Day-care centre
- Full time Day Program (e.g., Hockey school, Day camp)
- Care by a relative (non-sibling)
- Care by a sibling
- Care by a non-relative
- Care by you or another parent/guardian
- Other: Please specify_____

2. Thinking about this summer, approximately how many hours per week will your child participate in organized extracurricular activities? (Note: Include only the time spent at the activity, not driving time etc.)

- 1-2 hours per week
- 3-6 hours per week
- 7-10 hours per week
- Full time program
- Other: Please specify_____

Not applicable

3. Thinking about this summer, what types of organized extracurricular activities will your child participate in? Please check all that apply.

- Sports
- Music, Art or Drama
- Library program
- Religious or cultural (e.g., choir)
- Social Groups (e.g, Girl Scouts)
- Language instruction
- Tutoring
- Other: Please specify _____
- Not applicable

4. Thinking about this summer, briefly explain why your child will be extracurricular activities during the summer months:

D. FUTURE PLANS:

1. What is the highest level of education you hope your child will complete?

- Finish High School
- Apprenticeship: work towards a skilled trade (Community College University)
- University degree (e.g., B.A.)
- Postgraduate degree (e.g., M.A., PhD)
- Don't know
- Other: Please specify _____

2. How important for you is it that your child gets more education after high school?

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all

3. What, if anything, would stand in your child's way of achieving his/her educational goals? Please select all that apply:

- Nothing
- Trouble with learning
- English language problems
- Emotional problems or worries
- Getting along with teachers
- Getting along with students

- Feeling like he/she doesn't belong
- Bullying/harassment from other students
- Problems staying focused
- Little interest in school
- Money/Tuition
- His/her athletic pursuits
- Other: Please specify _____

4. Do you (and/or your family) have a financial plan for your child's postsecondary education (e.g., RESP)?

- Yes
- No

E. PARENT INFORMATION:

1. What year were you born? _____

2. How many children live with you?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Other: Please specify _____

3. What age(s) are your children?

- Child one: _____
- Child two: _____
- Child three: _____

Please list others: _____

4. Are you currently:

- Married or common law
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed
- Single

5. If you are currently separated or divorced, does your child regularly see his/her other parent?

- Yes
- No

6. What level of education have you completed?

- Elementary School
- Some High School
- High School graduate

- Private technical College (e.g. Toronto School of Business)
 - Community College
 - University B.A./ BSc.
 - Postgraduate University (e.g. law degree, Masters, Doctorate)
7. What level of education has your child's other parent completed?
- Elementary School
 - Some High School
 - High School graduate
 - Private technical College (e.g. Toronto School of Business)
 - Community College
 - University B.A./B.Sc.
 - University Postgraduate (e.g. law degree, Masters, Doctorate)
 - I don't know
8. Are you currently employed? Yes___ No___
9. If yes, are you employed part-time or full-time?
10. What is your occupation? _____
11. What is the occupation of your child's other parent? _____
12. Would the total income of all household members from all sources during the last 12 months be:
- Less than \$15,000
 - \$15,000 to less than \$30,000
 - \$30,000 to less than \$45,000
 - \$45,000 to less than \$60,000
 - \$60,000 to less than \$80,000
 - \$80,000 to less than \$100,000
 - \$100,000 to \$200,000
 - \$200 000 or more
15. What background and/or ethnicity apply to you? Please select all that apply:
- Canadian
 - British (England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales)
 - French
 - Chinese
 - Italian
 - German
 - Aboriginal (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit)
 - South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)
 - Ukrainian
 - Dutch (Netherlands)

- Polish
- Portuguese
- Filipino
- Jewish
- Greek
- Arab
- Latin American
- African
- South East Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, etc.)
- Other: Please specify_____

16. Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No

18. If you were not born in Canada, how long have you lived in Canada?

Years: _____

Months: _____

19. What is the language most often spoken in your home?

G. Other information:

Please use the space below if you have any other thoughts on student learning or achievement, extracurricular programs, summer programs and/or any other issues that are raised in the survey.

Thank you for participating in the Ontario Summer Learning Survey.

APPENDIX B

Parent Interview Questions SUMMER LITERACY CAMP

Questions in CAPITALS – MAIN QUESTIONS

Probes – if more elaboration/clarity is required

	Question/Instruction:
A1	CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY? (E.G., HOW MANY CHILDREN, AGES AND GRADE LEVELS)
A2	CAN YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOUR SON/DAUGHTER? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HIM/HER?
A3	BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL, DID YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, what were your concerns? How did you respond to ‘X’? (e.g., talked to family Dr.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, in your opinion, did you get the help you needed? If not, what barriers did you/your child experience? (e.g., long waiting lists) ○ If yes, are you still concerned about ‘X’? Why or why not? (e.g., treatment worked) • If yes, can you describe to me how (if at all) you are working with your child’s teacher/school to deal with ‘X’?
B1	THINKING OF THIS PAST SCHOOL YEAR, HOW WELL DID YOUR CHILD DO? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did he/she do in reading? In math?
B2	DOES YOUR CHILD LIKE SCHOOL? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why or why not? • How does he/she express these feelings?
C1	CAN YOU DESCRIBE TO ME THE TYPE OF CONTACT YOU HAVE WITH YOUR CHILD’S CLASSROOM TEACHER?
C2	IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN OR WANTED TO SHARE SOMETHING WITH YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER, DO YOU APPROACH HIM/HER? WHY OR WHY NOT? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, can you give me an example? • If yes, what was the outcome?
C3	DID YOU ATTEND A PARENT-TEACHER MEETING LAST YEAR? WHY OR WHY NOT? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, did you have any issues/concerns that you wanted to share? • Were you able to voice those concerns? Why or why not?
C4	CAN YOU RECALL A TIME THAT YOUR CHILD WAS HAVING AN ISSUE AT SCHOOL? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the issue? • How did you deal with the problem? What was the outcome?
C5	MORE GENERALLY, ARE YOU ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITIES?
C6	THE TERM “PARENT ENGAGEMENT” IS USED A LOT THESE DAYS. WHAT DOES THAT TERM MEAN TO YOU? WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU ASSOCIATE WITH THAT TERM? CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME EXAMPLES? (Note: If response is too general e.g., “parents should be supportive” – probe deeper and ask: e.g., “what do you mean by ‘supportive’? How does “support” translate into a specific activity/action or range of actions? Can you give me an example?”).
C7	WHAT DOES A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS/SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE?

C8	<p>HOW DO YOU SEE <i>YOUR</i> ROLE IN YOUR CHILDREN’S SCHOOLING? (E.G., WHAT DOES THAT INVOLVE OR LOOK LIKE?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you see your role in your children’s education and learning more generally?
C9	HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOL IN CHILDREN’S EDUCATION?
C10	<p>ONE THING THAT WE’RE REALLY INTERESTED IN IS LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW WE CAN MAKE STRONGER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS/SCHOOLS. WE KNOW THAT CHILDREN’S SCHOOL SUCCESS IS SUPPORTED WHEN PARENTS ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THEIR CHILD’S SCHOOLING. PART OF THAT IS FEELING CONNECTED TO SCHOOLS, TALKING TO TEACHERS, PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ETC - IN YOUR OPINION:</p> <p>-WHAT BARRIERS PREVENT PARENTS FROM CONNECTING TO SCHOOLS/TEACHERS?</p> <p>-WHAT BARRIERS PREVENT PARENTS FROM PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITIES?</p> <p>-WHAT DO YOU THINK INSPIRES REALLY POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS/SCHOOLS AND PARENTS?</p> <p>-WHAT DO YOU THINK COULD STRENGTHEN PARENT-ENGAGEMENT?</p>
C13	<p>AS A PARENT, WHAT RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES ARE MOST HELPFUL IN TERMS OF HELPING YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell me what led you to this opinion? Can you give me an example?
	NOW I’D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE GOALS
D1	WHAT EDUCATIONAL GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR CHILD?
D2	DO YOU ANTICIPATE ANY BARRIERS (THAT PREVENT YOU/YOUR CHILD) FROM REALIZING THESE GOALS?
	NOW I’D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH SCHOOL.
E1	DID YOU ENJOY SCHOOL? WHAT ASPECTS DID YOU ENJOY/NOT ENJOY?
E2	WHAT MESSAGES DID YOUR PARENTS GIVE YOU ABOUT SCHOOL?
	IN WHAT WAYS DO THOSE MESSAGES SHAPE HOW YOU PARENT YOUR OWN CHILD?
	Are there any other topics or stories you’d like to share that I didn’t ask about?

APPENDIX C

Teacher Interview Questions SUMMER LITERACY CAMP

SLP Teacher Interview Schedule - QUESTIONS	
A	CAN YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOUR TEACHING BACKGROUND AND YOUR CURRENT POSITION?
	HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PARTICULAR SCHOOL COMMUNITY? -STUDENTS? -PARENTS?
	AS A TEACHER, WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF TEACHING IN THIS COMMUNITY?
	WHAT ARE THE GREATEST BARRIERS/CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS IN THIS COMMUNITY? - WHAT FACTORS LIMIT THEIR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS?
B	EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS OFTEN USE THE TERM “PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT”. WHAT DOES THAT TERM MEAN TO YOU?
	HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE IDEAL PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP?
	HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE TYPICAL PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP?
	HOW DO PARENTS SEE THEIR ROLE IN THEIR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION? HOW DO THEY CONCEPTUALIZE THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL/TEACHER?
	DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CONTACT/COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS?
	WHAT EXPLAINS HIGH/LOWER CONTACT/COMMUNICATION? EXAMPLES?
C	HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE QUALITY OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT AT THIS SCHOOL/ BOARD?
	IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT EXPLAINS THE QUALITY OF THIS RELATIONSHIP?
	IN YOUR OPINION -WHICH STRATEGIES ARE MOST SUCCESSFUL? - WHICH STRATEGIES ARE LEAST SUCCESSFUL
	WHAT DO YOU THINK INFLUENCES PARENTAL ATTITUDES ABOUT SCHOOLING?
	INTERVIEWEE: NOW I’D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE SLLP.
D	HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE -THE STUDENTS AT THIS SITE? - PARENTS AT THIS SITE?

	WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS ATTENDING THIS PROGRAM?
	AS AN EDUCATOR, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES THIS SUMMER?
	BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR GREATEST SUCCESSES THIS SUMMER?
	WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR STUDENTS' GREATEST SUCCESSES THIS SUMMER?
E	CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE LEVEL/QUALITY OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT THIS SUMMER?
	IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT EXPLAINS THE LEVEL OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT THIS SUMMER?
	ARE THE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES DURING THE SLLP DIFFERENT OR SIMILAR TO THOSE USED DURING THE REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR?
	WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT FROM THE SLLP? ANY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES THAT WE CAN BRIDGE FORWARD INTO THE SCHOOL YEAR?

APPENDIX D

Demographics

Sex: _____ Age: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Highest level of education: _____ Occupation: _____

Marital status: _____

Residence: Own, rent or other: _____

Re: Other parent (Spouse/Partner) (if applicable)

Age: _____ Ethnicity: _____ Relationship status: _____

Spouse/Partner's occupation: _____

Spouse/Partner's highest level of education: _____

How many children live in the home full-time? _____ Ages? _____

How many children live in the home part-time? _____ How often? _____

Ages? _____

What is your best estimate of your total household income each year, received by all household members, from all sources, before taxes and deductions, during the year?

➤ Please check off which category best fits you:

_____ \$0 - \$29,999

_____ \$30,000 - \$69,999

_____ \$70,000 - \$99,999

_____ \$100,000 and more

APPENDIX E

Photo-Interview: Instructions

Camera given on: _____

Camera should be returned by: _____

- a) Your child has been given a disposable camera. We would like him/her to take photos that answer the following questions. We would like him/her to take at least 1 picture for every question; however he/she may want to take more than one picture to answer a question.
- b) On _____ please bring the camera back to school. After we develop the photos, we will sit down with your child and ask him/her about his/her photos. The interview will last about 20-30 minutes and will be conducted on the school grounds. If you would like to participate in the interview, please let us know and we will make sure that you are included.

Hi _____! Take at least 1 picture of.....

1. Your family.
2. What you like to read at home.
3. Your favourite place to read.
4. Someone that teaches you how to read at home.
5. A place where you go to get things to read or a person who provides you with things to read.
6. A place, person, or thing, that helps you learn new things.
7. Something that you have learned from the summer program.
8. Something you usually do after school or on the weekend.
9. Something that you are really good at.
10. Something that shows what you want to be when you are grown up.

Hint 1: You have been given a disposable camera. We want you to have a great time with this project, however before snapping a picture, think twice and ask yourself: 'Will the picture tell the story I want to tell? Will it answer the question?' Unlike most cameras on a phone or iPad, once you take a photo you cannot erase it.

Hint 2: You may want to take a photo of something that reminds you of the answer to your question. For example, if you like to play soccer afterschool you do not need to take a photo of yourself playing soccer. Instead, you can take a photo of a soccer ball.

Important: All photos must be taken off school grounds. We do not have permission to take photos of other children participating in the summer program.