Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices During the School Year and Summer

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ABSTRACT

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This study builds on an emerging literature within the effects of schooling tradition by extending the seasonal perspective to a class-based investigation of parenting logics and home influence. Using data from qualitative interviews conducted over the course of a twelve-month period that includes both the school year and the summer months, this dissertation examines possible linkages between home influence and summer learning, and tests the longstanding assumption that home influence acts in a constant and continuous way throughout the year. In particular, I investigate the expectations and beliefs that parents hold for their children during the long summer break from schooling and examine how summertime expectations and family practices differ from those during the school year.

I find evidence that home influence changes across seasons, and that the availability of economic resources plays an important role in shaping seasonal change. Specifically, my data suggest that mothers' attitudes and expectations vary by season, as do household rules around bedtime and screen time. I identify mechanisms that facilitate summer learning loss, including a "carry-over" effect, and I present evidence that the neighborhood context seems to take on outsize importance during the summer months. I also find that two sub-groups – children with disabilities and dual-custody families – seem to experience greater seasonal variation than the general population. My findings suggest the need to modify the assumption that home influence acts in a constant way and

to develop a more precise understanding of home influence, one that takes into account the likelihood of seasonal variation, particularly by class and by subgroup.

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DEDICATION

To Catherine, because life is bigger and better with you in it.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate seasonal variation in parenting logics. By specifically examining class-based differences in seasonal variation, my goal is to explore the link between home influence and student learning. Studies of summer learning loss provide ample evidence that home and community influences during the summer months contribute to the widening of the class-based achievement gap. Despite these findings, little is known about the expectations and beliefs that parents hold for their children during the long summer break from schooling and, importantly, how summertime expectations and family practices differ from those during the school year. Do parents see the summer months as a time for their children to take a much needed break from the rigors of formal schooling, or do they see the summer months as an opportunity for their children to catch-up, review, get ahead, or have new and different experiences? To what extent do household rules and expectations around screen time, reading time, and bedtime change from the school year to the summer, and how much excitement or anxiety do parents and children experience as they transition from the school year environment and schedule to a whole new routine during the summer months? What are the emotional, logistical and financial considerations that face working parents as they make arrangements for summertime child care and activities that may involve changes in their children's daily schedule, access to subsidized meals, and time with friends?

A class-gap in summer learning is well established, particularly in literacy related skills. However, research also suggests that students across the socioeconomic spectrum experience declines in math skills during the summer months. If previous research has

found that middle and working class parents have similar attitudes and expectations for their children's participation in structured activities during the school year (Bennett et al. 2012), how do these expectations carry-over to the summer? And, how does differential access to financial resources shape parental expectations?

Although previous research has examined parental expectations during the school year (Lareau 1987) *or* during the summer (Chin and Phillips 2004) none have examined parental expectations during *both* the school year and the summer. That is the purpose of this study, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which social class shapes or is linked to parental expectations across both seasons. In so doing, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence to test the longstanding assumption that home influence acts in a constant and continuous way throughout the year (Heyns 1987; Alexander and Entwisle 2001). Sociologists of education have relied on this assumption in designing seasonal comparisons.

Finally, by investigating parental expectations during the summer months, I seek to shed light on the mechanisms behind the phenomenon of summer learning loss. Summer learning loss is linked to home influences, yet very little is known about the mechanisms that contribute to summer learning loss.

Because my goal is to understand what parents think, expect, and want from and for their children's learning during these different seasons, I have designed a qualitative study that allows me to gather data on middle- and working-class parenting logics during both the school year and the summer. I believe that this investigation will expand our knowledge of parenting logics and the concept of home influence, shed light on the causes of summer learning loss, particularly the class-based differential that exists in

language arts and verbal skills, and test the longstanding assumption that home influence exerts itself in a constant and continuous way throughout the calendar year.

Problem Statement and Rationale

The overarching purpose of the research is to promote a deeper understanding of the ways families contribute to the class-based achievement gap. I will discuss implications of the study in terms of summer learning loss and the achievement gap, the conceptualization of parenting logics, and the use of home influence as a constant against which researchers can contrast the temporal effects of schooling.

Four features of the study enable me to contribute new information to the literature on seasonal comparisons and home influence. First, I collect data from parents during both the school year and the summer. Previous research has investigated home influence during one season or the other (Lareau 1987; Chin and Phillips 2004; Bennett 2012), but researchers have largely ignored the possibility of social class differences in the way parenting logics *change* from one season to the next. Second, I test the longstanding assumption that home influence can be conceptualized as a *constant* throughout the calendar year. I emphasize that while home influence is *present* throughout the calendar year, in contrast to the temporal nature of schooling, it does not necessarily follow that home influence exerts a constant or continuous effect on student learning throughout the year. This distinction has implications for seasonal comparisons. Third, by investigating class-based parenting logics during the summer months, I seek to provide insights into class-based differences in summer learning. Fourth, I focus my

investigation on the parents of 2nd grade children and explore expectations by subject area, specifically reading and mathematics.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate class-based, seasonal variation in the parenting logics of the mothers of 2nd graders. I examine parental attitudes and expectations during the summer and school year for each class: what do middle-class parents expect of their children and want for their children's learning during the summer and school year and, similarly, what do working-class parents want and expect for their children during the summer and school year? In addition to general expectations, I will explore expectations by subject area, looking specifically at reading and mathematics.

The overarching question I examine is how seasonal variation in parenting logics differs by class. I focus my investigation on three sub-questions:

1. How, if at all, do middle-class parenting logics vary by season?
    a. First, what do middle-class parents expect during the school year in general and by specific subject area?
    b. Second, what do middle-class parents expect during the summer in general and by specific subject area?
    c. Then how, if at all, do middle-class parents' expectations shift from the school year to the summer, both in general and by specific subject area?
2. How, if at all, do working-class parenting logics vary by season?
    a. First, what do working-class parents expect during the school year in general and by specific subject area?

b. Second, what do working-class parents expect during the summer in general and by specific subject area?

c. Then how, if at all, do working-class parents' expectations shift from the school year to the summer, both in general and by specific subject area?

3. How do the seasonal differences in expectations and parenting logics observed among middle-class parents compare to the seasonal differences in expectations and parenting logics of working-class parents?

Specifically, this investigation explores how seasonal differences in parental attitudes, beliefs, and expectations vary by social class and by academic subject.

Significance

The purpose of this study is to examine parental expectations during *both* the school year and the summer, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which social class shapes or is linked to parental expectations across both seasons. I narrow my inquiry to parents of children in the early elementary grades - because prior research has demonstrated that seasonal variation in learning is greatest for students in grades kindergarten, first and second – and I explore the ways in which parental expectations differ by subject area because prior research has revealed a class-based differential in summer learning loss in reading and literacy skills but not in math skills.

In so doing, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence to test the longstanding assumption that home influence acts in a constant and continuous way throughout the year (Heyns 1987; Alexander, Entwisle and Olson, 2001). Sociologists of education have relied on this assumption in designing seasonal comparisons. I also hope to shed light on

the mechanisms behind summer learning loss, what Bronfenbrenner (2005) called the proximal processes. While investigators explain summer learning loss as the result of home influences, very little is known about what actually occurs within homes to produce learning or learning loss during the summer months. In sum, I believe that this investigation expands our knowledge of parenting logics and the concept of home influence, sheds light on the causes of summer learning loss – particularly with respect to the presence of a class-based differential in summer literacy skills but the absence of class differences in summer mathematics learning - and tests the longstanding assumption that home influence exerts itself in a constant and continuous way throughout the calendar year.

Definitions

Although sometimes used interchangeably by other researchers, *parental aspirations* and *parental expectations* are considered to be conceptually distinct in this study: the former refers to parental desires, wishes or goals for their children, while the latter consists of more "realistic beliefs or judgments that parents have about their children's future achievement as reflected in course grades, highest level of schooling attainted, or college attendance" (Yamamoto and Holloway 2010; p.191). In this conceptualization, *parental expectations* are based on an assessment of both the child's academic abilities *and* the available resources for supporting achievement.

While acknowledging the robust debate around how to conceptualize and measure social class (Lareau and Conley 2008), for the sake of consistency with previous research on parenting logics (Bennett et al. 2012) and seasonal learning (Chin and Phillips 2004), I

define social class on the basis of parents' level of education and occupational status: middle-class status is defined by the presence of at least one parent who holds a bachelor's degree and is employed in a professional or managerial occupation.

Finally, I use *parenting logics* as a broad term that is meant to include the range of attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, and expectations that shape and define the ways in which parents raise their children. Implicit in the research questions and design of this study, is my assumption that parenting logics are informed by *both* culture and structure (see Bennett et al. 2012), and that any investigation of parenting practices should include consideration of both.

CHAPTER TWO: Seasons, Schooling and Parenting

Overview

The previous chapter introduced the purpose and significance of this study. In this chapter, I review the relevant research and present the conceptual framework that underlies my investigation. To begin, I review the effects of schooling literature, specifically the findings from seasonal comparisons that use the summer months as a way to disentangle school influences on learning from non-school influences, and the literature on parenting logics, with particular attention paid to the varied ways in which home influence has been conceptualized and measured. My review of the literature guides the development of this study's conceptual framework, which is presented at the end of this chapter and informed by the ecological perspective on human development with key elements drawn from the seasonal perspective on learning and the life course perspective.

The Effects of Schooling and Seasonal Comparisons

Whereas research in the *school effects* tradition examines the effects of variation among schools, measuring, for instance, the impact of specific characteristics of schools such as school size (Lee 2000) and teacher quality (Hanushek and Rivkin 2006), or the differences between public, private, and parochial schools (Coleman and Hoffer 1987), research in the *effects of schooling* tradition take a different approach by investigating the overall effect of the schooling process (Heyns 1978; Sorenson and Morgan 2000). Inquiry in this line of research includes studies of how schooling socializes individuals and shapes the lives of adults (Pallas 2000); how schooling sorts ands selects individuals

for employment opportunities (Kerckhoff 1976); how the institution of education exerts its authority across other institutions and sectors in society (Meyer 1977); how the causes and consequences of cross-national differences in education inequality emerge and manifest themselves (Montt 2011; Dorius 2013); and whether schooling serves to mitigate or reproduce social inequality (Alexander 1997; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Heyns 1978; Heyns 1987; Alexander, Entwisle, Olson 2001).

A methodological challenge for researchers working in the effects of schooling tradition is how best to disentangle school influences from home and community influences. Because most students live at home while going to school, researchers must find ways to estimate the effects of one separately from the other. The summer months provide an opportunity to do this. With most schools in America operating on the traditional 9-month, 180-day school calendar (Gold 2002), researchers are able to approximate a natural experiment by contrasting school year learning, which is the product of both school and non-school factors, with summer learning, which, because it is occurs during a period in which schools are closed, is understood to be the result of non-school factors (Heyns 1978; Entwisle and Alexander 1992; Downey et al. 2004). In this model, school influences are assumed to be temporal, that is, they operate only during the nine months of the school year, while non-school influences like home and family, are assumed to be in continuous operation throughout periods of both schooling and non-schooling. Although Heyns' (1978) study of Atlanta schoolchildren was not the first to examine seasonal patterns in cognitive development or to uncover the problem of summer learning loss (e.g., see Cooper et al., 1996 for a historical account of summer loss studies dating back to 1906) the study is considered seminal because she introduced

the notion of using the school calendar to disentangle school influences from home and community influences (Downey et al. 2004; Alexander et al. 2007). Heyns argued that by holding constant the effects of one set of variables, the non-school factors, while permitting the other set of variables, the school factors, to change, researchers could contrast the relative importance of the two, thus providing a more precise estimate of the effects of schooling than those reported by the well-publicized Coleman Report (Coleman et al. 1966). Mandated by Congress, the Coleman Report surprised many by concluding that much of the variation in student achievement lies within schools and not between schools. Put another way, when controlling for parental background status, variations in schools' average achievement levels were not large relative to variations in individual achievement and, similarly, differences between schools were tied to the socioeconomic makeup of the student body and not per pupil expenditures (Coleman et al. 1966; Riordan 1996). Although researchers have since reanalyzed the Coleman data with newer, more advanced modeling techniques and found stronger evidence of school effects (Borman and Dowling 2010), the Coleman Report was widely interpreted at the time to mean that schools had little if any effect on student achievement (Heyns 1978; Riordan 1996; Borman and Dowling 2010). Heyns, for instance, wrote that the Coleman Report "challenged the notion that improving the schools would have very much impact on the achievement of children… these conclusions undermined the basic premises of educational policy" (Heyns 1978, P. 6).

Heyns' results, drawn from a sample of roughly 3,000 white and African-American students in grades six, seven, and eight across 42 Atlanta middle schools, provided strong evidence that cognitive inequality increased dramatically during the

summer months. She reported that “children of every income level, and within both racial groups, showed a slower rate of summer learning than they did when schools were open” and that “socioeconomic differentials in learning were consistently exacerbated during the summer months” (Heyns 1978, P. 47). These findings, as well as corroborating evidence from subsequent studies of seasonal learning, have been widely interpreted to mean that schools serve to reduce inequality between students of different social backgrounds (Alexander, Entwisle and Olson 2004; McCombs et al. 2011).

Research on Summer Learning Loss

A meta-analysis of a dozen summer learning studies conducted between 1975 and 1996, including Heyns’ Atlanta study, reports that the average American student - with data aggregated across subject area, grade level, student socioeconomic background, gender and racial/ethnic identity- experiences summer learning loss equal to one-tenth of a standard deviation, which equates to about one month’s worth of math and reading/language knowledge on a grade level equivalency scale (Cooper et al., 1996). Cooper and his colleagues also report that summer slowdown and loss vary by grade level, subject area and students’ socioeconomic status and that, on average, the summer months led to a gap of about 3 months between middle class students and their less affluent peers. Writing in the mid-1990’s, just a year before the publication of Cooper’s meta-analysis, Karweit (1995) emphasized the consistency of these findings across studies using local or national data, employing varying measures of student disadvantage, and employing different methodologies. In the two decades that have passed since Karweit’s observation, additional evidence for an income-based differential in summer

learning has been provided by a number of studies. In the remainder of this section, I review in detail the empirical evidence from this body of literature, showing both how Heyns' findings have been widely replicated and how researchers have extended her use of seasonal comparisons to examine issues beyond students' cognitive development and academic achievement.

Differences by Family Income

The strongest and most consistently reported finding in the literature on seasonal comparisons is that the summer months exacerbate the income-based inequality in cognitive skills that is already present when children enter school (Downey et al. 2004; Entwisle and Alexander 1992; Alexander, Entwisle and Olson 2007; Heyns 1978; Cooper et al. 1996; Burkam et al. 2004). For instance, Entwisle and Alexander (1992) used local data from a sample of Baltimore schoolchildren in their Beginning School Study (BSS) to analyze mathematics achievement during the first two years of school. Consistent with Heyns' findings in Atlanta, the BSS data revealed what Entwisle and Alexander describe as a "striking relationship between economic standing and summer gains: for children in poverty, every summer meant a loss; for those not in poverty, every summer meant a gain" (P. 82). Whereas Heyns (1978) found the summer differential to be explained by both race and poverty, Entwisle and Alexander report that summer gains and losses did not differ by race when family income was controlled; the pattern of school year gains and summer losses was experienced by both low-income African-Americans and low-income whites. While this early analysis of the Baltimore data was limited to mathematics achievement in the first two years of schooling, later analyses of BSS

children in the upper grades (Alexander and Entwisle 1996) and in reading (Entwisle and Alexander 1994; Entwisle, Alexander and Olson 2004) report a similar pattern of income-based disparities in rates of summer learning. In fact, Alexander and his colleagues wrote in 2001 that the BSS data suggests that "*practically the entire gap increase across socioeconomic lines* traces to summer learning differentials" (Alexander et al. 2001, P. 174).

More recent studies (Downey et al. 2004; Burkam et al. 2004; Benson and Borman 2010) have analyzed nationally representative data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) and found results similar to the Atlanta and Baltimore studies. For instance, Downey et al. (2004) report that low-income kindergarten and first grade students, on average, learn reading and mathematics skills at a faster rate during the school year than during the summer months. Like Heyns (1978) and Entwisle and Alexander (1992, 1994), Downey and his colleagues (2004) argue that with respect to socioeconomic status, the primary source of cognitive inequality lies in children's disparate home and community environments, not the school environment. They caution, however, that their evidence does not support a similar claim with respect to the gap in reading skills between blacks and whites, which grew at a faster than expected rate during the school year, suggesting that schooling contributes to the black/white gap in literacy skills. Burkam and his colleagues (2004) also analyzed the ECLS-K data and found that the effect of socioeconomic status on children's summer learning was concentrated primarily in the highest and lowest quintiles of the SES distribution, or the most advantaged and the most disadvantaged children. Finally, the most recently published review of the literature on seasonal comparisons (McCombs et

al. 2011) concluded that the empirical evidence demonstrates "clear differences in the summer learning rates of low-income and higher-income students" (P.21). Despite the consistency of these findings, however, there is some evidence that the income gap in summer learning may differ by subject area. For example, Cooper et al.'s meta-analysis (1996) of 13 studies published after 1975 found a significant income-based differential in literacy skills but not in math skills, with students from both middle- and lower-income homes experiencing a decline in math skills over the summer. I discuss these and other findings regarding subject area differences in the next section.

Differences by Subject Area

Cooper and his colleagues' meta-analysis (1996) found that summer learning loss varied by subject area, with students experiencing greater losses, on average, in quantitative skills than in reading and literacy related skills. McCombs et al. (2011) suggest this finding is consistent with studies that have found school quality to have a greater effect on developing mathematics skills than reading skills because students have more opportunity to learn and practice literacy outside of the school setting, while mathematics instruction is generally limited to formal schooling. For example, while many parents read to their children at bedtime, one can assume that relatively few practice math problems at bedtime. Additionally, Cooper et al. (1996) draw on findings from the field of cognitive psychology to suggest that subject area differences in summer learning may be related to the differences between factual or procedural learning, on the one hand, and conceptual understanding, on the other. Their meta-analysis reports that students across all income groups declined by four-tenths of a standard deviation in

Spelling and two-tenths of a standard deviation in Comprehension skills, but did not lose ground in Word Recognition and, in fact, made small gains on Vocabulary subtests; Cooper and his colleagues suggest that such findings are evidence that summer loss is more likely to occur in subjects that involve factual and procedural knowledge, which may be more susceptible to learning decay in the absence of practice than conceptual knowledge (Cooper et al., 1996).

Alexander and his colleagues (2001) also report subject area differences, with low SES students in the BSS showing, on average, neither gains nor losses in verbal skills over the summer but registering large losses in quantitative skills, particularly in the first two years of schooling. High SES students in BSS experienced summer gains in both verbal and quantitative skills, with summer gains in math slightly less than those in reading.

Other research suggests that the subject area differential may not be as significant as Cooper et al. (1996) found, at least not in the early grades and not for all income groups. For instance, Burkam et al. (2004) report that middle-class children showed *gains* in math skills during the summer between kindergarten and first grade but experienced no gains in literacy skills, a finding that is at odds with the more significant losses in quantitative skills reported by Cooper et al.

Differences by Grade Level

The meta-analysis by Cooper, Nye, et al. (1996) suggests that summer effects may vary by grade level, although not in the way one might expect. For students in first and second grade, Cooper and his colleagues report non-significant gains in summer

learning while older students in fourth grade and beyond experienced significant losses in achievement over the summer. However, a number of more recent studies, discussed below, challenge these claims by providing evidence of greater summer effects in the earlier grades. Indeed, Cooper and his colleagues caution that the data they reviewed might be biased as a result of a *floor effect* in scaling, which would act to limit the amount of negative change a child in the first or second grade can manifest, thereby providing an artificial constraint on the amount of reported loss.

Despite finding only modest losses in the early grades, Cooper and his colleagues hypothesize that seasonal differences in the early years of schooling may be especially critical, given that they set in motion the processes that influence later learning. Indeed, this is the conclusion reached by Alexander and Entwisle (1996) who argue that "the early period of schooling sets the stage for virtually everything that follows: Achievement patterns and work habits are established, reputations are formed, a paper trail is put in place that will follow children for the rest of their schooling, and children's ideas about self and school begin to crystallize" (P.78). Data from their study of Baltimore schoolchildren suggest greater summer effects in both mathematics (Entwisle and Alexander 1992) and reading (Alexander et al. 2004) in the early grades, as do analyses of ECLS-K reading data (Benson and Borman 2010) and ECLS-K math data (Burkam et al. 2004). Given the consistency of findings, it seems likely that seasonal inequalities in learning are greatest in the early grades.

Research on seasonal differences in the middle school and high school grades is more limited. As discussed above, Heyns (1978) reports summer learning loss in the middle school grades, particularly among low-income and African American students,

but very little data are available at the high school level. For instance, Cooper and his colleagues (1996) did not identify a single study since 1975 that employed seasonal comparisons at the high school level in a methodologically rigorous way. While the notion of a "critical period" in summer learning put forth by Cooper et al. (1996) and Alexander and Entwisle (1996) is persuasive at the elementary school level, Gamoran (1996) suggests that seasonal differences may not be as strong at the secondary level. He argues that the common practice of grouping high school students by ability leads to within-school inequality that magnifies initial differences among students from different socioeconomic strata. Put differently, the compensatory effects of schooling revealed by seasonal comparisons are likely to be much stronger in the early elementary grades than the later grades.

Cumulative Effect

What is the long-term impact of the class-based gap in summer learning? To date, only one study, Alexander and Entwisle's aforementioned BSS, has provided longitudinal data to answer this question. The authors claim that the income-based differential in early grades' summer learning leads to disparities in school achievement at the end of elementary school (Alexander et al. 2004) that persist at least until the start of ninth grade: the "summer shortfall over the five years of elementary school accounts for more than half the difference" of the achievement gap between high and low SES at the start of ninth grade (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2007, P.175). The BSS sample included 790 first-time (nonrepeating) first-graders of whom 55% were African American and 45% White, 44% lived in single-parent households, two-thirds qualified for free and reduced

lunch, with almost 40% of their mothers lacking a high school degree (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2004). Though Alexander and his colleagues caution that the BSS is a local study with a small analytic sample, thus limiting its generalizability, the context is low income and urban and thus particularly relevant to discussions of the achievement gap (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2007).

Explanatory Factors

What explains the class-based gap in summer learning? Despite general agreement about the extent of social stratification during the summer months, previous research provides little clear evidence of the causal mechanisms that influence learning during the summer months (Alexander and Entwisle 1996; Phillips and Chin 2004; Burkam et al. 2004). Table 1 beginning on the next pages provides a summary of possible explanations while the remainder of this section reviews the available empirical evidence.

Researchers have hypothesized that social class differences in summer learning might be explained by differential participation rates in both formal and informal summer activities. Heyns (1978) examined the effects of structured summer activities including music or dance lessons, remedial summer school programs, sleep away recreational camps, and organized sports, but found little or no relationship between participation in those activities and literacy gains. Her study revealed, however, a strong relationship between learning and the amount children read; whether measured by the number of books read or the amount of time spent reading, the amount children read was the single

Table 1: The Substance of Class.
What happens in the homes of middle class children during the summer months that doesn't happen in the homes of working-class and poor children? A summary of possible explanations for class-based differences in summer learning.

	Middle-Class Advantages
Structural	
Family Income	More income means more choices[1]; a higher standard of living (i.e., greater chances of owning a car, living in a safer neighborhood, and enjoying better health); and more disposable income to purchase educationally beneficial materials, to enroll children in formal activities such as academic and/or recreational camps and lessons, and to travel or take family vacations.
Parental Occupation	Higher status professional/managerial jobs provide paid vacation and greater scheduling flexibility, as well as higher status social networks and increased sense of self-efficacy with regards to supporting and monitoring child's education.
Parental Education	Bachelor's and advanced degrees enhance in-home vocabulary and parental expectations, as well as income potential and social capital.
Cultural	
Parental Aspirations/Expectations	Higher parental aspirations/expectations are linked to children's motivation in school and their sense of self-efficacy, as well as to higher levels of parental involvement and teacher expectations.
Parental Involvement	High levels of parental involvement at home and in school provide children with important source of guidance/instruction and model the "importance of schooling."

[1] Hout 2008, p. 26.

Parents' Child Rearing Strategies	Middle-class strategy of "Concerted cultivation[2]" leads to higher level of organized leisure activities, parental engagement, more frequent parent-child conversations about school and learning, increased sense of children's self-efficacy and entitlement, and a pattern of interconnectedness between school and home.
<u>Contextual</u>	
Home Environment	What level of family stress or support is present in the home? For example, are families dealing with financial hardship, marriage instability or serious illness? While middle class status doesn't make one immune from these sources of stress, the availability of financial resources and higher status can make it easier to deal with them.
Neighborhood/Community Resources	The availability, accessibility, and variability of high-quality structured activities is greater in more affluent neighborhoods whereas access in working-class neighborhoods tends to be limited to social institutions such as schools and churches[3].
Peer Influences	While previous research has established the important role of peer influences in the school setting, less is known about the role peer influences play during the summer months. To what extent, and how, do peer influences play a role during the summer months?
<u>Schedule and Activities</u>	
Formal Activities	Access to learning opportunities outside both the conventional school setting and the immediate home environment are not equal, with middle-class students participating in extracurricular activities at higher rates.[4]

[2] Lareau, 2003.
[3] Bennett et al. 2012.
[4] Covay and Carbonaro 2012.

Daily Schedule and Informal Activities	Summer learning studies suggest that middle-class children tend to engage in informal learning activities – like visiting the library and reading - more frequently than their less affluent peers. In addition, how is the child supervised during the summer months and what is their daily schedule – is screen time limited, are they eating regularly, etc.
Pedagogical	
School Year-to-Summer Spillover	What is the interaction between teachers' school-year practices and children's summer learning? Do students in better schools or classrooms with more effective teachers receive higher quality instruction and thus retain more over the summer months?
Child-Centered: Capital and Resistance	What resources and/or constraints inhere in children themselves, particularly older children?[5] Children's varying talents, interests, and temperament can lead to differential levels of organizing and initiating learning activities; while "less-motivated" children come from all social classes, families with more resources have an advantage in trying to engage such children.

[5] Chin and Phillips, 2004.

activity that Heyns found consistently influenced achievement independent of socioeconomic class or race. Entwisle et al. (1997) report similar findings in their Baltimore study as do Phillips and Chin (2004), who report that first-graders who read more than thirty minutes a day during the summer months gained .18 standard deviations more in reading comprehension than children who read less.

Burkam et al. (2004) used the nationally representative sample in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) of 1998-1999 to test the impact of a wide array of summer activities on summer learning gains in literacy, mathematics, and general knowledge (i.e., science and social studies) during the summer between kindergarten and first grade. Summer activities for which they had participation data included the frequency of parent led reading, writing and math activities in the home, the number of visits to a library or bookstore, the number of hour per week spent watching television, the number of summer trips taken by the family, participation in dance, music or swimming lessons, participation in an individual or team sport, participation in summer school, and access to a home computer and home computer with educational software. While Burkam and his colleagues report that most measures of summer activity were either unrelated or only very modestly related to gains in literacy over the summer months, they identified two activities that were significantly related to summer mathematics learning: the number of summer trips and the educational use of computers. Overall, Burkam and his colleagues (2004) found that the class-based gap in summer learning amongst kindergarten and first-graders in the ECLS-K data was "not explained by class-related discrepancies in children's out-of-school summer activities."

A second possible explanation for the linkage between summer learning loss and economic disadvantage centers on the notion of "spillover," or the interaction between teachers'

school-year practices and summer learning. Phillips and Chin (2004) used nationally representative data from the Prospects study to explore whether teachers' education, experience, or teaching practices might influence children's gains in the summer following first-grade. Their results suggest that students assigned to new teachers (those with less than 3 years of teaching experience) for the school year experienced greater amounts of summer learning loss in mathematics than those with more experienced teachers and that students whose teachers assigned project work involving reading, writing and research skills during the school year seemed to gain slightly more during the summer months. Phillips and Chin's (2004) findings of a modest "spillover" effect in the Prospects data conflict with two other studies that relied on ECLS-K data: Georges (2003) found no relationship between kindergarten teachers' practices and summer learning and Downey et al. (2008) found that rates of summer learning between kindergarten and first grade were not affected by the assignment of summer book lists by kindergarten teachers or by schools sending home preparatory "packages" before the beginning of the first grade. A subsequent look at ECLS-K data in kindergarten mathematics achievement, by Georges and Pallas (2010), yielded mixed results: summer learning among low-SES students was positively associated with teaching practices that emphasized analytical and reasoning skills, but only modestly. Specifically, they found that teachers' use of manipulatives to read graphs, learn measurement, and estimate probabilities and quantities provided a small but modest advantage in summer learning compared to those students whose teachers relied more heavily on worksheets and collaborative instructional grouping. The authors suggest that teaching practices in kindergarten may be a weak treatment, given the limited amount of time and uneven quality of mathematics instruction in kindergarten, and thus the absence of a strong spillover, or carryover,

effect implies that summer learning loss could simply be interpreted as the fadeout effect of a weak treatment.

Another possible explanation for social stratification in summer learning centers on parents' beliefs and values. Phillips and Chin (2004) found that parental expectations were linked to their first-graders' summer math performance; holding family background and children's academic skills constant, those children whose parents expected them to graduate from college or attend graduate school after college experienced the greatest summer gains in math computation and concepts. However, Borman et al. (2005) found that parental expectations - as measured by survey responses concerning the frequency with which parents spoke with their child about academic goals, their expectations for their child's grades, and the importance they place on getting a good education – did not explain much of the variation in summer achievement in their sample of 300 early elementary school students from high-poverty schools. My review of the research on parenting logics at the end of this chapter offers an expanded discussion of this topic.

Interventions

A growing body of literature has investigated the efficacy of various interventions designed to ameliorate summer learning loss, including summer book distribution programs (Kim and Guryan 2010; Allington et al. 2010), summer reading programs operated by public libraries (Roman et al. 2010), formal summer programs, including school based programs, non-school based programs, remedial programs, enrichment programs, voluntary programs, and mandatory programs, (Cooper et al. 2000; Paris et al. 2004; Roderick et al. 2004; Borman and Dowling 2006; Matsudaira 2008; McCombs et al. 2011), as well as various configurations of the school calendar, including modified school calendars, year-round school calendars, and extended

school years (Cooper 2004). Of course, not all summer interventions have an academic focus; indeed, the largest federal effort focused on the summer months is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program. Established to provide low-income children with healthy meals when school is not in session, the program reimburses local partners who provide breakfast, lunch, supper or snack to children whose families meet the same income eligibility guidelines that define federal meal programs during school year, commonly known as free and reduced price meals (United States Department of Agriculture 2013).

Although this study does not investigate the efficacy of interventions, I anticipate that some respondents may have experience with these types of programs, including the summer food program, and may very well discuss their experiences during interviews.

Beyond Academics: Extending the Use of the Seasonal Perspective

While most seasonal comparisons investigate questions of cognitive development and academic achievement, one team of researchers led by Doug Downey and Paul von Hippel has extended the seasonal lens to examine patterns in children's health and weight gain (von Hippel et al. 2007) and to critique traditional methods for evaluating schools (Downey et al. 2008). Using ECLS-K data that reported the body mass index (BMI) of 5,380 kindergarten and first grade students in 310 schools nationwide, von Hippel and his colleagues used a seasonal research design to disentangle the effects of school and non-school environments on weight gain in much the same way that prior research examined seasonal gains in cognitive achievement. They found that growth in BMI was faster and more variable during the summer months than during the school year and that the seasonal differences were especially large for three at-risk

subgroups: Black children, Hispanic children, and children who were already overweight at the beginning of kindergarten (von Hippel et al. 2007).

Downey et al. (2008) applied a seasonal perspective to the study of school evaluation methods. Using seasonal data from the ECLS-K study, Downey and his colleagues show that the traditional and most widely used method for evaluating schools - the so-called achievement model that relies on annual tests to gauge students' levels of proficiency – fails to separate school from non-school effects on children's learning, thereby "blaming" schools for the non-school factors that also influence achievement (Downey et al. 2008). They suggest an alternative measure, the "impact" measure, which makes use of seasonal data to at least partially remove non-school factors from school evaluation methods; by subtracting students' summer learning rate from their school-year learning rate, Downey and his colleagues argue that their impact measure provides a more accurate estimate of the unique contributions of any particular school to its' students' cognitive development. Independent of the findings reported in these two studies, I want to emphasize the way the authors applied a seasonal lens to investigations of weight gain and the measurement of school effectiveness; I propose doing much the same thing by utilizing a seasonal lens to investigate the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting logics.

Discussion

Test scores, academic records and graduation rates indicate that disadvantaged students trail behind their wealthier classmates from the time they begin school through all levels of post-secondary education: prior to beginning school (Alexander and Entwisle, 1996), in elementary school (Entwisle and Alexander, 1992; Karweit, Thompson and Riccuiti, 1994), in middle school (Heyns, 1978; Alexander and Entwisle, 1996), in high school, and in post-secondary education

(Levine and Levine, 1996). Riordan (1997) writes that the achievement gap "has been found consistently in literally thousands of studies" (p.70).

In reviewing the literature on seasonal comparisons, I have shown how studies of summer learning loss help to explain the achievement gap between poorer students and their wealthier peers. Beginning with Heyns' study of Atlanta school children in the 1970's, sociologists have employed seasonal comparisons as a way to disentangle home and community influences from school influences and these studies have yielded empirical evidence that children generally learn slower during the summer months than during the school year, with variations by student socio-economic status, grade level and subject matter. In sum, a class gap in students' summer learning is well established; so too are seasonal differences by subject area and grade level. Less clear, however, are the reasons for this differential. Why is it that better-off students gain, or at least hold steady, during the summer months while poorer students experience significant loss? The logic underlying seasonal comparisons points to home and neighborhood influences as the key determinant of summer achievement, yet previous studies have largely ignored the question of whether class based seasonal variation in parents' expectations and practices are related to the class-based gap in students' summer learning.

Two issues - one conceptual, the other methodological – limit our understanding of the nature of parental influences during the summer months. First, seasonal comparisons conceptualize home influence as a constant and continuous influence throughout the year, yet there is little empirical evidence to support this. While it is certain that home influence is *present* throughout the year, particularly in contrast to the temporal nature of the nine-month school year, it does not necessarily follow that home influence acts in a *constant or continuous* way throughout the year. Downey and his colleagues (2008) caution that the assumption that "non-

school influences on learning are similar during the school year and during summer vacation" is debatable for the "obvious reason that during the school year, children spend less time in their non-school environments" and thus we could expect that non-school effects may be smaller during the school year than during the summer (257). Chin and Phillips (2004) also raised the possibility of class-based seasonal variation in parenting practices by suggesting the possibility that "families' child-rearing philosophies change seasonally, with middle-class families engaging in more concerted cultivation during the school year and less during the summer and working-class families engaging in less concerted cultivation during the school year (because they expect the school to play that role) and more in the summer (204)." For the purposes of this investigation, I suggest that a distinction be made between the *presence* of home influences throughout the calendar year and the observation, yet to be made, that home influences exert a *constant* effect throughout the calendar year. By conceptualizing home influence as present yet not necessarily constant, we allow for the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting logics and influence. This distinction has implications for the methodology employed by seasonal comparisons, for our understanding of home influence and parental role in their children's learning, and for explanations regarding how and why summer learning loss occurs. Without the kind of empirical evidence to be generated by this investigation, a number of hypotheses about the nature of home influence and parenting logics are equally persuasive and, thus, equally unpersuasive.

A second constraint on our understanding of home and parental influences during the summer months centers on the way parental involvement data has been collected and measured. As previous researchers have pointed out, large data sets like ECLS-K and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 do a better job reporting the *frequency* of parental activities

than the *nature* of those activities (Burkam et al. 2004) because measurements of parental involvement are often blunt and dichotomous, thus blurring the "distinction between parents who regularly participate in school activities and those who do so infrequently" (Domina 2005). An ideal data set would provide information about the context and motivations for parental involvement activities, would include measures from not only parents but also students and teachers, and would include more nuanced forms of parental involvement, such as informal discussions between parent and child (Burkam et al. 2004; Domina 2005). While qualitative studies have generated richer data sets that provide more detail and context about the nature of parental involvement activities (Lareau 2003; Luster and Okagaki 2005; Yamamoto and Holloway 2010), none have employed a seasonal perspective to examine variation across periods of schooling and non-schooling, which is, of course, the purpose of this study. In the next section I review the literature on parental logics and home influence.

Home Influence and Parenting Logics

Researchers have suggested several models to describe the ways in which home and parenting influences may affect children's cognitive development. Some models focus primarily on the effects of parental involvement in their children's schooling (Epstein 1992) or the ways in which parental attitudes and expectations shape children's learning (Yamamoto and Holloway 2010). Others take an ecological approach, emphasizing the environmental context that influences parenting practices (Kotchick and Forehand 2002; Luster and Okagaki 2005) while still others focus on the ways in which class-based resources provide home advantages not uniformly available to all children and families (Reay and Lucey 2003; Lareau 2000). These models, of course, are not mutually exclusive and a number of researchers have emphasized the

multifaceted role played by parents and the simultaneity of home influences acting in concert with school and community influences (Bierman 1996; Epstein and Saunders 2000). In this section, I review the literature on home influence and parenting logics and discuss how key findings in this body of research inform this study's design.

Parenting Logics and Class Standing

Investigations of parenting logics conceptualize social behavior as the product of values, beliefs and attitudes (Bennett et al. 2012) and prior research links parental attitudes, beliefs and expectations to children's behavior (Jennings et al. 2012). Questions of class figure prominently in research on home influences yet researchers disagree on fundamental issues such as how to conceptualize social class, how to measure it, and, ultimately, how it understand the way it shapes behavior (Lareau 2008; Hout 2008). Hout (2008) argues that class "works" through a variety of mechanisms, including objective markers such as income and occupational status as well as subjective means such as an individual's sense of his or her place in society. While Bennett et al. (2012) argue that social behavior sits at the intersection of culture (beliefs about what should happen) and structure (the ability to actualize those beliefs), others have emphasized one explanation or the other. Chin and Phillips (2004), for example, found that social-class differences in parenting practices had less to do with parental values and aspirations (i.e., issues of culture) and more to with class-based differences in parents' resources. Reay and Lucey (2003) emphasized the constraints that low-status places on children and families, demonstrating, for example, how choice can be less a form of agency than a marker of economic privilege, such that children from low income or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds, like refugees, are more likely to be 'forced to accept the least bad option' than have any real hope of selecting the best

option. While their study examined agency and class constraints in the context of a school choice program in London, their findings may inform our understanding of the structure of choices available to disadvantaged American students in the summer months. For example, children from working-class backgrounds frequently described "good" schools as being far away while nearby schools were inferior. Because respondents believed that the good, far-away schools were not accessible to them, the authors suggest that it is the "constraint of 'choice' rather than the freedoms of 'choice' that loom largest" (P.124). If, in fact, Reay and Lucy (2003) are correct in asserting that it is only middle-class families who have the "ability to manipulate geographical and social space" then the choices I observe parents making in this study may be highly correlated with class status.

Annette Lareau's ethnographic studies (1987, 2000, 2003) have contributed much to our understanding of class-based differences in child-rearing strategies. In her earlier work (1987, 2000), Lareau suggested that middle-class parents are more likely to see themselves as having shared responsibility for the schooling process while working- and lower-class parents tend to turn over responsibility for education to the school. In particular, she identified and contrasted patterns of separation between home and school in working-class families with patterns of interconnectedness between home and school in upper-middle-class families (2000). In subsequent work, Lareau (2003) observed parenting practices in middle class homes that emphasized daily structure and more deliberate pursuit of extracurricular activities, what she calls "concerted cultivation", in contrast to the relatively unstructured days and distrust, or avoidance, of dominant social institutions exhibited by the "accomplishment of natural growth" logic employed by working class parents.

While seasonal researchers have pointed to Lareau's work as a possible explanation for the class-based gap in summer learning (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson, 2001), her research was conducted only during the school year and didn't address seasonal differences in learning or the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting. In fact, Lareau (2000) uses a definition of parental involvement that centers on the requests made by teachers – a construct that is unique to the school year and thus may be too narrow to extend to the summer months when teachers generally don't make any requests of parents. An important question for future research is the extent to which the patterns of school-year parental behavior identified by Lareau hold during the summer months. In particular, the question of how parents perceive the degree of interconnectedness, or separation, between home and school may have implications for the ways in which parents approach the summer months. If working-class parents tend to turn over responsibility for education to the school, as Lareau (2000) suggests, then they may be likely to see the summer months as a time for children to take a break from formal learning activities, whereas middle-class parents may extend to the summer months their belief that schooling and learning are a shared responsibility between schools and families and, thus, may take a more proactive approach to fostering summer learning through formal and informal activities.

Parental Aspirations, Expectations and Involvement

In their review of the research on parental expectations, Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) claim that most researchers define parental expectations as "realistic beliefs or judgments that parents have about their children's future achievement as reflected in course grades, highest level of schooling attained, or college attendance" (P.191). In this conceptualization, parental expectations are based on an assessment of both the child's academic abilities *and* the available

resources for supporting achievement. This resembles the approach used by Bennett and her colleagues (2012) to situate their investigation of youth activity participation at the "intersection" of culture and structure. Yamamoto and Holloway contrast the concept of parental expectations with the notion of parental aspirations, which, they argue, describe parental desires, wishes or goals rather than realistic expectations. A central concern in this line of inquiry is the degree to which parental expectations and aspirations, as measured by interview or survey research, can be effectively used as a proxy for the value that parents place on their child's education as well as the resources and effort they devote to their child's education. In other words, how do parental expectations exert an effect on their child's education? Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) identified four mechanisms that link high parental expectation to academic achievement: a) child's internalization of parents' valuation of achievement; b) child's higher competency beliefs; c) more intensive and effective parental involvement; and d) more optimistic and positive teacher perceptions of child's capabilities. Like Domina (2005), Yamamoto and Holloway suggest that these mechanisms may function differently for families of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, they review studies that suggest that parental help with children's homework boosts the educational performance of European American students but not the performance of Asian American and Asian immigrant student, and others that suggest that the relationship between parents' expectations and students' expectations is stronger for European American families than for racial and ethnic minority families. Possible explanations for racial and ethnic variation in the effects of parental expectations include the degree to which parents and children communicate about schooling, which may be more difficult in immigrant families because parents are less familiar with the U.S. educational system, as well as cultural patterns of self-criticism and beliefs of self-efficacy.

A number of investigators have hailed the shift from thinking about how family *affects* schooling to conceptualizing the relationship in terms of the *interaction* of family practices and school practices (Lareau 2000). Epstein (1992) developed a typology that describes six different kids of parental involvement which Epstein and Saunders (2000) subsequently incorporated into a model that emphasizes the simultaneity of family, school and community influences. Phillips and Chin's (2004) analysis of the Prospects data exemplifies this approach, dubbed "overlapping spheres of influence" by Epstein and Saunders. In addition to examining demographic data and traditional measures of home influences, Phillips and Chin examined home-school links on the hypothesis that the degree to which parents were informed about their child's progress during the school year may be associated with gains during the summer months. They also examined whether teachers' characteristics and practices influenced summer gains. The formulation proposed by Phillips and Chin is important: they hypothesized that what happens during the summer is associated with the ways in which children learned during the school year. In other words, they suggest that these are not two discrete periods of time or two discrete sets of activities – either school or summer vacation – but a more dynamic relationship that emphasizes the interaction between school year learning and activities and summer learning and activities. Despite these conceptual advances, however, one question not addressed by prior research is the extent to which teachers and administrators may influence, either directly or indirectly, the plans that parents make for their children during the summer months.

Le Menestrel (2003) stands out as one of few studies to investigate parental attitudes toward summer vacation. In a short telephone survey of 412 parents of children ages 5 to 14, she asked parents to name the three most important things they hoped their child would get out of their summer. Forty-three percent of respondents mentioned having fun and relaxing, twenty-

four percent said learning new things, and twenty-two percent said preparing for school or their future education. It's unclear how to interpret these results. On the one hand, the most common response was have fun and relax, but the two other categories – learn new things and prepare for school or future education – are both academically oriented and taken together represent a significant group. Although she didn't investigate the role of class with the same intensity and rigor as Lareau (2000, 2003), Le Menestrel's findings suggest that household income did not play as significant a role in shaping parental expectations as one might expect given the out-of-pocket costs for most summer activities. While the study was not scientifically rigorous, it nonetheless provides a starting point for thinking about what parents want for their children during the summer months.

Finally, Domina (2005) presents a more cautionary view of the benefits of parental involvement. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, he examined the relationship between the six types of parental involvement described by Epstein (1992) and two outcomes: children's cognitive achievement and their classroom behavior. His results suggest that parental involvement does not independently improve children's learning, but can effectively mitigate children's behavioral problems. While acknowledging that his findings undermine the traditional case for increasing parental involvement in schools, which is centered on promoting student achievement, Domina emphasizes the benefits of preventing students' misbehavior. As with most of the previously discussed investigations of parental involvement, Domina's study considers only questions of school year parental involvement activities and outcomes, and does not conceptualize parental involvement as a year-round influence.

Ecological Studies of Parenting

Investigations of parental involvement in the ecological tradition emphasize the environment in which parenting occurs as well as the development and life history of the parents (Luster and Okagaki 2005). Belsky (1984) and Kotchick and Forehand (2002), for example, emphasize the contextual sources of stress and support that shape parenting practices while Eccles and Harold (1996) suggest that an important consideration in the study of parental involvement is the child's age because parental involvement declines dramatically as the child grows older and moves into secondary school.

In one of the earliest applications of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to the study of parenting, Belsky (1984) developed what he called the process model of the determinant of parenting. Beyond the individual characteristics of the parent and child, Belsky argued that three factors serve to promote or undermine good parenting: the marital relationship, the degree to which a parent receives support through a social network or is socially isolated, and the parent's work status and job satisfaction. While lauding Belsky's work in stressing some of the principal contextual factors that shape parenting, Kotchick and Forehand (2002) argue that his model stopped short of considering the broader social context in which parents raise their children. They point to subsequent research that has expanded his model by examining additional factors such as the link between parenting and the marital relationship (Fincham and Hall 2005), the neighborhood and community context, and the role of personal social networks in shaping parenting practices (Cochran and Walker 2005).

Discussion

Previous research on parenting logics has been limited in at least three important ways. First, studies have been confined to either the school year context (e.g., Lareau 2003) or the

summer context (e.g., Chin and Phillips 2004). A basic hypothesis of this study is that parental expectations and attitudes undergo fundamental shifts from one season to another, shifts that may be class based and may be significant enough to warrant caution when extrapolating findings from one season to the next. Indeed, I think it is possible, even likely, that the meaning of "time off," in general, and the meaning of summer or summer vacation, in particular, is subjective and varies by social class. For example, middle-class parents who receive two weeks of annual paid leave may approach the summer months with more enthusiasm than working-class parents whose children rely on the federal lunch program during the school year but will not have access to it during the summer months.

The second limitation, observed by researchers like Domina (2005) and Burkam et al. (2004), is that the quantitative literature on parental involvement suffers because information about the *intensity* of parental involvement and the *context and motivations* for parental involvement is frequently not available. Burkam and his colleagues argue that the frequency of parental involvement activities is recorded in large-scale surveys like ECLS-K but the nature of those activities are not. For example, information about the content, duration or engagement of children in learning activities is not provided. Domina (2005) also suggests that parents, students, and teachers will offer different perspectives on parental involvement.

Finally, seasonal comparisons have tended to employ overly broad conceptualizations of home environment. For instance, using data on first graders from the nationally representative Prospects sample, Phillips and Chin (2004) investigated whether a range of parents' expectations, parenting practices, and children's activities were associated with summer gains. Specific measures included whether parents expected their first graders to graduate high school and then attend a vocational school or a 2- or 4-year college; the degree to which parents were

permissive or authoritarian in their rulemaking in the home; the frequency of family trips to the library and museums, and whether parents enrolled their children in art and dance classes, organized sports activities, or summer school; how much time parents read to their children and how much time children read to themselves or watched television; and finally, how many books were in the home, whether the family received a daily newspaper or monthly magazine, or had a home computer. Although this type of broad conceptualization of the home environment can be useful when constructing lists of possible mechanisms that influence learning, I fear that it is too often driven by the availability of data to be crunched, rather than a strong connection to analytical or theoretical reasoning. Consider, for instance, Heyns' (1978) finding that students who reported owning a bike experienced less summer learning loss. It is difficult to know what, if anything, should be made of such a relationship. Is bike ownership a proxy for higher-class status? Is there any reason to believe that students who own bikes are more likely to read over the summer or engage in more formal or frequent learning activities? Without providing the kind of context called for by Domina (2005) and Burkam et al. (2004), an overly broad conceptualization of the home environment does little to advance our understanding of the mechanisms that produce the class-based differential in summer learning.

The next section presents the conceptual framework for this study, which draws heavily from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (1979, 2005) and is consistent with arguments put forth by researchers such as Lareau (2000), Phillips and Chin (2004) and Epstein and Saunders (2000) that the interaction between family and school settings, and the transition between environments is a promising line of inquiry as we hope to expand our knowledge of parental involvement, in general, and home influence during the summer months, in particular.

Conceptual Framework

The focus of this study is how parental expectations and involvement change from the school year to summer, how parents think about and explain these changes, and what, if any, relationship there is between social class and seasonal variation in parenting logics. To explore these issues, this study employs a conceptual framework based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (1979, 2000, 2005) and informed, additionally, by key concepts from a seasonal perspective on learning (Heyns 1979; Entwisle and Alexander 1992; Downey et al. 2004; von Hippel et al. 2007) and the life course perspective (Elder et al. 2003; Pallas 1993, 2003). In this section, I describe the conceptual framework and explain how it shapes the design of this investigation.

Bronfenbrenner introduced his ecological theory of human development in the late 1970s and continued to revise and expand it until his death in 2005. While his earlier writings drew attention to the role of context in shaping development and introduced the conceptual model of four environmental systems nested within one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), his later writings situated these constructs within a broader model that emphasized the role of proximal processes, an individual's personal characteristics, and the element of time in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Tudge et al., 2009). He called this the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The PPCT model situates the developing person in both his immediate settings and in the larger contexts within which the particular settings are embedded; taken together, these settings are broadly called the ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The ecological perspective has been used by prior researchers to examine parenting logics (Luster and Okagaki, 2005), with Belsky (1984) identifying three main determinants of

parental behavior: (a) the personality and personal resources of the parent; (b) characteristics of the child; and (c) contextual sources of stress and support. Specifically, I propose investigating the ways in which parental expectations (i.e., the home microsystem) change from periods of schooling to non-schooling (i.e., the macrosystem level beliefs about the structure of the school calendar) and the ways in which social class influences these changes. Figure 1 (page 41) provides a visual representation of my application of Bronfenbrenner's construct of nested environmental systems.

Using Bronfenbrenner's (2005) language, proximal processes are "the engines that drive development" or, put another way, the processes that connect some aspect of the context to some outcome of interest (Tudge et al. 2009). Luster and Okagaki (2005) observed that, "proximal processes that occur in the home are among the most important influences on children's development. For this reason we believe it is essential to understand factors influencing experiences in the home. Which factors influence the way parents interact with their children, structure the home environment, and help their children understand the world beyond the home?" (P. 201). Bronfenbrenner conceptualized the developing person as a "growing, dynamic entity", one who is continually shaped by his environment while, in turn, simultaneously acting to shaping his environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory, therefore, stresses the dynamic nature of human development, focusing attention on the reciprocal influences between a person and his environment. His emphasis on the "bi-directionality" of developmental influences is consistent with the arguments put forth by sociologists such as Lareau (2000), who argued that the relationship between family and school is best conceptualized as one defined not by either family effects or school effects but by the "interaction of family practices and school practices" (P. 187).

Figure 1: Visual Representation of The Ecological Environment

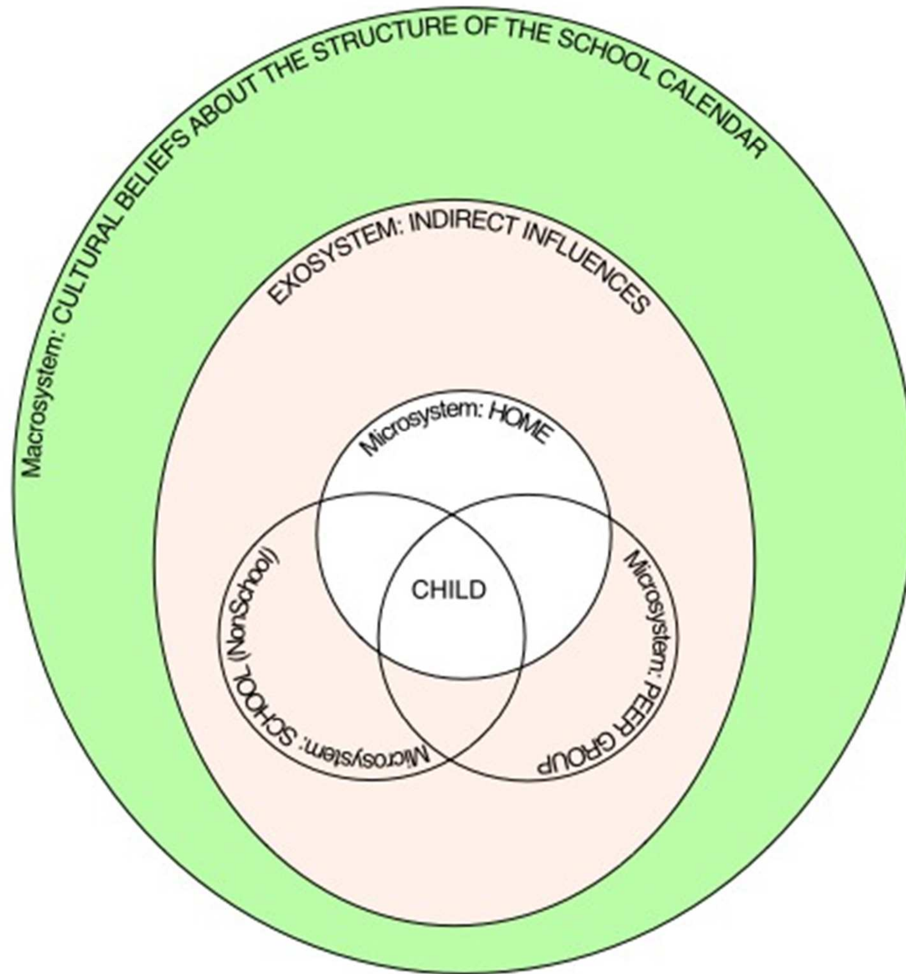

Figure 1. At the center of the four nested systems is the developing person of interest, in this case a second grade student from either a low or high SES background. Then,

- The microsystem involves three settings in which the child is situated: the home/family, the school, and peer group;
- The overlap between the microsystems represent the interactions between home and school, school and peer group, and peer group and home, and thus constitute the mesosystem;
- The microsystem and mesosytem are nested within the exosystem, the set of indirect influences acting on the sample;
- The micro-, meso-, and exo-systems are all nested within the macrosystem, which I define as the structure of the school calendar and the set of widely held cultural beliefs that shape expectations for children's learning during periods of schooling and non-schooling.

The nested systems that constitute the context in which human development occurs are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. First, the microsystem is understood to be a pattern of activities and interactions experienced by the developing person in a given setting. Tudge et al. (2009) explain that the microsystem can include environments such as home, school, or peer group, which are the three microsystems that I've identified for the purposes of this study. Moreover, I understand the home microsystem to include the ways in which family socioeconomic status affects the developing child and the school microsystem includes the structure of the school calendar, with periods of both schooling and non-schooling. I identify three microsystems relevant to an investigation of class-based, seasonal changes in parenting logic; the home/family setting; the school setting and, implied, the absence of school during the summer months; and the child's peer group.

Because individuals are situated in more than one microsystem at a time, the interconnections between the microsystems are conceptualized as the mesosystem. In this study, the mesosystem is comprised of the interactions between home and school (i.e., between teachers and parents), between school and peer groups (i.e., between teachers and the developing child's friends) and between peer groups and home (i.e., between the parents of the developing child and his or her parents). To offer a more concrete example of how I conceive of the mesosystem in this study, consider the case of an eight-year old boy whose neighbor and best friend is told that he will have to repeat second grade unless he attends a remedial summer school program. This would be an example of an interaction between two microsystems, the school and the peer group, that could presumably alter the way the boy spends his days during the long summer break from schooling.

Third, the exosystem refers to those settings that affect the developing person even though he or she is not an active participant. Consider, for example, the parents' place of work or the activities of an older sibling. The exosystem is by definition a broad construct, one that manifests itself not through direct influence on the developing child but through the other settings in which he or she is situated.

The macrosystem describes the broader set of norms and beliefs at the level of the subculture or culture. I conceive of the macrosystem as the set of widely held beliefs that shape children's activities during periods of schooling and non-schooling.

The final element in Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model is time. His theory emphasizes that development occurs as a result of complex, reciprocal interactions that take place over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner 2005). For the purposes of this study, the seasonal perspective and the life course perspective offer unique ways for thinking about the development of children's cognitive skills (Table 2, next page, summarizes the key concepts offered by each perspective used in this framework). As discussed above, sociologists of education have employed seasonal comparisons to disentangle school influences from non-school influences, with school influences assumed to be temporal while non-school influences, like home and family, are assumed to be continuous and operate throughout the year.

By drawing attention to the "nexus of social pathways, developmental trajectories, and social change" (Elder et al. 2003) and, thus, providing a framework for thinking about transitions as turning points (Entwisle et al. 2003), the life course perspective provides a framework for thinking about how children and families experience the transition from the routine and norms embedded in the school year to an entirely different set of expectations and arrangements for the summer months.

Table 2: Conceptual Framework

<u>*The Life Course Perspective*</u>

The life course perspective provides a framework for thinking about how children and families experience the transition from the school year to the summer, with the concept of *life events* drawing attention to the array of effects the transition can have on children and families from different backgrounds.

<u>*The Ecological Perspective*</u>

Proximal Processes are the "primary engines of development" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and the focus of this study: *What can we learn about the way parental attitudes and expectations shift from one season to the next in a way that contributes to the class-based gap in summer learning?*

Person: the developing person of interest, in this case a second grade child from either a working class or middle class home, brings his or her own unique set of personal characteristics, as does his/her parent, whose expectations and attitudes are the subject of this study.

Context:

- Microsystem: the child's home/family setting; his/her school setting and, during the summer months, the absence-of-school setting; and his/her peer group.
- Mesosystem: the interactions between the three microsystems; for example, information from the child's school to his/her parents that shapes the types of activities parents plan for the summer months.
- Exosystem: the set of indirect influences that emanate from settings in which the child is not an active participant; for example, the effect of a mother's stressful work environment on her behavior towards her son.
- Macrosystem: broadly held cultural beliefs; in this case, the norms that define seasonal differences in how children should experience the school year and the summer months.

Time: because development occurs over time, the research design must include a way to measure the effects of proximal processes over time; in this case, data collection will occur over a twelve-month period that spans a full school year and summer, as well as the transition between them.

For example, Pallas (2003) has described the way individuals alternately take on and cast off various social roles at different points in their lives, which is one way to think about the seasonal transition in which school-aged children shed their roles as students for the summer months.

Similar to ecological theory, the life course perspective suggests that an individual's development is shaped by relationships, environmental influences, and a series of transitions and life events that unfold over time (Hutchison 2011). The concepts of *transitions*, *life events,* and *roles* are particularly relevant to this investigation: whereas the seasonal perspective emphasizes the insights that can be gained by analytically separating periods of schooling from periods of non-schooling, the life course perspective emphasizes the transition from one period to the next, not the disentangling of the two. Consider, for example, the hypothetical case of a second grade boy and his single mother: if she works outside the home, arrangements will have to be made for his care and supervision during the summer months; this may involve financial burdens, logistical considerations around transportation and schedule, and an unfamiliar setting for the child in a physical space that is new with a group of adults and peers who are different from those he knew during the school year. Put another way, much of the child's daily life changes dramatically from school year to summer: his peer group and circle of friends, the adult or adults with whom he spends the bulk of his time, his daily schedule, his daily activities, the physical location where he spends his days, and, in some cases, access to the kind of regular, nutritious meals that are provided through the free lunch program during the school year. Of course, not all transitions are negative, and the concept of life events is not limited to those that are undesirable or produce unwelcomed consequences; for many children, the summer months can be a carefree time with the opportunity for recreational and enrichment activities not available during the school year.

The sociological literature on school transitions is extensive. For instance, Alexander and Entwisle initiated their Beginning School Study to study the period of early schooling "because it encompassed an important life transition that in many ways was different from other transitions" (Alexander and Entwisle, 2006, P. 67). They later characterized the first-grade transition as "critical" and found that it had serious long-term implications, particularly for low performing boys from low-income backgrounds (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 2007). In the upper elementary and middle school grades, Grigg (2012) found that changing schools was detrimental to reading and mathematics achievement for students in grades 3 through 8, and a number of studies explore the transitions students make from middle school into high school and from high school into college.

One explanation for this deleterious effect of some transitions centers on the concept of a *life event* (Hutchison, 2011), which Settersten (2003a) defines as "a significant occurrence involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long-lasting effects." Holmes and Rahe (1967) constructed a scale that reports the relative degree of stress associated with different life events. Although designed for use with adults, the scale is a useful way to think about the potential stressors children experience during the transition from the school year to the summer months. For instance, *beginning or ceasing formal schooling* is one of the life events included in their scale, as are the following: *major change in sleeping habits, major change in eating habits, vacation, major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation, major change in social activities,* and *change to a new school.* While these events tend to induce less stress than others that concern issues of health or finances, Holmes and Rahe (1967) suggest that all of them required some type of "adaptive or coping behavior on the part of the involved individual." Not all life events are turning points and not all life events are harmful; Hutchison (2011)

reminds us that specific life events mean different things to different individuals and different groups. With these qualifications, I suggest that the concept of a life event can be a useful way to explore the transitions that children experience as the school year ends and the summer begins.

Conclusion

The literature presented in this chapter has reviewed the empirical evidence establishing a class-based gap in summer learning and the influence of parenting logics on children's cognitive development. I have described how previous investigations have employed a seasonal perspective to disentangle the unique contributions of schooling from those of family and community, thereby identifying patterns in children's cognitive development that would otherwise be obscured. Additionally, I have described the ways in which previous research has extended the lens of seasonal comparisons beyond the study of children's cognitive development, including Downey et al. (2008), who utilized a seasonal perspective to examine the use of annual assessments to measure schools' effectiveness, and von Hippel et al. (2007), who applied the seasonal perspective to the problem of childhood obesity. By utilizing an ecological perspective to study seasonal changes in class-based parenting logics, I hope to gain a more precise understanding of the parent-driven, home-based *proximal processes* that appear to operate along class lines to produce differential rates of learning during the school year and summer. For example, a measure commonly included in the quantitative literature on parental involvement is *number of visits to the library over the summer*. In collecting data on this question, researchers make the assumption that the answer reflects, at least in part, the value that parents place on reading as well as the child's access to books over the summer. An ecological approach, by contrast, would go beyond simply reporting the frequency of library visits to gain

an understanding of the context in which the visits, or lack of visits, occurred. For instance, is the library within walking distance of the child's home? If not, does the family have access to a car? What type of public transportation is available? What is the parent's work schedule and how does it impact the family's ability to visit the library? Answers to these questions provide the data necessary for understanding the proximal processes that are at the center of child development.

CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology and Sample

Overview

As stated, this research investigates class-based, seasonal variation in the parenting logics of the mothers of 2nd graders. The study was specifically designed to allow comparisons across seasons, between social classes, and between subject areas. By structuring this as a 12-month study, I was able to collect data during both the school year and summer break, thus allowing seasonal comparisons. To ensure a diverse sample that included mothers from middle-, working-class, and poor backgrounds, I employed a two-step purposive sampling design. And, finally, to enable comparisons between reading and literacy skills, on the one hand, and mathematics skills, on the other, my interview protocol included subject area specific questions and probes. In sum, my data include information collected through interviews, observations and documents. As discussed below, I conducted a total of 123 interviews, all of which have been transcribed, and I recorded my own informal observations after each interview. In addition, I accessed publicly available data for the districts and schools from which I recruited respondents; this data includes basic demographic information as well as attendance records and test scores.

This section discusses these design features and my process for collecting and analyzing data, as well as key characteristics of my sample.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select subjects based on characteristics deemed important to the goals of the study (Merriam 1998; Patton 1990). Prior research suggests that mothers tend to be more involved in caregiving responsibilities than fathers (Parke et al., 2005) and, thus to be consistent across families, I opted to restrict my sample to mothers only.

Because my research sought to make comparisons across social classes, I employed a two-step process to recruit a socioeconomically diverse sample, with a final sample of 28 families drawn from three high poverty schools and four affluent schools. I began by identifying public elementary schools, all within a single state, in which greater than 80%, or less than 20%, of enrolled students met federal eligibility guidelines for the free/reduced lunch program during the 2012/2013 school year, which was the year that immediately preceded the start of my study. Given the costs and time required of traveling to interviews, I narrowed the list of potential target schools to those within a ninety-minute drive of my home and office. This process allowed me to identify 16 high poverty schools in 5 districts and 31 low poverty schools in 9 districts from which I could potentially draw a sample. The next step was to use media reports, school websites and personal connections to identify an entry point into the school or district leadership in order to introduce myself and secure approval for participation in the study.

The process to gain approval varied by school and by district. In some cases the principal preferred to be the point of contact and took an active role helping me navigate the process; in other cases, district policy required me to contact the superintendent or other district-level staff. For various reasons, a number of schools and districts declined to participate. Some principals and district leaders told me they were too busy to support a study such as this, while others expressed concerns around school and student confidentiality. Over the course of a few weeks in late summer and early fall 2013, I gained approval to recruit parents from 8 elementary schools in 6 districts. Four of the schools are affluent, with less than twenty percent of their students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and four are high poverty, with more than eighty percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. In all cases, approval was granted and

communicated via a formal, written letter on official school or district letterhead. I have retained all of these letters in password protected electronic files.

After our first interview, one principal became overwhelmed with other responsibilities and, subsequently, withdrew his school from the study, resulting in a final group of seven schools from which I recruited parents. All of the schools are located within a single state, and therefore subject to the same accountability regime and reporting requirements. To protect the confidentiality of respondents, I use pseudonyms to refer to all schools and individuals, and I refrain from naming the state or municipalities in which the schools are located.

In addition to recruiting schools with very high, and very low, percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, I had hoped to recruit schools that represented different approaches to student engagement during the summer months. Some schools, for example, actively promote summer learning programs and opportunities to their students and families, while other schools tend to "close down" for the summer months. In practice, it was difficult to select schools based on this criterion, largely because information about strategies for summer learning wasn't available to me at the time of recruitment. However, I subsequently learned that the seven schools in my sample do indeed represent diverse approaches to the summer. I discuss school level strategies for summer learning in the "School Characteristics" section of this chapter and, in the next chapter, I discuss the effects of these various strategies on students and families.

Having gained formal approval, my first task was to talk, in person or over the phone, with principals to request their assistance recruiting parents and teachers. I learned very quickly that each principal preferred to approach this task in a different way. While all of them allowed me to draft a recruitment letter to parents inviting participation, some principals actively

recruited parents by talking to them about my research and personally encouraging them to participate. Appendix B includes an example of the recruitment letter.

Parent recruitment was constrained by the fact that I was able to conduct interviews only in English and did not have the means to hire translators for parents who were not comfortable speaking in English. The sample, therefore, consists entirely of mothers who are fluent in English; indeed, all but two are native English speakers. Given the high percentage of English Language Learners at the three high poverty schools (see Table 3-4, and discussion below), I estimate that the proportion of non-English speaking parents at these schools is significant, likely fifty percent or greater. Thus, the sample drawn from the high-poverty schools is likely *not* representative of each school's overall parent population. This is less of a problem at the four affluent schools, where the percentage of English Language Learners is smaller. I discuss this and other limitations of the study in the final chapter, but will note here that a major shortcoming in the literature on summer learning loss is the absence of studies that investigate the seasonal experiences of English Language Learners; unfortunately, addressing this shortcoming is beyond the scope of this research.

This strategy yielded an initial sample of 31 mothers, all but three of whom completed the study. In short, then, I have complete data for a sample of 28 mothers, one of whom is the mother of twins; thus the number of target children is 29. Of these 28 mothers, four are in single parent, heads of households. I describe the sample of mothers, as well as the schools in which their children are enrolled, in more detail below.

Data Collection

I collected data over a 12-month period from October 2013 thru September 2014, conducting a total of 123 interviews with 31 mothers, 8 principals, and 10 teachers. My goal was to interview each mother three times and each principal and teacher twice. As described in the section on sample attrition, 3 mothers, 1 principal, and 1 teacher withdrew from the study after the first or second rounds of interviews; thus I have complete data for 28 mothers, 7 principals and 9 teachers across seven schools.

I organized data collection into three rounds for parents and two rounds for principals and teachers, with the goal of interviewing mothers, teachers, and principals at the beginning and end of the 2013/2014 school year, and then a third interview with mothers towards the end of the 2014 summer. The schools from which I drew my sample operated on similar calendars, with the school year beginning around Labor Day and ending within the first two weeks of June. In practice, the process for recruiting mothers sometimes took longer than planned, so that our first interview occurred almost mid-way through the school year. Table 3-1 presents actual dates for interviews by round, type of respondent, and type of school. This table does not include interviews with participants who subsequently withdrew from the study.

When scheduling interviews, I made every effort to meet respondents at a time and place of their choosing. With the exception of one teacher who asked to be interviewed in her home because she was recuperating from surgery, I interviewed teachers and principals in their classroom or school. On one occasion during the first round of data collection a principal and teacher asked to be interviewed together; otherwise, all principal and teacher interviews occurred in closed door, one-on-one situations.

Over the course of the study, I interviewed mothers in their homes, in parks, in coffee shops, at their child's school, and at their place of work. Children were sometimes present during the interviews and occasionally invited by their mothers to tell me about themselves. On four occasions, respondents also invited their husbands to participate in the interview. In general, however, I have included only mothers' responses in my analysis; in those instances when I have included fathers' responses, it is noted in my discussion.

Table 3-1: Interview Schedule
(for participants with complete data only)

	Sample from 3 Low SES Schools	Sample from 4 High SES Schools
Round 1 (Oct. 22, 2013 – Jan. 29, 2014)		
Principals	3	4
Teachers	5	4
Parents	10	18
Round 2 (May 1 – June 13, 2014)		
Principals	3	4
Teachers	5	4
Parents	10	18
Round 3 Aug 13 – Sept. 10, 2014)		
Mothers	10	18
Total	**46**	**70**

Interview Procedures and Protocol

I used a semi-structured interview guide that was designed specifically for each round and for each type of respondent. Put differently, I posed one set of questions to mothers and another to teachers and principals, with each set of questions unique to that round of data collection. Interviews with mothers generally lasted between thirty-five and forty-five minutes; the longest was one hour and four minutes, and the shortest was fourteen minutes. Interviews with teachers averaged 22 minutes and interviews with principals ranged from 23 minutes to 50 minutes, with the average lasting about 33 minutes.

All interviews were conducted in person, by me, typically at a time and place suggested by the participant. Shortly after each interview, I recorded my own observations and thoughts in field notes. Interviews were voluntary and obtained through informed consent. Since all respondents were literate, I guided them through a written consent process, and asked them to read and sign the written consent form prior to the start of the first interview. In addition, I asked all participants for their permission to be digitally recorded; all granted both oral and written permission (see Appendix C for Consent Forms), and all I have all consent forms filed in a locked storage cabinet.

In general, my protocol consisted of open-ended questions that allowed me to follow up by probing respondents for additional information. I made small talk and tried to put respondents at ease; in many cases, the interviews felt like informal conversations. To allow comparisons across seasons, I designed the study so that interviews were conducted at transition points between school year and summer break, and each protocol included questions about both seasons. By conducting three rounds of interviews, I was able to increase the reliability of findings related to school year expectations and summer expectations, as well as allowing me to

see how parents might have adjusted their expectations in response to their child's actual performance.

Table 3-2 summarizes my general approach to each round of interviews with mothers. During the interviews, I asked mothers to describe their families, their educational backgrounds and employment status, and their goals and expectations for their children's learning. In the second and third round of interviews, I reviewed with mothers the plans and goals they had previously articulated, and asked them to reflect on those plans now that some time had passed. In addition, I asked mothers about their household rules and their decision-making process when planning for their children's activities outside of school hours. I wanted to know, for instance, if mothers expected their child to read every day, if they placed limits on their child's use of electronics or screen time, and if their child had regular homework assignments. I also asked mothers about their children's interests, activities, and behavior. My hope was to not only discern parents' beliefs and values regarding their children's learning, but also to understand household rules and patterns of family behavior and activity, and then to track changes across the seasons.

Table 3-2: Interview Objectives, by Round of Data Collection

Interview #1: Looking Back at Summer 2013 and Looking Ahead to School Year 2013/2014

I'd like you to reflect on the summer that just ended.

And,

It is near the beginning of the school year and I'd like to learn about your expectations for your child during this school year. In addition to the goals that you have for your child, I'd like to understand what ideas or strategies you have to help him/her meet those goals.

Interview #2: Looking Back at 2nd Grade and Looking Ahead to Summer 2014

The school year is more than half over. I'd like you to reflect on the school year thus far and hear how you think your child is progressing towards some of the goals you told me about last fall.

And,

It is near the beginning of summer and the school year will soon end. I'd like to learn about your goals/plans/expectations for your child this summer and what strategies/ideas you have to help him/her meet those goals.

Interview #3: End of Summer Reflections and Looking Ahead to Third Grade

It is near the end of summer. I'd like you to reflect on the summer so far and hear how you think your child is progressing towards some of the goals you told me about earlier this summer.

And,

It is near the beginning of the school year and I'd like to learn about your expectations for your child during this school year. In addition to the goals that you have for your child, I'd like to understand what ideas or strategies you have to help him/her meet those goals.

Human Subjects and Data Management

This research required human subjects approval from the Institutional Review Board at Teachers College, Columbia University. The human subjects protocol required each interviewee to be provided with a written consent form approved by the IRB prior to the start of sample recruitment. Participation in the study was, of course, voluntary and each interviewee was given the opportunity to decline participation, or to refuse to answer any question during the interview. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to decline to be recorded or, at any point in the interview, to stop the audio recording. The names of all participating individuals were changed as were the names of their schools and neighborhoods, and I have made every attempt to withhold all details that could enable identification of any individual or school. To further ensure confidentiality, all hard copies of research records are kept in a locked file and all digital records are kept in a password-protected file.

In keeping with the assurances that I made to participants during the informed consent process, I have taken every effort to disguise participants' identities in this paper, and will do the same in future written materials and presentations. Pseudonyms have been substituted in the transcripts for the names of all individuals, schools, and neighborhoods, and I refrain from naming the state and municipalities in which schools are located.

Analytical Methods

I employed an ongoing and iterative process to analyze data throughout this study (Huberman and Miles 1998; Ryan and Bernard 2000). Prior to the first round of data collection, I developed a preliminary and tentative set of categories to organize and code my data. As I began to analyze data between rounds of interviews, I constantly created new categories and deleted

existing ones. Because data collection occurred in three rounds over the course of twelve months, the analytical process informed my approach to each subsequent round of interviews. I was able to revise and expand my protocol as I discovered new information or concepts that I hadn't previously anticipated. For example, my initial set of categories did not include a discrete way to identify data relating to the role of grandparents and other extended family members in caring for children during the school and summer. As I spoke to mothers during the first and second rounds of interviews, it became clear that many grandparents played an important role in family life and, thus, I began to probe mothers about the role of extended family members and created a new sub-category in my coding schema to capture and organize this data. Table 3-3 shows the set of 17 primary codes and 47 sub-codes that I developed and finalized over the course of collecting and analyzing data.

With the permission of each participant, I used a digital audio recorder to record each interview and then, between rounds of data collection, transcribed verbatim or hired professionals to transcribe verbatim the recorded interviews. This process afforded another opportunity to conduct a preliminary analysis of the data. As I transcribed, or reviewed for accuracy the transcriptions completed by those whom I had hired, I made notes, drafted descriptions of participants and their schools, made tentative assignments of participants to social class categories, and continually reviewed my coding schema.

Throughout the process of recruiting participants and then scheduling and conducting interviews, I kept field notes in an electronic file. Additionally, I recorded a set of handwritten notes with my own observations and reactions following each interview. Sometimes my interview and field notes were brief or perfunctory in nature. I might simply record when and where an interview took place, or a suggestion about when or how to structure a subsequent

interview. For example, after my second interview with Karen, I simply made a note to schedule our third interview in early or mid August because she had indicated that her availability was more limited later in the month. Looking back, I see that my field and interview notes were briefest on those days when I had scheduled multiple interviews back to back and, thus, seemed to be rushing from one to the next. Many times, however, my field notes provided an opportunity to record more substantive observations and preliminary interpretations of the data. I found it useful, for example, to reflect on what seemed to be the most salient or heartfelt comments made by participants, or perhaps their mood or energy level if it seemed germane to our conversation. For example, after my third interview with Susie Davis, I reflected on how tired and frail she appeared to be; I wondered in my notes if it was connected to her observation, made repeatedly in the interview, that it had been a long and difficult summer for her and her family. In this case, I used my field notes to both record her mood and to highlight for myself that this was an important interview, one in which she had revealed some deep anxieties about her son and their summer experiences. In sum, then, I found it helpful to use interview and field notes as places to record my most informal and unformed thoughts and observations.

Once the process for transcribing each interview was completed, I uploaded each interview as a separate text file into Dedoose, a cloud-based software program used for qualitative and mixed methods research. I then began the process of coding and excerpting data. This was a slow and sometimes non-linear process. For instance, if I found a piece of information in one file that seemed particularly relevant to another case, I might toggle back and forth between the two cases, trying to explore the significance, if any, of the connection. This process allowed me to continually make connections between cases, thereby identifying trends and patterns that seemed

Table 3-3: Codes (17 Primary; 47 Sub)

1. School and or Community Effect
    1. School year- homework, teachers
    2. Summer – packets, library programs, other
2. Child's Personality, Interests, Work Ethic, Skill Level, Abilities
3. Child's Status as Special Education or with a Learning Disability (as reported by mother)
4. SES
5. Expectations
    3. School Year
    4. Summer
    5. Reading
    6. Math
    7. College
    8. Job
6. Parenting Logics
    9. Screen time – school year
    10. Screen time – summer
    11. Morning routine – school year
    12. Morning routine – summer
    13. Afterschool routine – school year
    14. Bed time – school year
    15. Bed time – summer
    16. Reading time – school year
    17. Reading time – summer
    18. Homework – school year
    19. Homework – summer
7. The Transition
    20. From school year to summer
    21. From summer to school year
8. Constraints and Considerations
    22. Emotional
    23. Logistical
    24. Financial
9. Family Dynamics
    25. Role of grandparents or other extended family
    26. Mother's employment
    27. Parent's marital status
    28. Mother's education
    29. Role of husband or father
    30. Siblings
10. Formal Activities – school year
    31. Academic
    32. Recreational
11. Formal Activities – summer
    33. Academic
    34. Recreational
12. Informal Activities – school year
    35. Academic (flash cards, workbooks)
    36. Recreational
13. Informal Activities – summer
    37. Academic (flash cards, workbooks)
    38. Recreational
14. Parental Involvement and Volunteerism
    39. PTA
    40. Field Trips
    41. In Classrooms
15. Presence or Absence of Home Resources
    42. Neighborhood
    43. Books
    44. TV/Cable
    45. Video Games
    46. Internet
    47. Recreational – bikes, swimming pool, playgrounds, etc
16. Aware of summer learning loss
17. Great Quotes

consistent across the sample or subsets of the sample. The process also allowed me to revise and even reject previously-made interpretations that had once seemed more persuasive.

My process for formally analyzing the data began once I had completed all three rounds of data collection and had transcribed and uploaded all of my files. To begin, I linked the qualitative data gathered from interviews with school level demographic data reported by districts. Using Dedoose to organize both the data and my analysis, I systematically read and coded all the interviews over the course of about six weeks in early fall 2014. By aligning my coding schema to my research questions and sub-questions, I was able to organize my coded excerpts - of which there were more than 5,000 - in a way that helped me answer pertinent questions. Certain themes and patterns quickly became apparent. For example, nearly all the mothers in my sample reported a change in sleep and bedtime routines from the school year to the summer. The task, then, became one of discerning the meaning and relative importance of preliminary descriptive findings such as this one. This was a process rooted in the literature and informed by the continual testing and retesting of categories and hypotheses against the data.

While coding and excerpting the transcribed interviews, I simultaneously began to draft profile descriptions, summarizing and highlighting key characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and interview excerpts that stood out as particularly revealing. These descriptions provided me with a detailed and inclusive summary of the data gathered over the course of three interviews. I then used these descriptions to specifically address research questions and sub-questions, first by season and then comparatively across seasons. Finally, I analyzed the cross-seasons comparisons in three ways: by the

socioeconomic class of the respondent, by child's school, and by academic subject area, attempting to answer, in multiple ways, the central question of what changes in parenting logics occur across seasons.

To provide a clearer understanding of my analytical process, I will discuss an example. One research sub-question I examined was: how, if at all, do middle-class parenting logics vary by season? Based on the literature, I created a series of general codes to organize data that would help me understand the expectations and behaviors that defined parenting logics. For instance, I used the code "Screen Time" to capture parents' attitudes and rules about the use of electronics. I was interested in answering questions such as: if parents monitor screen time during the school year, do they do the same during the summer months? As I began the process of interviewing mothers to collect data, I realized that the code was too general and, thus, created more narrowly bounded, season-specific codes, "Screen Time - School Year" and "Screen Time - Summer." I also realized that the term "screen time" is overly broad and that the types of "screens" present in each household vary significantly. Because it was still early in the process of data collection, I modified my protocol to include more specific prompts about the kinds of screens used in each household. I asked, for instance, if different sets of rules applied to watching television as compared to playing video games.

After I completed the process of collecting data and began the coding process, I placed data, or text from the transcribed interviews, into the "screen time" categories. I then read these excerpts in order to draft the "Profile Descriptions," and several themes began to emerge. I was struck, for example, by the range of parental attitudes about their children's use of electronics. Some parents expressed enthusiasm for the ways in which

television, video games, and the internet could be used as tools for learning, tools for keeping their children "occupied," or tools to give their children downtime or help them relax. By contrast, other parents expressed deep reservations, even anger and frustration, about the omnipresence of electronics in their children's lives, including their classrooms, their homework assignments, and their peer groups.

Because this research focuses on the extent to which parental attitudes and behavior are, or are not, consistent across seasons, the final step in my analytical process was to compare findings in the "school year bucket" to those in the "summer bucket." I was particularly interested in the role of family socioeconomic status as well as the ways that schools influence parents' views of what is expected for each season. It was at this point in the analytical process, that I examined data across groups of respondents organized by social class and by school. As described previously, I employed three categories of social class (poor-, working-, and middle-class) to group families and I recruited mothers from seven schools across six school districts. Having interviewed principals at all seven schools as well as nine teachers from four of the seven schools, I was able to use these school level data to explore parental attitudes in more detail. The process allowed me to analyze the data in progressively more complex ways, constructing meaning first at the level of the individual respondent and then across groups of respondents. I present my findings in the next chapter.

School Characteristics

I collected data from parents, teachers, and principals at seven elementary schools located within a single state. Table 3-4 presents demographic and achievement data for

each school using publicly available data reported by the state's Department of Education for the 2012-2013 school year. In terms of socioeconomic makeup, the schools in my sample differ markedly. Three schools, Brooks, Stanton, and Garfield, serve primarily disadvantaged students, with roughly 80%, or greater, of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. By contrast, the four high SES schools in my study, Lawndale, Garrett, Forest Grove, and Greening, have student populations in which roughly 20% or less of students are considered economically disadvantaged. Thus, by design, I selected schools with high percentages of students are either end of the economic spectrum. Put another way, these seven schools are among the very poorest, or the most affluent, in the state.

The two groups of schools – Brooks, Stanton and Garfield, on the one hand, and Lawndale, Garrett, Forest Grove, and Greening, on the other – differ in significant ways. The poorer schools are generally larger, with Brooks being the largest at 620 students, and enroll higher percentages of English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from minority backgrounds. In general, these schools report lower percentages of students meeting and exceeding state standards in both reading and math. Two of the schools, Brooks and Stanton, are located within the same district.

From the three high poverty schools, I recruited thirteen mothers. Over the course of my research, one mother from each of these schools withdrew, resulting in a final sample of ten mothers from the poorer schools. In addition, I interviewed the principal of each of the high poverty school as well as five 2nd grade teachers from two of these schools. From the four more affluent schools, I recruited eighteen mothers and have complete data on all of them. I also interviewed each of the principals at these schools and four 2nd grade teachers from two of these schools. Table 3-5 describes sample

Table 3-4: School-Level Demographic and Achievement Data* (2012-2013 School Year)

	High Poverty Schools (3)			**Affluent Schools (4)**			
	Brooks	Stanton	Garfield	Lawndale	Garrett	Forest Grove	Greening
Percentage of English Learners	50%	45%	50%	25%	0	10%	5%
Percentage of Students with Disabilities	10%	15%	20%	10%	5%	10%	10%
Number of Languages Spoken	20	25	5	20	5	20	15
Race/Ethnicity (Percentage)							
Percentage White	40%	45%	45%	65%	80%	70%	70%
Percentage American Indian/Alaska Native	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%
Multi-Racial	5%	5%	<5%	5%	10%	10%	5%
Percentage Black/African American	10%	10%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%
Percentage Asian	15%	15%	<5%	20%	<5%	10%	10%
Hispano Latino	30%	20%	55%	5%	10%	5%	15%
Students meeting/exceeding state standards for Reading (Percentage)	65%	75%	70%	80%	85%	90%	80%
Students meeting/exceeding state standards for Math (Percentage)	70%	65%	80%	85%	75%	85%	70%
Students attending 90% or more of enrolled days (Percentage)	90%	85%	85%	90%	95%	95%	90%
Number of Mothers in Beginning Sample (31)	3	5	5	9	4	3	2
Number of Cases with Incomplete Data (3)	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Number of Mothers in Final Sample (28)	2	4	4	9	4	3	2

* all data rounded to protect schools' identities

Table 3-5: Sample Participants by School

Brooks Elementary
(90% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
0 teachers
2 mothers

Stanton Elementary
(80% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
4 teachers
4 mothers

Garfield Elementary
(85% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
1 teacher
4 mothers

Lawndale Elementary
(20% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
2 teachers
9 mothers

Garrett Elementary
(20% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
0 teachers
4 mothers

Forest Grove Elementary
(15%) free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
2 teachers
3 mothers

Greening Elementary
(15% free/reduced lunch eligible)

1 principal
0 teachers
2 mothers

Total

Low SES Schools

3 principals
5 teachers
10 mothers

High SES Schools

4 principals
4 teachers
18 mothers

participation by school and I discuss sample characteristics in the next section. In this section, I provide a short description of each school, beginning with the three high poverty schools.

The High Poverty Schools

Brooks Elementary

Brooks Elementary is the largest school in my sample (620 students), has the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (90%), the highest percentage of students classified as English Language Learners (50%), and the lowest percentage of White students (35%). In terms of achievement, Brooks reports the lowest percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards for Reading (65%) and the second lowest percentage for Math (70%).

The principal of Brooks speaks eloquently about the challenges that face many of her families. She talks about children and families who are hungry or homeless, and immigrant parents who don't speak English and find it difficult to communicate with teachers. Increasing parent involvement is a priority for her, and she has initiated a number of bilingual programs to build relationships with parents.

> One of the projects we started last year, which we're continuing this year is trying to build a Hispanic group of our Hispanic parents. We have a pretty large Hispanic population, I think the parents are, um, care a lot about education, [but] feel like they can't contribute to the school because they don't speak a lot of English.

In partnership with a local community organization, Brooks hosts an afterschool program that was widely praised by the mothers in my sample. In terms of homework, there is a school wide expectation that students read at home for a minimum of 20

minutes five days a week. And while the school was closed for the summer and did not offer any formal summer programs, the principal expressed concern for the possibility of summer learning loss amongst her students and described their program to provide a set of ten inexpensive, leveled books to all Brooks' kindergarten and first grade students, as well as older students who are reading below grade level.

With the support of the principal, I was able to recruit three mothers from Brooks, all of whom I classified as "poor." I was not able to interview any Brooks' teacher and one Brooks' mothers withdrew after the second interview, so my final sample includes two Brooks' mothers.

Stanton Elementary

Stanton Elementary, located in the same district as Brooks, is the type of school where the principal talks about education being the "ticket out" for her students. The school is large, with more than 600 students, nearly eighty percent of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch. Like Brooks, Stanton is a diverse school with immigrants from Russia, China, Ukraine, Vietnam, and other countries in Southeast Asia, Central and South America, and Africa. About a third of the students are English Language Learners, and the school reports more than twenty languages spoken by Stanton children and their families.

The parents in my sample describe the neighborhood surrounding Stanton as being "not so great" or "with a few shootings" and the second grade teachers with whom I spoke conveyed a sense of being overwhelmed. One teacher told me that less than half her second graders were on grade level and described homework as a "struggle."

Another described parent involvement as “really sad” and observed that over her twenty years of teaching the 2013/2014 schoolyear had been one of her most difficult. Concerned with the cost of photocopying given that so few students completed their homework, three of the four 2nd grade teachers at Stanton have stopped assigning paper-based homework and now “suggest” educational websites for students to visit. In partnership with a local non-profit organization, Stanton hosts a popular afterschool program and, in years past, has run a smaller summer program. However, the school was completely closed for repairs during the summer of 2014, with no access allowed even the principal and her office staff, who moved into temporary office space at another school in the neighborhood.

With the support and encouragement of the principal, all four of the second grade teachers agreed to participate in interviews, and I was able to recruit five mothers, one of whom withdrew after the second interview. Of the four Stanton mothers for whom I have complete data, one was classified as poor, two as working class, and one as middle class.

Garfield Elementary

The Garfield building is newly constructed and has a bright and airy feel to it, with abundant windows that allow natural light to shine through. Like Brooks and Stanton, the majority of Garfield’s students qualify for free and reduced lunch and close to fifty percent are English Language Learners, most whom are Spanish immigrants or the children of immigrants from Mexico or other Central American countries. Located adjacent to the campus of a small liberal arts college, Garfield has an afterschool program

staffed largely by college students. The program offers students an hour of homework support followed by two hours of recreational activities.

During our interviews, the principal of Garfield spoke excitedly about her use of data to drive instructional interventions. Frequent reading assessments, administered one-on-one by classroom teachers and then analyzed by the school's Title I coordinators, provide information that drive interventions during both the school year and summer. The school reports very high math scores and the principal has been honored in recent years at both the district and state level. With respect to summer programs, the principal and her staff are willing, even eager, to experiment with different interventions, including providing books to children over the summer, opening the school library one day a week throughout the summer, operating a summer breakfast and lunch program. At the time of our last interview, the school's Title I coordinators were considering the idea of a running a summer bookmobile from their personal vehicles.

I interviewed one second grade teacher and recruited five Garfield mothers, one of whom withdrew before our second interview. Of the four Garfield respondents, two are classified as poor and two as middle class.

The Affluent Schools

Lawndale Elementary

Lawndale Elementary is located in a new building in a vibrant and affluent suburb that sits between a large city and rolling farmland. Trendy and upscale, the community is full of newly constructed shopping centers, fire stations, a library, and subdivisions with single-family homes.

Lawndale has nearly 500 students and, of the four affluent schools in my sample, has the most diverse student body: more than a third of students are non-white and nearly a quarter are classified as English Language Learners. The school reports high tests scores in both reading and math.

During the course of my study, it was announced that two of the three second grade teachers would follow their students into third grade. The practice of “looping” is particularly interesting from a seasonal perspective because the relationship established between student and teacher during their first year together can lead to unusually high levels of teacher-student contact during the summer months. In this case, one of the two looping teachers emailed her students over the summer, checked to see if they were using online educational programs to practice their skills, and encouraged them to do so with the promise of incentives such as electronic badges.

I interviewed the principal and two second grade teachers, and recruited nine Lawndale mothers, eight of whom I classified as middle class and one as working class.

Garrett Elementary

With 275 students, Garrett is the smallest school in my sample, less than half the size of larger schools like Stanton and Brooks. Garrett enrolls a student body that is 80% white, making it the least diverse school in my sample. Indeed, the school does not offer a program for English Language Learners. Garrett has high test scores - 85% of students meet or exceed state standards in reading – and high rates of attendance.

Garrett’s principal describes parent involvement with terms such as “fantastic” and says there is a large bank of active volunteers. Like the other affluent schools in my

sample, the most common attendance problem at Garrett occurs when parents pull their children out of school for family vacations. In an effort to curb this practice, the principal talks to parents and addresses it in her weekly newsletter:

> …if you're planning a vacation, please don't plan it, do the best you can do not to take the kids out of school for it. While we understand that it's valuable to spend time with your family we just know that the instruction that you can get in the classroom cannot be duplicated by just taking a packet home

In partnership with a local community organization, the school hosts a popular before school and afterschool program but is closed during the summer months.

I recruited four mothers from Garrett, all of whom I classified as middle class, but I was not able to interview any second grade teachers.

Forest Grove Elementary

With just 14% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, Forest Grove is the most affluent school in my sample and reports the highest reading scores, with nearly 90% of its students meeting or exceeding state standards. In a student body of 480 students, 25 are English Language Learners, and the principal, whose own children attended Forest Grove, describes his students as coming to school well prepared with high oral language skills and a lot of exposure to the outside world. One teacher observed that in her class of 27 students, all but one or two completed homework on a regular basis.

A large, circular parking lot and driveway allow parents to drop off and pick up their children. In the front of the school, on the other side of the parking lot, sits a large and well-maintained garden with benches and a covered area. During my third round of

interviews, one mother suggested we meet in the garden, which she tended on a volunteer basis throughout the summer. The corn and sunflowers were thriving in the late August sun, many stalks rising to six feet or higher.

The school invests heavily in technology, with many classrooms having a one-to-one ratio between students and laptop or iPad. During the year this study took place, the second grade teachers were experimenting with a team teaching approach in which students rotated from their homeroom class to each of the other grade level teachers for grouped instruction in reading, writing and math. It was an arrangement that the two teachers I interviewed described in very positive terms, believing it allowed them to more effectively deliver instruction and content that was appropriately leveled for children who learned at different rates. The principal, however, told me that a number of parents had complained to him and, indeed, one of the mothers in my sample expressed frustration with the team teaching approach. I learned in my last interview with the principal that he had made the decision that they would not continue the practice after this school year.

In addition to interviewing the principal, I interviewed two second grade teachers and recruited three Forest Grove mothers, all of whom were classified as middle class.

Greening Elementary

Greening Elementary is located in an affluent suburb that is home to an international firm that specializes in advanced engineering. The school reports high attendance rates, high test scores, and just 16% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Greening is a large school – with 540 students it's the largest of the four affluent schools in my sample.

Like Lawndale and Forest Grove, Greening is a diverse school in terms of the ethnic make-up of its students and the number of languages they speak. For instance, the school reports that 30% of its students are non-White and that sixteen languages are spoken by Greening families. "We have an amazing amount of additional languages; I mean, we have everything from Chinese to Vietnamese to Russian to Indian," the principal says. He notes, however, that many of Greening's immigrant parents are affluent and highly educated professionals, like the engineers who work at the nearby tech company. In this sense, the diversity of a school like Greening is different than schools like Brooks, Stanton, and Garfield where many of the immigrant parents are not fluent in English and work unskilled or entry-level jobs.

During our first interview the principal explained the cold he was nursing by saying he'd recently slept on the roof of the building as a "prize" to students for exceeding a recent fundraising goal. Indeed, the PTA raises about $60,000 each year, much of which is spent in classrooms on projects directed by teachers.

The principal's own children attend the school and my sample includes two Greening mothers, both of whom are classified as middle class. I was not able to interview any second grade teachers.

Sample Characteristics

As discussed above, the final sample includes 28 mothers recruited from 7 elementary schools. All of the mothers had a child in 2nd grade during the 2013/2014 school year, and many also had other older or younger children. One respondent had twins in 2nd grade, so while the final sample of mothers totals 28, the number of target

Table 3-6: Demographic Characteristics of Mothers in Final Sample (n=28)

Pseudonym	Social Class	Race-Ethnicity	Level of Education	Work Status	Family Structure
Eleanor	Poor	White	Associate's Degree	Part-time	Single mother
Allie	Poor	White	College	Not employed	Two parent
Susie	Poor	White	High School	Part-time	Single mother
Tammy	Poor	White	Working on Associate's Degree	Not employed	Two parent
Elizabeth	Poor	White	High School	Not employed	Two parent
Joyce	Working	White	Some college	Full time	Dual custody
Sarah	Working	White	Did not finish high school	Not employed	Two parent
Nikki	Middle	White	Some graduate school	Part-time	Two parent
Jeannie	Working	White	College	Full time	Two parent
Linda	Middle	White	College	Full time	Dual custody
Nita	Middle	Asian American	College	Part-time	Two parent
Terry	Middle	Asian American	College	Not employed	Two parent
Sharon	Middle	White	College	Full time	Two parent
Jessie	Middle	Asian American	College	Not employed	Two parent
Sally	Middle	White	Working on Bachelor's	Not employed	Two parent
Sheila	Middle	White	College	Full time	Two parent
Kate	Middle	White	College	Part-time	Two parent
Maria	Middle	White	College	Part-time	Two parent
Margaret	Middle	White	Graduate Degree	Part-time	Two parent
Karen	Middle	White	College	Full time	Two parent
Mary	Middle	White	College	Part-time	Two parent
Melanie	Middle	White	College	Part-time	Two parent
Julie	Middle	White	College	Not employed	Two parent
Leila	Middle	White	Graduate/Professional Degree	Full time	Two parent
Nancy	Middle	White	College	Full time	Two parent
Nadine	Middle	White	Associate's Degree	Full time	Two parent
Betty	Middle	Asian American	College	Not employed	Two parent
Patricia	Middle	White	College	Part-time	Two parent

children is 29. To clarify terms, I consider my "sample" to be the 28 mothers who were interviewed three times each and the term "target child" refers to their child enrolled in 2nd grade during the 2013/2014 school year. The nine teachers and seven principals I interviewed, twice each, constitute an important source of background information and provided valuable context for my parent interviews and subsequent analysis.

Table 3-6 describes the social class, ethnicity, level of education, work status and family structure of the 28 mothers in my sample. The final two columns on the right report the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch at each target child's elementary school, and my corresponding classification of that school as either "High Poverty" or "Affluent."

In this section, I describe my sample in more detail and discuss the relevance of key characteristics for my research.

Social Class

The 28 mothers in this study come from different backgrounds and have different life experiences. In many ways, this is a sample of 28 individuals, each with a unique set of life experiences. For the purposes of sociological analysis, however, it is helpful to group them by common characteristics, particularly social class. Categorizing individuals by social class is not straightforward. At the outset of this study, I created three categories of class that were consistent with definitions used in other sociological studies of education:

Poor families are those in which there is no full-time worker, or those adults who work are employed part-time in low-paying, service sector or entry level jobs that do not draw on complex, educationally certified skills;

Working class families are those in which at least one parent is employed in a full-time position that is clerical, administrative or non-managerial;

Middle class families are those in which at least one parent is employed full-time in a position that entails substantial managerial authority or that draw upon highly complex, educationally certified skills.

In practice, assigning individuals to these categories could be tricky. One difficulty, for example, is collecting adequate and accurate data from participants in the setting of face-to-face interviews. Some respondents find it difficult or embarrassing to talk about their work history or to describe their job in terms of compensation, satisfaction, or complexity. Moreover, job titles don't necessarily provide the researcher with a clear understanding of an individuals specific duties or responsibilities. Consider the difference between a "sales clerk" at a low-end, dollar store type retailer and a "sales clerk" at a high-end jewelry store. These two positions, sharing a title, would, presumably, entail differences in compensation, communication skills, and the complexity of financial transactions.

A second challenge when assigning individuals to categories of social class centers of the complexities of family makeup. In this study, for example, there were multiple instances when one parent had a college degree and was employed in a professional or managerial level job, while the spouse had a significantly different

education and work history. Allie, for example, had a four-year college degree but did not work, while her husband had dropped out of school in 8th grade and worked part-time as a cook in a fast food restaurant.

Sociologists have long debated the best approach for constructing categories of social class, and I found myself more and more interested in this discussion as I discovered that many of my participants and their families did not "fit neatly" into one category or another. For instance, the ways in which I construct categories of class center primarily on issues of employment. While this is consistent with the approach taken by similar studies, it is a fairly narrow way to measure class. Consider, for example, the types of life experiences and influences on children that are neighborhood based. The child of a college educated parents working in managerial jobs living in an affluent neighborhood will have different experiences than the child of college educated parents working in managerial jobs but living in a more depressed, less affluent neighborhood.

In the absence of gathering specific data about income level and wealth, it would be misleading to use inference to assign individuals to categories of class. In my study, for example, a number of mothers who received housing assistance or whose children qualified for free and reduced lunch also told me about family vacations to places like Disneyland and Washington, D.C. Conversely, college educated mothers who worked professional jobs and lived in spacious single-family homes in newly constructed subdivisions would express concern with the cost of various children's activities, like camp fees.

A final thought about the challenges of assigning individuals to categories of class centers on the obvious: lives are lived, not static. In this study, a number of mothers were

enrolled in school and two completed their degrees between our first and third interviews. Some mothers were seeking employment, some found jobs and began to work for the first time in years, others quit jobs; similarly, some husbands were laid off while others found new work. Put differently, over the course of a 12-month study, incomes go up and incomes go down. Families moved neighborhoods or changed schools (one respondent withdrew from the study because her son changed schools) and family structure and daily life changed as custody agreements were revisited and marriages – even in the course of this study – fell apart. Each of these "life events" has the potential influence children's experiences and opportunities, and some – like a mother earning her college degree and beginning a new job – bear directly on issues of class and, in my view, highlight the complexity of assigning individuals to categories of class. Throughout the course of this research, I worried that my construction of categories of class might be too narrow and that the assigning of individuals to class could be too rigid. Despite these limitations, the purpose of this study is to explore the nature of parenting logics as they related to the problem of summer learning loss, which is commonly understood as a function, at least partly, of class. To this end, and with my aforementioned reservations discussed, I describe how I used categories of class to group the 28 mothers in my sample, including the ways in which I navigated assignment in those cases in which class assignment seemed particularly complex.

Poor Families

Of the 28 mothers in my sample, I assigned five to the lowest socioeconomic category. All of the children in these families qualified for free and reduced lunch and, at

the start of the study, none of the mothers assigned to this category worked full-time or had partners who worked full time, and none had work histories that included professional or managerial level responsibilities. Many of these families received assistance from public or community sources. For instance, Allie and her family received housing assistance through a community non-profit that supported people living with HIV; Eleanor and her children and Elizabeth and her family received state provided health insurance; and the children in Susie's and Eleanor's families received subsidized counseling from community based health organizations. Finally, all of the mothers in this category were recruited from high poverty schools.

Three mothers in this category are married, whereas two are single mothers. At the start of the study, two were not employed, one was not employed while going to school full-time, and two held part-time jobs, one as a sales clerk, the other as an in-home babysitter. Throughout our interviews, these mothers tended to describe their financial situations as precarious, frequently telling me that money was scarce and, thus, their activities curtailed or options more limited.

During the course of this study, one mother, Tammy, finished her associate's degree and then found full-time work as a secretary. Within weeks, her husband, who had been laid off from his previous job, also found full time work. By the end of the study, Tammy could have been categorized as "Working Class" but, for the sake of consistency, I continued to use the class assignments made at the start of the study.

Working Class Families

In this study, working class families are those in which one parent is working full time in a clerical, administrative or non-managerial position. I've assigned three mothers to this category; Joyce and Sarah were recruited from Stanton Elementary and Jeannie from Lawndale. Sarah is a stay-at-home mom who did not finish high school and is working, intermittently, on finishing her GED; her husband works full time for a transportation company. Joyce and Jeannie both work full time; Joyce, who is the divorced mother of one, works as a sales and service specialist in a bank and Jeannie, who is married with eight children, works as an office manager for a construction firm. During the course of this study, Sarah took a part-time, temporary job, and Jeannie finished her bachelor's degree and began looking for more advanced positions.

In many ways, the families classified as "working class" have more in common with "poor" families than with "middle class" families. For instance, all the children in the working class families qualify for the free and reduced lunch program - as reported by their mothers - as do as all of the poor children and none of the middle class children. In terms of educational backgrounds, one of the working class mothers did not finish high school and none of them had college degrees at the start of the study.

Middle Class Families

In general, the middle class mothers in this study were married and lived in single-family homes in neighborhoods they described in positive terms. Most of their husbands also had college degrees and worked in professional or managerial level jobs.

With the exception of Nadine Thorne and Sally Newman, whom I discuss below, all of the middle class mothers in my sample had four-year college degrees and many of

them had advanced degrees or professional certifications beyond college. While Sally Newman did not have a college degree at the time of the study, she was enrolled full time in school and expected to complete her degree in 2016; moreover, her husband had a four-year degree and a managerial job and their family income was too high for their children to qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Nadine Thorne, for her part, had a two-year associate's degree but her husband had a four-year degree and their family owned a farm of one hundred plus acres.

Race and Ethnicity

As reported in Table 3-6, my sample is predominantly white. Using guidelines established by the U.S. Census Bureau, I assigned four mothers in my sample to the category "Asian American", which includes those individuals from Guam, Korea, and the Indian subcontinent, which would be more specific descriptions of the ethnic backgrounds of the mothers in my study. Although the schools from which I recruited parents are more diverse overall than my sample, I was limited by the need to conduct interviews in English only.

Family Structure and Size

While all of the families in my sample had a target child in 2nd grade during the 2013/2014 school year, the size and make up of families differed. Table 3-7 describes the structure of the families in my sample. In some cases, the target child was an only child; in other cases, the target child had older or younger siblings, and in some cases, the target

child was part of a blended family or a family in which custody was shared between divorced or separated parents.

The size and structure of the family can have implications for the ways in which children and families structure their out-of-school time, and it's possible that the differences between a one-parent household and two-parent household are magnified during the summer months when children have more unstructured time at home. For example, the single mothers in my sample often felt overwhelmed and isolated during the summer months, whereas many of the married women emphasized the ways in which their husbands shared in daily chores and activities. Grandparents can also play an important role and in four households - Linda McCoy, Joyce Kohn, Nita Kamdar, and Elizabeth Miller – grandparents lived with sample respondents and the target children. I explore these and other issues around family dynamics in the next chapter.

Employment Status

The question of how mothers' employment status influences family life is surprisingly complex. Table 3-8 describes mothers' employment status by social class.

Table 3-7. Family Structure by Social Class

Social Class	Two-Parent Household		Blended Families	Single Mother Household
Middle Class	Nita	Kate	Maria	Linda
(n=20)	Julie	Sharon		
	Jessie	Kate	Sally	Leila
	Sheila	Mary		
	Karen	Melanie		
	Margaret	Nadine		
	Nancy	Patricia		
	Betty	Terry		
Working Class	Jeannie			Joyce
	Sarah			
Poor	Allie			Susie
(n=5)	Tammy			Eleanor
	Elizabeth			

Table 3-8. Mother's Employment Status by Social Class

Social Class	Not Employed	Part-Time	Full-Time
Middle Class (n=20)	Terry Jessie Betty Sally Julie	Nikki Holly Maria Margaret Patricia Mary Melanie Kate Nadine	Linda Sharon Sheila Leila Karen Nancy
Working Class (n=3)	Sarah		Joyce Jeannie
Poor (n=5)	Allie Tammy Elizabeth	Susie Eleanor	

School Level SES

Table 3-9 reports the distribution of mothers by social class and type of school. None of the eighteen mothers recruited from the four affluent schools are classified as “poor’ and only one, Jeannie, is classified as “working class.” Put differently, most of the middle class mothers in my sample have children enrolled in schools comprised primarily of middle class students. In contrast, the ten mothers I recruited from high poverty schools represent somewhat more diversity in terms of their family’s class status in that three are categorized as middle class. Nevertheless, seven of the ten mothers recruited from high poverty schools are categorized as either “poor” or “working class,” and thus comprise the bulk of my sub-sample of non-middle class families.

Sample Attrition

Attrition occurs in longitudinal studies when subjects drop out of the research. There are a number of reasons that subjects might have for dropping out, including their unwillingness to participate in the research, their non-availability for reasons such as illness or death, and difficulties tracing subjects for follow-up (Sumner 2006; Miller and Wright 1995). Of particular concern is the possibility of attrition bias that can occur when those sample members who drop have unique characteristics such that their nonparticipation causes the remaining sample to no

Table 3-9. Distribution of Mothers by Social Class and School Level SES

Social Class	**Affluent Schools (n=18)**		**High Poverty Schools (n=10)**
Middle Class	Holly	Linda	Leila
(n=20)	Terry	Sharon	Nadine
	Jessie	Kate	Nikki
	Sally	Maria	
	Sheila	Mary	
	Karen	Melanie	
	Margaret	Julie	
	Nancy	Patricia	
	Betty		
Working Class	Jeannie		Joyce
(n=3)			Sarah
Poor			Allie
(n=5)			Tammy
			Susie
			Eleanor
			Elizabeth

longer be representative of the original sample. Attrition bias of this kind is a threat to the external validity of the study and will limit the generalizability of the findings.

To minimize the possibility of attrition and attrition bias, I collected detailed contact information and attempted to stay in touch with respondents between rounds of interviews. I tried to be flexible when scheduling interviews and allowed respondents to select the time and location for the interview. On a few occasions, I asked principals to support my efforts to make contact with participants who I was having trouble reaching. These steps are consistent with recommendations for minimizing the threat of attrition bias (Miller and Holist 2007). In addition, I provided all participants – teachers, principals and mothers – with a $15 gift card to Starbucks or iTunes at the start of the 2nd interview.

Despite these steps, some attrition did occur in this study over the course of twelve months of data collection. I interviewed one principal in a high poverty school who agreed to participate and help recruit parents, but who subsequently was not responsive to my requests for follow-up; consequently, I was not able to recruit mothers from his school, which would have been the fourth high poverty school in my sample. I suspect that he simply became too busy with his regular duties as a principal to participate any further. Because my sample does not include parents from his school, I have not included his interview in my analysis.

In addition, a 2nd grade teacher from a high SES school who participated in a first round interview later went on maternity leave and thus did not participate in a second interview; however, because I consider teacher interviews to be sources of ancillary

information about the schools from which I recruited parents, I have included her interview in my analysis.

Some attrition also occurred within my sample of parents. After the first round of interviews with 31 mothers, one declined to be interviewed a second time, explaining to me via email that she had begun a job search and would not be able to participate in future interviews. She was a particularly interesting case in that she was one of only a few highly educated mothers – she was an attorney seeking legal work - with children enrolled in a high poverty school, Garfield Elementary.

Two more mothers declined to participate in a third interview. Both had children enrolled in high poverty schools, one at Brooks, the other at Stanton. The Brooks mother simply failed to respond to repeated requests for a third and final interview while the Stanton mother texted me to decline participation with the explanation that her children no longer attended the school. As with the Garfield mother who withdrew after the first round of interviews, the Brooks and Stanton mothers were interesting cases – one is a single, African-American mother raising three daughters, the other a foster mother who was in the process of legally adopting her children – and I'm sorry that they chose not to participate further. Given the longitudinal nature of this study, designed to generate data across both the school year and the summer, I chose not to include incomplete data in my analysis. Thus, the final sample consists of 28 mothers with complete data across three rounds of interviews. Table 3-10 compares the characteristics of participants who withdrew from the study with those for whom I have complete data. In this study, the most likely threat of attrition bias would occur if members of one class dropped out of the study at significantly higher rates than members of the other class.

Table 3-10: Demographics of the Sample with Complete Data (n=28 mothers, but 29 target children because of one set of twins) and Those Who Withdrew (n=3)

	Complete Data	Incomplete Data
Gender of 2nd Grader		
Male	16	3
Female	13	1
Ethnicity		
White	24	2
African American	0	1
Asian American	3	-
Other	2	-
Speak Additional Language at Home?		
Yes	2	-
No	27	3
Mother's Education		
Did not finish high school	2	-
High school graduate	2	1
Some college	3	1
College graduate	18	-
Some graduate school	2	-
More than college degree	1	1
Eligible for Free or Reduced-price Lunch?		
Yes	8	2
No	20	1
Family Structure		
Single mother	2	1
Two parent	24	1
Divorced, dual custody	2	-
Foster family	0	1
Mother's Employment		
Not employed	11	2
Part-time	6	1
Full-time	11	-
Social Class		
Poor	5	1
Working Class	3	-
Middle Class	20	2
Poverty Level of Target Child's School		
High poverty	10	3
Low poverty	18	-

All of the mothers who withdrew from the study had been recruited from low SES schools while none of the mothers recruited from high SES schools withdrew. However, the mothers who withdrew differed from one another in significant ways: one was a White, middle-class attorney, one was a Hispanic foster mother with an associate's degree and married to an accountant, and the third was a single, African-American mother with a high school degree.

Researcher Bias

Prior to conducting research on issues related to seasonal variation in parenting logics, I worked with program providers, policymakers, and researchers to improve and expand summer learning opportunities for all children, particularly those living in poverty. Although these experiences, which span two decades and a variety of professional settings, have provided me with insights that, I believe, inform my research in unique and important ways, they also represent an undeniable source of bias - I am a longstanding advocate for high-quality summer programs, including both formal and informal programs and those that include some element of parental participation.

To dissociate myself from my own bias as an advocate for summer learning programs, in general, and active parental participation in summer learning, in particular, I used techniques such as regular self-reflection in my field notes and line-by-line coding, both of which force the researcher to separate out his or her personal feelings from the comments and observations made by interviewees (Stillman 2011).

Summary

In this chapter, I described the way I designed this study and the methods I utilized to answer my research questions. I explained my process for recruiting a sample and described how I collected and analyzed data. In the next chapter, I present six profiles and then, in the next two chapters, present findings across my sample.

CHAPTER FOUR
Profiles Across Seasons

Overview

During the school year, parents and children structure much of their daily lives around the institutional norms and routines that constitute schooling. For most families, daily routines revolve around the task of getting children to and from school on time and then, in the afternoon and evening hours, ensuring they are safe and supervised. To varying degrees, parents also enforce bedtime routines, monitor homework and shuttle children to and from extracurricular activities. The summer months, by contrast, are generally free from both the demands and the routine of compulsory schooling and, thus, require parents to structure all of their children's time. For some families, summer presents itself as an opportunity to implement new schedules or pursue interests and activities that they can't do during the school year. For other families, constraints around limited financial resources, parental work schedules, or children's needs mean that the summer is a time of anxiety and strain. As families juggle their particular goals and needs, some habits and routines remain consistent, while others change in ways that can be intentional or unexpected. In this chapter, I profile six families - three middle-class and three poor or working class – as they apply, and sometimes adapt and revise, school year routines and expectations to the summer structures they have created in response to their own particular set of interests, resources, and constraints. Elements of social class - particularly the availability of financial resources and human capital - play an important role, as does the child's own level of compliance or resistance.

Part One: Seasonal Attitudes and Anxieties

In this section, I highlight the ways in which social class shapes families' attitudes and expectations across seasons. Julie Jacobs is a middle-class mother of three who leads a hectic life during the school year and, thus, eagerly anticipates the summer months as a chance for her family to slow down, sleep late, and relax together. By contrast, Eleanor Russell - a single mother of three boys all of whom have special needs, receive counseling services, and have been prescribed medication for hyperactivity and impulse control - sees the summer months as a difficult time during which school-based resources are no longer available. Eleanor devotes considerable time and energy to finding programs and activities for her children: she spends hours waiting in lines to sign her children up for free camps and swimming lessons, she applies for scholarships, and she is connected with a variety of social service agencies in the community. While Mrs. Jacobs tells me that the summer months are a welcome break from the "chaos of the school year," Ms. Russell notes that her anxiety rises as the school year comes to an end. Considered separately, these profiles highlight the seasonal changes that take place *within families*; taken together, they highlight seasonal differences *across families* at either end of the economic spectrum.

Summer Jammies 'til 11: Julie Jacobs and Her Family's Break from the "Chaos" of the School Year

> *[During the summer] we would never really start until 11:00. I would say until about 11:00 it was just kind of, like, hanging out… I read something early on that it's okay for your kids to be bored.*
>
> \- *Julie Jacobs*

“Chaos” is the word that Julie Jacobs uses to describe her family’s hectic schedule during the school year. Her son, Kevin, who is in second grade, plays so many sports that on some weekday afternoons and evenings in the spring he has back-to-back practices for different teams, frequently at locations that require him to be driven from one practice to the other. On many weekends, Kevin plays soccer games on Saturday and baseball games on both Saturday and Sunday. He has two younger sisters, a first grader who also loves sports, and an infant who requires Mrs. Jacobs’ attention even as she is running her older kids to and from their games and practices. Mr. Jacobs is an accountant who works long hours and travels frequently, including international trips to far-away places like Toronto, London, and Shanghai. Although his job is demanding – during the year in which I interviewed Julie, he was being considered for partner and, thus, traveling and working even more than usual – he makes time to co-coach Kevin’s baseball team with his wife’s father. On top of everything else, the Jacobs bought a new house and moved during the course of my research, so Mrs. Jacobs added packing and unpacking to her list of responsibilities.

Julie Jacobs is cheerful and energetic. She has a bachelor’s degree in marketing but doesn’t work, and tells me that she loves being able to stay home with her children. She describes Kevin as an amazing brother and a good student who is in the top reading group in his class and doing so well in math that he is assigned extra homework. While she notes that sitting around the dinner table as a family and eating together is “just not reality for us,” she seems to thrive on her family’s busy schedule. It helps that her parents live in the same neighborhood so she can ask them for help multiple times each week

babysitting the infant or running the older kids to and from their practices; as Mrs. Jacobs puts it, "I use my mom a lot."

Kevin and his sister attend Forest Grove Elementary, which is the same affluent, suburban school that Julie and her husband attended as children. Because the Jacobs live just outside the school's catchment area, the family had to apply to the school for permission to "opt-in." Mrs. Jacobs is very involved in her children's schooling: in addition to driving them to and from school each day, she monitors their homework, helps them find books they enjoy, volunteers frequently in their classrooms, and communicates regularly with their teachers.

Kevin's homework is assigned on a weekly basis and due every Friday. Mrs. Jacobs explains that, "It can range from four worksheet pages to about six or eight." In addition to the homework packet, which typically includes math worksheets with story problems, Kevin also has a weekly spelling test on twenty words and is required to read 20 to 30 minutes each night. While this amount of homework is typical of the amount assigned by teachers in the affluent schools in my sample, it is significantly more than that assigned to children in the high-poverty schools, who rarely had to complete more than a single math worksheet in addition to their nightly reading. And the homework can be a lot for Kevin to fit in to his day. While Julie wants him to be challenged – for instance, she complained to his teacher that his spelling words were too easy – their afternoons and evenings are packed with sports, a schedule she describes with words like "crazy." Her approach to Kevin's homework is to just get it done so they don't have to worry about it: "And so he takes one day of the week and does all the homework." Like most of the mothers in my sample, she is grateful that the homework is assigned on a

weekly basis because it gives her and Kevin the flexibility to pick and choose which days he can focus on his homework.

Mrs. Jacobs enjoys volunteering in her children's classrooms but has cut back since the birth of her youngest. To make up for spending less time in the classroom, she has told her children's teachers that she's happy to do some of their prep work at home, things like "cutting, gluing, putting projects together" that she can do while her daughter naps. While it is difficult to attend evening meetings given her husband's travel schedule, Mrs. Jacobs supports friends in the PTA as they plan various fundraisers and other activities:

> I'm good at helping people. I don't wanna be in charge of the stuff. I'd like to help… I just don't wanna be in charge of it. It stresses me out too much and takes the fun out of it.

Overall, Mrs. Jacobs believes that Kevin does well in school. He is in the top of his class in both reading and math, and she proudly describes him as a child who "pushes himself, he just pushes himself so hard." She says that he is "very smart in math" and that his natural curiosity serves him well. There is one area, however, that concerns her:

> I struggle with him at night, getting him to read more. And I think I haven't found something that he's interested in yet… I mean, he's in the top reading group, so it's not that he's not a good reader, I just don't think he engages [or]… enjoys it.

Like all children, Kevin has his own set of favorite interests and hobbies – for instance, Mrs. Jacobs says that he'll play basketball "nonstop" and loves watching ESPN to get the latest scores. And, of course, there are activities – like reading – which hold less appeal for him. The concept of child capital, meaning the resources and values that inhere in children themselves (Chin and Phillips 2004), is important year-round but may take on special relevance during the summer months when children generally have more

unstructured, free time and fewer compulsory activities. In addition to the interests and hobbies that children might choose to voluntarily pursue, they also have the capacity to either comply with, or resist, their parents' plans. Because most summer activities are not compulsory in the same way that schooling is mandated by the state, the relative importance of child capital may be greater during the summer months. In my study, mothers across social classes described their efforts to entertain their children, provide their children with down time, and enroll their children in activities that interested them. For some mothers, this meant allowing their children extra time in front of the television to watch their favorite shows, while for others it meant taking their child more frequently to the library or enrolling them in a sports camp. Many mothers also described situations when their children simply refused to go along with the plans they had made. While all children - regardless of their family's economic circumstances – possess some form of human, social and cultural capital, parents' ability to either overcome their child's resistance or cater to their child's interests is shaped by social class and the resources they have available. In the case of Julie Jacobs, for example, she tried to overcome her son's lack of interest in reading by buying him a Kindle, in the hopes that "holding a device" would appeal to him.

Mrs. Jacobs does not have explicit rules around her children's use of electronics, which include an iPod Touch, an iPad, a computer, and a television. While she does not want her children playing on the iPad for an hour straight, she believes they are entitled to some down time, particularly after school and during the summer months, and she does not monitor their screen time too closely. Kevin and his sister watch a lot of television, she says, but she emphasizes that most of their favorite shows, like PBS's "Arthur," are

educational in nature. With no strict rules around screen time during the school year, Mrs. Jacobs' approach to screen times during the summer month is the same. If Kevin and his sister fight over the iPad, or if she thinks they have been starting at a screen for "too long," she will intervene, but otherwise allows a lot of flexibility. She says that Kevin is "obsessed with" ESPN's Sports Center and, when it comes to sports, will watch "whatever game is on."

Indeed, sports are at the center of their busy lives. Mrs. Jacobs describes Kevin as being "very athletic," a boy who just loves sports:

> He had basketball twice a week and then games on Saturday, and then during baseball season there, he had baseball twice a week and then she had baseball twice a week… and they were opposite days, so we had, like, four days of baseball, both had games on Saturdays… And then soccer is, so soccer goes fall, and then basketball, and then baseball… he did an extra basketball.

Although her husband and her father share coaching responsibilities for Kevin's baseball team during the spring season, he also played soccer. This means that on Wednesdays, Mr. Jacobs takes Kevin to baseball practice and then she picks him up a few minutes early to drive him to soccer practice. This is typical of their busy lives, running back and forth to children's activities. Mrs. Jacobs says that sitting down together for family dinner is just not a reality for them: "It's not a lot of sit at home dinners on the table together, I wouldn't say, but, it works for us."

To help manage their hectic lives, Mrs. Jacobs uses a dry erase board to lay out their monthly schedule. On it, she makes note of all the events and obligations that impact her family's schedule: when her husband is traveling, for example, and all of her children's practices and games. She says that Kevin, in particular, likes to know the plan.

With the schedule made and set out in a obvious place so that everyone can see it, she uses it to organize her week, including helping Kevin to get his homework done on the less busy days.

As the school year winds down, Mrs. Jacobs looks forward to the summer months as a break from their hectic pace of life. They are able to take vacations - her parents have a vacation home about three hours away and sometimes her family accompanies her husband on business trips – but the dramatic change comes in their day-to-day schedule:

> I just don't think we have as many expectations. Yeah, it's just very relaxed. I mean, we…I think it was good that we didn't have a lot of plans this year, because we didn't have a lot of places we had to be at certain times and that's a good schedule.

Part of Mrs. Jacob's logic for wanting to slow down during the summer months is her realization that her families' schedules will change as her children get older. Given their enthusiasm for sports, Mrs. Jacobs anticipates that in the coming years her children will become more involved in more demanding programs that operate year-round, and thus she want to protect their summers now when they are still young:

> I would say, too, as they get older, I think then it's gonna be more, like, year round. There's a soccer thing…it's called player development academy. And I don't want him to do that yet, because it starts early in the summer. And then it goes longer, and I don't want him to pick an all-year sport yet. I think it would be better for him because I think it would be better coaching and it'd be better for him, but I think that would lead him to, like, maybe one sport and he's not ready for that and I'm not ready for him to have one sport yet.

During the last few weeks of school, Mrs. Jacobs enrolled each of her older kids in two summer camps, but realized after the first camp that Kevin was exhausted and needed a break, so she cancelled his enrollment in the second camp and kept him home.

Other middle class mothers in my sample describe similar experiences. Nancy James, for instance, is an elementary school teacher with two children. She and her husband limit their children's participation in summer activities: "Our family policy is to only do one sport at a time. That's enough for us, I don't need to run my kids ragged. They need to play and have other things to do." While middle class families like the Jacobs and Jameses tend to emphasize the limits they place on their children during the summer months, poor and working class mothers often struggle to find enough activities for their children.

Mrs. Jacob's relaxed attitude about sports in the summer months extends to learning as well, to the point that she feels a sort of nagging, guilty sense that perhaps she should have done more: "I have been really bad at the summer stuff:"

> I think if my kids struggled more during the year I would work harder during the summer to make them do more, but they work so hard all [school] year long that it's, like, I don't necessarily see them falling behind during the summer.

The seasonal change in scheduling and pace of life experienced by Julie's family is not unique; it is one that I found in many middle-class homes. While the parental values that shape and give rise to the process of concerted cultivation may be deeply held and even atemporal, the day-to-day pace of activities can be exhausting, particularly during the school year. As Mrs. Jacobs points out, the typical approach of squeezing sports and other activities into the afternoon and evening hours - along with dinner, homework, reading, and bedtime – can be difficult for parents and children alike to sustain. For some families engaged in concerted cultivation, the summer months offer the chance for a break. Without the demands of daily schooling, parents can allow their children to stay up later, sleep in, enjoy more screen time and still have time for both

organized sports and unstructured, free time. However, while the notion of summer as a break from the chaos is appealing for many families, it is not universal. It seems to require safe neighborhoods for kids to play outside, parents with both the financial resources to pay for activities, as well as the time and flexibility to take kids to and from activities. As the following profiles demonstrate, poor and working class families tend not to have the time, financial resources, or safe neighborhoods. Beyond economic issues, children themselves play a role in complying with, or resisting, their parents' plans and expectations. Schooling is compulsory and while children can act out in way their teachers do not appreciate, their attendance in schooling, at least in the early grades, is not debatable. In the summer months, however, participation in organized activities, informal play, and programs – even school based summer programs – is not compulsory and, thus, children have a greater capacity to comply, or not, with the plans their parents have made. For the Jacobs family, concerted cultivation is a nine-month endeavor that parallels the school year, with the summer months representing a deliberate break in the action. In the next section, I profile Eleanor Russell, a low-income mother who struggles to maintain control of her children and struggles to find activities that keep them safe and occupied.

The Anxiety of Changing Routines While Making Sure "Chernobyl" Doesn't Happen: Eleanor Russell

> *"About a week before school ends my anxiety starts to rise… when summer was coming on I would start having lots of bad days and it was just the anxiety, because once we're in a schedule, once we have a routine, we're good, it's figuring out the new schedule and the time period it takes to get into it, and it's just, it's awful."*
>
> *- Interview with Eleanor Russell*

Eleanor Russell's anxiety about the start of summer is testimony to the structure and routine that schooling provides her family. She is the single mother of three boys – Martin, a second grader, Michael, a kindergartner, and Matthew, a preschooler - all of whom have behavioral problems and are seeing counselors or taking prescription medicine. There is another adult in the household, a man whom she pointedly describes as her friend, "not her boyfriend," and who occasionally watches the boys while she at work. Their apartment is crowded; a small rental with two rooms upstairs and a pull-out couch in the living, where she sleeps. On one of the days that I visited, the television was on but no one was watching and her oldest son Martin was playing video games on a desktop computer that sat on a small table squeezed into the corner of the kitchen.

During the school year, her children have a daily routine and the care and supervision of adults who are trained to teach and support them. In contrast to middle-class mothers like Julie Jacobs, who see the summer months as a break from the school year, Ms. Russell struggles to keep her children safe and occupied during the months when schools are closed. With limited economic resources, she scrambles to find scholarships and spends hours waiting in long lines to enroll her children in free or discounted community based programs.

Life has not been easy for Eleanor Russell. She tells me that after graduating from high school in the late 1980's she did "a lot of nothing, for a long, long, long time." Now in her early forties, Ms. Russell takes Wellbutrin and Risperdal because they allow her "to function and stay focused and everything." Ms. Russell works weekend shifts as a clerk in a discount store near her home. She doesn't particularly enjoy the work – she says dealing with customers can be difficult - but the weekend hours are convenient and

finding another job would be difficult: “I have been fired from so many jobs for being late… I’ve had over 27 jobs in my life, over 27, and most of them I got fired from for being late.” Her children qualify for free and reduced lunch and she receives public assistance, including coverage under the states’ subsidized health insurance program.

For Ms. Russell, raising three boys as a single mother on a tight budget is a series of challenges that she characterizes as “constant turmoil.” In our first meeting, Ms. Russell shows me a book she’s been reading: The Explosive Child by Ross Green. She tells me that her middle son, Michael, was suspended from kindergarten thirteen times, and then recounts an incident when her youngest child, the preschooler, walked out of the house:

> Matthew decided one day, and he’s never done this before, that he was going to go over to Dairy Queen all by himself and get a Smoothie… and he was brought back by the police; he was only gone for twenty minutes but I wasn’t here and I had put him upstairs with a movie, he decided he was gonna leave and he just went, and he walked, and see the police, they didn’t bring him back in a car, he was able to tell them where he lived and he walked, he walked himself.

When I ask Ms. Russell what educational goals and aspirations she has for her children, she quickly replies, “I have all sorts of hopes and dreams for my kids but I also have these astronomical fears that go along with them.” Each of her children present a unique challenge: Martin, the 2nd grader, was speech delayed and is in occupational therapy; Michael, the kindergartner, is considered to be oppositionally defiant, has explosive outbursts both at home and in school, and is on the waiting list to be tested for Attention Deficit Disorder; and Matthew, the preschooler, is speech delayed and also in occupational therapy. The two older boys have mentors through a local community service organization and go to respite care for a few days each months so that Eleanor

can, as she says, get a break. Raising her children is difficult, Ms. Russell says, because "they all need so much personal assistance." None of them, for instance, can tie their own shoes and she sometimes feels outnumbered: "There's three of 'em and just me…so it's really challenging.' As in many households, bedtime can be a source of friction between Ms. Russell and her children, who share a room. She discovered, for example, that they were turning the light on after she put them to bed: "We eventually had to take the light bulb out of the bedroom, because they wouldn't leave the light off."

Despite the challenges of being a single mother, Ms. Russell describes her children in loving terms, "Martin is very sweet and he's very smart," and devotes considerable time and energy to finding services and programs for her children, as well as tracking their appointments and driving them to and from therapy sessions and social service agencies on an almost daily basis. In addition, she goes to the public library once a week to check out books for her children, and then has her own set of appointments with medical providers and social service agencies.

Eleanor Russell has taken many parenting classes over the years. During the course of my research, she began a parenting class with her middle son, Michael. With guidance from the parenting coaches, she is encouraged to offer positive feedback by saying things like, "I like the way you're playing so gently." She adds:

> I've got to learn how to do a lot of things. I'm pretty good at them already, but…so what we do is we go into a room and it's just me and Michael. And I wear a headset and then they direct me on how to interact with him. And in the first five minutes, I have to [offer] ten praising appropriate behaviors, ten reflecting appropriate talk, and ten describing appropriate behavior. In the first five minutes, I have to get thirty things out.

Ms. Russell's older children, Martin and Michael, attend Brooks Elementary. Like the other second graders in my study who attend high poverty schools, the amount of homework assigned to Martin each week is minimal, usually just one double-sided worksheet with word problems. Getting Martin to complete his homework is difficult, but when he finally sits down and focuses, he can finish everything in five to ten minutes. In addition to his weekly homework assignments, Ms. Russell also tries to read with her children at night, but that can be challenging:

> MS. RUSSELL: I used to read to them every night before bed and then it just became too hard, because they don't listen. My kids…it's really, really hard to read to somebody that doesn't stop talking.
>
> RESEARCHER: Right. Yeah, yeah.
>
> MS. RUSSELL: You know, and it's just, like, I'm not gonna read if you guys aren't quiet.
>
> RESEARCHER: Right, right.
>
> MS. RUSSELL: I mean, there's no point in me trying to read over you. I mean, I used to read to 'em every night and then it just became horrible, because after I moved Matthew in there and all three of 'em were in there together, then they wouldn't lay down anymore.

To provide extra support and structure for Martin, his teachers put him on a monitoring program in which he asks them, and sometimes the principal, to sign a behavior checklist that gives him immediate feedback throughout the day:

> He is on these daily check-in, check-out things and as long as he's on that he does really well. He just needs that extra bit of structure so that after every period or every, you know, whatever, he knows that he's either done really well or needs to work a little bit harder.

Given the challenges she experiences in raising her children, schooling acts as a source of structure and consistency for Ms. Russell. When the school year ends, the daily structure is gone and, for Ms. Russell, recreating that structure is difficult:

> I have it rough when they are here all the time, and it's my job to make sure that they're occupied all the time, all day long so that, you know, Chernobyl doesn't happen, you know, it's, it's hard, it's rough…

Like many of the low-income mothers in my sample, Eleanor Russell lives in a neighborhood that she does not consider to be safe. She describes it as having "just all sorts of drugs and theft." There are not a lot of places for her kids to play:

> They play in the parking lot which I don't like that either but that's where, but they climb that tree out there and sometimes they'll go around the outside of the apartment and I don't like that, but you know…

In the weeks before school ends, Ms. Russell devotes substantial time and energy to finding activities and camps for her children. A local community center offered four days of free swimming lessons, so she waited in line two hours to sign up all three of her children. She also signed Martin up for the school based summer program but was discouraged by program staff from enrolling Michael, the kindergartner, because of his behavioral problems. In addition to these activities, Ms. Russell knows that the school wants her children to read during the summer months:

> They want him to read 20 minutes a day and for my kids that isn't – what's the word I'm looking for – not, the word isn't logical, that's not practical or whatever, that's not sensible for here, that will not happen here, it won't happen like that but I do get him to read every day, you know, no matter what, I mean I try to anyway, I can't say all the time but we've gotten better this year since he can read by himself and he doesn't get so frustrated.

When asked about summer bedtime, she replies, "Well, it all depends." Her goal is to stay consistent with the school year and try to get them in bed by 7:30:

> MS. RUSSELL: My kids go to bed anytime, depending upon their behavior, because all their medications roughly start wearing off at around 5:30-6:00 and then it's just hell on wheels after that.
>
> RESEARCHER: They're hyper and they're acting out?
>
> MS. RUSSELL: Fighting and arguing and destroying and whatever. It just all depends. And, of course, right when their medications wear off, that's when they wanna leave the house [to play outside]. They…you know what? If they wanted to go out and, like, do stuff during the day, I'd be okay with that. Probably. It all depends, because it's really difficult with all three of them. But they always want to go…leave the house when it's time to start winding down and get ready for bed, because the longer they go without their medications, the less you can reason with them, the less they will comply with rules and what you want them to do. And so, it just gets worse and worse and worse.

In terms of summer routine, Ms. Russell sighs and says, "No, nothing's ever at the same time every day." Although a nearby park provides free summer meals, she is reluctant to take the children:

> I don't usually take them out of the house, just because they get all squirrely when all three of 'em are together and they're hard to manage and it's just…you know, the thing of it is, every once in a while I do take them out and then what ends up happening is it turns into such a horrible, horrible event that I always tell myself, "Why do you do this to yourself? You know how this is gonna be."

Despite their tendency to fight over the computer she allows them nearly unlimited screen time:

> MS. RUSSELL: They log into their own stuff. They have…I have my part of the computer, they have their part of the computer.
>
> RESEARCHER: And is it certain times or can they sort of-
>
> MS. RUSSELL: No, I let 'em be there all day.
>
> RESEARCHER: Okay.
>
> MS. RUSSELL: I know that people are all, like, "Well, that's a lot of screen time," but you just have no idea.

> RESEARCHER: Well, everyone does it differently, you know. That's why I-
>
> MS. RUSSELL: But a lot of times…they play lots of learning games, though.
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah.
>
> MS. RUSSELL: Like, they're always thinking and, like, strategies or they play, like, cool math games and stuff.

While Eleanor Russell's situation may not be generalizable to all families, her profile highlights how little we know about the summer experiences of children with special needs and their families, particularly those who live in poverty and, thus, have limited financial resources to enroll in camps, take lessons, or pursue other recreational and enrichment activities. Indeed, researchers working in the seasonal tradition have, thus far, neglected to investigate the particular experiences of subgroups of students such as English language learners and those with disabilities. While the challenge of raising her sons during the school year is not easy, the resources available during the school year provide Ms. Russell and her family with a modicum of stability and structure. Like the other mothers of children with special needs, Ms. Russell's children did best when they had some kind of externally imposed structure, consistency, or routine; while schooling provides that for much of the year, many poor and working class families like Eleanor's, struggle to create similar structures during the summer months.

While extreme in some respects, Eleanor Russell's experience is not unique. The anxiety that she feels as the school year winds down is rooted in the combination of economic insecurity and the particular challenge of being a single parent trying to raise children with high levels of resistance and a combination of special needs. The challenge

of raising children with behavioral and emotional needs is most difficult for families living in poverty, who lack the financial resources to secure adequate help and support.

Part Two: The Activity Gap Across Seasons

Previous research has documented the class-based gap in formal activity participation during the school year (Lareau 2003; Bennett, Lutz, and Jayaram 2012) or the summer months (Chin and Phillips 2004), but none have described the gap across both seasons. In this section, I discuss the mix of formal and informal learning activities that families pursue during the school year and summer. In many ways, Nita Kamdar, a middle-class mother of two, is a textbook example of the child-rearing strategy that Lareau (2003) calls "concerted cultivation." During the school year, she and her husband push their second grade son to complete extra homework assignments and have enrolled him in taekwondo, private tutoring and a number of organized sports. By contrast, Sarah Thompson, a working-class mother of three, plans informal activities at home such as daily journaling, reading, and chores. Unlike the Kamdars, she does not believe her children are ready to play organized sports and she and her husband do not have the financial resources to enroll their children in extracurricular activities or camps. During the summer months, Sarah increases the number of chores as well as the informal learning activities that she requires her children to complete on a daily basis. While Sarah is generally satisfied with her children's summer experiences, Nita becomes increasingly concerned that she is pushing her son too hard, not allowing him "to be a kid" during the summer months. In the Kamdar family, the pace of activities and concerted cultivation during the summer months creates unexpected anxiety.

Private Tutoring, Taekwondo, and the Seasonal Ambivalence of *Too Much* Concerted Cultivation: Nita Kamdar

Towards the end of our first interview, I asked Nita Kamdar what expectations she and her husband held for their eight-year old son, Ravi. Mrs. Kamdar had already described Ravi as a kindhearted boy who was tolerant of his younger brother and helpful to classmates, including a student with limited English language skills whom Ravi had gone out of his way to help. She had also told me that she and her husband pushed Ravi to do extra homework beyond what the teacher assigned and that his schedule was packed with activities that included homework, soccer, taekwondo, private tutoring, and weekly trips to the library. Having heard such a rich description of Ravi's activities along with his parents' insistence that he complete extra homework assignments, I was taken aback when Mrs. Kamdar laughed at my question and said that Ravi had recently told her he wanted to be a caveman. "That's not a very good dream," she told him, "I'm sorry about that one."

This anecdote highlights a tension that lies at the heart of the middle-class child-rearing strategy that Lareau (2003) calls "concerted cultivation." This parenting strategy generally produces high levels of organized leisure activities, active parental engagement, frequent parent-child conversations about school and learning, a well-developed sense of self-efficacy and entitlement among children, and a pattern of interconnectedness between school and home. Parents engaged in concerted cultivation purposefully enroll their children in extracurricular activities, and are able to do so because they possess both high expectations and the financial means required to provide their children with an array of recreational and enrichment-type activities. While seasonal researchers have pointed to Lareau's work as a possible explanation for the class-based gap in summer learning

(Entwisle, Alexander and Olson, 2001), her research was conducted only during the school year and didn't address the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting. In their 2004 article challenging Lareau's construction of the concepts of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth, Chin and Phillips (2004) speculated whether "families' child-rearing philosophies change seasonally, with middle-class families engaging in more concerted cultivation during the school year and less during the summer (204)." As this profile highlights, the onset of summer vacation causes Mrs. Kamdar to question whether she and her husband are pushing Ravi too hard.

Mrs. Kamdar works part-time as an occupational therapist. She enjoys her job and appreciates the flexibility of her schedule; she typically works two Saturdays a month. Her husband has an advanced degree and works as an executive in a large health care company. She and her husband are immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and his parents live with them in a newly built single family home in an affluent neighborhood that she describes as the kind of place where "everyone watches everyone's kids."

The Kamdars devote a lot of time and energy to Ravi's activities, both informal ones practiced within the home as well as organized activities. For instance, during the course of a week in the spring of his second grade year, Ravi has taekwondo afterschool on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and goes to a private tutoring program, called Kumon, on Tuesdays and Fridays. Ravi's parents started taking him to Kumon during the summer after first grade, not because he was struggling in school but rather as a way to help him get ahead. Mrs. Kamdar explained their goal for enrolling Ravi in Kumon, which costs $110 each month:

> Kumon is a reading and math program for kids who want to excel further past their grade level and we didn't put him in math because we figured if

> we pushed too far ahead, the kid's going to get bored so we decided to do reading, and we figured reading and comprehension, you can never overlearn it.

With no formal activities scheduled on Mondays, Mrs. Kamdar typically takes Ravi and his pre-school aged brother to the library, and uses Wednesdays as the day to "try to catch up with as much homework as we can." At different times throughout the year, Ravi also plays soccer, attends golf camp, and tries to convince his parents to allow him to play football.

Mrs. Kamdar keeps a close eye on Ravi's homework and is able to describe it in detail:

> They have a reading assignment for the whole week where it's 120 minutes for the week, which pretty much comes out to 20 minutes a day… and then his IXL, which is the math program, and they also have to do spelling words and two out of the three choices - their three choices are to write it out alphabetical order all their spelling words or to do like a rainbow write where they have to write the word over and over again with different colored pencils… and then write all fifteen sentences.

Although Ravi's teacher asks her class to complete only two of the three spelling assignments, Mrs. Kamdar requires him to do all three: "I typically make him do all, even though you just have to pick two choices."

Towards the end of the school year, the Kamdars went on a three-week trip to Europe that included a wedding in London and a family vacation in Spain. Before they left, Mrs. Kamdar asked Ravi's Kumon tutors for his assignments, which she required him to complete during their trip. By the time they returned from Europe, the school year had ended and summer break had begun. Just as his parents pushed him during the school year, so too did they push Ravi during the summer months. He continued to go Kumon throughout the summer, where his tutors assigned Kumon homework six days a

week. In addition, his parents required him to practice math with an online program available through his school, to complete weekly spelling exercises, and to read every day just as he had during the school year. Mrs. Kamdar explained her attitude towards summer learning:

> I understand [that when] we were growing up summer was summer, but if the kids want to advance in school nowadays, you definitely have to keep it up. I think it is important to keep up in the summer.

In addition to these activities, Ravi also attended summer sports camps and his mother continued their school year practice of weekly trips to the public library. In many ways, the Kamdars replaced the structure of the school year with a summer structure of their own making, one that includes tutoring with daily homework assignments, weekly trips to the library, sports camps, family trips, neighborhood play, and a variety of informal, home-based activities including reading and limited screen time.

Despite the time and effort that Mrs. Kamdar devotes to Ravi's activities, she also expresses conflicting feelings about pushing him too hard during the summer months:

> Over the summer I usually get workbooks from the Learning Center and said pick three books out of the seven to do each day, like one or two pages. I don't know, I always think that he's only seven, he's still a kid, let him have fun-

Like many couples, the Kamdars sometimes disagree about the best way to raise their children. On the issue of summer learning, Mrs. Kamdar believes that her husband sometimes pushes Ravi harder than is appropriate:

> My husband is different. So if he's home with Ravi then he'll make Ravi do like seven pages in the book and three books, and I'm like no, you don't have to push that hard… So whenever we hit a section of math where it got too difficult, I just hid the books… out of sight, so my husband couldn't [find them].

Nita Kamdar is asking a version of the question: how much is too much? Like the profile of Julie Jacobs, this section focuses on the seasonal ambivalence that can accompany middle-class parents' concerted cultivation. While Julie Jacobs was determined to slow down the pace of her family's life during the summer months, Nita Kamdar and her husband continued to push their son Ravi. In the Kamdar family, concerted cultivation seems to be a year-round endeavor, with the summer months being seen as an important opportunity to continue Ravi's growth and support. Despite her determination, Nita Kamdar questions their approach. Her ambivalence is not unique. Other middle-class mothers in my sample tried to find the balance between nurturing their children with an array of formal and informal activities, and stepping back to allow their children "just to be children." While mothers strive for balance throughout the year, the summer months seems to be a time of particular introspection, perhaps because of deeply held and widely shared cultural beliefs about summer being a time of relaxation and leisure. When should children be required to participate in extracurricular activities that their parents believe will further their growth and development, and when should they be allowed to play and relax? Further research is needed to understand how families engaged in concerted cultivation during the school year make decisions about the summer months, but we can offer some preliminary observations. While school creates norms and expectations, the summer months are free of this, and thus open to wider interpretations. Moreover, longstanding cultural norms cast summer months as a time to play and relax, thus causing parents to rethink their strategies. Because it is affluent families who can afford the cost of summer camps, these questions and doubts tend to be class-based. Because of the financial resources required to enroll children in camps and

private lessons, concerted cultivation is a middle-class phenomenon. While some parents in my sample continued to practice concerted cultivation on a year-round basis, others saw the summer months as a break from that hectic pace.

Summer Chores and Journals, but No Money for Organized Sports: Sarah Thompson

> *"Well, we have always done journals [during the summer], like I told you before. I try to make them do something that is productive because they needed to do something to not forget everything during the summer. And, I also have been couponing so I have been making them help me with that, math-wise. My daughter, she is so good at math, as it is, and she has really picked that up quick. So, it is another life lesson."*

As a teenager, Sarah Thompson dropped out of high school and moved out on her own but, as she told me during our first interview, "I had no idea how to fold my own clothes." Now married with three children, Mrs. Thompson assigns chores to her children and requires them to practice reading and writing throughout the school year and summer months. She is a stay-at-home mom trying to find the time to finish her GED and while her husband works full-time for a shipping company. Their children qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.

Mrs. Thompson describes her second grade daughter, Janelle, as the family's "social butterfly." Janelle attends Stanton Elementary and has been diagnosed with ADHD. The school has developed an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for her and she receives speech therapy. Mrs. Thompson describes Janelle as a quick learner but says that she can have trouble staying in her seat:

> Janelle has a lot of trouble with focusing on her schoolwork. I don't know if it has to do with class size… I know the teacher is super busy and Janelle is a tough cookie to handle sometimes… She has ADHD so she is bouncing off the walls all the time…and she has issues keeping in her seat and staying focused.

Janelle and her older brother receive homework assignments on a weekly basis, usually a packet of between three and six pages. Mrs. Thompson has a routine: “We try to do it right after school. They come home, they do some chores and then I let them have a snack and then we usually try to do homework. It takes about an hour after school.” Although Janelle struggles in reading, her mom says she does very well in math: “Math she has down. She learns very quickly, I think numbers speak to her… it just connects.” Mrs. Thompson uses different strategies to get Janelle to read. For instance, she’ll encourage her to play teacher and then read to her younger brother.

Mrs. Thompson likes the school but is frustrated by the new homework policy:

> They were sending home just a paper that says log on to this website and do this, but Janelle doesn’t learn that way so we’ve spoken with her teacher this year and her teacher’s just been awesome about sending paper homework home for Janelle and the paper homework we usually do and then if we have time or there’s extra we will go on to the internet but they have limited, limited internet access.

Every family today has to make decisions about how to use screens. For Sarah Thompson, the dangers of the internet loom large: “I still think they’re too young to be anywhere near a computer.”

Janelle does not play sports. Although she has expressed a desire to play basketball, her mother is worried about the cost and believes that Janelle is not yet old enough to know what she really wants, and then to stick with it once she makes a decision:

> I don't want to fit them into my idea of what they should be, I want them to come into their own. You know what I mean? I want them to be able to express themselves in a safe manner but I want them to be sure about something. If that is what you really want to do, then we will go do that, but I want them to know.

Like many of the less affluent mothers in my study, Mrs. Thompson describes her neighborhood in less than ideal terms, focusing particularly on the dangers of street traffic:

> I'm one of those parents that I won't let my kids go out front… There are no speed bumps and the cars, there are a bunch of teenagers who live down the street and they have those little loud Hondas and they try to show off...too fast.

Like many of the mothers in my study, Mrs. Thompson requires her children to do chores. They have to pick up their dirty clothes and change the sheets on their beds. She explains, "I'm trying to provide life lessons, not necessarily school lessons but life lessons." During the summer months, Sarah increases the number of chores she assigns her children:

> I had to make up stuff for them to do, I'm not gonna lie, to keep them busy and out of each others' hair and kinda out of my hair at certain times. So we came up with some interesting chores for them to do, some that they weren't too pleased about like picking up the dog poo in the backyard, that one wasn't a fun one to get them to do but they did it, so, I have to give them credit for that.

In addition to chores and daily reading, Sarah also requires her children to write in a journal throughout the summer. She describes her expectation in this exchange:

> RESEARCHER: When she would write in the journal, is that like 5 or 10 minutes, is it longer?
>
> MRS. THOMPSON: It kinda depends. Sometimes it would be just a few sentences with a picture. Other times, it would be a whole page of sentences and a picture on the next one. So, it kinda depended on what we did that day, what she felt like she wanted to write down. It could range anywhere between 10 minutes to a good ½ hour to 45 minutes if she was really into it.
>
> RESEARCHER: That is sort how you set it up. Write not for an x number of minutes but write something that is important to you.

> MRS. THOMPSON: Until you are done.
>
> RESEARCHER: Okay, and is she happy to do that or is that the sort of thing you have to-
>
> MRS. THOMPSON: She wasn't into it at first but she got into it especially after we got her the diary because before it was just a notebook and it wasn't as "cool" as a diary. The diary is very special because it is very "her" and very girly.

Sarah Thompson's experience sheds light on the ways in which low-income families can act to intentionally nurture their children's summer learning even with limited financial resources and a reluctance to enroll them in formal activities. Like most of the mothers in my sample, Mrs. Thompson had been told about the problem of summer learning loss by her children's teachers and expressed concern that her children not slide backwards. Despite having never finished high school, she valued her children's education and thought creatively about ways to foster their growth during the months when school was closed. Although she and her husband were not prepared to enroll their children in organized sports, partly for financial reasons, she was able to create a number of informal learning opportunities that she supervised within her own home. While the school provided flyers about community resources and, in a generic way, encouraged parents to read to their children over the summer, it was Sarah who developed activities, bought workbooks and made learning a priority during the summer.

A major element in Lareau's (2003) conceptualization of concerted cultivation is a description of the relationship between parents and school personnel:

> "working-class and poor parents typically are deferential rather than demanding toward school personnel; they seek guidance from educators rather than giving advice to them; and they try to maintain a separation between school and home rather than foster an interconnectedness (p.198)"

By arguing that working-class and poor parents "view education as the job of educators" and, thus, "expect teachers and school staff to be the ones primarily responsible for seeing that their children learn all they should," Lareau builds her argument around the family-school relationship. The question then arises as to how we should understand parenting logics in the absence of schooling. The example of Sarah Thompson as a working-class mother who dropped out of high school yet pushes her children to engage in informal learning during the summer months provides a counter-example to Lareau's argument. During the school year, Sarah Thompson acts in ways that are consistent with Lareau's description of the process she calls accomplishment of natural growth. For example, she discourages her children from enrolling in organized activities like sports. During the summer months, however, Sarah assumes responsibility for her children's learning in ways that are more consistent with Lareau's notion of concerted cultivation. While her family's economic situation constrains, she expects her children to complete daily learning activities.

Although Sarah Thompson stands out as being assertive and organized, her approach to summer learning is not unique; nearly all the poor and working-class mothers in my sample read to their children throughout the summer and purchased workbooks to practice their skills. Indeed, as I discuss in the next chapter, most poor and working class parents were aware of summer learning loss. There is no doubt that the limited economic resources available to poor and working-class families constrain their choice of summer activities. However, while working-class mothers like Sarah Thompson may be less able and less likely to enroll their children in organized activities or sports, many still bring a thoughtful and deliberate approach to providing their children with informal summer

learning activities. Investigations of the scope and impact of these informal activities have largely been missing from the sociological literature.

Part Three: How Contextual Effects Can Sharpen Class-Based Differences When Schools are Closed

In Part Three, I expand the discussion of social class by emphasizing the ways in which contextual effects seem to take on outsized importance during the summer months when the equalizing forces of schooling are not present. Beyond the important role played by social class and the availability of financial resources, I explore the ways in which families' plans for the summer are shaped by the demands of working mothers' jobs, by the role children themselves play in facilitating or opposing their parents' plans, and by contextual effects such as neighborhoods and the degree to which extended family are available to provide support and assistance.

Sheila Cohen is a middle-class mother with a rigid work schedule and a thirty-five minute commute each way to what she describes as a "desk job" in a large, national firm. She and her husband - who works for the same employer but on a later schedule and, thus, commutes separately - have two elementary age boys, one of whom is autistic. Because Mrs. Cohen believes that her autistic son needs consistency in his daily schedule, and because her job allows only limited flexibility during the workweek, she strives to create a summer structure for her children that closely resembles their school year routine and experience. Susie Davis, by contrast, is a divorced, single mother of two with limited financial resources. She struggles to make ends meet, lives in a neighborhood that isn't particularly child-friendly, and is not able to ask members of her

extended family for help watching her children. She believes that her son, Tim, may have Asperger's syndrome or another disorder on the autism spectrum and has persistently sought to have him tested. Despite his anxieties and occasionally disruptive behavior, Tim did well in second grade and Ms. Davis spoke highly of his teachers and schooling experience. As the school year winds down, Ms. Davis tries to enroll Tim in his school's summer program but Tim and his father, who lives about two hours away and takes Tim and his younger sister every other weekend, both resist, saying that summer school is for "remedial kids." Thus, with limited financial resources, Susie Davis experiences a difficult summer of isolation and financial insecurity.

Mom's Work Schedule, Autism and the Need for Year-Round Consistency: Sheila Cohen

"They really don't get a summer break."
- Sheila Cohen

Sheila Cohen and her husband work full-time for the same insurance company they've been with for nearly twenty years. Their work hours are set and they commute about thirty-five minutes each way. Despite their busy schedules, the Cohens try to spend quality time with each child to have what they call one-on-one mommy time or daddy time. This might be as simple as a quick trip on a Tuesday night to Starbucks to get a cookie.

In order to get their boys to and from school, the Cohens have arranged to have their work schedules staggered. Mrs. Cohen works from 6 A.M. to 3 P.M. while her husband gets the boys ready for school and takes them to the bus stop. Here she describes their morning routine:

> I don't usually see the boys in the morning. They usually kind of roll out of bed between 6 and 6:30 and Dad, dad does the morning routine and gets them on the bus, so he, you know, it's, by the time they get up at 6:30, they don't have to get on the bus until 7:50 so there's a long period of time, and so he comes down there and makes breakfast, I've already got their clothes picked out for the day, so daddy gets them dressed, they're back packs already packed and ready to go, the only thing he does is make lunches.

When school ends, the boys take a bus to a nearby private school that operates an afterschool program. Assuming there are no traffic jams, she is able to pick the boys up about 3:45 and they are home by 4:00 each afternoon.

The two Cohen boys, Jon (a second grader) and Rich (a fourth grader) attend Lawndale Elementary School, which is housed in a newly constructed building that is clean and spacious, with wide hallways and large windows that allow ample natural light to shine through. The school is nestled between rolling hills of farmland and horse ranches, not far from the manicured lawns and single-family homes that mark this affluent community. On one of the days that I visited Lawndale, a pair of deer was grazing on the bushes at the far end of the parking lot.

Mrs. Cohen describes Jon, her second grader, as a child who is friendly, academically oriented and able to work independently: "I just say to him, 'Do your homework,' and he does it." During the school year, Jon's teacher assigns homework on a Friday to Friday basis so that the students have a full week to complete the packet, which typically includes two spelling activities, twenty minutes a day of reading, and twenty minutes of daily math practice with an online program called IXL. When asked about his math homework, Mrs. Cohen says: "He does two sets of ten minutes each, he, however, really enjoys math and it comes easy for him, so he usually does more."

Mrs. Cohen calls Jon a "readaholic" and says he has no problem completing his weekly assigned goal of reading for 120 minutes. Their house is new, large and spacious, with a fenced backyard and upstairs bedrooms where Jon can lose himself in a book:

> One day he just sat and read an entire book. So, it kinda' depends on the book itself. He is starting to read the Harry Potter stuff so I think….last Saturday we were actually looking for him, we didn't know where he was. He was up in bed reading. So, those books are kind of addictive.

Midway through second grade, Jon's teacher decided to test him for placement into the school's gifted and talented program. A few months later, Mrs. Cohen told me that Jon had scored in the 97th percentile in math and reading. She tries her "best to at least volunteer a couple times" each year and her husband is the communications director for the PTA - she laughs when she tells me that he is the only man on a PTA board full of mothers.

Like many middle-class children his age, Jon plays sports year-round: football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and soccer in the spring. Practices are scheduled for one or two evenings each week, so Mr. and Mrs. Cohen take turns driving him to and from his practices and games. Jon is also involved in an afterschool art program and afterschool science program – both of which take place at Lawndale, which Mrs. Cohen likes because it is one of the few activities for which she doesn't have to arrange transportation; she can pick him up directly from the school when the program is over.

Like the other Lawndale mothers I interviewed, Mrs. Cohen speaks highly of the education her boys are receiving. In particular, she is pleased with Rich's experience at Lawndale. Rich has autism, and the Cohens struggled in a previous school district to get him the support they thought he needed and was entitled to receive. She recounted with frustration the time she and her husband "went to an IEP meeting and we both left

thinking, 'Boy, we're going to have to hire an attorney." Rather than doing that, the Cohens moved. They found a house in the Lawndale catchment area and were able to enroll Rich in a school they believed would be better able to meet his needs.

Mrs. Cohen has clear rules around screen time that she maintains consistently throughout the school year and summer. In short, she allows "no tv at all" from Sunday to Thursday and then allows everyone to relax on "Friday free night," when the boys can watch a full movie and have two hours playing video games on the Wii or the iPad; she also allows them to watch an hour of cartoons on weekend mornings. During the course of our three interviews, she frequently references Rich's autism – and the difficulty he has distinguishing between pretend and reality - as the key reason for limiting screen time: "we just decided we've got to restrict everything."

As she plans for the summer, Mrs. Cohen is constrained by two factors: Rich's need for consistency and her rigid work schedule, which limits her ability to transport her children to and from activities. In my sample, the Cohen household is one of only two in which both parents work full-time jobs on a regular Monday through Friday, year-round schedule. In this way, the Cohen's work schedule is different from the nine-month work schedule of teachers or the shift work of nurses. The full-time teachers in my sample, for example, tend to see the summer months as a special time when they can be home with their children. Similarly, full-time nurses tend to work ten or twelve hour shifts, so they tend to have more flexibility in scheduling their shifts and more days off per week.

This was not the case with Sheila Cohen and her husband. Her schedule was fixed and, with the exception of some limited flexibility on Friday afternoons in the summer, she worked 8-hour days, Monday through Friday. Her work schedule shapes

many of her decisions and, she would say, limits what they can do. During the summer months, she felt particularly constrained by her inability to provide transportation for her sons: while she would like to have Jon in camps, there is no way to drive him while she is working:

> I don’t actually have any way to transport Jon to camps, um, my high, I have a high school babysitter now that does now have her drivers license and by next summer she can actually have people in the car with her, um, and so I might be able to, um, have her transport Jon, there’s also summer camps for Rich for social skills on the west side, um, and I, I didn’t have any way to transport him either.

While many families are able to ask extended family for help, the Cohens’ parents live out of state and thus are not close enough to be involved on a regular basis: “No, we're kind of here on our own.”

In addition to the constraints imposed by her work schedule, Mrs. Cohen explains that consideration for Rich’s autism shapes many of her decisions. Family rules around bedtime and screen time, for instance, are designed to minimize change or uncertainty: “I have to stay consistent with Rich. He really needs that.” Like many families, she allows her children to stay up a bit later during the summer months, but only on the weekends; here again, emphasizing that importance of routine for Rich, even during the summer months: “For him, I have to really stay on a schedule.”

Because Mr. and Mrs. Cohen work the same schedule during the summer months that they work during the school year, the summer program functions as a childcare service, but she also emphasizes the academic and recreational components:

> They will be there all day from 7:30 until I get there at 3:30. So there is some math time there, there is reading time there, they do spelling. Certain days there's also art, certain days they go to the gym, certain days they actually go outside exploring, discovery, field trip day. But, the goal is that every single day they will read.

For both boys, summer camp costs the Cohens roughly $900 for four weeks, which is significantly more expensive than $250 per month that she pays for afterschool program during the school year. She likes the summer program; the boys enjoy both the daily activities as well as the other children, some of whom are longtime friends, in the program. However, working full-time creates constraints around transportation during the day. While she would like to have him in camps, there is no way to drive him while she is working. While she is grateful that they have the resources to pay for the summer program, it is not her ideal arrangement and she sometimes laments the fact that the boys can't go to sports and camps and lessons:

> There are tons of camps and I would love to send him to some camps. There is baseball camp, soccer camp, there are a whole bunch of camps. I just don't have anyway to transport him right now.

Her frustration is also evident in these comments about the summer offerings at her local library:

> You could go in for special reading times, but what I found that was frustrating, a lot of the summer programs they have they're, like, in the day. And so, if you've got two parents working…I mean, like, that's why I can't put 'em in sports camps.

In addition to enrolling them in the summer program, Sheila requires her sons to practice their skills during the summer:

> I kind of gave them a break in June. I'm like, okay, it's summer vacation. Just nothing. If you wanna read, that's fine. But then, starting in July, twice a week I started with IXL math.

And then while they were on vacation at the beach, she asked Jon to do more than twice a week: "When we were on vacation I kind of upped the ante. It was every day. So, if you want a little bit of [free] computer time, you need to do a half hour of IXL."

As this profile highlights, social class plays an important but not exclusive role in shaping the way families navigate the transition from school year to summer. While some middle-class mothers like Julie Jacobs see the summer months as a welcome change of pace, Sheila Cohen strives to create consistency across seasons, partly because her rigid work hours limit her ability to transport her children to and from activities, and partly because the consistency is important for her son with autism. In contrast to the desire for change that defines some families' approach to the summer, this profile highlights the consistency that Sheila Cohen sought to maintain across seasons. Two factors shaped her approach: the rigidity of her work schedule and her autistic son's need for structure and day-to-day consistency. Her work schedule prevented her from transporting her children to and from camps, and her attempts to hire sitters to drive the kids were not successful.

Here too, social class and the availability of financial resources plays a role: while Susie Davis and Eleanor Russell also desired structure and consistency for their special needs children, the Cohen family's financial situation allowed them to pay for a preferred program throughout the summer. The finding that social class matters is not surprising; it is, however, useful to point out that within social class categories, mother's employment is an important element in how family's experience the summer months. In the next section, I profile Susie Davis, a single mother who, like Sheila Cohen, has a son with special needs, but who does not work and has limited options given her lack of financial resources.

Financial Insecurity, Child Resistance, and Seasonal Isolation: Susie Davis

> *And I realized last night that there's been no fun this summer. Every day is a battle and every penny is fought for and there's nothing...We've had no fun. I can't remember the last time that we had a good time, just to have a good time doing anything. And it's hard when you don't even have $3.00 to rent a movie, but you figure it out and we have and we've made the best of it. And we're very blessed.*
>
> *- Susie Davis*

Susie Davis is a single-mother whose second grade son, Tim, is a student at Garfield Elementary. They live in a small rental unit that was tidy and well-kept but in a neighborhood with few children and no playmates for Tim. My first interview with Susie Davis took place a few days before Thanksgiving. Three months into the school year Tim, was doing well; Ms. Davis liked his teacher and was proud that he was in an advanced math group and getting assigned extra homework. She was working part-time as a babysitter, caring for an infant in her home about twenty hours a week and maintained a good routine in which she read to Tim and his younger sister – a kindergartner - each night, limited their screen time, and consistently got them into bed by 8:15.

Ms. Davis is worried that Tim may have Asperger's. By the time of our second interview in mid-June, she had quit her job because she was worried about Tim and felt he needed more of her time. It was a difficult choice financially – Ms. Davis is divorced and struggles to make ends meet – but she felt it was the right decision given her son's needs. She describes Tim as being anxious, hard on himself and "easily frustrated, because he's meticulous and a perfectionist." Although they qualify for the free and reduced lunch program, Tim refuses to touch the cafeteria food, so she packs him a lunch

every day. Ms. Davis worries that he is not just a picky eater but that he has "sensory issues," meaning that he doesn't like the way certain foods feel in his mouth. She tells me that for many years he couldn't bring himself to walk barefoot on grass because of the way it felt on his feet.

Conscious of her role to both protect Tim and to introduce him to new experiences, Ms. Davis struggles to find a balance but acknowledges that it isn't easy. For example, despite having misgivings, she let him sign up for a basketball team. She later said:

> He and I knew that basketball wasn't going to be his sport but there's no telling him… within about five minutes of getting to practice, he was in the middle of the court sobbing. And I felt terrible for him because these are kids that he knows.

Despite outbursts like this one, Ms. Davis also believes that Tim is a good big brother and recalls with a smile the time his teacher pulled her aside to say that she could see Tim being so proud of his little sister. She communicates frequently with Tim's teacher and helps him with his homework, which includes daily reading and extra math homework:

> On Tuesday's there is a folder that comes home and you know there's a newsletter and all of that and in addition to parental information there's also always a homework sheet and for Tim he now gets an extra one that's an advanced level so he gets two sheets and… every night he has to read one book and take it back the next day and they get rewarded.

There are times when Ms. Davis thinks Tim could handle more homework, but then she laughs at herself and says, "but that's only because I'm excited when I see him able to do these things. That's for me - a second grader doesn't need homework every day."

Like most of the mothers I interviewed, Ms. Davis has a number of household rules and expectations. She limits her children's screen time, reads to them every night, assigns chores, and follows a fairly rigid afterschool and bedtime routine:

> They're brushing their teeth and they're tucking, tucked in at 8 and then I read to them a chapter out of, right now I think we're reading Sideways Stories from Wayside School, so I read a chapter every night, something age appropriate like Ramona Quimby or something… So we read anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes and [then] lights out.

Towards the end of the school year, Susie attended an informational event at her children's school, Garfield Elementary. Inspired by the traditional "Back to School Night," this event was designed by school staff to warn parents about the possibility of summer slippage and to provide information about a range of formal and informal educational programs and activities. The school provided on-site childcare to make it easier for parents to attend and the informational sessions were conducted in both English and Spanish. The presentations made quite an impression on Susie:

> During that [event], the teachers talked about how if you don't do anything during the summer you will slide back, your skills will…they need to be re-sharpened in the fall, and you start out behind. So that sunk in for me, that…so I was pretty adamant about stuff.

In addition to making note of the informal learning activities that she could undertake at home, Ms. Davis decided to enroll Tim in the five-week summer program that the school was offering for rising third graders:

> And I signed him up. I talked to him about it first. I signed him up and he freaked, panicked, total meltdown.

Her ex-husband, who lives about two hours away and takes the kids every other weekend, was also opposed. She later described his response:

> He didn't ask. He didn't care. He didn't even ask if it would interfere with visitation. He didn't care. It was, 'I know what summer school is… And

> that's where being divorced and having different rules at different houses hurts, because dad was saying, 'You don't need summer school. Summer school is for remedial kids.' And he didn't even know what it was.

Rather than forcing Tim to participate, Ms. Davis organized a binder with activities that she would require him to do throughout the summer:

> I said, 'If you don't do summer school, we are going to do reading, we are going to do worksheets, and you're gonna do it. Because remember when we went to the root beer night and, you know, you really don't wanna lose any of your skills and have to relearn a bunch of stuff. That would suck. Come on, dude.'

When asked at the end of the summer about the binder, Ms. Davis replied, "Every day has been a battle." Like Sheila Cohen, Susie Davis believes her son needs structure:

> I think with Tim he did a lot better with a structured school day. And I've tried to keep it semi-structured, but also loose enough for him to be okay and learn to cope with free time.

Although he has not been diagnosed with a developmental disorder like Asperger's, Ms. Davis worries that Tim's time away from formal schooling allowed him to slip backwards. Her comments here refer not to his academic skills but to what she sees as his tendency towards obsessive, or perfectionist, behavior:

> I feel…no, I feel like he slid back a little, but more…not necessarily academically. He has gone back to being really slow about doing stuff. And my goal was to teach him that you don't have to write the number down perfectly, because he gets consistent 100%, but on those speed sheets where you get as many math problems as you can done in a timed period, he's the last one. He gets just a couple done.

Throughout the summer, Ms. Davis continues many of the household rules and routines that are in place during the school year: she enforces a bedtime routine, reads to her children before they fall asleep, and limits their screen time. Nevertheless, Tim is a child who finds it difficult to play independently and often resists his mother's efforts to

engage him. Moreover, the Davis's live in a neighborhood with few playmates, which leads to a sense of isolation: "Over the summer there's nobody in our neighborhood anymore…My kids have played with nobody but me and each other for three months."

By the end of the summer, Susie Davis is overwhelmed and nearly in tears. She is exhausted and frustrated, and worries that Tim has slid backwards socially. In our final interview in late August, she tells me that she can't wait for school to begin again.

For Susie Davis and her children, the summer months were marked by isolation, financial insecurity, and little access to community or neighborhood resources. Like other poor families I interviewed, the differences between school year and summer experiences were stark. Similar to Eleanor Russell's experience, this profile highlights the challenges that low-income families face during the summer months, and the outsized importance of child capital during the summer months.

The role of mother's employment and work schedule differed from the other cases in my sample where the father had a rigid schedule. For working parents, summer challenges are around transportation. Mothers like Sheila Cohen are not able to send their children to half-day program. For a middle class mother like Sheila Cohen, the challenge is not financial, but transportation.

Like Sheila Cohen, whose older son has autism, Susie emphasizes her son's need for structure: "Tim loves a routine…. he gets a little wonky without one." Compared to their classmates without special needs, children with development or other special needs may find the relatively unstructured summer months to be difficult. Tim's mother, Susie, observes: "He's overwhelmed if you just say, 'Go play'… He'll go, 'I don't know what to do."

It is also likely that the importance of neighborhood increases during the summer months when the absence of schooling means that children have more free time, time that children in other neighborhoods used to play with each other.

Taken together, these two profiles highlight the role of child agency and the unique needs of children with developmental disabilities. Whereas Susie's son Tim tended to resist her plans, Sheila's second grader is easy: "He's very social, very social, very academic, um, like I said he loves school, loves art, loves science, um, he loves athletics, I wouldn't say he's, you know, really great at it, but I, I have him do it because it's great for team building and working together and collaborating." The concept of child capital may be more important during the summer months when children generally have both more free time and more choice as to how they spend that time.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I contrast the experiences of poor and working-class mothers with those of middle-class mothers, thus positioning the role of social class at the center of my inquiry into the seasonal dimension of parenting logics and home influence. There is little doubt that social class, particularly a family's access to financial resources, looms large in mothers' accounts of their lives across seasons. In addition, I explore the role of contextual issues such as how the needs of children with disabilities are met across seasons, the role of working mothers' schedule in constraining options for summer activities, and the increased importance of neighborhood context during the months when schools are closed. Taken together, these profiles shed light on the ways in which families navigate the transition from school year to summer, and highlight the ways in

which parenting logics and home influence change from one season to the next depending on the unique circumstances of each family. These profiles reveal that for some families, summer is a carefree time of leisure and relaxation but for others, it is a time of economic insecurity and heightened anxiety. The opportunities and constraints faced by families both shape and are shaped by parenting logics. Some families are able to create summer structures and routines that mimic the organization of their daily lives during the school year, while for other families, the summer months represent a hard break from their school year activities and schedules. The challenges seem particularly difficult for low-income families with special needs children. While these profiles offer an in-depth portrait of selected families, the analysis presented in Chapter Five provides a synthesis of findings across the families of the twenty-eight mothers with whom I conducted interviews. In Chapter Six I discuss the contextual factors that shapes family experiences across seasons. Finally, in the conclusion, Chapter Seven, I revisit the general question of seasonal variation in parenting logics and home influence.

CHAPTER FIVE:
Seasonal Shifts in Parental Attitudes and Behaviors

Overview

Whereas the previous chapter highlighted the particular experiences of selected mothers and families, this chapter presents findings across the full sample. The data in my sample suggest that parenting logics and family behavior change across seasons and that this seasonal change is shaped by social class and the availability of economic resources as well as contextual factors that I discuss in the next chapter. I begin by describing mothers' general attitudes towards their children, their schooling experiences, and the summer months. I then report my findings on the extent of seasonal variation in household routines, behaviors and expectations, namely those centered on children's participation in formal activities, bedtime, screen time and the use of electronic devices, and informal learning activities geared towards reading and mathematics. Throughout this chapter, I discuss ways in which social class, particularly access to financial resources, shapes seasonal shifts in parental attitudes and household behavior.

School-Year Attitudes and Expectations

To create a framework for understanding seasonal shifts in parental attitudes and behavior, I begin by analyzing mothers' attitudes about their children's schooling experience. Overall, mothers across schools and across social classes report being generally satisfied with their children's classroom teacher and schooling experience. When problems did arise, the mothers in my sample felt that they were able to communicate effectively with teachers and principals, often working together to find solutions. In two areas – the amount of homework assigned to second graders and the

frequency with which mothers volunteered in their child's classroom – respondents reported differences by social class, with poor children enrolled in high-poverty schools being assigned less homework than their more affluent peers and middle-class mothers spending significantly more time volunteering in their child's classroom.

To begin, the 28 mothers in my sample spoke in strong and loving terms about their children. Despite differences in personality, age, and family circumstances, mothers across schools and across social classes describe their children with terms such as smart, sweet, happy, considerate of others, and a good sibling. For instance, Mary Adams, a middle-class mother who works as a part-time accountant, described her son Scott as a "good student" and a "good friend who seems to have a lot of kids who like him." Similarly, Allie Mills, whose family receives housing assistance and qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program, described her daughter as a "big helper" who is "really caring about others." Naturally, the mothers in my sample could also be critical of their children - many wanted their children to work harder in school, follow their rules more obediently, or spend less time with screens. As I discuss in more detail below, household friction during the school year tended to center on children's resistance to parental rules and expectations around bedtime routines, while friction during the summer months often centered on children's use of electronic devices.

Asked about the expectations they hold for their second graders, middle-class mothers tended to emphasize educational attainment. Jessie Hall, a middle class mother of three, made this point in a particularly clear and forceful way:

> I'm a tiger mom, I expect my children to be at the top… I expect them to finish college, I mean they have clear-, they've known from probably ten months old, you will go to college and you will finish and then you will go

> and you will get a job and you will be a contributing member of the society. That is what they're told from a very, very young age.

While not every middle-class mother spoke in terms as direct as Mrs. Hall, they tended to emphasize the opportunities available to their children. By contrast, poor and working class mothers were more likely to pair their aspirations for their children with a description of the challenges facing them. Asked about her aspirations, Eleanor Russell answered in a way that was typical of the less affluent mothers in my sample: "I have all sorts of hopes and dreams for my kids but I also have these astronomical fears that go along with them." While Ms. Russell's language is particularly vivid – *astronomical fears* – other poor and working class mothers in my sample often made reference to constraints in their lives such as limited economic resources, less-than-ideal neighborhood settings, overcrowded programs, and long lines to register for social services. From a seasonal perspective, the anxieties produced by economic insecurity manifest themselves year-round but seemed to take on increased importance during the summer months when parents are responsible for structuring all of their children's free time. By providing a safe and nurturing environment on a daily basis, the presence of schooling mitigates, at least partially, the anxieties of economic insecurity. In other words, a "bad" neighborhood can feel worse during the periods when school is not in session because children's *exposure* to the neighborhood increases as they spend more time at home during the summer months.

With respect to their children's schooling experiences, the mothers in my sample were generally quite positive. Many communicated frequently with their child's teacher and spoke about them in complimentary terms. My data suggest equal levels of satisfaction across schools and social classes, with the exception of mothers' reaction to

homework policies at Stanton Elementary. Three of the four Stanton mothers expressed frustration with a new homework policy that replaced written homework with optional on-line assignments. One mother, Joyce Kohn, was frustrated because she did not have a computer or internet access, while a second mother, Allie Mills, said that her daughter had enjoyed being assigned written homework in first grade and had been looking forward to similar assignments in second grade. A third mother, Sarah Thompson, felt strongly that the internet was not an appropriate place for young children and she requested that the teacher send home written assignments, which the teacher did to Mrs. Thompson's satisfaction. I discuss homework differences by school in the next section, but in terms of mothers' satisfaction with their child's schooling experience, this is a rare instance of parents within a school voicing dissatisfaction on a shared concern.

With respect to mothers' high levels of satisfaction with schooling, it is worth noting again that the participants in this study were all volunteers and, in many cases, were referred to me by principals or teachers. It is, therefore, likely that my sample includes parents who hold more positive views about schooling than might exist in the parent population in general, assuming that disgruntled or less satisfied mothers would be less likely to participate in the study.

Homework Differences By School and by Social Class

While all the mothers in my sample reported that their 2nd graders received weekly homework assignments, including a requirement to read each night, the amount of written homework varied by school, with students enrolled in the four affluent schools – Lawndale, Garrett, Forest Grove, and Greening - receiving significantly more

homework than students enrolled in the high-poverty schools of Brooks, Stanton and Garfield. Consider, for example, the way Linda McCoy, a middle-class mother, describes homework assigned to her son who attends Garrett:

> He gets a packet every Monday and the packet is about 5 to 6 pages long and it usually includes a couple pages of math, usually includes a couple pages on vocab, lately it's been a page on writing, you know, where they have to work on writing the letters and rewriting sentences and then she's also started including a page where they have to draw a picture and then write three or four sentences about a topic, and then it's spelling words that he's gotta do… and then they're supposed to do 20 minutes of reading every night.

The level of homework described by Ms. McCoy's is comparable to the assignments made by teachers at Lawndale, Forest Grove and Greening. At these schools, homework typically included a few pages of math practice plus two to three short writing activities in which students practiced their spelling words, of which there were between ten and twenty. Most teachers at these affluent schools also used online reading and math programs in their classrooms and sometimes encouraged, or required, children to log-in from home and use these programs for ten to fifteen minutes a few times a week. Teachers at these schools expected their children to have home access to computers as well as the software programs they used in school; for example, teachers at Lawndale frequently incorporated technology in their homework assignments, asking students to use programs such as PowerPoint and Google Docs. In all schools, homework was assigned on a weekly basis, a schedule that mothers across social classes favored because it allowed their children the flexibility to pick and choose which nights they would work on their assignment. While the exact amount varied week-by-week, middle-class

mothers estimated that, in general, it took their second graders about ten to twenty minutes, three or four nights a week to complete their written homework.

By contrast, the children who attended high-poverty schools were assigned less written homework. The poor and working-class mothers whose children attended these schools reported that their children could often complete their weekly packet in a single sitting. Tammy Howard's son, for example, attended Garfield Elementary and she described his homework this way: "It's just one sheet. It's pretty cinchy stuff for him." Susie Davis's son also went to Garfield and, for the first few months of the school year, he could get his homework done in "4 or 5 minutes." He was eventually placed into an advanced math class and given more homework, which then took him about ten to fifteen minutes to complete over the course of a week.

One of the second grade teachers at Stanton, at which nearly 80% of students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program, situated her discussion of homework policies in the broader context of the challenges faced by families living in poverty:

> Probably one of the biggest things in our school is we ask them to get their child here every day, on time, so attendance is a big piece and we ask them to read at home with their child at least five days out of the week. That's the only homework really that I ask parents to do. In my experience, copies of packet-work for kids to do, the kids who do it, aren't usually the ones who really need to do it and the kids who really are struggling and need to do it, they're either not doing it or their parents are just filling it out for them, so, I don't waste the paper and I just ask parents to read with kids because I really do think that's the best thing that they can do.

Other teachers and principals in high-poverty schools reported similar experiences: their primary request to parents centered on ensuring daily attendance and

nightly reading, and they tended not to assign written homework because of the cost of photocopying and the low completion rate.

Expanding the Concept of the "Carry-Over Effect"

Given the challenges faced by teachers in high-poverty schools, it is perhaps not surprising that they assign less written homework. However, homework may be important from a seasonal perspective for two reasons. First, researchers have hypothesized that teachers' school-year practices may shape the rate at which their students continue to learn during the summer months (Phillips and Chin 2004; Georges 2003; Georges and Pallas 2010). We might expect, for example, that experienced teachers offering high-quality instruction that emphasized project work or analytical and reasoning skills, as opposed to drill-and-kill type worksheets, might be teaching in a way that enhances their students' capacity to retain knowledge over the summer months.

While this study did not collect data measuring students' rate of learning over the summer months, my data provides modest evidence to suggest that the concept of a spillover effect may be expanded to include the interaction between teachers' expectations for homework and parental expectations for the informal, home-based practice of skills. Put differently, all the mothers in my sample engaged in some form of informal learning activity with their children during the summer months. For some families, this meant summer reading, for others it was the use of an online math or reading program, for still others it was multiplication flash cards or store-bought workbooks. I discuss these informal summer learning activities in a subsequent section, but the relevant point here is that these activities – completed at home under the guidance

of a parent – mimic the way homework is completed during the school year. When examining these types of at-home, informal activities, a central question is whether parental expectations for this type of activity are shaped by homework policies and practices during the school year. Because parents tend to look to teachers and schools as authorities and thus are guided by their professional judgment, it is possible that parents' attitudes about their child's capacity to practice skills at home during the summer months may be shaped, at least in part, by the amount of homework the child is assigned and able to complete during the school year.

While the carry-over effect has typically referred to questions of retention – i.e., to what extent do school year practices affect children's ability to retain knowledge over the summer months? – I suggest here that parental expectations for children's informal, at-home summer learning activities, and the experiences they construct based on those expectations may be related to school year homework assignments. Furthermore, given the apparent relationship between school-level socioeconomic status and the amount of homework assigned by teachers, my proposition that parental expectations around homework may be carried-over to summer expectations for informal learning will likely have a class dimension. Put differently, the higher amounts of homework assigned to middle-class children during the school year may act to encourage their parents to engage in a comparable amount of informal learning during the summer months; conversely, a smaller amount of homework assigned, on average, to less affluent children may serve to moderate the expectations that poor and working class parents hold for the amount of informal summer learning that is appropriate for their children. It stands to reason, for example, that a mother who sees that her child is able to complete twenty minutes of

homework a night during the school year might expect a comparable amount of work to be completed during the summer months, while a parent who sees her child completing only five minutes of homework a night during the school year might not expect more during the months when school is closed. Further research is needed to investigate the relationship between school-year assignments and parental expectations for informal learning during the months when school is closed.

Social Class Differences in Parental Volunteerism

My data suggest that the level of parental volunteerism in the classroom varies by social class. Nearly half of the middle-class mothers in my sample volunteered in their child's classroom on a regular basis; however, of the eight poor and working class mothers in my sample, only one, Allie Mills, regularly volunteered:

> MRS. MILLS: I go every Wednesday into her classroom for about an hour.
>
> RESEARCHER: Oh, you do. Every Wednesday?
>
> MRS. MILLS: Yeah.
>
> RESEARCHER: What do you do in there?
>
> MRS. MILLS: It is during their reading group time. Normally, I stuff their Wednesday folders that come home and then sometimes just odd little jobs, copying for the teacher or putting together packets or exercises.
>
> RESEARCHER: Sort of whatever is needed?
>
> MRS. MILLS: Yeah. At the beginning of the year, I did like, like testing with the kids to see what level they were at in reading.
>
> RESEARCHER: Sort of like one-on-one testing?
>
> MRS. MILLS: Yeah, after that was done it is pretty much just helping, they need a lot of help.

While some of the other poor and working class mothers chaperoned field trips or served in leadership positions within their school's Parent Teacher Association, the frequency of Mrs. Mills' in-classroom volunteerism was unique. Indeed, teachers and principals from the high-poverty schools in my sample reported very low levels of parent volunteerism; perhaps one or two parents might volunteer in each classroom over the course of a full school year. This stood in contrast to much higher rates of volunteerism in the more affluent schools where, in some cases, teachers put together a list of tasks that three or four parents would volunteer to complete in the course of a single school day.

The question for this study is how to interpret class-based differences in parent volunteerism from a seasonal perspective. One might, for example, understand volunteerism to be an indication of parental interest in their child's education, an interest that would, presumably, carry over into the summer months. My data suggest that while it would be accurate to understand parental volunteerism as a manifestation of parents' support for and interest in their child's learning and that this attitude was consistent across seasons – many of the parents who volunteered during the school year also actively supported their child's learning during the summer months – it would be inaccurate to consider a *lack of volunteerism* as an indication of parental disregard for their child's education. In fact, many of the mothers who did not volunteer during the school year – both middle-class as well as poor or working class – actively promoted their children's learning during the summer months. My data suggest that parental volunteerism is not a proxy for seasonal expectations or parenting logics, but rather a function of a mother's free time, which is shaped by factors such as work schedule and the presence of younger siblings, like infants, who require more attention.

Summer Attitudes and Expectations

The data in my study suggest that mothers' attitudes about the summer months differ by social class. Overall, mothers across schools and across social classes expressed a high level of concern for the problem of summer learning loss; beyond this, however, middle class mothers were more likely than poor or working class mothers to also see summer as a time for their children to either "get ahead" or to "take a break." These notions are, of course, not mutually exclusive and, as shown in Table 5-1, middle-class mothers tended to express multiple attitudes towards the summer months. In addition, my data suggest that mothers across social classes experience anxiety when planning for their children's summers, but the source of concern tends to vary by class: poor and working-class mothers were, not surprisingly, concerned about the costs associated with summer programs while middle-class mothers felt some uncertainty about the proper balance between leisure and recreational activities and the practicing of skills.

Three factors, typically conveyed as constraints, emerged in mothers' attitudes towards the summer months: the degree to which their child complied with, or resisted, their plans for the summer; their family's financial situation and capacity to pay for programs that interested them; and, mothers' work schedules, including the hours they worked and the flexibility in their schedules to transport children to and from activities. In trying to understand the factors that shape mothers' attitudes towards the summers, I also find that

Table 5-1: Mothers' Attitudes about the Summer Months

Pseudonym	Social Class	School Level SES	Prevent Slippage	Summer as a Break
Eleanor	Poor	High Poverty	Yes	
Allie	Poor	High Poverty		Yes
Susie	Poor	High Poverty	Yes	
Tammy	Poor	High Poverty	Yes	
Elizabeth	Poor	High Poverty	Yes	
Joyce	Working	High Poverty		
Sarah	Working	High Poverty	Yes	
Nikki	Middle	High Poverty		
Jeannie	Working	Affluent		
Linda	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Holly	Middle	Affluent	Yes	Yes
Terry	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Sharon	Middle	Affluent		
Jessie	Middle	Affluent	Yes	Yes
Sally	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Sheila	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Kate	Middle	Affluent		
Maria	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Margaret	Middle	Affluent	Yes	Yes
Karen	Middle	Affluent		
Mary	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Melanie	Middle	Affluent	Yes	
Julie	Middle	Affluent		Yes
Leila	Middle	High Poverty	Yes	
Nancy	Middle	Affluent	Yes	Yes
Nadine	Middle	High Poverty		Yes
Betty	Middle	Affluent		
Patricia	Middle	Affluent		Yes

schools serve as an important source of information about summer learning loss and, in many cases, play an important role shaping mothers' attitudes and, indeed, their plans for the summer months.

Summer Slippage

Asked about their attitudes and expectations for the summer months, about two-thirds of the mothers in my sample responded by referencing the problem of summer learning loss. Elizabeth Miller, for instance, a low-income mother whose son attends Brooks Elementary, told me that she had purchased workbooks for the summer months. Asked why, she answered:

> Just trying to keep up with what he has learned. They say if you don't use it you lose it. Well, I don't know if he will lose it over the summer, you know? I'd rather be safe than sorry.

Eleanor Russell, also a poor mother with children at Brooks, said that she assumes her children fall "a little behind" each summer and Sarah Thompson, a working-class mother with children at Stanton Elementary, told me that she requires her children to practice their skills during the summer months because, "They need to do something to not forget everything."

Maria Heath, a middle-class mother of a second grader at Garrett, explained her reasons for giving her daughter summer work:

> They say the mind is like a rubber band and if you just leave a rubber band there for so many years it gets hard and cracked and then there's no elasticity anymore, and so it's so important for her to, like, keep that mind moving and stretching and…you know, stretching her as far as she can go.

As I will discuss in subsequent sections, many mothers purchased workbooks to practice skills with their children during the summer. Melanie Jackson, for instance, is a

middle-class mother who bought a workbook to help her son at Forest Grove Elementary. Her reasoning is typical:

> MRS. JACKSON: We did do a bridging book that I found at an educational store…to go from 2nd grade to 3rd grade, and it was just a page a day… there was math, there was some grammar, there was some reading.
>
> RESEARCHER: And where did you get the idea for that? Or why? I mean, I'm just wondering what-?
>
> MRS. JACKSON: Because I've heard that, over the summer, there is a lot of slippage as far as knowledge retention and…for him with his, you know, issues with concentration in class, I didn't want him to have to have that in a new class, plus need to remember the basics.

While many mothers expressed concern for the problem of summer learning loss, their attitudes were generally formed in the absence of test scores or other school-provided data about their child. Whereas parents frequently cited teacher feedback regarding their child's performance during the school year, they relied on their observations to gauge the extent of summer learning or summer slide. In general, the seven schools from which I recruited sample respondents did not measure the performance of their students over the summer months but, much like mothers, relied on informal observation. Consider, for example, how Garrett Principal Maria Myers described the problem of summer learning loss in her school:

> I think we see it in math and in reading. I know our 4th grade was struggling with double-digit subtraction when the kids got back; it was like they hadn't, they couldn't remember how to borrow… And then multiplication always sort of slips, I think.

The schools in my sample are not unusual. While many schools test students near the end of one school year and the start of the next, the difference between the two is rarely calculated or reported to parents; instead, schools use these scores to group

students for instruction during the school year and to measure their progress over the course of the school year. In my sample, Garfield Elementary was the only school in which staff calculated rates of summer learning and used this data to drive summer programming. I discuss this and other examples of the school's role in shaping parental attitudes about summer learning in the next chapter.

Summer As a Break

While all families want to enjoy their summers, some mothers tend to emphasize the idea that summer is, first and foremost, a break from schooling, a chance to stay up late, sleep in a bit later, and, in general, take it easy. The comments of Sally Newman, a middle class mother of four children ranging in ages from 8 to 16, embody this attitude: "Summers, I'm a little more like, go, have fun, be lazy, whatever it is you want to do just, you know, it's cool."

While not conclusive, my data suggests that this attitude is largely the domain of middle-class parents and, I suspect, may be a response to the hectic nature of the parenting strategy that Lareau (2003) calls *concerted cultivation*. Consider, for example, Margaret Davidson's explanation for her view of the summer months. Mrs. Davidson is a middle-class mother of two daughters, one in second grade, one in fourth grade. Having stayed home for many years when the girls were younger, she is now in her third year teaching: "I feel like we are really, really busy during the school year…" As a teacher, she does not work during the summer months and cherishes the time she can spend with her daughters, as she puts it, "letting them be kids:"

> MRS. DAVIDSON: Well, I used to be a stay-at-home mom, so this is my little reminiscing, I don't know how many more years I have left that they

> are going to want to hang out with me, and do everything with me and run to the zoo…
>
> RESEARCHER: Summer is the time when you have them?
>
> MRS. DAVIDSON: I get them and I have more time and we can do what we want to do, and we can sit down and really get into a book and we don't have to be like, "Half hour is over, you guys need to go to bed." We can read until 10:00 if we want to because the book is really good and not have to worry about it.

The critical point here is not her aspiration to enjoy the summer – it is natural that all families hope to enjoy the summer - rather, it is the notion that the summer months represent a break from the school year. Mothers who express this view tend to share two characteristics: they describe the pace of family life during the school year as hectic or chaotic, and they do not work during the summer months and thus are able to take a break with their children. In contrast to poor and working class mothers who were unable to afford the costs associated with formal activities, many middle class mothers felt that their children were participating in too many activities. As she began to plan her summer, Jessie Hall, told me "I always think, I am not going to over-schedule summer, because right now I just need a break." Similarly, Maria Heath, cut down on the number of activities: "we took her out of gymnastics this summer just because we had so much going on, and so we'll probably put her back into gymnastics or something this fall."

While poor and working class mothers in my sample experienced challenges throughout the school year, they did not describe the pace of their families' lives as hectic in the same way that middle-class mothers tended to do, probably because their children were involved in fewer formal activities. In addition, mothers who work full time

throughout the summer tended not to describe summers as a break, because, in fact, the pace of their jobs generally did not change.

Summer as a Time to Get Ahead

As seen in Table 5-1, seven mothers characterized summer as a time for their children to get ahead academically. Jeannie Deeley who immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe while in middle-school, epitomized this attitude:

> I view the summer as, yes, you will have time to play and do something different, but I'm looking ahead. So, next year what are your subjects gonna be? Are you gonna need to start reading harder? I don't look at it as a review, because I think a review, that's what they do right now, May and June. But after June, hey, you're gonna do more harder stuff, so you start…Looking at that, read harder books, do harder…start making harder math and everything. So right now, I will not give them IXL [the online math program] from 2nd grade. After June, sorry, you are trying to do 3rd grade.

Similarly, Jessie Hall, a middle-class mother whose second grade daughter is enrolled in affluent Lawndale Elementary, said, "I'm ready to move her, to push her forward to multiplication for summer." Nita Kamdar, the middle-class mother who was profiled in the previous chapter, described her attitude: "I understand [that when] we were growing up summer was summer, but if the kids want to advance in school nowadays, you definitely have to keep it up. I think it is important to keep up in the summer."

Mothers who expressed this attitude tended to either enroll their children in formal learning activities during the summer months or required their children to practice their skills at home with workbooks or online learning programs. The amount of time that mothers required their children to engage in learning activities during the summer months

varied, and some mothers allowed their children to take breaks, sometimes for weeks at a time. Betty West, for example, required her sons to practice every day in June and August but not in July when their father was on vacation.

The notion of using summers as a time to get ahead was not the exclusive domain of middle-class mothers; for example, working class mothers Sarah Thompson and Jeannie Deeley, who is quoted above, pushed their children to learn new skills during the summer months. However, their attitudes tended to be unique: no poor mothers viewed summers in this way and middle-class mothers were much more likely to enroll their children in formal summer learning activities or programs, something that neither Mrs. Thompson nor Mrs. Deeley chose to do.

In sum, my data suggest (a) that mothers across social classes tend to be aware of the problem of summer learning loss and are concerned that their children not slip backwards and (b) that many middle-class mothers also tend to view the summer months as a chance to take a break from the hectic pace of family life during the school year. Given prior evidence on rates of summer slippage amongst poor and working class children, it is somewhat surprising that poor and working class mothers express not only a general familiarity with the risk of summer learning loss, but also a concern that their children not experience such losses. How can we make sense of this apparent discrepancy? First, there can be little doubt that financial resources help to limit summer losses. This plays out in ways that are direct – less affluent children are less able to participate in expensive, enriching summer programs and activities – and in ways that are indirect, such as the aforementioned possibility that teachers in more affluent schools assign more homework which, in turn, shapes middle-class parents' expectations about

their children's capacity to engage in learning when school is closed. Second, as I discuss in subsequent sections, the *frequency* with which less affluent mothers engage their children in learning during the summer months may be comparable to what middle class mothers do, but the *intensity, duration and sophistication* of such activities may differ. It is conceivable, for example, that mothers across social classes encourage their children to read throughout the summer, but that more affluent parents push their children to read more challenging books for longer periods of time.

Formal Activities

> "And then we start, you know, driving around. Like the oldest, my oldest has tennis, my son has taekwondo, that's driving back and forth, yeah, I just start driving. I'm just a taxi driver, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, you know, she's in Girl Scouts which we did last night."
>
> - Jessie Hall, a middle class mother

> "It was T-ball, I think…or baseball that we wanted to start, but we just couldn't afford it at the time."
>
> - Tammy Howard, a poor mother

Participation in formal activities during the school year or summer months provides children with academic, athletic, cultural and recreational opportunities during out-of-school hours. Activities can be school-based, community based or offered by private entities, such as tutoring centers or private gyms, and can take place during mornings, afternoons or weekends and summers. Barriers to participation include issues of affordability, accessibility, and availability, and a class-based gap in overall participation rates is well established. Prior research has also found that less affluent children are more likely to depend on school-based programs (Bennett et al., 2012) and some researchers have hypothesized that social class differences in summer learning may

be related to differential participation rates in formal summer activities (Heyns, 1978; Alexander, Entwisle and Olson 2004; Burkam et al. 2004; Chin and Phillips, 2004). In this section, I describe the formal activity gap from a seasonal perspective. I find class differences in participation rates during both the school year and the summer, and I discuss the parenting logics that guide participation in formal activities, with an emphasis on the ways in which parental attitudes vary by season. Finally, I discuss explanatory factors that include a class-based resource differential, seasonal shifts in parental attitudes about summer activities, the role of children's resistance, and the implications of participation in school-based versus non-school based activities.

Class-Based Gap Across Seasons

Consistent with prior research, I find that participation rates in formal recreational activities during the school year and summer differ significantly by class: all of the middle-class second graders in my sample participated in at least one formal activity during the school year; by contrast, of the eight children from poor or working class families, three participated in no formal activities, four were enrolled in school-based, afterschool programs, and one pair of twins took piano lessons.

Poor and working-class mothers in my sample gave various reasons for their children's lack of participation in organized activities. For instance, Sarah Thompson, the working-class mother I profiled in Chapter Four, told me that she did not believe her daughter was ready to play sports: "She wants to play, she wants to play everything but that changes on a daily basis …and I want to wait until she is a little bit older." Like many less affluent mothers, she referenced the cost of team sports as a concern.

The ambivalence expressed by a poor mother like Sarah Thompson stands in contrast to the enthusiasm many middle-class mothers felt towards formal activities like sports. Melanie Jackson's son Joseph, for example, had played soccer, basketball, and flag football, and participated in martial arts and swimming: "I would just say we haven't found…he hasn't found a sport that he loves… so, we're just trying different things."

More affluent families do not have to worry about the cost of programs. Consider, for example, Kate Gordon's comments when asked about the cost of summer camps and programs: "I thought the camps are worth it because they're learning something and they're not sitting at home, doing nothing, so I really don't care what they cost, to be honest."

At the time of our second interview, Tammy was enrolled full-time in her last semester of community college; she was working towards her Associate's Degree. Her husband had recently begun a job as a security officer in a nearby tribal casino, but money was still tight. Although her son, Danny, wanted to play baseball, she said it was just too expensive:

> Our budget being one income right now it is difficult to get him into those things. Not that he doesn't have a desire to, he wants to. But, it is just financial for us. He wanted to do baseball but it was what $89 to sign him up and then on top of buying all his gear, so…it was just not in our financial budget to do that this time, but I am hoping by the time the next season.

By the time of our third interview, in late August, Tammy had finished her degree, found a job, and, for the first time in years, both she and her husband were both employed full-time. With their financial situation now improved, Tammy was thrilled that she'd finally be able to put Danny in some sports:

> He'll be doing something this year. I don't know what… I want to get him into T-ball and stuff like that. I think that he'll probably play every sport that comes along. He's just really ready.

During the school year, formal activities like team sports provide stimulation and enrichment for children that supplement their schooling experience. During the summer months, however, these activities can take the place of schooling as a child's primary activity outside-of-the home.

School-Based Programs Close for the Summer

All three of the high-poverty schools from which I recruited parents offered afterschool programs. These programs were popular and the principals reported that enrollment filled up quickly. Indeed, the poor and working-class mothers in my sample spoke highly of these programs, but were often constrained by enrollment limits. Elizabeth Miller, for example, had to try multiple times to enroll her son in the afterschool program at Brooks Elementary:

> He didn't get accepted that [first] time, but that time they did it Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Well, and so there was only 60 kids that got accepted, but they realized how many kids really wanted to do it and out of 650 kids they knew it would never happen, so this time they split it. They did Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday.

A seasonal approach highlights an additional constraint for parents with children enrolled in school-based programs: they tend to close during the summer months when school is closed, meaning children no longer have access to such programs. Contrast, for example, the Brooks-based program in which Mrs. Miller's son was enrolled, which ended when the school year ended, with the year-round operations of the private tutoring program in which Nita Kamdar enrolled her son, Ravi, throughout the school year and summer.

Bedtime Rules and Routines Across Seasons

Pediatricians and other children's health experts present evidence that adequate sleep is critical for children's intellectual, emotional, and physical development (Simon 2005). From a sociological perspective, bedtime rules and routines shed light on family life and behavior. In this section, I discuss seasonal differences in the way parents monitor children's bedtime. Overall, I find that parents across schools and across social classes tend to enforce fairly strict bedtime rules during the school year but adopt a much more flexible approach during the summer months, when rules are relaxed and nearly all children are allow to stay up later. Because many families include nightly reading as a part of their bedtime routine, seasonal differences in bedtime rules and routines may be linked to changes in children's reading habits.

As shown in Table 5-2, the start time for the seven schools in my sample range between 8:00 and 9:00 A.M. and children's weekday bedtimes during the school year range from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. Asked to explain their reasoning for establishing bedtime rules and routines, mothers reference a number of factors including their own work schedules, children's evening activities, the sleep patterns of younger or older siblings, and the degree to which their second graders comply, or don't comply, with requests to go to bed. For many families, the bedtime routine was a sequence of activities that including changing into pajamas, getting clothes ready for the next day, brushing teeth, saying prayers, and reading for ten to twenty minutes, sometimes alone and sometimes with a parent. Most mothers also emphasize the variation that occurs from night to night, with children getting to bed later if they have evening activities, unfinished homework, a special family activity, or a parent who is traveling or works late and, thus, upends the

schedule. Mothers also point out that getting into bed is not the same as falling asleep; some children read or watched television long after their parents had told them, "lights out." Despite these variations, mothers across my sample take a fairly consistent approach to bedtime during the school year, hoping to get their children enough sleep so they can get to school on time, be alert and ready to learn throughout the day, and, as many mothers emphasized, not too crabby in the afternoon and evening hours. Nikki Anderson's approach is typical: "We try to get him about 10 hours of sleep, that's kinda how I look at it."

During the summer months, however, bedtime rules and routines change significantly. As shown in Table 5-2, most mothers relax bedtime routines when school ends. Margaret Davidson's attitudes towards summer bedtime were typical. She is a middle-class mother who teaches part-time during the school year but has summers off. Asked about her children's bedtime routine during the summer, she said they go to bed "quite a bit later:"

> You know, I'm not really worried about that. I know that when it comes time for school that it is going to be a little harder transition, some grumpiness but I think it is well worth it. Kids are out playing in the street, they are having fun, it is cooler in the evening.

While the majority of mothers in my sample allowed their children to stay up later during the summer months, three (low-income Eleanor Russell and middle-class mothers Sheila Cohen and Maria Heath) tried hard to keep bedtime routines consistent throughout the calendar year. For example, Eleanor, a poor mother who worked part-time on the weekends, maintained a consistent bedtime of 7:30 during both seasons. As profiled in

the previous chapter, her sons – in 2nd grade, kindergarten, and pre-school – took prescription medications and she pegged their bedtime to their schedule of medication.

Summer sports and other activities sometimes cause parents to change their children's bedtime routines. Linda McCoy, for example, allowed her son to stay up later because of his evening football practice:

> Now that practices are at 5:30, it's basically we get home and I make my oldest take a shower and then we sit down and have dinner. And I've kind of adjusted bedtimes up. So it's like, he's going to bed at 9:00. Because I'm like, well, you can sleep in in the mornings now.

For some families, the structure of the mother's work schedule – namely, her need to wake up and go to work – served as the primary reason for children to be on a schedule during the summer months. As described in the profile of Sheila Cohen, mothers who work full-time on a regular Monday through Friday schedule tend to emphasize their own need to wake up early for work as a reason to get their children to sleep at a reasonable hour even when school is closed. Leila Hughes works full-time as a nurse, but on a schedule of three, twelve-hour days: "So, if I'm not getting up [because] I've got to go to work, we just all sleep in."

Table 5-2: Bedtimes by School Year and Summer

Pseudonym	Social Class	School Level SES	School Start Time	Bedtime School Year	Bedtime Summer
Eleanor	Poor	High Poverty	9:00*	7:30	7:30
Betty	Middle	Affluent	8:00	7:30	8:30
Melanie	Middle	Affluent	8:20	7:30 - 8:00	8:30-9:00
Linda	Middle	Affluent	8:50	8:00	8:30-9:00 at her house;
Sharon	Middle	Affluent	8:50	8:00	"at least an hour [later],
Sally	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:00	9:00 or 10:00
Julie	Middle	Affluent	8:20	8:00	9:30-10
Nadine	Middle	High Poverty	8:00	8:00	9:00
Susie	Poor	High Poverty	8:00	8:00 - 8:15	9:30
Karen	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:00 - 8:30	"we've had some pretty late nights"
Mary	Middle	Affluent	8:20	8:10ish	9:00-9:30
Allie	Poor	High Poverty	9:00*	8:30	"not on schedule"
Tammy	Poor	High Poverty	8:00	8:30	"whenever he passes out"
Jessie	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30	"completely off schedule" stay up til 11
Sheila	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30	9:00
Maria	Middle	Affluent	8:50	8:30	8:30; 9 on special occasions
Margaret	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30	"quite a bit later"
Leila	Middle	High Poverty	8:00	8:30	"we're staying up later for sure"
Patricia	Middle	Affluent	8:00	8:30	9:30
Sarah	Working	High Poverty	9:00*	8:30 - 8:45	9:30 or 10:00
Nancy	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30 - 8:45	9:30-10:00
Joyce	Working	High Poverty	9:00*	8:30 - 9:00	9:30 or 10:00; 11:00 dad's house
Holly	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30 - 9:00	(not available)
Terry	Middle	Affluent	8:30	8:30 - 9:00	9:00-9:30
Kate	Middle	Affluent	8:50	8:30 - 9:30	no routine
Nikki	Middle	High Poverty	9:00*	9:00	11:00ish
Elizabeth	Poor	High Poverty	9:00*	9:00 - 9:30	"really late"
Jeannie	Working	Affluent	8:30	9:30ish	11:00

During the summer months, many children were also allowed to watch movies at bedtime or have sleepovers with friends. For instance, Nancy James, who works full-time as an elementary school teacher during the school year but has summers off, describes her family's summer bedtime: "Much later. More like 9:30, sometimes 10:00 if we let them watch a movie, or like last night Grace had her first friend sleepover [and] they were up until 11:00."

Seasonal Change in Bedtimes May Lead to Changes in Reading Habits

Few readers will be surprised that children tend to stay up later during the summer months. From a sociological perspective, however, seasonal differences in bedtime rules and routines could be related to reading habits, in that children across social classes tend to read at night as part of their bedtime routine. For analytical reasons, it is important to distinguish between staying up later during the summer months – which nearly all children were allowed to do – and seasonal changes in bedtime routines, particularly, children's evening reading habits. In some families, children were allowed to stay up an extra hour or more, but parents maintained a routine that included nightly reading. Nancy James, for example, continued the school year habit of reading "every night at bedtime" throughout the summer even though they stayed up later. Similarly, Nita Kamdar, allowed her son to stay up later during the summer but continued their reading routine: "We read to him ten to twenty minutes a day, so we always kept that going, the only change was probably that we didn't push the bedtime as much." Melanie Jackson, a middle-class mother whose son has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, explains that "He doesn't really self-select during the day to read. It's usually me

prompting him to do it… he likes to read at bedtime." She allows her son to stay up about an hour later during the summer, but still tries to keep a consistent routine: “For us, it’s pretty much the same because routine helps him… structure keeps things moving a little easier.”

In contrast to those mothers who enforce reading habits across seasons - even if their children are allowed to stay up later - for some families, the summer months mean not only a later bedtime but, more generally, an almost total lack of any routine. Allie Mills, for example is a poor mother who struggles with a routine in the summer:

> We’re pretty lax with bedtime in the summer. She likes to sleep out on the couch or, both of them like to camp out in here… Yeah, so we don’t really have a good routine in the summer at all… cause we do a lot more things to, like go to the movies and the park and stuff like that so, we’re out late.

Similarly, Nikki Anderson is a middle-class mother who works part-time:

> MRS. ANDERSON: I can never get in a routine in the summer.
>
> RESEARCHER: Is that right?
>
> MRS. ANDERSON: I want to. I always have these high hopes, like he’s gonna have a reading time and, you know, he’s gonna do that summer homework or…you know, just mealtimes are gonna be more scheduled or…
>
> RESEARCHER: Right, right.
>
> MRS. ANDERSON: Bedtimes better, just…
>
> RESEARCHER: And what happens? You just sort of…?
>
> MRS. ANDERSON: He hasn’t read a single paragraph, probably (Laughing), and we just wing it.
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah, yeah. And what…bedtime is pretty flexible? Does he…?
>
> MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I let him stay up with me and I stay up until 11:00 or 12:00, so.

Sociological theory and research has given scant attention to the notion of sleep and bedtime routines as a central element of "home influence." For instance, a search for the term "bedtime" produces zero results in the journal *Sociology of Education*. By contrast, researchers investigating questions of children's health, brain development, and behavior, position patterns and frequency of sleep as a key element. Given the tradition of reading at bedtime, a change in bedtime routines may indicate a change in reading routines which, in turn, may contribute to seasonal findings on children's reading performance. In short, my findings suggest that household rules and routines around sleep are in many homes a function of schooling (i.e., when school is in session, parents across social classes tend to enforce bedtime routines, when school is out of session, parents adopt a more flexible and relaxed attitude around bedtimes) and that seasonal changes in bedtime habits can often lead to changes in nightly reading habits.

Screen Time and the Seasonal Use of Electronics

In this section, I discuss seasonal changes in mothers' expectations and rules for their children's use of electronics. Like many Americans today, the families in my sample owned a wide range of devices, including computers, smart phones, tablets, video game consoles, handheld video games, and televisions. In this discussion, I use the term "screens" in the same way that the mothers in my sample used it: as a general term to include all handheld devices, desktop computers and televisions. The vast majority of families – 27 of 28 – had home internet access, and most children used screens for both recreational and academic purposes. Household rules varied significantly – some parents restricted screen time on a daily or weekly basis, some restricted content but not usage time, and some had few, if any, restrictions. The guiding question in this study is the

extent to which household rules and expectations change across seasons. My data suggest that children's use of screen time increases during the summer months in nearly all families: those parents who restricted screen time during the school year tended to relax their rules during the summer months and children in those families with few, if any, school year limits were allowed even greater use during the summer months. Mothers also report that electronic devices are a significant source of household conflict, particularly during the summer months. I begin this section by describing the variety of devices, usages and rules around electronics and across families, and then discuss seasonal change.

Devices, Usages, and Rules Across Households

While all families in my sample owned multiple devices, household rules and habits around the use of screens varied widely, with no discernible differences by social class or family size or structure. Middle-class mothers reported a range of usage habits and rules that were similar to those reported by poor and working class mothers. For instance, parents allowed their children to use the screen for leisure time. Leila Hughes, for example, allows her daughter some "chill out time" watching the Disney channel after school: "I can just tell she needs to just zone out a little bit." Parents themselves sometimes turn to screens when they need to keep their children occupied and not misbehaving. Patricia Michaels is a middle-class mother of three children, two elementary aged sons and a daughter in middle school. Her husband works as a police officer and she works part-time, typically just one day a week, as a nurse. Here she describes how she sometimes uses television to occupy her kids when she has meetings:

> I lead a Bible study in the evenings at my house Tuesday evenings, so last night the kids were upstairs and they watched something, a Disney movie.

Another middle-class mother, Linda McCoy, who works full-time and is divorced with two elementary aged sons, uses television to give her younger son some quiet downtime:

> Maurice does his homework at the dinner table while I'm getting dinner ready, he knows he's got to do his packet and write his spelling words. My youngest one can just chill and watch some cartoons.

Similarly, Mary Adams, who works from home, will occasionally allow her children to watch extra television so that she can focus on her work. Families also used television as a social activity, as when the whole family sits together and watches a movie or sporting event. Sarah Thompson's family, for example, enjoys watching basketball games together: "Unless it's an [NBA] game and we let them, 'cause it's a family thing with us, that's our family thing so we'll let them stay up til usually 9:00."

Mothers reported differences in the time of day in which they allowed their children to watch television or play on an iPad or other screen. Some families restrict the times during which children are allowed to use screens, particularly approaching bedtime:

> MS. DAVIS: Nothing at night. No electronics at night.
>
> RESEARCHER: During the school year, is that what you mean?
>
> MS. DAVIS: During the school year. It winds 'em up. It stimulates the heck of 'em. They have a television set in their room, unplugged. We plug it in for play dates. We plug it in for when it's really, really, really hot and we just wanna lay on the floor by the fan and watch a movie. It's just a little, you know, TV/DVD player. And there's no cable, nothing, just…it's just for movies.
>
> RESEARCHER: So it sounds like when…so when school starts up, they're not doing afternoon electronics?
>
> MS. DAVIS: Right. Electronics shut down at 5:00.

Some mothers have few, if any, rules around screen time. For example, middle class mother Kate Gordon says, “I don’t have any formal rules, like you only get an hour a day or anything like that.” Other mothers, like Nikki Anderson, struggles more with content than the amount of time. She allows her son and his friends to play video games as long as they want - “we're kind of lenient with it, let them play for several hours on a Saturday or Sunday because it is not something they do for months on end, you know,” but does not allow them to play violent games.

For some families, the use of electronic devices can be an important source of learning. Two middle-class mothers found online reading programs to help their struggling second graders. Here is Margaret Davidson:

> We found some really great online tools and her teacher participated in something called Razz Kids. She really hooked into it and has an incentive. She builds this interactive room by gaining points. It is really a nice program because it reads to you, she reads it and then there is a comprehension piece at the end of every one of those. So, it just kinda builds on all those important pieces for reading and she likes it. That modeling of reading and fluency for her was such a key piece that that particular program really, really worked well for her.

Seasonal Change

Screen time increases for most families during the summer months. Joyce Kohn, for example, a working class mother, allows her daughter more screen time in the summer: “Definitely in the summer time, yeah, she always watches more TV in the summer time because she’s an only child so she’ll sit at home with her dad and just watch

TV." Margaret Davidson's attitude is typical: "Summer? It's much more lenient. My kids love their iPads."

One subgroup of mothers stands out for having a clear explanation for why screen time increases during the summer months: the mothers in my sample who worked from home tended to allow more screen time during the summer months as a way to occupy their children. Consider, for example, Nadine Thorne, who did not allow her children to watch any television during the week during the school year. That rule changed during the summer months, however, when she brought her children to work - managing the family's farm stand - and allowed each of her two children to pick out a thirty-minute show to watch each morning. She describes her children as avid, enthusiastic readers and did not believe that their reading time decreased as their screen time increased during the summer months.

Mothers across my sample found it difficult to monitor screen time, particularly during the summer months when children had more free time. Similarly, Margaret Davidson says:

> I don't have a good feel of iPad time. I know that I get frustrated with it, um, when I wanna be…gather the family and I feel like I'm…they're running off to their iPad. I just, that bothers me.

For many parents, monitoring their children's adherence to the rules can be time-consuming. Leila Hughes, for instance, tries to steer her children towards educational games and away from video games:

> So I have been transitioning myself, I guess, to being aware of, you know, I guess kind of mindless games versus…there's some really nice educational, fun games. I'm trying to enforce that. And learning how to enforce that. And make myself pay attention.

When asked whether she limits her children's use of screens, Mary Adams told me: "I limit their time. However, the monitoring of me limiting their time may vary."

Household Friction

For nearly all the mothers in my sample, rules around screen time are a source of household friction. Sally Newman's frustration is typical: "It's really a struggle because the computer age really makes my life difficult." For boys in particular, the lure of video games was problematic for many parents. Consider Linda McCoy's comments: "I fought Maurice tooth and nail [about] video games, like, knock-out, drag out fights over it." Nancy James describes her problems trying to regulate her fourth grade son's use of the iPod: "that has been our biggest parenting battle lately, because… once it's in your hands it's, like…it doesn't mean you get to be on it whenever you want to." Similarly, Mary Adams and her husband repeatedly punished their son by taking away his screen time: "we've had a lot of challenges with iPods and electronics."

Mothers report an increase in household friction around screen times during the summer months. During the school year, Sharon Meyers and her husband limited their son's screen time to thirty minutes a day, never in the mornings before school, and only after he had completed his homework. During the summer months, she said, "It's more lax in the summer for sure," but her son was still required to ask before using an iPad and he needed to monitor his own time, spending no more than thirty minutes at a stretch. Despite being allowed more screen time during the summer months, her son violated the rules on multiple occasions by not asking permission and then, when asked, not being

honest about what he had done; as punishment, his parents took away his iPad for weeks at a time.

Finally, many of the mothers in my study reported that as their children get older, they begin to express an interest in video games. Two mothers, for example, Allie Mills and Maria Heath, observed their daughters beginning to grow bored with educational games as they increasingly preferred to play recreational video games that did not have an educational purpose. In this way, the notion of "seasonal change" occurs as children age – so the difference between school year habits and summer habits may, in fact, be about children getting older, perhaps gaining more self-confidence and independence, becoming more social or influenced by friends, and new interests like video games that are recreational rather than educational. In short, seasonal change occurs simultaneously with a child getting older.

Reading Across the Seasons

During the school year, teachers across schools consistently required the second grade students in my sample to read on a nightly basis. In most classrooms, teachers asked children to read for 15 to 20 minutes five nights each week, and then fill out a reading log to be signed by their parents. Mothers reported that most of their children completed these reading assignments, although not all of them; indeed, the degree to which children enjoyed reading – as reported by their mother – was an important factor during the school year that seemed to increase in importance during the summer months, when avid readers enjoyed more time and opportunity to read, and less enthusiastic readers were free of their teachers' reading assignments. In addition to child agency, a second factor that seemed to influence children's summer reading habits was the degree

to which their bedtime routines changed significantly across seasons. As discussed previously, most children stayed up later during the summer months but some maintained a bedtime routine that included reading, albeit one that began and ended an hour or so later, while others got out of the habit of bedtime reading when school ended.

While all children were asked to read during the school year, schools had different policies for summer reading. The teachers at one high-poverty school, Garfield, sent letters home to each child's parents asking them to commit to reading on a daily basis throughout the summer; parents were asked to sign the letter and have their child bring it back to the school. Garfield also sent books home with children and opened their school library one day a week throughout the summer for all children in the school, as well as older and younger siblings. No other school required children to read during the summer months, but many encouraged children to do so. Teachers at high-poverty Brooks Elementary sent inexpensive books home with children in grades 1 and 2, and the Parent Teacher Association at Forest Grove Elementary, which was the most affluent school in my sample, operated a summer reading program in which students could select the number of books they wanted to read over the summer, and then receive a gold medal in September if they had met their goal. In the next chapter, I will discuss the school's role in summer learning in more detail, but for the purposes of this discussion, it is useful to note that most of the mothers in my sample referenced guidance from their child's school or second grade teacher to continue reading over the summer. Although sometimes vague and with little follow-up, the school's guidance – that summer reading was important – was noticed by most of the mothers in my sample.

Linda McCoy is a divorced, middle-class mother of two boys, a second grader and a preschooler. In this exchange, she describes the difference in her attitude between summer reading and school year reading:

> RESEARCHER: How does the summer compare to the school year?
>
> MRS. MCCOY: Summers are more relaxed. I don't sit there and go, "You're going to read."
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah.
>
> MRS. MCCOY: When school starts it's like, "You're going to read every night. You're gonna read for half an hour to 45 minutes a night." I'm more rigid on it.
>
> RESEARCHER: Right.
>
> MRS. MCCOY: During the school it's like I'm more rigid. It's like, the TV goes off at this time and this is our time, you know.
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah.
>
> MRS. MCCOY: I'm more strict on that stuff. Where in the summertime it's like, eh, we veg and watch…because I'm like, you've been outside…I know they've been outside playing all day and so it's, like…right before bedtime it's like, if we're watching TV, we're watching TV and…
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah, yeah.
>
> MRS. MCCOY: I don't really stress over it too much.

The seasonal shift in expectations that Ms. McCoy describes was not unique; seven of the twenty-eight mothers in my sample report having a more relaxed attitude towards reading during the summer months than during the school year. For example, Kate Gordon, a middle-class mother who works part-time as a nurse, described reading this way: "We haven't been reading as much this summer as we do during the school year." Her experience was echoed by another middle class mother, Terry Waters: "we kind of vary in the summer, but in the fall we're really more consistent."

Allie Mills's daughter reads consistently throughout the school year, 20 minutes a day, five days a week. During the summer months, however, her reading is inconsistent:

> They do this summer reading program, well all of them, and actually I do the adult one, but, um, we spend a lot more time at the library in the summer and um… yeah, they do the reading program, but usually what tends to happens is we race through the reading program and they do it really good probably til the middle of July or the end of July and then they finish and then we don't do so much reading towards the end of the summer.

Many of the children who struggled to read consistently during the summer months had completed their reading assignments during the school year. Consider, for example, the experience of Joyce Kohn's daughter Tara. Joyce, who is a divorced, working-mother, told me during the school year that her daughter was an enthusiastic reader, "Twenty minutes a day is what they are supposed to do for reading and she loves to read so it is never an issue at all." She contrasts having to encourage her in the summer with the self-motivation and positive feedback Tara gets from her teacher:

> In the summertime I have to push her more, but during school time not at all, she just loves it…. Especially because we have like reading slips. Every Wednesday her teacher gives us reading slips and so she always comes up to me, sign this, sign this, she's all excited about getting it signed.

When asked why it was harder for her daughter to read during the summer months, Nancy James, a middle-class mother of two, smiled and said, "As always, it's better when it's the teacher who's asking you to do it." In their study of child-rearing practices during the summer months, Chin and Phillips (2004) highlighted middle-class parents' capacity to overcome child resistance. Margaret Davidson's daughter struggled with her reading, but she was able to find a way to help her:

> The other thing that was, I didn't really realize it was a huge problem for her, but finding the right book and the books that would interest her. So, we did kind of a book dig, that's what I called it, and we used Amazon. So, there was one author that she really enjoyed and we typed that in to Amazon. And you know how they have "people who bought this book liked all these books…" Well, all of those books, the 25 books that came up on that strip, I got them all from the library, and we went through every single one of them and I had her put in bookmarks. Yes, no, maybe. We found 2 or 3 more authors that she really likes….so that was interesting.

While some middle-class parents like Mrs. Davidson were able to overcome child resistance, others were not. Julie Jacobs, for example, decided not to require her children to participate in the summer library program because they were just "not that into it." Poor and working class mothers also found creative ways to support children who wanted to read more. After the first few weeks of the summer, Susie Davis's son Tim had read all the books in the house so she found used books that she could afford on a limited budget, and they continued to read at bedtime throughout the summer:

> MS. DAVIS: He's been through 'em all, so we went to Goodwill and-
>
> RESEARCHER: Got some?
>
> MS. DAVIS: Got a bunch of books that are a little harder and he read most of the Wizard of Oz. And then we just sign the sheet every night and…
>
> RESEARCHER: Do they have a set number of minutes or they just want you to read?
>
> MS. DAVIS: They say 20 minutes or a full book, but you know, I think we read about an hour at least.
>
> RESEARCHER: You said he's a reader, yeah.
>
> MS. DAVIS: Tim…yeah.
>
> RESEARCHER: Okay.
>
> MS. DAVIS: And then they read before bed. We either read…I read him a story or we take turns or whatever, so…

RESEARCHER: Q. So that's in addition to…that's sort of all three of you together?

MS. DAVIS: Yeah, yeah.

RESEARCHER: At bedtime? Okay.

MS. DAVIS: Yeah.

For the mothers of struggling readers, the summer months presented a challenge. Nikki Anderson's son is not an enthusiastic reader. He struggled to complete reading during the school year - at our first meeting, he had just started, or whipped through Diary of Wimpy Kid, but then stopped. Despite her best intentions, Nikki Anderson realized at the end of the summer that her son had not spent much time reading:

RESEARCHER: Does he read during the summer?

MRS. ANDERSON: No.

RESEARCHER: Not last summer?

MRS. ANDERSON: Not a whole lot.

RESEARCHER: Yeah.

MRS. ANDERSON: It's hard, and we always talk about it, you know, with each other, me and my husband, we should be making him read and-

RESEARCHER: Right, right.

MRS. ANDERSON: We're gonna do that, you know.

RESEARCHER: It's hard making a 7 or 8 year old do anything they don't want do to.

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah, well there's so much else going on, you know.

By the end of the summer, mothers like Nikki Anderson and Linda McCoy regretted not having read more with their children:

> MS. MCCOY: The program is you can go sign up and take your kids, and it's based on age groups. For my kids' age, it's like for every 20 minutes they read you mark off a box, and when they've read…they have so many boxes marked off, you can take the form to the library and they get rewards.
>
> RESEARCHER: Are you guys doing that?
>
> MS. MCCOY: No. I wanted to. It's just, summer got away from us.

Consistent with the evidence on summer learning loss, the middle-class parents in my study tended to encourage summer reading more than poor and working class parents. It is worth noting, however, that half the poor and working class mothers described making a significant effort to read to or with their child during the summers. In the next section, I discuss mothers' attitudes towards practicing mathematics during the summer months.

Math Across the Seasons

Prior research suggests that students across the socioeconomic spectrum experience declines in math skills during the summer months (Cooper et al. 1996; McCombs et al 2011). I found that while nearly all mothers across social class encouraged their children to read during the summer months, their expectations and active support for math practice were very different during both the school year and the summer. Overall, teachers assigned less math homework than reading homework and, in some cases, it was "just a page or two," which children like Mary Adams' son Scott could complete on the bus ride home: "He usually…he will usually do some math on the bus coming home."

While most families read during the summer months, math practice tended to drop off. For example, Tammy Howard, told me that her son continues to read over the

summer but, "The only thing that probably drops off is we don't do as much math." Similarly, Joyce Kohn is a working-class mother whose daughter Tara struggled with math in first grade but has done well in second grade. When asked whether she and Tara practiced math during the summer, she deferred to school as the place where math is learned and practiced:

> Not as much math. Last year I didn't really push it too much, we did a little but not as much as what she does in school, so, um, yeah not that much.

Allie Mills' daughter Jodi attends Stanton Elementary, the school in which the 2nd grade teachers decided to assign electronic rather than written homework. She was frustrated by the new homework policy because Jodi enjoyed having homework in 1st grade and had been looking forward to being assigned more in 2nd grade. Mrs. Mills has a bachelor's degree but doesn't work outside the home; her husband dropped out of school in 8th grade and works part-time at a nearby fast food restaurant. The family qualifies for free and reduced lunch. During the school year, Mrs. Mills bought workbooks from the Dollar Tree so that Jodi could practice math at home. When the teacher suggested that Jodi was ready to begin learning her multiplication facts, ahead of the rest of her class, Mrs. Mills bought flash cards and practiced with her:

> MRS. MILLS: We bought a couple workbooks, from the Dollar Tree yeah and I think she's pretty much gone through all of them. We just started doing flashcards yesterday actually, um, her teacher suggested that, um, she could start learning multiplication tables-
>
> RESEARCHER: Aha-
>
> MRS. MILLS: Or working on the flashcards help keep her challenged, so we did that last night, but we don't really have any specific goal or that sort of thing…

Despite making an extra effort to supplement her math instruction during the school year, Mrs. Mills did not practice math with her daughter during the summer – which is not unusual: overall, parents across social classes are less likely to practice math than reading during the summer. Despite this general pattern, a number of parents did practice math and, when asked why, they frequently referenced their child's interest. Given the emphasis on developing reading skills in the early grades, it may be that children themselves play a greater role when math is practiced outside of the school. For example, Allie Mills and Kate Gordon each had daughters who asked them for math practice.

Researchers have previously argued that mathematics instruction is generally limited to formal schooling and students generally have more opportunity to learn and practice literacy outside of the school setting (McCombs et al., 2011). The data in my sample suggest this may be the case: while all children received math homework during the school year, nearly half report not doing any math over the summer, while only four report doing no reading. Indeed, when asked about summer learning loss, teachers and principals said that they have more test data for reading skills. For example, a second grade teacher at high-poverty Garfield Elementary, demurred by saying, "We have a lot more testing in reading." Similarly, the principal at the more affluent Garrett Elementary said, when asked about summer slippage in math: "You know we don't have any assessment for it. So it's harder to determine slippage in math." Literacy tends to be the instructional focus in the early grade. Here, a second grade teacher at Garfield Elementary explains:

RESEARCHER: And do they tend to have math homework?

TEACHER: Um, we don't have a lot of math homework. We have a math homework page once a week.

Even parents of young children, like these second graders, tend to be concerned about "teaching math wrong or differently than the school." Kate Gordon, for instance, made the following observation: "I'm terrible at math [laughing]. You know, I don't wanna teach it wrong." This may reflect a difference in the way mothers view *instruction* versus *practice*. Susie Davis said it was difficult because she's "explaining things that he hasn't covered yet" in school while Nita Kamdar said, "We may not be teaching him the right way, I don't know how the school has been teaching."

Some mothers push their children in math. Here Terry Waters describes her daughters use of an online math program called IXL, which was available throughout the year via the school's website:

RESEARCHER: And does she like IXL? I mean-?

MRS. WATERS: She does not. She likes the actual activity workbook versus the IXL. I kinda' have to push her more. "If you want to play outside, then we need to [practice].

While some parents encouraged, or required, their children to use the internet-based math programs made available through the school, others were unsure whether the programs were available during the summer. For instance, when asked whether the IXL program was available during the summer, Kate Gordon said, "If they are, we haven't heard about it." Nita Kamdar requires her son to practice math throughout the summer:

MRS. KAMDAR: at home but we have just been doing IXL every day.

RESEARCHER: Every day? Again, is that something the school assigned or is that just something-

MRS. KAMDAR: We are just doing it. IXL is a program that the school has given us access to but nobody, I mean there is access throughout the

> year. So, we figure if he hasn't finished 2nd grade math yet, that means we need to finish it. So our goal is to finish all of 2nd grade math before he starts 3rd grade.
>
> RESEARCHER: And is that 15 minutes a night or-
>
> MRS. KAMDAR: Sometimes it could be, he is not the type who is self motivating, he gets like lazy, "I don't want to do it, its too hard, I quit." So, I have to sit with him. Yesterday, we did 2 and it took him 56 minutes to do 44 problems. He makes silly mistakes, he didn't add properly, or.
>
> RESEARCHER: So this is you two at home on the computer?
>
> MRS. KAMDAR: Yes.

Beginning in mid August, Sally Newman's son practiced math on the computer for ten minutes every day because his teacher emailed the class over the summer and encouraged them all to do so. Mrs. Newman was surprised that her son did it, and did it consistently, but she figured he was eager to impress his teacher.

Some mothers tried to incorporate informal math practice into daily activities. Sarah Thompson, for example, asked her daughter to help her calculate savings when she used coupons at the grocery store. Margaret Davidson, who works as a math specialist in an elementary school, also tried to incorporate math in informal ways over the summer:

> RESEARCHER: You are a math specialist, do you guys do math over the summer?
>
> MRS. DAVIDSON: I try to teach them games. We won't ever sit down and do worksheets or things, but the more things that develop number sense and like addition work, throw down 2 cards, add them together and then who tops it to take them instead of just comparing number to number. We can do it with any operation. Just like things with their mind. Not a whole lot though. I am so focused with her with reading that, math seems to come really intuitively for her, as much as she struggles in math.

Finally, some mothers, like Leila Hughes, encourage their children to read during the summer months but specifically avoid practicing math:

> Math she seems to like and seems to be where she's supposed to be at, so there was an additional math program that she could do along with it, but I don't…I mean, I know this is a lot for her and I don't wanna burn her out with… Something that I know she's doing it at least grade level.

In short, my data suggest that while parents across schools and across social classes are likely to encourage their children to read during the summer months, fewer tend to practice math on a regular basis. However, when parents did practice math during summer, they often cited their own child's interest as the reason for practicing. Although some parents purchased math workbooks at places like Costco or The Dollar Tree, children at more affluent schools also tended to have summer access to online math programs like IXL through a year-round subscription purchase en masse by their school or school district. Finally, it is useful to note that the principals and teachers in the seven schools from which I recruited parents tended to place greater emphasis on developing literacy skills than math skills; in addition to consistently assigning more homework in reading and language arts, they also, importantly, spoke more frequently and more clearly about the importance of summer reading, with much less said about summer math.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described patterns of family behavior and parenting logics during both the school year and the summer months, and discussed how these patterns changed across seasons or seemed to be influenced by class. Overall, I found that mothers were generally aware of the problem of summer learning loss and concerned that their children not slip backwards academically. I also found that a significant number of middle-class

mothers – but not poor or working class mothers - viewed the summer months as a chance for their families to take a break from the hectic pace of daily life during the school year; however, mothers who worked full time throughout the calendar year were less likely to hold this attitude than their counterparts who had the summers off. I suggested the possibility of a "carry-over effect" in which the level of homework assigned during the school year may influence parental expectations around informal learning activities during the summer months and, furthermore, emphasized the likelihood that such an effect would be linked to social class status given the higher levels of homework assigned in middle class schools. I found that the class-based gap in children's participation in formal activities widens during the summer months, partly because the school-based programs that serve less affluent children tend to close when school ends while affluent parents enroll their children in fee-based, private summer camps. I found that virtually all parents relax bedtime rules during the summer months and, for some children, the chance to stay up later during the summer means a disruption in their reading routines since many tend to read– either independently or with their parents – at bedtime. I also found that many children are allowed more recreational screen time during the summer months, and that parents across social classes find the summer months to be a particularly difficult to monitor and limit their children's screen time. In short, the data presented in this chapter suggest that parenting logics and family behavior change across seasons and that the availability of economic resources plays an important – albeit not exclusive role - in shaping seasonal change.

In the next chapter, I discuss factors that seem to shape parental attitudes and behavior across seasons, including contextual issues within the home and neighborhood.

CHAPTER SIX:
Seasonal Variation in Neighborhood Context and Sub-Group Experiences

Overview

Underlying this investigation is my contention that a distinction be made between the *presence* of home influences throughout the calendar year and the assumption that home influences are *constant* throughout the year. I have argued that while home influence is certainly present throughout the year, particularly in contrast to the temporal nature of the nine-month school year, it does not necessarily follow that home influence acts in a constant or continuous way throughout the year. In this section, I present evidence of seasonal variation in the relative importance of certain contextual factors and family characteristics. Researchers such as Downey and his colleagues (2008) have previously raised the possibility of non-school effects being larger during the summer months for the obvious reason that children spend more time in their non-school environments when school is closed; this is, in effect, an argument about exposure: as children experience greater quantities of X during the summer months, the relative importance of X increases as compared to the school year. As I discuss below, the data in my study suggest that the neighborhood context takes on increased importance during the summer months. I also find that two subgroups of children, those with disabilities and those living in dual custody arrangements, tend to experience summers as a uniquely challenging period.

Neighborhood Context

Prior research has demonstrated both the importance of neighborhood effects on family life and children's development as well as the advantage that financial resources provide in enabling affluent families to live in neighborhoods that are safer and more child-friendly (Sharkey and Faber, 2014; Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Kotchick and Forehand, 2002). A seasonal perspective suggests that the relative importance of neighborhoods may be greater during the summer months when children have more unstructured free time and, hence, engage more with the social and physical structures of the neighborhood. The mothers in my study identified three issues that shaped their children's neighborhood experiences: traffic patterns and safety, crime and personal safety, and the degree to which peers were available to play with their children. The target children in my study were young – second graders at the start of the study – and thus still under the watchful eyes of their parents; few were allowed to venture too far from home, but for middle-class families the summer months tended to include more independent, outside play during which time new boundaries were set, and pushed. In contrast, poor and working class mothers often cited safety concerns or the lack of playmates in explaining their summertime rules limiting children's engagement with and exploration of the neighborhood.

Affluent families can afford to live in newer developments that have been planned with children in mind. Sidewalks, playgrounds, green spaces, traffic patterns that include cul-de-sacs and low speed limits are some of the neighborhood features that more affluent mothers in my sample describe as positive. Middle-class mothers like Melanie

Jackson describe living on a dead-end street that allows her to feel comfortable letting her son "actually just go and play:"

> MRS. JACKSON: He's got a few buddies in the street. So they can ride bikes outside fairly safely, go to each other's houses, or go…you know, in back yards. Our rule is just let us know where you are and don't go out of-, because there are some trails that can lead out of the neighborhood and they're not allowed to go without letting us know or without parents.
>
> RESEARCHER: And does he sort of check back in at the next mealtime or does he have a-?
>
> MRS. JACKSON: You know, if we need him back, we have to put a-, he has a watch that has an alarm, so we'll say, "You need to be home by…" or "You can go play for an hour and then come home." …So there are days he's, you know, out for several hours. Usually mealtimes he'll come home. (Laughing)

Other middle-class mothers in my sample describe summertime in their neighborhoods in similar ways. Terry Waters, for example, who lived in a single-family home in a newly constructed subdivision, explained her family's preferred summertime activity: "Just riding bikes or scooters… we try to stay out as much as possible when it is nice." Similarly, Margaret Davidson, a middle-class mother, said, "They're welcome on the sidewalk, you know, running back and forth playing with their friends."

In safer neighborhoods, middle-class parents feel comfortable giving their children more independence. Mothers like Nita Kamdar described her neighborhood as one full of children and adults, many of whom spend time outside: "Everyone watches everyone's kids," which is the classic example of social capital used by Coleman (1988). During the summer months, middle-class mothers like Nancy James allow their children to venture a little further from home:

> I just the other day tried it, where they went for a bike ride together, made the loop around the whole block and on the busier road as long as they stayed on the sidewalk and they decided they would take their own route

> but my husband saw them because he was coming home from work and they were carefully crossing the busy road, so that was good.

By contrast, poor and working-class mothers were more likely to describe their neighborhoods as a source of concern, with crime and unsafe traffic patterns. Working-class mother Joyce Kohn, for example, answered a question about her neighborhood by saying, “I wouldn’t let her play outside because this area is not that great.” She continued:

> MS. KOHN: There have been a few shootings around here lately...
>
> RESEARCHER: Is that right?
>
> MS. KOHN: Yeah, and I'm not going to have that happen to my daughter so she will be in the back.

Two poor fathers who sat in on interviews voiced similar concerns. Allie Mills’ husband told me, “I don’t like her to walk anywhere alone; bad neighborhood… it’s getting worse and worse.” Similarly, Tammy Howard’s husband described living on the corner of two heavily trafficked streets:

> MR. HOWARD: We live on a street that’s pretty heavily traveled.
>
> RESEARCHER: Yeah.
>
> MR. HOWARD: And a lot of people don’t obey the…
>
> RESEARCHER: Right, right.
>
> MR. HOWARD: We’ve had some incidents with pets and stuff like that.

For Susie Davis’ son, the end of the school year brought a sense of isolation, partly because he had no peers or playmates in his neighborhood. Schooling provided him with a peer group and playmates. Like many children living in poverty, he did not

participate in formal activities and without extended family in the area, the neighborhood would have been his only source of friends:

> MS. DAVIS: And over the summer there's nobody in our neighborhood anymore.
>
> RESEARCHER: Is that right?
>
> MS. DAVIS: My kids have played with nobody but me and each other for three months.

The experiences of these families is consistent with prior research that highlights the safety concerns and constraints on neighborhood exploration faced by many low-income families (Rhodes and DeLuca, 2014). The data in my study suggest that the differences between good and bad - or safe and unsafe - neighborhoods may matter more during the summer months when schools are closed, the weather is warm and children want to spend more time outside. Given the relationship between financial resources and neighborhoods that are newer, safer, and more child friendly, it is likely that the neighborhood context is closely linked to social class. In this way, I think the longstanding assumption that neighborhood effects are constant throughout the year is based on a false premise.

The Seasonal Experiences of Children with Disabilities

One gap in the literature on seasonal comparisons concerns the summer experiences of children with intellectual, developmental and behavioral disabilities. While evidence suggests that these children may learn at different rates and in different ways than their classmates without disabilities, little is known from a seasonal perspective about how they and their parents navigate the months away from schooling,

and little is known about the extent to which children with disabilities experience summer learning loss at rates greater than their classmates without disabilities.

In this study, I use the term "disability" as a general, non-clinical descriptor in much the same way that parents, or other non-specialists, might use the term. I did not have access to confidential school or medical records and thus rely solely on parents' accounts of their children's disability. Despite these limitations, this analysis is an important first step in identifying the particular challenges faced by children with disabilities as they and their families transition in and out of periods of schooling. Indeed, this is a line of inquiry that deserves further attention.

In my sample of twenty-eight mothers, seven identified their children as having a disability of one form or another. In five of the seven cases, the disability was diagnosed by a school official or outside expert. In the other two cases, the child's mother expressed concern that her child may have a disability and was in the process of seeking testing and expert advice. In six of the seven cases, it was the target child - a second grader – who had the disability; in one family, it was the target child's older brother, a fourth grader. Prior research shows that low-income children are more likely to be labeled special education students, and this held in my sample: of the 8 poor and working-class mothers in my study, four had children with disabilities; of the 21 middle-class mothers in my study, three had children with disabilities.

Elizabeth Miller's son James has a rare genetic disorder that prevents his body from processing protein. His diet is severely restricted, with food specially prepared and available through state subsidized health insurance and through a children's health center

at a nearby university. His disorder can lead to intellectual disabilities and his mother noticed his inability to focus and sit still:

> He hasn't been diagnosed with ADHD, but he is ADHD. And like, he'll…she said he'll be standing up, like, at his desk or whatever, and he'll, like, try to get out of his chair…"

Although Mrs. Miller buys him books and tries to read with him over the summer, she feels that she is not able to get him to sit still and focus. Similarly, Sarah Thompson's daughter has been diagnosed with ADHD and the school has provided an IEP for her: "She is bouncing off the walls all the time…. she has issues keeping in her seat and staying focused." In contrast to less affluent mothers like Elizabeth Miller and Sarah Thompson, Sheila Cohen and her husband have the financial means to provide structure and consistency for their autistic son throughout the school year and summer. In the next section, I'll describe how the end of the school year means seasonal differences in resources that affect family practices, particularly in less affluent homes.

School Year "Extras" – Not Available During the Summer Months

Overall, mothers across schools and social classes are satisfied with the schooling experiences of their children with disabilities. Many of these children receive additional services and support at school during the school year. These include a range of services, including social, behavioral, and instructional. For instance, Susie's son participated in a yoga program and extra math lessons: "Yoga Calm every Wednesday, which helps with social skills and, helping them kind of relax and relieve anxiety." Elizabeth Miller describes the school's effort to accommodate James' restricted diet, as being "awesome." Eleanor Russell's son, Martin, has a daily check-in and check-out with the principal or

counselor and participated in a "boot camp" during the middle of the day. Margaret Davidson's daughter Reese is reading below grade level. Mrs. Davidson, a certified teacher, believes Reese has an auditory processing problem:

> Her teacher is amazing and [she] made really great gains in reading this year…It was a combination of her teacher and I, and it was teamwork, it took the village.

Although many districts offer summer programs for students with learning disabilities, none of the children in my study participated in district-sponsored summer programs. Such programs are typically small, and participation is limited to those children for whom IEPs have been developed. When asked about such programs, teachers tended to be uncertain about eligibility requirements and, in general, not very familiar with offerings. For instance, when asked about eligibility requirements, Mrs. Boland, a second grade teacher at Lawndale, replied, "Oooh, I should know this… um, I'm not totally positive." Similarly, her colleague, Ms. Cowers, told me that she rarely has students participate in the district's summer program for children with disabilities. Although drawn from a small sample, evidence from a seasonal perspective suggests that schools in this study provide *additional* supports for children with disabilities during the school year, but provide little or no support during the summer months.

For many mothers, raising a child with disabilities required additional time and expense, and could be a strain. Given the role that schools play in providing for children' development, the months without school may be a period of difficulties for families of children with disabilities. For example, in my sample, the mothers of children with disabilities were more likely to emphasize the importance of structure for their children. Consider the way Susie Davis organized learning activities for her son Tim after he

refused to participate in his school's summer program: "It's all set up, we have a summer binder." Then she adds, "If I don't keep things routine and organized… Tim loves a routine…. And he gets a little wonky without one." Melanie Jackson's son was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and she took him to weekly sessions for a full year.

The data in my study suggest that for many families having a child with special needs at home during the summer months is different than having the same child at home during the course of the school year. The experience is substantively different in two important ways. First, the services provided during the school year act to nurture, develop, and support the child. These services are important for many reasons, most importantly the child's cognitive, behavioral, and emotional development. The absence of school services can leave a void that parents may find difficult to fill. Consider, for example, the value that Susie Davis and Eleanor Russell, both poor mothers with children who had special needs, placed on the special activities provided to their children during the school year. Susie's son, Tim, participated in a "Yoga Calm" class that helped him calm down, relax, and control his anxiety. Eleanor's son Martin, also a second grader, went to a mid-day, boot-camp type physical fitness session that allowed him to burn energy. These are examples of schooling at its best; principals and teachers created these programs to meet the unique needs of a select group of students, with the support and approval of parents who believed these interventions were beneficial to their children. During the summer months these school-based interventions were not in operation and both Ms. Davis and Ms. Russell reported difficulties in their child's behavior, with Ms. Davis expressing concern that her son "slipped backwards" during the summer months in terms of his social skills and behavior. I am not making a case for the efficacy of these

specific interventions, Yoga Calm and mid-day boot camp, but rather using them as examples of the types of services that parents believe have a positive impact during the school year but are not available during the summer months.

Family Structure and The Seasonal Experience of Shared Custody

My data suggest that the summer months can be a time when the shared custody arrangements for the children of divorced parents tend to operate on a different schedule. For three families in my sample, the structure and routine of compulsory schooling limited the amount of time that children moved between their divorced parents' residences; during the summer months, however, children tended to spend more time shuttling between parents which – at least from the point of view of the mothers I interviewed – tended to be problematic.

Linda McCoy is a middle-class mother of two boys who attended Garrett Elementary. She and her ex-husband, who lives in the same town, abide by their divorce agreement that mandates that the children stay at his house one night each week during the school year and two weeks each summer. After two weeks at their father's house, Ms. McCoy said that it takes a week to get her boys back onto the schedule and routine that she maintains her house:

> I hate my summers. I hate them. My summers are complicated. We split, me and their dad, split the summers. We do a two week on, two week off type of thing… we maintain totally opposite routines… they'd go to their dad's, no schedule, no set bedtimes, no set dinners, no routine whatsoever, just whatever… it takes me over a week to get them back on the schedule after I haven't had them for two weeks… I hate the two weeks on, two weeks off, and it just, by the end of the summer I'm just like ok, are we done yet?

Joyce Kohn is a divorced, working-class mother raising one daughter who attends Stanton Elementary. Like Linda McCoy's children, her daughter spends more time with her ex-husband during the summer months when school is not in session, and she finds the change in routine difficult:

> RESEARCHER: Tell me about her bedtime and wakeup time. Is it the same as during the school year or different?
>
> MS. KOHN: She stayed up a little bit later during the summertime which I haven't really liked too much but it was mainly like, she would come home from her dad's house and she would be really cranky the next day so I tried to get her to bed early on my nights and then she wouldn't want to do it because she got to stay up late at dad's and so...
>
> RESEARCHER: Different rules, different houses?
>
> MS. KOHN: Yeah, big conflict. I mean she doesn't go to bed too late, like 9:30 or 10:00 is usually when she would go to bed.
>
> RESEARCHER: At your house?
>
> MS. KOHN: Yeah.
>
> RESEARCHER: What do you think she was doing at his house?
>
> MS. KOHN: 11 or 11:30.
>
> RESEARCHER: Is that right?
>
> MS. KOHN: Yeah. I'm just like "aaaack, no."

Finally, Susie Davis is a divorced, single mother of two children, a 2nd grade boy and a daughter in kindergarten. Her ex-husband, the children's father, lives about two hours away. Every other weekend, Ms. Davis and her ex-husband meet in a parking lot in a small town about halfway between their two homes and the children move from one car to the other. Asked about her children's transition back to her house after a weekend with their father, she said: "It was Wednesday before anybody would sleep alone and go to

bed on time… oh, it was awful." In addition to disrupted sleep routines, Ms. Davis was concerned that the children do not use the summer workbooks that she bought when they are at their father's house:

> MS. DAVIS: And I always had talented/gifted workbooks and worksheets, those little books, you know, you can buy with mazes and crosswords and…so I said, "Alright, here you go. Let's do some of these." And we made it fun, as fun as we could. And there are rewards and stuff like that.
>
> RESEARCHER: Right. And have you been doing that consistently or does it…sort of five days a week, seven days a week…?
>
> MS. DAVIS: Yeah, every day except for when they're at their dad's.

Of course, some divorced couples agree on child-rearing strategies. Maria Heath and her ex-husband had both remarried and she reported that the two couples shared many values and found it easy to parent together. From a seasonal perspective, however, it is interesting to note that for this subgroup of families – divorced parents who share custody – the absence of compulsory, daily schooling means that the arrangements for children's scheduled time with each parent may change, sometimes significantly. For the children in my sample, spending time with the non-custody parent, the father in these cases, tended to disrupt the mothers' household routines around reading time, screen time, and bedtime. It is not yet clear how this affects children's cognitive development, but it is likely that it suggests that there may be a seasonal dimension to family structure effects on children's learning and development.

Conclusion

In Chapter Four, I profiled six families to highlight the ways in which social class shapes seasonal shifts in parental attitudes and behaviors. In Chapter Five, I presented

evidence of seasonal change in household routines and parenting logics across my sample. I discussed, for example, how children tend to stay up later when school is closed and how this may affect their reading routines. This chapter builds on those findings by presenting evidence that the relative importance of the neighborhood context may increase during the summer months. I also discussed my findings that particular subgroups of children, namely those with disabilities and those living in dual-custody arrangements, may experience the summer months as a more difficult period than the school year. In the next chapter, I summarize my findings in detail and discuss the implications, as well as the limitations, of this study.

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION

Summary

In the decades since the 1978 publication of Barbara's Heyns' seminal book, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling*, researchers have used seasonal comparisons to examine the effects of schooling and to investigate the problem of summer learning loss. The logic underlying Heyns' novel approach is persuasive - by holding constant the effects of one set of variables, the non-school factors, while permitting the other set of variables, the school factors, to change, researchers can contrast the relative importance of the two, thus providing a precise estimate of the effects of schooling. There is, however, no empirical evidence to support the assumption that non-school factors, such as parenting logics and home influence, exert themselves in a constant and continuous way throughout the calendar year.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine that assumption by investigating the possibility of class-based, seasonal variation in home influence. In particular, I explored how mothers' attitudes, household rules, and children's activities, both formal and informal, shifted across seasons. I also examined the factors that seemed to influence seasonal change in parenting logics, including child and family characteristics, the neighborhood context, and the role of social class.

In general, I find evidence that home influence does change across seasons, and that the availability of economic resources plays an important role in shaping seasonal change. Specifically, my data suggest that mothers' attitudes and expectations vary by season, as do household rules around bedtime and screen time. I find that social class shapes parental attitudes and expectations and, additionally, that the neighborhood

context seems to take on outsize importance during the summer months. Finally, I find that two sub-groups – children with disabilities and dual-custody families – seem to experience greater seasonal variation than the general population. I discuss specific findings and their implications for sociological theory and research in the next section.

Implications

To begin, my evidence suggests that social class plays an important role in shaping mothers' attitudes about the summer months. For some affluent families engaged in concerted cultivation, the summer months offer the chance for a break. Without the demands of daily schooling, middle-class parents can allow their children to stay up later, sleep in, enjoy more screen time and still have time for both organized sports and unstructured free time. However, while the notion of summer as a break from the chaos is appealing for many families, it is not universal. It seems to require safe neighborhoods for kids to play outside, parents with both the financial resources to pay for activities, as well as the time and flexibility to take kids to and from activities.

During the school year, parents and children structure much of their daily lives around the institutional norms and routines that constitute schooling. For most families, daily routines revolve around the task of getting children to and from school on time and then, in the afternoon and evening hours, ensuring they are safe and supervised. To varying degrees, parents also enforce bedtime routines, monitor homework and shuttle children to and from extracurricular activities. The summer months, by contrast, are generally free from both the demands and the routine of compulsory schooling and, thus, require parents to structure all of their children's time. For some families, summer

presents itself as an opportunity to implement new schedules or pursue interests and activities that they can't do during the school year. For other families, constraints around limited financial resources, parental work schedules, or children's needs mean that the summer is a time of anxiety and strain. As families juggle their particular goals and needs, some habits and routines remain consistent, while others change in ways that can be intentional or unexpected.

The Role of Social Class Across Seasons

Throughout this dissertation, I contrast the experiences of poor and working-class mothers with those of middle-class mothers, thus positioning the role of social class at the center of my inquiry into the seasonal dimension of parenting logics and home influence. There is little doubt that social class, particularly a family's access to financial resources, looms large in mothers' accounts of their lives across seasons. Some families are able to create summer structures and routines that mimic the organization of their daily lives during the school year, while for other families, the summer months represent a hard break from their school year activities and schedules. The challenges seem particularly difficult for low-income families with special needs children.

Mechanisms that Facilitate Summer Learning Loss

I identified four mechanisms that may facilitate summer learning loss. First, I found evidence of a "carry-over" effect in which school-year policies on homework influence how parents approach informal learning activities during the summer months, and how school-year emphasis on homework is related to school-average SES. Second,

my data suggest that the summer months can be a particularly difficult time for children with disabilities and their families, particularly those living in poverty. The profiles of Eleanor Russell, Sheila Cohen, and Susie Davis – each of whom has a child, or children, with special needs – demonstrate the particular vulnerability of children with special needs during the summer months. Third, I found that the summer months can be a link between socioeconomic status and dual-custody, and during the summer children spend more time with the non-custody parent, who is more likely to disrupt school-year routines. Fourth, I find that parents across social classes relax bedtime rules and allow more screen time during the summer months. Changing summer bedtimes may change summer reading habits, and if bedtime changes are linked to SES, then a facilitating mechanism for summer learning loss.

Seasonal Variation in Concerted Cultivation

I examined the possibility of seasonal variation in the middle-class child-rearing strategy that Lareau (2003) calls "concerted cultivation." This parenting strategy generally produces high levels of organized leisure activities, active parental engagement, frequent parent-child conversations about school and learning, a well-developed sense of self-efficacy and entitlement among children, and a pattern of interconnectedness between school and home. Parents engaged in concerted cultivation purposefully enroll their children in extracurricular activities, and are able to do so because they possess both high expectations and the financial means required to provide their children with an array of recreational and enrichment-type activities.

Although seasonal researchers have pointed to Lareau's work as a possible explanation for the class-based gap in summer learning (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson,

2001), her research was conducted only during the school year and didn't address the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting. In their 2004 article challenging Lareau's construction of the concepts of concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth, Chin and Phillips (2004) speculated whether "families' child-rearing philosophies change seasonally, with middle-class families engaging in more concerted cultivation during the school year and less during the summer (204)." As one middle-class mother put it, "In summer, I think it's so important to give the kids a rest and a break from an academic and rigorous life, and maybe even get bored."

Home Influence: Present But Not Constant

My evidence suggests that home influence is not constant throughout the year. By conceptualizing home influence as present yet not necessarily constant, I allow for the possibility of seasonal variation in parenting logics and influence. This distinction has implications for the methodology employed by seasonal comparisons, for our understanding of home influence and parental role in their children's learning, and for explanations regarding how and why summer learning loss occurs.

The schooling effects studies are premised on schooling being temporal or episodic, while home influence is considered to be constant: "Since children are simultaneously exposed to both school and home environments for most of the time they receive education, the relative importance of the two environments can be contrasted only by holding constant the effects of one, while permitting the other to change" Heyns (1978). The logic of this approach allows the investigator to disentangle the effects of schooling from the effects of home influence. My data suggest that this premise is not

supported by the evidence; indeed, I argue, that home influence changes across seasons. If this contention is supported by future research, then our understanding of the effects of schooling must be reexamined. Put differently, seasonal comparisons that have employed home influence as a constant against which to measure the temporal effects of schooling have likely produced mis-estimations of the role that schools play in promoting cognitive development. In short, my findings suggest the need for a more precise estimate of seasonal variation in parenting logics and home influence, particularly by class and by subgroup, which, in turn, can be employed in seasonal comparisons to produce a more precise estimate of the effects of schooling.

Limitations

Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed the limitations of my study as they appeared. In this section, I highlight and discuss some of the most significant limitations.

First, this study does not establish a causal link between specific parenting practices and school year or summer learning. I did not collect achievement data or have access to students' academic records, and when interviewing teachers and principals I did not ask them to comment on the skill level or performance of individual students. An investigation that uses seasonal achievement data to estimate the effects of specific parenting logics would make an important contribution to the literature, but it was not the focus of this study.

Second, the sample size and make-up are limited in a number of ways that may undermine the external validity of my findings. To begin, my sample is overwhelmingly white and consists primarily of native English speakers, and, thus, not representative of

the overall population in each school or the state in which I conducted my research. In a sample of twenty-eight, only eight mothers were poor or working-class, meaning my sample was heavily skewed towards the middle class and the suburban environments in which they lived. Furthermore, my sample was drawn from seven elementary schools within a single state, and thus, I did not capture regional differences that might exist across states or include a significant number of respondents from rural and urban settings. In accordance with their wives' wishes, three fathers participated in interviews; however, they were the exceptions. I did not include fathers' responses in my study design and, thus, their perspectives are largely missing from my analysis. The target children in my study were enrolled in second grade at the beginning of my research; it is likely that parenting logics change as children age and, thus, a similar study of older children might yield different insights. For instance, older children will become increasingly independent and require less adult supervision, which will have implications for household rules around homework, bedtime and screen time, as well the ways in which they interact with their neighborhoods.

Third, while I interviewed the principal at each of the seven schools from which I recruited respondents, I was able to interview teachers at only four of the seven schools. The context that teachers provided - particularly by describing their expectations around homework and parental involvement – was invaluable and I regret not being able to interview teachers at more schools.

Fourth, collecting data via interviews can yield rich insights and important observations; however, it is not a methodology that allows the researcher to easily verify claims made by respondents. Data collected on social behavior via interviews can be

vulnerable to a discrepancy between responses and actual behavior (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014). By interviewing respondents at three separate points over the course of 8 to 12 months, I was able to ask follow-up questions and check for consistency in their responses over time. However, I did not have access to academic or health records and, thus, could not confirm mothers' reports around issues such as their children's classroom behavior, academic performance, or special education status. While I have no reason to believe that respondents provided misleading or inaccurate information, and I value both their willingness to participate in the study and the time they spent being interviewed, additional sources of documentation or other corroborating information would have been useful.

Fifth, research on summer learning loss has largely focused on cognitive outcomes as measured by test scores; while such outcomes are important, it is useful to note that children learn and develop in many ways that extend beyond cognitive abilities. Consider, for example, the ways in which children learn to act independently of adults; how they construct identities and a sense of their own place in the world; or how they grow and mature physically. Experiences outside of schooling – such as summer camps, team sports, or informal play at home or in neighborhoods – shape children's development in ways that seasonal studies rarely acknowledge. For instance, participation in a summer music camp may nurture a child's sense of independence or her ability to express herself *even as* she experiences a decline in the kinds of computation skills that are captured by standardized test scores. While it was beyond the scope of this study, future research could expand the concept of summer learning to include non-cognitive outcomes and measures of growth.

Sixth, the end of the school year brings with it a significant change in the nature of children's day-to-day interactions with siblings and peers. During the school year, students spend much of their day in classrooms with twenty to thirty other children; when school is closed for the summer months, however, children are likely to spend more time at home with siblings or a smaller group of children in their neighborhood. While researchers have examined lateral relationships and peer influence during the school year, few have examined how children's social relationships change across seasons. Whereas this study was not designed to illuminate seasonal change in lateral relationships, it would be a worthy goal for future research.

Finally, I defined social class on the basis of parents' level of education and occupational status. Previous investigators of seasonal learning and parenting logics have used various measurements of socioeconomic status. Bennett et al. (2012), for example, used a construct in which class status was determined by the presence, or absence, of a bachelor's degree held by at least one parent or caregiver in the home. Entwisle and Alexander (1992), by contrast, used multiple variables to define class standing, including eligibility for subsidized meals, parents' level of education, and family configuration. Although Wright (2008) argues that, given the complexities inherent in the concept of class, any single measure is likely to be narrow and thus imperfect, Leyendecker et al. (2005) suggest that the limitations of using discrete categorical variables can be avoided if researchers bear in mind the specific components of socioeconomic status that are likely to influence parenting at a particular stage of child development, and the likelihood that these components will fluctuate over time.

Further Research

The findings presented in this study suggest a number of lines of inquiry for future research. The central question of whether home influence and parenting logics act in a constant and continuous way throughout the calendar year is ripe for further investigation. Whereas my data suggest that indeed there is seasonal variation in parenting logics, a number of questions remain unanswered. For example, it would be important for this study to be replicated on a larger scale with a more diverse sample that responds to the aforementioned limitations of my sample. This would include children of different ages, including both younger and older children and fathers as respondents. In addition, it would be valuable to include parents whose children are enrolled in charter schools, private schools, and parochial schools, each of which may have different expectations for homework, parent involvement, and even summer work; moreover, parents who opt to enroll their children in these schools may hold attitudes and expectations that are different than parents who enroll their children in zoned, public schools.

Throughout this study, I asked mothers to describe their household expectations and behavior around screen time, reading, and informal play and learning activities. However, the context and quality of recreational and instructional materials are not equal. Thirty minutes watching a cartoon is not the same as thirty minutes watching a science show. In a similar way, instructional materials are not equivalent. Future research should examine not simply household routines and behavior but the nature and quality of the activities and materials used.

A second line of inquiry centers on the summer experiences of particular subgroups of students. As the profiles in Chapter Four demonstrate, the summer months can be a difficult period for children with disabilities and their families, particularly those living in poverty. With respect to students with special needs, it's clear that they generally learn at different rates and in different ways than their classmates, which could make them more susceptible to summer slide – and, thus, we need to better understand the nature of their experiences away from schooling. Roughly thirteen percent of students enrolled in public school receive services for a disability (NCES, 2013), and yet there is little, if any, research on the extent to which they experience summer learning loss. In addition, it is likely that children who are English Language Learners may experience greater amounts of summer slippage in literacy skills. Given persistent rates of underachievement by students of Latino backgrounds, as well as their growth rate as a segment of the overall student population, this would be a timely and important line of inquiry.

Finally, the emergence of "big data" provides a unique opportunity for sociologists and other researchers interested in questions of seasonal patterns of learning. "Big data" is a popular term used to describe very large sets of data that are typically generated by users of digital services or web-based programs. Online programs like IXL, which many of the families in my sample used throughout the school year and summer, enroll millions of unique users, some of whom provide basic demographic data provided by the school - such as their gender, grade level and zip code. In addition, to online programs used for practicing skills, many schools and school districts are now using online testing programs to assess and track students' performance over time. One such

program, DIBELS, is used in 15,000 schools across the nation. Policies around test administration vary, but many are giving tests close to the beginning and end of each year. Schools and school districts pay for these programs and most are available year-round, with varying levels of teacher encouragement and direction. In partnership with the software companies that own these programs, investigators could track children's patterns of usage and growth rates overtime, which would allow seasonal comparisons with very large and diverse samples.

Conclusion

I have presented evidence throughout this dissertation that home influence does not act in a constant way throughout the calendar year. If corroborated in future research, this finding has important implications for sociological theory and research, as well as educational practice.

While investigators explain summer learning loss as the result of home influences, very little is known about what actually occurs within homes to produce learning or learning loss during the summer months. I believe that this investigation expands our knowledge of class-based parenting logics, refines the concept of home influence, sheds light on the causes of summer learning loss, and challenges the longstanding assumption that home influence exerts itself in a constant and continuous way throughout the calendar year.

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APPENDIX A

Letter Inviting Teachers and Principals to Participate

(DRAFT)

Matthew Boulay
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

September XX, 2013

Address
Elementary School
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Teacher or Principal,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me yesterday. As we discussed, I am writing to request permission to conduct a study in your school.

In this project, I am interested in learning more about what parents expect of their children during both the school year and the summer months. I would like to conduct a series of interviews with eight parents, two teachers, and the principal. The interviews will last an hour or so and can be scheduled at a convenient time and place. All information collected will be kept confidential; neither the identity of the school, nor that of any parents or teachers, will be revealed.

Having taught in an elementary school, I know that teachers and administrators lead busy lives. My hope is that the lessons learned from this research will be used to improve student learning. If it would be helpful, I would be happy to make a brief presentation about the project to school staff and parents.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Respectfully,

Matthew Boulay
Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com

APPENDIX B

Letter Inviting Parents to Participate

Matthew Boulay
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

September XX, 2013

Dear Parents,

With the permission of your teacher and principal, I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project that I am conducting at your school.

In this project, I am interested in learning more about what parents like you expect of their children during both the school year and the summer months. My goal is to interview a small number of parents three times over the course of the next year. The interviews will last an hour or so and will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you. All information collected will be kept confidential; neither the identity of the school, nor that of any parents, teachers or children, will be revealed.

Being a father myself (I have two daughters, aged 10 and 7), I know that parents lead busy lives. While I hope that any lessons I can learn from your experiences can be used to improve student learning, I also recognize that your time is valuable and I appreciate your willingness to consider this request.

If you are interested in being interviewed, please fill out the attached form and return it to your child's teacher or your school office.

Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Respectfully,

Matthew Boulay
Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com

Contact Information

DRAFT

Parent's Name (please print):____

Home Phone:_______________________Cell Phone:___________________________

Home Address:____

Email:____

Child's Name: ____

Child's School:____

Child's Grade:____

Child's Age:____

Your relationship to child:____

Please return this form to your child's teacher or to the school office.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at
Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form for Parents, Participant's Rights, And Investigator's Verification of Explanation

Study of Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices During the School Year and Summer

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-4105; www.tc.edu

INFORMED CONSENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study that examines parental expectations and family practices during the school year and summer. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to understand what parents think, expect and want from and for their children during the school year and the summer months.

What I will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in three interviews over the course of one year. The interviews will include questions about your child, your expectations and aspiration for your child, and your parenting beliefs and practices. With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will take place at a time and place of your choosing.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: While I will take measures to ensure confidentiality, there is a slight risk that despite my efforts to mask your identity, certain described events and/or you, your child, or your child's school might be recognized by a reader. Thus, there is some risk of embarrassment and or discomfort. There is also the risk that you may find some of the questions about your family or child rearing strategies to be sensitive. There are no direct benefits to participation in this study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you agree to have this interview audiotaped, you may request to stop the taping at anytime. If you decide to take part in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Participants will not be paid for their time and there are no consequences for not participating in this study.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY. The records of this study will be kept private. I will not identify you, your child or your child's school. I will not discuss with the dissertation committee or anyone else any names, locations, or identifying particulars of the participants. All hard copies of research records will be kept

in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Digital records will be kept in a password-protected file to which only the researcher has access. Interview transcripts will not be shared with other respondents and I will not reveal your identity or the identify of your organization during subsequent interviews. Interviews will be transcribed only by the principal investigator (Matthew Boulay) or a discreet and reputable transcriber. Pseudonyms will be substituted in the transcripts for all names of persons, institutions, cities, and states. Every step will be taken to adequately disguise your identity and place of residence in any published materials or presentations.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: I will interview you three times over the course of the next year. Each interview will last approximately one hour.

HOW THE RESULTS WILL BE USED: The results of the study will be presented at academic conferences and may be published in professional journal articles and book chapters.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS: The researcher conducting this study is Matthew Boulay. You may ask any questions now or at any time during the interview. If you have questions later, you may contact Matthew Boulay at Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com or (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151 or call (212) 678-4105. You may also access their website at http://www.tc.columbia.edu/irb/

You may keep this form for your records.

Study of Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices
During the School Year and Summer
Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-4105; www.tc.edu

Participant's Rights

Principal Investigator: Matthew Boulay
Research Title: Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices During the School Year and Summer

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX and his email address is Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com
- If at any time I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- I ( ) consent to be audio-taped. I ( ) do NOT consent to being audio-taped. The written, audio-taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator and the dissertation committee chairperson.
- Written and/or audio taped materials ( ) may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research or ( ) may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
- My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Participant's Signature ______________________________________Date ___________

Participant's Name (printed)____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audio recorded.

Participant's Signature ______________________________________Date ___________

Participant's Name (printed)____

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to ____ (participant's name) in age-appropriate language. He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e., assent) to participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature:____

Date: ____

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form for Principals and Teachers, Participant's Rights, Investigator's Verification of Explanation

Study of Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices During the School Year and Summer

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-4105; www.tc.edu

INFORMED CONSENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study that examines parental expectations and family practices during the school year and summer. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to understand what parents think, expect and want from and for their children during the school year and the summer months. To provide some context for better understanding parental expectations and behavior, I am also interviewing principals and teachers.

What I will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews over the course of one year. The interviews will include questions about your expectations for parental involvement, the ways in which you promote or would like to promote parental involvement in your school or classroom, and your observations of parental involvement this academic year. With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will take place at a time and place of your choosing.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: While I will take measures to ensure your school's confidentiality, there is a slight risk that despite my efforts to mask your identity, certain described events and/or you or your school might be recognized by a reader. Thus, there is some risk of embarrassment, discomfort and/or recrimination in your employment. There is also the risk that you may find some of the questions about you or your school to be sensitive. There are no direct benefits to participation in this study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you agree to have this interview audiotaped, you may request to stop the taping at anytime. If you decide to take part in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Participants will not be paid for their time. There are no consequences for not participating in this study.

Your answers will be confidential: The records of this study will be kept private. I will

not identify you, your school, your students, your student's parents, or any of your colleagues. I will not discuss with the dissertation committee or anyone else any names, locations, or identifying particulars of the participants. All hard copies of research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Digital records will be kept in a password-protected file to which only the researcher has access. Interview transcripts will not be shared with other respondents and I will not reveal your identity or the identity of your organization during subsequent interviews. Interviews will be transcribed only by the principal investigator (Matthew Boulay) or a discreet and reputable transcriber. Pseudonyms will be substituted in the transcripts for all names of persons, institutions, cities, and states. Every step will be taken to adequately disguise your identity and place of work in any published materials or presentations.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: I will interview you two times over the course of the next year. Each interview will last approximately one hour.

HOW THE RESULTS WILL BE USED: The results of the study will be presented at educational conferences and may be published in professional journal articles and book chapters.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS: The researcher conducting this study is Matthew Boulay. You may ask any questions now or at any time during the interview. If you have questions later, you may contact Matthew Boulay at Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com or (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (212) 678-4105 or access their website at http://www.tc.columbia.edu/irb/

You may keep this form for your records.

Study of Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices
During the School Year and Summer
Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-4105; www.tc.edu

Participant's Rights

Principal Investigator: Matthew Boulay
Research Title: Parental Attitudes, Expectations and Practices During the School Year and Summer

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX and his email address is Matthew_Boulay@hotmail.com
- If at any time I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- I ( ) consent to be audio-taped. I ( ) do NOT consent to being audio-taped. The written, audio-taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator and the dissertation committee chairperson.
- Written and/or audio taped materials ( ) may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research or ( ) may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
- My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Participant's Signature ____Date ____________
Participant's Name (printed)____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audio recorded.

Participant's Signature ____Date ____________
Participant's Name (printed)____

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to ____ (participant's name) in age-appropriate language. He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e., assent) to participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature:____

Date: ____

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol #1 for Parents: Looking Back at Summer 2013 and Looking Ahead to School Year 2013/2014 (2nd Grade)

Part I: Background

I'd like to begin by getting to learning about your family.

1. To begin, can you tell me who lives in your household? Adults? Children? What are the children's ages?
2. Tell me about your child. Can you describe her personality? For example, what are three adjectives you might use to describe her?
    a. How would you describe her interests? What kind of games does she like to play? What type of toys does she have? What kind of books does she like to read? What kind of television shows does she like to watch? Does she get a chance to play outside? If so, what does she do?
3. How would you describe her as a sister?
4. How would you describe her as a student?
5. What are some things that you would say come easy for her? Or, can you identify some of her strengths?
6. And what are some things that might be harder for her? Or, what are some things that you would like to see her work on as she gets older?

Ok, thanks. She sounds like a great little girl. Now I'd like to get a little bit of background information about you.

7. Are you currently working outside the home? If so,
    a. Where or for whom do you work? What kind of business or industry is this? Last week, how many hours did you work? What kind of work do you do? What are your most important activities or duties? In general, do you like or dislike your work? Why?
8. Do you mind telling me what year you were born?
9. And what is your marital status? Are you: Now married, Widowed, Divorced, Separated, Never married?
10. Does your husband/spouse/partner currently work outside the home? If so,
    What kind of business or industry is this? Last week, how many hours did he work? What kind of work does he do? What are his most important activities or duties? In general, would you say he likes or dislikes his work?
11. Can I ask about your education? Where did you go to school? And what is the highest degree you received? None, Elementary school diploma, GED, High school diploma, Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Professional or doctorate degree?
12. And when you think about "child's name", what level of education do you hope she will complete?

13. Can you tell me about your home and neighborhood? Do you own your home or rent? Do you have a yard? Is the yard shared with other families or is it your own yard?

Part II: Looking Back at Summer 2013

14. Ok, now I'd like to ask you about this past summer. Can you describe all the different things that "child's name" did this past summer? Please include any activities, programs, camps, travel, day care, etc.
15. Can you tell me some of your thoughts and reasons for supporting her participation in these activities?
    - (a) supporting their child's interest in an activity, (b) keeping active, (c) personal development, (d) increasing the academic skills of their children, (e) providing a venue for children to socialize with peers.
    - (b) Safety, (b) Future Opportunities.
16. If we think of the summer as being roughly 12 weeks long, about how many weeks was she in an organized program?
17. In total, how much money did you spend this summer on organized, structured programs or activities for your child? How difficult was it for you to pay for these programs?
18. And during the days when she wasn't in an organized program, who took care of her? How did she spend her days?
19. Did your family take any vacation? Where did you go? Who went? How long was your vacation? What about the timing of it – why did you take vacation when you did?
20. Thinking back to when you started to plan her summer, what were the most important things that you hoped she/she would do this summer? Or get out of this summer? (Examples: Be better prepared for school in the fall; Get ready for college; Be in a safe place; Have fun and/or relax; Be active; Be healthy; Learn new things; Meet new people/make new friends; Nothing in particular; Other
21. Looking back, do you think your child's summer matched up with what you had hoped for? Yes/No? Why/why not? If yes, how? If not, why not? What were the challenges?
22. I'd like to ask you a few specific questions about your child's routine during the summer:
    a. During the week, what was her bedtime?
    b. During the week, what time did she wake up?
    c. On weekends, what was her bedtime?
    d. On weekends, what time did she wake up?
    e. On a typical day, how much time did she spend reading at home? About how many books did she read over the summer?
    f. On a typical day, how much time did she spend watching tv or playing on a computer or other screen?
    g. On a typical day, how much time did she spend playing (non screen) at home? What did she do?

h. On a typical day, how much time did she spend playing with friends? Is there a park or playground near your home? How far is it? How frequently did your child play there?
i. Is there a library close to your home? Did your child go to the library over the summer?

23. Looking back, do you think your child's skills improved, stayed the same, or declined over the summer? Specifically, reading? And math? What are some things she did that you think helped to improve her reading and writing skills? And, what are some things she did that you think helped to improve her math skills? (Or, what do you think caused he decline in her skills?)
24. Are there things that you wish you could have done this summer that you didn't?
25. Still thinking about the summer, what are some ways that you helped your child relax? And what are some ways that you helped your child learn?
26. One more question about summer: think back to the end of the school year and the start of summer. What is that transition like in your household? What's it like for your child? What's it like for you? Is it easy? Is it stressful?

Part III: Looking Ahead to School Year 2013/2014

27. Ok, now I'd like to talk about 2nd grade. How would you describe your academic goals for her as a 2nd grader? What are some things that you would like to see her teacher help her with?
28. I know it is still early in the school year, but what is your "best guess" for the type of grades she'll get this year?
29. And how is she doing so far? Do you like her teacher? Would you say that the style of instruction and level of work is right for your child?
30. Does your child have homework? How many nights a week? How many minutes each night? Do you think that is too much or too little?
31. Do you have older children who have gone to the same school? What were their experiences?
32. Do you have younger children? Would you send them to the same school?
33. I'd like to ask you a few specific questions about your child's routine during the school year:
    a. During the week, what is her bedtime?
    b. During the week, what time does she wake up?
    c. On weekends, what is her bedtime?
    d. On weekends, what time does she wake up?
    e. On a typical day, how much time does she spend reading at home?
    f. On a typical day, how much time does she spend watching tv or playing on a computer or other screen?
    g. On a typical day, how much time does she spend playing (non screen) at home? What does she do?
34. Can you describe all the different activities that your child is doing this school year? Please include any activities, programs, camps, travel, day care, etc.
35. Since the beginning of school, have you been able to visit your child's classroom? Do you plan on visiting the classroom or volunteering?

You've been very gracious with your time. I just have a few more questions.

<u>Part IV: Analytic Questions (if time allows)</u>

36. We've talked about both the summer and the school year. What stands out for you as some of the biggest differences between summer and school year?
37. When it comes to learning, some people say that both parents and teachers play an important role. How do you describe the role of the parent and the role of the teacher? How are they the same? How are they different? Do you think these roles change by subject or as kids get older?
38. So many factors influence children's learning, what do you think matters most?

Thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, again, thank you for your time. Sometimes when I begin to listen to the audiotape, I have questions about the interview – if that happens, is it ok if I call or email you with a few follow up questions?

As you know this is the first of three interviews, so I'll be contacting you in a few months to set up a time for the next interview. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to call or send me an email.

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol #2 for Parents:
End of School Year Reflections and Start of Summer Expectations and Practices
(May/June 2014)

Part I: Looking Back on 2nd Grade

Begin by circling back to key observations they made in the first interview. Ask to check in – have things progresses as they expected? Changed?

1. Compare and contrast goals and expectations articulated in the fall interview with their observations about the school year; probe parental views on the role of the child, the role of teacher, and the role of the parent.
2. Inventory list of school-year activities (differentiating between academic and recreational); probe goals, cost, scheduling, any constraints of time or resources, and observations on perceived benefits.
3. Explore the extent of parental involvement in the classroom and at home; try to understand parental views on the requests made of parents and children by classroom teachers.
4. Ask about daily schedule:
    a) During the week, what was her bedtime? When did she wake up?
    b) On weekends, what was her bedtime? Wake up?
    c) On a typical day, how much time did she spend watching tv or playing video games on the computer?
    d) On a typical day, how much time did she spend playing (non screen) games at home? Does she play outside?

Part II: Looking Ahead to Summer 2014

Now I'd like to ask you about this upcoming summer.

4. Can you describe your plans for this summer? Probe goals for child this summer. Explore comparisons between school year and summer, and between summer 2013 and summer 2014.
5. Explore the transition: For many families, the transition from the school year to the summer means changes in their daily schedules and activities, and in child care arrangements. Can you describe some of the changes for your child and family?
6. Inventory list of planned/hoped for activities, programs, camps, travel, day care, etc., and parental explanations/reasons for these activities.
7. Try to understand constraints about time (daily schedule) and cost. Ask about expectations for daily schedule.

8. Try to understand the role of family dynamics – who in the family is responsible for childcare? What role do older siblings, grandparents, neighbors play?
9. Explore parental views on differences between the school year and the summer:
    a) What would you say changes the most for your family from school year to summer?
    b) How are your priorities for the school year different than for the summer?

Thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, again, thank you for your time. Sometimes when I begin to listen to the audiotape, I have questions about the interview – if that happens, is it ok if I call or email you with a few follow up questions?

As you know this is the second of three interviews, so I'll be contacting you in a few months to set up a time for the next interview. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to call or send me an email.

APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol #3 for Parents: End of School Year Reflections and Start of Summer Expectations and Practices (July/August, 2014)

Part I: Looking Back on Summer 2014

I'd like to begin by asking you to reflect on this past summer:

1. Inventory list of summer activities; probe goals, cost, scheduling, any constraints of time or resources, and observations on perceived benefits.
2. Explore the extent of parental involvement in informal learning activities at home; try to understand parental views on the role of parents during the summer months.
3. Ask about daily schedule:
    e) During the week, what was her bedtime? When did she wake up?
    f) On weekends, what was her bedtime? Wake up?
    g) On a typical day, how much time did she spend watching tv or playing video games on the computer?
    h) On a typical day, how much time did she spend playing (non screen) games at home? Does she play outside?
4. Compare and contrast the goals and expectations articulated in the spring interview with actual experiences during the summer.

Part II: Looking Ahead to School Year 2014/2015 (third grade)

Now I'd like to ask you about this upcoming school year.

5. Begin by asking parents about their goals for upcoming school year? Probe how those goals might compare and contrast to goals they articulated for (a) second grade and (b) the past summer.
6. Explore the transition into 3rd grade: For many families, the transition from the school year to the summer means changes in their daily schedules and activities, and in child care arrangements. Ask parents to describe some of the changes for their child and family. Ask about their child's outlook – how do they feel about the upcoming school year? Excited? Anxious? Distinterested?
7. Inventory list of planned/hoped for activities, programs, camps, travel, day care, etc., and parental explanations/reasons for upcoming school year.

Thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, again, thank you for your time. Sometimes when I begin to listen to the audiotape, I have questions about the interview – if that happens, is it ok if I call or email you with a few follow up questions?

APPENDIX H

Interview Protocol #4.
For Principals and Teachers: Looking Back at Summer 2013 and Looking Ahead to School Year 2013/2014

Part I: Background

I'd like to begin by getting to know your school (and/or classroom).

1. How would you describe the school? What do you see as some of the school's strengths and weaknesses? How would you describe the quality of teaching and education provided to the students?
2. How would you describe your students and their parents?

Ok, thanks. Now I'd like to get a little bit of background information about you.

3. To begin, how long have you worked at this school?
4. And what brought you to this particular school and position?
5. What caused you to want to become a teacher/principal?
6. What part of your job do you find most satisfying? And what part of your job do you find most challenging?

Thanks. Now I'd like to ask a few general questions about your educational beliefs and philosophy.

7. So many factors influence children's learning, what do you think are the three most important factors? And what do you see as the biggest obstacles to student learning?
8. When it comes to learning, some people say that both parents and teachers play an important role. How do you describe the role of the parent and the role of the teacher? How are they the same? How are they different? Do you think these roles change by subject or as kids get older?
9. Can I ask you about absenteeism and the importance of daily attendance? What standards does your school/district have around daily attendance? And what do you think are the consequences of too many missed days?

Part II: Looking Back at Summer 2013

Ok, now I'd like to ask you about this past summer.

10. How would you describe an "ideal" summer for your students?
11. And how would you describe a "typical" summer for your students?

12. Does the school offer any programs or activities – formal or informal – during the summer months? Why or why not? Are they well attended? Do you think they work well?
13. What do you think happens to student learning over the summer months? Do your students experience summer learning loss? Do you see evidence of summer learning or summer learning loss? Do you see any differences by subject area?
14. I want to circle back to the comments you made about absenteeism and daily attendance to ask you to think about summer break in the context of daily attendance. Given what you said about daily attendance, how do you think about the weeks that students spend away from school during summer vacation?

Part III: Looking Ahead to School Year 2013/2014

Thanks. Now I'd like to ask you about this school year.

15. I know it is still early in the school year, but what are your goals and expectations for your students this year?
16. What are your expectations around parental involvement? How do you want parents to be involved?
17. How many of your parents come into the classroom on a weekly basis? How many come in once or twice a year?

You've been very gracious with your time. I just have a few more questions.

Part IV: Analytic Questions (if time allows)

18. We've talked about both the summer and the school year. What stands out for you as some of the biggest differences between summer and school year?
19. What is the interaction between teachers' school-year practices and children's summer learning? Do students in better schools or classrooms with more effective teachers receive higher quality instruction and thus retain more over the summer months?

Thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, again, thank you for your time. Sometimes when I begin to listen to the audiotape, I have questions about the interview – if that happens, is it ok if I call or email you with a few follow up questions?

As you know this is the first of three interviews, so I'll be contacting you in a few months to set up a time for the next interview. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to call or send me an email.

APPENDIX I

Interview Protocol #5
For Principals and Teachers: Looking Back at School Year 2013/2014 and Looking Ahead to Summer 2014
(May/June, 2014)

Part I: Looking Back on 2nd Grade

I'd like to begin by asking you to reflect on this past school year:

1. Compare and contrast goals and expectations articulated in the fall interview with their observations about the school year.
2. Probe their professional views on the role of the child, the role of teacher, and the role of the parent, particularly as played out in the context of the school year.
3. Explore the extent of parental involvement in their classroom.
4. Ask about homework policies, both written assignments and online assignments.
5. Ask about attendance in general.

Part II: Looking Ahead to Summer 2014

Now I'd like to ask you about this upcoming summer.

4. Explore what, if anything, they or their school are doing to promote learning over the summer.
5. Ask their views on the possibility that their students might experience summer learning loss?
6. Ask their views on the opportunities their students have for summer activities and summer programs; probe their familiarity with community-based programs.
    a. Explore what, if any, programs are offered at the school during the summer.
7. Explore comparisons between school year and summer, and between summer 2013 and summer 2014.

Thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, again, thank you for your time. Sometimes when I begin to listen to the audiotape, I have questions about the interview – if that happens, is it ok if I call or email you with a few follow up questions?