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MOTHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE IN THEIR CHILDS' OUT OF SCHOOL

[SUMMER] TIME: A SOCIOECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation in

Educational Theory and Policy

by

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Abstract

I set out to explore the question: How do middle-class, working-class and low-income mothers experience their children's out of school summer time? Using qualitative basic interpretive approach, study findings draw from interview data, journal entries and participant observations from a study completed with 22 mothers of varying socioeconomic statuses whose children underwent a 10 to 12 week summer vacation. Study participants had at least one child in K-6th grade during the study. All participants resided in one of three communities. Each community was selected because of contrasting makeups in terms of resident levels of education, poverty concentrations, economic prosperity and employment opportunities. I used Lareau's (2003; 2011) theories related to a cultural logic of childrearing and I asked three guiding questions. First, what are mothers' perceptions of summer related to learning regression? How do education stakeholders prepare families? How did preparation affect childrearing strategies? I find that the fissure between the school and the home begins even prior to the close of the school year. This anticipation for summer months creates anxieties for mothers who aspire to provide their children with productive out of school experiences, but find them unattainable due to life constraints. I also find that though mothers have intentions for keeping up with school-like activities, these goals are rarely realized. I also asked, how do mothers of varying SES characterize the purpose of their child's summer vacation; and where does summer vacation "fit" into family life? Regardless of social class, I find that mothers appropriate their own memories from their own histories with summer vacations. Middle-class mothers go to great lengths to construct summer plans for their children, but these efforts are often rebuffed as children use their own sense of agency and "child capital" (Chin and Phillips, 2004) in establishing their own schedules and summer routines. Finally, I asked how can Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing explain social class reproduction cycles? My findings were not entirely consistent with Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth. As a result, I propose a reconceptualization of child-rearing practices during the summer called leveraged exploration and contingent exploration. These theories introduce new dimensions for understanding the replication of social class differences.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Summer vacation has long-endured as one of the greatest American rites of passage. Since a common school calendar was developed around the turn of the 20th century, summer vacation—or school calendar reform—has rarely faced earnest or meaningful attention on a broad scale in the American public school system. This is in spite of the fact that seasonal research studies produce broad swaths of evidence about summer vacation and the role it plays in learning slides (aka: summer learning loss) and in the reproduction of social inequality (Alexander & Entwistle, 1990; Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson 2000, 2007; Burkham et al., 2004). Why does summer vacation endure when most available data about extended breaks from school indicates that summer has ill effects on student outcomes? Should the ritual of summer vacation simply be reduced to a cultural value incapable of change? If so, why?

One way to potentially answer these questions is to gain a better understanding for how those who experience summer vacation perceive and practice it. This study, using a basic interpretive approach, draws from interview data, journal entries and participant observations from a study completed with 22 mothers of varying socioeconomic statuses whose children underwent a 10 to 12 week summer vacation. Therefore, this study makes the logical assumption that by honing in on family life during a time when the formal institution of school is set to the background, new understandings about summer as an undeniable rite of passage will emerge. Next, I problematize the issue of summer vacation by introducing a recent case study that serves as an unusual example of school calendar reform.

Statement of the problem

In April of 2011, the Chicago Public School System (CPS) ignited a debate when the CPS's Board unanimously approved a measure to extend the school day by 90-minutes as well as tack on two weeks per year to the school calendar. While headlines on the issue may read to the effect of school time *increases*, another way to articulate the reform would be instead as a *decrease* in the time Chicago schoolchildren spend outside of school. Despite the context of the reform in Chicago—a highly populated city plagued by problems known to interfere with academic success such as rampant poverty, high instance of violent crimes and excessive dropout rates—decisions to increase the school day were met with scrutiny.

Months later, when the first teachers strike in 25 years took place in September 2012, the extension of the school day was cited in the top three reasons for the strike. When it ended after eight days, concessions between the Board and the Chicago's Teacher Union were made, but the extended school day was not on the list of compromises. The Board's original decision to extend the school day and year remained intact.

The CPS's effort to curtail student's "free time" highlights broader and, at times, controversial missions of schools to act as proxy for familial, neighborhood and community resource deficits. For an impoverished child, school plays an integral role in the fulfillment of basic necessities. Recognizing this, throughout the history of formal schooling in the United States, policymakers have instituted a number of reforms meant to support some of society's most disadvantaged youth. Still, changes to school calendars like the case study found in Chicago, by and large, are a rare occurrence. Despite widespread evidence that summer has ill effects on learning and academic outcomes, policymakers remain unable to reach productive agreement for how to manage summer vacation. Researchers argue for longer school days noting that especially in achievement gaps, schools matter as they level

rather than intensify societal ills (Downey, Hippel and Broh, 2005). Others, however, are skeptical that school can act as panacea or cure-alls for large-scale social problems (Ravitch, 2011).

Social reproduction theorists observe and readily point out that schools serve to reward students of families that perpetuate the practices and expectations of mainstream dominant classes (Lareau, 2000; 2003; 2011). Others go further to suggest that schools sort and “track” thereby perpetuating social class issues like dropout and cycles of poverty (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985). Regardless, an annual 10 to 12 week summer break remains a mostly uncontested space in the education reform and policy arenas. In the next section, I provide the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

This study examined mothers’ out of school time summer practices, thought processes in how they negotiated their children’s time away from school and therefore, shaped their family life during summer months. I situated my research in an epistemological understanding that family background as well as environmental contexts contribute to a child’s academic future and overall life trajectory significantly. In formulating my research questions, I hypothesized that losses or gains related to academic summer setbacks only explain a small subset of what actually occurs in families during summer months. I further argued that my participants’ socioeconomic status plays less of a role in determining summer out of school time than does the contextual circumstances of one’s immediate environment. For example, while I recognized that middle-class families stand a better chance than their working-class and low-income counterparts to provide their children with

more and higher quality opportunities to learn, I also contended that community context plays a mediating role.

The core research question of the study was: *How do mothers in different communities and of varying social class backgrounds experience and negotiate their children's academic summer vacation?* To answer this broad question, I employed three guiding sets of sub-research questions aimed at a further understanding of out of school summer time. They are:

- 1.) Guiding Question – Subset 1: What are mothers' perceptions of summer learning loss (SLL)? How do education stakeholders prepare families? How did preparation affect childrearing strategies?
- 2.) Guiding Question – Subset 2: How do mothers of varying SES characterize the purpose of their child's summer vacation; and where does summer vacation "fit" into family life?
- 3.) Guiding Question – Subset 3: In what ways do theories related to Bourdieu's social production theory and Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing explain differential summer out of school time experiences?

Organization of the study

The premise for this study sits at the intersection of summer learning loss and family life. By interviewing mothers and spending times with their families, I hoped to understand how the fissure between home and school might widen during out of school summer time. I also wanted to know if social class differences readily presented themselves in my discussions and interactions with families. In Chapter 2, I begin the study with a comprehensive overview of the history related to summer vacation. I focus on three inter-

connected events that transpired at the turn of the 20th Century, which played a role in shaping modern day summer vacations.

First, I discuss the role of the Common School Movement in creating standardized calendars and consistency that would help to stabilize a somewhat transient population. Second, I explain how the United States was undergoing important cultural changes like a growing immigrant population and how these numbers brought to bear significant repercussions for schools. Likewise, I discuss how the implementation of child labor laws exposed the importance of schools for families of a disadvantaged background. Finally, I discuss two movements enacted as antidote to the growing concerns for child well-being: vacation schools and organized camping. In the second part of the literature review, I provide current information that spans school calendar changes in the United States. I note that though some school systems have been successful in creating calendar reform, the movement has been seen as largely experimental with most schools in the United States sticking to a 180-day school calendar (Entwistle, Alexander and Olson, 2007).

Despite school playing an integral role in the life of a child, researchers find that only 13% of time is spent in schools (Walberg, 1984). As a result, out of school time (OST) has emerged as an important subfield in education research. In this section of the literature review, I introduce some important areas of OST researchers use when considering the patterns and effects related to it. I use my discussion with OST as a primer for a larger discussion surrounding summer learning loss (SLL).

Studies focused on SLL often emphasize the detrimental effect of time lapses away from school. Researchers have been particularly successful in demonstrating how low-income and impoverished students suffer from extended breaks the most. Faucet theory developed by Alexander, Entwistle and Olson (2002) is introduced and study results from

interventions and summer bridge programs are presented. At the end of Chapter 2, I introduce three gaps in the field that require the attention of the research community.

The third chapter introduces my conceptual framework for the study. Here, I introduce Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing, which I used as a framework for observing patterns of differences and similarities between the social class backgrounds of families in my study. My sub-research question for this section asked: How do mothers of varying social class backgrounds and community contexts manage their children's out of school summer time? Lareau (2003) conducted a rigorous ethnographic study focused on differentiated patterns of childrearing based on gender, race and class. Her award-winning book *Unequal Childhoods* (2003; 2011) has been as Cheadle (2009) describes it, "highly visible and influential" (p. 477). Lareau uses the work Pierre Bourdieu (1973; 1986) who conceptualized social production theory into a framework of cultural capital, *habitus* and "field".

Lareau (2003; 2011) used Bourdieu's (1986) refinement of social production theory in developing a cultural logic of childrearing. Based on her findings, she posited that—based on social class—families hold differential viewpoints for parental roles and responsibilities. She claimed that middle-class families practice concerted cultivation, while working-class and poor families practice accomplishment of natural growth. She draws out at least three key dimensions of child-rearing variations between families of different social classes: structure of daily life, interventions at institutions and language at home. Though I use Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing as the predominant lens, I also discuss broader sociological theories related to class such as social reproduction and conflict theory and Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction.

In Chapter 3, I also introduce pilot work I conducted before setting out with a new set of research questions used for this study. Pilot work was vital in forming an initial understanding knowledge gaps about family life and summer vacation. Based on the findings of that study, I developed an alternative for gaging family life during the summer (See Appendices A, B, C and D).

In Chapter 4, I introduce my approach to collecting research for this study. I explain how I went about collecting the data and analyzing it. Here, I describe the basic interpretive approach which draws from interview data, journal entries and participant observations from a study completed with 22 mothers of varying socioeconomic statuses whose children underwent a 10 to 12 week summer vacation. Study participants had at least one child in K-6th grade during the study (one child was going into 7th grade the following year). All participants resided in one of three communities. Each community was selected because of contrasting makeups in terms of resident levels of education, poverty concentrations, economic prosperity and employment opportunities. Mothers completed a demographic survey with questions related to their SES, racial and background information. Research occurred in three phases with interviews, observations and journal entries occurring at planned intervals throughout the course of the study. For example, a preliminary interview took place during the spring before school had technically ended, a second interview occurred midsummer and a reflection interview took place during the fall after school had been in session approximately six weeks.

In addition, six critical cases were selected to participate in a minimum of three additional interviews along with participant observations and completion of journal entries for mothers and their children. Mothers were provided with a total journal prompts every other week for the duration of the summer. Critical cases were selected based on a

combination of results from the information obtained from the demographic survey and preliminary spring interview. Critical cases demonstrated variation in SES and the mothers' background information including their experiences with upward mobility along with a general willingness to articulate insights about their child's summer vacation. Also, in Chapter 4, I provide examples for how I analyzed my data. Here, I show examples of my coding schematics, memos and the matrixes I used in order to draw my study conclusions.

In the fifth chapter, I introduce my first set of findings related to the way mothers go about preparing for their child's summer vacation. By combining Silva's model for types of time and Epstein's spheres of influence in demonstrating school, family and community partnerships, I create a visual description that explains mothers' perceptions of a gradually tapered school year. The mothers in the study noted how as the school year came to a close they had a heightened pressure to provide their child with a healthy and positive summer. For working-class mothers with limited resources, living in Grantville was particularly frustrating because despite access to many activities, they were financially and logistically out of reach. Despite this, the majority of mothers, regardless of social class were excited for summer. Middle-class mothers take great care in preparing inside and outside the home activities. Though they have good intentions for doing school-like work at home (e.g. language review and math drills found on worksheets or websites), they rarely followed through on these intentions.

In Chapter 6, I aimed to answer the question: How do mothers of varying socioeconomic statuses characterize the purpose of their child's summer vacation and where does summer vacation "fit" into family life? I found that remarkably, nearly all mothers in the study appropriated memories from their own childhoods as a way of formulating their child's summers. Not all memories were positive and not all mothers were "at-home" with

the idea that summer should be synonymous with time away from “learning”. What mothers enjoyed most about the possibility of summer was an opportunity for their children to explore free of school influences and to explore their environments. However, children often expressed their own agency and form of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 2011) during summer months often leading mothers to re-welcome the school year back into family life.

In Chapter 7, I used Lareau’s cultural logic of childrearing as a lens for teasing out summertime parenting strategies according to social class. Findings demonstrate that Lareau’s ideal types designed to explain child-rearing strategies according to social class were often too rigid as descriptors for the specific cases offered in this study. I particularly find accomplishment of natural growth limiting as it discounts working-class and low-income mothers’ aspirations toward more structured lives. These mothers’ desires were often palpable and convincing, demonstrating how poor and disadvantaged populations are not aloof to cultural milieu that often results in advantages (Chin and Phillips, 2004; Rosier, 2009). Here, I introduce a new way of thinking about summer time away from school: leveraged exploration and contingent exploration. This theory postulates that even though mothers have similar hopes and aspirations that the middle-class maintains a distinguishable “edge” over working-class and low-income mothers. Finally, in chapter 7, I introduce how Pugh’s (2009) theories about consumer culture and the need to belong, relate to my findings. I show that the middle-class mothers in my study had an established sense of belonging, allowing them to more freely reach higher levels of “being” needs. I use Maslow’s theory of motivation, commonly known as a hierarchy of needs to further illustrate this point.

Finally, in chapter 8, I end the paper by summarizing my key findings and putting them into a contemporary context. In this chapter, I also acknowledge a number of study

limitations including potential sensitivity to outliers and other elements related to logistics of the study. Finally, I present the policy implications of my findings for the following groups:

Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review

Introduction

Research questions for this study were drawn from issues important to the sociology of education as situated in the context of the summer—a time when the formal institution of school is set to the background. Two distinct bodies of literature have informed the design of this study. In Figure 1, I provide a visual depiction of the structure of this chapter including how it corresponds to my conceptual framework (presented fully in the next chapter) and research questions.

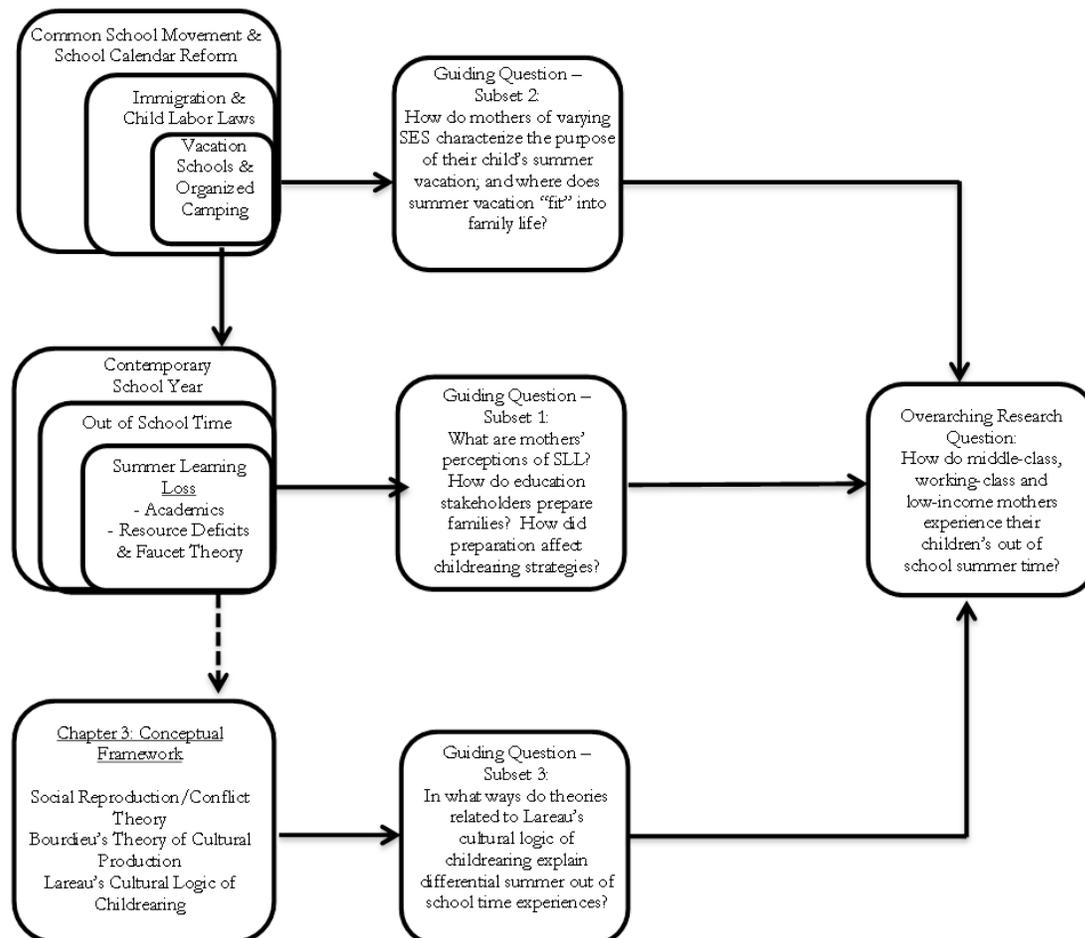


Figure 1: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework Mapped to Research Questions

My goal for this chapter is twofold. First is to present data from primary and secondary sources focused on historical events that have laid groundwork for present day (and often taken for granted) summer out of school time (SOST) practices. Second, is to demonstrate the way in which my research questions bridge gaps in current understandings of family life and seasonal research. Bearing in mind these goals, I argue that value sets about summer vacation are dredged in deep historical roots and contemporary cultural norms that are consistently ignored in studies focused on the connection between summer vacation and inequities. Areas of the literature review are grouped into two main topics:

- 1. Historical Overview of Summer Vacation: Early Patterns of Social Inequity** – I begin with an overview of historical events that led the United States to institute an annual summer vacation as part of the Common School Movement. Here, at least partially, I debunk the myth that the academic calendar of today simply reflects the outdated needs of an agrarian and largely rural populace of days gone by. Rather, I show how the landscape of the United States at the turn of the 19th Century was undergoing rampant changes in demographic makeup and physical mobility driving the need for a reliable school calendar. Urbanization and its effects, hot physical plants during summer months and doctors' advice against year-round schooling all contributed to the institution of an annual summer vacation. I also describe how certain populations of children suffered ill effects from the annual closing of schools during summer months and how these effects were sparked by urbanization, immigration and child labor laws--two important and banded socio-

historical events that shed new light on the way that summertime inequities could be seen early on in the nation's educational history. Here, I show how vacation schools and organized camping were two ways that SOST activities show patterns of social inequities in summer vacation and are traceable back as far back as the turn of the 20th century when the school calendars realized an annual summer vacation.

2. **Out of School Time (OST) and Seasonal Research:** Because seasonal research falls into the broader category of out of school time (OST) research, it is important to understand commonly accepted practices for OST: including the way researchers place value in its productive use. I link the OST research to that of seasonal research showing how researchers are overly preoccupied with summer learning losses (SLL) in academic subjects. I argue a gap exists in understandings related to parents' philosophies, values and ideals and how these connect to summertime decision-making that affects student outcomes. Here I introduce research related to parental investment strategies, which I ultimately contend makes the most convincing case for understanding how summer vacation has persisted as an undeniable rite of passage for American schoolchildren.

Historical Overview of Summer Vacation: Early Patterns of Social Inequity

Academic summer vacation bookmarks an important place in the historical lineage of education reform in the United States. In this section of my literature review, I provide a

historical assessment of summer vacation and the way it exposes an ongoing trend of unequal experiences based on social class. Here, I demonstrate that as far back as the turn of the 20th Century that children living in poverty experienced disparate summer vacations in comparison to their middle-class counterparts. Patterns related to advantage and disadvantage developed early on as political reformers established policies that would result in the implementation of a summer vacation.

Kenneth Gold (2002), education historian, introduces summer vacation not as a separate entity from education reform, but as a component of larger reforms meant to standardize education in the United State. Like most decisions related to education, summer vacation was no exception to controversy and acted as a sort of “political animal”. In terms of combined efforts of school movements of the late 19th century and early 20th century he writes,

“Political, ideological, and docile forces pulled at summer from multiple directions, and historical actors brought a variety of agendas to bear on it. That the summer’s place in schooling and society was a pluralist construction should not necessarily cause surprise—the same could be said of public schooling. Summer and regular schools alike took their shape from demographic trends, social-class anxieties, economic conditions and national events. (p. 3).”

As schools were gaining credibility as hubs for social progress and responsibility, Horace Mann, American education reformist and advocate for the Common School Movement, urged schools to realize a comprehensive school calendar. He contended that inconsistent school calendars stymied educational progress. In fact, school calendars during this timeframe were erratic as the number of required school days varied dramatically not only

from state-to-state, but also from community-to-community. In urban areas, schools were often closed during hot summer months, while rural locations with strong farming economies took a school break in the spring because of planting and another in the fall due to harvest.

Contrary to the belief that summer vacation was developed simply to support the agricultural needs of American farmers, Gold (2002) presents a collage of reasons that ultimately resulted in a 10 to 12 week annual break during summer. Reasons included urbanization, teachers undergoing training and professional development and physical plants unable to support hot weather during summer months. Well-respected members of the medical community also had their say as they persuaded parents that over-schooling would jeopardize the mental and physical health of children.

Especially at the turn of the 19th century and throughout the progressive era until around 1985, the middle class increasingly viewed the rapid rates of urbanization and industrialization occurring in city centers as detrimental to the health and well-being of their children (Ramsing, 2007). Doctors warned that that without proper recuperation from school, children would become mentally unstable (Gold, 2002). They encouraged parents to make travel plans for their children as “summer afforded...the opportunity to interact with the natural world in order to resuscitate themselves (Gold, 2002, p. 108).” Summer, then, became a time for urban elites and members of a stable middle class to gain a reprieve from stifling city conditions. For poor children, however, summer vacation exacerbated poverty-stricken conditions. Furthermore, within the two decades following the Common School Movement, the United States would undergo a number of swift social changes that directly affected missions and objectives of schools and school-aged children: immigration and

changes in child immigration laws. Each of these important socio-historical events had unintended consequences that reared ugly heads during summer vacation.

At the turn of the 20th century, along with urbanization, immigration rates in the United States rose sharply, affecting communities and the schools within them. Education historian, Diane Ravitch (2000), describes immigration as “a rationale that seemed to link social reform and school reform.” During this time, schools also became a central focus of communities. Of the growing collective responsibility of public schools during this timeframe she writes,

“...public schools remained open for community use after school and education in the evenings. These were valuable innovations because the schools supplied medical and social services that were greatly needed and deeply appreciated by immigrant families (Ravitch, 2000, p. 56).”

Struggles of immigrant families to live outside of poverty often led children to take factory jobs for wages that would support the family. However, as the progressive era began, a number of new ideologies emerged about the value of education and social acceptability of children in the labor force.

Trade unions argued it was unethical for children to work also adding that their participation minimized the wages of adult workers (Marten, 2004). During the progressive era, laws curtailing such practices were swiftly legislated. In writing about the progressive era, child labor and educational opportunity, Marten (2004) describes how by the late 1800s, committees against child labor had sprung up in several states. With child labor laws enacted and compulsory attendance soon to follow, children were required to report to school rather than to factories or mills (Slyck, 2006). This caused an influx of immigrant children to attend schools as middle-class ideals were projected onto schools as they were deemed

places, not just for socializing children, but acculturating into them American social life (Ravitch, 2000).

Though certainly not utopian environments, schools did act as shelter from the effects of living in poverty, but with common school calendars now in place and factory work out of the question, summer vacation exposed and exacerbated the abject conditions children endured outside of school. Especially in urban areas, without the option of returning to factory work during the summer vacation, many children turned instead to delinquency and pauperism (Gold, 2002). Henry Curtis (1902) described summer vacation as, “Twelve weeks in which there was no place for the children of the poor but to remain in the narrow tenements or roam the streets (p. 115)”. Especially to the growing middle class, repercussions from poverty were considered counter to social progress, spurring innovative interventions perceived as critical to the campaign for social order (Marten, 2004).

In tandem to rampant growth in urbanization was the value of the “child” in society. At the turn of the 19th century, progressives succeeded in establishing a number of ancillary programs designed to benefit children. Such efforts included the playground movement, pensions for widowed mothers, housing and healthcare (Marten, 2004). As the values of America’s middle class grew more salient (For instance, education, patriotism, morality, value in childhood) so did organized outside of school opportunities for the middle class. Eventually, as they saw the teachings of morality and social responsibility as their responsibility, the middle class would broaden programs to include poor and disadvantaged children (Slyck, 2006; Ward, 1935). Among them were two such programs, vacation schools and organized camping, both of which took place in summer months when schools were closed. Though different in structures, venues and missions, vacation schools and organized camping were considered antidote to increases in vagrancy and untoward effects blamed on

extended breaks from school. More than that, they show that though SOST opportunities for the disadvantaged and poor were designed under different conditions and goal sets than for the middle class.

Vacation Schools

Vacation schools, though they occupied schools that normally would have been closed for summer vacation, were facilitated not by school systems, but by philanthropic organizations like the Women's Club (Perry, 1910). In describing the impetus for the advent of vacation schools, Clarence Perry (1910), sociologist during the progressive era, declares the impetus unsavory conditions prompted by summer. Around 1885 vacation schools began to grow and Perry (1910) notes that as many as 60 U.S. cities hosted vacation schools for children who lived in an urban setting but could not afford summer respites like were common for middle-class and upper-class children. Like Perry (1910), sociologist Sadie American also documented the overwhelming popularity of vacation schools. American (1898) notes that despite school being closed for the summer...

“...here were 700 children coming regularly to school every morning...At one of the schools it was found necessary to call the police to remove the parents who crowded the halls of the building, insisting that their children must be accepted (p. 6).”

For parents of immigrant children, vacation schools were a popular way to engage children during months normally underscored by indolence and what was perceived as nefarious (Perry, 1910). In his observations of vacation schools, Perry often notes observations of the honing of trade skills. In the description below, he tells of the tasks undergone by boys and girls in one of the schools he visited.

“The boys were so busy making things, putting themselves into broom

holders, brackets, candlesticks, that represented their ability which they could show to others—they were so intent on all this that it did not occur to them to annoy their neighbors or the teacher. The girls were still occupied and learning how to make dresses and hats that they forgot to talk loudly or laughed boisterously. On entering school their countenances reflected the satisfaction felt at home over the fact that they were neither in the street nor underfoot (p.7).”

As he describes, vacation school curriculums were mainly vocational. While vacation schools may have saved city youths from vagrancy, these experiences were hardly equal to the SOST experiences of their upper class and middle-class counterparts. Education reforms common to the progressive era are often criticized for the way in which they marginalized poor and immigrant students by tracking them into vocational skills training rather than college preparatory programs. For these students, the development of a trade in high school was more than a common career path for life after graduation—it was a way to create balance in an increasingly unbalanced social reality (Katz, 1987) and a way to teach discipline and obedience through hard work (Oakes, 1985). Oakes (1985) writes about the viewpoint of education administrators who marginalized populations through manual training tracks. She says,

“The new breed of efficiency-minded urban school administrators saw vocational programs as a productive mechanism for differentiating the curriculum and sorting students according to what they perceived to be the diverse needs and proclivities of the expanding high school population. As we have seen, city school administrators saw the needs and educational potential of poor and immigrant children as different from those of middle-

and upper-class students (Oakes, 1985, p.32). ”

Vacation schools, then, served as an ancillary instrument for securing the vocational trajectories of disadvantaged students who, unlike their middle-class counterparts, were unable to flee from the perceived ills of urban life and gain cultural enrichment from broadening the scope of their environments to include natural surroundings. In fact, running parallel to the invention of vacation schools was organized camping—a movement mainly designed for urban elites and leisure classes who gained beneficial pastoral experiences viewed as fundamental to the building of one’s character.

Organized Camping

Organized camping was a movement that endorsed the growing values of the middle class and forged an indelible place in the construction of modern childhood (Slyck, 2006). Slyck (2006) in historical overview of summer camps in the United States writes how “Like ballet lessons and Little League, summer camp became an increasingly common enhancement activity for middle-class children (p. xxvi).” In general, outside of school activities flourished during the progressive era as Groups like the Boys and Girls Club of America, Boy Scouts and the Campfire Girls took the age-old activity of camping and organized it a way that fostered middle-class ideals (Slyck, 2006; Marten, 2004). Ramsing (2007), in a historical overview of camping in the United States, describes the founders of organized camping as, “...visionaries who understood the power and influence that natural settings could have on the development of youth (p. 752).”

By 1934, Ward (1935) notes that the Boys Department of the Y.M.C.A. reported the establishment of over 300 camps and eight hundred campers in attendance. These numbers documented over a one hundred percent increase in camps since 1901. He also notes that this increase does not account for “...mission camps, city settlement camps, charity camps,

school camps and organized private camps, at least two hundred of them... Their increase is so constant and normal and democratic that it has become a general movement in education, and not a 'fad' (Ward, 1935, p. 21)". Camps were not simply for outdoor recreation alone. Rather, researchers point to the linkage of organized camping to beliefs about growing values and ideals both of mainstream viewpoints and alternative ones.

Early on, boys were the main recipients of camp experiences. Later, though, camps would develop and thereby plant the seedlings of feminism and identity growth outside the constructs of housewife (Slyck, 2006). Camps were considered breeding grounds for democracy. Slyck (2006) notes how during the years 1920 to 1950 ushered in a number of special interest camps like ones for communism, those related to preserving ethnic values threatened by assimilation into larger cultures like Judaism and others for elite African-American children. Prior to World War I, though, organized camping mainly would cater to privileged middle-class children (Ramsing, 2007; Slyck, 2006; Ward, 1935).

Organized camping, as a charitable endeavor would begin post World War I and continue to gain credibility as facilities that could quell societal ills like those endured by Americans during the great depression and as part of New Deal tenants (Slyck, 2006). Again, with middle-class agendas foremost, organized camping experiences expanded to include children of disadvantaged backgrounds. Slyck (2006) notes the evolution of private camping movement—those which originally catered to the leisure class—to those focused on shoring up middle-class value sets like those designed by the Y.M.C.A. and Boys' and Girls' Clubs of America. Until then, if boys did partake in organized camping experiences they were normally offered in conjunction with odd jobs or organized work programs.

In a historical analysis of organized camping up until 1935, Ward notes how participation by working-class and poor children offered more of a work program than they did a quintessential camping experience. He writes,

“One article tells the story of a Boys' Club in San Francisco where a group of boys were organized for a six weeks' trip to the country each summer from 1903 to 1906. They worked part time for fruit-growers and earned enough to pay the expenses of their camp and trip.^^ ...[Another] was carried on for several years by organizing the boys as caddies for a summer resort golf club; the boys camped and earned their own expenses. Camp Hale was more on the order of what came to be called the 'Fresh Air Camp.' (p. 30).”

As noted above, Fresh Air camps and those that married camping with work programs epitomized desires of the growing middle-class to bestow their ideologies and common value sets on America's “needy” youths. In the decade spanning 1930 to 1940, for disadvantaged youths, the home environment was considered toxic due to “unscientific parenting” (Slyck, 2006, p. 99) and organized camping in bucolic locations was considered remedy. Such viewpoints have had lasting effects on the way Americans have grown accustomed to viewing summer as a cultural rite of passage for schoolchildren.

As this section of my literature review indicates, in tracing the historical roots of summer out of school time, vacation schools and organized camping help to conceptualize the social threads that weaved through early school reform in light of urbanization, child labor laws and immigration. Vacation schools, vocational in curriculum, demonstrate that from very early on in the history of education reform in the United States that summer out of school time opportunities and experiences among social classes were disparate. Likewise, organizing camping movements show a similar theme of incongruent opportunities to gain

advantages during summer out of school time. As the literature indicates, summertime experiences for poor children—like those provided in organized camping—were contingent mainly on the support of the community programs, not those provided by schools. Decades of research about summer experiences and out of school time (OST) demonstrate that not much has changed. In the next section of my literature review, I explain how contemporary school calendars and summer practices have only shown a small degree of change since the Common School Movement took place over a century ago. I then briefly discuss social patterns related to contemporary OST practices and opportunities and summer learning loss (SLL)

Out of School Time & Summer Learning Loss

Since the Common School Movement of the late 19th Century, school calendars in the United States have remained, for the most part, unchanged. The majority of schools within the United State maintain a 180 school-day-per year calendar and with budget crises in education looming, points of legislation to tack more days onto the year often sputter and stall (Rich, 2012). Alexander, Entwistle, and Olson (2007) cite that in 2000, thirty out of forty-four states maintained a 180-day calendar with only three states requiring school more than 180 days and eleven requiring less. In 1993, the number of children who participate in an annual summer vacation of 10 to 12 weeks was north of 90 percent (Gold, 2002). One exception to changes of the school model is charter schools that have enacted policies related to extended learning time. In a 2012 article the *New York Times* reports that out of the 170 schools in the United States to change school calendars 140 were charter schools (Rich, 2012). Additionally, as demonstrated in the introductory chapter of this study, public school systems that struggle with poverty and high unsafe environments, like that seen in Chicago, have been successful in lengthening the school year.

Still, models for change remain widely experimental and the 180-day calendar with a 10 to 12 week break remains standard (Entwistle, Alexander and Olson, 2007). One palpable change in the last several decades, however, are the number of school systems who run summer bridge programs (commonly known as summer schools) (Cooper, 1996), but these programs serve only a small margin of United States schoolchildren, remain largely conditional based on remediation and only typically run for about half the gamut of the overall break. Furthermore, summer school programs hinge on inconsistent and uncertain sources of funding in order to operate. Regardless of progress or stagnation of school calendars in the United States, dialogues skirt the underlying reason such reforms are discussed in the first place—a curtail of time left to the devices of parents of low-socioeconomic status. In the next section of this literature review, I introduce the field of out of school time (OST) and then demonstrate its connectedness to summer out of school time (SOST)—more specifically, summer learning loss.

Out of School Time

Researchers agree that productive use of outside of school time (OST) shapes student's abilities in positive academic and psychosocial directions (Hofferthan & Sandberg, 2001). The idea that summer becomes a time to hone in on the productive use of outside of school during summer is also not a new idea. As discussed in the first section of this literature review, OST summer opportunities like organized camping became available to children well over a century ago. At first, participation in organized camping catered to leisure classes with upper -class and middle-class segments of the population participating most. However, as middle-class ideals about morality, education and childhood grew more salient, camping became an integral way to impart these ideals to marginalized youths.

Summer notwithstanding, over the last several decades, education researchers have placed growing amounts of value in the way children spend out of school time. Cautioning against a simple measure of absolute participation (i.e. a dichotomous “yes” or “no”), Weiss, Little & Bouffard (2005) propose that when considering OST participation the scope of consideration should also include intensity (or number of hours spent) and breadth (the number of activities in which children participate). In their quantitative study about the demographics of youth participation in OST experiences, these researchers found that socioeconomic background factors were the largest predictor for absolute and breadth of participation (Weiss, Little & Bouffard, 2005). These results align with a number of other studies which suggest middle-class children participate in more OST activities than do children of other social backgrounds and that participation leads to life trajectory advantages (Lareau, 2003; 2011; Bodovski & Farkas, 2008).

In this study, I narrow the scope of activity enrollment to that which takes place during the summer. To this end, research questions focus on the intersection between OST experiences and ecological factors like home, school and community. Similarly, Chin and Phillips (2004) conducted a summertime ethnography using Lareau’s tenets of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth as a lens for summer activity gaps.

Chin and Phillips’ (2004) study bears significant influence on seasonal research as well as the study presented here. Most notably, with sociological theories as an underpinning and ethnographic methods aligned with drawing out nuances, the study hones in on the seasonal differences that occur in parenting strategies when school is not in session, a rare occurrence in seasonal research. Chin and Phillips (2004) research enables a clearer understanding for how both parent’s *and* children’s desires, capacities and resourcefulness plays as integral role in the participation of activities might be considered inter-generationally

advantageous. Like the one presented, here Chin and Phillips (2004) provide dimension to seasonal research because researchers go in search of fundamental details that might help to re-conceptualize OST phenomenon like summer learning loss (SLL).

Summer Learning Loss

Concerns over summer learning loss have been common since comprehensive school calendar reform resulted in a summer vacation over a century ago (Gold, 2002). Despite such concerns, early studies on achievement slides lacked the rigorous standards expected of scholarly work. Seasonal research consistently demonstrates that students lose academic gains at a substantial rate during summer vacation. Put another way, extended breaks from school—those propelled by schools closing for summer vacation—produces a palpable loss in academic footing.

In her seminal work with urban public schoolchildren, Heyns (1978) concluded that formal schooling fills a void for children of a disadvantaged background. Heyn's also introduced the importance of summer reading programs for low-income and at-risk students (Alexander, Entwistle & Olson, 2002). Such contributions enabled greater depth in SLL research, but policymakers have made little progress toward implementing across-the-board measures that would close or slow inequity gaps impelled by summer vacation.

Studies focused on SLL are plentiful. Cooper et al (1996) performed a comprehensive, narrative and meta-analytic review of 39 academic studies all bearing in mind the same goal: to measure the losses and gains of schoolchildren in light of summer vacation. From their research they concluded that relative to spring scores, overall, students lost 1-tenth of a standard deviation or about one month of progress commensurate with grade-level scales. However, losses in reading were not seen across the board as middle-class students gained in reading scores while low-income students lost on the same

measures. Concerning math, researchers found that as grade level increased, so did losses in procedural and computational math exercises. Researchers concluded that opportunities for practice and access to bridge programs might ameliorate the effects of extended time away from school.

Researchers agree that race and class have significant bearing on SLL (Alexander & Entwistle, 1990; Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson 2000, 2007; Downey, von Hippel & Beckett, 2005). Arguing that schools align student-learning rates rather than create gaps, Downey et al., (2004) discovered that for every race except black, schools closed gaps and that the black-white achievement gap grew during summer months. In a study utilizing the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), Burkham et al (2004) measured SLL and social background of students between kindergarten and first grade. Findings indicated that SLL is most pronounced for students of disadvantaged backgrounds, while middle-class students actually gain in general knowledge and reading. Nevertheless, researchers are unable to fully unpack gains and losses relative to “systematic family influences on summertime growth” (Cheadle, 2009, p. 486). Furthermore, Burkham et al. (2004) postulates that summer activities may not be accurately described or that instruments used to collect such information are ineffective. Especially in dealing with secondary datasets. Burkham et al concedes that measures may not be tailored enough to gain a clearer understanding of SES.

“...the survey is unable to document the nature or duration of reading and writing activities. We have no idea what the content of the story hours was, whether the children were actively engaged in these activities, or anything about the skill of the providers. We have little idea about the content, duration, or engagement of children in summer school (other than it was

required, suggested or optional). Thus, the measurement of children's summer activities...lacks depth (p.22)."

Researchers for the Beginning School Study, a longitudinal study of Baltimore Public School children, Alexander, Entwistle and Olson (2007) echo Burkham's (2004) argument that understanding the dimensions of SLL commands more attention than simple documentation of gains and losses relative to social class. The BSS that began in 1982 and tracked 790 early elementary school children with the most recent analysis occurring in 2005-2006 pinpoints privileged student gains realized during summer, more so than during the school year, as those capable of creating lasting advantages (Alexander, Entwistle and Olson, 2002). For students who live in poverty, losses not only surface early in the childhoods of disadvantaged children, but such losses accumulate and impede high school graduation and enrollment in a four-year college. In relating summer learning loss to social class backgrounds, researchers for the BSS Alexander, Entwistle and Olson (2000) use the metaphor of a faucet. They say,

"...when school was in session, the resource faucet was turned on for all children, and all gained equally; when school was not in session, the school resource faucet was turned off. In summers, poor families could not make up for the resources the school had been providing, and so their children's achievement reached a plateau or even fell back. Middle-class families could make up for the school's resources to a considerable extent so their children's growth continued, though at a slower pace (p. 1)."

While faucet theory makes a logical proposition for resource deficits highlighted by summer vacation, other researchers caution against the assumption that SLL can be assuaged simply by access to or possession of advantageous resources.

Borman, Benson & Overman (2005) designed a study where they used evidence from a randomized field experiment of a high quality summer program designed for students living in poverty combined with a telephone survey about family life and SOST. In the study, researchers set out to discover the effects of certain types of parenting strategies on SLL. Researchers compared reading achievement scores of 300 early elementary school students living in high instances of poverty against results from a phone survey that focused on the following four criteria:

1. *Investment models* considered the theory of human and inhuman capital. Researchers considered human capital models as formal time set-aside for children and what talents and competencies parents bring to these interactions. Inhuman capital is described as the conversion of economic wealth not only into goods and services, but how much latitude economic wealth enables time spent between parent and child.
2. *Summer activities* included measurement of the hours children spent reading as well as parental preference for reading over watching television.
3. *Parental psychological resources* or parent's academic aspirations for their children.
4. *Parental expectation levels for summer learning* and the overall importance attributed to enrollment and attendance.

Contrary to other studies which focus on zero-sum games, authors found that investment models, parental psychological resources and activities had little effect on student's SLL (Borman, Benson & Overman, 2005). Rather, two factors working in tandem forged greater consequences: parents' self-selection of their children into summer programs *and* favorable attendance rates. The results prompted researchers to call for an expansion of community-

based, high quality summer programs in which parents would be encouraged to have lasting buy-in. Borman, Benson & Overman's (2005) study results produce important implications for the study presented herein because rather than simply putting summer learning losses in terms of gains and losses relative to SES, they demonstrate that parental actions and viewpoints are perhaps the driving-most factor in understanding summer learning loss and the larger perception of the role of summer in family life. My study bridges this gap considerably.

Summary

Two goals were integral to the literature review presented in this chapter. My first goal was to provide a comprehensive historical overview of summer vacation that demonstrated social inequities in childhood summer vacations have been disparate since the Common School Movement. I tied this argument to the important socio-historical events of urbanization, immigration and child labor laws. I showed how vacation schools and organized camping, though each was framed as an innovation for youth development, acted more like mechanisms for sorting children based on social class (Oakes, 1985). Vacation schools were opened during the summer for poor children unable to escape urban environments for country reprieves. Curriculums were mainly vocational, steering marginalized classes into trades rather than college preparatory programs (a common criticism of vocational training during the progressive movement) (Katz, 1987; Oakes, 1985). Organized camping paints a similar picture as it was originally developed for middle-class children, expanded to include poor children after World War I, but in these instances camps were often connected to work programs where wages were exchanged for camping experiences. Together, vacation schools and organized camping showcase that summer out of school time experiences have been largely incongruent based on social class.

My second goal was to demonstrate how shortcomings of SLL research stall the progress of consistent SOST policy implementation. I find the following three gaps in the current literature about summer learning loss:

- Studies, especially those using quantitative methods and secondary datasets, often only tell part of the seasonal research story. Though these studies have been critical in shaping the field of seasonal research, my study proposes an investigation of the intersection between summer vacation, family life and broader “ecologies”.
- Typically, studies about summer learning loss and the intergenerational persistence of inequality focus specifically on students and families categorized as “at-risk”. I contend that matters related to summer vacation are not understood because parental philosophies—across all social classes—are not adequately understood. By gaining a diverse range of perspectives, answers may emerge for *how* the perpetuation of a cyclical annual event known to cause academic setbacks continues to survive.
- When children participate in quality summer bridge programs, interventions are often successful. Still, for the vast majority of students in the United States, plentiful, free or reduced-price opportunities of high quality remain unusual. My study transcends simple documentation of absolute participation (Bouffard et. al, 2006) in summer out of school activities by also capturing perceptions of SOST opportunities and how these activities are viewed as fundamental to family life according to social class and community context.

From my literature and review of background, I conclude by asserting that despite vast numbers of credible seasonal research studies which replicate gains and losses relative to social class, few take into consideration the catalytic circumstances that determine and shape summer vacation as an integral and perhaps indelible hallmark of the larger United State

sociocultural fabrics. I further support this argument in my findings found in chapters five through seven. Next, I unpack my conceptual framework, which introduces the tenets of social reproduction theory, cultural capital and Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing. Here, I consider how these lenses add dimension to studies about summer outside of school opportunities, practices and philosophies.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The principal research question for this study explores mothers' perceptions of summer vacation along with how mothers manage and navigate their child's summer out of school time based on SES and community context. Sub-research questions ask how mothers assign meaning and purpose to summer vacation and how these "labels" and perceptions [mis]match with sociological theories about family life and childrearing. Summer as a time when the institution of school falls to the wayside for families is the key aspect of this research making it different than other bodies of research about family life as well as those interested in measuring summertime academic gains and losses (i.e. summer learning loss).

Considering the nature of my research questions, it is necessary to employ a number of both general and specific theoretical assumptions. Generally, I situated this research in an epistemological understanding that child-rearing strategies aligned to larger environmental contexts contribute to a child's social and academic future and overall life trajectory significantly. Research about intergenerational transmission of social class advantages is well established and these bodies of literature were taken into consideration when designing the study presented herein (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2000; Lareau, 2002; 2003; 2011). In regard to seasonal research—the subfield that best describes this study—I recognized the legitimacy of many bodies of evidence that find middle-class families well equipped with resources stand a more significant chance than their working-class and low-income counterparts to provide added and higher quality opportunities to learn over the summer (Cooper, Nye, & Greathouse, 2008).

Research tends to focus on interventional research conducted with populations already labeled at-risk or disadvantaged, I entered into the study with the purpose of unlocking a summer out of school time (SOST) “black box” for families of middle-class backgrounds as well as those with less means and resources at their disposal.

As I will discuss in my next chapter about the methods employed for this study, I winnowed away at my research questions by asking mothers how they viewed summer as part of their family life and how they assigned meaning and purpose to it. Though my study spanned a short period of time relative to the whole year, information about mothers’ meaning making and experiences provided new insight into both seasonal effects and general effects related to social class and family life.

I utilized Lareau’s cultural logic of childrearing as a lens for conceptualizing out of school summer practices. Lareau’s theory builds from other studies about social class and child-rearing practices (Kohn, 1977; Bernstein, 1971) have made at least three important contributions to studies about family life. First, Lareau claims that social class—more so than race or gender—is the foremost guiding factor in the shaping of life chances (Lareau, 2003; 2011). And secondly, through her ethnographic studies of families of varying demographics, she concludes that middle-class families who adopt, exercise and in some cases challenge authority figures on their children’s behalf, become beneficiaries of mainstream values (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2000; Lareau, 2002; Lareau, 2003; 2011; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). This activation of resources leads to a replication of intergenerational advantage commonly known as conflict or social reproduction theory (Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Third, Lareau’s (2003; 2011) notions of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth developed from her qualitative work have allowed researchers to create new quantitative

constructs for operationalizing child-rearing qualities, creating a broader understanding of how child-rearing effects U.S. students (Bodovski, 2013; Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Cheadle, 2008; 2009)

Lareau (2003; 2011; Lareau and Weininger, 2003) argues that it is the accumulation of resources *over time* that ultimately dictates intergenerational patterns of advantage or disadvantage. Conflict theorists believe social institutions like schools and the labor market are at the center of societal inequities—rewarding those who comply with societal standards and penalizing those who do not—typically by withholding resources or opportunities. Conflict theorists view society as socially stratified not by ability, but according to social stratification models apparent in elements like socioeconomic status (SES), race and gender. Social reproduction theorists observe the competition for scarce resources within society leading them to argue that societal class structures are stratified. Race, gender and social class status act as mechanisms for such stratification. In its purest form, a conflict theorist asserts that access to resources are intentionally withheld from those of meager social standing and therefore, social class reproduction cycles are replicated. Furthermore, conflict theorists believe elite classes change societal rules in order to maintain a distinct advantage over those of a lower social status (Lareau, 2003; 2011; Bowles and Gintis; 1976).

Conflict theory relates to the research question posed here because my study supposes that families who rely on the resources and opportunities provided during the school year are absent in summer, thereby magnifying social deficits. As presented in Chapter 2, Alexander, Entwistle & Olson (2000) symbolize the social advantages and disadvantages of summer with the metaphor of a “faucet”; one which remains on during the summer for privileged students and one that turns off at the close of the school year for their disadvantaged peers. My study proposes that summer out of school time—when

resources provided by schools are removed—isolates a time to observe family and community assets and deficits more closely as it takes place in three different communities which are disparate in offerings of summer out of school time opportunities.

Bourdieu's theories of habitus, cultural capital and field have made seminal contributions to sociological discussions about social class¹. Habitus, Bourdieu says, can be “understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (1977, p. 82). Embodied cultural capital is one's internalized dispositions and mindset toward preferences in elements like art, movies, music, food and how one's exposure and affinity for these cultural elements translates into one's achievement and maintenance of one's position in a higher social order (Lareau, 2003; 2011). Exposure to cultural elements like travel and museum attendance may produce embodied cultural capital. In addition to embodied cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) also describes it in two other distinct forms: objectified (i.e. concrete possessions, goods related to wealth such as the number of books one owns and institutionalized such as symbolism attached to the credentials of one's educational attainment like public school vs. private, community college vs. state provided higher education vs. Ivy League.

The immense popularity of Bourdieu's production theories have led scholars to expand and reshape his theories to fit more contemporary contexts. For example, Dumais (2002) adds educational expectations to habitus arguing that one's self-perceptions of academic potential proxies for how individuals view themselves in light of their position in larger “social worlds”. Bodovski (2013) connects habitus to psychological aspects like educational expectations, locus of control and self-concepts. Habitus and embodied cultural

¹ See Lareau and Weininger (2003) for a comprehensive review of sixteen studies from 1982-2002 that have re-interpreted, redefined and operationalized cultural capital.

capital align because they each move across “spaces” as they are seemingly intangible yet palpable in the transposition of social advantage. Habitus and embodied cultural capital are relevant to the study proposed here because they demonstrate how even when the social institution of school moves to the background, educational expectations remain fixed. Attendance at summer camps and summer programs may act as producers and activators of embodied cultural capital and habitus.

Lareau’s (2003; 2011) interpretation of Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural production model is based on inclusion/exclusion criteria. His model recognizes that slots in elite society are not innumerable. As a result, when those of lower social stature achieve upward mobility, cultural elites develop new strategies for advancement, which results in exclusion and therefore, a cycle of social reproduction (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In Chapter 7, I discuss the way in which cultural capital within certain habitus bears significance on study participant meanings. Conflict and social reproduction theory are further relevant to the contexts of this study because they acknowledge how powerful social actors in the “field”—defined by Lareau as “various institutional arrangements” (p. 361) like intermediary units such as schools, higher education institutions—affect the saliency of habitus through educational expectations. Further still, Bourdieu’s theories add dimension to this study’s conceptual framework because it enables a lens for mothers’ decision-making strategies as related to their cultural surroundings.

Despite its popularity as a conceptual lens, Lareau and Weininger (2003) claim that Bourdieu’s theories related to cultural capital have been misrepresented in two main areas. First, they claim that too much emphasis is placed on the notion that simple knowledge or competence of highbrow or fine culture simply leads to advantages. And two, Lareau and Weininger (2003) believe researchers place too much emphasis on the

partitioning of skills from abilities as an accurate measure of institutionalized cultural capital. In sum, they believe it is not simply the possession of cultural capital that fosters advantages or disadvantages, but instead, the way social actors activate cultural capital between and within habitus (Lareau and Weininger, 2003; Lareau, 2003; 2010).

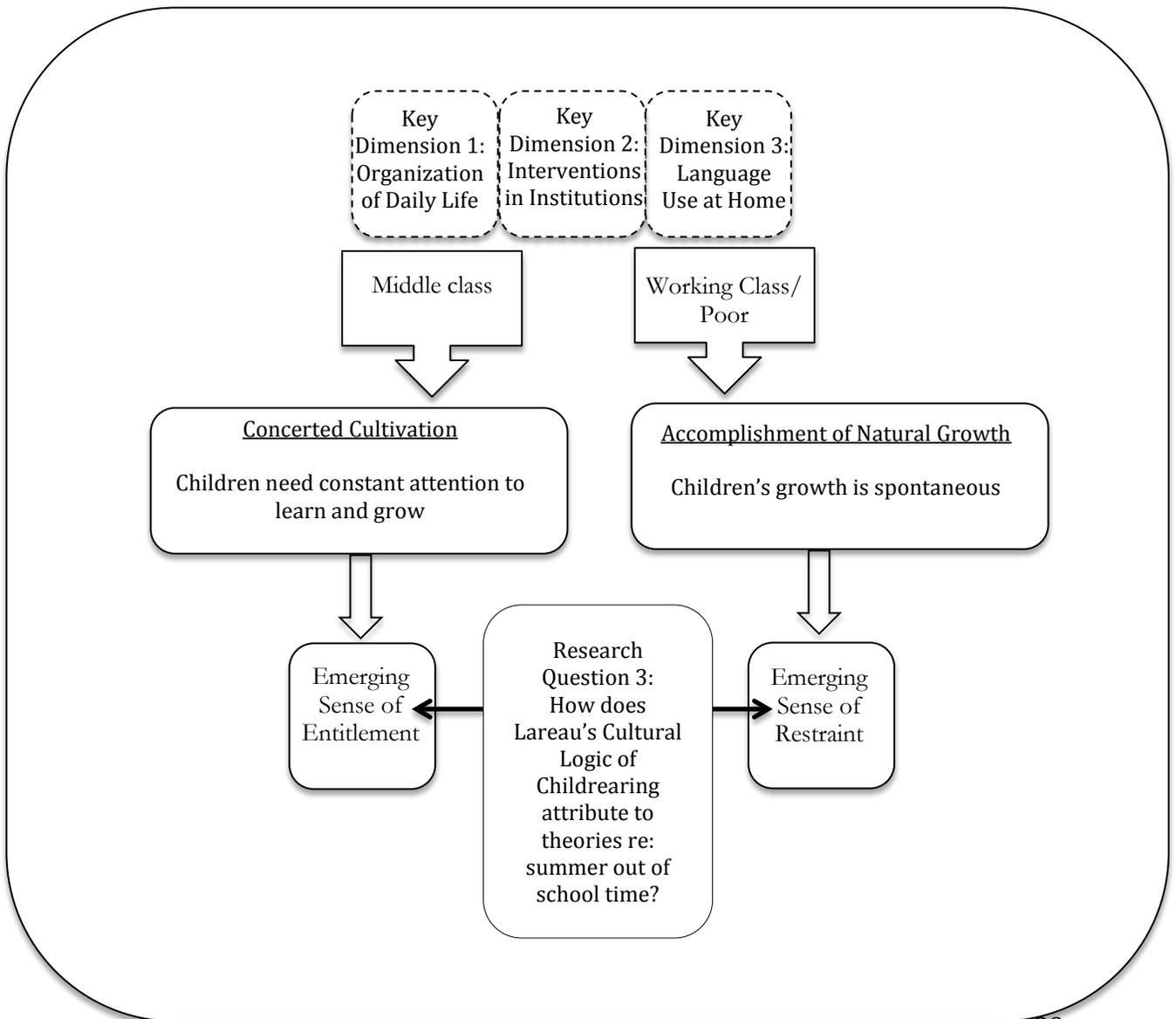
Lareau and Weininger (2003) observed a *micro-interactional process* through which rewards or punishments were obtained based on individual's level of compliance to the evaluative standards of mainstream social institutions. They describe the micro-interactional process as "the direct or indirect imposition of evaluative norms favoring the children or families of a particular social milieu" (p. 598). In schools, standards of evaluation are often measured against the way that parents interact with their child's teacher, invest in their child's in-school and out of school activities, and use of language and discourse as a mechanism for vocabulary building, negotiation practice and reasoning (Lareau, 2003; 2011). The social norms of one's habitus (i.e. the expectations related to one's environment and setting) create benchmarks against which standards of evaluation can be tested.

To summarize Lareau and Weininger's point (2003), habitus and cultural capital in relation to one's field are not necessarily strong predictors for intergenerational advantage that stand on their own. Rather it is one's ability to fluently activate forms of cultural capital and effectively manage the actors in the field in situations where evaluative norms matter—like schools, universities and labor markets. In her ethnography of families from diverse social backgrounds, Lareau observed differentiated child-rearing patterns in families of low-income, working-class, and middle-class families that exemplified the role of field, habitus and cultural capital in practice.

Based on her findings and through the lens of cultural reproduction theory, Lareau identified a cultural logic of childrearing and proposed two ideal types: concerted cultivation

and accomplishment of natural growth. Borrowing from a gardening metaphor, she argues that middle-class parents view their children like projects that need constant attention and guidance in order to grow and develop. Standing in contrast to concerted cultivation is the accomplishment of natural growth where she argues that while poor and working-class parents loved and cared for their children, upbringing practices were more inline with a provision of basic necessities rather than “extras”. Here, growth is viewed as spontaneous rather than directed or deliberate. In Figure 2: Diagram for Lareau’s Cultural Logic of Childrearing, I demonstrate a visual depiction of her theory refinement.

Figure 2: Diagram for Lareau’s Cultural Logic of Childrearing



Lareau (2003) organizes her cultural logic of childrearing into three distinct areas all under the heading of parental roles and responsibilities: organization of daily life, language use, and families and institutions. As I will further discuss in Chapter 7, while the key dimensions of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth were useful in observing family life at a time of year when school routines are pushed to the background, this study was most concerned with understanding the way in which mothers make meaning about their interactions with their social worlds. Put another way, much of what I learned about mothers' meaning making was derived from discussions with them. Next, I introduce each key element of Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing (interventions in institutions, structure of family life and language use at home) and discuss the degree to which the key element contributes to the study presented here.

Organization of Daily Life: Leisure Time and Social Connections

I used Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth as a tool for observing differentiations in childrearing during the summer. Organization of daily life creates an important dimension for observing child-rearing patterns in families. Lareau observed salient differences in how families constructed their leisure time based on social class in two related areas: social connections and activity choices. Comprised, these areas construct a key dimension to her cultural logic of childrearing.

Lareau claims that because middle-class families keep their children busy in structured activities little time is left to forge strong social connections like with family and kin. Middle-class families spent a great deal of time, energy and money on structured activities leaving them with less time to strengthen family relationships or forge strong social connections. Though middle-class families build social networks with professionals in roles

like medicine and education that work to their advantage, they do not have strong connections to family members—often choosing events related to their child’s activities over time spent with extended family. On the other hand, working-class and low-income families had strong family ties and children often relied on relationships with siblings and cousins to supplement their free time away from school. Middle-class siblings seemed to quarrel more so than working-class and low-income children. When middle-class children did have free time they showed little creativity and complained of boredom. With abundant activity schedules, in general though, these children had much less free time than did their low-income counterparts.

Middle-class children participated in a bevy of structured events that were planned and orchestrated by adults. Activities were often “high maintenance” requiring expensive equipment, transportation and large time commitments. Middle-class families in Lareau’s study partook in traveling soccer teams, private music lessons and prearranged play dates. Working-class and low-income families had more unstructured free time reliant on interactions with peer groups and siblings rather than relationships with adults. These children were more likely to play “pick-up” basketball games, engage in self-directed plays and watch more television than middle-class children. Furthermore, working-class and low-income families were often exasperated by social activities perhaps leading to frustration or self-selection out of activities for their children (Lareau, 2003; 2011).

Based on Lareau’s (2003; 2011) typology, it can be rationalized that children who participate in either concerted cultivation or accomplishment of natural growth will have summer experiences that also reflect these qualities. For example, a child who is accustomed to orchestrated activities will attend summer camps with qualities related to concerted cultivation (i.e. adult driven, offer opportunities for the acquisition of new language skills

through discussion or new terminology). Conversely, children whose parents practice the accomplishment of natural growth will have more responsibility and latitude for their own time rather than spending it in structured activities pre-designed by adults. By default, they have more screen-time; impromptu sports games; creative play with neighbors and kin.

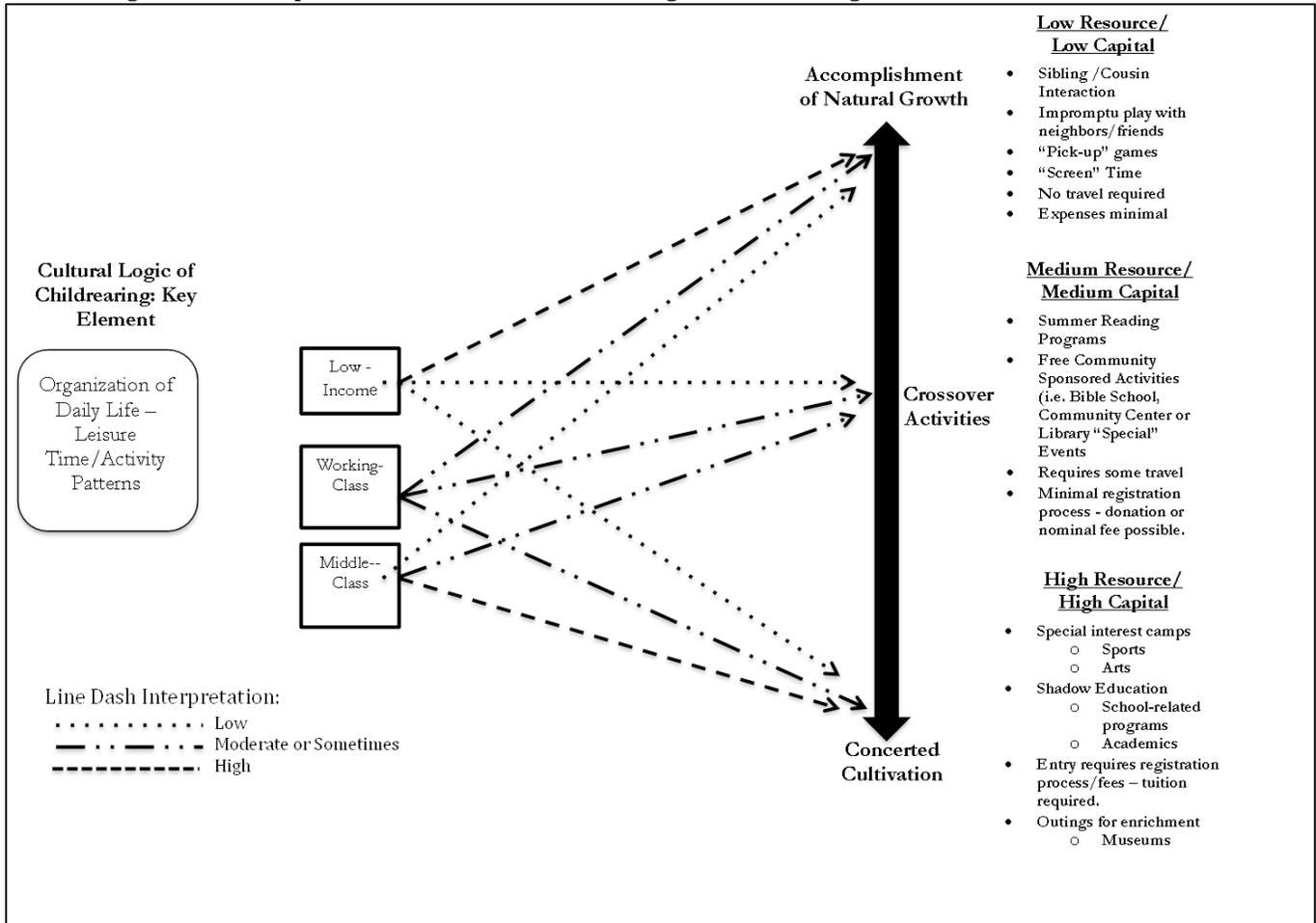
Lareau does not make a definitive distinction between school-year family life and summertime family life, though she does acknowledge that during the summer for middle-class children “the number of choices and the amount of time available both rise steeply” (Lareau, 2003; p. 170). I considered the lack of distinction between families’ lives during the school year versus during the summer a strong entry point to observe if a cultural logic of childrearing could be observed during summer. As presented in Chapter 2, although studies claim summer produces learning slides, other than a small SES gap, Cheadle (2009) did not observe family influences systematically.

Considering this supposition, in the summer of 2011, I conducted a pilot study where I observed three options that represent common SOST formats: a day “camp” which modeled daycare, an academic subject program related to the field of STEM, and a nature-focused special interest camp. The day camp population served a wide-range of families from different SESs, while the academic subject camp and special interest camp tended to cater mainly to middle-class families.

During the course of the pilot, I conducted participant observations, interviewed staff and personnel at each site, talked to and surveyed parents (See Appendix A for Pilot Study Results). I found that the foremost goal of families from each site was to find a balance between what would work best in terms of their work schedules and finances while also providing children with opportunities to explore. Many of the children at each site, regardless of SES, were partaking in a number of SOST activities ranging from free or

inexpensive to high-maintenance and pricey. In Figure 3, I reconceptualized the key dimension of organization of daily life and leisure time into one which hypothesizes frequency of involvement as well as introduces a new category for “cross-over” activities.

Figure 3: Reconceptualization of Lareau’s Cultural Logic of Childrearing



The concept of crossover activities makes an important contribution to summer out school time for three main reasons. One, research indicates that over the past several decades children’s free time has become much less their own as parents enroll children in activities designed to mimic play and games while at the same time teach new skillsets (Corsaro, 2011). Like Corsaro (2011), others posit that extracurricular activities are an important component to the social milieu of contemporary culture and specifically to parenting and childhood.

Two, crossover activities explore the possibility that when parents do not have competing demands of the school year that they may be more inclined to place their children in SOST activities. Furthermore, families, especially those who work outside the home, may enroll their children in activities because they must—not simply for enrichment. Finally, because summer vacation remains a normal staple to the United States social fabric, non-profit and community organizations often provide free or inexpensive ways for children to remain engaged and occupied during summer months. Most often, these activities lend themselves less to stressful procedures for enrollment; do not entail exorbitant costs or large time commitments. All the same, these sorts of activities may also provide as many benefits as those that might be categorized as higher intensity like those depicted as concerted cultivation. In fact, researchers often express doubt that simply “showing up” for activities reaps benefits and instead what matters is intensity and engagement (Chin & Phillips, 2004; Weiss, Little & Bouffard, 2005).

Figure 3 theorizes a number of possible outcomes relative to summer out of school time. On the right-hand side and corresponding to the continuum for activity qualities with concerted cultivation on either end and crossover activities in the middle, I note the level of necessary resources as well as the level of cultural capital involvement might change based on involvement. First are low resource-low cultural capital activities, which are not dependent on time or unreasonable amounts of economic resources for participation.

Examples include activities such as television or computer games, impromptu free play and participation in pickup games with neighbors or siblings. Skills gained from these activities include establishment of a peer group, individual problem solving and imaginative free play. Parent and adult interaction is minimal and learning outcomes are not established. Because activities in this category are initiated and carried out only by children and take place

in confined environments, (i.e. the home) low resource-low cultural capital activities will not transmit substantial levels of cultural capital capable of activating intergenerational benefits.

Medium resource-medium cultural capital activities require more resources than do low resource-low cultural capital. These activities are typically funded and initiated by intermediaries like local or federal governmental agencies, non-profits and community organizations. Programs sponsored by public libraries or faith-based organizations that offer vacation bible schools exemplify activities in this category. Most likely these events are considered “one-off” and are not recurring or ongoing. Focus is not on development of talents per say, but rather general or experimental education (i.e. making a craft or learning general information about a particular religion) Because participation could require a “sign-up” process, transportation may be needed and a small cost or donation might be requested crossover activities are considered medium-resource. Though they do not always have the objective of creating lasting skills and talents, these activities still may expose children to some level of cultural capital. For example, a child who participates in a vacation bible school may be exposed to important cultural references or gospel or orchestra music.

Corresponding to concerted cultivation are high resource-high cultural capital activities that require the greatest amount of parental investment at all levels. Trained personnel who are compensated operate activities in this category. Registration processes are detailed and competitive forcing parents to plan well in advance of upcoming events. Skills gained in this category are specific in nature (i.e. science camps that focus on hypothesis building and testing). Activities at this level tend to be expensive and may mirror school, but learning is often “reframed”, taking place out of doors and on terms that both kids and parents accept (i.e. frequent breaks outside, some time set aside for play among friends).

In this category, learning outcomes are clear based on pre-established thematic elements (i.e. Campers at a science camp based on forensics will solve a crime by the end of the week). In general, children may participate in culminating activities that showcase and demonstrate newfound skills. Potential activation of cultural capital at this level is high as students are exposed to subjects that enrich their general knowledge or cultural repertoires. Examples skillsets children build from high-resource-high capital activities are exposures to new vocabularies and opportunities to express themselves orally. Combining the literature about participation in outside of school activities along with my own observations from my pilot study, I make the following prediction about how children spend outside of school time based on social class (See Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Map for Organization of Daily Life – Leisure Activities).

- Low-Income children’s participation in low resource-low cultural capital those which most closely resemble Lareau’s description of childrearing related to accomplishment of natural growth) will be a *high frequency*, participation in medium resource-medium cultural capital will be *low frequency* and participation in high resource-high cultural capital (those which most closely resemble Lareau’s description of childrearing related to concerted cultivation) will be a *low frequency*.
- Working-Class children’s participation in each level of activity will be a *moderate or sometimes frequency*.
- Middle-Class children’s participation in low resource-low cultural capital (those which most closely resemble Lareau’s description of childrearing related to accomplishment of natural growth) will also be *low frequency*, participation in medium resource-medium cultural capital will be a *moderate or a sometimes frequency* (those which most closely resemble Lareau’s description of childrearing

related to concerted cultivation), participation in high resource-high cultural capital will be *high frequency*.

Interventions at Institutions

Lareau (2003; 2011) finds differences between social classes in the way families interact with prominent social institutions like schools and healthcare facilities. Middle-class families see themselves as equals to personnel and navigate social systems with confidence. Middle-class parents consistently intervene on their child's behalf, often arguing or aggressively advocating for their children to receive opportunities. Working-class and low-income families, in contrast, tended to find themselves at odds with the standards of evaluation of large social systems (Lareau, 2003; 2011). They were less likely to confront their child's school, navigate systems like healthcare with confidence and generally struggle against evaluative social norms. These families were less likely to view themselves as equals and often caved or acquiesced to those in positions of authority.

Lareau (2003; 2011) used an ethnographic study methodology where she and her research team observed firsthand study participant's interactions with those in positions of authority. Because school adjourns for the duration of the summer and few families in the study were participating in school-sponsored events observations of interaction with institutions was limited. However, I asked mothers to discuss their viewpoints about their child's school as well and to describe their process for relationship building and interactions with influential authority figures like teachers.

Language use at home

Differentiated patterns related to oral discourse between social classes are a key element of Lareau's (2003; 2011) cultural logic of childrearing. Discourse studies provide

salient findings regarding the academic benefits of language and vocabulary exposure. Researchers often find that oral language patterns in households are largely correlated to social class (Heath, 1983; Bernstein, 1971; Ervin-Tripp & Strage, 1985; Lareau, 2003; 2011; Bodovski & Farkas, 2008). Lareau (2000; 2003; 2011) found that middle-class families used language extensively at home. These families bargained with their children, included them in high-level conversations and provided spaces for children to exercise and build verbal capacities. Working-class and low-income families communicated differently using directives and nonverbal behavior instead of extensive discussion. Most of the time, they did not include children in adult conversations and children did not argue or challenge their parents as much as middle-class kids.

In my study, I utilized Spradley's (1979) ethnographic interview method whereby I provided a vignette or asked them to explain in a teaching way, how they would go about explaining things to their kids. I asked questions like, "What would you say if your child came to you and requested an activity that you could not afford?" or "If your child wanted to do an activity, but you felt they were too busy, what would you say?" In addition, I expanded the key dimension of language use to include opportunities for vocabulary building gained through outside of school and social activities. For example children who participated alongside adults in extracurricular activities like sports or art gain access to new sets of vocabulary and obtain opportunities to flex verbal muscles. I considered reading a suitable proxy for language use as well, noting the ways in which families used books or spent time at the library or bookstores. Finally, I observed in my many interviews and observations the way that parents engaged in conversations with their children and vice versa.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the conceptual framework I used as a lens to address my third sub-research question: In what ways do theories related to Bourdieu's (1977; 1986) social production theory and Lareau's (2003; 2011) cultural logic of childrearing explain differential summer out of school time experiences? I introduced conflict and social reproduction theories generally, followed by Bourdieu's refinement and interpretation of these theories through habitus, cultural capital and field. I introduced my pilot work and my goals to use Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing as a tool for unpacking mothers' feelings toward summer vacation. Based on my pilot work, I proposed crossover activities along with an accompanying typology for testing my idea (See Figure 3). In Chapter 7, I introduce my findings related to my conceptual framework. Next, however, I discuss my methodology and strategies for data collection and analysis.

Introduction

This chapter explains how I made decisions about the design of my study, followed through with those decisions in the research field, and approached data analysis. In this chapter, I describe my choice of methodology, site selection and participant recruitment, as well as the methods I used to collect data and analyze data. Finally, I discuss how I addressed threats to validity of the study.

Research Design and Methodology

I utilized a basic interpretive approach as a means of addressing my research questions. The basic interpretive approach is best described as the application of a relevant disciplinary framework as a way of understanding the worldviews and realities of study participants. Rather than adopting one methodological tradition, an interpretive approach tends to be eclectic in nature as it emphasizes a number of methods and methodologies within the approach itself (Merriam, 2002). Furthermore, in an interpretive approach, both symbolic interactionism (the way in which study participants situate themselves within their own cultures and form their worldviews) (Becker and McCall, 1990) and phenomenology (understanding the essence of subjective experiences) are utilized for pattern identification. Each of these considers the foundations of constructivist theories that acknowledge prior knowledge and experience as mechanisms for the development of worldviews (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) describes the basic interpretive approach as relevant to all studies that are qualitative in nature. In my interpretation of data, I utilized sociological theories related to life trajectories as consequences of socioeconomic status. More specifically I employed Lareau's Cultural Logic of Childrearing (See Figure 2: Diagram for Lareau's Cultural Logic of Childrearing).

Multiple-Case Sampling Strategy

In order to add a layer of confidence to my study design, I selected diverse sites and participants that could effectively contribute to the conceptual underpinnings of my research questions. It was important to employ contrasting cases in equally contrasting settings in order to gain more robust findings that Miles and Huberman (1994) write “gives us confidence that our emerging theory is generic, because we have seen it workout—and not work out—in predictable ways” (p. 29). By conducting the study in disparate social contexts, I was able to view overlap as well as variation in my data.

Site Selection

Research for this study took place in three distinct sites located within an approximate 65-mile radius of one another. The site selection for this study was purposeful. Purposeful selection is a deliberate selection of rich cases, study participants or unique entities that exhibit common traits central to the study’s overall purpose (Patton, 1990). As discussed in Chapter 3, my pilot work took place in Grantville and Watertown where I observed programs dedicated to summer out of school time (See Appendix E: Pilot Work Addendum – Adding Wheaton as a Study Site). These sites were close in proximity and residents of Watertown, in particular, borrowed resources from Grantville. It became apparent that in order to more closely examine the role of community context in out of school summer time, I would need another study site that would further juxtapose and highlight socioeconomic diversity of the community and study participants. Prospectively, then, I took the recommendation of my committee in adding Wheaton as a study site.

These three communities were selected because of their contrasting makeups in terms of resident levels of education, poverty concentrations, economic prosperity and employment opportunities. For example, Grantville, a thriving university community,

possesses credibility in a number of economic sectors including education, healthcare and technology. Poverty rates are low and numbers of college matriculation for high school students in Grantville are high. Such a description stands in stark contrast to that of Wheaton where the community struggles to offer gainful employment to residents and to keep local businesses afloat and ward against “brain drain”. Socioeconomically, Watertown serves as an in-between site, in terms of economic and educational prosperity in part because of its proximity to Grantville. Table 1: provides eligibility of free and reduced lunches for each community.

Table 1: Yearly Reports: % Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (2012)

	Enrollment	Free Eligible	Reduced Eligible	%Free Enrollment	%Reduced Enrollment	%Free/Reduced Enrollment
Wheaton	1,135	401	120	35.3304	10.5727	45.9031
Watertown	2,830	697	136	24.629	4.8057	29.4347
Grantville	6,906	1,207	206	17.4776	2.9829	20.4605

Participant Selection

Like sites, a purposeful selection strategy was also employed for study participants. In all, I interviewed 22 women for this study. My intention was to elicit the co-construction of data from mothers who could offer a variety of perspectives on academic summer vacation and who clearly fell into general categories of social class standings. All participants in the study resided in Grantville, Watertown or Wheaton. I used snowball sampling, which entails the identification of participants who then recommend other potential candidates for study participation (Bodgen and Biklen, 2007). Because I utilized a nonprobability sample gained through the snowball sampling technique, it was logistically unrealistic to have equal numbers of mothers’ representative in each of the four social class-standing categories used in the study. Ultimately, I felt study volunteers met my criteria in a way that would add value to my theoretical considerations.

Study participants had backgrounds (education levels, annual incomes and occupations) that matched the broader demographics of the communities in which they resided, but I did not look for differences among mothers purely based on socioeconomic status. Instead, I used the results of the demographic survey coupled with my first interview to help me ascertain if I had achieved a wide enough range of perspectives to inform decision-making and strategies from a variety of mothers. For example, in Grantville, I received the most socioeconomic diversity. Here, mothers' incomes ranged from six-figure salaries to those who qualified for public health care assistance and free or reduced lunches. In this community, mothers had professional titles like "professor", "teacher" and "researcher" to ones indicative of wage earners with roles like "hospitality worker" and "clerk". See Table 2: Participant Demographics for participant details.

Table 2: Participant Demographics & Family Information

Participant Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Community Name	Age	Marital Status	Annual Yearly Income (k)	Level of Education	Employee Status	Partner's Level of Education	# of children total/grade level(s)
Diane*	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	25-34.9	Master's	Part-Time	Doctorate	2/Elementary, Preschool Age**
Birdie*	White	Grantville	40-49	Divorced (Single)	25-34.9	Bachelor's	Part-Time	n/a	2/High, Elementary
Edith*	White	Grantville	40-49	Divorced (Single)	25-34.9	High School Diploma	Full-Time	n/a	3/Elementary
Lucy*	Asian	Grantville	40-49	Remarried	35-49.9	Master's	Full-Time	Master's	3/Middle, Elementary
Rosalyn*	Latino	Grantville	40-49	Married	35-49.9	Some College	Stay-at-home	Doctorate	2/ Elementary, Preschool Age**
Michelle	White	Grantville	30-39	Remarried	50- 74.9	Master's	Part-Time	Bachelor's	2/Elementary, Not School Age
Emily	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	50- 74.9	Bachelor's	Part-Time	Bachelor's	3/ Elementary, Preschool Age**
Laura	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	50- 74.9	Master's	Part-Time	Associate's	4/Elementary, Preschool Age**, Not School Age
Flori	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	75-99.9	Master's	Full-Time	Master's	3/Elementary
Thelma	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	75-99.9	Master's	Self-Employed	Doctorate	3/ Elementary, Preschool Age**
Martha	White	Grantville	40-49	Married	100-149.9	Master's	Part-Time	Higher Education	2/Middle, Elementary
Claudia	White	Grantville	30-39	Married	100-149.9	Master's	Stay-at-Home	Some Graduate School	2/ Elementary, Preschool Age**
Mabel	White	Grantville	40-49	Divorced (Engaged – living with partner)	100-149.9	Master's	Full-time	Doctorate	2/High School, Middle
Helen*	White	Grantville	46	Divorced (Lives with partner)	25-34.9	High School Diploma	Full-Time	n/a	5/4 Adult Children, Elementary

Eleanor	White	Watertown	49	Divorced (Engaged)	50- 74.9	Doctorate	Full-Time	n/a	1/Elementary
Maggie	White	Watertown	30-39	Married	50- 74.9	Associate's	Part-Time	Associate's	2/Elementary
Lane	White	Watertown	30-39	Married	50- 74.9	Bachelor's	Part-Time	Master's	2/Elementary, Preschool Age**
Louisa	White	Watertown	40	Remarried	75- 99.9	High School Diploma	Part-Time	Bachelor's	4/High school, Middle School, Elementary
Jackie	White	Watertown	30-39	Married	75- 99.9	Some College	Part-Time	Associates	4/Elementary, Preschool Age**, Not School Age
Mary*	White	Wheaton	40-49	Married	25- 34.9	Some College	Part-Time	Some College	2/Elementary
Caroline*	White	Wheaton	30-39	Married	25-34.9	Some College (Pursuing Associates)	Full-Time	Service	2/Middle School, Elementary
Elizabeth*	White	Wheaton	20-29	Remarried	35-49.9	High School/Pursuit of Associate's Degree	Part-Time	Some College	2/Elementary, Not School Age

- *According to USDA regulations, families qualify for free or reduced lunches.
- **Does not mean that child is necessarily enrolled in preschool.

Participant Selection Criteria

The participants of this study were mothers. With counsel from my committee, I decided on establishing study participation criteria related to sex, and more precisely to the commonly accepted “gendered role of mother as caregivers and care-arrangers” as a means of gaining focus and consistency as well as demographic and theoretical depth. It comes as no surprise that women have long endured dilemmas in issues related to work-life balance and raising a family. In her study of mothers, Sharon Hays (1996) theorized that regardless of race and social class, modern mothers participated in “an ideology of intensive motherhood” which is child-centric and often leads to a sacrifice of her own needs in favor of her child’s. She found that mothers often claim to share family responsibilities in egalitarian-type roles with spouses, but in reality they buy into a commonly accepted social construction of motherhood. At the same time, mothers have been forced to come to terms with surmounting pressures that swirl around motherhood. Recent reports indicate that women opt out of the workforce to stay at home with their children as they weigh the monetary and emotional costs of professional careers (Peek, 2013).

I primarily sought mothers who had children in early elementary (kindergarten-second grade) to intermediate grades (grades 3 – 6) for several reasons. Because a number of my study interests and guiding questions deal with summer learning loss, I needed mothers from a school age population. For example, summer camps often set age participant requirements like “children entering kindergarten”. Children of an elementary school age may have expanded access to activities through non-profit organizations (i.e. Boys and Girl Scouts), after-school and enrichment programs advertised through school. Furthermore, schools often diagnose and provide interventions for learning and behavioral

challenges, which creates eligibility in public services (i.e. English as a Second Language (ESL), speech and language therapy, reading or math support).

My goal was to talk to mothers who were still, for the most part, in control of how their children spent their free time. For that reason, mothers with children *only* above 7th grade were not eligible because as adolescence takes shape, children often have more latitude and personal agency in how they spend their free time and with whom (source). As a result, children spend more time away from families as they design their own schedules. Self-care becomes common and it is permissible by law for children to stay at home alone.

Mothers selected to participate as critical cases had at least one child who was in the target age range of K-6th grades. Only one mother had a child entering 7th grade. If mothers had children who were above or below grade cut-off, I selected a “target” child. However, the majority of study participants did have children who were either younger or older than said criteria. This reality often stretched the parameter of our discussions to include relevant insights about children who fell outside of criteria. For example, mothers often compared their children academically and socially to one another. In most cases, diversity in the age ranges of children living at home provided depth to the study findings.

Critical cases were identified after my first set of interactions with all study participants (i.e. demographic survey and first interview) and after my first round of coding. Critical cases either fit the theoretical lens for the study or, opposite of that, expressed thoughts and ideas that bucked my theoretical assumptions. I ultimately chose three middle-class single mothers, Michelle, Eleanor and Birdie; Flori and Louisa, two middle-class mothers who had experienced upward mobility; one working-class mother, Mary; and one low-income mother, Elizabeth. Each mother I approached about becoming a critical case in the study accepted.

Participant Recruitment and Access

After receiving approval from Penn State’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I posted recruitment flyers in physical locations in each of my study sites such as the community bulletin boards of libraries, grocery stores and school district offices. A number of friends and colleagues posted the recruitment virtually on personal social networking sites as well as special interest websites for mothers. See Appendix L1: “Verbal Script for Study Recruitment” and Appendix L2: “Recruitment Flyer”. In addition, an announcement was made through the university’s research office website that advertises *research studies*.

In scheduling interviews with participants, particularly for the first, I offered to meet them in an environment of their choosing—preferably one which combined confidentiality protection and could accommodate schedules. As a result, interviews were conducted in workplace offices, public libraries, coffee shops and alongside children’s practices for activities (i.e. football or martial arts as examples). Interviews that took place in these naturalistic settings enriched data points and efficiently allowed me to capture cultural nuances of participants’ communities. Especially for the second and third interview, however, meetings took place in the homes of participants. Home interviews were assets to study findings. By the end of the study, I had conducted at least one interview or visit at the home of all but one participant. Doing so allowed me to capture context-specific details about the participant’s life that connected to their worldviews. In addition, home interviews allowed them to speak freely in a space that enabled the greatest degree of authenticity. In repeat home visits, mothers were obliging offering me drinks and snacks. I watched children play and played with them when they showed interest. I pored over mom projects and

chatted with spouses. I grew fond of families and recognized patterns in their lifestyles that afforded strong narrative qualities.

Confidentiality of participants was an important consideration for this study. In order to keep participant information confidential, I used pseudonyms for each mother and for their child(ren). I also kept details of their personal lives as general as possible without compromising important study details. All quotes or information with identifiable information was changed in order to provide an extra layer of anonymity. Sites and all geographic locations recognizable by name also received a pseudonym for additional confidentiality.

Data Collection

In the next section, I provide an overview of my data collection methods. I address how I went about data gathering through interviews, journals and participant observation. In each section I provide a rationale for the chosen method as well as specific procedures and details. In this section I also address the importance of how these methods afforded thorough data triangulation.

Interviews

In order to address my research questions, I conducted in-person interviews with mothers, which served as the primary source of data for this study. I used interviews because I wanted to hear from participants in their own words, their feelings and sentiments about how out of school summertime affected their family life. Three interviews were conducted over the course of the study for all participants: a spring interview prior to the end of school before summer vacation began; one mid-summer; and one shortly after school had begun again in the fall. I chose to do research in three phases in order to provide a “before, during, and after” type of assessment. First, I wanted to know how mothers felt

about and responded to the close of the school year and transition into summer; second, how they felt about summer itself; and finally, their thoughts and feelings about the transition from summer back into school. Interview one lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to over 2 hours, averaging about 45 minutes. The second interview (mid-summer) was usually the longest as I delved deeper into the meanings and philosophies; drawbacks and benefits of family time without school in the foreground. Average time for the second interview was about one hour. In the third interview, I asked mothers to reflect on their summers and talk about the transition back into the school year. This final interview averaged about 45 minutes.

Children of critical cases were also interviewed regularly not exceeding three times. These interviews were mainly used as a way to provide triangulation. Length of child interviews were dependent on the age of the child lasting anywhere from five minutes for younger children eight and up to about 30 minutes for nine and up. Interviews of children often took place as we played together. For example, Bradey and I would talk while tree climbing or playing catch. In one case I interviewed siblings and a neighbor (also in the study) together in a focus-group type style. Occasionally, children of non-critical cases sat in on interviews simply “chiming in” when they had particular thoughts of their own to contribute. They typically lost interest after a short period of time, instead deciding to play or use screen time. Though interview protocols were designed for each phase, interviews were open-ended allowing the conversation to flow naturally. Doing three interviews also had benefits because I could ask for participants for particulars if I happened to miss a question during an interview.

Journals

In tandem with interviews, I sent critical cases journal entry prompts every other week via email and using responses for further points of evidence for data analysis. Hammersly and Atkinson (1994) note how journals compliment interviews and participant observation as a means of triangulation. Children of critical cases were provided hardcopy notebooks that served as journals. (For example prompts, see Appendixes H, “Critical Case Kid Prompts” & Appendix J, “Mothers’ Journal Prompts”). Only one mother chose to journal in hardcopy form. The other six critical cases opted to complete journal entries and submit them via email. Entries were useful in constructing dialogues with the participant allowing them to ruminate over questions and respond in their own time. Journal entries enabled convenience—allowing members to participate in the study at a time that was convenient for them. In many ways, journal entry responses along with my questions and feedback acted as an ongoing member check (source/explanation) allowing study participants to clarify responses and adjust answers if necessary.

Participant Observation

By conducting participant observation, I was able, as Becker (1958) wrote, “to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them” (p. 652). Participant observations allowed me to capture firsthand, how mothers and their children interacted with social realities. Observing families in their home setting and other contexts enabled me to collect rich description of routines, rituals and other meaningful events. For critical cases, a minimum of three observations took place over the course of the summer. Children were not the primary focus of this study, but their participation was an important means of data triangulation.

Table 3: Interview and Observation Totals

Sites	Grantville	Watertown	Wheaton	Total
Number of participants interviewed during spring	13	6	3	22
Number of participants interviewed during summer	13	6	3	22
Number of participants interviewed during fall	13	6	2	21
Total Family observations	12	6	6	24
Children interviewed	3	4	4	11

Data Analysis

My data analysis was an ongoing and iterative process. Shortly after my first round of interviews, I began coding data as a first step in finding themes and patterns between participant responses. Coding is an analytical process for categorizing and sorting data in the development of a theory. I utilized a three-step process: foundational, focused and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). As part of foundational coding, I selectively examined transcripts and line-by-line and placed participant responses, and reflections into categories. Often referred to as a constant comparison method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser, 1978), this foundational micro-coding process occurred without a pre-existing coding scheme, but still retained cogency between my research questions and theoretical frame (Glaser, 1978). I also assigned broad categories to the feedback provided by my participants, while still bearing in mind my theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009).

After my first set of interviews was complete, I took an approximate six-week pause from interviewing allowing mothers time to settle into their summer routines. During this time, I used the opportunity to hone my foundational code list, which I left open to the possibility of changing, renaming or redirecting codes into new or different categories.

Glaser (1978) describes this process as “refit” (p. 4). In the outset, because the categories are a function of the data (as opposed to preconceived), the fit is automatic (Glaser, 1978).

However, he notes how at this stage, data are not “precious, just captivating” (p. 4) and the researcher should remain open to the notion of refitting based on consecutive data.

As part of my ongoing data analysis phase, I constructed memos on a regular basis. Glaser (1978) describes memos as a way to theorize about codes as the analyst comes across them. In memo construction, I often wrote about or revisited the unforeseen alignments of codes to my interviews, journal entries and participant observations in my memos. For example, in one case, I had created a category for the academic preparations that mothers took for summer out of school time in which “worksheets” were often depicted as (See Appendix F: “Memo – The Worksheet Culture”). Memos allowed me to choose remarkable themes over those that were commonplace (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1994). They also allowed me to write reflexively, confronting my own potential researcher bias and posing interesting questions to examine under a theoretical lens.

As I performed my coding, I noticed a number of salient patterns surfacing in the data and needed to provide operational definitions in order to better distinguish my themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This was especially important when threads between points seemingly overlapped, but offered important distinctions from one to another. For example, the codes “identity building” and “mother as teacher” each stored a sub-code for “religious exploration”. In defining the sub-codes, I differentiated identity building and religious exploration as learning about one’s personal religion as a fundamental part of the “identity building process”. In operationalizing religious exploration for “mother as guide” I was able to define religious exploration as mothers use of summer vacation to concretely provide religious guidance by facilitating and engaging children in discussions about religious

ideologies or physically accompany them on mission trips. Defining codes was an important way to determine the link between code categories to theory while at the same time, keeping them distinct.

As my second round of interviews came to a close, I began performing more focused coding where I settled on broader themes related to my initial coding categories. I continued to write memos about the focus of my codes as larger connections to theory began to emerge. I began compiling my instances related to focused codes, labeling them and tying them to memos and an ongoing Table of Contents that helped me envision themes and core elements.

The last phase of data coding was dedicated to theoretical coding. In a basic interpretive approach, the researcher is compelled to view the data through a disciplinary and theoretical lens. Using a sociological framework, I set out to determine how Lareau's (2003; 2011) cultural logic of childrearing applied to my participants during their child's summer out of school time. Early on, though, I noticed that participant responses often transcended the key elements of accomplishment of natural growth and concerted cultivation (organization of daily life, interventions at institutions and language use at home) (Lareau, 2003; 2011) and lent to other theoretical frameworks as well. Family-school-community partnerships and the social construction of childhood were two such examples of strong conceptual underpinnings that emerged. In many ways, these new theoretical frameworks helped to answer my research questions.

I found that I reached data saturation by the end of my second interview when themes began to match and no new ones emerged (Jones and McEwen, 2000 as cited by Merriam, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that saturation is achieved if no new data is found regarding any of the relevant categories, the properties and dimensions of a category

are thoroughly developed and include variation, and the associations between various categories are well developed and validated (p. 212). The challenging task at hand, then, became how to effectively organize narratives into themes and categorize them according to findings that both related to and fell outside of my theoretical assumptions. The third interview was primarily used to confirm these patterns and further endorse them by asking participants to provide confirmations, examples or insights.

As the coding process was ongoing, I was able to draw out relevant themes and collapse categories into larger and broader ones. Integral to this process was the ongoing writing and re-writing of memos, revisiting and adding to my field notes and if necessary, revisiting of interview transcripts. As theory generation was taking shape, I also pulled out relevant pieces of literature that matched or enhanced my findings and aligned those with quotes and pieces of evidence I had gathered.

Validity

A number of measures were put in place to ensure the validity and overall trustworthiness of study findings. The overall number of participants in this study was low. The information presented here cannot be generalized, but the goal of this study was an exploratory one. However, I put safeguards in place to ensure that the themes I found among my study participants (and between and within the communities of focus) were salient ones. I did this mainly by conducting multiple interviews with participants using semi-structured interview protocols, but also through participant observation of families and journal entries from critical cases and their kids.

Triangulation through multiple means of data collection was critical in developing low-inference data needed to create broader more salient theories (Maxwell, 2005). I triangulated data with journal entries from critical cases, participant observations in

communities and in the homes and environments of participants as well as secondary interviews and participant observations with kids. For example, I would begin my interview with mothers, take a break to interact or spend time with their children in an activity of their choosing and then continue the interview with mothers where I would use an example of something the child had said or done. This created a richer dialogue. This cyclical process allowed for spontaneous question asking and data gathering, a process that Kvale (1996) calls the “self-communicating” interview wherein the process does not require additional description or explanation to tell the story. This process often led me down a surprising new path or acted as confirmation—especially in the beginning and ending phases of the study respectively.

Likewise, I relied on journal entries as a means of triangulation. Because most journal entries from mothers were electronic and sent back to me at regular intervals, I had them at my disposal to annotate and create clarification questions back to the participant. I also used other mothers’ responses as a springboard for conversations with other participants. Journal entries augmented points observed or discussed with participants. They also served the purpose of a member check; allowing participants to reflect more, correct misunderstandings or divulge additional information.

In memos, I pulled out the recurring themes combined with quotes from my participants and my own thoughts about contradictions I may have heard. Clustering was a fundamental part of memo writing, allowing me to tie theories to specific accounts of participants’ responses. Memos, notes and audio recordings taken shortly after meeting with participants, allowed me to create a fieldwork portfolio which collaged together points of evidence that reflected established literature and had significant bearings on my own theory creation.

The concept of researcher reflexivity was an important consideration throughout my research—especially as I began to come to terms with my own relationship with participants combined with my own multi-faceted experiences as a child of a working-class background squared against my contemporary position as doctoral student and scholar. I brought to bear on the research situation a number of beliefs about the effect of living in a struggling, working-class town like Wheaton where opportunities to learn during summer are stymied by sociocultural factors, especially in comparison to a university community like Grantville where advantages are observed even superficially with ease (See Appendix E also for research identity memo about choosing Wheaton).

As I interviewed each family and observed each community, I continued to reflect on my own biases and research “baggage” that undoubtedly were in tow. In addition, since mutual influence can have large affect on study outcomes, I reminded myself of Spradley’s (1979) ethnographic interview strategy that allows participants not just to tell but also to show and teach. This approach helped to keep me focused on my participant’s perspectives foremost.

Still, just as participants had an effect on me, my ongoing presence almost certainly had a similar affect on them. Each phase of this research seemed to have its own flavor: the first interview had an element of a perfunctory first date—where I asked simple “getting to know you”-type questions. The second became more personal and involved. I began to backchannel more with mothers during this phase, relying on participants as sounding boards for what I was both from them hearing from others in the study and from the context of the greater communities in which the study took place. This typically resulted in interviews that were much more flavorful and productive than simple fidelity to a question-by-question interview protocol.

In one conversation I had with Flori, I asked if she felt her daughter's participation in competitive sports might help her in school. Most genuinely this question stumped her as she noted that she really had never before thought about her daughter's participation in extracurricular activities in those terms. Like Flori, other mothers were often honest about the way they had taken for granted elements or practices of their own family life or possibly an element of their own family life compared to another family.

Even though it was not all that common, sometimes those who were not critical cases often showed signs that they were thinking about the research between our interactions. A few sent me unprompted emails about an event or incident that had occurred during the summer that they felt I would find useful. In one instance, Lane, a middle-class mother of two from Watertown, had compiled a list of school-like games she played regularly with her children. At the study outset during the first interview, I included in my introduction a portion on the potential benefits of participating in the research, explaining that through participation one might gain an opportunity for reflection about their own style of parenting during summer out of school time as well as education experiences in general. Lane's unprompted reveal of her own parenting practices she thought would be beneficial to me as a researcher was one such way I observed tandem effects between participant and researcher.

In any field of study, a lack of self-awareness or authenticity about one's own position as a researcher can persuade research outcomes. Yet, a complete buffer against one's own biased tendencies is also unrealistic. Rather than ignore my own bias, I chose to embrace my own researcher identity while still approaching the research situation with careful pragmatism of the phenomena under study. By not shying away from these realities, I allowed myself a greater sense of security about presented study findings.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of my methodological intentions, tools and strategies related to data collection as well as the systematic approach I took in my procedures for ongoing data analysis. The fundamental goal of the methods outlined above was to provide spaces and platforms through which mothers of varying social class statuses and community backgrounds could articulate meanings, philosophies and feelings associated with the phenomenon of summer vacation. In chapter 4, I have also provided a discussion about the precarious balance of mutual influence between researcher-participant as I outlined how I navigated this reality in the study presented here. Next, in Chapter 5, I present my first set of findings related to my study goals and research questions.

Chapter 5: The Intersection of School and Summer Vacation

Introduction

In the next several chapters, I present the findings from my study which introduced the broad research question: How do middle-class, working-class and low-income mothers experience their children's out of school summer time? The study took place in three communities close in proximity but largely different in sociocultural contexts. As discussed previously in my Methods chapter, interviews began shortly before the official end of the school year, which allowed me to capture mothers' insights about summer vacation before it began, as it was in progress as well as afterword. My first set of sub-research questions asked the following:

RQ1: What are mothers' perceptions of summer learning loss? How do education stakeholders (i.e. faculty, staff and administration) prepare families for summer break and how did it affect mothers' preparations, actions and overall child-rearing strategies during summer out of school time?

Two underlying assumptions relate to these questions. First, I assume that formal schooling shapes family life and affects routines and parenting strategies. I also assume that the mothers in this study, as the primary caregivers to their child(ren), must adapt to a new structure in their family life and day-to-day routines revealing some vacillation toward the transition of school year to summer break. Finally, I understand that SES plays a significant role in both family and broader community ecologies. I expect that the effects of SES on the family and community are magnified and accentuated during summer months.

All study participants' child(ren) partake in a traditional school year model that operates on a 9-month calendar with an approximate 10 to 12 week break for summer. This break accounts for their longest uninterrupted break from formal schooling. The families in

the study share this calendar in common with 90% of other schoolchildren in the United States (Gold, 2002) and all mothers in the study also experienced a 10 to 12 week summer vacation as part of their formal schooling experience, including for moms raised outside the United States. Key findings for this chapter are summarized into the following three sections:

1. School Year to Summer Limbo: Distancing School and Home Life

Gradually – Before the official end of the academic year, shared decision-making between schools and families slowly grew distant. As distancing occurred, regardless of community or SES, mothers’ perceived a noticeable shift in family life and routines. While mothers observed a decrease in the time their children spent on homework and “on task” in-the-classroom activities, they observed an increase in outside of school field trips and in-class activities framed as “fun” and rewards. These shifts created a sort of school year-to-summer limbo, changing the dynamics of family life while at the same time sending a mainly implicit message to mothers reminding them of their impending increase of responsibility for their children’s time. The limbo leads to pragmatic shifts in family life and leads to expectations about summer, many of which vary based on social class standing.

2. Schedules, Reward Charts and “Bucket” Lists: Middle-class Mothers’ Preparations for Out of School Summertime

All mothers, irrespective of SES and community, realized and anticipated some degree of influence of the summer break on changes in family life. This pattern was more observable in Grantville (middle class) and Watertown (working class) than in Wheaton (low-income). Mothers in Grantville and Watertown plan well in advance of the school years’ end. In Grantville,

children have more opportunities for structured and specialized out of school summertime than those in Watertown and Wheaton, but mothers in these communities utilize what is available (i.e. Free resources like parks and state forests) to fill their child's time. Still, children from Watertown and Wheaton participated in less structured activities overall than did children in Grantville. In this community, middle-class mothers often co-construct with their children summer schedules, goals, rewards and incentives as a way to stave off boredom, make and preserve memories and promote desirable behavior.

3. Warding Off Summer Learning Loss: Strong Intentions Outdone

Though the majority of mothers received information about warding off summer learning loss, patterns of teacher and school academic preparation for summer vacation were broadly inconsistent. Though most middle-class and some working-class mothers had strong intentions for continuing “school-like” activities during summer, such exercises were rarely carried out as hoped. When they did occur, efforts were mainly child-driven.

School Year to Summer Limbo: Distancing School and Home Life Gradually

In this section, I provide share findings that discuss the role of school in priming mothers and kids for summer. This was evident in how mothers noted a shift from the *focus* on the *student* to that of the *child*. As the school year tapers, they find themselves in an “academic limbo” between the school year and summer. Especially for working-class mothers, this creates a heightened sense of anxiety since affordable SOST options are often out of reach. I first discuss the role of schools in preparing mothers for summer time away from school.

Findings show how schools, though they still technically meet on a regular schedule, change classroom and time-on-task practices toward the end of the academic year resulting in a gradually tapered school year. This form of “academic limbo” causes changes in patterns of decision-making that are typically shared between the home and school during the academic calendar. While all mothers sense and react to this change, the degree to which changes affect mothers did show variation based on SES and community context. Before highlighting these effects, I apply and then merge two theories to mother’s responses that create a conceptual framework for these finding. By combining Silva’s (2007) Types of Time (Figure 4) and Epstein’s (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Influence home, school and community paradigm shifts are better understood.

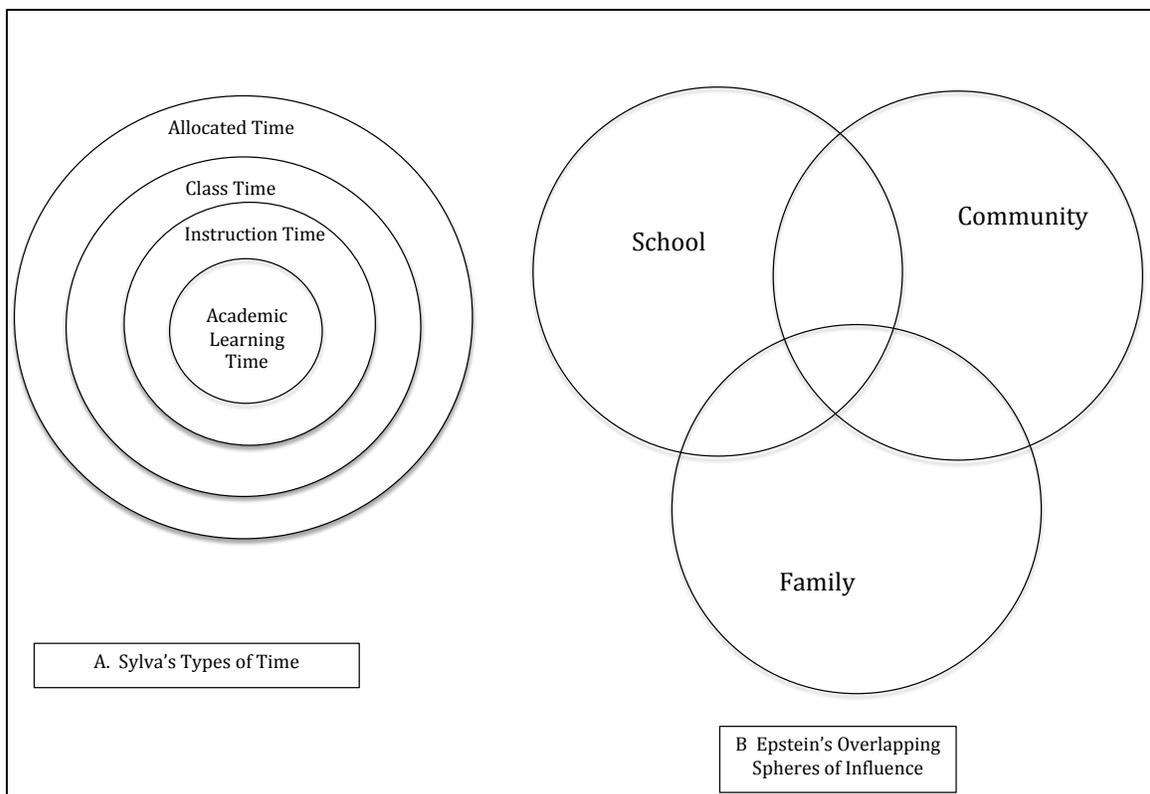


Figure 4: Silva’s Types of Time & Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of influence.

Teachers and staff often carry certain amounts of latitude in their practice as they design lesson plans and projects that match their pedagogies and meet the specific needs of their students. Still, researchers find that the time students spend in school can be categorized according to “types of time” placed in a four major categories. Silva (2007) organizes the types into concentric circles that begin large as an overall representation of the school day and eventually winnows to retention and long-lasting skill building. Each category is described as:

- Allocated school time or total time spent in school represented by the largest and outermost circle.
- Allocated class time or total time spent physically in the classroom.
- Instructional time where students receive lessons from teachers.
- Academic learning time or time students gain and retain subject knowledge.

When Silva’s Types of Time (2007) is merged with Epstein’s (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Influence, a new lens for viewing the home-school relationship in light of summer out of school time is created. Epstein (2011) describes the home, school and community partnership as a set of spheres that overlap and exhibit patterns of mutual influence. The degree to which the spheres are pulled or pushed apart depends on a number of factors including childrearing philosophies, neighborhood contexts and the like (Epstein 2011). One factor underestimated by Epstein’s theory is the degree to which extended breaks from school affect the spheres. In Figure 5: School Year Time I have merged these theories thereby replacing Epstein’s school sphere with that of Silva’s concentric circles for Types of Time.

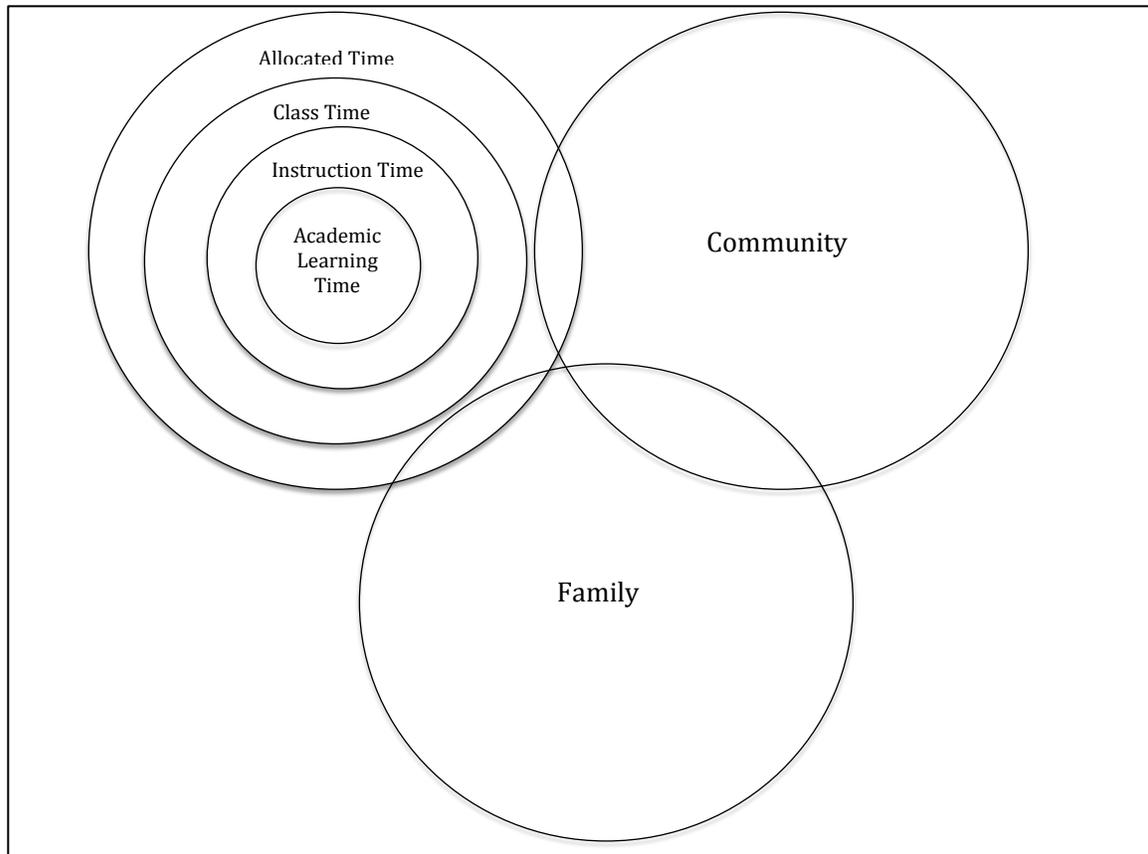


Figure 5: Silva's Types of Time and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Merged

Arguably, during the school year Silva's (2007) types of time, presents an accurate depiction of the school day. However, toward the close of the school year, mothers indicated that although allocated school time remained the same, they perceived decreases in class, instructional and academic learning time.

Based on this, in Figure 6: School Year Limbo, I have combined these theories to demonstrate not only the mutual partnership of the home, school and community, but to highlight an evolution of school year time while school is still in session. This is indicated in Figure 6 where I have decreased the size of the three innermost circles.

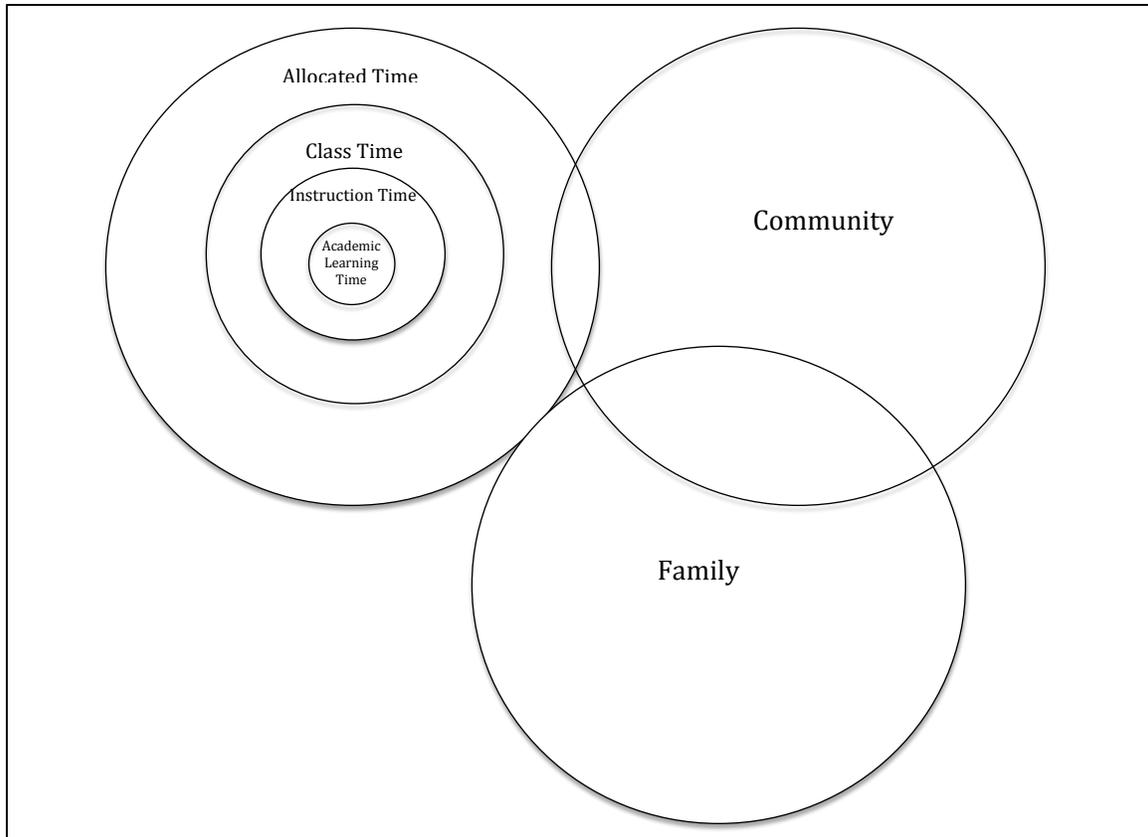


Figure 6: School year-to-summer limbo.

Findings show that prior to the school year’s end, a gradual taper takes place. In spring interviews, mothers from each community perceived a dissipation of school policies and practices that normally affect their families (i.e. homework and extracurricular activities) and this magnified their role as “timekeeper” outside of school. This transition forms what I refer to as a “school year-to-summer limbo”, wherein children are still in school but no longer focused on achieving academic benchmarks. Rather, activities related to rewards and closure takes place. This “limbo” affects mothers as they reflect on their partnership with their child’s school and deal with the reality of an impending responsibility of their child’s time.

Birdie, a middle-class single mother of a 5th-grader and a high school junior from Grantville, simply notes in her journal, “The weeks before the end of the school year were

crazy. There were so many activities (concerts, field day, award ceremonies). The homework slowed down.” Maggie a working-class mother from Watertown agrees, “Kindergarten didn't send any homework the last two weeks of school...Bill's backpack was filled with his science booklet, math folder, and journal. We had fun reading the journal and seeing how he improved over the months.” Mary, a working-class mother from Wheaton describes how changes at school affected home life. She says,

“In the weeks leading up to the end of the school year I could tell that my children were getting increasingly wild. The less work the kids were doing in their classes in school and the more field trips and parties they had made for some crazy nights when the kids got off the bus. It seemed that the less structure there was in the school day the more chaotic life got at home. I also kept asking the kids ‘Do you have homework to do?’ and I had trouble believing that they didn't!”

Mary’s reflection is indicative of the way that many of the mothers in this study plan family time around the demands and structure of school (in this case, through homework) and as a result, develop home life expectations. Mary’s statement also alludes to another overriding sentiment provided by study participants and reflected in other findings of this study—the ways in which families and schools pander to competing personas for kids: one of a “student” and one of a “child”.

A prominent finding of this study overall is the way in which the social construction of childhood philosophically matters to mothers. In later chapters, I argue how summertime magnifies this philosophy and I explore findings regarding childhood in greater detail. In the meantime, findings in this chapter section demonstrate that schools, especially at the end of the academic year, also contribute to the social construction of childhood.

Maggie, a working-class mother of two from Watertown talks of her son's elation about Field Day, elation she shares alongside him. In an email to me she says, "He LOVED this day. The month leading up to field day we had the daily countdown of how many days until Field Day. He still talks about all the activities from that day." Especially in spring interviews, discussions about special end-of-the-year events like Field Day were a common occurrence. Flori, a middle-class mother notes a palpable shift from curriculum goals also to ones centered on revelry. In her journal she says,

"The regular 'Daily 5' language lesson changed with ten days of school remaining. This time was replaced with a pop the balloon activity. Each day a ballon [SIC] was popped which revealed an activity for the morning. The activities included things like a nature walk, a movie, water painting, a dance party and board game day. There was definitely a larger focus on fun and group activities as the school year came to a close."

Sentiments regarding the slowly tapered school year and school year-to-summer limbo—one marked by a discontinuation of focus on curriculum goals to one instead focused on closure—were found across the board, in all communities by nearly all mothers. Below, Elizabeth, a low-income mom from Wheaton, an economically struggling community, makes a similar observation to that of Flori's.

"The weeks leading up to the end of school were filled with less work in my opinion. Fin would bring home most of his 'school gear' and they had many days of movies, outdoor things, field trips, etc. Just things to relax..."

Commonly, many mothers detected this shift from the typical mission of school to foster the academic potential of students' to a desire, instead, to an indulgence of the "child". Though they ultimately encouraged it, support was also met with a degree of hesitation.

Diane, a middle-class mother of two from Grantville highlights the way in which the end of school year activities, though perhaps framed as “rites of passage”, miss opportunities for easing upcoming transitions. In her journal she notes,

“This time period was exciting, draining, and overstimulating [SIC] for everyone. There just seemed to be so much going on! Homework for school had subsided...I also felt like there was something fussy and fun going on at Benny's school almost every day, just so many special events, and I don't think this helped with the transition for Benny. For example, they always seem to show a movie the day before a vacation and it seems like a bit of a cop-out, distracting kids from what could otherwise be an important time for emotion coaching.”

Perhaps not intentionally, the teachers and schools associated with the mothers in this study, gave increased latitude to parents for how children spend their out of school time while the school year remained in session—particularly by curbing homework and closing out parental volunteer opportunities and extracurricular activities. In the classroom, priorities shifted from accomplishing curriculum goals to ones related to closure and celebration. Because the school year tapers and forms a limbo, mothers perceive a transfer from regular shared decision-making between the home and the school to one more centered on the home and child. This transfer leads mothers to anticipate their summer out of school responsibilities and sets up a variety of expectations.

Though the experience of school year-to-summer limbo was common between mothers, summer out of school time expectations showed variation based on SES as well as community context. Middle-class mothers articulate higher expectations for summer months than that of their working-class and low-income counterparts. Most of the time,

though, expectations are not reached. Eleanor a middle-class, single mother puts into perspective her own sense of conflict that resurfaces each year as summer draws near,

“I think of the summer as a challenge, a chaotic time when routines are abandoned. Usually I start the summer with high hopes for myself--in terms of my own writing and research--and the demands of parenting leave me disappointed by the end. I am trying very hard to change that expectation. I am trying to see parenting as something valuable and worthwhile in and of itself rather than something that steals time from my primary identity as a writer and scholar. (I wonder if giving birth so late in my career, after my professional identity was formed, has created this strange tension.) This summer I was also more intentional about setting up the schedule so that she would have things to do almost every week. (Now I wonder if she will get burned out by it all...)”

Eleanor’s anticipation and reflection were common among middle-class mothers who plan well in advance for their children’s summer time away from school. Working-class mothers also expressed sentiments related to hopeful goals, but these were often stymied by the constraints of day-to-day life. Helen, a working-class mother from Grantville whose son is entering first grade, expresses feeling of disappointment and inadequacy because she cannot provide enriching activities for her son.

In our first interview that took place just days before school let out for the summer, Helen is still uncertain about where Jack will spend the majority of his day while she is at work. She is divorced and her ex-husband, who is a cook at a local restaurant, will often take Jack with him in order to fill in the gaps when they need childcare. Jack’s teacher has reached out to Helen and invited Jack to the school district’s summer reading program, which will fill

about 3 and a half hours of the day for about six weeks of the summer. In the following excerpt she describes her unstable plan for Jack out of school summertime

“I have a friend who's watching him and if he can do it then he would go down to [my ex-husband's place of employment]. They set them in the back...they're pretty lenient about that. They all have kids...I don't really like it. I found out he had him sitting in the dining room. I said, ‘Absolutely not. If anyone ever walked in and take him you would never know. There's an office back there where you can set him.’ He sets up the DVD player for him or he'll color. He'll be there for a couple of hours and then as soon as I would get off at I would go pick him up.

His teacher said it would really do him a lot of good to go to [the school districts summer reading program]. He's going to do that. It's from 9 in the morning to 12 in the afternoon. They're to pick him up right from [my ex-husband's place of employment] and then drop him off. I think it's like a six-week program and the cost \$30 but that was affordable. We could do that and that's going to benefit him for his reading.”

When I ask about how he will spend the rest of his time (at least three hours while she is at work), she concedes, “I honestly don't know and we only have about a week to go.” Later in the same interview, she further underscores her frustration with feelings of sadness and inadequacy related to the upcoming summer break. She says,

“I would just like him to be able to go out and enjoy these camps and the things I read about. I know he would enjoy doing it, but I just can't afford it. I read this stuff and it makes me sad that I can get him into this stuff.”

Helen's response underscores the role of community context in expectations. She lives in the community of Grantville where out of school summertime learning opportunities are both plentiful and popular for kids who live in the community. Mothers in Grantville often received an implicit message that children should participate in stimulating out of school opportunities. For working-class mothers, this reality causes frustration. Though living in Grantville has many benefits, Helen's comments also demonstrate a perception that her child is at a disadvantage because her work hours and financial situation are not amenable to out of school participation for Jack. Summer vacation, when Jack's time belongs solely to her, increases frustration and feelings of inadequacy. This outlook was common for struggling mothers (not necessarily those of a working-class or low-income background) who lived in Grantville who perceived the rewarding possibilities of living in a university community, but equally perceive an inability to realize its full potential. Still, Edith loves the community and can truly see it for all its benefits. In our first interview, we discuss her view of Grantville versus her previous community located only 30 minutes away

MM: Are you new to the area?

Edith: We lived here we moved here 3 years ago

MM: Where were you before?

Edith: Levinsworth. Not a good town to live in.

MM: Why?

Edith: Drugs. Nobody has initiative.

MM: Do you notice how is Grantville different than Levinsworth?

Edith: I don't know. People are more happier here it seems there's more to do. You even see people talking to their kids a lot nicer and there's so much more here for [Nellie] to do here...I don't know it's not a depressing town Levinsworth. Have you ever been there? It's depressing. There's nowhere to shop has nothing to do...

It was common for residents of Grantville to express pride in their community, especially in discussions regarding outlying areas. Residents of Watertown also expressed gratefulness for where they grew up. In Figure 7: Summer Spheres (Community), I revisit the merge of Silva (2007) and Epstein’s (2011) theories to also demonstrate how during the summer while the sphere of school separates from the home; the sphere of community becomes more vital to the family.

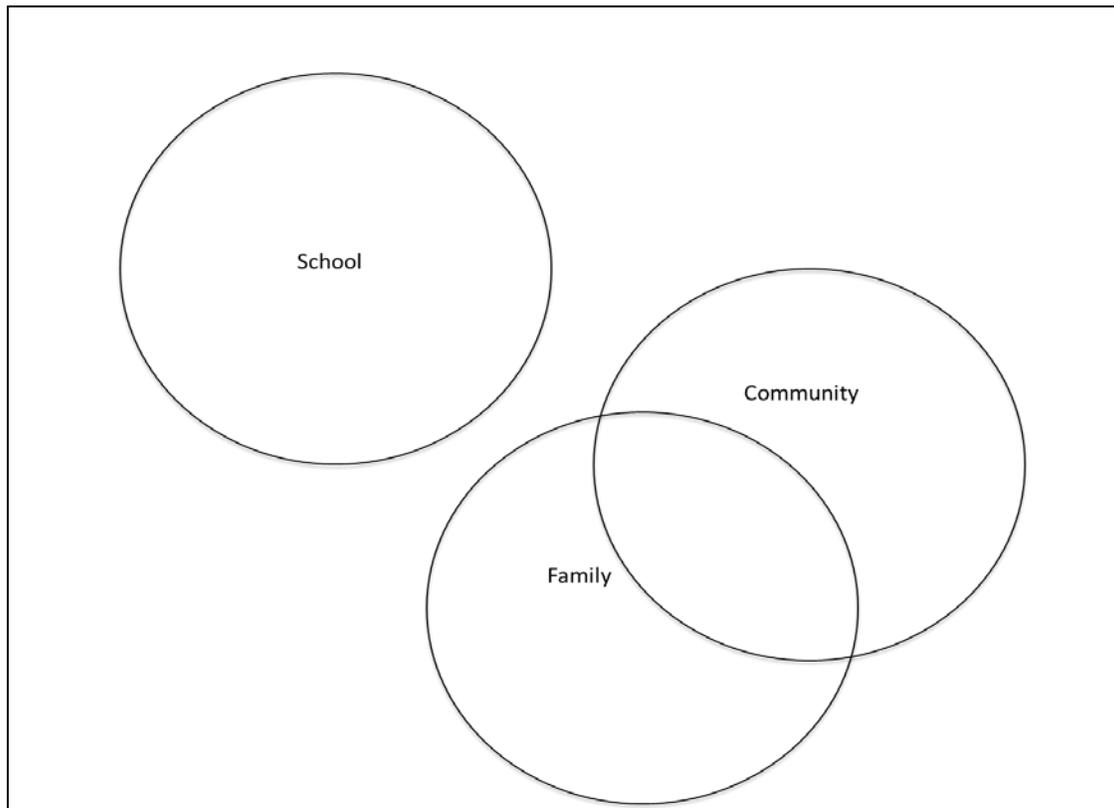


Figure 7: Growing fissure between school and family/community.

In a community like Wheaton, however, working-class mothers also aspired to have enriching summers for their children, but feel a greater sense of “going it alone”, since the community does not offer a variety of summer camps and other “extras”. Mary, a working-class mother of two who works for the Wheaton School District and is unemployed during the summer, searches for activities that will keep her children engaged and structured during

the summer. She often notes the way in which her family “falls apart” when the structure of school vaporizes. Already predisposed to depression, she notes how in the past, summer out of school time sets her into a tailspin due to its lack of structure. In a midsummer interview, she describes how her son’s regular, early morning physical therapy appointments have kept her depression at bay. She says,

Mary: God sent that physical therapy as silly as it sounds; he sent that to us, to keep us going.

MM: Right. You were pretty stressed about the summer the last time we spoke.

Mary: I was. I really thought it's going to happen again. And I'm not going to resist it, you know...But we would go to physical therapy and we would get up early enough to eat breakfast...and get pancakes...and just being around other people, you're having interaction...

MM: Feeling like you're involved?

Mary: Yes.

Overall, working-class mothers and middle-class mothers expressed the highest levels of expectations for summer out of school time. Community context played an important role in this sense of expectation. Low-income mothers, on the other hand, expressed goals and expectations more muted than middle-class and working-class moms.

Elizabeth, a low-income mother of seven-year-old Finn and 2-month old Sylvie from Wheaton simply wants her son to gain respite and recharge. Her plans are not concrete and she has done very little to prepare for Finn’s time away from school. She believes firmly in a separation between home and school all year, but especially embraces time away from school during the summer. She has a laissez-faire approach to her parenting style often letting Finn spend hours outside untended. At our first meeting she describes her interactions with Finn’s school,

“I’m not the typical like PTO parent, so I don’t see the teachers and stuff as much as the other parents do, but if I had to go in I could...I don’t really go out of my way to do things for the school or with the school. You know, they have field trips to [a nearby amusement park]...and they wanted people to go. I’m not going. Well, we’re going to go as a family, but it’s just too much hassle for me. Life’s crazy enough...I see the parents helping with the fundraisers and stuff passing them out. It’s one of these things. I don’t really get into that. Not being rude, but I have so much on my plate already with the house and everything to add one more thing, I don’t really want to commit to it.”

Throughout the course of the summer, Finn attends two free community events, goes swimming at a local state park and in his backyard, spends a lot of time with his paternal grandparents in a different town and goes to a couple amusement parks and local festivals. Otherwise, his summer out of school time was largely unplanned and of his own making. In her final journal entry of the summer she notes,

“I can't really say our Summer went according to plan or not because we really didn't enter the Summer with a plan...just relax and have fun and enjoy the summer really is all we ever want to do.”

Though not sent as an explicit message, mothers perceive the lessening role of school in family life before the school year actually ends, but the way in which they perceive their role as driving force behind summer out of school time differed. Middle-class and working-class mothers have high expectations, though due to extenuating circumstances, like those expressed by Helen and Mary, summer can leave working-class moms to feel a sense of

inadequacy because they are unable to construct summers that meet socio-cultural expectations of a “good summer”.

This feeling is spurred by a gradual separation of the spheres between home and school life, which begin to separate while school remains in session, but summer vacation looms. During this point of the school year, teachers and schools focus on goals related to closure, not curriculum. In doing so, teachers and schools conduct a slow break in partnership and, at least symbolically, send messages to mothers that soon their child’s time becomes her full responsibility. This school year-to-summer limbo causes vacillation for mothers about the upcoming transition. Working-class mothers faced with constraints had the most reservations about summer vacation. Low-income mothers from each community expressed the lowest level of expectation, not hoping so much for a productive summer as much as a welcome break from the structure school imposes. In Figures 4-7 the merge of Silva and Epstein’s theories related to out of school summer time is constructed.

In the next section of this chapter, I go into greater detail about the preparedness of the mothers in this study. I find that almost exclusively, middle-class mothers went beyond reserving events on their calendars, but also in some cases, had created day-to-day agendas, reward charts and goals for how her children would spend out of school summertime.

Schedules, Reward Charts and “Bucket” Lists: Middle-class Mothers’ Strategies for Out of School Summertime

All mothers, irrespective of SES and community, realized and anticipated the influence of summer on changes in family life. However, middle-class mothers exercised more control of their children’s summer plans than did working-class and low-income moms. Middle class mothers planned a bounty of enriching, activities (free, moderately priced and expensive opportunities) to fill their children’s summer months. Moms who

stayed at home during the summer were most likely to formulate schedules, but even if middle class mothers worked, they still kept regular tabs on their child's goals. This pattern was more observable in Grantville (middle class) and Watertown (working class) than in Wheaton (low-income) where mothers were either working class or low-income.

Inline with many of the findings in the study, mothers residing in Grantville and Watertown shared some common characteristics and went about planning their summers differently than moms in Wheaton—a finding attributable in part to the sociocultural contexts and proximity of their communities. Later in Chapter 7, I unpack how mothers' strategies inform literature about the possession and activation of many different forms of capital (i.e. social, human and cultural). For now, the goal of this chapter section is to introduce mothers' preparedness for their child's out of school summertime. Because patterns of preparation were found mainly in the instances of middle-class families, this section focuses almost solely on mothers of this social background.

In Grantville, conscious dedication to family structures, goals, rewards/incentives were commonly observed. Grantville is a small city that enjoys economic prosperity due almost entirely to the making of the university around which it was established. Grant State is renowned for its globalized focus on research, leading of innovations in most sectors, and an elite reputation for instances of high graduation rates, remarkable student philanthropy and quality athletic programs. Grant State's commitment to quality education permeates into the sociocultural context of Grantville and often crosses the borders of neighboring town lines like in the case of Watertown.

During the summer, Grant State hosts a vast collection of summer camps and events spanning most genres of academic and personal interest. Since it is a manageable drive (less than 20 minutes), school age children in Watertown often benefit from special events taking

place in Grantville and on the campus of Grant State. This advantage is much less common for the children of Wheaton whose geographical proximity to Grant State is not convenient. Still, because it is a reasonable drive (about 1 hour), children in Wheaton know of Grantville and Grant State and travel there for special occasions. However, no children in this study from Wheaton participated in camps or summer events in Grantville and only one middle-class child from Watertown (who attends private school in Grantville) attended a camp at Grant State.

Middle class mothers in Grantville and Watertown planned their child's summer well before the school years' end. Though a bevy of opportunities exist (too many for any one child to experience during a summer), early planning is due, at least in part, to the common perception that participation opportunities fill up quickly. In general, Grantville has a reputation for a competitive edge when it comes to activities like sports and special interest opportunities like camps. When I ask Eleanor (who is an academic at Grant State herself) for her take on this phenomenon she quickly replies, "Well, it's all these professors and other professionals, working moms, who need things for their kids to do."

Birdie, a middle-class single mom, begins her preparations for summer in February around the time that the school district hosts an annual summer camp fair. In terms of her early preparation, she was not alone. Other moms from Grantville often noted being placed on waitlists or missing registrations altogether because they learned of something too late or did not act quickly enough. In Grantville, working-class and low-income mothers often had aspirations for their children to attend structured, out of the home activities, but due to personal circumstances they often self-selected out of camps or lessons. In this case, they instead they deferred to accessible resources. Maggie, who had some anxieties about long

summer days with her children at home takes advantage of local opportunities that are financially within reach. In talks of her preparation she says,

“I signed Bill up for [a] Township Summer Camp. It's 5 days per week starting at the end of June from 9am to noon x 6 weeks. Cost is \$30 which is very very affordable. I looked into swimming lessons at the YMCA. We do not have a membership and the cost was too much for our budget so we decided to try to work on his swimming skills at [a] State Park during the summer as a family.”

Cutting across all social backgrounds and community contexts was the observation of industriousness, simple, and low-maintenance activities. Michelle and her 12-year old son Bradey, who have a middle-class background, make homemade muffins together on Saturday mornings. On our observation days, Bradey and I climbed trees and he guided me on a nature hike where his mother works. Helen, working-class mother of 7-year-old Jack, constructed a hoop out of an inflatable inner tube and a chair so they could play basketball at home. Edith, a low-income mom, hosted game nights and held dance “parties” in her kitchen with her daughters and grandson. However, it was middle class mothers who perceived a need to make firm plans in order to keep their children content during the summer months. In the next section, I highlight the efforts of middle class mothers to offer their children day-to-day structure when school is closed for the summer.

More so than working-class and low-income moms, middle class mothers emphasize structure as important. While they are happy to get a break from the structure imposed by school, they feel more comfortable when their family life is controlled and regimented. Eleanor echoes the sentiments of many mothers as she jokes, “We’re all toddlers”. While most mothers mentioned some insecurity about the lack of structure often impelled by

summer months out of school, the showcasing of rewards and incentives put in place to buttress structure was found only in middle-class homes. Later in Chapter 7, I analyze more thoroughly the specific structure of daily life through activities using Lareau's observed dimensions of daily life. Here, on the other hand, I introduce structure in a different context, one marked by middle class mothers' use of rewards as a concrete method for maximizing summer months away from school.

Flori, a substitute teacher, commonly designs learning and behavior incentives for her children. On an observation day that took place toward the end of the summer, she shows me a large, homemade reward chart she has fashioned after an ice cream scoop. It hangs by the table in the eat-in kitchen. For each "scoop" (i.e. level) the kids earn by showing good behavior, they take outings, which grow larger in travel time and expense as the cone climbs one scoop on top of the other.

Flori was not the only middle-class mother in the study to provide a structure and incentives to her children during summer months away from school. Laura, a middle-class mom of four young children ranging in age from six to two years, has co-created with the input of her children, a "bucket list" of 96 items—one for each day of summer vacation. Resembling a calendar one might find on a desk blotter, the sprawling list contains brightly colored boxes holding descriptions of activities that are low-cost or free. Wishful activities are often referred to as those on one's bucket list. Affixed to the back of the family's front door with magnets, the list is surrounded by photographs taken by Laura of the kids completing bucket item lists in action. Examples include: a "Yes" day—where within reason, Laura has to agree to everything the children ask/suggest; jumping into the deep end of a pool; having a pajama walk; and "School for a Day". On the day of our midsummer interview, they plan to check Back to School Shopping off the list. She says,

“This list has been –it’s like perfect. It has kept us so busy which is nice because in the summertime we get so bored...so just having this list of things to do...I can say, ‘What are we going to do today?’ So today we are going back to school shopping at Target because they are having awesome sales. Our summer has just been so different because of this list. [It gives a focus] because so many summers I’m like ‘We didn’t do this, we didn’t do this.’”

For most middle-class moms, the reasons for schedules, rewards and incentives were seemingly simple: to thwart boredom, curtail sibling conflict, and encourage appropriate behavior. They also were used as tools to restore routine for the control during the school year. Mabel, a middle-class mother with a master’s degree, through her actions and sentiments demonstrates the influence of school on family life.

Mabel recently relocated with her two children from a west coast state to Grantville. Her son, Jemison, struggled in his previous school. Since moving to Grantville she has been very satisfied with the Grantville Area School District. Jemison’s previous school had furloughed days so she attributes much of his improved performance to a consistent, full five-day school structure. Since he has made significant progress in his 6th grade year, Mabel is concerned that summer break will lead to regression. This concern compounds because of a custody situation in which Jemison and his teenage sister are required to go visit their father for a five-week block over the summer. At the time of our first interview in the spring, her ex-husband was unemployed and itinerant, often living in locations without phone or Internet access.

In our discussion, she highlights her anxiety about the possibility of slippage in the accomplishments she had made with the children since their cross-country move one year ago. Prior to relocation, Mabel struggled with her ex-husband’s behavior that she perceived

as wholly irresponsible. Repeated issues of incomplete homework and failings to take the kids to out of school activities propelled Mabel to change their custody arrangement, which used to consist of some weeknights with their father to more time on weekends. I asked if she felt their father's consistent irresponsibility affected them at school. She is adamant that it did. In her response, Mabel outlines the importance of relationship building between teachers and student. She responds,

“Oh, it certainly did. And also because...there's a dynamic and if a child is not getting their, um, work done at school, it actually, it lowers the teacher's opinion of them. That's the other dynamic that happens. The teacher considers them a child unwilling to do their work as opposed to really understanding the context of the situation where they're not being allowed time to do what they need to do. Unfortunately once those dynamics are set in place, it is hard to undo that.”

In Chapter 3, I introduced the notion that advantages in cultural capital are often observed through what Lareau and Weininger (2003) refer to as micro-interactional practices.

Mabel's response underscores researcher's notions that cultural capital though extremely valued, is not taught directly taught in school. To Mabel, her ex-husband's irresponsibility was communicating a negative impression about her children's capabilities, not just in regard to their schoolwork, but about the peripheral qualities of a “good student” that have an effect on overall academic perception.

She goes on, “His father has different sets of rules [like screen time]...I'm concerned that where Jemison has been reading a lot of books here that he'll shift his downtime to watching t.v.” Shortly after our first conversation, she sends me a hopeful email about a request her daughter who is entering 10th grade has made, “We have obtained [her] reading

list and will be buying the books ahead of time for her to read at her dad's house this summer. I am going to see if we can do the same thing for Jemison.”

Later, during our summer interview that took place after the children had gotten home from their dads, she explains that most of her fears about their time apart were realized. She notes how the children did not accomplish any of the goals they had set.

“Basically every fear that I had about them going, [her ex-husband] put me through and then some. I think that it became, you know, it became work just for them to maintain a base level of living...and so doing anything extra, it just didn't happen...So just the necessities, you think, like showering – you know? Like figuring out...just kind of basic, ‘How am I going to get my clothes clean while I'm here and what do I need to do to make that happen?’ It's been – so we spent probably the first three weeks that they were back, so really, up until, like, a week or two ago just trying to get basic structures back down, like...‘Yes, you have to brush your teeth every night.’ You know? ‘No, you can't sleep until 1 o'clock in the afternoon.’...that's not appropriate. ‘You need to go into bed. No, you can't watch eight hours of TV in a day’...I mean, that was their life...We've been totally just trying to increase structure.”

To make matters worse, upon returning a close family member died suddenly forcing Mabel to leave town for another week leaving childcare responsibilities to a friend. In an effort to reverse some of the negative effects of both experiences, she rewards the kids for participation in school-like activities. In exchange, she allows extra screen time.

“...with things like requiring regular bedtime and, you know, requiring them getting up in the morning and we have, you know, they have to

read every night for a half hour. We don't care what you read, but you have to read something for half hour at night. We also – in the last week or two, started imposing more back-to-school stuff...like they're able to get extra computer time. They do the Khan Academy...it's a really awesome website that goes over math concepts and science concepts. It's like 10-minute videos that you need to do and practice. Actually, I haven't [been met with resistance]...I was really expecting to receive more or to come home to find out that it hasn't been done.”

She also encourages creative writing, games to increase typing skills and an incentive for physical fitness. “August is our marathon month. I am encouraging them to run 26 miles this month. I'm encouraging them to do one-mile each...I told them that we'd give them a dollar for every mile.”

Mabel's strategy for putting her children back on track was to utilize academic resources that help would help to restore balance as well as contribute to their overall as students. The description of her actions along with her reasoning serves as a reminder that the structure of formal education resonates through family life even when school is not in session. Mabel's decision to motivate her children with concrete, educational-based incentives she considers salubrious was common among middle-class mothers and some working-class mothers as well. For many, though, this reality was often more a function of theory than practice. In the next section of this chapter, I present findings that show how difficult it is to circle the square when it comes to out of school time learning.

Warding off Summer Learning Loss: Best Intentions Outdone

Despite best intentions, many middle-class and working-class mothers' aspirations to

lead school-like activities at home were unrealized. Only in some instances did mothers accomplish academic goals they set out for their children. As outlined in the previous section, Mabel's situation demonstrated how middle class mothers, especially when family life is unstable, turn to school-like activities to regain stability. Likewise, toward the end of the school year, faculty, staff and personnel turned to families for support in warding off summer learning loss. However, between and within schools, patterns of preparation for summer vacation were not consistent—including within the same community where children attended different schools.

Especially in Grantville and Watertown, as the school year drew to a close, school personnel were busy communicating the importance of school-like activity continuity to students and families. In Grantville, local librarians canvassed the district's many elementary schools hosting informational sessions on the summer reading program that took place in the physical library and online. The Continuing Education Department from Grant State sponsored a community summer camp fair. Two children involved in this study were identified for summer bridge programs – one for English as a Second Language and another for the districts Title I sponsored summer school. A math coordinator for Watertown Elementary sent home a math packet promising a pizza party if children returned the completed math packet at the beginning of the new school year. Mothers in Wheaton also received literature about the summer reading program from the town library. Still, during interviews, mothers cited a lack of interest in completing their academic goals and in observations learning packets were left untouched.

Summer learning loss as an education phenomenon was not entirely a new concept to the mothers who took part in this study. Some were directly aware of it or once I explained it, believed it was logically possible). Most acknowledged her child(ren) would

probably lose his or her pace of learning and possibly also experience regression during time away from school. Mary, working-class mom from Wheaton, reveals this fear in a journal entry when she says, “I know it will be about a 2 week transition...I hope it goes smoothly and that the kids don't get to [SIC] bored and whiney. I don't want to let them watch tv all day and loose everything they learned.”

Ideas combatting learning slides and ideas were often derived from interactions with teachers and staff. In both Grantville and Watertown, mothers received direct communication from school personnel directly citing the issue. Mothers in Wheaton also acknowledged summer learning loss as a possibility. Louise, a middle-class mom of four who lives in Watertown makes the following observation about the school’s efforts to curb SLL,

“Watertown Elementary is always very good at keeping kids academically challenged over the summer. They provided summer math packets and have scheduled days and times for the kids to participate in a summer reading program at their school library. My children will be participating in both. Benner Elementary sent home math worksheets and math game ideas. Plus, information on local book clubs thru the library and Barns N Nobles were given to the students. All of these activities are free. School encouraged safe playtime mixed with continued use of reading/math skills learned throughout the school year.”

Kids also received information. In an interview with 10-year old Kirsten from Grantville, she tells me how the principal of her school addressed the issue during an all-school assembly. “[She] said that if you read three books during the summer that are at your reading level, you will not lose what you’ve learned during the school year.” Hands down,

the number one message mother received in the context of summer learning loss was to continue with reading at home. Flori notes in her journal,

“Grantville library came to McKenna's elementary and gave a presentation on their Summer Reading Program. I heard from McKenna's teacher, librarian and suggesting ways to keep up their skills over the summer. The strongest message was to Read, Read, Read! They shared activities in the area to promote reading and gave Web sites with information on book lists and sites to maintain math skills.”

Mothers from Wheaton were least likely to cite her child's schools as source of information about combatting the loss and again. Elizabeth from Wheaton says, “I don't think the school necessarily prepared parents for summer break, they did send home the summer reading program papers from the library, which we did sign up for.” Toward the end of the summer, Mary from Wheaton received a welcome letter from her child's new teacher, but did not receive concrete instructions at the end of the school year.

Though many mothers in the study cited plans and precautions geared toward preventing summer learning loss, these activities were not given priority over family time, independent play, traveling, or skills building in activities like sports. Put another way, the overriding sentiments associated with out of school summer time were rarely put in terms of academic learning loss. Instead, the influence of school on the family, slowly but surely, drifted.

Other than pleasure or leisure reading, engagement in school-like activities at home was rare and almost entirely determined by the interest level of the child (For a memo regarding mothers' perceptions of “school-like” activities, see Appendix F, “Memo – the Worksheet Culture”). Many moms had plans to continue using worksheets or workbooks

like those they saw their children completing at school. Some purchased “bridge” books, other moms in the study stockpiled items sent home from school for the purpose of review and bookmarked special websites. Most mothers enrolled their children in a local summer reading program and many of the kids (but not all) continued reading throughout the course of the summer. Birdie, a single middle-class mother says, “Kirsten read A LOT. She participated in the summer reading program and continues to read. Some days she does not have enough books.” On an observation day, with Kit, Molly & Josephine, I accompanied the girls on a trip to the library and observed them interacting with library staff in order to exchange books and to rent movies. On another occasion, my field notes indicate that I ran into Martha, middle-class mother, at the Grantville Public Library, “I saw Martha with her son Jonathan today at the library. He was sitting at a table covered in tons of ‘pages logged’ tickets. The amount he had resembled what tickets might look like for receiving the highest score on an arcade game.”

Mothers cited a burgeoning interest in reading that occurred for their children over the summer. Here, they often noted that developmentally something seemed to “click” without any pressure or influence coming directly from them. Though this was especially common for middle class mothers, working-class and low-income mothers also understood the importance of keeping up with reading over the summer.

Edith, a low-income mom who works in food service on the campus of Grantville, shares with me her thoughts about maintaining her 8 year-old daughter’s reading habits over the summer. Nellie struggles with reading and is enrolled in the Title I reading program at school. Each night, they read together before bed. Edith monitors her progress closely and believes that soon, due to substantial improvement, she will no longer be eligible for the program. Though the two of them read together regularly, she struggles to find the time to

document the reading they do. Edith qualifies for a federal subsidy for Nellie to attend a day camp program at the same place where during the school year she does after school care. Because her time with Nellie at the end of the day is short, she has deferred some of Nellie's reading regimen to an employee at the day camp Nellie attends.

“They have something where if you read a certain amount of time each day and you write it down [you get a reward] but I don't have time for that. I told her, ‘I'm sorry, Janie,’...the teacher there. Ms. Janie she's really good. She told them that if they do...30 pages if you read 30 pages that gives you a privilege to do something. They have this Dance Dance Revolution so that's her thing so she does 30 pages and she does Dance Dance Revolution.”

In initial discussions about day-to-day routines, reading was the most commonly cited built-in activity for all who took part in the study. It was simply a part of the normal flow of family life despite differences in demographics. This finding coincides with U.S. Census Bureau data, which reports a steady increase in the rise of children being read to at home at least once a day and increases are most emphasized in families living in poverty (2011). During home visits, I observed books strewn on sofas, piled in corners, found among toys or art projects, and neatly placed on shelves or in baskets. According to mothers, despite capabilities for reading, in some cases children still requested being read to. In other cases, reading was a self-directed activity among children. Other school-like exercises were rare to observe, however, as I note in the following excerpt, I was able to capture some schoolwork in progress.

Today I went for my observation at Flori's. When I walked in the house, which is normally abuzz and cacophonous with neighborhood friends, music and kid games; it was so quiet I assumed [the baby] was napping and the

older two were out playing at a neighbor's house. After chatting for a bit, I say to Flori, 'Where are the kids?' She tells me they are in the other room doing some workbooks. Just then McKenna, a seven-year-old going into second grade, pops her head around the corner, leans out from where she is sitting just out of eyeshot. With a toothy, broad smile she says, "Hi, Miss Marcy!" Henry is sitting caddy corner in his own space also doing a worksheet. I congratulate him for doing his work and he proudly continues on in deep and earnest concentration. The kids are making use of the desks that Flori showed me at our first interview, which she got at a thrift shop for a bargain price. While I'm flipping through the book the worksheets were pulled from—a summer bridge review book—McKenna and Flori work on phonetically sounding out the word alligator...A little while later in the visit, McKenna breaks out a new book collection she received on loan from the public library. She and Flori share how impressed they were with the librarian who waited on them and found the books McKenna wanted through only a few key words.

The above field note demonstrates one middle-class family's commitment to the formal institution of school as they borrowed activities that mirror the ones children typically perform during the school year. Like many of the families in the study, families were "school-like" (Epstein, 2011), often quizzing children on their alphabet, colors and other academic standards that denote "readiness". Something else of greater importance is at play here as well—Flori has a background as an educator and has the wherewithal and skillset necessary to effectively help her children continue school-like activities over the summer. This set of credentials and experience was not the case for the majority of other participants

of this study and as a result, many struggled in efforts to “keep up” with schoolwork. Even Thelma, a well-educated teacher of the arts, conveys a sense of helplessness about her children’s language lessons. She says, “I wish they would have given packets for Chinese and Spanish...You're just off on your own for 10 weeks.” Still, in middle-class families, children had much more opportunity to exercise qualities important to the building of cultural capital—especially in the instance of camps, vacations and outings, which was the foremost way families showed distinction by way of social class.

Summer was not a time to endorse academic learning in a heavy-handed manner. In fact, most mothers took a passive, laissez-faire role in the monitoring of summer reading and though reading (mainly in the evenings) continued, many families lost the desire to write down or log numbers of pages read each in order to receive prizes from their respective programs. Michelle notes that her son’s elementary school opened once a week during the months of June and July and that though they intended to go, Bradey was resistant, wishing to spend his time elsewhere. In fact, upon setting up our planned observations, Bradey initially wanted to take me to the library, but when I get there, he is not interested in going and we watch a cartoon together instead. Though she cites her disappointment that they did not attend library days, throughout the course of the summer, Michelle did not press on school-like activities she wanted to do more with Bradey like reading and writing. Though she is frustrated, she rationalizes her permissiveness in a journal entry,

“...I was frustrated with how much time he spent watching TV. When he was watching it was either *Phineas and Ferb* or football. Phineas and Ferb is a creative, musical, funny cartoon. They use good vocabulary. The atmosphere is positive. And yes, football. Loads of football. I am hoping

that by watching football, he is coming to understand the game and have some good role models for his own interests and ‘career.’”

Much more so than working-class and low-income mothers, middle class mothers questioned the way that their children were spending his or her time. At one of my visits, my field notes indicate frustrations from Eleanor, directed toward her daughter’s gradual increase of idle time over more productive activities. Eleanor and I talk about Kit’s reading. She says that they are reading at night, but she is reading aloud to her in most cases. I say, ‘But you are not asking her to read?’ She concedes she is not. She explains that Kit’s desires right now are focused on spending time with the girls next door. Later, in a journal entry from Eleanor, again, she cites some agitation about Kit’s summer.

“Kit gained some independence from traveling with the Girl Scouts to Savannah and from going to sleep-away camp for a week. She did take part in a fairly involved science camp on campus also. At the same time, and especially during August, I’ve been feeling that she could have done a lot more: read more, practiced the violin more, learned more, etc. There were moments where I saw her making connections between her reading and play and life--for example, when I told her I planned to can a bunch of peaches, she said, "Oh, that's what they did in the 1930s..." which she knew because of reading and watching a film about...her American Girl doll. Or, when we were watching the film HUGO, after she'd read the book, she was interested in thinking about when the action was taking place, picking up cues from

fashion and so forth. When the station inspector mentioned that he had been injured in the war, she said, "That was World War I, right?"

Both Michelle and Eleanor's responses demonstrate how children "flex" their levels of agency during the summer. Many children refused their mothers invitations to work on school-like activities and mothers did not campaign. Reading was a regular and valued family activity and though it continued over the summer somewhat, mothers often cited disappointment in the actual amount. In general, other subject areas, got even less attention.

Diane, a middle-class mother says,

"In terms of skills, they both made of a lot of progress with swimming...Other skills that are more school-based received less attention. They did very little reading and except when we would occasionally include math in conversations, they did very little math.

We did a little writing with my older son as he learned how to write email messages but that was basically the extent of it."

During our spring interview, most mothers were conscious of keeping summer learning loss at bay and many had developed strategies in this effort. Lucy, a middle-class mother who worked out of the home all day and left most of her childcare needs up to her 13-year old daughter, made a list of chores for her children to earn allowance and included reading as an option next to menial household jobs. Many also planned ways for their children to write in journals. Mary, a working-class mother, intended to do math lessons for her children throughout the summer. In reality, though, few mothers accomplished the level of engagement in at-home school-like activities as they had hoped. Thelma explains in our first interview,

“Yes...I do think it's important to have them do a little bit of math work...we are reading to them at bedtime anyway...and the summer reading program is at the library and is really helpful because it encourages them to read because they get specific prizes as they go along so that's great to have...I do think it's important.”

Later in the interview, she also notes how she pulled out worksheets from her children's language lessons in Chinese and Spanish in preparation for regular review, yet reviews did not happen. Later in the summer, during an interview she shares her thoughts about her progress on school-like activities at home, “I know that there is online stuff for Chinese and Spanish and I actually contacted the teacher and then I never did anything with it.”

Sentiments like this were shared by many of the mothers in the study who had good intentions but got caught up in other activities and the non-structured reality of summer.

One example was demonstrated during a conversation I had with Mary at her home where we discussed the reason why her goal of completing math lessons on a regular basis was not accomplished. Her 11-year old daughter, Julie, is sitting in on the interview listening. She chimes in to offer her thoughts as well.

MM: How's it been going with school-type stuff? Have you guys been doing anything other than reading this summer?

Julie: I've been reading.

Mary: Yeah...he's been reading some, but like we planned on doing math.

Julie: Like a little math class – like math classes.

Mary: No, that didn't happen. [Chuckles]

Julie: Yeah.

Mary: But now we feel like – they're feeling kind of the pressure. He just got a letter from his teaching saying, it really will help you if you know your multiplication, times, tables.

MM: Oh.

Mary: And he's like, just panic. And I said, 'Okay, we're kind of gonna work on it. I know we were going to work on it all summer and didn't, but we'll get – we'll do it now.' Because you just forget about it.

MM: Is it that you get it into your routine and then it is just there's no time for it?

Mary: Yup.

MM: It's not a priority anymore?

Mary: No. Because the school is not making you do it.

Julie: I wanted to get my math – my multiplication done and then if I get my multiplication down, then I know my division. Then, like, I've been like – I can't do multiplication in my head like the – like 8 times 7, I don't even know that like right off the head. I have to have a piece of paper, a pencil.

Mary: What's 7 times 7?

Julie: 42? 46?

Mary: No.

Julie: 49?

Mary: Yup.

Julie: Okay.

The above exchange between Mary and Julie effectively highlights seasonal research findings that stress how procedural subjects like math are particularly vulnerable to atrophy (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson, 2001, 2000; Entwistle & Alexander, 1992; Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Heyns, 1978; Borman, Goetz, & Maritza Dowling, 2009; Burkham,

Ready, Lee & LoGerfo, 2004). But more importantly, it also revealed how mothers, though knowledgeable about summer learning loss, do not always take action against it.

When children did participate in school-like activities, most of the time mothers did not take credit for leading these efforts. Children who kept up with school-like work during the summer were those who possessed a desire to do so. As outlined in the above example of Flori's efforts with McKenna and Henry, in order for school-like work to take place in families, children themselves had to show willingness. Many mothers in the study cited a general rebuff of their efforts to do school-like work with their children.

In general, as summer wore on, mothers described how children expressed agency often choosing activities that to mothers, resembled idleness. Chin and Phillips (2004) note how during the summer, children refuse activities that build traditional cultural capital like museums, reading, or "elite vacations" (p. 187) in favor of activities related to popular culture like cartoons and computer games. Researchers argue that this resistance to "adult-sanctioned" (p. 187) activities means that a middle-class background is not a given for social reproduction or intergenerational during the summer (Chin and Phillips, 2004).

During the course of her work on family life Lareau (2002) notes, "...there were significant differences in temperament and disposition among children in the same family. These variations are useful reminders that social class is not fully a determinant of the character of children's lives" (p. 766). In the study presented here, mothers often discussed levels of interest in learning and engagement in the context of each child's personality type. In my spring interview with Birdie, middle-class mother of two girls, I ask how she is feeling about upcoming summer months away from school. She uses her two daughters' unique dispositions as a backdrop to her response,

“Well, my girls are two totally different people. So my 17-year-old she'd rather be a slug and she's always been a slug in the summer so she loses more than my 9-year-old who always wants to do camps. [My 9 year old] reads a lot and she will not watch TV. She wants to learn about something so we look it up on the Internet or we get books...so I can't answer your question with just grouping both of them together because they are so different.”

Almost always, mothers with more than one child discussed each separately. Within the same family, one child may have excelled in school while another needed learning support. Despite being nurtured in the same environments, children displayed a variety of interests and motivations. In a visit to Jackie's, a working-class mother who homeschools her children, I observe nine-year old Ruthie in her room engrossed in a book for the length of my visit while her siblings bounce between inside and outside the house uncertain of how to spend their time. In the home of Lucy, mother of three from the western Pacific region, her 7-year-old daughter Addy is watching television while 13-year old Mae reads a Harry Potter book in the background. Emily, a middle-class mother fields her 11-year-old son's questions about an upcoming book series while her 4-year old plays on the computer with the help of his father. These examples show how the minutia of daily life in each family differed from home-to-home. Often children living under the same roof were observed partaking in activities that would, by some standards, be considered more advantageous than that chosen by their sibling (i.e. reading vs. playing video games).

Summary

It is out of the scope of this study to define “learning”, judge quality of programs, or to evaluate progress or regression of the children of study participants. Rather, the findings

in this study highlight how demographic complexities and relevant minutia of family life affect summer out of school time practices. However, it is clear that mothers in this study find themselves at the helm of responsibility for their children's summer learning. At the outset of this chapter, I introduced sub-research questions related to mothers' knowledge of summer learning loss, how they were prepared for summer out of school time and then inquired about how their own preparedness took shape.

Across the board, mothers took notice of end of the school year changes spurred by a gradually distancing of school life on the home. This notion endorses a kind of school year-to-summer limbo where the allocated school day remains the same, but where schools change their focus from one centered on the student to one more inclined to endorse the social construction of the "child." This noticeable change prompts middle class mothers and working-class mothers to set expectations high for the fruitful possibility of learning that might take shape outside of "brick and mortar" schools. Working-class mothers cited feelings of frustration that often lead to a sense of inadequacy about their abilities to provide an enriching summer to their children. This is particularly true in Grantville where the common convention is to send children to popular high-quality summer camps and programs. Though they expressed high aspirations for a productive summer for their children, working-class mothers were constrained by a number of lifestyle circumstances. These constraints often affected their preparations for out of school summer time.

In terms of preparedness and the reality of such preparations, middle class mothers demonstrated the most amounts of structure and control over their children's time. They often went to great lengths to design rewards and incentives they believed would both enhance their child's out of school summer time and keep children occupied. When instability was detected, participation in school-like activities was often introduced as a way

of reclaiming focus. However, though most mothers cited awareness about summer learning slides, goals related to continuity and practice of the skills learned during the school year was not met. Mothers attribute this finding to a number of reasons including: lack of forced accountability from schools, more interest in spending time on other, less traditional means of learning, and children's temperaments and dispositions.

Chapter 6: The Purposes and Meanings Mothers Ascribe to Summer Vacation

Introduction

“When a kid grows up and looks back on his childhood...does he remember all the things from school or the material things he had gotten? Maybe, but the things that stick with kids the most is experiences. Summer gives kids time to have experiences and grow in their independence. I know I often think about to my childhood I never really got one. I was pretty much on my own from the age of 10 when my mom got married to my step dad, I continued living with my grandparents. Finn and I had this talk today, when I was his age I was cleaning the house and doing laundry, the only thing I ask him to do is let the dogs up and make his bed, the rest of the time he is free to be himself and do things he enjoys, this is what I want him to remember when he looks back on his childhood, all the fun things he got to experience. I don't want him to ever be afraid to try new things and be independent.”

(Elizabeth, Low-Income, Mother of Two, Wheaton)

In the journal passage above, Elizabeth, summarizes many of the perspectives of summer vacation of other study participants—including mothers with starkly contrasting backgrounds and more advantageous life circumstances. In this chapter, I discuss how mothers, regardless of social class and community context, are unified by a philosophical belief that a child’s childhood is enhanced because of summer vacation. Generational echoes (i.e. mothers own personal summer experiences) and opportunities for independent growth outside of school underscore this finding.

Elizabeth is a non-traditional student who is two semesters away from finishing her Associate’s Degree in a field related to criminology. As a resident of Wheaton, a struggling

working-class community, she drives approximately 30 minutes to the college nearest to her—a branch campus of a public state school. On days when she has class and her 8-year old son Finn does not have school, he attends alongside her because she cannot afford to pay a sitter and she has no family support nearby. When I ask her how Finn occupies himself during her classes, she says with a laugh, “He takes notes.” She recently gave birth to another baby, Sylvie, prompting her to ask for special permission from professors at the university to do most of her schoolwork remotely since she cannot afford daycare, especially for an infant, which comes at a higher cost than daycare for a toddler. She stays active in school and has been invited by her professors to assist them in research. An avid reader, she enjoys driving to a small city about 40 miles away to shop at a large chain bookstore. Along the walls of the living room are two built-in arts and crafts style bookcases filled with hardcopy books of both popular and lesser-known titles. In the upstairs of the well kept home, she has painted each of the kids’ rooms with a distinct theme. Finn’s room is painted in dark blue and an army green color that meshes well with his interest in the military. Sylvie’s room is more intricate with whimsical floor to ceiling stripes in bright red and light pink hues.

Her husband and father to Sylvie, Tai, manages a hardware store about 15 miles away in a neighboring community. With an annual income hovering around \$35,000/year, the children qualify for public healthcare assistance. Though Elizabeth does not mind staying home, money is commonly cited as a reason for limiting outside of the home activities. For example, she was invited to attend an out of state event, but the cost of tolls alone prevented her attendance. At one point during the study, Elizabeth picked up an early morning shift at a local correction facility prepping food in the kitchen. The job was short-lived because the supervisor was unhappy with her inflexible schedule. She looks for other ways to make ends

meet like babysitting and using her sewing and craft skills to “upcycle” empty baby wipe boxes, transforming them by hand into fabric-covered troves in cheerful colors and patterns embellished by ribbons and buttons. She has designed a special one for Finn, which he uses as a pencil box at school.

Though she supports Finn with his schoolwork and encourages him to behave and do well in school, she equally embraces summer as a time for Finn to grow without the influence of school. Unlike many other mothers who participated in the study, her child does not have a cadre of activities that comprise a busy schedule nor does she worry herself about entertaining Finn during his summer out of school time (SOST). Still, Elizabeth articulates a philosophy of summertime childrearing that had common threads to many other mothers in the study and her sentiments in the journal entry above precisely outline the major themes of this chapter.

Previously, in Chapter 5, I presented a number of findings about the intersection of schools, family life and summer vacation. I showed how as the school year winds down mothers noted palpable changes at home creating a school year-to-summer limbo that shows a gradual distancing of decision-making between families and schools. I find this limbo affects expectations of middle-class and working-class mothers most as they design and attempt to construct productive summer vacations for their kids. However, for working-class moms, an inability to achieve a conventionally “good” summer vacation is frustrating and causes feelings of inadequacy, especially in a town like Grantville where opportunities are plentiful but logistically and financially unattainable. Like Elizabeth, other low-income mothers were less inclined to create measurable expectations, often indicating they simply wanted their children to relax and gain a break from school.

In Chapter 5, I also introduced preparations and strategies mothers employed during out of school summer time. Almost exclusively, middle-class mothers planned far in advance of their child's summer vacations. They also frequently used rewards and incentives as a buffer against unstructured days and an overabundance of free time. When middle-class mothers perceived an incurrence of untoward effects as the result of time off, they often borrow from school-like activities to reign in untamed schedules. Finally, I explained how, despite mothers' knowing about summer learning loss as a phenomenon, middle-class and working-class mothers' good intentions for carrying out school-like activities were outdone by a slow, but steady drift between the home and school. Here, I introduced findings that children who showed interest or initiated school-like activities were those most likely to continue academic-based activities.

The key elements presented in Chapter 5 are important to bear in mind because while these findings demonstrate strategies and differences among mothers based on SES and community context, they also shape a broader pathway for understanding the larger role of summer in family life according to social class standing. In Chapter 6, then, I turn my attention to the way in which mothers assign purposes and meanings about summer vacation based on their worldviews. I argue that despite differences in social class backgrounds and community context that mothers' thoughts and feelings about summer vacation converge into a common philosophy of summertime childrearing.

In my overarching research question for this study I asked: How do mothers in different communities and of varying social class backgrounds experience and negotiate their children's academic summer vacation? In Chapter 5, I was concerned with outside sources of influence affecting mothers SOST strategies (i.e. school personnel, communities and SES). In this chapter, I continue to winnow away at my overarching research question by

now shifting focus *from specific outside sources of influence* to the more philosophical ones that represent the *purpose and meaning* mothers assign to summer vacation in the larger schematic of family life. Therefore, findings in this chapter are dedicated to answering my next set of sub-research questions:

Sub-RQ2: How do mothers of varying social class backgrounds characterize the purpose of their child's summer vacation; and where does summer vacation "fit" into family life?

In answering these questions, I find distinct themes that dovetail, creating a common philosophy of summertime for childrearing. As I presented in Chapter 5, I find a number of differences in SOST planning, expectations and strategies among mothers of varying social classes. In Chapter 7, I will again show patterns for how mothers leverage their middle-class circumstance more readily than others and as a result, fit more classically into childrearing patterns proven to have intergenerational advantages. Here though I argue that the majority of differences between mothers (i.e. resource exposure, forms of capital, etc.) are offset by a variety of shared ideals. Put another way, study participants, despite variations in life circumstances (i.e. "rich" vs. "poor"; affluent community vs. disadvantaged), pull from similar frames of reference and worldviews creating a common construction for what is the "purpose of summer" and how it "fits" in the broader schematic of family life. This common frame of reference unifies mothers as they experience their child's summer out of school time. Findings are organized into the following chapter sections:

1. **Common Philosophies of Summertime Childrearing** – In this chapter section, I introduce how mothers', though different in life backgrounds and current social class position, communicated a common philosophy of summertime childrearing. This philosophy was forged by their personal experiences and a desire for their

children to grow independently outside of “brick and mortar” institutions. Together, these act as conduits for a philosophy that is further bound by the point of view that summer marks an uncompromising time in a child’s childhood. Even when mothers felt serious reservations and anxieties for summer, feelings were often suppressed in favor of a hopeful optimism enabled by the break.

2. How Generational Echoes of Summer Affect Mothers’ Present Points of View – Mothers commonly regarded summer vacation as formative in two ways: to their own childhood and to their child(ren)’s childhood. Mothers cite residual experiences frequently as they contemplate where summer fits into the broader spectrum of family life. Some mothers look back on their summer experiences with fondness. Middle-class mothers who experienced upward mobility, working-class and low-income mothers hoped to learn from their less fortunate experiences and instead provide a different, more positive summer experience for their own kids. Still others cite a number of ambivalent feelings as they reconcile their own experiences with the present societal conventions of what it means to experience a contemporary social construction of “summer”.

3. “Chalk Towns” and “Three Points of Contact”: Mothers’ Perceptions of Outside of School Growth – Mothers place clear values on the flexible schedules and dynamic structure of daily life enabled by summer. Many mothers cited that activities related to independence, exploration and building of identity were more readily

available during the summer than during the school year. Across all social classes, mothers cite appreciation for school routines and the overall mission of school, but many feel summer vacation provides a welcome break from the academic and social pressures faced during the school year. However, though mothers have high hopes for exploration and personal growth, as summer wears on, mothers sense that summer vacation has shortcomings. In the end, many mothers gladly re-welcome the routines of school back into family life demonstrating many issues related to balance and contradictions of motherhood.

A Common Philosophy of Summertime Childrearing

Despite variations in the immediate realities and contexts of their own lives, mothers were more alike than different in the articulation of their SOST values and ideals, which created a common philosophy of summertime childrearing among them. Participants of this study, mothers of children who experienced a 10 to 12 week summer break from school, were located in one of three communities located within a 65-mile radius of one another. Borrowing from a traditional European model for social class distinctions, each was categorized either as middle-class, working-class or low-income. Still, despite differences in contexts contributing to varying levels of exposure to opportunities for their children to learn and play, all mothers in the study acquiesced to their child's school break. In the use of acquiesce, I mean that no mothers in the study had ever participated in measures to change their child's school calendar and they were not mobilizing or participating in efforts to do so.

As I presented in Chapter 5, for middle-class and working-class mothers the transition from school to summer caused the most sense of vacillation about newfound responsibilities as a result of summer vacation. More so than anxieties, low-income mothers expressed optimism from the benefits of summer. Many mothers in the study talked of the inconveniences related to logistical matters like financial hardships and inconvenienced schedules and emotional ones like feelings of inadequacy. Academically, many cited a level of concern for the learning losses that would inevitably follow as a result of time off. Still, during spring interviews and into summer, complaints were minimal as reservations about summer were quickly disregarded in favor of a hopeful optimism grounded in the possibilities afforded by time away from school.

Diane, a middle-class mother of two from Grantville, who early on cites ambivalent feelings about the break, later decides to describe the unstructured time as a gift. In a journal entry written midsummer, she notes,

“I’ve also been thinking a lot about the gift of unstructured time. When the summer began, huge stretches of unstructured time seemed like the opposite of a gift. It seemed like the recipe for family distress and general irritation. However, as time goes by, I’ve noticed that my sons are adapting to this unstructured time and learning to play with each other for longer periods.”

Thelma, mother of three, is an instructor for the arts who owns her own business. Apart from teaching a weeklong summer camp, her work schedule is less restrictive over the summer than during the school year. In one of our meetings, she light-heartedly hands me a comic strip.

The comic depicts a stressed and harried mother coming to grips with her children's upcoming summer vacation. Thelma compares the cartoon to her initial reaction to reading the recruitment flyer for my research study (Found in Appendix L2). "[My thoughts about summer vacation are] When will it be over?" However, by the time we reach our second interview she says,

"It's funny because at first when I learned you were doing this study, I was like 'Oh no, summer is so awful, all the kids are home', but after we talked the first time, I started thinking, you know, I am really looking forward to this. I enjoy trying to find activities my children will like and walking around downtown to farmer's markets and things like that."

Maggie, a working-class mother of two, who works part-time cleaning houses, expresses similar sentiments as she both mentally and strategically braces herself for some long summer days.

"I am concerned that we will get lazy and watch too much TV and have too much wii time. Over the past week I've thought to myself, what on Earth are we going to do all summer long? I want to keep Bill busy and challenge his mind to continue learning and using the skills he's [SIC] already knows."

But in an email to me just a few days later she highlights a bright side of summer vacation inspired by a family outing. She says,

"I am loving looking at the ways the boys are learning this summer. While driving around [a local mountain range] we saw two different snakes (snakes were on the road and we were in the car but we stopped and looked out the window). One was a rattle snake. This was the first time the boys saw one

in real-life. Great teaching moment for being safe and educated about wildlife. While on a hike at [a State Forest] we talked about stagnant water vs. fresh water and the habitats they create for animals. Bill is learning so much by experiencing the world around him.”

As the school year drew to a close, especially for middle-class and working-class mothers, uncertainties about free time and general levels of anxiety were heightened, but ultimately, fears were exchanged in favor of philosophical beliefs leaning more toward the positive prospects of summer vacation. These philosophies are reflected in a core belief in summer as an uncompromising vicissitude in the grander scheme of a child’s childhood and construction of family life.

For middle-class mothers, summer enabled an opportunity for them to express agency in their child’s life. They appropriated experiences from their own childhoods as a means of creating and enhancing their own child’s childhood. I introduced two broader themes that act as conduits for a child’s childhood that together forge a common philosophy of summertime childrearing. However, plans for how to spend constructive time were often foiled by kids expressing their own and in most cases, a more powerful form of agency. In Figure 8, I coalesce mothers’ generational echoes with their present day values about independent growth outside of school and align it with the core belief of summer as a time to enhance a child’s childhood.

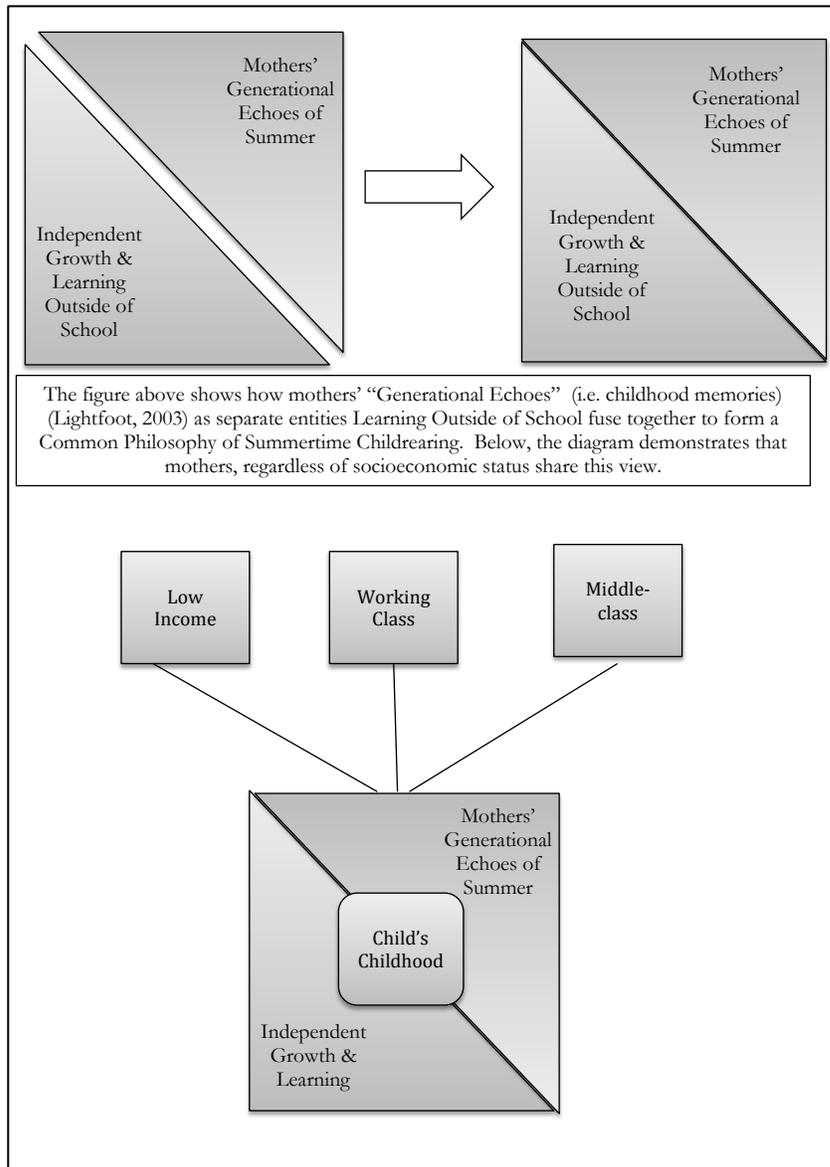


Figure 8: Common Philosophy of Summertime Childrearing

In the next two sections of this chapter, I demonstrate that when assigning purpose and meaning to summer vacation, a pattern quickly developed among mothers that summer vacation bookmarks an important “life place”. First, I align mothers’ present day summertime decisions with her SOST experiences.

“Generational Echoes” of Summer: A Reconciliation of Mothers’ Childhoods with their Child’s Childhood

All mothers I interviewed situated perspectives of their child’s contemporary summer out of school time among their own historical, personal life experiences. Each mother, even those not schooled in the United States, participated in an academic summer vacation of similar length to the one experienced by their children. In other words, each mother’s summer out of school time was also a byproduct of formal schooling rituals capable of producing intergenerational effects. In fact, most mothers found it difficult to disentangle their own experiences from the decisions they made about their children’s summer out of school time.

In this section, I discuss the gravity of mothers’ own personal experiences of summer out of school time and the way these experiences shape their points of view about the role of summer in their child’s childhood. Though no mother’s experience was identical to another in the study, (memories had both positive or negative repercussions), it was clear that mothers did draw heavily from their own personal experiences when assigning present day meaning and purpose to summer out of school time. Saturation on this point was reached early on as mothers, regardless of social class, frequently used terms like, “When I was a kid...” or “When I was [my son or daughter’s age] I was expected to...” and “Things are not the same as when I was a kid...”.

In her book *The Essential Conversation*, Lightfoot (2003) uses the phrase “generational echoes” to describe the complex and often emotional nature of parent-teacher conferences. Lightfoot (2003) talks of the residual school feelings parents often carry over into their child’s school experiences. Since mothers in this study also had an agrarian school calendar similar to that of her children, they experienced generational echoes in a different context than the one referenced by Lightfoot (2003), but the effects are the same. Here I find that

either positive or negative generational echoes merge with mothers' strategies and at times create sustentative narratives about summer vacation. Many mothers had positive experiences that translated into a carryover of traditions and memory making.

One case was Rosalyn, a middle-class mother originally from Latin America but currently lives in Grantville. She looks back on her summer out of school time fondly. As we sit on her small front porch chatting while her two daughters play in the background, she expresses happiness that her children share a similar experience of a relaxed summer to the one she had while growing up. She is especially gratified by all of the neighborhood interplay that takes place on her street. She says,

“I mean, it reminds me of my childhood, we grew up the same. We had lots of neighbors and we were spending time in each other's houses. In winter, we rarely see anybody. I loved summer. I played outside for hours with the kids in my neighborhood. I don't know what those kids are doing now, but still I loved it.”

Like Rosalyn, many mothers looked back on their summers with affection—periods of personal growth and bonding, a middle-class mother says,

“As a child, I remember growing a lot during summer. I learned how to swim, how to bike, and how to run like the wind. I went to overnight camps and learned how to not be so afraid. I wrote my own "novels" and called myself a writer. I spent a lot of time with my sister. I went on all kind of adventures with my family-- mom, dad, and sister. Given how much time we spent together, it is not surprising that these family members continue to be the people I feel close to.”

Especially for the middle-class mothers who experienced upward mobility, summer becomes a special space for moms to impart on their children a sense of value they might otherwise take for granted. Flori and Louisa, both middle-class mothers, exemplify this point. In her book *Unequal Childhoods* Lareau states how, “In popular language, middle-class children can be said to have been “born on third base, but believe they hit a triple.” This is not the case for Flori and Louisa, who have both experienced upward mobility.

The responses of these women consistently demonstrated how they did not take for granted their social status and they engrain a sense of value in their children by demanding that they go to college and that they appreciate their lifestyle. Flori is a middle-class mother who grew up in a nearby community known for white rural poverty and lack of opportunity. She says, “I always had a good sense growing up that we didn’t have a lot of money. I don’t know that my children get that sense of need.” When talking about their summer activities agenda, she often primes responses with a genuine tone and terms reflecting gratefulness like, “We’re really fortunate...” or “We’re lucky to...” In one journal entry, she notes, “I know I am blessed to have been able to be home with them every day to plan and enjoy these experiences with them. We are also blessed to live in a community with a multitude of opportunities...” She describes how her parents worked hard to put her through college. When I ask her expectations for her three children’s higher education prospects, she quickly responds, “They’re going!” Shortly after, she laughs, “Well, I mean, that’s the hope they will. We are planning for that.”

Louisa, also a middle-class mother who experienced upward mobility, does not take for granted her current social class position and the opportunities that such a lifestyle affords her children. Like Flori she is determined to send each of her four children to college

because she never had the opportunity. Conscientious of her upbringing, she contrasts her summer vacation to the one experienced by her children. In her journal, she notes,

“I will always remember the ‘one’ vacation we took as a family when I was a child. We went to Ocean City, and stayed at a ‘motel’, not a ‘hotel’. I can remember thinking that was funny. That trip was very special to us, because we did not have much money, and it was huge for us to go to the beach. It makes me very thankful every time we are able to provide a vacation for our children. I hope that they will take these memories, both good and bad, and use them as life lessons...”

In addition to Louisa’s journal entry reflection of her social background growing up, she is also rekindling meaningful summertime memories. Like her, most mothers had concrete summertime memories to share and they believed these experiences played a role in the building of their own characters. Life lessons, like those cited by Louisa, were considered one of the great benefits to summer. Still, in general, many were conflicted by a reconciliation of their own personal experiences matched with the expectations of contemporary summer cultures. Eleanor questions the notion that summer *is* a time for regression as she boldly begs the question, “Is summer a time of regression? Who benefits from this idea? Parents or kids?” In a separate journal entry she goes on,

“When I was young, my parents (who both grew up on farms in Amish and conservative Mennonite homes) maintained enormous gardens on a couple of acres on the edge of a small town in Western PA, although my dad worked in a 9-5 job in a corporate research lab. Summers were devoted to growing and preserving food. We did sometimes go to a state park nearby to swim--in late afternoon or with a picnic in the evening--and I did play with

neighborhood friends sometimes. For one week, I attended a church sleep-over camp. For several weeks, I was shipped back to family farms, where I helped in small ways--fed animals, helped preserve food, etc. Generally, summers were industrious, busy times. And as I recall it--pulling weeds, picking and husking hundreds of ears of corn, canning endless quarts of tomato juice or spaghetti sauce, or pints of jam--we all worked with the grown-ups.”

Now, as an academic, I see summer as a time to think, read, write. A time when I might get a little space in my mind to serve my own work, apart from the year when most of my energy is spent nurturing the thoughts of my students. I am ‘putting up’ ideas like all those jars of peaches. I've struggled to think about what role summer should play for my daughter, who is surrounded by the contemporary culture of day camps and idleness.”

For Eleanor, a middle-class mother, stark is the juxtaposition between her own pragmatic summer experiences and that of her 11-year old daughter, who plans to attend a variety of camps, travels out of town frequently and also has plenty of downtime to fraternize with neighbors during her time away from school. The gravity of this reality resonates and causes a distinct feeling of discomfort for Eleanor. In a separate journal entry, of this juxtaposition she writes, “That life seems far from the ways our children play and attend camps that appear to be educational, but are really designed to keep kids safe and occupied while their parents work.”

Kit, Eleanor’s daughter, participates in activities that reflect her mothers’ history. She spends time with family members on an out of town farm tending to animals and riding in a horse and buggy. She helps her mother in the canning of food. Still, these activities are

born more out of tradition and enrichment than they are out of expectation or inherent responsibility as a family member. Like Eleanor, conflicting feelings about residual childhood experiences were not uncommon for other mothers to express.

Mary, a working-class mother who currently resides in Wheaton and also grew up there, communicates wounding SOST experiences. In an interview, she talked about walking alone a busy road collecting cans in order to earn money for an annual village carnival. She accompanied her impatient father on roofing jobs, picking up the nail-spiked shingles as they fell to the ground and placed them in trash bags. Summer, for Mary, was not a happy time. In a journal entry, she reflects on how her personal SOST experience had an effect to her own at-risk behaviors later in life. She says,

“When I was young my father worked night shift. In the summer this meant that I had to be very quiet if I wanted to stay in our house to play for the day. For the most part, I chose to play outside all day either in my own yard or at a friends [SIC] house down the road. These were better choices than staying in and being hushed and yelled at all day to be quiet. Being a mother now makes me ask questions like: "how could my mom not have cared enough about me to provide a better summer for me?", "Did my mom even care where I was all day and who I was interacting with?", "How could she let my friends mom be responsible for my safety so many days without feeling guilty?". These are just some of the questions I can't believe never crossed my parents minds...My friends parents did make sure I was safe and fed. They took me swimming and on picnics. Fishing and campfires with sleepovers too!...My parents on the other hand set themselves up for me resenting them and not respecting them. I didn't feel like I belonged...I

started at a young age to be very, very sad. This turned into depression, which later lead me to drinking and drugs. All of my choices, I take responsibility for. I feel that with more attention from my parents and more acceptance and consideration, things may have been better for me.”

As demonstrated in Mary’s response, not all generational echoes of summer out of school time are rosy. In the next chapter, I explore more how working-class mothers’ negative life experiences affect mothering strategies—sometimes coloring them with cynicism. Here, though, the reconciliation of her past summer out of school time propels Mary to work tirelessly to provide her children with what she perceives as a healthy childhood—one which will put them on a different life course than her own. For all mothers, summer was a window of opportunity to hone in on their child’s childhood.

Since Arie’s *Centuries of Childhood* was released in 1962, the social construction of childhood has gained immense popularity in the field of sociology. During the course of my interviews with mothers, it became clear that each mother had in common with the next a deep desire to provide what they considered exceptional summers for their kids. To many mothers, summer seemed to epitomize a time for “a kid to be a kid” whereas when school was in session, opportunities to exercise childlike behavior were somewhat suppressed by the discipline and routine of school.

In the next chapter section, I introduce evidence that many mothers feel summer vacation serves as antidote to the toll of school. I show that mothers embrace and value summer as a time for a child’s childhood to grow and flourish. In fact, about halfway through the course of the study, focus on the child’s childhood became the overriding sentiment from nearly all mothers in the study.

Without question, in the grand scheme of a child's childhood, mothers placed summer on a pedestal. This finding came to the fore about halfway through stage two of data collection (during the midsummer interview) and as my ongoing analysis was taking place (See coding schemas in Appendix J). As I was nearly complete with my second set of interviews with all mothers, I wanted to learn more about how my critical cases defined childhood and where they thought summer might fit into the schematic of a child's childhood. To this end, I sent a journal prompt to mothers making childhood, the focus for that week (See mothers' journal prompts in Appendix I).

Many mothers found the question challenging. In a discussion later with Flori, she brings up the difficult nature of the prompt. She jokes, "When I read that one, I was like 'Wow. Deep thoughts by Marcy.'" However, reflections by these critical cases were strong and ultimately, much like during interviews, mothers' responses showed only minor variations between one another. See Appendix M, "Excerpts: Mothers' Responses".

Mothers consistently endorsed current social constructions of childhood that present children's lives as separate and distinct from that of adults (Corsaro, 2011; Aries, 1962). Many mothers' described childhood as a fleeting window. Summer was a way of isolating this timeframe and for many that meant allowing freedom of expression without school getting in the way.

In the next chapter section, I introduce findings dedicated to personal growth in action. I also include how mothers viewed summer out of school time as remedy for the demands of school. To be sure, at times summer did enable creativity and innovation. Yet, many mothers in the study struggled to balance their child's exercising of agency with their own desires to affect it. Imbalances between perceived productive versus non-productive free time left almost all moms to pine for the structure imposed by school.

“Chalk Town” and “Three Points of Contact”: Mothers’ Perceptions of Life Skills and Outside of School Growth

Upon arriving at Louisa’s this afternoon for our interview, I see her daughters Molly and Josephine along with Kit from next door [all who participate in the study] busy with what seems like a simple occasion of sidewalk chalk drawing. But as I get closer, the makings of a miniature village drawn from the chalk comes into focus. The girls have used almost all the space of the flat, blacktop as an artist’s canvas to create what they declare as a “Chalk Town”. About 15’ x 12’ feet in size, one-dimensional drawings of buildings fashioned in bright hues of pink, blue and yellow make the carefully constructed details of the town nearly three-dimensional. It resembles a classic illustration one might find in a storybook of a village center one might describe as quaint. Threaded between a post office, school, stores and a variety of other business buildings and residential homes are roads and sidewalks. Molly and Kit are crouched down poring over the details of their respective building projects while Julie is on her scooter “running errands” between the flat structures. As I’m leaving to go into the house to find Louisa, we all agree what a shame it would be to have an afternoon thunderstorm today.

Imaginary play, building of identity, and problem-solving skills obtained through kid games and hands-on activities—like those captured in my “Chalk Town” field notes above—served as a main objective and focal point of summer for many mothers who participated in this study. In Chapter 5, I noted the way in which mothers often planned for school-like activities, but rarely followed through on their goals (i.e. math lessons, writing and language arts). In this chapter section, I demonstrate how mothers embrace summer out of school

time as a time for a child to build important life skills through play as well as a general “reframe” of learning by doing. However, mothers, for all of their enthusiasm toward less structured learning and exploration at the beginning of the study, toward the end of the summer, began to convey some untoward effects like agitation, annoyance and unhealthy choices in time spent. Before discussing this, however, I share some moments where learning through fun and play were caught in action. I also outline mothers’ perceptions of the value of these types of experiences.

Independent learning outside of school dovetails well with the previous section in this chapter, which discussed the comingling of mothers’ memories of childhood with beliefs that summer could shape childhood. Where in the first section I thought it important to demonstrate the philosophical underpinnings to mothers’ thoughts and feelings about how past summers inform present, decisions, here, I aim to show how much mothers place stock in independent growth without the social force of school dictating family life.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, mothers were not terribly bothered by concerns of academic summer slides. Rather, the vast majority characterized summer as a time *NOT* for lateral development but as a key time for upward personal growth. Simply put, mothers believed in the power and empowerment of exploration enabled by time off. Learning to swim, cook and navigate directions alone on bikes were just some of the life skills mothers considered deeply beneficial to their children and summer was the time to exercise such exploration. This finding was not dependent on social class. However, I will discuss more in the next chapter how working-class and low-income mothers worried more about their child’s general safety while exploring. This often held their children back from achieving the levels of exploration experienced by middle-class kids. However, for most, without school routines to dictate time, mothers believed their children gained practical skills and life lessons

through the course of play and independent learning. Many mothers cited the rigidity of school as an inconvenience to the family. In summer, mothers believed they got some of this time back.

Rosalyn, a middle-class mother of two who is taking time off from her technical career in software to spend time at home with her two daughters. Her husband is in the process of completing a doctoral fellowship at Grant State. Rosalyn has an inquisitive nature and has lived in many different countries. She speaks English through a strong accent. She values education and research, which is evident in the way she regularly participates in studies at Grant State. (When we meet, she is participating in at least one other study about physical fitness). She generally enjoys watching her two daughters, ages 7 and 6 play, as she secretly makes mental notes of their interactions. In fact, in the midst of our conversation during the interview documented below, the girls were having an impromptu pretend tea party.

Rosalyn: So it's a big group. Like last night they were – I don't know what they were playing but it seems like they're – they were clap house and they oh, God, follow me, I just I love it.

MM: Uh huh. What do you love about it?

Rosalyn: Well, first is the interaction. How they learn to – they have to learn to be patient. They have to learn to be wait for their turn. Learn to share, their imagination, their belly laugh, how they imitate each other.

MM: Yeah.

Rosalyn: Ally is the oldest one. So she's the captain of everybody, pushing everybody around in a nice way, making the game exciting. Yesterday like was a princess.

MM: Were you a princess?

Rosalyn: No, you were were a monster, I think.

Later, she describes how summer embodies the life lessons of childhood free from the pressures of school.

“They're still little. I mean this is just the formative years. They need to learn by their skills when they are in school still. I mean, I'm saying I love studying. Both my husband and I in our respective schools and he was the best student. And I'm sure they will like – oh, he was also like studying as well. But I don't want them to worry now. They're going to have 12 years at least of that.”

For Rosalyn, while she places value in the academic side of a child's life, she also does not see a benefit to “over schooling”. Her daughters' exposure to play and concrete learning experiences gained during the summer, to her, are equally important. Her viewpoint was commonly shared among mothers who believed that while school played a central role in formed identities relevant to the “whole” child define (Epstein, 2011), so too did opportunities that occurred during summer vacation.

Martha is a middle-class mother of two boys, Jonathan, age 13 and Aaron, age 11, who resides in Grantville. She lives in an upscale housing development lined with expansive homes positioned among manicured lawns. As a community, Grantville, though well known for opportunity in academics and extracurricular activities, lacks in religious diversity. Because the boys do not have a lot of peers who share their religion summer affords them with an opportunity to attend a non-secular sleep away camp filling a void of religious identity not found during the course of the year. In an interview, she says about the opportunity, “It's just because it's such a small Jewish Community. They are actually exposed to and meeting friends and being with other kids who for one common factor – are like them. They don't find that very often.”

According to Martha, though the curriculum of the three-week sleep away camp is not heavy-handed, life lessons presented through the lens of Judaism do take place. Martha shares with me letters the boys write from camp. They sometimes mention historical themes, like learning about Janusz Korczak, an important figure in Jewish history and more contemporary ones like a concert from, Dan Nichols, a well-known Jewish rock band. When we talk about the format of camp, she describes it as an opportunity for life lessons delivered covertly. She says,

“[There are] moral lessons, not pure play all day, but it’s structured in such a way that the kids don’t realize they could be learning something. At one point I saw [in pictures] that they had a Torah Scroll rolled out so whatever they were learning and studying about at that point in time...So there may be learning, but it’s not something that need to know something to take a test.

This is a fun way to learn something.”

For Martha, summer camp enables Jonathan and Aaron to connect more deeply with their religious identities. As I demonstrate in Chapter 7, enrollment in faith-based activities was common for many children in the study. Mothers often cited summer as a chance to reconnect with their church or cultivate religious values. For Martha, though, sleep away camp also enabled responsibility, a life lesson she considered invaluable to her children’s future. Small, seemingly banal skills, like learning to cook breakfast or how to navigate to the public library or a friend’s house on bikes were commonly articulated by mothers as important. Martha says,

“Being independent and being able to take care of themselves and all the responsibilities. There is whole lot of responsibilities that go with it. They are in bunks with same age peers so and then there are 4 or 5 counselors per

bunk, so they have to learn to work together. There's no one to say to I don't have underwear today. If you didn't send it to the laundry, then oh well. They have to figure out how to deal with meals and that sort of stuff. If you're hungry, we aren't allowed to send food which eliminates critters issues in their bunks, so they have to figure out how they are going to deal with meals and all those choices."

Like Rosayln and Martha and many other mothers in the study, life lessons were considered vital entities to the experience of summer vacation. In fact, in many of my interactions with kids, I was able to personally participate in some of these life lessons. Below is an excerpt from my field notes from an afternoon spent with 12-year-old Bradey.

I went for my first official observation with Michelle and Bradey today. After we throw out some ideas for how we will spend our time, Bradey tells me that he'd like to visit his climbing tree that he and Michelle have shown me before. We leave the house and head up the side-walked street about 200 yards to an alleyway that leads to a church parking lot. Bradey directs me to the tree that sits just outside of the churchyard. He begins to climb and invites me along. "Aren't you coming?" Before I can refuse, he says, "Well, you are wearing your tree climbing shoes." In fact I am wearing outdoor sport sandals with thick rubber grips on the soles. Acknowledging he is correct, I put my hands on the lowest limb and push my body upright enough to lumber my right leg up over the first limb. I then hoist my body onto it and position myself so I can climb to the next branch and the next. Bradey is well ahead of me, already perched about halfway up the high tree. While we sit and mull over what he has done so far this summer, I ask him

how does he know he is safe when he climbs trees. He thinks it over for a minutes, but then shares with me how his mother has taught him to always have three points of contact with the tree...hand, hand, foot or foot, foot, hand. On our way back down after 10 minutes or so, I try this technique.

I'm actually surprised at how much safer it seems.

Conducting research in the season of summer enabled me to capture many moments like that described above between Bradey and me. Many observations and interviews took place while kids splashed in backyard pools. Parents and children proudly showed me items they had grown together in family gardens. Playing on swing sets, tossing around the football, window shopping, and taking nature walks were just some of the independent activities I watched children experience over the course of the study. Essentially, as simplistic and everyday as these experiences were, mothers believed they built character.

But, what is more, findings show that mothers not only appreciate breaks from schools as a way of indulging play and independent exploration, many believed that summer break was a valuable component to their child's overall mental health. In my literature review in Chapter 2, I introduced how when the common school movement was taking place and resulted in summer vacation, many doctors of the day believed that children "would become insane from over-schooling" (Gold, 2002). Though never put into these extreme terms, study participants expressed feelings of a similar nature.

Many mothers believed that school routines related to homework, exams and projects took an emotional toll on their family life and especially on their kids. In interviews with children of late elementary age, many of them shared this sentiment. Nine-year-old Kirsten, who is going into 5th grade, says, "Sometimes, they just put so much stuff into your brain, it hurts." In an interview on a separate day with her mother, Birdie, without

prompting or disclosing Kirsten's response, it is clear the two are kindred spirits on the matter. Birdie says,

“I think they need a little bit of break of – sometimes I feel like they have – they're sort of sponges in there, just sort of water is dripping down in...And they don't get to use what they've learned...It's more of like memorization than anything else. And I would like to see them – and I know that it's a whole countrywide education problem but I'd like to see them, teach and show them how to use it. And I think that they need a break just from that memorization. Their brain just hurts after so long...It is because they just keep pushing the stuff in.”

Some mothers in the study cited their discomfort with top-down federal policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that are common to public schooling in the United States. Two such examples are Eleanor and Jackie, who circumvented the public school system altogether and opted for alternative schooling methods for their children. Even though it was a financial hardship, Eleanor, a single mother who receives no child support or alimony and makes an average salary, enrolled Kit in a private school in Grantville. Kit receives a small financial based scholarship each year, but tuition still absorbs a significant portion of her average annual salary. As a published and successful author, she relies heavily on her book royalties, honorariums from speaking and workshop events in order to make ends meet. When I inquire about the decision to send Kit to private school, she explains,

“I actually have a PhD in English education, so I was in graduate school when all the testing came in and I am just so discouraged by the way testing has changed public education, so I thought ‘Well, if I can manage to put out the money for this education, it's student-centered, it feels innovative even

though it's old...It's very project-oriented, it's very holistic.' I think she's a really lucky kid to go there.”

Jackie, a middle class mom without a college degree, cites the Watertown School System's emphasis on standardized testing as a contributing reason in her decision to start homeschooling her four children the next school year. During our first conversation, when we discuss this decision she explains that it was her oldest daughter's first year of taking standardized tests. I ask her how it went. She replies,

“She was fine she was very happy and loves them—just the whole dynamic of the special gifts and treats because they're tested. That is out of our comfort zone and putting so much emphasis on that kind of standardized test isn't something that we really want.”

Birdie, a middle-class mother, also cites frustration with testing movements, but with a slightly different bend. In many of our conversations, it is clear she has taken a lot of time to think about the drawbacks. She first explains how standardized testing only challenges kids to learn by rote. In the context of a conversation focusing on the toll of school, She says, “And I think that they need a break just from that memorization that their brain just hurts after so long.” In a later interview, she describes how standardized testing actually results in a shorter period of academic learning time. She says,

Birdie: And I think that – I think the school district now, sort of in April sort of figures out, yeah, we got to start getting ready for finals, and [state exams] and all of the other tests...And so, you got April to October, so you have six months without learning. And I don't think that's right.

MM: Would you then rather like they don't have the standardize testing?

Birdie: Oh, I hate the standardized tests.

For many mothers like Birdie, summer vacation served as resolution to academic pressures imposed by schools. Again, mothers consistently underscored the value of a child's childhood outside of school boundaries. Elizabeth, a low-income mother explains,

“Without summer vacation they would not have time to just be kids. They focus on school and work for 9 months of the year, they are disciplined and under a routine and schedule, the summer gives kids a chance to unwind, be themselves, and explore their environments.”

Louisa makes a similar comment, citing a need for distance between home and school.

“Although children remain stagnate, or even backslide some academically during the summer, I still feel it is important to have that extended break. Having worked in the school district the past two years, I feel that the children, along with the faculty and staff, need that break to recharge their batteries. By the end of the school year, both children and adults are overloaded and start to get relaxed in learning and teaching. I feel that it would not benefit anyone to continue school throughout the summer.”

Edith, a low-income mother of three, believes that school cuts into family time. In our final interview during the fall, she explains that during the summer, she can focus on her family and not worry about school. She says,

“...Because in the summer it's not rushed. We can come home we can go to the store, we can go swimming. My medication is [in a neighboring town] so we go there. We go get Chinese [food] and go to the park and play. We get to do more stuff like that. Right now we can't go anywhere in the evenings...”

Later, when we talk about her decision to not send her daughter to summer school even though she qualified through the Title I reading program at school, she says,

“I can't because of my hours [at work] plus I don't really want her to. I want her to have a break. We read at night and she still has her books and we have the books that says what level they are at the top and she does those.”

Most mothers, regardless of social class felt kids needed the break summer vacation afforded. Martha, middle-class mother of two says,

“For my guys, it just helps them regroup. We find the same thing during holiday break. Jonathan can't get time to sit down and work on his [legos] during the school year. In the summer, they're still required to practice their instruments and I never have to ask them to read. They still do those things....and they know that 'if I get my practice done and that's all I'm supposed to do', they know that the rest of the day is theirs.”

As demonstrated above, mothers believed their children were able to grow and advance in different ways during the summer than during the school year. In the next journal entry provided by Flori, she first describes the structure and events from which her kids benefited over the summer.

“Day trips, movies, art camp, learning to swim, camping and enjoying the great outdoors, hiking, strength development, gardening, creating a secret hideout, cooking (especially becoming an advanced pancake flipper), nature exploration in natural habitats and man-made habitats, money management, crafts, biking, increase in household responsibilities, shoe tying and good old fashion free play. These are all experiences my kiddos gained from having a more relaxed schedule and time away from school.”

However, in the same journal entry she quickly turns her attention to the challenging reality of her children's out of school summertime. Here she demonstrates the challenging

paradox of motherhood, propelled by summer out of school time.

“The above is a beautiful picture of sunny days and kids fully engaged in natural learning experiences, but don't let my fond reflections of our summer fool you. In those days there were also many arguments among siblings, stretches of boredom, whines to do "something fun", inability to keep the house clean with three kids constantly messing it up and while I am embarrassed to admit too much time on the iPad or with the TV as I scrambled to put cook and clean three meals a day (plus snacks). Some summer days were long and perhaps I planned too much at times. Because any day that didn't have a fun filled agenda reviewed in the morning led to complaints of boredom.”

Mothers, who at the beginning of the study had cited the necessity and benefits of summer vacation, toward the end, began to articulate frustration about the length of vacation and how children were spending their time. This includes Elizabeth, quoted in the introduction of this chapter, who so embraced summer as a time for her son Finn to learn and gain experiences outside of school. The following is an excerpt from my field notes and transcript from a late afternoon visit that took place shortly before the start of the new school year.

Finn is bouncing off the walls when I arrived today because we have planned to take a walk to a general store down the street. I try to get some time to chat with Elizabeth before we go, but Finn is relentless in his requests to leave. I remind him, “I'm just going to be a couple of minutes, buddy.” And “Can you wait for a minute while I talk to your mom?” Still he is hyper! “Can we go? Can we go?,” he says, “I'm going to get a blue Arizona

[soda]...” Though I find his energy a bit infectious, I did need to talk to Elizabeth about her most recent journal entry. Still, his behavior is comical distraction as he walks to and from the kitchen, interrupting our conversation at will. We are both watching him as we chat as Elizabeth shares a kind of frustrated smile paired with deep sigh. Finn has received behavior reports before at school in the past for an inability to sit still and talking out of turn. Knowing this and seeing his behavior today, I ask her if she thinks he will be ready for school.

Elizabeth: Yeah. He needs to go.

MM: Yeah? Do you feel like as a summer has gone on, you're ready to see him go back?

Elizabeth: Well, yeah. Mostly, I think it's more – like during the day, the other kids like, like, Tony [Finn's neighbor] gets home at 5:00. So...

MM: Is he in daycare?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Finn: Is that where he goes? Yeah.

Elizabeth: So until Tony gets home, there's no kids. He doesn't like to swim without somebody to swim with.

MM: Right.

Elizabeth: And, you know with her [the baby], I have to be there for her.

MM: Yeah.

Elizabeth: So...

Finn: Yeah, I love mom to push me.

Elizabeth: He gets bored. Oh, yeah, I do push him off the ladder.

MM: Uh-huh.

Elizabeth: But he gets bored until 5:00 and then from 5:00 to 9:00, he goes and does whatever.

MM: Yeah.

Finn: But one time...

MM: So what do you do in the house during the day until 5:00, until daddy gets home?

Finn: Well, watch TV.

MM: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Play your computer – well, play your dad's computer now.

Finn: But not now.

Elizabeth: No, that's right. Because you didn't shut it down right.

As the above demonstrates, for Finn, unlimited opportunities for independent exploration throughout the summer were eventually replaced with excessive, less constructive activities like television watching and computer games. Finn's screen time was not restricted by Elizabeth and based on feedback and observations, he seemed to spend more than the daily-recommended allowance on the computer and watching television. Finn was not alone. As families grew more accustomed to my visits, I often observed children absconding from interviews or activities to watch television, play video games or browse on the computer. This was frustrating for mothers, especially for those who had envisioned high hopes for a summer filled with independent growth. Mary, working-class mother from Wheaton, notes, "I think that spreading the three month break out over the entire year would not only benefit the students learning but their well-being. Too much of a good thing isn't really that good."

Michelle, middle-class mother from Grantville, cites a lot of frustration about achieving an enriching but still relaxing summer all while she manages to work her fulltime

job and care for her six-month-old. Her annoyance with the way Bradey chose to spend his time grew as the summer days went on. In the two separate entries from her journal below, she talks of this frustration.

“...THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO DO. One should NEVER be bored. And TV, well, most of it is a waste of time. (I am working on this...both Bradey and [my husband] spend time with TV and I struggle. There are so many better ways to engage one’s body and brain—and so much to do that there isn’t time for such a time wasting hobby.)”

In her final journal entry, she brings it up again,

“Because I am not a TV watcher, it is difficult for me to watch him watching it so much. I would classify some of this time as more idleness than experience. It is so passive. Even if he would color or do a craft, then it would seem more productive.”

Like Michelle, toward the end of the summer, both adults and kids cited boredom and idleness as a persistent problem. With vacations complete, summer camps closed and kid games exhausted, days became difficult to feel with activities that were constructive. In an interview with Kit, Molly and Josephine, I asked them how they are feeling about the upcoming school year, which was starting in one week. They say,

Molly: It’s just getting to that time of the summer when it’s getting...

Josephine: Boring.

Molly: Yeah.

MM: Are you all experiencing some boredom?

Molly: Yes

Josephine: Yes

Kit: Yes

Equally so, many mothers expressed feelings of frustration at a perceived inability to strike a happy medium between relaxation and indolence toward the end of the summer. This reality often led them to usher in the upcoming school year with as much hope and optimism as they did summer vacation. Though many cited that summer “flew by” overall, mothers were ready for school to begin again. Birdie, a middle-class mother to Kirsten, sums up the paradox of mothering during the summer. She says,

“Kirsten is starting to have a few days of boredom. Some days it seems as if the summer is not long enough to do everything that we would like to do.

On the other days, it seems as if the summer is way too long.”

Summary

The findings presented help to answer the guiding question: How do mothers of varying social class backgrounds characterize the purpose of their child’s summer vacation; and where does summer vacation “fit” into family life? In answering this question, mothers linked summer vacation to a meaningful childhood in two main ways: one, independent growth free from the influences of school (time to play and explore) and two, an appropriation of their summertime experiences as a time to shore up family bonding and values. In Chapter 5, I introduced how toward the end of the school year, both schools and families begin to redirect focus from the perceived role of *student* to that of *child*. This sort of false dichotomy provides explanation for why summer vacation has credence as an inalienable rite of passage that rarely undergoes reform in school settings. More than that, the tensions that summer creates demonstrate competing theories about child development and the sociology of childhood.

Through his extensive work of childhood in society, Corsaro (2011) introduces a sociological theory called interpretive reproduction where children collectively participate in society. The term *interpretive* acknowledges that children participate in peer cultures by appropriating information they learn from the adult world in unique creative ways (Corsaro, 2011). The term *reproduction* has dual meaning—first, it acknowledges that children are not passive, but rather “actively contributing to cultural production and change” (Corsaro, 2011, p. 21). Corsaro (2003, 2009b as cited by Corsaro, 2011) defines peer culture as “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 21). As we saw through the narratives provided by mothers like Michelle, mothers often found themselves at odds with the ways their children went about spending their time during summer vacation. Bradey was particularly adamant that summertime was his time. While we played, he often said things akin to “Let’s relax, that’s what summer is all about.”

In a journal entry he notes, “I think kids get a summer vacation for many reasons. One reason is that students probably need a chance to rest their brains and kind of recover. On the other hand, I will miss school because I really do like seeing all my friends...” Bradey was not alone. Many of the kids in the study also noted that summer was a time earmarked for rejuvenation. Kit and Molly were two examples. “I think kids get summer vacation because teachers and kids both need a break.” and Molly

“I think we get a summer vacation because if we worked all year we would be to tired to work.” In another undated journal entry he makes similar sentiments saying “There is many different things about school and summer vacation. For example, you get more time to relax and take that load off your back.” While Michelle was certainly happy to allow Bradey a chance to recharge over the break, she also struggled with the way in which

Bradey's interpretation of summer had played out in practice. She had high hopes at the beginning of summer for constructing a memorable and fulfilling summer for Bradey. Together, they compiled a bucket list and seemed to talk extensively about how they would spend their time. Bradey, however, particularly craved interactions with his peers expressing a love for sleepovers with friends and time to watch football on television. Like many parents and kids in the study, there was a constant negotiation/renegotiation about the societal norms structured around summer.

This cultural routine of summer, which Corsaro (2011) notes leads to "taken-for-granted character" (p. 21) of social norms that endorse a "shared understanding belonging to a social group". For Michelle, a foremost reason she acquiesced to Bradey's summertime mantra of rest and relaxation was that she too had once "belonged" to the cultural routine of summer vacation. Viewing it as having a positive effect on her own development, she allowed Bradey to interpretively reproduce his own meaning that was in alignment with the perception of summer as a time to escape every day pressures – like ones commonly found during the school year. NEED A LITTLE MORE HERE

As I presented in this chapter, the contribution of summer to a child's childhood has significant meaning to mothers. They appropriate memories from their own childhoods and use the time to forge stronger relationships that they feel lead to positive socio-emotional outcomes. In the next chapter, Chapter 7, I bear this notion in mind as I revisit Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing and unpack through the lens of my own data findings.

Introduction

Up to this point, I have presented findings about how mothers regardless of social class, share common experiences in assigning purpose and meaning to summer out of school time. For example, all mothers noted the way family life changed at home before the school year ended. Likewise, each appropriated memories from their own childhoods in labeling purpose and meaning to summer. In this chapter, I address questions related to my final set of guiding questions:

Sub-RQ3: In what ways do theories related to Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing explain differential summer out of school time experiences?

In this chapter, I present findings of a different sort—those that focus on social background differences and SES, thereby stretching beyond common worldviews and spheres related to agency to those focused on important nuances found between families. Some findings mesh with Lareau's (2003; 2011) theories, while others take on new meaning.

In my analysis, I found that mothers often wavered between concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth or demonstrated key characteristics of both depending on circumstances (See Table 5). However, especially for mothers of a working-class background, there was an expression of knowledge that behaviors related to concerted cultivation would be socially preferred over childrearing method (i.e. enrolling your children into activities, helping them achieve access to professionals who could advance their academic agendas, partnering with teachers). Though these mothers were often stymied by financial and logistical constraints, making concerted cultivation unattainable, they understood the social rewards for children who lead more structured lives than their own

children. This finding was important because it highlights the degree to which access to quality activities and services mattered to participants. In this chapter, I aim to accomplish the following:

1. **Lareau's Observed Key Dimensions:** Here, I unpack my own findings through the lens of Lareau's three observed dimensions of childrearing that led to her conclusion that middle-class children show an emerging sense of entitlement while working class and poor children demonstrate an emerging sense of constraint. I find that overall mothers in this study did not easily fit into the patterns of accomplishment of natural growth and concerted cultivation. Especially in the key dimension of organization of daily life, mothers' perceptions and actions could not be categorized according to social class. The other key dimensions—interventions with institutions and language use at home—also showed variation based on Lareau's theories.
2. **Leveraged and Contingent Exploration:** I introduce two new emergent theories regarding summertime childrearing practices: contingent and leveraged exploration. I introduce the key components of each and provide distinction between these practices and Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing. In the discussion and summary of this chapter, I introduce the notion of belonging and how it relates to essential and perceived needs.

Lareau's Observed Key Dimensions

Organization of Daily Life

Researchers assert that social class differences in families can be observed and tested vis-à-vis how parents construct their children's leisure time. In her ethnography about language usage in two communities that comprise the "Piedmont"—an evolving textile mill region in the south, Heath (1983) describes how the "townspeople" (e.g. mainstreamers or those with an air of importance) who resided in and around the communities filled their children's daily lives with activities that promoted individual competition among mainstream families. The townspeople organized the daily life of their children around school and community events requiring constant scheduling and chauffeuring to activities—a cultural reality that created seedlings of advantage from the time children were babies. Children of townspeople were more likely to have language skills that promoted school readiness than were children who were considered outside of the mainstream.

Likewise, structure of daily life creates a key dimension of Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing. According to Lareau, middle-class families participate in concerted cultivation as their children regularly partake in events like traveling soccer teams, private music lessons and prearranged play dates. In contrast, low-income children participate in the accomplishment of natural growth marked by unstructured free time reliant on interactions with peer groups and siblings rather than relationships with adults. Here, activities take place close to home and include "pick-up" games, child-directed skits, television watching and play with friends or siblings. Lareau claims that concerted cultivation perpetuates social stratification because it allows children to borrow from and practice adult-like behaviors that they later use to their advantage.

During the course of my pilot work, I determined that concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth were too limiting when categorizing the types of activities participated in by children of various social class backgrounds. As presented in Chapter 3 (Figure 3), I developed a new paradigm for activities that introduces the concept of crossover activities that operate between those identified by Lareau (2003; 2011) as indicative of a particular type of childrearing. As opposed to activities like those associated with accomplishment of natural growth and concerted cultivation where resources and reproduction of cultural capital are low and high respectively, crossover activities allow for a middle ground. In crossover activities children have opportunities to participate in an activity but doing so will be less imposing in terms of costs and resources, but still offer learning and social benefits.

As a reminder, in Figure 3 (Chapter 3), I predicted that children of middle-class backgrounds would have the “busiest” summers full of scheduled events (For example, their activities would mainly be facilitated by adults). Furthermore, I predicted that middle-class children would have the highest frequency of participation in activities that resembled concerted cultivation, medium frequency in crossover activities and low frequency in activities related to accomplishment of natural growth. For working-class children, I predicted they would experience low frequency in concerted cultivation-like activities, medium frequency in crossover activities and high frequency in accomplishment of natural growth-like activities. Finally, for low-income families I anticipated low frequency in concerted cultivation-like activities, low frequency in crossover activities and high frequency in activities resembling the accomplishment of natural growth. In Figure 9 and Table 4, I share the results of activity enrollment of the children who took part in this study.

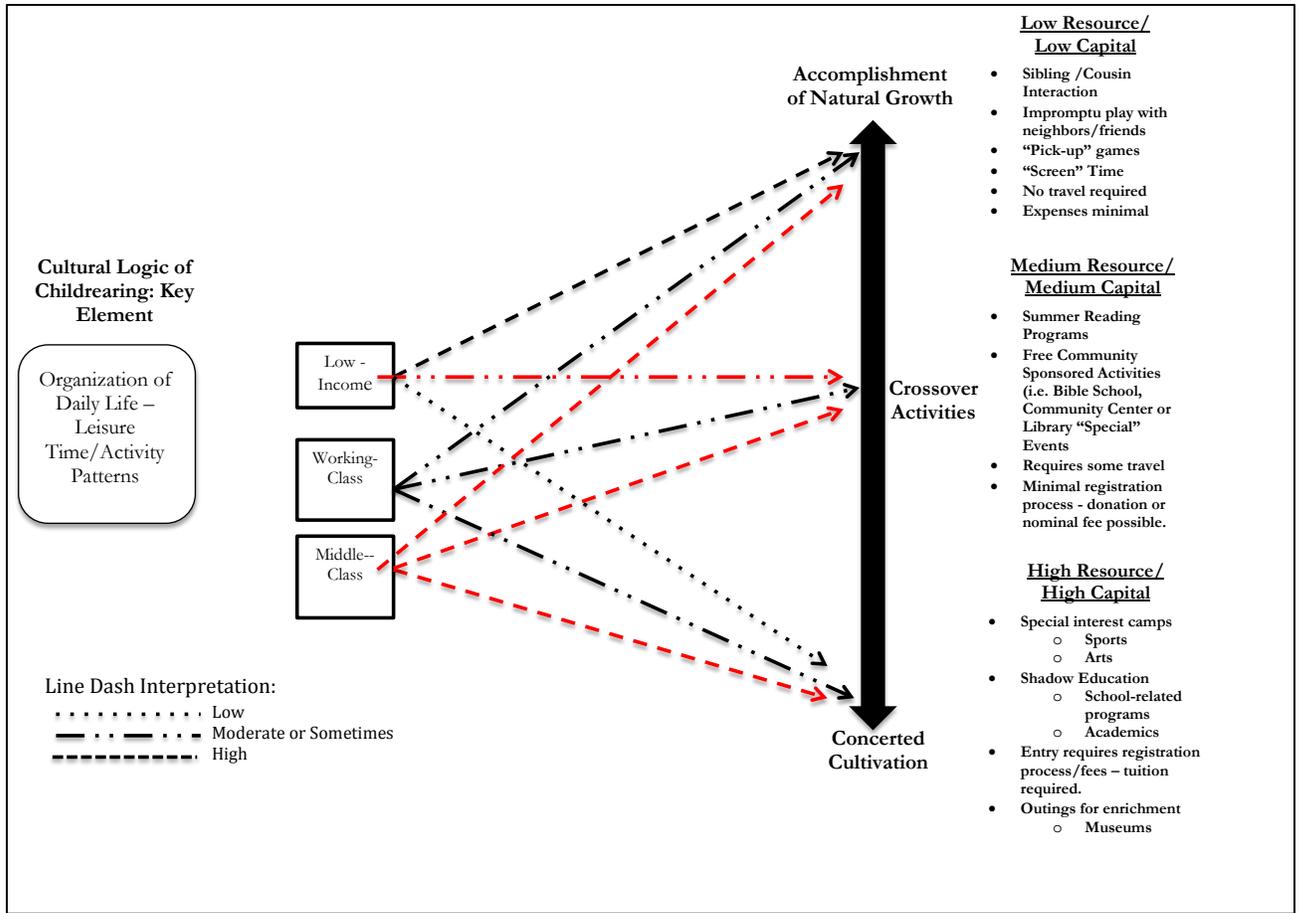


Figure 9: Tested Conceptual Framework Map for Organization of Daily Life

Table 4: Mothers' Cultural Logic of Childrearing Tendencies

Mother	SES	Organizational of Daily Life		Interventions at Institutions		Language Use at Home	
		Accomplishment of Natural Growth	Concerted Cultivation	Accomplishment of Natural Growth	Concerted Cultivation	Accomplishment of Natural Growth	Concerted Cultivation
Edith	Low-Income		X	Alternative Form – Avoidance			X
Elizabeth	Low-Income	X		Alternative Form – Avoidance		X	
Helen	Low-Income	X			X		X
Caroline	Working-Class	B.O./D.		Undetermined		X	
Maggie	Working-Class		X		X		X
Mary	Working-Class	B.O./D.			X	B.O./D.	
Jackie	Working-Class			Alternative Form – Avoidance			
Diane	Middle-Class	B.O./D.			X		X
Birdie	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Claudia	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Eleanor	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Emily	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Flori	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Lane	Middle-Class	B.O./D.		Undetermined		N.O./D.	
Laura	Middle-Class	B.O./D.		Undetermined			X
Louisa	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Lucy*	Middle-Class	X		Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Martha	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Mabel	Middle-Class	X		Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Michele	Middle-Class	B.O./D.			X		X
Rosalyn	Middle-Class	X		Alternative Form - Partnership			X
Thelma	Middle-Class		X	Alternative Form - Partnership			X

X = Dimension Clearly Observed
 B.O./D. = Both Observed or Discussed

Table 5: Resource-Capital Requirements Activity Participation Matrix

Family Background Characteristics				Summer Activity			School Year Activities		
				Resource-Capital Requirements			Resource-Capital Requirements		
Mother	#Child(ren)	Social Class Distinction	Community	High Resource-High Capital	Medium Resource-Medium Capital	Low Resource-Low Capital	High Resource-High Capital	Medium Resource-Medium Capital	Low Resource-Low Capital
Edith	3	Low-Income	Grantville	L; CD; D	L	M	L; CD; D	L	M
Elizabeth	2	Low-Income	Wheaton	IW	L	H	IW	L	H
Helen	4	Low-Income	Watertown	D	M	H	D	M	H
Caroline	2	Working-Class	Wheaton	M; CD; D	M; CD; D	H	M; CD; D	M; CD; D	H
Maggie	2	Working-Class	Watertown	IW; CD	H	H	IW; CD	H	H
Mary	2	Working-Class	Wheaton	H	L	M	H	L	M
Diane	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	IW	H	H	IW	H	H
Birdie	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	H; CD	H	H	H; CD	H	M
Claudia	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	H	H	H	H	H	H
Eleanor	1	Middle-Class	Watertown	H; CD	H; CD	M	H; CD	H; CD	M
Emily	3	Middle-Class	Grantville	H	H	H	H	H	H
Flori	3	Middle-Class	Grantville	H	H	H	H	H	H
Jackie	4	Working-Class	Watertown	CD	M	H	CD	M	H
Lane	2	Middle-Class	Watertown	CD	M	M	CD	M	M
Laura	4	Middle-Class	Grantville	M	M	M	M	M	M
Louisa	4	Middle-Class	Watertown	H; CD	H; CD	H	H; CD	H; CD	H
Lucy	3	Middle-Class	Grantville	D	D	H	D	D	H
Martha	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	H	M	M	H	M	M
Mabel	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	CD	L	H	CD	M	M
Michelle	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	CD	M	H	CD	M	H
Rosalyn	2	Middle-Class	Grantville	IW	H	H	IW	H	H
Thelma	3	Middle-Class	Grantville	CD	H	H	CD	H	H

L = Low Frequency
M = Medium Frequency
H = High Frequency
IW = Intentionally Withheld (Mother acknowledges options, but chooses not to enroll for various reasons)
CD = Child Dependent – Participation took place, but mother bases participation decisions on child interest
D = Desired, but frequency not achieved

In the cases of working-class and low-income families, my predictions were mostly correct with one exception. Rather than having low participation in crossover activities, low-income children had a moderate level of participation. Middle-class and working-class children participated in activities sponsored and led by adults (middle-class high and working-class moderate). Working-class children attended crossover activities too and also partook in activities with no parental guidance or structured learning objectives. However, perhaps most surprisingly, I find that middle-class children had high frequency of participation in accomplishment of natural growth-like activities. Though more so than any other socioeconomic background, middle-class children had “fuller” summers, they also had plenty of free time. They had high frequencies of spontaneous time with siblings, neighbors and friends and watched television far more than mothers would have liked. Their mothers enrolled them in a number of structured camps and all middle-class children took vacations, but mothers also heavily relied on crossover activities with attendance at free community events and local parks as staples to summer routines. The remainder of this chapter section introduces specific findings related to leisure time and social connections separately.

Table 6: Child Activity Tables

Name (Pseudonym)	Target Child(ren) Name(s) (Pseudonym)	Family Social Class	Community	Adult-Led School Year Activities	Summer Organized Activities/Lessons	Examples of Summer Community Activities	Registered for Summer Reading /Reading Routine at home
Diane	Benny	Middle class	Grantville	Gymnastics	None	Library & Library Programs	Yes/Yes
Flori	McKenna, Henry	Middle class	Grantville	Gymnastics, Dance	Gymnastics (cont'd), Art Camp	State Parks Library Programs, Community Festivals, Environmental Centers, Volunteer	Yes/Yes
Birdie	Kirsten	Middle class	Grantville	Basketball, Martial Arts	Basketball, Science, Art Martial Arts	Library, Community Pool	Yes/Yes
Lucy	Addy, Oliver	Middle class	Grantville	None	ESL (Oliver)	Church Activities,	No/Yes
Emily	Teddy, Ivy	Middle class	Grantville	Soccer, Basketball, Gymnastics, Piano	Traveling Soccer	Library, Geocaching	Yes/Yes
Martha	Jonathan, Aaron	Middle class	Grantville	Martial Arts, Music (through school), Baseball	Sleep Away Camp (faith-based, but not major theme)	Library, Festivals, Parks, Pool (community)	Yes/Yes
Edith	Nellie	Low-Income	Grantville	Dance, Gymnastics	Day camp (includes field trips)	Parks, Library, Festivals	No/Yes
Claudia	Christopher	Middle class	Grantville	Football, Basketball, Soccer	Nature Camps (2), Swim Team, Soccer, Sports Camp (Church)	Library, Parks, Pool (community), Museums	Yes/Yes
Thelma	Kaya, Francis	Middle class	Grantville	Martial Arts, Ballet, Choir	Sports Camp	Library	Yes/Yes
Rosalyn	Ally, Felicity	Middle class	Grantville	Movement, Computer Club, Karate	Swim Lessons	Library, Grantville, Parks, Pool (community), Museums	Yes/Yes
Laura	Lloyd, Mia	Middle class	Grantville	Soccer, Gymnastics	Tee Ball	Library, Grantville, Parks, Swim at home, Community Service	No/Yes

Mabel	Jemison	Middle class	Grantville	Organization for Boys, Intramural Sports (in school time)	None	n/a	No/Yes
Michelle	Bradey	Middle class	Grantville	Football, Music Lessons, Track	None	State Parks Library Programs, Community Festivals, Environmental Centers	No/Yes
Eleanor	Kit	Middle class	Watertown	Violin, Soccer, Organization for Girls	Art, Imagination, Watersports, Science, Faith-based Sleep Away Camp, Girl Scout Camp	Library, Parks, State Forests	Yes/Yes
Louisa	Molly, Josephine	Middle class	Watertown	Soccer, Piano Lessons, Organization for Girls	Faith-Based Sleep Away Camp, Soccer	State Parks Library Programs, Community Festivals, Museums, Fairs, Church Events	Yes/Yes
Helen	Jack	Working Class	Watertown	None	None	Fairs, Festivals	No/Yes
Jackie	Ruthie, Rebecca	Middle class	Watertown	Gymnastics	Gymnastics (cont'd)	Church Activities	No/Yes
Maggie	Bill, Charles	Working Class	Watertown	Soccer	Community Sponsored Day Camp	Library, Parks, State Forests	Yes/Yes
Lane	Saige	Middle class	Watertown	Church Youth Group (two)	Bible School	Parks, Library	No/Yes
Mary	Julie, Tom	Working Class	Wheaton	Dance, Youth Development Org.	Dance (cont'd), National Agriculture Club Bible School	Lakes, Parks, Church Activities	No/Yes
Elizabeth	Finn	Low-Income	Wheaton	Organization for boys (withdrew because of no leader)	None	Library Programs, State Forests, Parks	No/Child-Dependent
Caroline	Samantha, Nolan	Working Class	Wheaton	Dance, Athletics for physical and/or mental challenges	Dance (cont'd) Community	Library, Museums, Parks & Streams	No

Leisure Time: “I’m still waiting for the ‘summer’ part to start.”

With normal school routines out of the picture, children’s time during the summer becomes almost entirely devoted to leisure. While a few children in the study took part in government-sponsored summer school programs, for the vast majority, leisure and unstructured time dominated. This fact allowed me to observe and discuss with families differences in how they spent their time between the school year and summer. I found that even during the school year, most of the children in the study were involved in activities that took place outside the home. (Only one low-income child from Wheaton did not do anything structured or adult-led outside of school, but he hoped to join Cub Scouts but was rebuffed because his troop lacked a leader.) Though this was especially true of middle-class children, some working-class and low-income families also had complex after school schedules that carried over into the summer months.

Mary is a working-class mother of two whose child-rearing style characterizes many qualities of concerted cultivation in the structure of her children’s daily lives. Despite her working-class status, the structure of daily life of her children very much resembles that of a middle-class child described by Lareau (2003; 2011) as experiencing concerted cultivation. Tom, 9, and Julie, 11, are active in multiple forms of dance varying from classical training in ballet to more contemporary forms like hip hop. Tom takes lessons three days a week and Julie four. In addition to performing in an annual recital, they compete in local, regional and national competitions as well as peripheral activities like fundraising and studio celebrations. Tom plays seasonal sports like football, baseball and wrestling and if a winning season occurs, each sport may require playoff games or matches. As this study was taking place, Tom was undergoing daily physical therapy for an injury to his knee sustained during a wrestling match. In addition to commanding copious amounts of time and recurring monetary commitments,

the children's activities require expensive equipment and costumes. For example, protective gear for Tom's position of catcher can cost hundreds of dollars. Issues related to the kids' activities are a regular bone of contention between Mary and her husband.

Julie and Tom are also busy at home as they raise chickens and turkeys as members of a local branch of a youth development organization for animals and livestock. In the summer, with their club, they are required to take their home-raised livestock to a plant about two hours away to observe both the slaughter and processing of their animals—an event that clearly disturbs and upsets Mary since she has grown attached to the animals as pets. The business aspect of the organization is more to her liking because the children gain valuable life lessons in public speaking, competition among their peers and concrete experience in the art of persuasion as they peddle their livestock at a county fair. When we talk about the skills they obtain from their activities, she says, “I hope [they] will learn better speaking skills like not to be so nervous and – because I know I got nervous [when I was a kid].” Later, when we talk more about their involvement in dance and their travel opportunities that happen as a result, she says, “I think that just in general, going to competitions, I hope teaches them not to be stressed out about going into new places where they don't know what to expect.”

One symbol of concerted cultivation that stands out in the bright and tidy kitchen of her modest country home are schedules plastered to the wall; prompting reminders and acting as a compass for the direction of each weekday. Despite her own background from a working-class family and her family's present financial situation (an income sitting just north of the poverty line for a family of four) the organization of Mary's daily life and that of her children more closely draws from the key dimensions of concerted cultivation than accomplishment of natural growth. In talking with Mary, she notes how important providing experiences and opportunities to her children that she herself was never afforded. However,

despite her preference for staying busy and structured, during one of our summer interviews, she comments, “I’m still waiting for the summer part to start.” Though she knows summer is typically earmarked for families and kids as a time for relaxation, her comments indicate that the harried pace of life takes a toll. Yet, in the end, her child-rearing strategy is a deliberate one. Later in a journal entry she confirms this. She says,

“...the events that happen in my children's lives, are very thought over by me. If I can make good things happen for them, I make it happen. If I can be supportive during a bad event, I make sure I am there for them. I believe that we should live purposefully, not let all life's events to chance. We can't control it all. But I am going to make sure that my kids feel loved and that I do care what is happening to them and that they belong in my life. This, I hope, will give them a firm base in the the [sic] choices in their future.”

Other working-class children in this study were not as busy as Tom and Julie, but most did have an activity that required financial and time commitments. What is more, the busy pace of Mary’s life showcases how working-class families perceive the social rewards and benefits that this lifestyle affords. According to research about the social benefits of children’s activity patterns, Mary’s inclination to enroll her children in social activities can lead to positive academic returns especially for children with low socioeconomic status. Dumais (2006) finds that gains in math and reading scores can be positively influenced by taking dance lessons, music lessons or participating in athletics.

Most working-class and low-income mothers in the study expressed salient desires to get their children into structured activities but had specific and often complex reasons for why they could not accomplish this goal. Reasons included financial considerations like having to wait for money to come in to pay class tuition or inflexibility of work schedules to

manage odd hours of classes or camps. When children could not participate in an activity some mothers expressed regret and frustration. Nevertheless, working-class mothers took advantage of free or reduced-cost events when available, scheduling play dates for their children or planning small getaways. This aligns with the findings of Chin and Phillips (2004) ethnography, where they claimed that participation levels were not as tied to desire as much as they were by time and money.

In Chapter 5, I introduced Helen, who lives in Watertown, but works in hospitality at Grant State. She continued to work during the summer but with an employer-imposed furloughed workday. Even though her hours were less, this still complicated her life considerably because she could not afford daycare. This meant Jack, her seven-year old son, would have to sit alone in an office at his father's workplace where his father was a cook. In our first interview and throughout the summer, she expressed feelings of inadequacy because she knew her son was missing out on extracurricular activities and ancillary enrichment opportunities offered in Grantville during the summer.

In our final interview, I asked her about this again. She reaffirms her commitment to cultivating her son's interests, but explains how her desires are often undermined by her circumstances as a single mother. We again talk about summer camp participation, which was a sore spot for her toward the beginning of the study at the start of summer. She says, "Well, it's because it is too expensive. And that's why [my friend] watches him because I could never afford that." When I ask what activities she wishes she could provide for her son, she says,

"Soccer...I know he'd love to do gymnastics. And I haven't checked it out to see how much that would cost because I know he would love to do it. He

talks about that all the time. Even the science camps, but they are ridiculous.

They are 300, 400, 500 dollars a week. I could never do that.”

Quickly, though, she turns the conversation toward a free-sponsored community event that she attended with Jack and her grandson.

“We went to a science fair up at the Watertown High School the other night.

They really enjoyed that...There was people there from Grant State, they had like a blow-up planetarium. They had this really big thing and they both loved it. I wish we could have gotten their picture while they were in it. It was this big round thing and it was a bubble and they pulled the bubble up over them.

(Laughing) They really enjoyed that.”

Many working-class and low-income mothers were active in community events like the science fair Helen described. Grantville in particular has a strong community activity infrastructure. This allowed families to take part in events all summer that were both free and educational in nature. Working-class and low-income mothers in this community had free event days marked on their calendars and they often spent hours at these events. Like Helen, other mothers of similar life circumstances wanted their children to get exposure to enriching experiences and activities just as much as their middle-class counterparts. Where differences were observed began at the point of action and attainment, which, for low-income and working-class families, was more inhibited by life circumstances and accessibility—not by interest or desire.

What is more, in my study, I find that organization of daily life in leisure activities was often related to evolving structures of modern families. Though Lareau (2003; 2011) does address this somewhat, I feel that in light of my sample, it is particularly under-developed meriting more consideration. For example, many mothers in this study had gone through a

divorce. These mothers in particular gave their children great degrees of latitude for how they spent their leisure time and their child-rearing strategies were more indicative of a partnership than mothers and children of two-parent households. Birdie asked Kirsten to interview potential summer babysitters telling me it was Kirsten's choice since she was the one who would stay with her for part of the day. I mentioned this notion to Michelle, who had recently remarried, but had experienced a divorce when Bradey was six. After my final interview with Michelle, she sends me a quick follow-up email where she writes, "I mentioned to Bradey about your observation concerning our 'partnership'. And he very quickly agreed that we are not just family, but we are partners and that he likes it."

Though some had since remarried, planned to remarry or lived with their partners, they were used to supporting their families financially and designing their children's schedules around custody issues. This reality often led middle-class mothers to enter into leisure time activities with a degree of frugality. One example is Lucy, a previously divorced mother of three who recently emigrated from a pacific island country to Grantville. When I ask her why she has relocated to the United States from her home country, she smiles broadly simply stating, "For love." Lucy has a master's degree from an institution in her home country, but works in a professional position at Grant State but with a low annual salary. Though she has remarried, she is adamant about maintaining her financial independence. Her new husband—also divorced with children—works in a hospitality-related job, which often takes him out of town on weekends. Due to her full-time employment status and lack of accessibility to transportation, her children typically stay close to home unless they are offered transportation to events through others. At our midsummer interview, the children, 12, 9 & 8, splash and play in an inflatable pool in the small backyard of their bungalow-style home.

To accommodate her work schedule, she leaves the house before her children depart for school in the morning. She prepares their lunches (food from their home country) and designs a meticulous time schedule with instructions that she hopes allows them to have a smooth morning. For an afterschool routine she has created a chore list (which also includes reading) where her children can earn up to a couple of dollars a week for helping out around the house. Though she is happy with her children's adjustment to the Grantville school district, Lucy hopes to eventually get her kids into programs offered through Grant State like camps and to take more advantage of the community. I ask her how she talks to her children about their family situation.

MM: So when they come to you and they say, "I'd like to do this activity," So what may be something -- how do you tell them that?

Lucy: Normally, I tell them because I trained them not to demand for so much.

MM: Yeah.

Lucy: I mean, when we—me and my husband -- my first husband separated...the kids were small...I was so honest with them. I told them life is going to be a little different now because I'm going to raise you singlehandedly. So mommy's money is good for the basic things and a couple of like...(searching for words)

MM: Treats?

Lucy: But it's not so much. I mean it's pretty much different if you're income is like, I mean...[cut in half and yeah]. So I told them, my priority is food, shelter, clothing and education. I paid so much for their education in [our home country]. But I value education so much because I want them not to be -- I mean, you have more opportunities with more education.

Lucy: So that's why even it's -- I pay dearly for it...

MM: Yeah.

Lucy: ...I value it. It's an investment.

- MM: Okay.
- Lucy: So when they come to me and tell me that they wanted something... I would not outright would tell them -- I would tell them like let's see if mommy has money [at the] end of the month. So we can do plans if we can afford it or not.
- MM: Yeah.
- Lucy: And so I don't pretty much rely on my husband's income.
- MM: Okay.
- Lucy: Because I'm just a person who wants to be financially independent.
- MM: Okay.
- Lucy: I just ask money from him if I'm really that broke.

In their home country, Lucy's children led a privileged life enjoyed by those who had well-educated parents. Her children were taken care of by nannies and attended private school. A new beginning in the US has compelled a different type of lifestyle. Superficially, her children's leisure time schedules mirror those associated with accomplishment of natural growth—the kids are not overscheduled, they watch television and play together constantly. Rather plainly, though, my exchange with Lucy provides an example of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and embodied cultural capital.

Lucy's regard toward the power and importance of her children's education cannot be easily altered. Rather, since these expectations are embodied or integral to Lucy as an individual, her habitus remains intact and uncompromising regardless of whether or not her situation in the US is temporary or permanent. Later in this chapter, I deeper explain the relationship between habitus and educational expectations and how it applied to my participants. For now, Lucy's situation demonstrates how frequency in the participation of activities outside the home may only tell part of the story about child-rearing strategies. In

fact, many mothers (not just those of a middle-class background) were skeptical about social trends related to the organization of daily life.

This was apparent in the opinions of one low-income mother, Elizabeth, and two middle-class mothers, Eleanor and Diane. These women shared strikingly similar attitudes toward organized activities. Eleanor and Diane are well-educated middle-class women who do not always choose leisure activities because they advance their children as cultivated projects. More likely, they employ activities outside the home for childcare purposes.

In the context of sociology of childhood, Corsaro (2011) discusses the increase of children's activities over the last several decades. He parallels growing patterns of enrollment to increasing rates of parents who both work outside the home noting the win-win of children receive lessons and parents supplementing childcare simultaneously. In my study, middle-class mothers, especially those who are career-oriented, use organized activities for childcare. Still, they do not simply settle for activities that act as placeholders or glorified babysitters. Instead, they leverage the resources they have at their disposal to design summers that create mutual benefits. However, most women in the study had mixed feelings about activity enrollment. Even though it was unlikely she could afford a lot of activities for her daughter, Edith, a low-income mom when we talk about the hectic pace of life for many in Grantville she says, "I just think it would be too much on her but if she wanted to dance we'll give it a try."

Researchers have noted that one's personality, temperament and engagement in activities act as mechanisms for understanding both entry and benefits of participation in OST participation (Cheadle, 2009; Dumais, 2006; Bouffard et al, 2006; DiMaggio 1982) activity levels were best determined by the temperament of the child. Michelle, a middle-class mother, understood that her nine-year old son might be bored with repeating camps he had

already done in previous summers, so she was okay when he refused enrollment. Thelma sometimes takes the money she would have spent on her kid's activities to pay a babysitter so she and her husband can go on a date and spend quality time with one another. Louisa practices selection in and out of activities for her kids based their temperaments—Molly thrives in new environments where Josephine experiences anxiety in new situations. Typically, as Chin and Phillips (2004) and Cheadle (2009) noted, the disposition of the child and his or her ability to cope with their surroundings affects their daily lives.

In a journal entry shortly after the start of the study, Eleanor, an academic scholar and single-mother, notes how prior to her participation in the study, she has largely taken for granted the educational benefits of Kit's activities. Previously, she classified them as much-needed childcare. However, perhaps on a subconscious level she was still choosing stimulating activities that would support her daughter's interests and feed her curiosity. In our first interview, she indicated this as a priority. In a follow-up journal entry she notes,

“I have registered Kit in various camps and activities. I will admit, though, that until taking part in this study, I thought of these activities more in terms of child care--how will we fill these days without school? will I be able to do any of my scholarly work or not this summer?--than educational opportunities. Participating in the study has made me more mindful of educational content. I know she's happier with structure and stimulation, so that shapes my decisions about what to schedule--i.e. science camp rather than hanging out at Watertown pool. Last week, when we spent time at the beach with my family, for instance, I noticed that of all of her cousins, Kit was the only one who opted to do the worksheet and seek answers at Kitty Hawk and thereby earn a "junior ranger" badge. Afterward, she asked about whether we

could visit other national parks and earn more badges. This has got me thinking about spring break: Gettysberg [SIC]? Valley

Forge? Williamsburg? History is something that engages her imagination.”

It is clear from Eleanor’s sentiments that despite her foremost need for childcare, she also sees herself as an activity gatekeeper for leisure time activities, but in doing so she and Kit are both on the receiving end of out of school time “perks”. Eleanor’s benefit of having choices and options would have been considered a luxury for a working-class mom like Helen or even other middle-class mothers like Lucy, whose day-to-day realities were much more constrained by resource deficits.

Still, Eleanor is not aloof to the double-edged sword her “flexibility” creates. As the study wears on, her summer has not gone according to plan. Though she and Kit had established what she thought would be a “well-oiled” schedule, Kit has expressed agency in “bagging” a camp or two. Instead, she opts to hang out at home, bouncing between her own home and that of her neighbors who live a stone’s throw away. Kit’s reading routine is tapering and instrument practice has fallen by the wayside. Though the mother and daughter have discussed Eleanor’s need to continue with her work over the summer, due to the proximity of working upstairs in her home office, she remains available and is often interrupted.

Eleanor starts to express agitation and frustration about the cultural norm of summer as a time set aside for rest and relaxation. At one visit, she meets me at the door, excitedly exclaiming, “This is the summer!” She proceeds to vent her frustrations about playing chauffeur to Kit and her friends—taking them to the pool and hosting play dates for demanding children. She notes how if she worked outside of the home in a job with clearer boundaries this would not be the reality, but alas, she is often interrupted, frustrated and then

experiences a cyclical sense of guilt for her feelings of resentment. In a journal entry she laments more about summer,

“[Summer] makes it possible for her to travel and engage in other forms of learning (camps, Savannah/ girl scouts, etc.) I suppose, too, that she has time to dream, to play, etc. Lately, though, I've been thinking about all these indulged children around Grantville, all being ferried around from camps to pools and so forth in mini-vans. (What else can we do with them??) When I was this age--dreaded phrase--I mowed lawn for money in the neighborhood, worked very hard in large family gardens and preserving food. That life seems far from the ways our children play and attend camps that appear to be educational, but are really designed to keep kids safe and occupied while their parents work.”

Elizabeth, a low-income mother from Wheaton, has a similar rationale when I explain that summer camps hosted at Grant State can cost hundreds of dollars. She speculates that the cost is high simply to pay to use the facilities and personnel not because the camp is actually academically useful. To Elizabeth, the idea of paying that amount of money for a weeklong camp seems like a sham. Diane, a middle-class mother of two from Grantville, shared Eleanor and Elizabeth's assertions about the guise of “camps” and summer activities as “educational”.

A busy schedule full of activities does not appeal to Diane, a viewpoint that puts her at odds with the social norms of Grantville where children enroll in excessive amounts of activities frequently. In our conversations she describes the enrollment of her sons into activities for reasons closely aligned to “outsourcing”; only doing so when she feels the activity will provide a valuable life skill she or her husband are not able to provide like

swimming or other physical domains where she feels she is personally incompetent. In talking about her preparations for summer, she notes how she...

“...did a lot of research about summer camps and activities. I ramped this up when I found out I got a job and would be needing extra childcare assistance. However, since our household income is low right now, I was especially particular about what I was willing to pay for and, in the end, very little met my stringent expectations! I wanted something well reviewed by peers, available in the morning, and something both my children could participate in together. I care a lot about convenience and I wanted something that would truly give me a much-needed break from childcare. And, of course, I wanted something I knew the boys would be passionate about.”

Elizabeth, Eleanor and Diane have a number of other qualities in common, despite the fact that Elizabeth falls on the opposite end of the social class spectrum. First, none was financially well off. Eleanor is a single mother and her teaching salary is modest. She receives scholarship funds for Kit to attend private school and she makes ends meet by teaching workshops and receiving royalties from some of her published works. At the time of the study, Diane's family was in a financial limbo, living off the meager salary of her husband's post-doctoral work at Grant State. Elizabeth receives federally funded government subsidies for Finn and Sylvie's healthcare. Second, all three operate their family lives outside of the mainstream norm of activity enrollment. They critically question marketing agendas of camps and do not readily buy-in to the social trends in childrearing. And finally, these women are not convinced that activities make a large difference to their child's lives or wellbeing.

Though they guide and support their children, of course hoping they will experience some

fringe benefits from their activities, the main purpose of enrollment remains mostly practical over fanciful. At least in their opinions of enrollment of activities, Elizabeth, Eleanor and Diane operate as progenitors of both concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth.

Social Connections: Summertime is family time

In Lareau's (2003; 2011) cultural logic of childrearing she characterizes social connections and family relationships between classes as disparate. She claims that activities and obligations related to the cultivating of children overpowered middle-class family's schedules thereby weakening their social ties and family connections. Where middle-class children spent time in the company of adults and peers like teammates, she claimed low-income and working-class families spent more time at home and with kin. Contrary to Lareau's findings (which were not necessarily honed in on summer), middle-class mothers in this study used summertime as a means of reclaiming family time normally absorbed by school year routines and extracurricular activities. Mothers discussed "unplugging" and "disconnecting".

Lareau observed middle-class siblings arguing more than working-class and low-income children. In my study, middle-class mothers used summer as a time for siblings to develop deeper bonds. Michelle, mom to Bradey, 9 and Emery 8-months, struggled all summer to balance the demands of working and not having out of the home childcare for Emery. Even though her work was flexible allowing her to bring Bradey and Emery along to meetings and events, she still struggled to keep up. She often calls on Bradey to help her with the baby. He is happy to comply—once abruptly leaving the room during one of our conversations to tend to Emery who had woken up from a nap. Rosalyn adored hanging

back; watching and listening to her daughters play. Louisa, in one of her final journal entries notes how her daughters grew closer during summer months.

“Even during the days we did not have plans, Molly and Josephine stayed busy playing with friends and each other. After writing this last sentence, it hit me that this is another personal growth that the two have shared....they have become best friends! They relied on each other this summer and grew in their relationship with one another.”

Elizabeth, a low-income mother from Wheaton, describes her feelings about family connections afforded by summer vacation.

“I think Finn is getting a lot more family time this Summer, he has been to [Goodwin] with his grandmother for a week, [Linn] with his grandparents and went to a baseball game, which he loved, he is going to the beach with his other grandparents at the end of August, and he just gets to spend a ton of time outside which is great for him! I think the advantages of having time outside of school is being able to spend time with family, while school is in session things get nuts you have to come home, do homework, make dinner, eat dinner, get bathed, then go to bed so the kids never really get quality time with family, in my opinion.”

Elizabeth, Low-Income, Wheaton

Many mothers in this study repeated Louisa and Elizabeth’s sentiments. They consistently cited increases with both immediate and extended family as yet another way of nurturing their child’s well being while school was not in session. Middle-class and otherwise, mothers were particularly sensitive and adamant about summer time as family time. In my home visits, I observed grandparents playing with kids and heard of cousins from out of town preparing for

sleepovers. Children in shared custody situations spent time away from their mothers—sometimes traveling far distances to have annual visits with their fathers’ side of the family. In their journals and interviews, kids shared stories of silly incidents, family “legends” and adventures that happened while on summer vacation with extended family members. Vacations were earmarked as a time to “disconnect” from the regular stresses of the school year. This time was also earmarked as a way of creating and forging family memories.

Results related to Lareau’s key dimension organization of daily life and social connection, shows that what might be a typical cultural logic of childrearing during the school year does not accurately reflect the daily lives families during summer months. Furthermore, my findings demonstrate how family life adapts to cultural norms and expectations looming around the greater context and ecologies of family’s surroundings. This was evident by how much working-class and low-income mothers in the study desired to have their children gain enriching experiences that they perceived were being enjoyed by other children. This was especially clear in Grantville as opportunities abounded, but it was also evident in Watertown and Wheaton, where working-class and low-income mothers were committed to their children’s participation in some activities that were not simply unplanned, spontaneous or fully left to the devices of their children.

Interventions at Institutions

Interventions with institutions as a key dimension of a cultural logic of childrearing resemble some of Lareau’s finding (2003; 2011). Lareau describes how families of a middle-class background are comfortable intervening on behalf of their children at powerful social institutions like schools and healthcare outlets. In instances where affluent families felt their children were overlooked or underestimated for opportunities, she observed parents advocating on behalf of their children, which created and fostered social advantages (Lareau,

2003; 2011). Children observed these practices, which often forged a growing sense of entitlement among middle-class kids, therefore helping to build a slow accumulation of resources. Counter to this, she felt in similar contexts that working-class and low-income families demonstrated inferiority. Poor families were much less likely to intervene on behalf of their children and they did not object or challenge those in positions of authority. Rather than entitlement, working-class and low-income children showed an emerging sense of constraint, rarely challenging those in positions of authority.

Lareau used an ethnographic study method as she observed cultural patterns of the families in her study. In my study, I used interviews as a way of gleaning from mothers how they interacted with their child's school and those in positions of authority. Though I did often observe children taking part in formal activities like sports practices, unlike Lareau, I did not accompany my study participants to parent-teacher conferences, school functions or doctor's visits. Rather, I asked mothers to describe their relationships with teachers and their volunteer experiences at their child's school. Additionally, when the occasion presented itself, we talked about situations that involved teachers, principals or doctors.

In contrast to Lareau's findings, my data shows that while mothers of different backgrounds did not handle interactions with institutions in the same way, they also did not share Lareau's findings. While I could distinguish some degrees of differences among social classes, what I gleaned from working-class and low-income mothers was not as much indicative of inferiority as it was avoidance and circumvention.

Middle-class mothers communicated stable and salubrious relationships with their children's schools. More so than working-class and low-income mothers, they were members of organizations like Parent Teacher Organization (PTOs). Whereas most middle-class mothers in this study had flexible or part-time work schedules, working-class and low-income

mothers had jobs that did not allow for volunteering frequently in the school. Though I found that working-class and low-income mothers had a firm pulse on what was happening with their child at school, these mothers did often find themselves at odds with social institutions.

Mary, a working-class mom from Wheaton, describes how incompleting of her associate's degree weighs as a huge "burden". Even though it has been well over a decade since she was in college, she holds out hope she will be able to someday pass a basic math class and receive her degree. Despite the stress that her incompleting causes, she gives up after feeling frustrated when she tries to reconnect with her university to take the class. She says,

"But like that is an obstacle for me. Like colleges to me seem very confusing and they make everything difficult to figure out. Does something transfer? Will it? We call [my university] and they say, 'Well you'll have to ask them.' Well you call 'them' and they say, 'Well you have to ask them'. And I think, 'Somebody just do their job. Tell me what to do. I want to hand you money. I want to take a class and be done.'"

After many exchanges with the university, she has all but given up on the pursuit of her degree. More so than feelings of inferiority, she conveys a perception of the system as bureaucratic and inefficient. Though the situation does weigh on her, rather than deal with it directly, she chooses mostly to avoid it.

Similarly, Edith is a low-income mom from Grantville whose first grade daughter, Nellie, struggles in school. During the course of the study, Edith described two interconnected situations with Nellie's teacher and then with Nellie's doctor. At our spring meeting, Edith tells me that upon the recommendation of Nellie's teacher and results from a

diagnostic test from Nellie's family doctor, she has decided to get Nellie on medication for attention deficit hyper-activity disorder (ADHD). In our discussions, it is clear that Edith is very frustrated with the intrusion of school on her time with Nellie and the way the school (particularly her teacher) has handled her child's behavior and learning problems. Bluntly, she tells me that she never liked school herself. She says, "I just never liked it...I hate school. Where's my time? I work. I want time with my kid. By the time I come home and cook supper, we spend our time at night reading, where's my time?"

The majority of her resentment stems from her interactions with Nellie's teacher who she perceives as simply against Nellie. She describes her interactions throughout the school year with the teacher as a "battle". In one instance at a tense parent-teacher conference, the teacher suggests Edith should get Nellie checked by a doctor for medication. Edith says,

"[She acted out] and she wasn't allowed to go to the bathroom with her class so I don't really think the teacher liked her. So then I said I think you've embarrassed her enough, I think that she should be able to go to the bathroom with her class. So during my last parent-teacher conference (she's below all her reading) and the teacher said I can't tell you to go get her checked but you might want to go get her checked, so I made an appointment for her the next day and then the teacher [changed her mind] and said she will just do reinforcement so I took her [to the doctor] and she hasn't got in trouble since. Her writing has been better. She used to read one line and forget what she read. Right so now she is doing so much better."

But later, in our last fall interview, Edith has become concerned that Nellie is losing too much weight as a side effect of the medication. She communicated this to Nellie's original physician, but the doctor disregards her concerns. Because of this, she switches doctors,

moving to a new practice. After explaining the weight loss to other doctors at the office, she convinces them that Nellie has lost more than the amount listed on her charts. The doctor agreed and began interventions to get Nellie on track to a healthier weight.

At this same interview, we talked about her relationship with Nellie's teacher, who is the same teacher she had the previous year. At first, Edith had met news about the looping² with disappointment (though she says she "was okay with it" because Nellie liked the teacher), but at our fall interview she communicates an almost 180 degree turn in her opinion of Nellie's teacher. She says, "All resolved. Her teacher is great now. Everyone says, I thought you hated her, but then again I can see why she felt that way, some mornings it is impossible for [Nellie] to get going." She tells me how the teacher got a team of personnel together from the school for a meeting saying things like, "What can we for you?" Edith reiterated her concerns that Nellie was losing too much weight. She suggested that the teacher let Nellie eat at various points throughout the day. The teacher supported this suggestion, allowing Nellie to eat snacks throughout the day, thereby resolving any animosity Edith had against her.

At first Edith did not view the teacher as a partner—someone who had the best interest of her child in mind. This viewpoint was counter to middle-class mothers in the study who tended to see their child's teacher as a partner in their child's development. In fact, many middle-class mothers took their child's teacher's advice seriously, often agreeing with their assessments of their children's behaviors and using them as sounding boards when they needed advice. Rather than communicate her insistence that Nellie had lost too much weight, when her ideas were dismissed she circumvented this doctor rather than assert herself.

² The practice of having children have the same teacher from one year to the next is often to refer to as "looping".

Lareau claims that working-class and low-income mothers feel inferior against those in positions of authority. She notes that middle-class mothers advocate on behalf of their children regularly. Though Edith did somewhat advocate on her child's behalf, especially with the teacher and the first physician, she chose mostly to avoid confrontation with the authority figures. However, perhaps more important than the frustrating detours this situation took was the positive end result where Edith felt as if she had been heard. This situation demonstrates that when those in positions of authority gain trust from families who have had potentially damaging past experiences with institutions, positive outcomes can result.

Language Use at Home

A critical component of Lareau's cultural logic of childrearing was the way in which parents and children in her study utilized language as part of their home life. Lareau found middle-class parents were more likely than poor or working-class families to bargain with their children and have longer exchanges and banter between them. Lareau's findings match with a wide-variety of discourse studies that also claim families comprised of professionals possess and transfer extensive vocabularies to their children. Seminal pieces of work like Heath's (1983) *Ways with Words* and Bernstein's (1971) *Class Codes* make similar claims while other studies report convincing correlations between discourse and literacy and academic achievement.

My study relied mainly on interviews in understanding mothers' childrearing philosophies. In order to gauge language use, then, I employed Spradley's (1979) ethnographic interview techniques in order to glean the way mothers use language at home. In an ethnographic interview, the researcher asks participants to show and tell in a teaching way. I triangulated this with my own observations of how they exercised language with their

children, if reading was an integral part of family life and if their children took part in activities where they could learn new terms and exercise their language skills.

Language use at home, it can be argued, is often a taken for granted element of family life. In one instance, however, Laura, a middle-class mother of four who works part-time as a speech and language pathologist, discusses her deliberate attempt to use summer as a way to work on her children's vocabulary.

Laura: I'm going to try to work this summer on vocabulary.

MM: Okay.

Laura: Like this just came to my head, like we went to a creek the other day, like yesterday, and we were digging up rocks and they were trying to get these rocks out of the ground. So instead of talking about digging, we're talking about excavating. So I'm just trying to teach them, what's excavating? Just to kind of learn new words.

MM: And concepts?

Laura: Yes, yeah. Vocabulary and concepts just in context.

MM: So why do you think that vocabulary is important?

Laura: Well, I'm a speech therapist so that's always like in the back of my mind, like, vocabulary and it's kind of – like I always feel it's like the basis for everything. Like vocabulary to reading, to anything like that.

MM: Okay.

Laura: So that's always big for me.

Though Laura's specific reference to building her children's vocabulary was unusual, I often observed middle-class mothers utilizing their professional expertise with their children and engaging them in conversations more so than working-class or low-income mothers. Furthermore, at the beginning stages of the study, low-income mothers were extremely taciturn, only answering my questions or emails with short, almost curt responses. Though

they were welcoming and obliging, I often wondered if they perceived my questions as intrusive or if this was a larger part of their regular language patterns. I opted then to take a different approach with mothers who seemed to only provide short answers. I put my interview protocols aside and let the conversation flow naturally. In these situations, engaging in an activity with their children became an excellent way to spur dialogue.

This strategy typically paid off and sometimes coincidentally led to insightful exchanges. For example, one day during a visit at Elizabeth's (low-income) home, Finn, her 7-year old son decided he wanted to play a game rather than venture out into the neighborhood. He wanted me to pick the game, but I instead persuaded him to decide. We walked to a closet off the dining room chock full of board games, puzzles and toys. He pulls out *The Game of Life*³. As we played, Elizabeth sits in and helps Finn when he has trouble reading game cards. Between turns, Elizabeth and I discuss at length, her aspirations for Finn to go to college and her hope that he will choose a path free of drugs and alcohol, start a family or if he so chooses, go into the military.

As the study progressed and home visits became more frequent, it was not uncommon for me to have deeper and more involved conversations with mothers about parenting practices. Though some low-income and working-class mothers were plainer spoken and informal in their use of language than middle-class mothers, they still expressed themselves clearly and very often, eloquently. Their ideas were expressive and I often caught them engaging their children in lengthy explanations about the world around them. They viewed themselves as facilitators and gatekeepers to their children's knowledge bases and they

³ The Game of Life is described as a classic American board game. The following is a product description from retailer Amazon.com: Practice makes perfect in the game of Life. Try marriage, kids, and more. Will you go to college and take out student loans? Or join the working force and collect on payday? Will you go bankrupt, or earn millions in stock and real estate? Anything's possible with a spin of the Life wheel! A classic family game that can be a reality check--or just a fun time. Retrieved November 6, 2013 from <http://www.amazon.com/Hasbro-4000-Game-of-Life/dp/B000001WD7>

utilized resources like the Internet in fielding complex questions. Edith explains, “If she's doing something and she runs around and sees a bug or something I can explain it to her. The teacher’s not going to take the time to explain it to her. Nellie asks thousands of questions about everything.” In an email to me, Maggie, a working-class mother of two demonstrates her role as teacher and guide to her children, going above and beyond a provider of necessities.

“I am loving looking at the ways the boys are learning this summer. In the first week we learned how heavy water is while playing with the water play table and buckets. We cleared an area of brush and examined how trees decompose and turn back into soil for the forest. We held and examined and googled information on a dozen different types of bugs, insects, toads, spiders, and worms we came across in the last week while clearing brush. While driving around [a local mountain range] we saw two different snakes (snakes were on the road and we were in the car but we stopped and looked out the window). One was a rattle snake. This was the first time the boys saw one in real-life. Great teaching moment for being safe and educated about wildlife. While on a hike at [a state forest] we talked about stagnant water vs. fresh water and the habitats they create for animals. Bill is learning so much by experiencing the world around him.”

Maggie’s descriptions of her interactions with her children were not entirely unique among low-income and working-class families. Many mothers, not just of the middle-class variety indulged their children in attention and discussion. They stopped what they were doing to listen to their child’s ideas. They also gave their children “the floor” to read and “show and tell” me about pieces of their artwork. Helen and Edith, both single-moms who

work in blue-collar jobs, often gush about their children. Within the first few minutes of meeting Edith, she is showing me pictures of her three daughters and two-year old grandson. “There is my baby,” Edith says proudly. Helen describes Jack as a “...sweet kid. Oh, he is so sweet”. She explains to me a plan to save up all her vacation time so that next summer they can spend more time together. About their free time at home she says, “We read a lot. We play games. We build puzzles...Jack has a really good imagination. He takes boxes and you name it...He takes boxes and makes little lands.”

Despite Helen’s best intentions to provide enrichment for her son, like many working-class and low-income children in the study, his parents did not have the resources to provide him with many outside of the home activities that might enhance his vocabulary. Though many of them read books to their children at home, because their mothers worked odd hours, mothers did not have as much time to read to their kids or take them to the library as their counterparts. In terms of professional credentials, low-income and working-class mothers did not technically have the human capital or professional experiences that would enable them to transfer valuable vocabularies to their children (as the women in the study who were educators or researchers, for example). Even still, working-class and low-income mothers made honest attempts within their capabilities to use the resources they had at their disposal to educate their children.

Contingent and Leveraged Exploration

Time and again, study participants articulated summer out of school time as a critical window in the lives of their children to reach levels of exploration generally stymied by the structure imposed by school and regular year activities. Nevertheless, the levels of exploration and managerial strategies for activating such exploration did show variation based

on social class. The detailed and rich conversations I had with mothers about philosophies related to summer vacation show a consistent pattern of growth and well being achieved through the act of exploration.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I provided evidence for mothers' perceptions that summer school year routines inhibit their children's exploration time. Regardless of background or community context, mothers shared a philosophical viewpoint that summer vacation is a powerful developmental period of childhood—one marked by open discovery that occurs without the imposition of school. However, levels of exploration were attainable for middle-class mothers, but constrained for working-class and low-income mothers. Because of this, I re-conceptualize class differences and out of school summer time as I introduce a theory related to summer childrearing strategies: contingent exploration and leveraged exploration. These theories were based on a consistent pattern cited by mothers that “exploration” is a primary purpose and benefit to summer out of school time.

Middle-class mothers practiced a form of “leveraged exploration” as they possess the latitude and backing of resources that enabled experiences considered invaluable to their child's childhood. For working-class and low-income mothers, exploration occurred but was more “contingent”, that is, experiences were more constrained, limited, dependent on social/community resources, and based on an alignment of events that worked in mothers' favors.

In Table 7, I provide the key characteristics of summertime family practices observed over the course of the study. First, the left-most column of Table 7 demonstrates that though ultimately mothers did show variation based on class, they also shared a number of philosophies in common. In the next section, I unpack the key components of each.

Table 7: Summertime Childrearing: Leveraged and Contingent Exploration

		<i>Differentiated Strategies According to Social Class</i>	
<i>Shared Core Philosophies Regarding Summer Vacation</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Middle Class: Leveraged Exploration</i>	<i>Working Class/Low-Income: Contingent Exploration</i>
<p>Mothers' philosophy of child's childhood foremost consideration.</p> <p>Mothers' decisions influenced by their own history of summer experiences.</p> <p>Child's interest and temperament determines time spent on educational activities</p> <p>Time with extended family increases and is considered invaluable to child's well being.</p> <p>Flexible and dynamic structure of daily life allows for free play.</p> <p>Embracing & acquiescence of summer vacation as a regular and desirable social norm</p>	Activities	<p>Children "dabble" and try out new activities both seasonally and year-round.</p> <p>Activity-types cover a wide-range, building capacities in a variety of domains.</p> <p>When attempts at activities fail, the experience is still considered valuable.</p> <p>Mothers accept inconveniences of activities related to time and finances.</p> <p>Family "policies" concerning activities are common.</p>	<p>Activities are based locally and require low resources for execution.</p> <p>Limited engagement of opportunities due to finances, "trust deficits" and knowledge of access leads.</p> <p>Family life routines in summer more closely mirror school time routines as mothers continue with work schedules and children choose how to spend free time.</p> <p>Patterns of participation are not regularly continued.</p> <p>Skills may not be cultivated or pursued further than ad hoc.</p>
	Traveling/Vacations	<p>Vacations are preplanned well in advance through a combination of word of mouth extensive research or prior exposure.</p> <p>Trips often made possible by pooling resources with family/friends.</p>	<p>Traveling is limited and relies on "windfalls" or family connections, employer-sponsored events, social services and/or public resources for opportunities.</p>

As presented in Chapters 5 and 6, a mainstay for all mothers who took part was their own personal histories with summer vacation as well as a culturally significant "frame" for summer as a special rite of passage. The remaining portion of the table introduces the qualities of leveraged and contingent exploration. I will explain each of these theories separately.

Contingent Exploration

For working-class and low-income mothers exploration was "contingent". I observed that all children in the study were at least somewhat active outside the home. If children were not participating in structured activities, their mothers aspired for them to explore but were

often stymied because of work schedules or financial constraints. Exploration did occur, but more so than middle-class mothers, it was provisional and tied to circumstances. Contingent experiences were those opportunities reliant on employers, social networks, and community-sponsored events that required low expenses and logistical resources like travel.

For working-class mothers, vacations usually meant driving to the home of a friend or family members where accommodations were free and other expenses kept to a minimum. If lodging was not free, short trips were common. Often though, plans fell through or simply were not realized as mothers had hoped. Maggie explained that she had hoped to visit a friend who had recently relocated to a well-known city near educational, historical sites. She was not able to go, however, because she and her friend were not able to align their schedules. Instead, they traveled to her mother's home in a nearby town for getaways. Importantly, like in the case of Maggie, working-class and low-income mothers planned events they thought were both educational and recreational. This finding demonstrated how when working-class and low-income mothers were provided with opportunities they perceived as manageable, they frequently exercised this privilege and many noted they wished more opportunities were within their reach. Often, however, they were constrained by logistical matters that were not in the range of concerns for middle-class mothers.

In the following transcript from an interview with Caroline, mother of two from Wheaton, we discuss how her daughter's participation in a theatre production in a town a significant distance away (about a 30 minute drive from Wheaton) was prohibited by the cost of gas prices.

MM: Does she ever come to you with ideas of things that she wants to do and you're just like we can't do that?

Caroline: Yeah.

MM: What are some examples?

Caroline: There is a play in [a neighboring town].

MM: Okay.

Caroline: She was in it last year but this year she wanted to do it and I can't do it because of the gas prices. They did last year, they did Les Mis, they're doing Guys and Dolls this year.

MM: And that was because of gas, not really anything else, just the gas prices?

Caroline: The gas.

Like Caroline, many of the working-class and low-income mothers in the study reluctantly had to forego enrollment in activities because they faced seemingly simple constraints. Still, they were eager for their children to learn and try new things. In the same interview, Caroline tells me about an opportunity Samantha, her 13 year-old daughter had to try kayaking. They were acquainted with the instructor through her son's affiliation with a non-profit organization for adults and children with special needs.

“They're going to be kayaking here pretty soon. We're supposed to...there is a girl up in [local town]. She wanted Samantha to start racing kayaks...for Samantha to start competing in kayaking and she's – and she told me to meet a [a local] park at 6 o'clock...every Thursday. She never showed up every time we went. She never showed up.”

Like Caroline, mothers in the study who had limited incomes and resources relied on others as a way of gaining summer out of school time experiences. Though plans were foiled or unattained, they gave great amounts of consideration for what they could handle both logistically and financially. Helen, a working-class mother to Jack, was able to take him to an amusement park because it doubled as a company picnic. Edith scheduled a day off work so

she could take her daughter for a day of free activities at a festival in Grantville. Maggie enrolled Bill in a subsidized day camp program with a schedule full of enriching activities. Mary's kids were able to go to a national competition because another mother in the group had a timeshare at the same location.

While participation in activities was important, they were very often constrained by budget and depended on “paydays” or windfall opportunities like tax returns⁴. Still, many indicated that they “found money” or “would make it work” when their kids aspired to participate in an activity. This was true of Edith, a low-income mother from Grantville, who remarked how if her daughter wanted to do something, she would find a way. For Edith, this meant taking on a part-time job in retail so she could enroll her daughter and two-year old grandson who lived with her into a gymnastics class.

Experiences were also contingent on issues connected to relationships with activity vendors and camp personnel. More so than middle-class mothers, low-income and working-class moms entered their children into activities with a degree of fear that if they could not be with their child that something might happen to him or her. Working-class and low-income mothers also cited more concerns about their child's safety. For example, many were straightforward about their general sense of distrust toward others; especially when it came to out of the home activities. This cynicism often resulted in an opting out or self-selection of their children from activities that might broaden their child's toolkit of special skills and abilities. Mary prohibited her daughter from attending an overnight camp because she was fearful that someone might harm her. Edith did not want her daughter to take a field trip with her day camp to a nearby cavern because she did not trust the staff to watch her properly. She ultimately took the day off and went along so Nellie could go. Middle-class

⁴ In her book about consumerism patterns according to social class, Pugh (2009) found a similar strategy for parents of low-incomes.

mothers did not have the same degree of concern for their child's safety. Of course it was a consideration, but most often, a general distrust for activities outside the home did not occur to them. Lareau (2003; 2011) notes how working-class and low-income families lack the educational competence required to engage effectively with ubiquitous institutions that result in the successful action of cultural capital. Given this reality, such a finding is not entirely surprising. Regardless, it does have implications for policy and practice. As demonstrated in the earlier example of Edith with her family doctor and Nellie's teacher, those in positions of authority may wrongly label avoidance with a social system as indolence rather than lack of knowledge about such social systems.

To summarize contingent exploration, the above examples demonstrate how low-income and working-class mothers went about the activation of exploration during out of school summer time. More so than middle-class mothers, children of these families took part in activities that were local and based on low amounts of resources. Mothers also relied more on opportunities through social connections and employers than did middle-class mothers (though middle-class mothers also participated in free and community events regularly). Finally, participation was contingent on issues related to lack of trust of personnel and caretakers at summer camps and facilities. This finding demonstrates that at least partially, exploration levels are hindered as the result of mothers' self-selection or opting out of activities. Counter to contingent exploration, middle-class mothers' navigation of summer was leveraged exploration explained next.

Leveraged Exploration

In contrast to contingent exploration demonstrated by working-class and low-income families, middle-class mothers practiced a form of "leveraged exploration". The use of the word leveraged is used here in a number of capacities. First, it derives from the banking term

defined as investment using monetary capital sources in expectation or hope of a return on investment. Here, I both borrow from this definition and expand it to encompass other forms of capital like cultural, social, human as well as economic/monetary. Leveraged exploration illustrates how middle-class mothers had the latitude and backing of resources to allow their children to explore more freely because stakes were of a low-risk nature. For example, when a child did not continue with an activity long-term (even if there was a significant investment made), mothers were okay to have their child experiment with the activity and move to a new one. Most middle-class children had wide ranges of activities that they participated in on a regular basis. They changed frequently from season-to-season. During the summer, activity patterns slowed down and middle-class children had more time to explore freely without the guidance of adults and this was an overriding importance to mothers. As I noted earlier in this chapter, mothers saw the benefit to this free time, particularly in the beginning of summer because they felt it played a key role for their child's socio-emotional well being. Still, when looking at activity patterns, the swath for adult-led participation in activities was still much wider.

Children from middle-class backgrounds were offered a variety of summer camp choices, took scheduled week long vacations to new places or revisited old ones. They also had more opportunities to hone skills (i.e. intense preparation for traveling teams) or gain new ones (i.e. give swim team or science camp a try) than did working-class or low-income children. Middle-class families often invested in equipment related to activities only to have children lose interest and move on to something new. Thelma noted how in the previous summer her children were into tennis, so they purchased a racket, but that was later exchanged for an interest in ice and roller-skating. This was not seen as a failure from the viewpoint of mothers, but rather a form of lessons learned.

Due to their professional statuses, middle-class mothers who worked typically had more latitude in their employment to activate exploration than did working-class and low-income mothers. Many middle-class mothers in the study had only part-time, flexible employment allowing them to transport and deal with scheduling issues around camps and activities that run inconsistent hours (i.e. 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.). This was another way in which they leveraged their social positions and were able to activate exploration more freely than their less-advantaged counterparts. Birdie, a middle-class single mother, actively pursued scholarship opportunities for her daughter to attend a science camp that was financially out of reach. She contacted camps early and made special scheduling arrangements with her employer so she could pick up her daughter midday from a camp, bring her daughter home to a sitter and then go back to work for the remainder of the afternoon.

Lareau (2003; 2011) finds that in the United States, children have unequal childhoods due in part to child-rearing patterns that lead to social advantage or disadvantage. In this chapter, I have presented findings that demonstrate how some of Lareau's (2003; 2011) observed key dimensions of a cultural logic of childrearing were more apparent than others in my study sample. Based on my findings, I cannot claim exclusively that families clearly fall exclusively into the categories of accomplishment of natural growth or concerted cultivation. Especially with working-class and low-income families, I found mothers eager to enroll their children in activities that would broaden their children's scope of experience and exploration. Scope of participation was attributed to issues related to work schedule constraints, financial stability, accessibility based on community opportunity and a fear for the unknown which caused a general sense of distrust toward outside of the home activities.

Particularly, leveraged exploration shares in common some characteristics of concerted cultivation with one key exception. Middle-class mothers use summer to shore up

what they believe will be indelible memories that belong to the fleeting window of a child's childhood. Perhaps during the school year when mothers are constantly inundated with messages related to success and failure, the project aspect of child-rearing comes more clearly into focus. But here, the child's childhood was paramount. Further still, all mothers in the study shared this philosophy.

Summary

It has been my hope throughout the course of this study to demonstrate that summer out of school time, on a fundamental level, reveals telling and often complex narratives about family life. In this chapter section, I reframe mothers' meanings about summer out of school time and place them into the unique context of what it means to belong. The act of belonging, while perhaps subjective, helps to demonstrate how at the core, the mothers in this study strive to not only achieve belonging, but also transcend it to personally reach higher levels of psychosocial needs.

While it is impossible (neither in scope or intent of this research) to predict the life courses for the children who took part in this study, I do feel it fair to make the connection between childhood opportunities to learn outside of school during summertime and thread what this participation (or lack thereof) means to mothers' senses of belonging. The narrative themes embedded in this study about summer vacation, as multi-dimensional and as they are, stem from basic as well perceived needs.

In her book *Longing and Belonging*, Pugh (2009) studies the way parents of differing social class backgrounds adapt to consumer demands. She observed three ways in which feeling "different from other kids" (p. 9) informed parents buying decisions: interactional (differences in talents or owning a trendy item); personal (long-lasting characteristics like family facts or inherent personality traits); and social (race, gender, nationality and the like).

While all families participated in what she called an “economy of dignity” where they supported a sense of belonging translatable through goods and experiences framed as symbols, rationalizations were much different between social classes. She found most middle-class and low-income children had material goods quite similar to one another. However, though affluent families had spending power, they practiced “symbolic deprivation”, pointing to their “moral restraint” by emphasizing what their kids did not have. They used symbolic deprivation as a way of chastising normative consumer behavior as “keeping up with the Joneses” (p. 9 – 10) and as wholly contradictory to their ideals. On the other hand, low-income families practiced “symbolic indulgence” often making great sacrifice in order to purchase trendy items like toys and electronics that they viewed as a measure of granting their child a sense of belonging.

Pugh’s assessment of consumerism differentiated by social class has two important implications to the study presented here. First, her findings demonstrate that while the outputs of parental practices share resemblances, it is often “behind the scenes” behaviors related to navigation and central values and attitudes that create the most revealing differences. In my study, I found that between families with different incomes, on paper (i.e. survey) or in superficial discussions mothers, the objectives and goals associated with summer vacation had some striking similarities, but in further discussions with mothers, reasons and rationalizations toward how mothers “did what they did” were usually quite disparate. And second, Pugh (2009) stresses the different perception of needs related to belonging and social class. By exercising “symbolic deprivation” the middle-class families in Pugh’s study express a confidence that they already belong to society, so they need not prove themselves by the accrument of goods for their kids. By being part of the middle-class, these families already belonged.

In my study, for mothers facing extenuating circumstances, a desire to establish belonging or social needs to their children was a pronounced theme. A useful way to conceptualize an intangible quality like belonging is to put it in the context of other needs. Maslow (1943), a humanistic psychologist, designed a series of five pre-potent categories in a hierarchical pyramid format as seen in Figure 10.

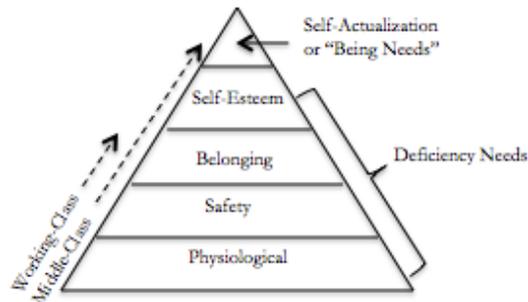


Figure 10: Modified Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

At the base level sit rudimentary needs like those related physiology such as food, clean water and a temperate climate. Along the same lines, safety needs like access to protective shelters and medicine. Belonging is sandwiched between other needs in the hierarchy. Commonly, it is also referred to simply as “social” as they are connected to family, friends and intimacy. Once physiological, safety and belonging needs have been met, one can realize self-esteem including self-mastery and receiving of recognition for skills and abilities. Self-actualization assumes the pinnacle space of the hierarchical structure. In the process of self-actualization individuals achieve their highest level of “being”.

An important quality of Maslow's Hierarchy revolves around what constitutes as needs. While no family in this study lived in an abject state of poverty where food or water was scarce and all had housing in “safe” locations (e.g. low crime rates), working-class and low-income mothers had more rudimentary concerns than did middle-class mothers such making choices between car maintenance versus enrolling children in activities.

Maslow's hierarchy has been criticized for its over dependence on individual needs rather than collective ones—especially needs that are taken for granted like language acquisition (Neher, 1991). Still, on a fundamental level, summer vacation *is* a singular experience. I often noted the way in which mothers seemed to base their decisions on individual circumstances more so than during the school year, where mothers were involved in collective endeavors provided by their child's school and class. That said, working-class and low-income mothers still aspire for their families to belong to the cultural norm of summer vacation. I find that because middle-class mothers have mastered physiological, safety and social needs related to belonging, they are more capable and confident than their working-class counterparts in moving up the motivation ladder to also achieve self-esteem and self-actualization.

Put another way, the middle-class could also be called the “belonging-class”. To establish a stable middle-class family lifestyle continues to endure as a quintessential facet of also accomplishing the American Dream. As Obama declared, “...the stakes for our middle class and everybody who is fighting to get into the middle class could not be higher.”⁵ The working-class families who took part in this study were working toward belonging, while most middle-class mothers had already reached or transcended that level. For all mothers who shared aspects of their lives, providing a fulfilling and memorable summer for their children was not only a priority, it was a measure of belonging and perhaps a larger ascription to the socially constructed “good parent”. This finding separates itself from studies (e.g. Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003, 2011) that focus on social class, but took place in different contemporary contexts than the study presented here. One potential explanation is the rampant development of technology over the past decade that created deep changes in

⁵ Obama quote, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/07/24/president-obama-lays-out-better-bargain-middle-class> Retrieved November 14, 2013

mainstream cultures. Just as access to services like cable and internet services have broadened so to have the desires of parents from virtually all class distinctions who pine for access to contemporary social practices and privileges that secure a sense of belonging.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to understand how mothers in varying social contexts and of differential socioeconomic backgrounds managed their child's out of school summertime. Like other scholars interested in seasonal effects that occur as a result of schools closing for an annual summer vacation, I developed research questions that if properly answered, would contribute to bodies of literature about summer out of school time as well as studies focusing on child-rearing strategies according to social class. Through the presentation of my study's findings supplied to this point, I have provided formative evidence based on my own data collection with 22 mothers whose children participate in an annual summer vacation. The final four items comprise the goals for this final chapter.

1. **Summary of Key Findings** – I will provide a summary of the key findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 & 7 as they are related to three subsets of guiding questions.
2. **Limitations** – I outline the limitations of this study including a discussion of caveats about my study sample like demographic-make-up. Here, I address outliers and issues related to generalizability.
3. **Policy Implications & Future Directions** – In this section, I broach the subject of policy reform as a result of the information presented in this study. Many findings in this study propel attention to policies in the domains of schools, families and communities. I will briefly provide policy implications for each of these areas.

Summary of Key Findings

In this study, I set out to discover how mothers of varying social classes experience their child's summer vacation. I was guided by three subsets of research questions. In Chapter 5, I presented findings that answered the following questions: What are mothers' perceptions of SLL? How do education stakeholders prepare families? How did preparation affect childrearing strategies? Three findings about the intersection of schools, family life and summer vacation were presented. By combining two theories, Silva's types of time and Epstein's spheres of influence, I showed how as the school year begins to taper mothers notice less structure at school and a diminishing of homework and extracurricular activities that affect home routines. This creates a school year-to-summer limbo that demonstrates a steady distancing of the shared decision-making that normally occurs during the school year. I find the limbo affects expectations of middle-class and working-class mothers most as they design and attempt to construct productive summer vacations for their kids. Working-class moms express fears about achieving a fulfilling summer vacation. This desire to provide a conventionally "good" summer vacation spurs feelings of inadequacy.

This was especially true in a town like Grantville where opportunities are plentiful but logistically and financially out of reach for segments of the population (including working class and single mothers). Low-income mothers had the least amount of expectations. Middle-class mothers planned far in advance of their child's summer vacations, often designing rewards and incentives to protect against idleness. "School-like" activities are commonly employed in middle-class families. Despite knowledge about summer learning loss as a phenomenon, I showed how a slow, but steady drift between the home and school outdid middle-class and working-class mothers' good intentions for carrying out school-like

activities. I noted how it was child temperament that most determined if continue academic-based activities like reading and worksheets.

In Chapter 6, I explored how mothers characterize the purpose of their child's summer vacation and further asked where does summer vacation fit into family life? I found that mothers, despite social class, were remarkably consistent in the articulation that summer vacation has a profound effect on their child's childhood. Mothers appropriated this meaning at least in part to their own experience with a summer vacation. Regardless of the nature of their memories regarding summer, each endeavored to provide their children a time for new experiences as well as a space for independent growth and learning marked by exploration. Further, mothers believed that summer was able to act as antidote for the stresses and pressures school had on their children. However, for most mothers, the length of summer was not ideal. Many children experienced boredom and expressed a desire to go back to school. This led mothers to willingly invite the routine of school back into family life. Still, in discussions about year round school, reactions were decidedly mixed.

These findings add dimension to the intersection between the sociology of education and research about summer learning loss in a number of ways. Foremost, inside the "black box" that occurs between the end of the school year and the beginning of a new one are mothers' strong aspirations for a summer which enhances her child's childhood. Despite clear differences in mothers' social class standings, each participant's purpose and meaning of summer was largely informed by dominant mainstream constructions like a child's childhood and the romanticism and idealism of what it means to have "summer vacation".

All mothers in the study experienced a summer vacation themselves and many of them perceived summer out of school time as character building and as a timeframe that had positive effects on family life. These findings add dimension to seasonal research studies that

normally place their focus on summer losses and regressions relative to pace of learning during the school year. Findings show that social class and community context notwithstanding; mothers acquiesce to summer vacation because they possess a hopeful optimism for the contribution of “summer” to their child’s childhood even if they are anxious, inconvenienced or otherwise frustrated by its annual occurrence. This finding demonstrates that intergenerational effects paired with powerful social constructions make policy changes like school calendar reform difficult to achieve. However, especially toward the end of the summer, mothers, again, regardless of social class standing and community, cited shortcomings mainly focused on the length of summer as too long. Second, these findings match well with Sharon Hays’ (1996) book *Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* where she develops the concept of “intensive mothering” as a theory explaining the modern mother’s investment in their child above all else.

In Chapter 7, I asked: In what ways do theories related to cultural capital and Lareau’s cultural logic of childrearing explain differential summer out of school time experiences. I show how despite a common philosophy of summertime childrearing shared by mothers; variations in decisions for how to spend time did show variation between social class and community context. To this end, I revisit Lareau’s logic of childrearing, which served as my conceptual framework for the study. Here I will show how mothers utilize time differently based on resources and forms of capital that ultimately affect intergenerational patterns of inequity during summer out of school time. Like other scholars, my data leads me to argue for a reconceptualization of mothers’ summertime child-rearing strategies into one broad enough to include not just social class differences, but one that considers mothers’ circumstances and underlying value sets; especially those relevant to relationship building and issues related to access (Chin and Phillips, 2004).

Limitations

In this section, I provide some study limitations for consideration. First, because I was tethered to the schedule of busy mothers, many interviews had to be rescheduled and unfortunately, one interview, my last with Caroline did not take place because of too many scheduling conflicts. This was a loss to the data, but was unavoidable. During heavy interview phases of the study, I made it a point to keep my own schedule flexible, often foregoing personal plans to conduct the interview. Toward the front-end of the study, after a number of re-schedulings with Eleanor she makes a statement akin to – “and so your [work with mothers] begins.” In addition, because I lived in Grantville, I found it difficult to travel to Wheaton frequently since the majority of my participants were also located in Grantville and Watertown. Ideally, I would have studied one site at a time, but again, due to scheduling issues and busy summer schedules of mothers, this was not logistically possible.

A second limitation deals with the geography for study sites. Though the sites here were carefully selected for their contextual and socioeconomic diversity, none were located in an urban area where mothers may have very different sets of concerns about summer vacation. For instance, Grantville, Watertown and Wheaton all have low crime rates and residents enjoy freedom in their general securities that are often the impetus for summer program development in inner city contexts (i.e. camps developed to keep kids from dangerous street or gang activity). However, this fact in and of itself endorses many of the sentiments offered through this study: contextual complexity matters, especially for disadvantaged populations. Still, the voices of mothers from urban geographies are not provided here.

An absence of racial diversity could be considered a third limitation. Only two women out of my participant pool were a race other than Caucasian and one child was bi-

racial (His mother was Caucasian). However, since I used Lareau's theories as my conceptual framework, I went by her finding that SES plays a stronger role in life trajectories than that of race. I was able to gain access to many more women in Grantville than other communities, leaving the study imbalanced. Because of this it is also important to address outliers as a fourth limitation.

An outlier is an extreme case found outside of those normally encompassed by an established "grid" (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 389.) Particularly in Wheaton, my sample was small and only included a working-class or low-income population. Again, due to the working-class nature of the town, I felt my cases represented well the general population in Wheaton. My social connections and frequent participation in social events in Wheaton allowed me to observe how children's activities, though pale in comparison to those offered in Grantville and Watertown, were well-attended and appreciated by parents. Mary represented a working-class parent whose children had busy social lives. Caroline offered a medium-type of involvement (especially because of her financial and logistical constraints). Elizabeth filled a void at the opposite end of the spectrum by communicating a daily life that included very little outside of the home formal activities.

Grantville and Watertown as study sites also had limitations. A good variety of the mothers who responded to my study, also had participated in Grant State research studies in the past. I expressed my concern about this to a peer also in my department and she linked me to Edith (low-income), who eventually led me to Helen (low-income). These women helped to create a wider range of diversity within Grantville where the population tends to be well educated. As it were, this study was a nonrandom sample making the findings not relevant to the broader population and therefore, is not generalizable.

Policy Implications & Future Directions

In this section, I offer further discussion about the entities considered in this study—family, community and schools. I also broach the subject of policy implication as a result of the information presented. Many findings propel attention to policies in the domains of families, schools and the broader communities in which they live. In some cases, my recommendations are focused on summer out of school time as a powerful entity on its own, but I also present suggestions that transcend seasonal implications. In this section then, I provide closing thoughts about each domain and where possible, offer policy implications and ideas for future research.

Schools & Summer: What are the effects of standards and accountability?

Because Summer Learning Loss (SLL) effects are cumulative not acute, advocates struggle to make claims that frame SLL as a self-contained social problem. For example, policies are constructed around remediation (both at the early childhood stage and after high school graduation) rather than focused on continuing, quality summer bridge programs. Because of this, school calendar reform, like moving to a year-round school system for instance, faces ambivalence when it comes to mobilization and change in public perception.

In addition, my study shows that from school-to-school and even classroom-to-classroom (even those in the same district and under the same roof) that preparations and approaches to curbing summer learning loss were wildly inconsistent. Schools face insurmountable challenges in terms of changing a cultural perspective that summer vacation foremost equals a formal respite from school-like activities. One key example presented in the body of this research was how summer reading programs were popular toward the start of summer, but they eventually lost steam as days and weeks wore on. This reality presents

significant challenges for teachers, administrators and policymakers when the season of summer is so clearly distinct from the school year. This study at least partially explains how families value summer as a time to reclaim family life, forge stronger relationships between siblings and neighbors and give their children space to explore their communities without the imposition of school.

Working-class and low-income families, even though they were faced with difficult decisions regarding childcare issues and constraints significant enough to preclude activities like summer camps had the same hopeful optimism about the positive repercussions of summer as did middle-class mothers. Each family involved in this study possessed a sense of summer as a time to enhance their child's childhood. To be sure, middle-class families were more likely to demonstrate instances of enrichment by enrolling their children in unique summer camps and taking them on interesting vacations, outings and trips. Working-class and low-income children also had some degree of enriching experiences, but these instances were much more left to chance. Future research about the intersection between stringent standards and accountability and summer as a cultural rite of passage may shed further light on this finding.

It is not entirely clear from this research the degree to which families resent a current climate of top-down federal policies that create a climate of standardized testing and accountability in schools (i.e. standardized testing). Across the board, however, mothers agreed that a child's needs in securing wellbeing and personal growth as an independent and critical thinker exist in many different contexts—not only in school. These findings invite researchers to explore how policies like No Child Left Behind might deter school calendar reform because of a perception that standardized testing movements endorse a student-child dichotomy whereby creativity and self-expression are sought during summer months outside

of school. At the center of this research should be families—especially who operate outside of the mainstream middle-class. In the study presented here, working-class and low-income mothers were quite adamant that what their children is not necessarily more formal schooling. Instead, these families need more opportunity for tuition assistance for enriching outside of school opportunities—those that are consistent with the ones enjoyed by the stable middle-class.

Families: Inclusion and outreach

My research shows that when families of many different backgrounds are invited to participate in events that broaden their child's cadre of experiences, they usually take part if extenuating circumstances are taken out of the equation. However, working-class and low-income families communicated a level of disconnect with social services. It seemed as though outreach to families was lacking. The question is why when each community had a bevy of public and social support programs in place (Grantville and Watertown especially)?

Research conducted in sociology and education certainly acknowledges the unique nature of families, yet policies that might promote better access to social services rarely reflect this. One potential reason for this reality is a miscalculation by stakeholders of the rate at which family circumstances are fluid not fixed or easily measured by social class distinctions. In education research, the difficulty in understanding school and community contexts is often assuaged by common benchmarks or commonly accepted standards against which to measure social class. Median household prices in a particular town, city or school district or percentage of children who qualify for free and reduced lunches are two distinct examples of how researchers base evidence and formulate claims relevant to social class standing for certain populations. The study presented here was no exception as I used the number of students who qualified for free or reduced lunches to illustrate the socioeconomic realities of

Grantville, Watertown and Wheaton. Using these numbers provided a telling way for the reader to understand the gravity of difference between each community. In addition, I used free or reduced lunch as a way to demonstrate the current financial position of my study participants. Again, it was used for illustrative purposes and to show distinction from one family to another. But this benchmark only provides a small glimpse into the day-to-day realities of participants.

For qualitative studies about social class where number of participants is small in size, the researcher must make choices about how social class will be assigned. The practice is challenging and researchers are under no obligation to adhere to a specific set of standards for how social class is determined or “understood”. Though there are best practices most go about it differently relying on the researcher’s judgment as a foremost tool.

This study reveals many of the complexities of studying modern family structures in the United States. Even in simply looking at my participants “on paper” I often faced difficult choices about the ways to classify and characterize them according to typical social class standards (i.e. middle class, working class and low-income). Though in some cases, decisions were clear cut, in many other cases, my task of social class labels increased tenfold as I got to know families and they discussed with me the extent of their personal and financial situations, which were confounded by factors not simply aligned with labels of middle-class, working-class or low-income lifestyles. For example, Diane’s family qualified for free and reduced lunch at the time our study began, but only because she was in a professional limbo and her husband was working in a post-doctoral situation that was temporary and not well-paying. In Jackie’s situation, she did not have a college degree and her husband had an associate’s degree, but they had an average comfortable household family income well above the poverty line. Lucy was another important example because she held a master’s degree in

her home country, but when she relocated to the United States she took a job that paid well below her credentialed possibilities. Helen was under the impression that though her salary was barely enough to make ends meet (at \$35,000 annually), she made too much to qualify for welfare programs or camp scholarships.

Individual family characteristics were also an important consideration that shaped mothers' day-to-day decisions. Many families had upward of three children all of school age that required financial, academic and emotional support. Some children needed more academic or behavioral attention than other siblings. Single mothers or moms who were remarried ran their households much differently than women who were married. In short, almost every family included in this study had elements of uniqueness that deserved further consideration beyond simple social class assignment. Such a reality poses many difficulties in constructing eligibility criteria for public services and social programs.

In my study, I found that working-class and low-income families were often more isolated and less savvy about navigation of social systems and standards than were middle-class mothers. Other scholars have long-noted similar findings. Barriers to access and assumptions that working-class and low-income families are not as keen to acquire opportunities for their children to learn outside of school are not helpful to families. As demonstrated throughout the course of this paper, when families were targeted for participation, learned about opportunities or were approached personally to take part, they almost always participated. Stakeholders who are invested in enrichment programs that broaden the scope of children's knowledge bases and bolster academic trajectories can enhance policies by restructuring them to include a distinct and well-designed outreach phase.

Outreach can focus on inclusion by working with broader community agencies to understand populations typically unrepresented in enriching activities. Undoubtedly, recent

years have seen slashes in education budgets and ongoing de-funding of social services. This fiscal reality places insurmountable challenges on agencies concerned with reaching out to families who are most in need of services. Where funding is still available for programs, agencies would be well served to redesign funding to funnel moneys into carefully considered outreach phases. Furthermore, outreach programs should also house a phase of evaluation in order to understand how outreach strategies have bolstered programs and benefited the participants for which the programs were designed. Outreach programs should offer flexible hours for working families, reasonable incentives for participation and utilize well-trained empathetic staff capable of developing long-lasting and trustworthy relationships. Finally, outreach programs need to canvas communities—mapping the best locations for where access to families has the most potential.

Summer out of school time: The importance of Communities

Throughout this paper, I have argued that in discussions about family, school and community partnerships, empowered communities have the most opportunity to stall the inequities that occur during summer out of school time. In other words, if family, school and community were a trifecta; community wins in the quest to curb summer out of school inequities. However, as my research also reminds, many communities are simply ill equipped to handle struggling populations—even when the desire to participate in community life is strong. This reality paves a difficult road for disadvantaged communities.

In chapter 7, I introduced the theories of leveraged exploration, practiced by middle-class mothers and contingent exploration, practiced by working-class and low-income mothers. Particularly contingent exploration invites policymakers concerned with summer inequalities to think more simply, but more thoroughly about ways to address such inequalities. Without community support for policies and programs to assist families in

providing their children with outside of school opportunities to learn a theory like contingent exploration is rendered meaningless. However, if community leaders can support initiatives that interface families with resources and support systems, a great deal of return on investment can be expected.

Take for example the many instances of family literacy routines of the families involved in this study. Most had developed a relationship with their local library, used it as a powerful resource and wholeheartedly believed in the power of this social institution. This finding demonstrates how capacity building policies about reading at home have been successful. Public policies that support family literacy are one such way education stakeholders can improve upon their relationships with disenfranchised populations. Public libraries that support families with flexible and accessible operation hours, book mobiles that travel to rural and inner-city vicinities and outreach by library staff local preschools like Head Start are one way to bolster appreciation for academics while also raising children's academic trajectories.

Multidimensional community intervention programs are also an efficient way to promote family, school and community interconnectivity. These initiatives, often referred to as collective impact, enable communities to promote education practices known to ameliorate dropout and prepare students for college and fulfilling careers. Though anecdotally powerful, few rigorous studies have been conducted on such initiatives welcoming researchers to investigate the concrete and long-term benefits of such programs.

My study findings suggest that community support for enrichment and summer learning may significantly curb disparities during the summer, but year round endeavors are also necessary and worthwhile. In communities like Grantville, abundant opportunities for children to learn outside of school are a basic part of the community infrastructure.

Watertown, in part because of its close proximity to Grantville, also supports a large number of programs that take place in the community. Working-class and low-income mothers who participated in this study were still affected by the notion that summer vacation is a worthy and important experience for their children. Based on this, policymakers and education stakeholders, then, should not assume that alternative school calendars for low-income families would always be a welcome change. Indeed, providing insular activities for disadvantaged youth that reflect school year practices may only serve to further disenfranchise low-income populations. Instead, those invested in improving access to opportunities to learn should turn to community collaboration efforts that focus on increasing the availability of social services including programs for enriching out of school time experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A1: Pilot Work Case Study Analysis

Pilot Work

Introduction

Endeavoring to develop a deeper understanding of summer out of school time in practice, I conducted a pilot study spanning from the latter part of May until the beginning of September 2011. My goals for pilot work were the following. First, I wanted to observe if elements of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth might be present in children's summer activities. Inherently connected to this, I wanted to explore if summer activities showed any observable differences between social classes in the cultural logic of child rearing (Lareau, 2003; 2011). Three, I wanted to get parental perspectives on how their children spend summer vacation. Finally, the overarching goal for pilot work was to gather affordances that would buttress arguments for my dissertation proposal. As a way of winnowing away the broad goals stated above, I conducted pilot work at three summer programs in two communities close in proximity but different in social contexts.

My analysis for pilot work has the following layout: descriptions of each community where the program sites were embedded; a depiction of each site in detail according to daily/weekly events and structures and site key informants; preliminary findings and pilot implications along with a section on pilot limitations. I begin with community descriptions of Grantville and Watertown [both pseudonyms].

Community Description: Grantville

Grantville, is a bustling college town comprised of approximately 40,000 residents and 44,000 students who attend Grant State. Grant State boasts a sprawling and meticulously maintained campus that abuts Grantville's downtown center. A main thoroughfare runs directly parallel to the campus and is lined with art galleries, jewelry stores and shops that peddle trendy fashion apparel. There are a variety of cultural choices in fine dining like Thai, Indian, Asian and Middle Eastern available downtown. However, Grantville also appeases the thrifty college population with plenty of discount choices in college apparel, pubs, fast food chains and coffee houses. Polished storefronts offer contemporary as well as traditional designs. New construction of buildings and store openings occur commonly both downtown and on campus.

The prominence of education as a priority in Grantville is well demonstrated by reading the local newspaper, which commonly features up to three education issues on the front page. Many of the town's local preschools, elementary and high schools are within walking distance to Grant State. The Grantville school system has a stellar reputation and is often referred to a "bubble" compared to neighboring districts that do not fare as well on state and national exams. Grantville's town-and-gown relations allow for shared resources between local schools and Grant State. During the summer months, Grant State becomes host to sports, special interest and academic summer camps attended by children and students from around the world. Grantville children also commonly partake in the camps offered by Grant State.

While summer break is a time for rest and relaxation, it's also a time to explore new worlds and opportunities. From sports to music to science, an active summer should be part of any child's overall summer wellness plan. Grant State's Office of Human Resources is proud to present this compilation of summer programs.

Inside you'll find a diverse variety of summer activities located in or around the

[Grantville Region]. No matter what his or her interest, your child is bound to find an activity that will provide fun this summer and memories for life.

We hope you find this guide useful!



Community Description: Watertown

Watertown is located approximately 12 miles outside of Grantville. Streets of the Victorian-style downtown area are situated on steep and hilly terrain. A long and winding river runs perpendicular to the downtown main street and a picturesque park bright with green space, a wrought iron foot bridge and wooden gazebo, is centered next to the river at the base of main street. As a county seat, Watertown stays busy during the workweek with bustling courthouse activity.

In contrast to Grantville, the offerings of shopping in the downtown area are much more modest with a discount dollar store and a variety of thrift and antique shops being common. Though plentiful, restaurant choices are more limited in genre, offering mainly traditional American fare save one American-Style Chinese choice. A two-room art gallery in a renovated historical home is a charming outcropping in the downtown district. A gourmet cupcake shop also adds a touch of panache.

Just outside of the downtown sits a long stretch of abandoned factories and mills. Once a symbol of progress and job security, these buildings are now a reminder of obsolete industry unlikely to return. It could be said that Watertown “rides the coattails” of Grantville, as new construction of large and modern homes is common as a way to meet the needs of workers that commute to Grant State, but are looking for a larger and newer home than one could purchase in Grantville. In talking to park goers in the downtown during my visits, it also appears that those who use the downtown most are those who live or work in downtown Watertown, not those who reside in outskirt developments. More likely, the populations living in upscale development utilize the resources of Grantville more.

School systems in Watertown have a less pristine image than those in Grantville, but still have a decent reputation. However, there exists little diversity in race and ethnicity. In

talking to an acquaintance about his daughter's high school experience in Watertown, he noted that his daughter "had trouble and did not fit in" because "she looked ethnic". She was of middle-eastern descent with dark hair, skin and eyes. Poverty is highly concentrated. The rate in Watertown is much higher than Grantville at about 14% for families with children aged 5-7, compared to 7% in Grantville (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Site Selection

Inherent to site selection process was a desire to gain access at places where I would find a variety of structures and participant backgrounds as well as clear missions and desired goals/outcomes. Finding sites that matched these criteria was not a challenge as I found an overabundance of choices in both communities, but gaining access proved more difficult.

After contacting sites by telephone and speaking with someone in charge of each program, I followed up with an email describing the nature of my research (initial research question) and my plans for data collection. In all, I contacted seven camps in the Grantville and Watertown areas. The following are case write-ups of the sites that provided full entrée and observation of camps.

Three sites are described below. They are Valley Bend, the Watertown YMCA and Science Today. Both Valley Bend and Science Today are directly affiliated and operated by Grant State. Science Today takes place directly on the Grant State campus and though Valley Bend operates in a town outside of Grantville, the main population it serves hails from Grantville. The Watertown YMCA operates in Watertown

Site 1 – Special Interest: Valley Bend Nature Center

Within a 25-minute drive of Grantville is Valley Bend Environmental Center, which is owned and operated by Grant State. The drive toward Valley Bend is a slow gradual ascent with housing developments and modern conveniences slowly tapering. Cellular service

becomes spotty and unpredictable. The last 10-minutes of the drive consists of an uphill climb and then a sharp decline to the Center entrance, marked by a large wooden welcome sign. Though Valley Bend is open to the public year round, for eight weeks each summer, it becomes home to a variety of summer camps for children ranging from preschool to high school.

As a summer camp venue, Valley Bend is renowned and well respected among Grantville residents. In talking to parents, almost all make a point of noting how quickly the camps fill up and how important it is for one to promptly register in late winter saying, “well, they fill up so quickly”. At a time when most registrations for events are handled online, registration at Valley Bend uses two old-fashioned methods: in person registration that takes place in person during the centers business hours or the form can be mailed in. Many of the parents I spoke with drive to the center to make sure they can enroll their kids and not miss out on registration.

According to camp staff, in all, about 95% of participants are repeat campers. With only a few exceptions, the vast majority of campers are from Grantville. The average price of a four-day camp at Valley Bend is \$160 for a total of 36 hours/week. By paying a membership fee of \$35, this cost is curtailed significantly dropping \$35 to \$125 per child for a five-day camp. For one of the camps offered at Valley Bend, no cost is associated. Called Leaders-in-Training, this program runs in tandem with other camps.

LITs are high school students who work alongside an adult counselor. There are typically two LITs and one counselor for every eight kids. The LIT program accepts applications. In 2011, they had more applications than available slots. There is no cost for LITs to attend camp at Valley Bend. Clearly, the LIT program provides Valley Bend with a resourceful way to keep costs down while also providing valuable leadership experience to

high school age children. One of the LITs explains to me that Valley Bend “is kind of the highlight” of his summer.

Because the Center is a significant drive from Grantville, Valley Bend offers a yellow school bus service each morning from a Grant State parking lot for an additional cost of \$30/week charge per child. A couple of weeks out of the summer, Valley Bend offers extended day camp, which means that the bus leaves from Grant State at 8:30 a.m. and returns to the same location for pick-up at 4:30 p.m. later in the day. On these special extended weeks, bus service is an option every day—morning and afternoon—except for Fridays when parents are required to make their own pick-up arrangements.

Valley Bend Case Study Write-up

Activities at Valley Bend are contingent upon the type of camp that children elect and also their age ranges. My participant observations took place with kids ranging in ages from 9 – 11 with two LITs per group that ranged in ages from 14 – 17. The focus of camp varied each day; however, the overall theme of the week was songbirds. The theme is secondary, however, to building general knowledge and an appreciation for the environment.

Each day the counselors, with lightweight weaved baskets used as backpacks and walkie-talkies strapped to their sides, head out for a hike around Valley Bend. The distances they go each day increase as the week wears on. Once a week, kids are instructed to wear waterproof shoes so they can do river exploration. On another day, they spend a large part of the day searching for animal footprints. Toward the end of the week in the afternoon, they have exhibits and activities close to the center where children can learn about specific animals and also make a craft. At other times, counselors are expected to pick ad hoc from what they have learned in training in order to fill their group’s time.

Counselors initiate breaks and the children are responsible for bringing their own snacks, lunch and water. Each child carries their provisions in school-like backpacks in which they also have packed rain gear (hiking occurs rain or shine) and sunscreen. Bathroom breaks are scheduled and children are expected to go when advised by their counselor.

When out on the trail, the children are complacent. Despite hot weather and long hikes, complaints are practically non-existent. Also on the trail, the counselor is a participatory member of the activities and facilitator. LITs take the campers out of eye view and earshot. In short, campers enjoy a certain amount of latitude and autonomy at camp. Friday marks two special events at Valley Bend. The first is a long hike to a local beach where the kids swim for the afternoon. They then get picked up in Grantville passenger buses and are driven back to the Center. The second event is called Family Campout.

Rather than simply picking up their children at Valley Bend on Friday evenings, parents are invited to campout overnight, act as audience for classic Campfire entertainment, partake in an ice cream social, explore exhibits, take a guided moonlit walk made extraordinary by the twinkling glow of fireflies and eat a pancake breakfast the next morning prepared by camp staff. This event comes at no extra charge.

One of the events campers look forward to most is Campfire; an event that resembles an outdoor school assembly. At campfire, kids remain in their cohorts and sit on the ground near the front of the stage. Parents, grandparents and siblings sit on seats that are pieces of cut, upturned log seats that resemble stumps. The Campfire assembly follows a similar pattern from camp-to-camp and from year-to-year. I hear parents saying, "Oh, I remember this from last year." Or laughingly, "This is what they did last year." The director, Tom, and assistant director of camp, James, act as Master of Ceremonies for the event. Camp staff performs skits and provide musical entertainment. Campers perform a skit that they have

developed with their group earlier that day. There is also silly poetry and camp songs taught to the crowd. Parents can be found singing and dancing along, laughing and taking pictures.

Valley Bend Key Informants: Tom & James, Fox & Finch

During my pilot work at the Center, four individuals became what I would consider key informants. The first, Tom, is the Director at Valley Bend and also an Associate Professor at Grantville. Tom is fit and “outdoorsy” always sporting the unofficial uniform at Valley Bend; earth colored cargo shorts and a simple cotton tee shirt. Tom’s demeanor is open, warm and welcoming. Though his temperament is even keeled, he is also quick to smile. He has been at Valley Bend for nine years. Tom works alongside James, the assistant camp director. James is best described as ambitiously busy, yet cool and collect. In addition to working at the Center full time and belonging to an actively performing rockabilly band, in the upcoming fall, he will be attending Grant State for a master’s degree in an education-related field.

Together, with easy smiles and relaxed demeanor, Tom and James share a common vision of Valley Bend as a special place for youth to spend one week of their summer vacation. Constantly communicating throughout the day with one another and the counselors by way of two-way radio, Tom and James form a stellar duo, which at times rivals the funniest of comedic teams.

At the beginning of each camp day, the campers gather and sit cross-legged while, on bended knee, Tom and James introduce the day’s events. Talented in their impromptu delivery, each uses a variety of theatrical voices as they “josh” the campers and coax along their participation in their kid-focused version of an agenda presentation. By the end of the week, this morning ritual becomes like an inside joke between them and the campers.

Tom says to James, “Today is Egg Sandwich Day. Yes indeed, egg sandwich day!” To which James replies with concerning disagreement, “No Tom, I don’t think so. I don’t think today is Egg Sandwich Day.” He looks at the

campers who are disagreeing with broad smiles. “It’s not?” Tom replies as he furrows his brow and shakes his head in utter confusion. “I could have sworn today was Egg Sandwich Day.” The campers are fully engaged and laughing. Banter and teasing go on between Tom and James for another minute or so. “Well, does anyone know what today is?” says Tom. Many of the campers shout out enthusiastically, “Biodiversity Day!” The campers are fully engaged and laughing. “What?” asks Tom, incredulously. The campers repeat themselves, only louder this time. “Oh, yes! Biodiversity Day. I remember now.”

At Valley Bend, there are three rules, which all campers are expected to memorize and appreciate – Be safe. Be respectful. Have fun. Tom and James feel whole-heartedly that if these simple rules are enacted that it is possible to have what James cites as, “The best summer at Valley Bend ever” a mantra likely repeated each year.

The vision shared by Tom and James also embodies the camp staff in their work ethics and interactions with campers. In an interview with Tom, I ask how he goes about selecting his staff members. He tells me that the staff must have an interest in working with children and also to be energized, rather than depleted by a day at Valley Bend. Indeed, the day’s events are jam-packed with hiking (up to three miles a day for some campers), game playing and singing of songs and chants that can be heard echoing through the center grounds. Staff are often put in positions of dealing with out of line campers, minor injuries and basic resistance to authority. All situations are handled in stride and children out of sorts are always re-directed rather than punished or harshly disciplined.

In addition, the staff is knowledgeable about the environment as well as history and future plans of the Valley Bend grounds. They share stories with campers, draw out campers’

interests and focus on the kids nonstop. In particular, I connected with two of the camp staffers who, in addition, to Tom and James became key informants for my pilot work.

Finch

Finch⁶ is a bright and cheerful environmental education major from a nearby college (not Grant State). Always sporting a classic red bandana in a hippie fashion and standing just over 5-feet tall, Finch blends in well with the campers some of whom are similar in size. Like most of the campers on staff at Valley Bend, Finch establishes more of a partnership with her campers than an authoritarian style. At times, this could be considered a drawback since the children do not always comply with her requests. One day, before leaving for a long hike around the grounds, Finch takes her group to the bathroom facilities, but many of them do not go. After repeated requests, she looks at me and says with a smile and shrug, “They never listen to me.” But in reality they not only listen, but pay careful attention to her comments like a mentee to a mentor.

Knowledgeable about the environment, she seems to thrive on her camper’s energy. In one instance, a camper finds a leaf with a parasite attached and brings it to Finch for observation. As she investigates the leaf, all of the campers eagerly flock around her. Excitedly, she says, “Wow! A real teaching moment!” She goes on to tell the campers that the parasite is slowly killing the leaf. Some of the campers say, “Poor leaf.” And Finch simply states, “Well, the parasite is just trying to survive, too.” Finch does not pretend that she knows it all. She’ll say, “Let’s find out.” And she frequently looks at guidebooks with the campers for answers to things she does not know.

Fox

⁶ All staff (including Tom and James) goes by “camp names” that they choose. I also had a camp name for the week I was at Valley Bend. Names are typically reflective of nature.

Fox is a vibrant, quick-witted (often referred to as a “character” among other staff at Valley Bend) and theatrical Grant State sophomore. Fox attended Valley Bend as a camper and her family now considers Valley Bend a special annual ritual the likes of which rival the anticipation of special events like weddings, reunions, etc. Her mother attended campfire on Friday night and was very forthcoming about the importance of Valley Bend to her family explaining how it has become a non-negotiable ritual. This particular summer, Fox’s cousins were coming from out of state to attend camp at Valley Bend.

Though technically an adult, Fox remembers well what it was like to be a child and often acts silly. One day as I tagged along with her group, she says to her campers, “We are not supposed to, but would you guys like to venture into the lake?” The “lake” at Valley Bend is actually where a lake used to be. It contains no water, but is full of interesting vegetation, small game, bugs and insects. Later, she quietly pulled me aside and says that actually they are allowed to take the kids into the lake, but when she was a kid, she liked to do things that people told her she was not allowed to do.

Also wealth of knowledgeable about the environment, she quizzes her kids constantly and gently corrects when they do not respond properly. Fox believes that Valley Bend brings out the best in kids in a way that formal school might not. Earlier in the summer she had a camper with special needs who required constant assistance through the grounds. According to Fox, the other campers were patient, helpful and protective toward the camper. When Fox conveyed this to this camper’s mother, Fox says, “His mom was shocked and said, ‘no one ever helps him [at school]’.”

Access to Valley Bend allowed me to observe what I would consider a special interest camp. For both parents and staff, a weeklong experience at Valley Bend is considered special even “old-fashioned” way to enjoy one’s summer. In a conversation with Tom, he explains

his irritation at the marketing of summer experiences as “camp” which has no interaction with the outdoor. To him, a computer camp is a bit of an oxymoron.

Along the way, children learn a certain respect for the environment that carries with them from year-to-year. Many of the children who attend Valley Bend as campers later become LITs. This outcome bolsters the mission of Valley Bend and lends to its respected image.

Site 2 – Summer Day Care: Watertown YMCA

Driving from downtown Grantville to Watertown one goes from a bustling medium-sized city to a smaller, working-class town. Farmland pastures peppered with barns and livestock connect small rural roads to large interstate highways. Quickly off an exit ramp that ultimately leads to the downtown, one passes an industrial park that employs skilled workers from Watertown as well as Grantville and other neighboring communities. On a small stretch of highway, an abandoned parking lot offers salvaged goods sold by prisoners from a local correctional facility. Though the YMCA is nestled in the downtown, the summer camp takes place at a public park about a 5-minute drive from the downtown center.

Vacant fields line the road that ultimately leads to the summer camp venue. Just before the entrance to the park is an apartment complex. Since the park is open to the public, residents of the apartments utilize the park frequently as they can be seen making their way from the complex to the park, spending some time and then going back to the complex again. This includes some children who, though not paying members of the Y summer camp, play on the equipment and fraternize with the campers. The park is green and sprawling with a number of pavilions and soccer fields on the premises. Thickly wooded, the trees offer respite from the sun on hot days. There is also a community pool at the park used every day by the campers and is also open to the general public.

During the school year, the Watertown Y serves all of Watertown's elementary school before and after school programs. In the summer, the vast majority of the children who participate in before and after school care continue on with summer camp. The camp serves over 60 students between 1st and 6th grade placed into three different categories. Each level wears a team name that was picked arbitrarily by camp staff: Quest (6th, 5th, 4th grade), Adventure (3rd grade and 2nd grade) and Journey (1st grade). The Watertown Y receives

funding for meeting certain state requirements that goes beyond licensing. These include hiring trained staff, staff participation in professional development and the following of a structured curriculum.

A hefty portion of the children who participate in the before and after school program, continue on with the Y during the summer. The cost of attendance is \$150/week as well as an additional activity fee to cover the cost of weekly field trips to local attractions. This cost can be significantly discounted by participating in fundraisers.

Watertown YMCA Case Study Write-Up

Summer camp at the Watertown YMCA has a structure akin to that of a daycare model. A well-oiled machine, the day camp is open from 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. daily. Most children average over 40 hours a week for attendance. The day camp is open every day during the summer save two days near Labor Day weekend in order to prepare before and after school care. No ceremonies or special events mark the beginning or end of summer.

At staff meetings leading up to the first day of camp, supervisors stress the importance of parents getting out of their cars and signing their children in and out each day. Each morning and evening it is the responsibility of two staff members to ensure that all kids are accounted for and their arrival and drop-off times are documented. Conversations with parents lead me to believe that many of the children who attend this camp have parents who are divorced. In one instance, I approached a father about filling out my survey and IRB consent forms. Though he appeared interested in my research, he ultimately responded, “You know what, I am going to have her mother fill out these forms because she handles camp things, I handle soccer.” I asked staff members if many kids in the camp have divorced parents. The answer was a resounding “Yes”.

The camp provides breakfast each morning and one afternoon snack. Campers bring school backpacks, which tote their lunchboxes and swim gear. Backpacks are also used to bring home handmade goods that the students worked on during “center” time each day. Journey and Adventure (1st – 3rd grade) are required to do two hours of “centers” each day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. While Quest (4th, 5th & 6th graders) also has the option of participating in centers, staff are more flexible with the older children allowing them to initiate pick-up games or occupy their time in other ways. The school age coordinator tells me, “A fifth grade boy has no desire to do crafts...the younger kids do a lot more centers and crafts...they are into that and the oldest group they would rather go play kickball...we don’t ever make them do anything. And even when we have group game time, we don’t make them play if they don’t want to.”

Unless there is heavy rain or thunder, each day after lunch the children take a short uphill walk to the public pool where they spend a good part of their afternoon until pick-up. However, inclement weather can put a significant damper on the day. A couple of days my observations took place during heavy downpours. In this case, the children were moved to one extra-large pavilion away from the wooded areas. In this case, counselors are faced with occupying the children with materials from bins chock full of card and board games for the entirety of the day. Free time on the park equipment bookends the morning drop-off periods and afternoon pick-up times.

Watertown YMCA Key Informants: Natalie & Yvette; Pat & Jill

Natalie, School Age Coordinator, became my main source of contact at the Y and gave me permission to observe the site at my convenience. Natalie holds an elementary education degree from a university about 30 minutes east of Watertown. As a child, she

attended the Watertown Y preschool and after school care. Judging by her endless supply of binders and efficient pace, Natalie is well organized and efficient.

Natalie excitedly walks me through summer camp preparations, procedures and expectations. She also tells me that her staff starts “bugging” her about summer camp very early on in the year. Summer camp staff 15 in number and though she is ultimately in charge of the summer camp, she only devotes half of her time to the camp. Yvette, another staff member, holds the title of Summer Camp Manager. Yvette helps me to hand out IRB forms and surveys on my behalf. She does not volunteer a lot of information about the camp, but she does answer questions when I ask. In my time at the YMCA, I found two other staff members to be better representations of the Y staff.

Pat

Pat is an outgoing, self-appointed leader to the day camp staff. Holding a degree in elementary education, she has lived and worked in remote parts of the western United States and recently returned to the area. Originally from Watertown, she now works for the Y before and after school care and is actively looking for a job in the Grantville/Watertown area, but she also commented that she was open to moving away. She has a lot of energy and usually is smiling. Pat is chatty with all camp staff, children and also with the parents at pick-up time (She works a shift that happens later in the day). She remembers details about parents and their children and will inquire about goings-on in the family life of campers and parents. In one instance she had a conversation with one of the camper’s mothers who recently got married. She will also say things like, “Yeah, [your son] told me that.” Or, “[Your daughter] mentioned that.”

She is affectionate toward the kids and says things like, “Hey, you didn’t give me a hug yet today.” She will then embrace and talk to the child for a little while. But for all her

care toward the children, she can also be rather gruff with the campers and often shouts commands or directives at the kids from long distances. Her tone is that of a scolding mother frustrated from having to repeat herself, “I told you not to do that before!” or “You need to get your things now!” Most of the time, the kids who she yells at change their behavior for the better.

Pat uses her cell phone at camp frequently. This is also common for most of the other staff members who freely make phone calls or use their devices for other reasons throughout the day. Sometimes they use their phones to keep in touch with the Y home office, but other times, the counselors seem to check their phones out of boredom or habit. Often, some of the kids come over and watch what the counselors are doing on their device or they engage in some kind of phone play with them. One day while I was there, Pat had checked her Facebook page from her phone and learned that another counselor and personal friend from the camp had received a job offer that day. Jokingly, Pat acted offended that she was not the first to learn this news. She then called her friend to tease her for not calling her immediately to share the news. She and her friend then stayed on the phone for a couple of minutes chatting about the job offer. This episode took about 10 minutes and was conducted at a time when most parents were coming to pick up their kids. None of the parents or other counselors seemed to mind that Pat was on the phone.

Jill

Jill is an even-tempered and sensible young teacher who works at the day camp during the summer. She walked me through how things are going at camp during the lapses in my visits and always answers my questions with straightforward answers. She also trains me on

how camp procedures are done and walks me through artifacts like a weekly photo folder that holds pictures from that week's field trip. She was also the first person to show me how the complex system for pick-up and drop-off operates.

Unlike many of the other staff that seem to congregate and simply watch the children play, I always find Jill tending to the children or doing administrative tasks. One day when I came to camp, Jill was helping one of the children who had summer school math homework. Another time at pick-up, Jill was responsible for telling two moms that their children had gotten into trouble earlier in the day for using inappropriate language. Though this was an uncomfortable task, Jill seemed determined to tell the parents the situation, which she firmly conveyed as an unacceptable way to act at camp.

Jill also seems to understand the nature of my research and is more interested than any of the other counselors who often ignore my presence. At first pass, Jill seems like a serious person. Upon further observation, however, she simply possesses a stellar work ethic and genuinely cares for the campers. Doing so leaves her little time to lose focus on the busy camp as she constantly picks up the slack of her co-workers.

Access to the Watertown Y offered me the chance to observe a context for children who attended camp at the same location each day and where summer-long participation would be a common occurrence.

Site 3 – Science Today

Sponsored by and located at Grant State, Science Today offers students in grades 2nd – 12th grades the opportunity to take part in STEM-themed camps. As a site, Science Today was somewhat of an “11th” hour site choice as I realized that an academic subject camp could enhance my pilot. I contacted Alex, the director of Science Today. He responded

quickly and after inquiring about IRB issues, offered me the opportunity to come observe a classroom activity and attend a closing ceremony for the week.

Science Today Case Study Write-up

Science Today camp sessions have the foremost purpose of academic subject enrichment in a school-like setting. In fact, since the camp takes place on the Grantville Campus, campers become academically socialized and exposed early to college. By foot, they canvas the campus moving to different buildings and classrooms on the sprawling grounds.

A document analysis of the camp's brochure provided logistical and programmatic goals as they relate to science enrichment in more detail. Examination of the brochure reveals the summer camp program to be a high-caliber, intense and meticulously designed program. The front cover boasts a sizable and professionally designed logo, large and pristine picture of a historical Grant State building and what are seemingly Science Today campers wearing matching camp tee-shirts, walking near the building. Layered intermittently on top of this picture, is thumbnail size "snapshots" of students participating in science-related activities. There are seven people pictured: 3 females (one of color) and 4 males (also one of color); 6 of the 7 appear to be children ranging in ages from 7 to 17. Similar types of thumbnail shots are found peppered throughout the brochure. The front cover also announces that Science Today has both day and resident options available.

Turning to the inside cover one finds a carefully constructed note from the Director (Alex, my contact person), mission statement and program goals, which both stress the importance of capitalizing on children's interests and inspirations in order to "encourage critical thinking and prepare them to become responsible, skilled and caring citizens". Over the course of the next four pages are descriptions of 15 different summer camps organized according to grade level. Creatively written, each description forms a unique statement about

the expectations of each camp and contains a symbolic icon or cartoon describing the camp. Time offerings differ from camp to camp as does the audience for which the description is written. For example, one is written for the benefit of parents stating “Surf’s up in the lab this summer as your children discover how the properties of light and sound mimic the rhythmic movement of our oceans.” Another poses a set of questions to potential campers, “Do you have what it takes to a Jr. Science Sleuth?” and “Can you help the detectives crack the case, and solve the mystery that has them baffled?” Two parental testimonies provide fillers in white space between camp descriptions. One reads, “I think Science Today is a great summer camp that exposes young learners to the wonders of science at an early stage of their development.”

Most telling, the last page of the brochure details prices for each camp according to day camp or a resident option offered for some of the camps. Prices for the day camp option range from \$175 - \$425, if registration occurs prior to May 1st. After this deadline, prices range increase by \$30. Resident programs, only available for 8 out of 15 camps, range in price from \$660 - \$795; after May, these prices rise by \$30. Science Today also has three corporate sponsors: Subway, a large and national sandwich company and federal and state grants. The last page also describes extended care options available from 7:45 a.m. or 5:15 p.m. This fee is \$25 for morning, \$30 for afternoons or \$50 for both.

Camps themselves mirror a traditional discovery and inquiry science classroom. Session leaders first structure a science lesson based on specific project goals. After technical information has been presented, project goals are explained, children are then broken into groups and are expected to complete a set of formal “challenges”.

Despite taking place inside in classrooms, sessions also have the underlying goal of making learning fun. Rooms housing Science Today students are loud with a sense of

organized chaos. The exercises that children are expected to complete (with guidance from college-age counselors) are challenging and have little room for disengagement. In one instance, a counselor describes the goal of particular session, “You guys need to figure out how to make this little light bulb on this motor light up. All ten of you need to work together to figure it out.” In another instance, a counselor assists the children in meeting the goal of creating using a piece of cardboard that will make a wheeled toy move a minimum of four feet.

She engages the children in questions like, “Is that what you think will happen?” The children respond in unison, “Yes.” She says, “Okay, let’s try it.” They put their contraption on the floor in an attempt to make it roll. It goes only a few inches. The counselor asks, “Did that go four feet?” The children all giggling say, “NO!” She responds, “Okay, what do we need to do now?” The group continues to work on this until they get it right. They are the only group left inside and they still need to do one more challenge before they are able to take a break.

The observation I conducted at Science Today revealed the difficulty of getting campers to focus for long periods of time while they struggled to maintain attention spans with pristine weather as a distraction. With the exception of a few outliers, however, most of the children were engaged with the tasks presented to them. Miniature celebrations occurred when campers successfully completed the required challenges.

For older campers, celebration of success was also apparent in what the program calls a “Closing Ceremony” attended by students (though parents attend, campers sit with teams that were formed earlier in the week) and is run by camp personnel. In addition to a master of ceremonies whose role is to highlight team success a video of professional quality has been

made that captures the week's events. The video is set to alternative pop music. The video is meant to appeal to all who are present: staff, parents and campers.

Data collection at Science Today allowed me to observe in action, a camp based on the premise of enrichment of a particular academic subject. The experience also allowed me to survey data from parents at a closing ceremony that parents attended. The sheer cost and curriculum presented by Science Today provided for a more clear delineation between social class structures and children's out of school time. The implication of this finding and others like it will now be discussed.

Pilot Findings

Analysis of pilot study results indicates that summer vacation, a collective occurrence for most school age children in the United States, simultaneously creates some common but mostly unique experiences for children. No two children participating in the study underwent a summer vacation identical to their fellow peers. Pilot results also indicate trends in the type of activities that parents choose for their children and some of the reasons why they do so.

The following outlines four emergent themes found through analysis of pilot work. They are: summer as a special event; relationship building; activities; language usage and parental motivations and expectations. Each of these themes presents ways in which cultural logic of child rearing have bearing on the activities and venues that parents select for their children's out of school summer time.

Summer as a special event

Pilot study results indicate that family routines and patterns shift from those centered around formal schooling during the school year to more informal activities during summer months. All programs studied for this pilot stressed play and fun as priorities. For example, both Valley Bend and the Watertown Y took place outside entirely (rain or shine) suggesting

that summer for “fresh air” stimulation. Even Science Today, which was based in a classroom setting most of the time, encouraged students to “take a break and go outside”. All three programs also emphasized swimming as a natural way to enjoy summer. Especially at the Watertown Y, where children swam everyday, parents indicated this was important. At Science Today, during a video showcasing the week’s events, the pictures and video from the pool received the most cheers from campers. In short, though each program symbolically imparted the context of summer in a fashion in-line with their program goals, the concept of summer vacation as a special event was still relevant and apparent for each pilot site.

At Valley Bend and Science Today, the concept of fun was reframed in a way in which students could also gain in general and subject specific knowledge. In other words, Valley Bend and Science Today made education fun by reframing the process of learning. At the Watertown Y, “fun” more commonly took place in a more traditional sense like tag, board games or weekly field trips to amusement parks and sporting events.

Relationships

The notion of relationships has two separate impacts on children’s summer experiences: relationship among camp staff and children’s relationship with adults. Relationships among staff at the Watertown Y could best be described as cohesive friendships. Throughout the day, staff could be found chatting with one another, sitting together at a separate table at lunchtime or congregating in a group at the pool. At the Y, though children relied on the adults for help, mainly the campers formed peer groups for socialization. Natalie, staff supervisor, was not on site at the park the vast majority of the time.

In contrast, Valley Bend staff integrated and engaged with campers constantly. Counselors did not come together at lunch or during breaks. Staff, though clearly friends,

participated in interactions related to logistical or pressing matters rather than out of boredom or for social reasons. Tom and James, camp directors, kept in touch with staff via two-way radio throughout the day and would actively walk the grounds, talking to staff and campers. These differences in relationships among staff and between campers and staff underpin the mission and objective of each camp as well as the population the camp serves.

Where the mission of Valley Bend seeks to cultivate children into environmentally aware citizens, the Watertown Y models that of daycare. Children were cared for and affection was both given and received. At Valley Bend, relationships resembled youth-adult-partnerships wherein children and adults were engaged together. Hierarchical structures at the least seemed non-observable and at the most were truly nonexistent. Relationships between staff and campers also played into the ways in which children spent their days.

Activities

Each site observed in this study had varying missions and goals for the way campers should spend their time. At Valley Bend and Science Today, schedules and activities were full and well planned. Even “downtime” at Valley Bend and Science Today had clear demarcations of beginning and end. At the Y, especially on rainy days, children made use of their own time. Though some events had consistent and structured timeslots like going to the pool everyday at 1:00 p.m., these events just posed another way to bide time. This usually resulted in free play and low-resource activities.

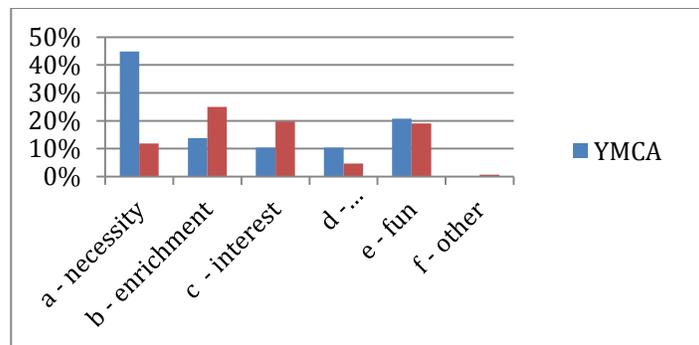
Language Usage

Opportunity for verbal and vocabulary skills were much higher at the special interest camp and academic subject camp than at the day camp site. One potential explanation for an increase in verbal skills is due to the mission of the camp sites themselves. For example, as a nature center, Valley Bend is invested in concepts that require explanation, evoke questions

from campers and contribute to knowledge related to science and biology. It was not uncommon for children as young as six years old to orally communicate their understanding of habitats, biodiversity, adaptation, species and predators. This was similar at Science Today. At the Watertown Y, children were mainly expected to play and have fun. Most of the time children were not engaged with adults and lessons or events mirroring school or discussions were not observed. These observations fall inline with research suggesting that middle-class and high-income children have more opportunities to gain oral skills as well as express themselves through language than their low-income counterparts.

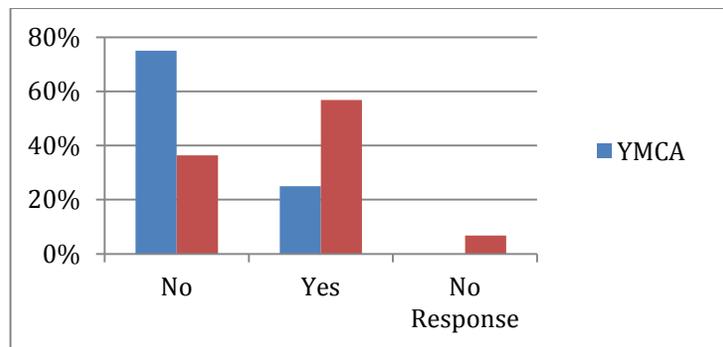
Parental Expectations and Desires

Results from surveys indicate that parents hold varying expectations for their child’s camp experiences depending on where their child is enrolled. At the Watertown YMCA, parents indicated that foremost, the reason why they enroll their child in this camp is out of necessity (i.e. that they work during the day and need someone to tend to their child(ren)). Though parents with children at the Y also cited other reasons for attendance alongside necessity, these reasons were primarily for children to gain socialization and have fun. On the other hand, Science Today parents chose enrichment and child’s interest in science as a subject for their primary reason for enrollment (See Graph 1.0).



Graph 1.0 displays responses to the question: What types of skills do you hope your child might gain from this experience? Red bars indicate Science Today.

Also, compared to the YMCA, children who attended camps sponsored by Science Today campers were much more likely to also be attending other summer camps and programs. Further, when asked to describe other programs, some parents indicated up to seven other special interest or academic subject camps that their child would be attending. This finding indicates that capital form possession and activation are at play during summer months.



Graph 2.0 shows responses to the question: Will your child be attending any other camps this summer? Red bars indicate Science Today.

Pilot Discussion

Through her work, Lareau (2003) comes to the conclusion that the way in which individuals interact with social realities stem from social class standing. Analysis of pilot results indicates that Lareau’s cultural logic of child rearing models, accomplishment of natural growth and concerted cultivation, can be applied to contexts outside of the home via the way parents choose their child’s out of school summer time.

The Watertown YMCA and Science Today represent different ends of Lareau’s child rearing logic continuum. At the Watertown Y, participated in the accomplishment of natural growth. This was apparent in interactions with staff, the manner in which campers chose and initiated their own activities and established peer groups. Valley Bend, though not landing

necessarily on one end of the continuum, still featured cultivation as one of its main goals of the camp experience. In short, cultivating children's interests and curiosities is inherent to the mission of Valley Bend and Science Today. Though the YMCA accreditation bespeaks a desire to provide the best possible care for children, teaching of specific skills are not a high priority. Instead, the Watertown YMCA provides a consistently structured, safe and low-resource way for children to spend their out of school time.

Pilot work revealed clear possession and activation of capital sources depending on the site being studied. In the instance of Valley Bend, though relatively inexpensive, the popularity of the camp and reputation in the Grantville context demonstrates the use of social capital and access to necessary resources (in this case a car) that were required in order to register kids in a timely fashion. Economic capital as a way of supporting interest in academic subject was most apparent in Science Today. At the Watertown Y, parents, in noting necessity as their main reason (and in many cases sole reason) for children's enrollment along with results showing that the vast majority of kids enrolled were not going to attend any other summer camps or programs, highlights that parental goals for children's out of school time are quite different.

Analysis of pilot results reveals that children's opportunities for learning vary significantly in the summertime and this reality has much to do with social class standing and forms of capital. Pilot research allowed me access to three different ways that children spend their summer out of school time, yet, I was unable to unearth specific motivations and specific reasons why parents as a larger function their social class choose such activities. Early findings indicate parental perceptions and expectations do vary, but the results provided here are limited.

Appendix B: Pilot Study Letter to Parents

PENNSTATE



Department of Education Policy Studies

The Pennsylvania State University
300 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16802-3201

814-863-0619
Fax: 814-865-1480
www.ed.psu.edu/eps/

June 21, 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Marcy Milhomme and I am a graduate student at Penn State in the College of Education. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting pilot research for my dissertation at the [REDACTED] Summer Camp as well as other camps in the Grantville area. Although my definite research questions are undetermined at this time, my interest is to observe the process of summer camps and the way in which families utilize them and for what purposes.

As part of this research, attached are two forms that require your attention. One is a consent form, which, if you choose to sign, will enable me to observe your child at camp. All children will remain anonymous in this research study and pseudonyms will be given for each child. Additional details are on the attached consent form.

Also attached is a survey for you to fill out. Again, your participation in this survey will be anonymous, as you will not be identified. When you return the survey and consent form, you will receive a Penn State Creamery gift certificate as well as be entered in a drawing for a \$25.00 Barnes & Noble gift card. Please return the survey by Friday, July 15 to collect your voucher and have a chance to enter the drawing.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at mbm24@psu.edu or [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Marcy Milhomme

Appendix C: Pilot Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Summer Camp and Summer Learning Loss

Principal Investigator: Marcy Milhomme
Doctoral Student
Education Theory and Policy
mbm24@psu.edu
Rackley Building
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: [REDACTED]

Other Investigator: Dr. Dana Mitra
Assistant Professor of Educational Theory & Policy
d1m54@psu.edu
302D Rackley Building, Dept. of Educational Theory & Policy
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16802
Office phone: 814.863.7020

1. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to observe summer camp activities that take place out of schools. The research question for this pilot work is:

How do summer camps differ based on community contexts?

2. Procedures to be followed:

1. The researcher will interview parents for up to 30 minutes following a basic interview protocol. Results found in research may be used for publications and/or presentations but audio recordings will be used only by the investigators and destroyed on Sept. 1st, 2016. Renderings from any of these data will **never** be associated with your name.

2. Discomforts and Risks:
There are no risks in participating in this research. You are welcome to

3. Benefits:
In exchange for your participation in an interview, you will receive a Penn State Creamery voucher and also will be entered into a drawing for a \$25.00 Barnes and Noble gift card.

4. Duration/Time:
This research will last for one summer, but this interview will only take place one time with the knowledge that a follow-up may be requested.

5. Statement of Confidentiality:

Your participation in this research is confidential. All participants and school names will be given pseudonyms. The data and pseudonym key will be stored and secured at Pennsylvania State University in a locked and password protected file. Only the two investigators, above, will have access to this file. Publications or presentations resulting from the research will contain no personally identifiable information.

Audio-recordings will not be shared with anyone except the researchers (named above). The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

6. Right to Ask Questions:

Please contact Marcy Milhomme at [REDACTED] with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

7. Voluntary Participation:

Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can withdraw at any time. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you or your child would receive otherwise. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You may want to make a copy of this consent form for your records.

Parent and/or Guardian Signature

Date

Optional: Parent of (child's name): _____

Individuals obtaining consent

Date

Appendix D: Pilot Study Survey

PENNSTATE



Department of Education Policy Studies

The Pennsylvania State University
300 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16802-3201

814-863-0619
Fax: 814-865-1480
www.ed.psu.edu/eps/

- 1.) Please indicate your relationship to the child(ren) attending this camp: _____
- 2.) Please indicate the gender of the child(ren) attending this camp: _____
- 3.) Please indicate the age of the child(ren) attending this camp? _____
- 4.) How did you learn about this camp (choose all that apply)?
 - a.) Friends or acquaintances
 - b.) Through the school
 - c.) Local newspaper
 - d.) An internet search
 - e.) From my childOther (please describe): _____
- 5.) Please indicate the main reason why your child is attending this summer camp (choose all that apply):
 - a.) Necessity (For example, you work and need a place for your child to spend their day).
 - b.) Enrichment (For example, this camp might help your child in school).
 - c.) Child's special interest (For example, your child has expressed an interest or has a special talent in this area).
 - d.) For behavior or emotional development (For example, to gain practice in taking instruction, working in groups/teams, etc.; meeting/playing with other children)
 - e.) For fun (For example, to make new friends or "hang-out" with friends).Other (Please describe): _____
- 6.) What types of skills do you hope your child might gain from this experience (choose all that apply)?
 - a.) Enrichment or knowledge in a specific area
 - b.) Social skills and meeting new people
 - c.) Team skills and working with others
 - d.) All the aboveOther (please describe): _____
- 7.) What are the reasons you chose this particular camp (choose all that apply)?
 - a.) The hours are convenient for you and your family
 - b.) This camp has a good reputation
 - c.) You know the camp personnel
 - d.) Friends or other people you know recommended the camp
 - e.) Friends of my children are also attending this campOther (please describe): _____
- 8.) Will your child be attending any other camps this summer? If so, please describe.

Appendix E: Pilot Work Addendum – Adding Wheaton as a Study Site

As mentioned in Chapter 4, after the conclusion of my pilot work, committee discussion focused on obtaining a community where infrastructure was not as secure as in Grantville and Watertown. After weighing some options, we chose Wheaton because of the demographic and economic reality of the community and because of my social networks. I visited the town frequently and had often noted the slow, but sure progression of economic hardship in both the downtown and outlying areas. It was important to me as a researcher to utilize my familiarity, but also develop a new and fresh perspective. This sort of third-party relationship to the community enabled me to hold close to my own roots as the child of a working-class family that lived at or just above the poverty line for most of my childhood, but also reconcile my current status as an educated member of the middle-class.

Conducting research in a study site where the researcher has experience merits discussion, particularly about bias. In the simple words of Krathwohl (2009), “bias is inevitable”, yet it does not preclude a researcher from taking steps necessary to minimize a “coloring” of data and evidence based on one’s prior experience. Rather, I viewed it as productive to confront my own history and experience with the context of Wheaton.

Two out of the three participants who came from Wheaton, Caroline and Mary, were from my social networks in town. Elizabeth was unknown to me prior to the study as she responded to a recruitment flyer I had posted at Finn’s school. Only Elizabeth resided in the borough of Wheaton. Caroline and Mary lived in rural, outlying areas, especially sparse in population. Driving to their homes through curving and steep hills one notices scenery that is lush and green. In the morning hours, the elevation allows a fog to nestle between the tree lined skies and the winding roads.

Driving into town on a narrow two-lane highway, one sees a long, flat trail that was converted from railroad days. It now welcomes residents a place to jog, bike or hike along the winding river that winds through the wooded and residential areas of the town. The high school football stadium sits prominently near the highway. Until very recently, Wheaton was a one-stoplight town. A new light now sits just beyond the Wheaton town border just after the football stadium, presumably to control traffic for Friday night football games.

Driving into town the Main street businesses include a small, but long-running foreign car dealership, a single grocery store, a pharmacy, two gas stations, a discount dollar store and a small number of non-chain restaurants. The street is bookended by banks & trusts on either end. Parking meters have been removed and replaced with wrought iron flower planters, perhaps to draw in more business for local vendors. A number of cheerful and quaint shops and businesses also exist including a dance studio, a bridal shop and a newly renovated Victorian era home that sells seasonal goods and knick-knacks and boasts a small, but quaint tearoom. Elements of Americana are also common to see throughout town with a patriotic statue poised just slightly off main street and a Veterans of Foreign Affairs, American Legion and Sons of Italy (S.O.I.) within a short walking distance of the town center.

It could be said that Wheaton is a smaller version of Watertown, but with the stark juxtaposition that Wheaton does not have access to the resources and opportunities afforded by the Grantville economy supported by Grant State. Wheaton, a working-class town, though not by pure definition a bedroom community, shares similar attributes in that many community members must rely on neighboring towns for more than basic provisions and in many cases, employment. For decades, Wheaton has been losing the industries that once stimulated a vibrant and promising local economy. Like many small towns and cities reliant

on jobs for workers with vocations and trade skills, domestic and foreign policies have brought to bear significant hardships in sustaining industry and creating a new and viable job market in Wheaton. The companies related to textiles and food processing that once employed many local residents have long since closed plant doors. However, a handful of manufacturing facilities remain including a lumberyard and tannery both of which are historically and financially significant contributors to the town's lineage.

The median income for a household in the borough is \$27,281, and the median income for a family is \$36,197. Males have a median income of \$28,145 versus \$18,598 for females. The per capita income for the borough is \$14,829. 16.0% of the population and 12.8% of families are below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 29.0% of those under the age of 18 and 12.7% of those 65 and older are living below the poverty line.

Appendix F: Memo - The Worksheet Culture

A recurrent theme during the study is how much mothers talk about and use worksheets as an important measure of academic learning. In conversations about preparation for summer, mothers often cited pulling out the papers sent home in folders and saving them for review purposes. If they planned to do “academic” work with their children, worksheets were usually considered the appropriate way to go about this. Why is this the overwhelming sentiment? How might it reflect current issues related to top-down federalist policies like No Child Left Behind?

A particular conversation comes to mind that I had with Diane, a middle-class mother of two, where she addresses her skepticism and frustration with how schools utilize worksheets both in and out of school. Diane strikes me as a cool-headed but strong-willed “modern mother”. She reads books about motherhood and she identifies and establishes concrete philosophies related to her own mothering practices. She is reflective. Her child-rearing strategies do not always align with other mothers in the study because she conducts a lot of higher-order thinking that is both reflective and analytical about expectations surrounding the social construction of “motherhood”.

More so than average, she applies practical reasoning when placing her children in activities—refraining from those disguised as “lessons” but she more classifies as a form of glorified childcare. She is discerning and mindful when it comes to choosing activities for her sons especially because she appreciates hands-on learning opportunities, often using her own interest in cooking to help her children learn concepts related to math. (Her six-year old son had recently learned to make his own scrambled eggs for himself). She considers learning to enjoy the pleasure of one’s own company to be an invaluable life skill. She is honest about mothering admitting that she is “often emotionally drained as a parent”.

Like most mothers in the study, she had hopes of providing enriching activities for her kids over the summer that would contribute to their life skills. The difference between Diane and the other mothers is in the way she communicates a deliberate deviation or move from typical school-like activities to ones that are more concrete. Though often moms would describe activities they did with their kids like gardening or nature walks for example, they seemed more aloof to the possibility that this was just as valuable as a school activity. Yet, to be fair, worksheets were what mothers see the most often coming home from school. For many, it might be the most consistent form of communication they receive between long months between parent teacher conferences.

For Diane, worksheets are a complete turnoff. Furthermore, worksheets are a concrete example of missed opportunities on the part of the education community. In an interview, she provided these thoughts,

“I would like them to be proactive with providing parents with good, fun activities but not “you have to do this by this time or else” but more like these are activities that can enrich your child's life and your life. You know “these are research-based evidence this is a great way to spend time”. And I would rather that instead of giving us a bunch of worksheets which I'm not interested in and Benny hasn't done one...

I'm getting on my soap box. ... Like the worksheet that Benny comes home with, I'd really like to see the evidence that this is a good way for him to be spending time. Especially given that it's on top of a lot of paper-based work just like what he's doing in school. When we're really looking at how children spend their time and what's important, what are our goals for this developmental stage? I would have some real concerns.”

I ask if she believes parents buy-in to the worksheet culture.

“Yes, I think they do. At all ages they are really concerned with giving their children a competitive edge making sure that their child is the best reader and gifted and you know – ahead, above average and I think they’re missing the point.”

For Diane, the reality of her own life circumstances over the summer did enable the goals she had hoped to accomplish with her sons (something she shared in common with other moms in the study). A move to a nearby neighborhood and opportunities related to her own schooling (she was in the beginning stages of Ph.D. coursework at Grant State) prevented her from realizing an agenda for creative literacy projects or engagement in more creative play with her children.

This outcome suitably fits a major thread in the study that despite the knowledge that learning regressions are “real”, pressures and day-to-day realities of time constraints very often outdo good intentions. But does this mean that summer as a developmental time is wasted “academic” time? Laura, who co-created an impressive “bucket list” with her children that included a food pantry outing, playing school for a day, going for moonlight walks in pajamas really didn’t focus on academics per say, yet married some of the romanticism and exploration of summer with learning that might be considered “sneaky”. She had set out to do activities more in-line the type of enrichment and exploration. This was much more in line with the type of guidance Diane had hoped schools would take upon themselves to suggest.

In preparation for summer, some mothers actually purchased what are known as bridge books marketed specifically for the purpose of buffering against summer learning loss. In the bookstore at the beginning of June, I spotted a display piled high with workbooks all

meant to keep children’s minds “active” and engaged during the summer. The covers are splashed with bright colors and boast cheerful photographs of kids with arms raised as if going down hill on a rollercoaster. The books come at a cover price of about fifteen dollars apiece. I wonder how parents see these as investments—a soft-covered collection of worksheets (most of which the likes could be found for free on the Internet) and presumably are only be used one time? I also wonder how much companies make on bridge books each summer and how this might be connected to a larger cultural norm of summer as an idealistic time to yes, play hard, but also to keep kids apart of a competitive school culture. One where standardized tests and success in school are measured via a “Worksheet Culture”.



It makes logical sense that in the course of my conversations with mothers that they would refer to worksheets consistently. More than any other form of communication, it seems like schools rely on worksheets on an almost daily basis to relay informal progress, curriculum/subject content and unit information to families. Furthermore, if families did receive summer prep information from their child’s school (beyond the message to read everyday), it typically came in the form of worksheets coalesced into “packets”. Some mothers showed me the packets they received and many referred to them as a way of guarding against loss. My observation of packets and worksheets over the course of the study was that most of them were left untouched over the summer.

Considering this, I looked around for other research that has critically examined this idea of a “worksheet culture” and I found a study out of Australia titled “Learning to Learn in

Informal Science Settings” (Griffin, 1994). In the study, researchers interviewed and observed schoolchildren’s interactions with museum exhibits. I found this passage particularly apropos:

“In spite of this, they often commented that they "wouldn't learn anything" if they didn't have the sheets. There seemed to be a strong belief that "just looking around" did not count as learning. This idea became apparent very early in the interviews. Questions like, "What did you learn on your visit?," or similar, were fruitless. The answer was, invariably, "nothing". Following on the experiences of Falk and Dierking (1992) the students were asked instead about what they remembered. This brought answers about specific displays which they had seen. When the idea of learning was discussed further, particularly when associated with worksheets it became very apparent that the students did not believe they were learning unless they were answering questions on their worksheets. They seem to identify learning almost exclusively with the type of activities which go on at school, especially pen and paper activities. While several groups said they would prefer not to have worksheets in the museum they added, "but you wouldn't learn anything if you didn't" (p. 124).

Though the study took place prior to the enactment of NCLB, it demonstrates that standards and accountability through commonly practiced learning assessments like worksheets, even when they aren’t necessarily graded, have an impact on what kids perceive as learning. It seems fair to assume that parents have been on the receiving end of this message as well. An interesting point of research is to ask if the worksheet culture has bloomed in light of NCLB gotten worse as mantras like “teach to the test” and “memorization not rationalization”

wiggle their way into school cultures and norms. Evidence of this reality is something to explore further as a part of data analysis.

Reference: Griffin, MS Janette. "Learning to learn in informal science settings." *Research in Science Education* 24.1 (1994): 121-128.

Appendix G1: School Year Transition Interview (Spring)

Opening Questions:

Can you tell me the way you are feeling about upcoming summer months?
What were summer months like for you as a child?

Family routines (Spring):

- 1.) During the school year, how does school influence your family routines?
 - a. Probe for family policies and “house rules”.
- 2.) Can you walk me through your typical weekday during the school year?
- 3.) Can you describe to me what a typical Saturday morning might look like?
And Sunday?
 - a. When do you make decisions about weekend plans?
 - b. How do you keep track of these plans?

Activities (Spring):

- 1.) How do you go about deciding on your child’s activities during the school year?
 - a. When do you start the decision-making process?
 - i.) Probe for family policies and “house rules”
 - b. Probe for details about specific activities:
 - i.) cost considerations
 - ii.) time commitments
 - iii.) level of parent’s interest vs. what they child expresses a desire in
 - iv.) rules and restrictions
 - v.) types of resources used for activities
- 4.) Could you tell me how you typically decide your child’s structured activities that happen before school? After school?
 - a. What are the qualities you look for in before school care?
 - b. What are the qualities you look for in after school care?
- 5.) How far in advance do you plan family activities?
 - a. What are activities do you participate in on a normal basis?
 - b. How do you keep track/manage these activities?
- 6.) What are some things you might say to your child about before/after school activities?

- a. Probe for details about specific activities:
 - i.) cost considerations
 - ii.) time commitments
 - iii.) level of parent's interest vs. what they child expresses a desire in
 - iv.) rules and restrictions
 - v.) types of resources used for activities

- 7.) Can you tell me how you go about finding more information about activities?
 - a. Focus on influence of:
 - i.) Community
 - ii.) Peer Groups
 - iii.) Symbolic/social rewards

- 8.) Did you participate in activities when you were a child?

Education Practices (Spring):

- 1.) Can you describe how you handle homework?
 - a. Probe for information about:
 - i.) Where is homework done?
 - ii.) When is homework done?
 - iii.) Rules surrounding involvement

- 2.) How would you describe your relationship with your child's school?
 - a. Probe for details regarding:
 - i.) volunteering
 - ii.) contact due to discipline issues
 - iii.) relationship with teacher
 - iv.) relationship with other parents
 - v.) interest/concern in curriculum decisions

- 3.) If your child is having trouble (or a difficult day) in school, what are some things you might say to him or her?
 - a. What might the child say in return?
 - b. Would you contact the school? At what point?

Closing Question: Can you describe to me any goals you would like to accomplish during the upcoming summer?

Appendix G2: Summer Interview

Opening Question:

Can you summarize for me your typical summer?

Family Routines (Summer):

- 1.) How does summer influence your family routines?
 - a. Focus on shift from spring to summer.
- 2.) What does a typical summer day look like?
 - a. A Saturday in the summer?
 - b. A Sunday?
- 3.) If you have a free day during the summer, what might be some ways you would fill it?
 - a. Probe for details regarding:
 - i.) Traditions
 - ii.) Family Rituals
- 4.) If you are not the person who is the caretaker of your child during the summer, how do you go about selecting the caretaker?
 - a. Probe for:
 - i.) Qualities looked for in the caretaker
 - ii.) Cost considerations
 - iii.) Scheduling flexibility
 - iv.) Child's influence

Activities (Summer):

- 1.) How do you go about planning your child's summer activities?
 - a.) Probe for details about specific activities:
 - i.) cost considerations
 - ii.) time commitments
 - iii.) level of parent's interest vs. what they child expresses a desire in
 - iv.) rules and restrictions
- 2.) What are some things you might say to your child about summer activities?
- 3.) How do your child's individual activities during the summer affect your family?

Education Practices (Summer):

- 1.) In what way do school-related practices shift during summer months?
- 2.) During the summer, how do you prepare for a new school year?
- 3.) What do you say to your child about the upcoming school year?

Closing Question: Can you tell me the way you are feeling about the upcoming school year?

Appendix G3: School Year Transition Interview (Fall)

Opening Question:

Can you describe to me the way your summer routine shifted to a school year?
In what way did you accomplish your summer goals? (Follow-up question from spring interview)

Family Routines (Fall):

- 1.) What has this year been like compared to last?

Activities (Fall):

- 1.) How have activities changed:
 - a. From spring to summer from
 - b. Summer to fall?
- 2.) How did you go about selecting fall activities?
 - a. cost considerations
 - b. time commitments
 - c. level of parent's interest vs. what they child expresses a desire in
 - d. rules and restrictions

Education Practices (Fall):

- 1.) Have your homework practices changed from the last school year to this one?
- 2.) What goals do you have for your child this year in school?
 - a. Probe for details of how this will be accomplished?
 - i. Working with school
 - ii. Tutoring
 - iii. Based on activities

Closing Question: Based on how this past summer went and the transition into fall, is there anything you will do differently next summer?

Appendix H: Critical Case Kid Prompts

Directions: These journal prompts are optional. As you are keeping your journal this summer, you may choose to use them or write fresh ideas of your own. Don't forget to draw some pictures or take digital photos of what you have been up to! If it is okay with your Mom, you can email me if you have any questions or need help! Thanks for participating in research!

Prompt 1: Why do think kids get a summer vacation from school? What are you looking forward to? Is there anything about school you will miss?

Prompt 2: What are some things you have been doing with your time so far? What are some things you would like to do that you haven't yet?

Prompt 3: What is different about summertime than the school year? What do you like about it? Is there anything you do not like?

Prompt 4: Is there anything special about your community and summer vacation? Do you go out into your community (i.e. the library, parks, etc.)? What do you notice about your community and summertime?

Prompt 5: As summer vacation is coming to a close what are your feelings? Did you do a lot of the things you hoped you would do this summer? What are some things you learned?

Appendix I: Mothers' Journal Prompts

Here are your journal instructions:

I plan to send these out every other week until summer's end. You can choose to send them back to me electronically, save or collect them in a way that feels comfortable to you (i.e. on your pc - don't forget to back them up if you store them on your computer) or you can write them free hand in a journal (if you need a hard copy journal from me, I can provide one to you). In short, I can take them right away, or you can provide them to me in a collective at the end of the study. Of course, it goes without saying that you will not want them to pile up.

Prompt #1: What were the weeks leading up to the end of the school year like (noticeable changes at school due to transitions, celebrations, homework changes, end of the year projects, etc.)? What, if anything, have you done to prepare for summer break? Did your child's school help you prepare for an academic break? Now that the school year is officially over, how do you feel about your child(ren) being out of school for an extended period of time?

Prompt #2: In what ways do you utilize your community (such the places where you live, work, socialize) during summer months? What are the benefits to your community during summer vacation? What are the drawbacks?

Prompt #3: - What benefits/advantages (for example, family time, education, enrichment, rest & relaxation) are you and/or your child(ren) experiencing during summer vacation? What are the advantages of having an extended period of time outside of formal schooling? On the other hand, what are the drawbacks? While your response could include special moments, it can also be the opposite - such as moments of frustration, boredom, etc.

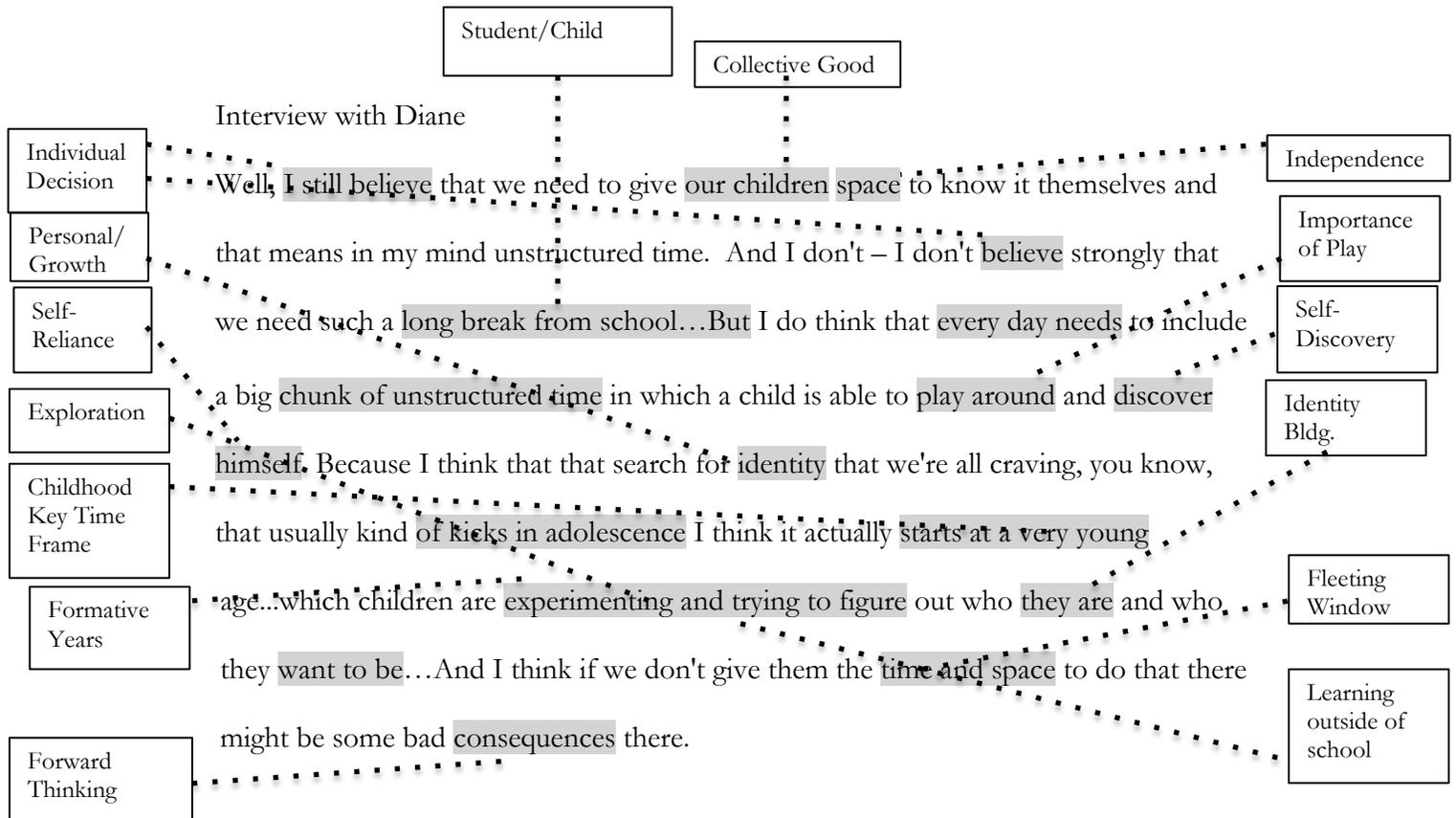
Prompt #4: What does childhood mean to you (Can you personally define it)? Do you feel that summer vacation is capable of affecting or shaping childhood? If so, in what way? If not, why? Another way to put this might be: In the grand scheme of childhood what role, if any, does summer time (that chunk of time away from school) play? Perhaps here you would like to include the way that your past has shaped In what ways have your own life experiences contributes to your viewpoint.

Prompt #5: During summer time away from school did your child experience personal growth and/or learning? If so, how? (For example, did he or she explore interests - like cooking; nature; travel to new places; gain a skill like swimming or biking/walking somewhere on their own, etc.). If not, why? (For example, are you concerned that the break in school caused more idleness than experience? What makes you feel this way?) P.S. Bear in mind, you don't have to choose one or the other here. In fact, you may feel a little bit of both ways.

In what way did your summer go according to plan? If not, what happened? For example, if you planned to make time for reading each day, did you? Is there anything that you did not accomplish that you had set out to do in the beginning of summer? Please offer any other general thoughts you might have.

Appendix J: Qualitative Analysis Demonstration

Phase 1: Foundational Coding



Memo on Identity Building

Consistently in my interviews lately has been this idea that the school year and the summer have totally different purposes. Mothers have been expressing ideas related to exploration and how summer affords this opportunity. In Diane's comments, she expresses that she is not opposed to something like year-round school, but she is adamant that her son have reserved time each day to play and explore. Other mothers have alluded to this as well. They seem propelled by the sheer notion of summer to allow their children more time to build their identities, explore and experiment. It has me wondering: How do mothers measure exploration? In what way might exploration be both organic and contrived? Do

they classify it as an expectation? If it is an expectation, will they be able to objectively say that summer did not meet the expectation?

Phase 2: Focused Coding

The following is a collection of quotes focused on childhood and the role of summer.

Childhood: Social Construction	Louisa: “I believe that every moment we spend as a child defines what choices we will make as an adult...”
Dichotomy of Student vs. Child Exploration/Identity Bldg.	Elizabeth: “I do believe summer vacation shapes a child's childhood, without summer vacation they would not have time to just be kids. They focus on school and work for 9 months of the year, they are disciplined and under a routine and schedule, the summer gives kids a chance to unwind, be themselves, and explore their environments.”
Childhood: Social Construction Exploration/Identity Bldg.	Flori: “Childhood means popsicles, ice cream cones, being creative and artistic, bike riding, exploring, trying new things, having a chance to test out ideas in the comfortable atmosphere of home, and learning who you are and what you think is important.
Childhood: Social Construction Dichotomy of Student vs. Child Exploration/Identity Bldg.	Birdie: “During the school year, you have a routine and you only have weekends (if not in sports) to be an individual. You can express who you are in school a little but during the summer, you can spread your wings and do what you would like or try new things.
Dichotomy of Student vs. Child Toll of school	Elizabeth: I think the advantages of having time outside of school is being able to spend time with family, while school is in session things get nuts you have to come home, do homework, make dinner, eat dinner, get bathed, then go to bed so the kids never really get quality time with family, in my opinion.
Dichotomy of Student vs. Child Toll of school	Mary: “In the weeks leading up to the end of the school year I could tell that my children were getting increasingly wild. The less work the kids were doing in their classes in school and the more field trips and parties they had made for some crazy nights when the kids got off the bus. It seemed that the less structure there was in the school day the more chaotic life got at home. I also kept asking the kids ‘Do you have homework to do?’ and I had trouble believing that they didn't!”

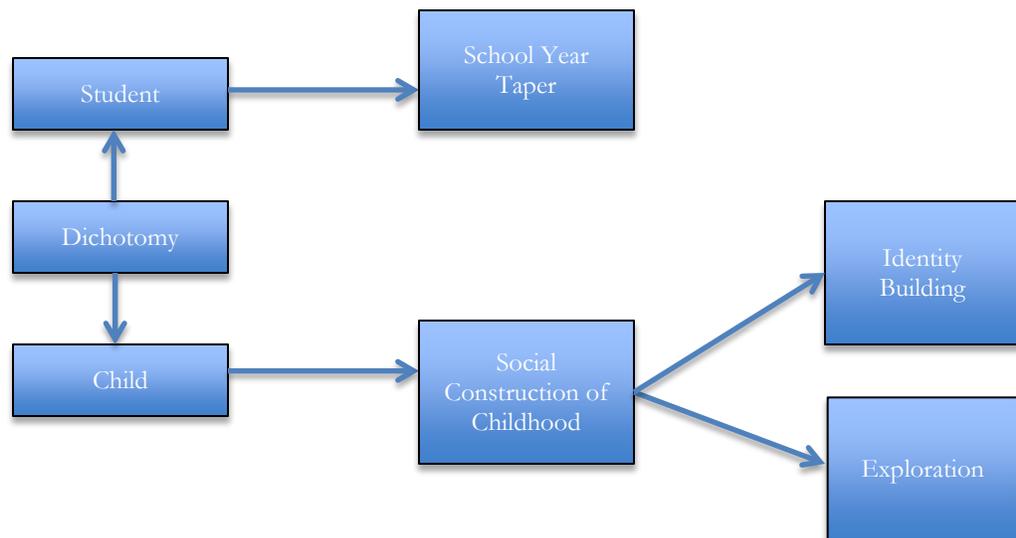
Memo on Summertime Development

I’m learning more from mothers about the intersection between summer and school. It seems like schools are driven to focus on the concept of the “student” during the school

year, but they reframe their viewpoint on this as summer starts to approach. Most notably, it seems like the overriding priority becomes a focus on the child. Mothers seem to buy-in into this idea of not only the socially constructed summer, but the socially constructed childhood. Not many mothers seem too concerned about summer learning loss—though most of them are well aware of it as a phenomenon). At present it seems like they are focusing on the “child” through a culmination of the student first.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding is used as a way of condensing and relating codes into a visual diagram that heightens data analysis to one of a theoretical nature. This diagram was derived from the focused coding table above. It appeared in a field notes diagram I had sketched and later appeared in my first draft outline of a findings chapter.



Appendix K1: Informed Consent form for Social Science Research

ORP OFFICE USE ONLY
DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY
IRB# 39379 Doc. #1002
The Pennsylvania State University
Institutional Review Board
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 04/17/2012 – J. Mathieu
Expiration Date: 04/01/2013 – J. Mathieu

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Socioeconomic Status and Community Contexts and Mothers' Perspectives of Academic Summer Vacation

Principal Investigator: Marcy Milhomme, Doctoral Candidate
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Contact Info: [REDACTED]; mbm24@psu.edu

Advisor: Dana Mitra, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Education Policies Department
Education Theory and Policy
301 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: 814.863.7020; dmitra@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to look at the perspective and experience gathering of academic summer vacations as told by those who experience it describes the central purpose of this research study. The research question for this research study is:

How do mothers of varying socioeconomic statuses in various community contexts experience summer vacation?

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You and your child will be participants in this study and asked to do the following:

You:

- Complete two interviews. Interviews will be audio recorded. The audio recordings will be used only by the researchers and will be destroyed three years after the close of the study or no later than 2017.
- Allow the researcher to observe you and your family inside or outside of the home (e.g., at the park, library, pool, etc.) for a day. Some observations may be video recorded.
- Journal entries about your family's summer activities (about 4 per week)
- Take photographs of your family's summer activities

Your child:

- Keep a journal of his/her summer activities. Given the age of the child, this could be done either by writing or drawing pictures. (once a week)
- Complete three interviews with the principal investigator. If your child requests, you may be present during the interview. These interviews will be audio recorded as well.
- Allow the researcher to observe him/her during summer activities for a day. Some observations may be video recorded.

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. **Benefits:** In participating in this research, you may learn more about opportunities for summer education and be able to reflect on your own practices.
5. **Duration/Time:** Parent interviews will last approximately 90 minutes each. Child interviews will take about 30 minutes or less. Observations of you and your child will be done on 6 different days up to 8 hours each day. The amount of time needed to complete each journal entry is at your discretion but should not take more than 15 minutes each time.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** All participants and names of their schools, towns/cities of residence will be given pseudonyms. The data and pseudonym key will be stored and secured at The Pennsylvania State University in a locked and password protected file.

Audio recordings will not be shared with anyone except the researchers (named above). The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

The principal investigator would like to use photographs and video clips of observations in publications and presentations. If you do not agree to allow photos or video to be used publicly, you and your child's participation will be confidential. If you allow the use of photos and videos publicly, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. While the researcher will not identify you and your child by name, photos and videos will be identifiable. Please indicate your agreement below.

_____ I AGREE to allow photos and video clips of my and my child's participation to be used in publications and presentations.

_____ I DO NOT AGREE to allow photos and video clips of my and my child's participation to be used in publications and presentations. Video recordings and photos will be destroyed 10 years after the close of the study.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Marcy Milhomme at [REDACTED] with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.
8. **Payment for Participation:** Your total compensation for participating in this study is a \$70 gift card broken out as follows: \$10 for each interview (2 interviews = \$20), \$5 for each observation (6 total = \$30) and \$20 for turning in the journal and photographs. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will be compensated for the portions of the research study you have completed.

Your child will receive a Penn State sweatshirt for his/her participation. If you decide to withdraw during the study, your child will still receive the sweatshirt.

9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to enroll yourself and your child in this study is

voluntary. You and your child can withdraw at any time. You and your child can choose to not answer certain questions. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you or your child would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. If you agree to (1) take part in this study; (2) to allow your child to participate and (3) the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____ I AGREE to allow my child, _____, to participate in this research study.

_____ I DO NOT AGREE to allow my child to participate in this research study.

_____ I AGREE to participate in this research study.

_____ I DO NOT AGREE to participate in this research study.

Participant Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent's Signature

Date

Appendix K2: Verbal Assent Form for Social Science Research/Children Ages 6-7

Verbal Assent Form for Social Science Research/Children Ages 6-7
The Pennsylvania State University

ORP OFFICE USE ONLY
DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY
IRB# 39379 Doc. #1003
The Pennsylvania State University
Institutional Review Board
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 04/17/2012 – J. Mathieu
Expiration Date: 04/01/2013 – J. Mathieu

Title of Project: Socioeconomic Status and Community Contexts and Mothers' Perspectives of Academic Summer Vacation

Principal Investigator: Marcy Milhomme, Doctoral Candidate
Education Policy Studies Department
Education Theory and Policy
300 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: [REDACTED]; mbm24@psu.edu

Advisor: Dana Mitra, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Education Policies Department
Education Theory and Policy
301 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: 814.863.7020; dmitra@psu.edu

Assent Script:

My name is Marcy and I am a student at Penn State University. Your mom said it was okay that we talk. I was wondering if I might be able to learn about how you spend your summer vacation by talking with you? If you don't want to talk with me, that is okay. No one will be mad or sad.

Appendix K3: Verbal Assent Form for Social Science Research/Children Ages 8-13

**ORP OFFICE USE ONLY
DO NOT REMOVE OR
MODIFY**
IRB# 39379 Doc. #1004
The Pennsylvania State University
Institutional Review Board
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 04/17/2012 – J.
Mathieu

Verbal Assent Form for Social Science Research/Children Ages 8-13
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Socioeconomic Status and Community Contexts and Mothers' Perspectives of Academic Summer Vacation

Principal Investigator: Marcy Milhomme, Doctoral Candidate
Education Policy Studies Department
Education Theory and Policy
300 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: [REDACTED] mbm24@psu.edu

Advisor: Dana Mitra, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Education Policies Department
Education Theory and Policy
301 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802
Contact Info: 814.863.7020; dmitra@psu.edu

Assent Script:

My name is Marcy and I am a student at Penn State University. Your mom said it okay that I talk to you. I am doing a project for my schoolwork where I talk to a lot of different kids who live in different places about what they do with their time over the summer. Will it be okay if we meet and talk a little bit about what you do with your time over the summer? If you don't want to, that is okay. No one will be mad or sad.

Appendix L1: Verbal Script for Study Recruitment

I know a graduate student at Penn State who is asking for volunteers to be part of her research study about how mothers' experience their child's summer vacations from school. The study will consist of three interviews and a survey. You and your child may also be asked to participate in follow-up research study where you take photographs (if you do not have a digital camera one will be provided to you), keep a journal and participate in observations of your family inside or outside of the home (For example, at the park; library; pool; etc.). Parental Consent must be obtained in order for your child to participate.

Please email her at [REDACTED] or mbm24@psu.edu or call [REDACTED] You will receive compensation for your time.

Would You Like to Talk About How You Experience Your Child's Summer Vacation?

I am a graduate student from Penn State University conducting a research study that seeks to understand how mothers experience their child's summer vacations.

Are you...

- A mom whose child or children experience an academic summer vacation (For example, your child ends their school year in June and returns to school in August or September)?
- Are any or all of your children in the grade levels of kindergarten through 6th grade?
 - Over the age of 18?

If you answered yes to these questions, I invite you to participate in my research study.

All participants will be asked to take part in one survey and three interviews.

You and your child* may be asked to participate in follow-up study consisting of photographs (if you do not have a digital camera one will be provided), journals and observations of your family.

Compensation will be provided.

Contact: Marcy Milhomme Email: [REDACTED] Phone: [REDACTED]

*Parental Consent must be obtained in order for your child to participate.

Appendix M: Excerpts – Mothers’ Responses

“I believe that every moment we spend as a child defines what choices we will make as an adult. Taking that a step further, I believe that every moment we spend in time, whether it be as a child, or later in life, will shape us for the next moment. We are constantly be shaped and molded for the future. We can always learn something from the “now” and use it for the “then”. As for summer vacation, I feel that it plays a huge role in our childhood. Children use summer vacation to create lasting memories with family and friends, by doing activities they normally would not get to do during the school year.”

Louisa, Middle-class mother of four, Watertown

“What childhood means to me is a time that influences the path one will choose in life. When you are a child, each event you encounter makes your mind think about something differently, either about yourself or about the world around you, than before the event. This leads a person in a certain direction, either good or bad...So, the events that happen in my children's lives, are very thought over by me. If I can make good things happen for them, I make it happen. If I can be supportive during a bad event, I make sure I am there for them. I believe that we should live purposefully, not let all life's events to chance...For my children, summer is a time of fun, sporting events, swimming, amusement parks and some days of laying around the house doing nothing but relaxing. I'm sure they have their complaints, but overall I think it's a good experience for them.”

Mary, Working-class Mother of Two, Wheaton

“How do I define childhood...wow that is a hard question to answer. Let's come back to that. I do believe summer vacation shapes a child's childhood, without summer vacation they would not have time to just be kids. They focus on school and work for 9 months of the year, they are disciplined and under a routine and schedule, the summer gives kids a chance to unwind, be themselves, and explore their environments. I know Finn leaves the house about 10am and doesn't come home till dark during the summer, and when he does come home he is sweaty, dirty, and ready to tell me all about his day. He sometimes comes home with scrapes and cuts, dirty knees, and grass stained clothes, but he always comes home happy and excited. I think this is what childhood is about.”

Elizabeth, Low-Income Mother of Two, Wheaton

“In asking us to define childhood I reflect in two ways, as a child once myself and as a parent of three children. In both roles the word carefree instantly pops in my head. Not carefree in the sense of reckless abandonment, but carefree as in the sense of letting life just happen without over thinking every little moment or personal interaction. There is so much growth and learning squished into every moment of living, especially as a child. However during childhood you are more capable of living in the moment; not being bound by all the rules that come with adulthood. While children exude the joy of living carefree year round, there is something magical about the freedom of summer and the opportunity to live even carefree-er (I made that word up because I can in the carefree days of summer).”

Flori, middle-class mother of three, Grantville

“Childhood: a time of enchantment when imagination is fertile. A time when humans are able to determine few of the conditions of their own existence (where they live, with whom, how they spend their time, what they eat, etc.), thus, a time of powerlessness. A time when they are protected by adults who shelter and care for them. A time when their personalities and skills are forming, a time of indeterminate and open potential... Summer has become associated with childhood in powerful ways, I think. Maybe because of summer break from school, we think of summer as a time for fun, play--things we associate with children, although perhaps that is unfortunate for the adults who imagine their lives as less joyful, committed to work and worry. So, summer not only shapes individual experience of childhood--golden memories, or what we desire, nostalgically--but summer also constructs our notions of childhood: a carefree period of life before one must assume financial responsibility for oneself. I think this is a recent notion, and not entirely healthy. I think I need to involve my child in more of the every day details of maintaining our lives. (She's old enough now.)”

Eleanor, Middle-class Mother of one, Watertown

“Childhood means popsicles, ice cream cones, being creative and artistic, bike riding, exploring, trying new things, having a chance to test out ideas in the comfortable atmosphere of home, and learning who you are and what you think is important.

YES. Summer vacation does have a key role in childhood. It is a chance for a kid to make his/her own plan (within reason) and to have big projects. It is a chance for extended “hang out times/play dates” that force friends to negotiate how to spend that time together...important skills...There is also time for solo time. How to spend alone time? How to entertain one’s self? How to make the best use of your time that is alignment with who you are and what you want to accomplish? Summer is good for lots of personal growth.”

Michelle, Middle-class mother of two, Grantville

EDUCATION:**The Pennsylvania State University****Fall 2009 – May 2014**

Doctorate in Educational Theory and Policy; Dissertation Title: “Mothers’ Perception and Practice in their Child’s Out of School [Summer] Time: A Socioeconomic Perspective”

Suffolk University

Master of Arts, Communication Studies

May 2001**Edinboro University of Pennsylvania**

Bachelor of Arts (Cum Laude), Speech and Communication Studies

May 1999**TEACHING EXPERIENCE:**

EDTHP200: Education Reform, Education Policy Studies

Spring 2013

EDTHP497C: Family & Community Engagement, Education Policy Studies

Spring 2012; Summer 2012

CAS100A&B: Effective Speech

Spring 2009 – Present**PUBLICATIONS & REPORTS:**Milhomme, Marcy (2012-02-01). Families, Schools, and the Adolescent: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice. (Book review). In *American Journal of Education*. 118 (2), 239(3).

Swain, J., Janzen, M., Milhomme, M., Mei, F. (May, 2011). LMS Interim Report. Unpublished paper presented to Penn State’s eLearning Committee May, 2011.

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:Milhomme, M.B. (April, 2012). *Social Class, Forms of Capital and Mothers’ Perspectives: A Qualitative Study of Summer Vacation*. Presented at the Higher Education Graduate Symposium, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.Milhomme, M.B. (November, 2011). *The Role of Leaders in Fostering Civic Engagement and Student Voice Activities: Tales from a Democratic School*. Presented at the University Council for Educational Administration, Pittsburgh, PA.Milhomme, M.B. (April, 2011). *The Role of Leaders in Enabling Civic Engagement in Schools*. Presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.Milhomme, M.B. (May, 2008). *Educational Web Portals in K-12 Schools: Potential to make a difference*. Presented at Eastern Communication Association Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.Milhomme, M.B. (May, 2008). *The Results Show[down]: The American Idol/ Presidential Election Connection*. Presented at Eastern Communication Association Annual Conference Poster Session, Pittsburgh, PA.Milhomme, M.B. (May, 2008). *Incorporating film into the communication classroom*. Presented at Eastern Communication Association Annual Conference Short Course, Pittsburgh, PA.**PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:**Invited Reviewer – *American Journal of Education***January 2014, March 2013, March 2012**

Research Assistant, Dewey School Project

Fall 2009 – Spring 2012

American Education Research Association

Spring 2010 - Present**AWARDS:**

Top Three Paper Award, Eastern Communication Association

February 2008

Gold Key Part-time Teacher of the Year Nomination Emerson College

March 2008