Overcoming Inequality: How Schools Compensate for Socioeconomic Gaps in Children's Learning

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation views schools' compensatory mechanisms from a mixed methods approach, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected from a larger study on summer learning in Canada (see Davies & Aurini, 2012). Overall, these chapters contribute to Downey and Condron's (2016) framework that schools partially compensate for class-based inequalities in education. However, lacking from this framework is *how* schools compensate for low SES children's education, especially when educational resources are not available by their families. The goal of this dissertation, therefore, is to fill in these gaps with empirical and theoretical contributions as discussed in each of the three chapters.

Chapter two analyzes summer learning scores among low SES children and examine whether family practices matter. Drawing on a sample of 282 students from 60 elementary public schools in Ontario, this study explores the relationship between family-involvement and summer literacy outcomes. I find that not all forms of parental involvement with schooling promote summer learning among lower-SES children. Instead, meeting with the school teachers predicts gains in summer literacy over other measures of parent engagement. These findings lend support for cultural mobility theory and for policies that place greater emphasis on the development of high-quality parent-school relationships rather than other forms of parental involvement.

Chapter three examines educators' views and beliefs about their experiences interacting with parents from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. Based on 32 interviews with educators (teachers and principals) in Ontario, Canada, this article examines educators' beliefs about their responsibilities to engage with low SES parents who are often reluctant to participate in schools. I explore the concepts of emotional capital and emotional labour theory to examine educators' beliefs that using emotions is effective for building relationships with low SES parents. I conclude this chapter with educational policy suggestions on the educators' preferred strategies to use when engaging low SES parents while ensuring educators maintain their professional boundaries.

Chapter four examines educators' perspectives on their experiences with low SES children and investigates educators' beliefs on how they can improve low SES children's quality of learning in the classroom. This chapter also explores educators' perspectives on the benefits of the summer learning program (2012) that allow educators to further assist the personal and educational needs among low SES children. In their interviews, educators believe that schools support the personal and academic needs of low SES children. Specifically, they believe that summer learning program serves a necessary source of support, structure, and learning opportunities that go beyond educational needs and addresses children's personal and behavioural needs. I examine educators' perspectives using the concept of cultural mobility and argue that educators are potential sources of cultural capital for low SES children. Educators' beliefs about their role reflect a "compensatory mindset" in that state that they want to help low SES children succeed in schools but also understand that these children require additional sources of support. In chapter five, I conclude with recommendations on educational policy that should consider additional ways to serve low SES communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction: Compensation vs. Reproduction in Children's Early Education

Introduction

A large body of literature in the sociology of education focuses on the academic differences between children from low vs. high socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds. This research consistently demonstrates that low SES children are more disadvantaged in schooling. Although this area of research is essential, much of it ignores reasons why some low SES children succeed in education and how schools relate to these successful outcomes. To contribute to this literature, this dissertation addresses the following aspects: 1) sociologists of education have emphasized, to a much higher degree, the reproducing aspects of educational systems over schools' compensatory function to reduce educational inequality; 2) sociologists of education rarely use research designs that adequately address compensating versus reproducing effects of schooling when it comes to SES-based gaps in learning outcomes. Downey and Condron (2016) argue that understanding the compensatory role of schools requires seasonal learning designs and longitudinal designs that reach back to preschool years. These seasonal learning designs can test both theories (i.e., the role of schools in reproducing or reducing inequality effects in children's learning) by comparing learning gaps during school time vs. non-school time (von Hippel, Workman, & Downey, 2018). The results of these studies show that, while schools cannot reduce SES-based gaps entirely, they do partially compensate for learning differences among social classes (Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008).

However, these seasonal research designs have yet to demonstrate schools' partial compensatory mechanisms from any level (e.g., at the *macro*, *meso*, or *micro* level) of analyses. This dissertation attempts to fill in this gap in the compensatory framework by focusing on

schools' compensatory functions to reduce SES-based inequalities in children's learning. In this dissertation, I offer both empirical and theoretical contributions to the compensatory framework by focusing on the role of educators who support low SES children's academic development and learning needs. I conclude with educational policy suggestions that are informed by the main findings of each chapter. From a *macro-level* perspective, chapter two explores whether family practices in the home or schools account for successful summer literacy outcomes among low SES children. In this chapter, I focus on which family practice variables (e.g., helping with homework, reading or meeting with educators) explain differences among low SES children who succeed compared to students who lose in summer literacy skills. This chapter draws on summer literacy achievement scores (student report card information and parent surveys) to explain why certain lower SES children gain in summer learning compared to their equally disadvantaged peers. In the subsequent chapters, I further explore the theme of schools as partial compensators from a *meso-level* analysis (chapter three) and then a *micro-level* perspective (chapter four), focusing on the role of educators and how they relate to this compensatory process to reduce low SES barriers in learning. For instance, chapter three examines schools' *meso-level* of compensation in how educators discuss their role in forming relationships with low SES parents. However, in light of Ontario's parent engagement policies (e.g., Ministry of Education, 2010), it is not clear how educators form relationships with low SES parents who are disengaged from schools. Therefore, the goal in chapter three is to show what educators believe are beneficial strategies when engaging with low SES parents who are often reluctant to engage with schools. Also, the chapter attempts to explore educators perspectives on an ideal relationship with low SES parents. Next, chapter four uses a *micro-level* analysis of educators' attitudes and strategies used to support the personal and academic needs among lower SES children. For instance,

educators discuss having to provide additional support for low SES children because they lack academic and basic needs (e.g., food and socio-emotional support) from their families.

Overall, the goal of this dissertation is to illustrate potential compensatory mechanisms of reducing SES-based inequality from the perspectives of schools and educators. The findings in this dissertation suggest that schools could be an indispensable source of capital (e.g., social and cultural) and social mobility for low SES communities. In light of these findings that schools may partially compensate for SES-based educational inequalities, I offer educational policy suggestions that further highlight the importance of schools for providing low SES communities with educational support. The below sections discuss the relationship between children's SES and academic outcomes and experiences as found in the sociology of education literature.

Educational Inequality

Of the many factors that shape inequality, family background (e.g., income levels and education) is perhaps the most consequential for children's learning (Downey et al., 2004; Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005). For decades, educational research has found numerous barriers that prevent children from low SES backgrounds from succeeding in school. These barriers include a lack of 'school readiness' including lower cognitive and non-cognitive competencies (Davies, Janus, Duku, & Gaskin, 2016). As Hart and Risley (1995) describe, low SES children begin kindergarten with "meaningful differences" in vocabulary knowledge compared to their higher SES peers. These developmental delays can have enduring and long-term effects. For example, Phipps and Lethbridge (2006) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and found that low SES children had poorer long-term cognitive and socio-emotional delays than higher SES children. Other research using longitudinal data find that lower SES children are

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more likely to drop out of high school (Archambault, Janosz, Dupéré, Brault, & Andrew, 2017) and that higher SES children ensure a more competitive advantaged in post-secondary college admissions (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011). Overall, these findings have generated debate among sociologists about the root causes of educational disadvantages (Comer, 1988). Explanations include school-based factors, such as teacher bias in favour of middle-class students, and having higher expectations towards their academic development (Cooper, 2003). In contrast, individual-level explanations include the role of intelligence (e.g., IQ), student resistance to learning and individual merit differences (Ma & Schapira, 2017).

More credible and consistent evidence suggests that low SES children fare worse in schooling because they come from vastly different home environments and have lower levels of academic support (Lareau, 2000, 2002, 2011). Beyond academic support, low SES children are also denied basic needs that prepare them for consistent learning in the classroom (e.g., a food and reliable transportation to school), which are essential for school performance (McGee, 2004). Low SES children are also disadvantaged when their parents do not participate in schools. Studies on parent-school relationships find that low SES families have lower quality relationships with schools and that low SES parents do not support their children's education as much as higher SES parents (Cooper, 2010). Also, low SES parents are more likely to shy away from schools due to their previous negative experiences (Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Given that low SES children are more disadvantaged than their higher SES peers, it is essential for schools to address their needs earlier on before these developmental delays have significant consequences on their learning (Cooper, 2010).

Theoretical Underpinning

The following sections discuss how sociologists have traditionally defined the role and purpose of schools in society according to the dominant theoretical frameworks of functionalism and reproductionism. For functionalists, education provides a vehicle for status attainment and social stability. From an early age, children are taught academic or cognitive skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy, reasoning, problem-solving, and knowledge needed for future careers), but are also socialized via schools to accept social norms and values (Karabel & Halsey, 1977).

The Role of Schools According to Functionalism

Talcott Parsons (1959), one of the most famous functionalists, viewed schools as necessary for the transition into adult society and socialization outside of the family unit. For Parsons, educational institutions operate under a system of fairness and opportunity for individuals to attain social mobility. In other words, educational systems reinforce the notion of meritocracy or a system based on students' efforts needed for academic success. For instance, according to a functionalist framework, schools allocate students who are successful in positions of higher status and power in society (Meyer, 1977). Beyond academic training, functionalists see the need for education to teach the youth morality for social integration and cohesion into society (e.g., Durkheim, 1956) and build unity and national culture (Meyer, 1977).

However, functionalists seldom discuss the relationship between educational systems and inequality. Instead, functionalists view schools as providing opportunities that are available for all children regardless of class background to succeed in their lives (Kingston, Hubbard, Lapp, Schroeder, & Wilson, 2003). Therefore, any issues related to inequality or disadvantages in education are a reflection of errors in an individual's effort not from any discriminatory practices from schools. This meritocratic perspective was advocated by Davis and Moore (1945) who

viewed the benefits of social stratification as it serves a function in society: prestigious positions in society reward those who work hard. From this perspective, therefore, academic success is based on one's talent, determination, and hard work since schools reward merit with academic success. For instance, in modern society, education is a necessary vehicle for success in the labour markets, which has been demonstrated by status attainment researchers who find that formal education predicts success in the job market (Stevens, 2008).

However, this meritocratic framework fails to explain why children's social class background is a strong predictor of academic achievement, outside of individual traits (e.g., IQ) and do not account for the overwhelming evidence showing that class-based differences in academic achievement and learning opportunities are an ongoing problem (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). In modern societies, we still find a strong relationship between social class and success in education. As a meta-analysis by Sirin (2005) found that family SES predicts children's academic achievement. The fact that social class background consistently predicts children's academics counters the meritocratic argument that schools are neutral to social class differences.

The Role of Schools: Reproductionism

In contrast to functionalism, reproductionists view schools as the driving force behind social class inequality. As a challenge to the meritocratic framework that functionalists promote with schooling, reproductionists claim that schools are primarily responsible for reproducing inequality among social classes as schools have a middle-class or elite bias. Also, the notion of a meritocratic educational system is false; meritocracy is more of a myth as academic achievement is a by-product of higher social class "privilege" (Khan, 2011).

Reproductionists refer to how inequality is persistent at all levels of education. Some

believe that higher education institutions are a cause of SES-based inequality. For instance, Suzanne Mettler's (2014) book *Degrees of Inequality* focuses on how higher education institutions, while promoting social mobility, actually perpetuate social class inequity. For instance, research on private high schools shows that elite students are more successful in enrolling into American selective colleges (Cookson Jr & Persell, 1985), while graduates from public high schools have a statistically decreased chance regarding admission into four-year and selective colleges (Falsey & Heyns, 1984). More recent research further supports these findings. For instance, Radford (2013) found a relationship between the social class of student and college choice, more than gender or race. According to Radford, higher SES valedictorians were more likely to choose a selective, elite college compared to students from lower SES backgrounds. Even during their time in college, higher SES students know how to engage with professors and other authority figures in more advantageous ways than lower SES students (Jack, 2016).

From a social stratification perspective, these studies highlight the role of elite institutions in perpetuating social class stratification and reinforcing advantages for the wealthy. For example, attending a private high school provides a clear pathway to attending a selective institution and that the students who enroll in private high schools predominately come from the most privileged families. Influenced by Marxist theory about the role of power and status differences, reproductionists do not view society as cohesive but instead inherently unequal as educational systems stratify children into dominant and dominated groups (via "pedagogic action") (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Reproductionists also see the relationship between capitalism and inequality within education systems. According to Bowles and Gintis's (1976) book *Schooling in Capitalist America*, educational success is not related to intelligence or meritocracy, but students' social background. One of the main purposes of schooling is to

legitimize higher SES dominant positions in society, while children from poor backgrounds learn mundane skills only to fulfill low-paying jobs in the labour markets after their schooling. In other words, the purpose of education is to conceal power relations and legitimate unequal power and pre-existing class privilege. As stated by Bowles and Gintis (1976): "Unequal schooling perpetuates a structure of economic inequality which originates outside the school system in the social relationships of the capitalist economy (p. 248). Therefore, from a reproductionist perspective, schools cannot be the great equalizer because of the unequal conditions that exist in the larger society, which schools either do not address or worse reproduce.

Sociologists of education often draw on cultural capital theory when discussing how schools reproduce class-based inequality (e.g., Lareau & Weinger, 2003). Bourdieu, one of the most influential reproductionists in the sociology of education, developed the concept of cultural capital to describe the symbolic understanding of the goods of elite culture and institutions. For Bourdieu, the education system is part of the reproduction of class and inequality as schools sanction the domestic transmission of cultural capital that begins in the family. Further, academic achievement is based on the amount of cultural capital invested by the family. Higher SES families have higher cultural capital and schools reward their children in the form of academic achievement. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that schools reward conformity to elite cultural norms and force submission to academic disciplines and cultural hierarchies. For instance, low SES children are taught rudimentary skills that reflect manufacturing positions that do not require critical thinking skills or much intellect (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

For instance, Annette Lareau 's research focuses on how low SES children are disadvantaged in schools as a result of unequal family practices (Lareau, 2000, 2002, 2011). Building on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, Lareau's work shows that middle-class families

provide more enriched households in which children's learning is reinforced and are exposed to more reading, higher vocabulary, reasoning, and access to high cultural learning and traveling opportunities outside of the school. These skills align with the expectations and standards of schools and therefore are rewarded in higher academic achievement (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In contrast, Lareau found that schools do not adequately facilitate low SES families. Because of their parents' access to resources, higher SES children do better in school and are sent to better schools in America (Duncan, Magnuson, & Murnane, 2016). In contrast, low SES children do poorly in school as a result of disengaged parents and learning from low-quality teachers and schooling environments (Owens, Reardon, & Jencks, 2016; von Hippel et al., 2018). Therefore, from this perspective, schooling cannot help the poor as they are powerless in society and do not belong in a middle-class institution (Illich, 1973).

Limitations of Reproductionism

However, the reproductionist view that schools are the root cause of inequality (or at least reproduce inequality) overstates schools' negative impact on children's education. Most importantly, reproductionists confuse causal processes and aggregate outcomes of schooling. If children from low SES families have unequal outcomes regarding academics or schooling experiences, the assumption from reproductionists is that schools are to blame. However, reproductionists seldom discuss reasons for why low SES children do well in school or how education could create opportunities for social mobility. Instead, they rely on the assumption that the primary social process that characterizes schooling is that of reproduction and not mobility. One of the most influential critics of the reproductionist approach is Goldthorpe (2007) who states that this theory is "contradicted by empirical evidence". Goldthorpe notes that the

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problem with Bourdieu's position on schools is that he ignores evidence of upward mobility as a result of schooling, or how lower SES students benefited from schooling, even during the period of Bourdieu's famous works (i.e., the 1970s). Instead, Goldthorpe argues that Bourdieu and his reproductionist followers are concerned more about legitimizing his theoretical assumptions, rather than examining or accounting for contradictory evidence to his claims.

For instance, while low SES children lack in school readiness (Duncan and Magnuson, 2011), other research finds that these early learning barriers are not permanent for low SES children. Once in school, von Hippel et al., (2018) find that these gaps in reading and math scores do not grow and often shrink over two to three years after schooling and seldom change through 8th grade (see also von Hippel & Hamrock, 2016). Moreover, Paul Kingston's work challenges Bourdieu's cultural capital theory in that there is no convincing evidence that class-based differences in children's cultural capital explain why socially advantaged students do better in school. Nor does cultural capital in itself predict academic success (Kingston, 2001). Instead, Kingston finds that success in school is not bound by or limited to their parents' social class but on their ability to demonstrate the necessary academic skills for success in school. Other research showed that the concept of cultural capital, which dominates much of the literature with respects to inequality in schooling, is not limited to high SES families. Instead, the work on cultural mobility theory (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000; DiMaggio, 1982) explains how children can benefit from access to cultural capital. When low SES children have access to the practices and behaviours needed for success in schools (e.g., exposure to learning environments and educational resources), they can succeed.

Schools as Partial Compensatory Organizations

Recently, some studies have provided some insight into these questions and suggest that low SES children succeed "against the odds" via engaged family practices (e.g., helping with homework and reading to children) which account for why some low SES children gain in academic achievement compared to their equality disadvantaged peers (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Slates, Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2012). However, educational researchers still lack insight into how low SES children succeed in summer learning when their parents are less involved.

Downey and Condron's (2016) compensatory perspective offers an alternative view to schools as partially reducing inequality rather than reproducing as more commonly discussed in the sociology of education. This perspective views the primary causal forces that generate mobility appears to be rooted in family-based inequalities, not in school-based factors (Downey & Condron, 2016; von Hippel et al., 2018). In other words, a compensatory perspective views educational inequality as the aggregate consequence of such competing causal forces: those emanating from schools themselves, which tend to compensate, and those from families, which tend to generate inequalities. In the end, schools neutralize much of the latter, but only partially. For instance, family differences in educational resources and opportunities overwhelmingly generate inequalities as upper-middle-class families have adopted and implemented strategies to get ahead (Lucas, 2001; Raftery & Hout, 1993). Therefore, the primary function or socially beneficial purpose of public schools is to reduce social inequalities not to reproduce these inequalities, as reproductionists claim. From a compensatory perspective, while acknowledging that schools cannot reduce SES-based inequality, schools can at least partially compensate when children are in school.

However, this perspective that schools help to compensate for inequality has received less attention compared to the reproductionist approach. As a result, Downey and Condron

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(2016) argue that this exposes a considerable "weakness" in the sociology of education and has adverse effects on public opinion and trust in our educational institutions. A mistrust of schools in society could undermine any political or social efforts to support public schools and educators regarding funding and resources, which help schools educate the poor (Dobbie & Fryer Jr, 2011). Downey and Condron (2016) trace the rise and popularity of neo-Marxist orthodoxy as taught in many sociology courses that overlook or ignore schools' compensatory functions to reduce inequality in education. However, the reproductionists view is challenged by empirical evidence showing that sources of inequality operate at the family level and are not reproduced by schools. In other words, the compensatory framework acknowledges the difference between the causal forces and outcomes of inequality (i.e., do schools cause inequality, or is inequality an outcome of other non-school factors?). Perhaps the most important research that shows the sources of inequality, as well as the impact of schools on low SES children, come from summer learning research. Studies using seasonal designs have found that summer months (i.e., the most extended period when children are not in school) account for SES-based inequality in learning, while all children achieve academic skills at similar rates regardless of their family background. Seasonal comparison designs offer a way of understanding the difference between school and non-school effects on academic outcomes and on how schools influence inequality. When school is in session, SES differences in academic achievement being to lessen (Alexander et al., 2007; Condron, 2009; Heyns, 1978).

In contrast, when school is out for the summer months, poor and working-class students seldom participate in academic-related activities. Conversely, middle-class students participate in summer learning activities which provide consistent literacy learning and development. Since these families have sufficient supply of economic capital, parents can afford to send their

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children to summer camps, tutoring, and other educational resources that stimulate cognitive enhancement and learning while school is out of session during the summer (Burkam, Ready, Lee, & LoGerfo, 2004).

Summer learning studies, while revealing the actual source of inequality that occurs during the summer months, also show how essential schools are for low SES children since their families cannot support their academic development due to lack of economic, social, and cultural capital. Since low SES children are more likely to live in homes that do not have access to educational resources or have parents who reinforce learning, they do not have opportunities to maintain their educational skills outside of school environments. These studies provide evidence that schools teach low SES children essential cognitive skills (e.g., numeracy and literacy skills) during the school year. However, it is during the summer months that these gaps in learning widen as children from higher SES families continue to gain learning skills and benefit from their home environment, supportive families and access to educational resources and opportunities (Alexander et al., 2007; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey et al., 2004; Downey et al., 2008; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2000).

However, the idea that schools function as compensatory institutions for reducing inequality is not a novel idea. Horace Mann (1848) famously promoted schools as equalizing class-based differences and opportunities for members in society, and many studies confirm that schools offer children opportunities regardless of social class origins. For instance, low SES children gain literacy skills from schools (Alexander et al., 2007; DiMaggio, 1982; Downey et al., 2008), are provided additional academic and learning opportunities in the form of reading and numeracy intervention (Davies & Aurini, 2013), and taught critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for children's future success in the job market and other

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aspects (Kingston et al., 2003). Since the famous Coleman report (1966) differences in the

quality of home learning environments explain SES-gaps in academic achievement and are not

attributable to differences in school or teacher quality. However, the Coleman report did not

discuss how schools might help low SES children regarding compensating for their unequal

home environments but instead suggests that schools are neutral in that they do not help or

reproduce inequality for low SES children (Downey & Condron, 2016).

Although the sociological research that focuses on the differences between high vs. low

SES children and the various reasons why low SES children are disadvantaged in schools are

essential pursuits of inquiry, much of this research ignores evidence finding that schools

compensate for these SES-gaps in learning. It is crucial to understand low SES children's

barriers to learning and these sources, which can inform school policy and the formation of more

effective strategies to solve the problem of poverty through intervention programs or strong

parent-school connections. However, the compensatory framework also recognizes that schools

and educators provide an essential role in supporting low SES children's education and helping

them meet their personal needs. With these acknowledgments and understanding, we can then

inform policymakers about what schools are doing that is currently effective. For instance, low

SES children depend on school beyond academic needs but also for addressing their personal

needs (e.g., food, transportation, socioemotional skills) when their families cannot help them and

that the resources and support available in schools are valuable. When low SES children's

barriers to learning are detected early, there is an increased chance that their academic futures

will be improved (O'Sullivan & Howe, 1999). Therefore, in many ways, if it were not for

schools, low SES children would have little opportunities for social mobility. For low SES

children whose family's resources and opportunities are limited, schools help low SES children

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gain in social and cultural capital which are transferred into academic success and social mobility (Martina, 2006).

From a compensatory perspective, investments in schools provide important benefits and solutions to low SES children's quality of education. Since SES gaps occur before schooling, it may be more cost-effective to invest in programs before school starts (von Hippel et al., 2018). According to the compensatory framework, schools may compensate for what is lacking at home for lower-SES children: a home environment rich in academic resources and support for academic achievement (Heyns, 1978). However, it is also essential to assess the impact that schools have on low SES children's situations and to understand school's compensatory functions, which can be done by assessing the degree to which schools have an impact on low SES children's academics and learning opportunities beyond comparing academic achievement scores to their higher SES peers (Downey et al., 2008). For instance, viewing schools as a solution to the consequential effects of poverty can help researchers understand how to improve educational programs and policies that address significant sources of inequality and to improve low SES children's learning opportunities (Davies & Aurini, 2013). However, schools rely on funds to support low SES children whose needs go beyond academics. Schools use after-school and summer learning programs to offer low SES children with food, transportation, and social programs to become more well-adjusted to learning environments and to reduce academic problems. One example is the summer learning program, sponsored by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, that targets academic setbacks that occur during the summer months. While these programs are available to all children, educators find that low SES children benefit the most from them regarding improving their socio-emotional skills and well-being in addition to academics (Davies & Aurini, 2012). For instance, these programs help repair relationships between schools

and low SES communities as parents and their children gave more exposure and confidence in interacting with schools (Rowan, 2011). When schools have better relationships with low SES communities, children's academics are improved (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001), which can contribute to long-term social mobility and well-being (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder Jr, 2004).

Contribution of Dissertation

Although Downey and Condron's (2016) compensatory framework explains that schools partially compensate for SES-based gaps in learning, we do not have an understanding of what the school-based mechanisms of compensation look like and what role educators might have supporting low SES communities. Without this understanding about what schools do for low SES children, educational researchers can only speculate about schools' compensatory role and how low SES children are benefited. Also, we do not know enough about what role educators play in this compensatory function of schools. This dissertation contributes to the compensatory framework by focusing on *how* schools play a beneficial role in low SES children's education, especially when family resources are not available. The findings in the following chapters relate to previous research that shows that schools play an essential role in addressing the educational and personal needs among low SES children (e.g., Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017). I find that educators perceive their roles to help low SES children and their parents become more adjusted to learning environments. From a compensatory perspective, I argue that these attitudes and perspectives among educators reflect schools' compensatory mechanisms to reduce social-class inequality. Also, this dissertation adds a Canadian perspective in the sociology of educational research, which is heavily dominated by American data in the sociology

of education (Brint, 2013).

However, it is important to note how Canadian society is different from the United States regarding opportunities that make Canadian educational institutions as more effective compensatory institutions for low SES children. Low SES children in Canada score higher on international achievement scores, and Canada is considered a world leader in education as students perform well despite SES differences. As found by Merry (2013), American children are less likely to enter formal schooling as a result of poor social conditions. The explanation, therefore, is that while Canadian low SES children face barriers to learning, American low SES children face more barriers as a result of social conditions beyond the walls of the school (e.g., poorer access to health care, and greater economic inequality that exist in America) (Merry, 2013).

Moreover, it is also important to differentiate Ontario from other provinces regarding the degree of educational attainment. For instance, among the provinces, Ontario ranks high in reading levels among elementary school students. According to the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, Ontario Grade 4 students performed near the top in overall reading achievement compared to other Canadian provinces [1]. Moreover, compared the U.S., Canada is more socially equalitarian and has a higher degree of social mobility among low SES populations, within and between classes[2] and has higher rates of social mobility than in the United States (Downey and Condron, 2016). For instance, a study by Frenette (2017) found an increase in the percentage of low SES students enrolled in some form of postsecondary schooling from 2001 to 2014. This difference in academic achievement might be due to differences in social policies such as Canada's stronger social welfare state and access to universal health care

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[1] See: http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/294/PIRLS_2011_EN.pdf
[2] See https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/social-mobility-alive-and-well-canada

and more effective policies to address poverty (e.g., increases in minimum wages, food and nutrition programs). Canadian public education has provided better opportunities for children than in the United States where low SES children seem to be worse off because of the unequal system. Specifically, Ontario's Ministry of Education has invested in efforts to reduce the harms from poverty. Successful school-based strategies for addressing educational inequalities may include enhancing teacher awareness to community partnerships to changes in professional practice [3].

Although private school attendance has grown in Canada, the majority of children are enrolled in public schools. According to a study from the Fraser Institute[4], in the province of Ontario, 62.6 percent of Anglophone students were enrolled in public school between the years of 2014-25. However, the number of students enrolled in public school has declined by the years of 2000-01 and 2014-15 in every province. In Ontario, for example, the percent of total enrolment in public education went from 64.2 % in the years of 2001-01 to 62.6 % in 2014-15.

Organization of Chapters

The three projects in this dissertation aim to address the gaps in the compensatory framework to illustrate in more detail the compensatory mechanisms of schools to help low SES children. In the chapters that follow, I examine the role between schooling and low SES children's education. I focus on how low SES children might benefit from schools and what schools can offer low SES communities to offset the harmful effects of poverty. This dissertation explores this question: *how* do schools and educators compensate for low SES children's academic and learning

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[3] See http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_MindsetPractice.pdf
[4] See https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/where-our-students-are-educated-measuring-student-enrolment-in-canada-2017.pdf.

opportunities? First, in chapter two, I find that low SES children can succeed in summer learning and that educators and schools provide essential opportunities for low SES children to help meet their needs. The subsequent chapters explore educators' perspectives on their roles in helping low SES communities adjust to schooling environments.

This dissertation contributes to the compensatory framework by showing how Canadian schools (specifically, in the province of Ontario) are an essential source of support for low SES children's academic achievement and increased quality of learning opportunities. I argue that schools and educators can play an essential role in the compensatory framework to reduce educational inequalities. The data (both quantitative and qualitative) used in this dissertation come from a larger project on summer learning programs in Ontario. The Ministry of Education sponsors these summer learning programs and offer all children (regardless of social background), opportunities to learn cognitive skills for a few weeks during the summer months.

In this dissertation, I analyze both quantitative and qualitative data that were generated from the summer learning project (see Davies & Aurini, 2012, 2013). The findings of this dissertation help explain why lower SES children gain in academic achievement and how educators play an important compensatory role for low SES communities. Each chapter highlights a unique aspect of the school's compensatory mechanisms from different perspectives. Chapter two focuses on schools' compensatory mechanisms from a *macro-level perspective* and uses quantitative data to examine low SES children's summer literacy scores. In chapters three and four I examine qualitative data (i.e., educator interviews) to illustrate how educators strategize to engage and build relationships with low SES parents (chapter three), and how educators perceive their role in helping low SES children (chapter four) in school. From a theoretical perspective, the findings from chapters two and four help advance the concept of

cultural mobility (DiMaggio, 1982), which explains that low SES children can benefit from access to cultural capital (e.g., knowledge about institutions norms and positive attitudes towards schooling). For instance, in chapter two, I operationalize cultural capital via family practices (in the home and communications with educators) and investigates whether these sources of cultural capital translate into academic success; chapter 4 focuses on cultural mobility from a micro-level on how educators are sources of cultural capital for low SES children.

In chapter three, I analyze school's compensatory mechanisms from a *meso-level* perspective in the context of how educators engage and build relationships with low SES parents. In this chapter, I find that educators perceive the need to use emotions as a strategy to build relationships with low SES parents such as drawing on their compassion and sensitivity to navigate around parents' sensitivities and vulnerabilities in schooling environments. Chapter four focuses on educators' perceptions of their role to help improve the quality of learning among low SES children. Theoretically, it is possible that schools provide access to cultural capital among low SES children who face greater personal barriers to learning and require additional needs, which educators want to and believe that they can provide for these children. Also, this chapter explores the context of how the summer learning program provides the necessary infrastructure (e.g., funding, organization, staff) for these efforts.

The overarching theme of all chapters is how educators may be essential to schools' compensatory mechanisms. In this dissertation, I find that compensation may operate from three unique perspectives (i.e., macro, meso, and micro levels). From a theoretical perspective, I argue that these compensatory mechanisms present an alternative view to arguments made by reproductionists such as how schools neglect the needs of low SES communities and only favour the privileged. As discussed in chapter two, not all low SES children do poorly in academic

achievement. Instead, I investigate the existence of exceptional summer learners, which I define as students from low SES backgrounds who manage to achieve summer learning skills, and focus on the factors behind these exceptional students. For instance, previous studies on exceptional learners find that family support and involvement can promote summer learning skills among low SES children compared to families who do not support children (Slates et al., 2012). This finding echoes a body of literature that shows that parent involvement may be the key to reducing educational inequality among lower-SES children (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Also, from a compensatory perspective, schools give all students, regardless of social class, the necessary skills for academic success (DiMaggio, 1992, Alexander et al., 2007; Downey et al., 2008). In this chapter, I also find exceptional high-achieving summer literacy learners among lower SES children and examine whether low SES parents' communication with educators (i.e., whether they meet with the schools and communicate about their child's schooling) relates to these positive summer learning outcomes. Using data from a wider project on summer learning in Ontario, this project builds on recent literature (see Slates et al., 2012) that focuses on low SES children who thrive in summer learning. In this chapter, I ask whether family practices or school effects relate to these academic differences among low SES children. Since some believe that while schools matter, families also shape outcomes and could potentially explain why low SES children do well in the summer months (Slates et al., 2012). By understanding the factors that relate to their exceptionalism, we can understand which factors matter for these children, which can provide a means for addressing their academic success. Specifically, understanding the role of families and schools can point to the degree to which what schools do compensate for low SES children's literacy achievement over the summer months.

Chapter three explores schools' compensatory function from a *meso-level* perspective on

how educators' perceive their role in building relationships with low SES parents. As scholars in the field of parent engagement have pointed out, it is important to differentiate parent involvement from parent engagement as these terms are commonly used interchangeably in the literature. Pushor (2007) defines parent involvement as practices, behaviours, or attitudes that align with the school's expectations or standards for parents. In contrast, parent engagement refers more to parents' sense of belonging to schools and in their children's learning and to do so on their terms. In other words, while parent involvement is based on what schools expect, parent engagement reflects parents' preference for being involved in the school. Given the differences between the two terms, I use the term *parent involvement* since it reflects schools' expectations and success and how schools may reward these practices.

As discussed in chapter three, low SES families commonly shy away from school environments and deal with educators on a needed basis, usually in response to children's problems (Lareau, 1989). I find that educators understand the relationship between poverty and parent-school interactions and that they discuss the role of emotions in building relationships with low SES parents. Therefore, in this chapter, I draw on literature in the sociology of emotions and the concept of emotional capital, which explains how educators are compassionate and strategic in how they connect with low SES parents for building relationships. To help build better relationships with low SES communities, educators believe that specific strategies as useful to gain the trust and respect among low SES parents whom educators find are more sensitive and vulnerable in educational environments. Such strategies consist of being more informal with low SES parents and ensuring that parents are not intimidated or uncomfortable during interactions. According to educators, these strategies were successful in building better relationships with low SES parents.

Chapter four also draws on interviews from educators but focuses on educators'

perspectives and beliefs about their role in providing additional support and personal

accommodation for low SES children. According to educators, low SES children require more

resources than other children. However, educators believe that the resources provided by the

summer learning programs can support low SES children's needs for learning. Once children's

personal needs are addressed (e.g., food, clothing, transportation), educators believe that low

SES children can excel in their learning. From a compensatory perspective, the findings from

this chapter suggest that educators may be part of the equalizing effect of schools (Downey et al.,

2004). For instance, in addition to teaching low SES children academic skills, educators also

teach low SES children socio-emotional skills that help them become more engaged and adjusted

in school environments. Thus, chapter four reflects that idea that educators may have

compassionate mindsets and attitudes might play an essential role in providing opportunities for

low SES children who otherwise would be disadvantaged in education.

Moreover, in chapter five, I conclude with a discussion on how to improve educational

policies as informed by the main findings of each chapter, which relate to how the Ministry of

Education in Ontario promotes the use of schools to build relationships with low SES parents in

hopes that these relationships will improve student engagement and academic achievement. In

this section, I draw on the findings that schools are worthy investments for closing SES-gaps in

learning and reducing the harmful effects of children's poverty.

Overall, all three projects in this dissertation highlight educators' role in schools' partial

compensatory function to reduce SES-based inequality in children's learning, which requires

strong relationships between schools and families and access to additional resources to help low

SES children in their learning (e.g., access to food and transportation). Although schools cannot

entirely compensate for inequality as a result of family life, a compensatory framework helps educational researchers understand areas where schools are effective in supporting low SES families to help increase academic achievement and learning opportunities. These sources of compensation, therefore, could help us understand how to design and implement more effective school policies and practices to give more opportunities to children where their families cannot. This dissertation contributes to the compensatory perspective by first focusing on the relationship between low SES children's success in summer learning (chapter two), how educators attempt to build relationships with low SES parents (chapter three), and how educators provide additional resources and support for low SES children (chapter four). The findings of these chapters reveal that more research is needed to explore the reasons how schools can further benefit low SES children whose families and unable to provide academic, social, and personal support. Focusing more on how schools help low SES children can inform more effective educational policies that target the problem of poverty in children's early education that has lasting consequences for their careers and personal lives.

CHAPTER TWO: What Types of Parent Involvement Matter? An Examination of Summer Literary Outcomes among High-Achieving Lower-SES children

Introduction

Research on 'summer setback', the loss of literacy during the summer months, finds that children from lower SES families tend to lose literacy skills, while their peers from higher-SES families continue to gain literacy skills (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996; Entwisle, 1997)[5]. While schools act as "great equalizers" and generally help close literacy gaps during the school year (Alexander et al., 2007), it is during the summer months that literacy achievement gaps between children from higher and lower-SES families widen (Davies & Aurini, 2013). On average, children from lower-SES families do worse in summer literacy learning than do children from higher-SES families. However, there is considerable variation in literacy outcomes among low-SES children, and some low-SES children gain in literacy over the summer months (Slates, Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2012)[6]. As sociologists of education, we lack an understanding of how lower-SES children gain in summer learning, and why other low-SES children underperform. We also lack an understanding of how parent involvement or relationships between low SES parents and schools might affect these different outcomes in summer learning (Davies & Aurini, 2013).

This chapter examines the amount of variation in summer learning among a sample of

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[5] SES refers to socio-economic status which commonly consists of parental education and family income (Richards, Hove, & Afolabi, 2008, p. 7).
[6] One study from the United States finds that some children from lower educated families do have gains in literacy during the summer. These researchers attribute those gains to supportive family practices (Slates, Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2012).

282 low-SES children (grades 1 to 3) from Ontario, Canada. I explore whether measures of parental involvement in their child's school account for such variation. This chapter is informed by DiMaggio's (1982) cultural mobility theory which highlights cultural processes such as parent involvement in education that promote academic achievement. In this chapter, I ask the following questions: do parental involvement practices improve summer literacy scores among students from lower-SES families? And, if so, which types of family practices matter most? Also, do parents' relationships with schools mediate summer learning outcomes among low SES children? Understanding which aspect of parent involvement promotes summer literacy can be helpful for educational policies.

Literature Review

Summer Setback

During the summer months, the most prolonged period when children are not in school, gaps between students from higher and lower-SES families are most noticeable (Alexander et al., 2007; Condron, 2009; Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008). Cooper et al. (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of 11 summer setback studies and found on average that summer months result in a literacy gap of roughly three months between children from lower and higher educated families. The most extended study on summer setback in the United States found that a staggering two-thirds of the achievement gap was attributed to gaps that occurred over the summer months. In the long term, summer literacy loss has substantial consequences for children from lower-SES families. These children are less "school ready" when they begin kindergarten, tend to receive lower grades, and are less likely to finish high school than students from higher educated families (Alexander et al., 2007).

Summer literacy gaps also occur in Canada. Using data from an Ontario-wide population

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of elementary students, Davies and Aurini (2013) found that SES was the most statistically significant demographic variable that predicts summer literacy gains, controlling for family practices and academic achievement scores such as previous year's tests. One of the key findings was that summer literacy differences are more prevalent at extreme ends of the socioeconomic distributions: summer literacy growth deviates widely between the bottom and top of SES quartiles. Children from the bottom quartile of SES lose about a month of literacy while the top quartile gained nearly one month. In contrast, students from the middle-SES quartile had "negligible losses" indicating that the most meaningful differences are between the most socio-economically deprived and the most privileged students (Davies & Aurini, 2013, p. 298).

Why do low SES children lose summer learning skills? Entwisle, Alexander, and Olsen (2000) use the analogy of schools as a faucet to illustrate how such literacy gaps take place over the summer months. During the school year, the faucet is turned on and provides all students, regardless of family background, the same range of educational resources and supports. However, during the summer months, this faucet is turned off. For instance, children from lower-SES families have less access to and exposure to educational resources and support compared to higher-SES children who have greater access to high-quality learning environments during summer vacation (Alexander et al., 2007; Burkam et al., 2004; Chin & Phillips, 2004; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Downey et al., 2004), and are more likely to have access to summer camps, tutors, and other educational resources in the home (Burkam et al., 2004). Consequently, children from higher-SES families return to school in the fall with little to no summer literacy losses, and in some cases noticeable literacy gains (Entwisle et al., 2000).

Summer Learning Gains among Lower-SES Children: The Role of Cultural Mobility

Not all children from lower educated families experience summer setback. A recent study by Slates et al. (2012) found summer literacy gains among forty-four children from lower educated families from Baltimore. Specific parental characteristics and practices set these exceptional higher achieving students apart from their equally disadvantaged peers. These include differences in reading behaviours and having higher expectations placed on children to do well academically. These findings suggest that not only do parenting practices matter but also vary within families of similar socio-economic backgrounds (Slates et al., 2012, p. 166). However, much of this research regarding the factors associated with summer literacy gains among low SES children are still lacking. Beyond children in Baltimore, it is unclear the sources of exceptional summer literacy gains, whether family practices matter for summer literacy growth or losses, and importantly what practices matter more or less.[7] Sociologists know little about what explains summer literacy gains among children from lower-SES families in Canada.

Cultural mobility theory may explain these exceptional summer learners. Culture mobility argues that children from lower-SES families utilize cultural capital in more advantageous ways than social reproduction theory acknowledges; it acknowledges that cultural capital benefits all children who have access to it. For instance, DiMaggio (1982) found that children from lower educated families benefited more from cultural capital more than children from higher educated families. The reason is that children from lower educated families have more desire to overcome their social disadvantages, so any access to cultural capital gives them a higher return (Jæger, 2011).

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[7] The literature on what parenting practices matter to academic, socio-emotional or behaviour outcomes is also highly contested in the literature. While some academics asset that many forms of parent involvement improve a variety of schooling outcomes (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; Epstein, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991) many 'common sense' parenting practices are not supported by empirical research. Practices, for example, such as homework support or heightened school involvement are not associated or in some cases negatively associated with academic achievement (McNeal, 2012; Reay, 2005; Senler & Sungur, 2009).

Rather than defining cultural capital through participating in elite cultural activities (e.g., museums, theatres), De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp (2000) consider parents' cultural resources such as reading practices to children. In this way, parental cultural capital benefits lower educated families because it narrows the gap between home environments and schools (De Graaf et al., 2000, p. 100). These parents provide a culturally rich home environment that generates a positive attitude towards reading and other academic values, which convert into academic success. For instance, having a strong familiarity with reading helps children from lower educated families do well in school because they are not "shocked by cultural practices at school" (p. 96). Other work by Jæger (2011) discusses the benefit of having access to books in the home, which may increase literacy skills among children from lower educated families. Also, cultural mobility theory sees the role of schools in compensating for lack of cultural capital in the family. Schools teach children from low educated families proper literacy skills such as vocabulary, writing, and verbal communication skills that contribute to academic success (e.g., Alexander et al. 2007; DiMaggio 1982; Downey et al. 2008; Downey and Condron, 2016).

For these scholars, schools improve the conditions of all students, regardless of social class background. Drawing on cultural mobility theory, then, it is expected that children from low-SES families who managed to succeed in summer literacy may be attributed to specific family practices that engage in academics (e.g., reading behaviours, academic resources, and engagement with schools) that allow children from low-SES families to be exceptional summer learners and thrive in literacy during summer vacation.

Parent Involvement as Cultural Mobility

Parent involvement is a crucial ingredient of cultural mobility and may explain why exceptional summer learners thrive during summer vacation. Parental involvement is a 'catch-all' term that includes the way in which parents interact with schools (e.g., attending a parent-teacher meeting, volunteering at the school) and various ways they support their children's development at home (e.g., helping with schoolwork, reading with their children) (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The few studies that have examined the relationship between family SES and parental involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1988) suggest that parents who are involved, regardless of their educational background, have the ability to monitor their child's educational development and can work with schools to overcome academic issues (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000). For instance, Otto and Atkinson (1997) find that parent involvement increased student academics among lower-SES high school students (see also Miedel & Reynolds, 2000). As some studies find positive outcomes for children's academics, some suggest that increasing parent involvement could be a beneficial strategy to reduce SES-based gaps in academics (see Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Although these studies suggest that parent involvement is related to school success, other research has either been mixed or finds that parent involvement is not related to academics (Reay, 2005; Domina, 2005). As McNeal (2012, p. 80) observes, "[T]he degree of inconsistency surrounding parent involvement's effect on student outcomes is perhaps the most troubling aspect of the research done to date". Some research has found that parent involvement improves developmental issues but has little to no impact on academic achievement (e.g., El Nokali et al. 2010). A meta-analysis of parental homework support found mixed results, finding a positive relationship for elementary and high school students, but not for middle school students. This analysis also found a positive association relating to verbal achievement outcomes, but a

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negative association with mathematics achievement (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008).

Even more concerning, some studies have found a *negative* relationship (e.g., Senler and Sungur 2009; Desimone, 1999) or no relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement or student wellbeing (Domina, 2005).

The inconsistency in the literature suggests that some forms of parent involvement practices matter more than others. For instance, parental aspirations and expectations may matter more than in-home types of parent involvement such as helping with homework (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009, as found in Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016). To better understand the relationship between parent involvement and children's academic success, especially among low SES populations, it is necessary to distinguish which types of parental involvement matter more than others. In this chapter, I separate parent involvement into three categories of parental involvement practices: parent involvement as *expressive*, *cultivation*, and *communication with educators*.

Expressive involvement refers to how parents choose to be involved in their children's education, not for any direct educational benefit per se, but because these parents enjoy being involved in their children's learning. Examples include parent volunteering in the classroom, going on trips, and attending parent-teacher meetings (Lee & Bowen, 2006) or open houses (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006).

Cultivation involvement includes practices that support and nurture children's academic achievement including reading, helping with homework, and having access to learning materials (e.g., books) in the home (Dearing et al., 2006). This type of parent involvement also relates to parents' monitoring of their children's school performance and abilities such as reading (e.g., De Graaf et al., 2000). The third type of parent involvement is parents' *communication with*

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educators (i.e., their child's teacher and principal). This type of involvement includes good

communication between parents and educators (e.g., having regular discussions about children's

academic achievement) (e.g., Graham-Clay, 2005). Communication may include a positive

exchange about a child's academic prowess or ways a parent can support learning at home.

However, it can also include discussions about an academic or behaviour problem. For example,

if a student is struggling, a parent might be called in to meet with educators (principals and

teachers) to address ways to help. In such situations, parents are involved reactively rather than

proactively in their children's schooling (for a counter-argument, see McNeal, 2012). In either

case, having a strong relationship between educators and parents is viewed as an effective

strategy to support or improve children's academic performance (e.g., Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon,

Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Williams, 2009).

     With these three types of parent involvement in consideration, I draw on DiMaggio's

(1982) cultural mobility theory as a framework to understand the role of parental involvement

and academics, the objective of this chapter is to see how parental practices relate to summer

literacy outcomes among a population of low SES children. In this chapter, I ask the following

questions: 1) is parent involvement associated with summer literacy outcomes among children

from low SES families? And, 2) which type of parental involvement practices matter more than

others to explain these outcomes?

Research Methods

Data used for this project come from a larger project on summer literacy (see Davies & Aurini,

2012, 2013), which targets early summer literacy loss experienced by elementary students

(grades one to three) who participated in a summer literacy program to help increase literacy

during the summer months[8]. The summer learning project collected student test scores and included a parent survey (see Appendix A for the entire survey). These data speak to the role of student demographics, family practices, and academics and their effects on summer literacy. Literacy and report card data were also collected. For this study, these data allow me to focus on a subsample of students with summer literacy scores from the lowest quartile of both parents' education to reflect students of low-SES backgrounds. I created this low SES subsample by first calculating the highest score on both parents' education and then calculating the average of both parents' education. For instance, a student with one parent who has a high school education (score of 3) and another parent with a community college education (score of 6) would receive a score of 4.5. The benefit of this approach is that it includes participants with scores for only one parent.

Data Collection

Data come from efforts made by the Ministry of Education, which recruited school boards, schools, and students into the summer learning project. The intention was to help schools, boards, and students in need of literacy achievement. As a result, no specific sampling frame was used during data collection. Instead, boards that scored below average in Ontario's reading tests were recruited. These boards then selected schools with a significant population of at-risk students and principals who were willing to participate (Davies & Aurini, 2013).

    As a result of this data collection protocol, there were a few limitations. First, these data were collected retroactively from school boards who targeted underperforming schools, the result of which produced a non-random sample of students, which results in a possible downward bias

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[8] In this chapter, I control for the attendees of this summer learning project in the regression models to compare whether the summer learning program relates to summer learning outcomes.

in estimates of literacy in that the sample of students is disproportionately lower achievers. In other words, the majority of students tested struggle with literacy grades and thus may not reflect the literacy grades of the Ontario population. As a result of these issues, statistical results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Ontario elementary students (Davies & Aurini, 2013). Despite these limitations, these data are the best and only available data on summer literacy in Canada. Specifically, these data provide a rich array of covariates not available in many administrative data sets. These include student test scores, report card data, and a parent survey. These data can be used to focus on the effects of students' demographics (gender, ethnicity, household size, and immigration status), family background, and their support of education (Davies & Aurini, 2013).

As shown in **Figure 1**, these criteria and missing data resulted in a subsample size of 282 students from the larger data set of 5191 students.

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│                                         │
│        Original data set (n=5191)       │
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│   All parent education scores (n=1618)  │
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│       Bottom 25 percent of parent       │
│          education (n=405)              │
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│                                         │
│      Final Sample: Summer literacy      │
│    scores among students from bottom    │
│  quartile of parent education (n=282)   │
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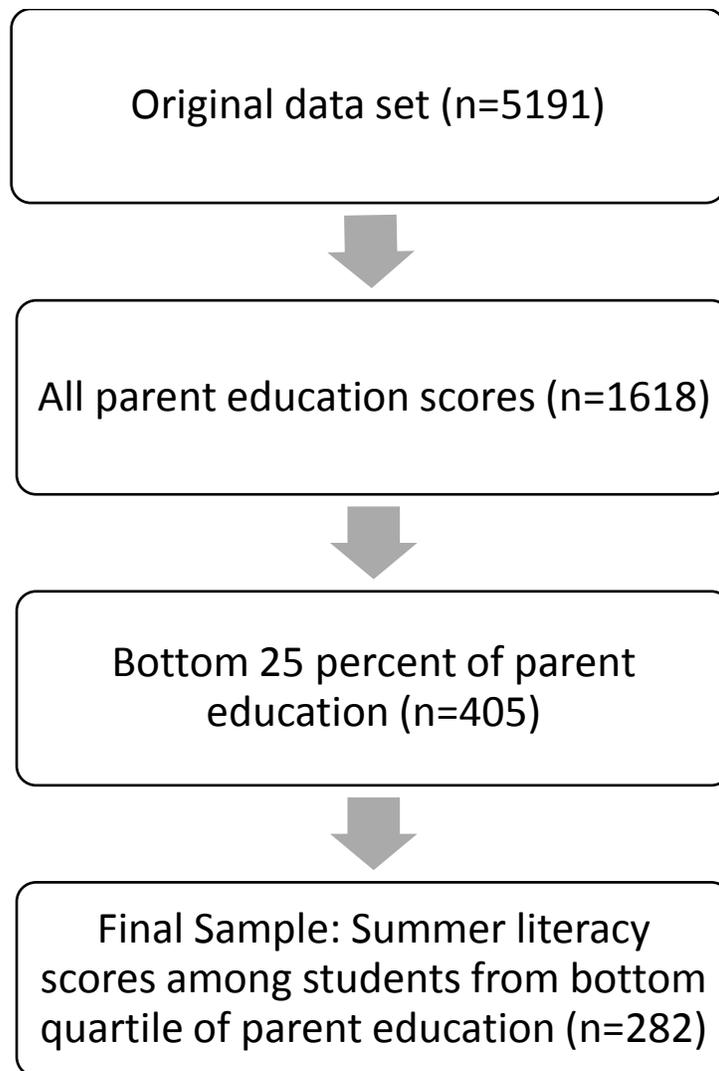
Figure 1. Data Exclusion Flowchart.

Note: This figure shows the breakdown of how the subsample of 282 students from low educated families was created.

Most of the loss in the sample size resulted from questionnaire non-response. The original dataset included 5191 students. From there the sample was reduced to include students whose parents reported their education (n=1618). The next step was to generate a subsample of children whose parents were bottom quartile of education (n=405). Finally, students who had

summer learning scores and were from the bottom quartile of parent education were then isolated, which resulted in a subsample of 282 students, after accounting for missing data on school name and region. However, it is important to note that such a substantial loss from the original data set (n=5191) was primarily related to significant missing data on parent education (3,572 missing scores, or 69%). Generally, parents are reluctant to respond to survey questions asking parents to report their education levels (Davies & Aurini, 2013). Also, summer literacy scores had 1,356 missing values.

Variables and Measures

Outcome: Summer Literacy Scores

The outcome variable for this project is summer literacy achievement or summer learning scores. Summer literacy scores were calculated using STAR Reading, an online literacy test that calculates reading achievement from "25 short comprehension questions that test several sub-skills, including phonemic awareness, general readiness for reading, comprehension, and vocabulary" (Davies & Aurini, 2013, p. 291). The STAR Reading measure uses item response theory (IRT) scaling. IRT calibrates the difficulty of a question with student's reading level, as measured by a child's correct and incorrect responses and differentially weights items according to their difficulty, which results in correct responses to more difficult questions carrying more weight in the final scale (Renaissance, 2016). Each item is designed to measure reading ability at a specific grade level using a "Rasch difficulty scale" based on a range of reading performance from Kindergarten through grade 12. Also, the Rasch model assesses the probability of a right or wrong response given the difficulty of items and a person's ability level (Renaissance, 2016).

STAR scores are converted to grade equivalent (GE) scores based on literacy trends from

millions of students from kindergarten to grade 12 (Davies & Aurini, 2013). These scores reflect average scores by student grade and month. These scores range from 0.0 to 12.9, which reflects how a student performs relative to national standards. For instance, if a fifth grader receives a GE score of 6.2, this indicates that the student performed as well as a typical sixth-grader in the second month of the school year (October). It is important to note that this would not mean that the student is capable of reading at a sixth-grade level. Instead, this score would indicate that the student's reading skills are well above the average for fifth graders. Next, summer literacy scores are calculated by subtracting June GE literacy scores from September GE literacy scores. For example, a score of +0.3 would show that a student gained in summer literacy by three months. In contrast, a score below zero indicates a loss in summer literacy.

It is important to note, however, the issue with extremely high scores that occur with summer learning measures. For instance, extreme scores may occur when children repeatedly guess correct answers to difficult questions or receive help from others such as a parent. In contrast, extremely low scores may also occur when children go through the motions, and therefore, do not take the test seriously. For this reason, I chose to truncate summer learning scores at +1 or -1 year since scores greater than those values are likely products of measurement error. This procedure resulted in 251 extreme scores that were truncated. Specifically, research that uses test scores may result in unrealistic scores. For instance, to generate literacy scores (GE), children were tested multiple times. It is possible that an adult helped some students before a given test (i.e., either before test one or test two) and thus achieved a higher literacy score. Alternatively, some students may have abruptly stopped a test or randomly answered questions. As a result, their scores would be lower than usual. Also, a small percentage of children took multiple literacy tests beyond their limit. As a solution to this issue, students' first literacy scores

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were used, rather than guessing at which test was valid. Therefore, the rationale for truncating summer learning scores at +1 or -1 year is that the truncated scores are closer to students' valid scores: students likely did grow or lose in summer literacy to some degree, but extreme summer literacy scores are unlikely[9].

In this chapter, I examine if family practices (e.g., parent involvement with schools, reading to a child) are associated with summer literacy growth among children from low educated families. I used Stata's "svy" commands to account for clustering within schools and regions (forty-three schools stratified across five regions) (see StataCorp, 2013). This procedure produces standard errors that are robust to the violation of independence that comes with clustering.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of summer literacy growth and losses for the subsample of 282 children from the lowest quartile of parent education levels.

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[9] This procedure was discussed via communication with Scott Davies.
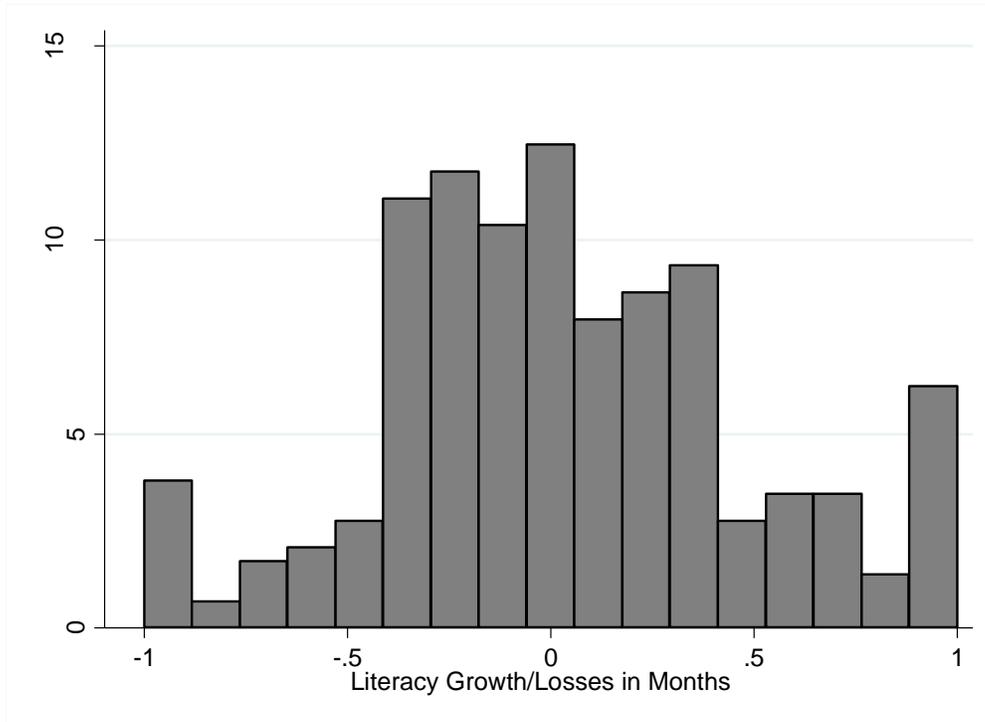
Figure 2**.** Distribution of Summer Learning among Children from Lowest Parent Education (n=282)

As shown in **Table 2**, the mean change in summer learning among the subsample of students from the lowest parent educational level is 0.04. However, the median (results not shown) was 0.0, indicating that half of the subsample "broke even" in summer learning (i.e., they did not gain nor lose in summer learning when they returned to school in the fall of 2012). Also, 161 low SES children had scores above 0 in summer literacy, indicating either no summer literacy loss and perhaps some summer literacy gains. In contrast, 128 children had scores below 0, indicating summer literacy loss (results not shown).

Independent Variables

Table 1 shows variable descriptions for the independent variables used in the analyses[10].

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[10] The highest variance inflation factor was 1.10, indicating no collinearity issues with predictor variables.

Table 1: Variable Definitions

Outcomes

Summer Literacy | Fall literacy score subtracted from spring literacy score. Spring literacy scores are from June literacy test, measured in grade-month equivalents. Fall literacy scores are from September literacy test, measured in grade-month equivalents

Control variables

Test Interval | Number of days elapsed between spring and fall tests taken by students

Grade | Grades 1 (reference category), 2, or 3

Average Language Grades | Average from final reading, writing, and oral report card grades

Attend SLP | Whether child attended summer learning program (2012) 0=no, 1=yes

Parent Involvement

Expressive

Volunteering | Parents were asked whether they volunteered in their child's school. 0=no, 1=yes

Parent-teacher meeting | Parents were asked whether they attended a parent-teacher meeting at their child's school 0=no, 1=yes

Cultivation

Homework help | Parents were asked, "During this past school year, which activities did you do with your child several times *per week*?" "Help with homework" (0=no, 1=yes)

Time Reading | Parents were asked how much time is spent reading to his or her child in a typical week during the school year? (1 = Less than 1 hour per week; 2 = 2-5 hours per week; 3 = 6-10 hours; and 4 = More than 10 hours per week)

Books | Parents were asked if they provide books in their home. 0=no, 1=yes

Communication with Educators

Met Child's Teacher | Parents were asked "Met privately with your child's teacher to discuss his/her schooling" 0=no, 1= yes

Met Child's Principal | Parents were asked "Met privately with your child's principal to discuss his/her schooling" 0=no, 1= yes

The following variables capture parental educational support and resources, which reflect various aspects of cultural mobility theory (De Graaf et al., 2000). In this chapter, I view parent

involvement as based on three separate types of practices: 1) parent involvement as expressive; 2) parent involvement as cultivation; and 3) parent involvement as relationships with educators (e.g., teachers and principals).

Expressive Parent Involvement

Variables used to reflect how parents want to be involved in their children's education include the following volunteering at school and participating in parent-teacher meetings.

Volunteered at Child's School

This variable was created from a question asking parents they volunteered at their child's school. This variable was coded 0= no, 1 = yes.

The second type of parental involvement is cultivation, which describes how parents are involved in their child's school to improve educational experiences and to provide assistance. The following variables measure parents' in-home practices such as reading, helping with homework, and having access to learning materials (books) in the home.

Cultivation

Variables used to reflect parents' efforts to cultivate practices of educational support include reading to children, helping with homework, and providing access to books in the home.

Time Reading

This variable was created from a question asking parents how much time is spent reading to his or her child in a typical week during the school year. This variable was coded 1 = Less than 1 hour per week; 2 = 1-4 hours per week and 3 = More than 5 hours per week.

Help with Homework

This variable was created from a question asking parents if they help their children with their homework during the school year. This variable was coded 0=no, 1 = yes.

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Books

This variable was created from a question asking parents if their children use books in the home. This variable was coded 0=no, 1 = yes.

Communication with Educators

Finally, the third type of parent involvement is communication with educators, which relates to parents' relationship with their child's educator (school principal and the teacher) and whether they discuss low SES children's academic situations. The following variables (meeting with teacher and meeting with the principal) measure how low SES parents' interactions with educators.

Met with Teacher

This variable was created from a question asking parents if they met privately with his or her child's school teacher to discuss his or her schooling. This variable was coded 0 = no, 1 = yes.

Met with Principal

This variable was created from a question asking parents if they met privately with his or her child's school principal to discuss his/her schooling. This variable was coded 0 = no, 1 = yes.

Control Variables

Grade

I control for student grades 1-3 which is dummy coded (grade 1 is the reference group) as these grades were the focus of the summer literacy project (Davies & Aurini, 2013).

Test Date Interval

In summer learning studies, students are tested twice. However, this may increase measurement error and lower validity. Student testing should be done before and after subsequent school years

to reduce measurement errors (Davies & Aurini, 2013). In this project, students were tested in late June and early September 2012, which establishes achievement benchmarks for students participating in the study (Davies & Aurini, 2012). To account for variation in testing schedules between schools (Davies & Aurini, 2013), I control for the number of days in each student's test interval. The average test interval was just over 91 days. Controlling for test intervals is important since measures of summer learning can be affected by a disproportionate amount of school days (Davies & Aurini, 2013, p. 293). However, the summer learning measures used in this project have significant validity since they are minimally influenced by classroom instruction (Davies & Aurini, 2013, p. 294).

Average Language Grade

To control for students' academic backgrounds, I include students' average language grades from their report cards. This variable was created by averaging students' final reading, writing, and oral report card grades. This variable is a continuous variable that ranges from 50 to 88.33.

Attend the 2012 Summer Learning Program

It is also essential to control for the effects of the summer learning program on low SES children's summer literacy outcomes, given that the program was designed as an intervention in children's summer learning.

Analytical Procedure

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of each variable, including the imputed means. Missing values were imputed via multiple imputation, and the results were combined using Rubin's rules (Rubin, 1987). Unlike listwise deletion which discards observations with missing

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values, this procedure produces a simulation of missing values of all variables in the full model

to create single sets of imputations. The results obtained from each separate imputation are

combined into a single imputed data set. This procedure has many benefits including the

reducing uncertainty that is involved in multiple imputations and taking into account sampling

variability due to missing data (Statacorp, 2015). I performed 20 imputations based on the

recommendation of at least 20 imputations to reduce the sampling error due to imputations

(StataCorp, 2015).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Imputed mean (n = 282)
Outcome						
Summer literacy	282	0.04	0.45	-1.00	1.00	0.04
Controls						
Test interval	282	91.30	0.65	69	122	91.34
Grade	282	1.83	0.74	1.00	3.00	1.80
Language grade	275	70.38	6.60	50	88.33	69.49
Attended SLP	281	0.37	0.48	0	1	.37
Involvement Type						
Expressive						
Volunteer	271	0.18	0.39	0.00	1.00	0.20
Attend meeting	271	0.72	0.45	0.00	1.00	0.73
Cultivation						
Time reading	275	1.82	0.65	1.00	4.00	1.87
Homework help	274	0.86	0.35	0.00	1.00	0.85
Books	277	0.92	0.28	0.00	1.00	0.92
Communication with Educators						
Met with teacher	271	0.55	0.50	0.00	1.00	0.59
Met with principal	271	0.17	0.38	0.00	1.00	0.20

Results

Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression analyses that predict summer literacy outcomes. It is important to note that at least two factors in the data serve to reduce overall variation in the outcome of summer literacy, and thus limit the possibility of statistical significance among the variables. First, summer literacy scores are derived from literacy tests taken three months apart. Generally, the shorter the testing period, the smaller the variation. In contrast, studies that use 'snapshot' measures that contain processes generated over the years, not months, generate far more variation. Also, note that due to the small sample of 282 students from low educated families, the variation in the outcome of summer literacy is also reduced, since parent education is related to the outcome[11].

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[11] This discussion occurred via communication with Scott Davies.

Table 3: Linear Regression Predicting Summer Learning Outcome

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Language Grade	0.01*	0.00	0.01*	0.00	0.01*	0.00	0.01*	0.00	0.01*	0.00
Attend SLP	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Volunteer			0.01	0.06					-0.05	0.06
Attend Meeting			0.01	0.05					0.02	0.05
Time reading (<1 hour =RC)										
2-5 hours					0.01	0.06			-0.01	0.06
6-10 hours					0.10	0.11			0.07	0.11
>10 hours					-0.00	0.20			-0.10	0.21
Homework help					0.03	0.12			0.05	0.12
Books					0.03	0.08			0.03	0.08
Met with teacher							0.13**	0.05	0.14**	0.05
Met with principal							0.08	0.08	0.10	0.08
Constant	-0.59	0.38	-0.59	0.40	-0.67	0.39	-0.77	0.41	-0.88*	0.44
n	282		282		282		282		282	

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. RC = Reference Category. Standard errors are in parentheses. Data are imputed. Results control for student grade, and test interval in days. Students are clustered into 5 regions and 60 schools. N=282 due to missing data on schools and regions.
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

I estimated five linear regression models that predict summer learning scores from parental involvement type. The first model introduces summer learning program attendees and controls. Model 2, introduces *expressive* parent involvement variables; model 3 introduces *cultivation* parent involvement variables; model 4 adds *parent-educator communication* variables to examine the role of schools on children's outcomes; and, lastly, model 5 includes all parent involvement variables and controls. All models control for whether children attended the Summer learning program (SLP) attendance, children's average language scores, grade level, and test interval date.

In model 1, the regression model shows no relationship between attending the summer learning program and summer learning outcomes. However, children's average language scores are associated with summer learning outcomes. Specifically, low SES children who score higher in average language grade predict an increase in summer literacy scores (b=0.01; p<0.05). In other words, controlling for SLP attendance, low SES children who score higher in average grades do not lose in summer learning skills. In simple terms, a 1 percent higher average language grade is associated with an increase in summer learning skills of 10 percent of a month of literacy achievement over the summer. This increase in literacy scores is a significant change, given the duration of only two months of non-school time.

Beginning in model 2, I introduce parent involvement variables, specifically, *expressive* parent involvement variables. The findings show no statistical relationship between low SES parents' *expressive* involvement in their children's school. Specifically, whether parents volunteer or attend parent-teacher meetings is not related to summer literacy scores. As shown in model 1, low SES children's average language scores, however, are statistically associated with positive summer learning outcomes (b=0.01; p<0.05).

In model 3, *cultivation* parent involvement variables are added. As shown in the previous model regarding *expressive* parent involvement practices, the results in model 3 show no statistical relationship between *cultivation* parent involvement (e.g., helping with homework, reading to a child, and providing books in the home) and summer learning outcomes among low SES children. Consistent with the previous models, low SES children's summer learning outcomes are associated with their average language scores (b=0.01; p<0.05).

In model 4, *parent-educator communication* variables are added and show a positive statistical relationship between meeting with the teacher and low SES children's summer learning outcomes. The results show that low SES students whose parents have reported that they meet with their child's teacher to discuss academic matters is associated with a gain of just over one month of summer literacy (b=0.13; p < 0.01). Also, consistent with previous models, low SES children's average language scores are positively related to summer learning outcomes (b=0.01; p<0.05).

Lastly, in model 5 all parental involvement variables are added and show that meeting with the child's teacher remains positively associated with summer learning gains (b=0.14; p < 0.01). Specifically, children who have parents who met the teacher improved in summer learning skills by over a month of literacy achievement. Also, when controlling for other measures of parent involvement, and as consistent with all models, low SES children's average language scores remain positive and statistically associated with summer learning outcomes (b=0.01; p<0.05).

Discuss and Conclusion

Research on summer setback consistently shows the strong effect of parent education on their

child's summer literacy scores (e.g., Davies & Aurini, 2013). Students from higher-SES backgrounds do better in summer literacy than do students from lower-SES families. Differences in family practices may be responsible for how students from higher educated families do better in education (Lareau, 2011; see also Alexander et al., 2007; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013). However, less is known about exceptional summer learners: children from lower-SES families who manage to defy the odds.

The objective of this chapter was to examine if family practices relate to summer literacy achievement among higher achieving, lower-SES children. This study contributes to summer learning research by addressing exceptional summer learners and the sources of support made available to them. Even among a small sample of 282 children from lower-SES families, I found 161 low SES children who did not experience summer literacy losses. The goal of this chapter was to understand whether parent involvement practices accounted for these successful summer learning outcomes among low SES children. The results also show that not all forms of parent involvement are beneficial to children's summer literacy. I found that expressive and cultivation forms of involvement are not related to summer literacy gains. Specifically, in-home practices such as reading with children, helping with homework, and having access to books do not translate into summer literacy achievement. Furthermore, whether parents volunteer in the school or attend parent-teacher conferences do not seem to benefit children's summer literacy outcomes. The fact that children's average language scores were consistently related to summer learning outcomes also suggests that what schools do for low SES children matters for summer literacy achievement beyond the role of family involvement practices.

Therefore, the findings in this chapter lend some support for the cultural mobility thesis, specifically from a school-level perspective. I found that low-SES parents' communication with

educators is positively associated with their children's summer literacy growth, which suggests that having a good relationship between lower-SES parents and teachers can have meaningful effects on children's summer literacy (see Epstein,1992). These findings raise important questions about the role of schools and family practices on promoting summer literacy among low SES children and the types of parent involvement that should be emphasized to lessen SES-based gaps in summer literacy. Although more research is needed to explore these relationships further, these findings suggest that not all forms of parent involvement help to improve low SES children's summer literacy and that parent involvement policies should emphasize improving communication and relationships between low SES parents and schools.

Given that parent involvement measures, for the most part, were not statistically associated with summer learning outcomes supports other research findings that question its effectiveness. Also, since government agencies have invested significant funding towards parent involvement initiatives, this raises important issues regarding the purpose of parent involvement in schools. Furthermore, my research findings support previous research on parent involvement and its lack of effectiveness in academic achievement. For instance, Harris and Robinson (2014) conducted a large-scale study on whether parent involvement matters for their children's academics (math and reading achievement scores). Using two data sets from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the authors found that most forms of parent involvement not related to academic achievement. Specifically, while parents' high expectations for educational achievement was found to be positively related, other forms such as helping with homework were negatively associated with academic achievement.

Moreover, Harris and Robinson (2014) found that parents who requested a teacher

increased in math scores but that meeting with a teacher was related to a decrease in math scores.

Overall, given the lack of consistency in parent involvements' effectiveness, the authors suggest

that parent involvement is not a sound solution to educational inequality. My findings support

the arguments made by Harris and Robinson (2014) and others (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001) who

found that parent involvement (i.e., an in-home form of parent involvement) does not help

explain academic achievement among children. Instead, as my findings suggest, parent-teacher

relationships may be more important for academic achievement, especially among low SES

children.

Limitations of the study

While these are the best available data on summer literacy in Canada (Davies & Aurini, 2013),

this study has a few limitations that are important to discuss. Most noticeably, this project was

limited by its small sample size due to missing data and parents' reluctance to fill out survey

items such as their education level. Since these items were required to create a subsample that

focuses on low educated families, the result of which was a significant loss in sample size, which

meant that certain demographic variables (e.g., ethnicity, Canadian-born status, and gender) were

excluded from the models to avoid overfitting the regression analyses[12]. Future studies require

larger samples sizes to generate additional measures of student demographics and characteristics.

Another limitation relates to the difficulty in interpreting the effect of communicating

with the child's teacher. While communicating with teachers promotes summer learning growth

among low-SES children, it clear whether parents are responding to situations where children

experience academic problems or if parents are proactive in their meetings with educators to

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[12] Previous regression analyses confirmed that these variables had no significant effect on the summer learning
outcomes, so were excluded from analyses to avoid the problem of overfitting the regression models.

early intervene in problems. Future research should explore the reasons why communication between low-SES parents and educators is essential for children's summer literacy growth.

Furthermore, this chapter also lacked precise measures about reading habits to test the cultural mobility thesis more comprehensively. For instance, Jæger's (2011) study used some indicators of children's reading habits, which consisted of how many books a child has and how often a child reads for enjoyment. These items provide essential indicators of a "supply" of reading environments and a child's "demand" of reading environments. Together, these measures assess the influence of parental cultural capital (as measured by reading habits) that go beyond merely asking how often parents' read to their child. However, it is important to note that it is not clear the types of reading materials that are read, or if the child is reading along with the parent, which may be more important such as stimulating cognitive skills and linguistic development. For instance, De Graaf et al. (2000) noted that reading materials could create a rich literacy environment for low-SES children. However, I was unable to control for the type of literacy materials. Whether one type of book or genre matters more for summer literacy gains is not yet clear. For instance, Chin and Phillips (2004) found that children from lower educated parents lacked the skills and awareness to evaluate the quality of their children's reading materials and how to overcome their children's resistance to not wanting to read. Therefore, while a lower educated parent states that their child often reads on a survey, it is difficult to know whether the child is reading.

Policy Implications

Parent involvement is often described by educational policymakers as a critical ingredient to children's school success. As one policy document boldly states: "All forms of parental

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involvement are beneficial" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005: 10). However, a vast amount of research evidence, including the findings of this chapter, suggests that the impact of parent involvement varies greatly. Educational researchers have started to gain a more nuanced understanding of the types of parental involvement matter most to children's school success. These lessons should be used to direct policy to the most beneficial types of parent involvement. Many lower-SES parents do not participate in schools and avoid meeting with their child's teachers or the school principal. Many of these parents feel unqualified to engage in their child's education or to intervene when issues take place in school. When they do, parents often feel afraid, shy, anxious, or distrustful of educators (Lareau, 1987, 2002, 2011). Limited communication with teachers can negatively impact children's school success. Lower-SES children whose parents met with the principal or teacher were less likely to lose literacy skills over the summer, while other 'common sense' forms of parent involvement did not improve children's academic fortunes[13]. The findings in this chapter suggest that parent engagement or involvement policies should emphasize meeting with school teachers over other forms of parent involvement to promote summer literacy growth. In particular, policy efforts should be made to reduce such barriers between school officials and lower-SES parents in efforts to help reduce summer literacy setbacks among their children.

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[13] I acknowledge that other forms of involvement may have other benefits such as improving the school culture or having a fun and relaxing time with a child at a school event (e.g., school BBQ or concert).

CHAPTER THREE: Gaining Parents' Trust: Educators' use of emotional capital and management

Introduction

Developing partnerships between schools and parents is a worthy pursuit for educational policymakers. However, at the ground level educators may face challenges when building relationships with parents, especially among disengaged parents. While Ontario's Ministry of Education's (2010) parent engagement policy states that partnerships with parents would benefit children's academic outcomes and experiences (Epstein, 1992), lower SES parents are often disengaged from their children's educational experiences, have weaker relationships with schools and are least effective in supporting their children's academics (Cooper, 2010). Research has shown that certain factors behind low SES parent disengagement, which include negative educational experiences that prevent low SES parents from feeling comfortable during interactions with educators, which contribute to weaker connections with their children's schooling (Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). While reproduction theory views schools as responsible for these failed relationships, in many ways this framework overlooks the efforts among educators who want to build better relationships with low SES communities, and are open to providing additional resources that help low SES parents feel more comfortable in schools. Reproductionists, on the contrary, are pessimistic about educators' intentions or abilities to engage with low SES parents, due to cultural or social differences that often drive these populations apart or having meaningful relationships. However, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to offer an alternative view of schools as functioning as compensatory rather than reproducing inequalities.

In this chapter, I discuss how educators perceive their relationships with low SES parents and their opinions on which strategies are essential to repair these relationships. I argue that educators' perspectives reflect a *meso-level* form of partial compensation for reducing inequality in education. Specifically, educators discuss their strategies on how to engage in meaningful relationships with low SES parents and how to help them become more adjusted to schooling environments. These relationship-building efforts have the potential to increase parent involvement in schools and result in higher-quality educational experiences for low SES populations.

However, it is important to note that educators' perspectives may not reflect that these efforts are successful in terms of actually improving relationships. Instead, my focus in this chapter is to offer an alternative view of how educators perceive their role in compensating for low SES inequalities by how they discuss their approach to the problem of low SES parent disengagement in schools. I argue that educators' perspectives on how they attempt to solve the problem of low SES parent disengagement in schools cannot be explained by reproductionist theory who view such relationships as hostile. Overall, the focus of this chapter is to show how educators attempt to solve the problem of low SES parent disengagement and their beliefs about what might be effective strategies to help low SES parents become more adjusted to schooling environments and interactions with educators.

This project draws on data from 32 semi-structured interviews with educators (teachers and principals) and the concepts of emotional labour theory and emotional capital to explain how educators discuss using their emotions as resources and strategies when attempting to build relationships with low SES parents. To understand the potential benefits and purposes of educators' relationship-building strategies with low SES parents, I draw on the concepts of

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emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 1979) and emotional capital (Zembylas, 2007; Cottingham, 2016) that explain how emotions play a key role this relationship-building idea. As a strategy to overcome barriers to relationships, I find that educators believe in using their positive emotions (e.g., sensitivity, compassion, and understanding) as strategies for fostering relationships with low SES parents, many of whom have had negative experiences in school. I examine such strategies from an emotional capital perspective. As a form of capital, emotional capital refers to how emotions act as resources, which can be accumulated, circulated, and exchanged into other forms of capital such as cultural and social (Zembylas, 2007). From the perspective of emotional capital, educators believe that their emotions allow them to manage how they interact with low SES parents and can help them resolve issues. I also use the concept of emotional labour theory to explain educators' beliefs that they need to manage their behaviours, attitudes, and expressions of emotions to gain the trust and respect from low SES parents. For instance, educators believe that they need to draw on their positive emotions such as empathy and compassion when they first interact with low SES parents.

In the findings section, I discuss educators' beliefs about their building relationships with low SES parents. According to educators, these relationships are successfully developed when they draw on their positive emotions (e.g., compassion, understanding, sympathy) and carefully manage their emotions during interactions with low SES parents to avoid adverse outcomes such as intimidation or conflict between them and low SES parents.

Overall, educators believe that their emotions are central to their relationship-building efforts with low SES parents. Theoretically, I describe that these efforts reflect the following usages of emotions. First, I use emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) to explore educators' beliefs that emotions must be strategically managed when interacting with low SES

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parents to develop trust and respect, while also avoiding conflict from any misunderstandings that parents may have of educators. Second, I also draw on Zembylas's (2007) concept of emotional capital to show how educators' use of emotions might play an essential role in helping them secure their institutional goals (i.e., building relationships with low SES parents) as discussed by parent engagement policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 2012).

Context: Parent Engagement and Involvement in Ontario Schools

Developing partnerships with all parents has become a key focus for educational policy in the province of Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 2012). These partnerships in elementary schools generally refer to the quality of relationships between families (parents, grandparents, or guardians) and their children's schools (e.g., teachers and principals). Since the late 1980s, research has examined how schools can build or strengthen relationships with parents (Lasky, 2000). The purpose of these relationships is to encourage opportunities for educators and parents to share a common understanding of the classroom and home life (Landeros, 2011). These relationships are considered useful when both parents and educators have a shared value and understanding of their role in the relationship (Christianakis, 2011).

While schools base their parent involvement policies on various studies that show a relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (e.g., Ferrara & Ferrar, 2005; Lawson, 2003; Miretzky, 2004), other studies reveal that this relationship is inconsistent (Lee and Bowen 2006). Fan and Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between parent involvement and children's academics and found a small to moderate relationship at best, but this had more to do with parental aspirations and expectations rather than their involvement in schools. Even worse, some studies found a negative relationship between parent involvement and academic

achievement (e.g., Senler and Sungur, 2009) or no relationship (e.g., Reay, 2005, as cited in Aurini et al., 2016). More specifically, it is not yet clear whether parent involvement is beneficial among children from low SES communities (Baker, 1996; Epstein & Lee, 1995, as cited in Desimone, 1999). Such inconsistencies in findings suggest that efforts to increase parent involvement in schools, although with good intentions, may not produce the intended results schools desire (Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, and Pinto, 2003).

However, while finding ways to improve academic achievement is important, there are other benefits of building strong relationships between low SES parents and educators. Developing strong relationships with parents, particularly among those from lower SES backgrounds can result in a range of benefits for children and their home communities. Beyond academic achievement, improved relationships with parents can help foster confidence, respect, and a mutual understanding between low SES parents and educators. As a result, stronger relationships between schools and low SES parents can bring in greater access to resources and opportunities to lower SES communities such as increased social networks and social mobility. For instance, educators can help low SES communities increase their social capital (Coleman, 1988), and developing skills and knowledge consistent with expectations of schooling, and to become more engaged in their children's learning (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Moreover, outside of educational needs, many low SES families are deprived of resources, such as steady incomes, healthy foods, and access to proper healthcare (Benson & Martin, 2003). Commonly, low SES parents also cannot afford the time to participate in schools due to their busy work schedules, less access to transportation, and a lack of time and energy. Also, many low SES parents are less confident about their children's academic progress and futures and therefore feel insecure about intervening in their education or proactively responding to academic issues (e.g.,

Crosnoe, Mistry, & Elder, 2002; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999, as cited in Cooper, 2010). As a result of many of these barriers, lower SES parents may feel alienated from schools and educators (Benson & Martin, 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999), and are less likely to develop positive relationships with teachers (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Low SES parents are also less likely to attend parent-teacher conferences, engage in school-related activities, intervene in academic instructions, and volunteer in schools (Boethel, 2003). Moreover, compared to higher SES parents, lower SES parents do not have a proper understanding of how to incorporate or adopt effective parent engagement initiatives (Aurini, Milne, & Hillier, 2016). While many schools encourage partnerships with parents (e.g., Ministry of Education in Ontario), it is unclear how educators understand the negative impact of barriers that prevent them from having strong relationships with low SES parents, or how educators strategize to reach out or engage with these disadvantaged populations.

Causes of Inequality in Schools

The relationships (or lack thereof) between schools and low SES parents reflects the larger the of inequality in education and what roles school play in either reducing or reproducing social class divisions, which is a widely debated topic in the sociology of education. In many ways, educational systems have many unequal aspects (Carter, 2016). Whether schools are solely responsible for such inequality, however, is at the heart of this debate. The literature on the relationship between schooling and class-based inequality can be separated into two groups: 1) schools as reproducing class-based inequalities and 2) schools as partial compensatory institutions.

        Sociologists who argue that schools reproduce inequality hold schools accountable for

rewarding students from higher SES backgrounds by recognizing their cultural capital (e.g., understanding of elite culture and taste) which disadvantages lower class children (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). From this perspective, schools are criticized for intentionally sorting students into tracks and abilities, which, reproduce unequal conditions (Torche, 2016). Also, children from privileged backgrounds enjoy more positive experiences in schools as teachers reward their greater familiarity with higher SES culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; DiMaggio, 1982).

In contrast, other research finds that schools do not adequately support low SES communities and their children's educational development (Crozier, 1997; Lareau, 1987; Lasky, 2000). Some argue that teachers are not adequately prepared to support parent engagement initiatives with low SES parents (Ammon, 1999; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). From a reproductionist perspective, low SES parents lack such support due to their position in the school environment hierarchy in which low SES parents are subordinate to teachers who hold greater power in school environments (Lareau, 2000, p. 59). From a cultural capital perspective, for instance, low SES parents lack educational credentials and positive school experiences that reduce their ability to communicate effectively or understand academic jargon or terminology used by teachers (Graham-Clay, 2005). In contrast, higher SES parents have more advantages when it comes to interacting with teachers since they are more common in the same social class.

Moreover, critical sociologists view the poor-quality of involvement among low SES parents as a result of teacher bias or discrimination (Christianakis, 2011; Lawson, 2003). Some studies support this finding. For instance, when teachers hold negative judgments about low SES parents' lack of involvement (Konzal, 2001), it could result in lack of empathy towards low SES communities for low SES communities (Hill & Taylor, 2004). From a reproductionist view, low

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SES parent and teacher relationships are unequal and full of conflict, which only further alienates low SES communities from schooling (Todd & Higgins, 1998).

However, reproductionist theory overlooks other evidence that schools close class-based gaps in learning. In contrast to reproductionist arguments, Downey and Condron (2016) argue that schools do not receive enough credit for their compensatory role for closing SES-gaps related to differences in cognitive skills (Carter, 2016). It has been reported that high-quality educators provide a rich learning environment that has been shown to improve academic achievement among all children regardless of social background (Torche, 2016). The most convincing data to show schools' compensatory function come from summer learning research that shows that during the school year children of all social class learn at similar rates and that gaps grow larger during the summer months (when children are out of the classroom) (e.g., Davies & Aurini, 2013). Moreover, research has found that educators enter into the teaching profession because of their commitment to making a difference for disadvantaged communities. For instance, many teachers believe in the principle of equality and opportunity for their students and demonstrate a tendency towards empathy and caring and prefer to offer their support to academically struggling students and to help close SES gaps in learning (Duffett, Farkas, & Loveless, 2008). While teachers cannot ultimately close achievement gaps, their commitment to support the needs of low communities has been documented in the literature (e.g., Konstantopoulos, 2009; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004).

However, it is still unclear what educators believe are essential strategies to improve their relationships with low SES parents that might go beyond the advice or suggestions discussed in various Ministry of Education websites and documents (see Ontario Ministry of Education 2010, 2012). Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to understand the perspective, attitudes, and

strategies that educators incorporate in the context of building relationships with low SES communities.

Conceptual Framework: Emotional Labour and Emotional Capital

From a sociology of emotions perspective, emotions are crucial to forming relationships. In many ways, teaching is an emotional-laden occupation (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006), and is it common for educators to use their emotions during interactions with parents and children. As discussed in the findings, when interacting with low SES parents, educators draw on their emotional skills and resources to respond to the perceived emotional needs of low SES parents, such as helping low SES parents overcome their emotional and personal barriers associated with negative experiences in education. Therefore, to understand how emotions work within these relationships, some sociologists of emotions suggest that emotions are embedded within social interactions (e.g., Reay, 2000, 2004; Zembylas, 2007).

A sociological approach to understanding emotions has recently emerged in sociological analysis and theory, which focuses on how emotions are internalized, experienced, expressed, and shaped by social reality and the relationships one has with their social world (Bericat, 2016). However, it was not until the 1970s that sociologists cared about emotions from a sociological analysis (Turner, 2009). Since then, notable sociologists have incorporated emotions as a critical element in their research (e.g., Collins, 1975; Hochschild, 1975, 1979). Hochschild (1975) first understood emotions as it applied to the workplace, and.subsequently extended the role of emotions in her 1983 study on emotional management among flight attendants. Another sociologist, Scheff in 1977, examined the role of emotions in rituals and developed a sociological theory of negative emotions such as shame and pride in 1988; and in 1990 he focused on the

relationship between emotions and social bonds and how to incorporate it in sociological theory (as cited in Bericat, 2016). Randall Collins (2004) also contributed to the sociology of emotions via his interaction ritual theory, which looks at how individuals are joined by everyday activities, shared symbols, meaning, and expressions and how they as the basis of group solidarity. Within groups, positive emotions are activated via symbols that are exchanged in social relationships; negative emotions occur when group members violate rules (Turner, 2009). Researchers focus on how emotions are social via "interactional emotions" affective dispositions, emotional states and emotional processes related to the different positions that actors occupy in the social structure" (Turner, 2009, p. 13).

Overall, the field of sociology of emotions provides an understanding of such complexity in social interactions and behaviours and how emotions play an essential role in explaining why individuals behave they want they do in a given context (Bericat, 2016). To contribute to the sociology of emotions literature, I draw on both emotional labour theory and emotional capital, both of which provide an understanding of how educators can develop strong relations with low SES parents.

In this chapter, I view emotions as central to how educators perceive their efforts to engage and interact with low SES parents and to fulfill their professional obligations to develop these relationships. Theoretically, I argue that educators are essential sources of support for low SES communities: educators have educational skills and qualifications to teach not only cognitive skills but also can offer additional forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural) to low SES parents and have experience in managing these relationships. However, educators also believe that they need to be strategic in how they approach low SES communities, which can be explained by emotional labour theory approach (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Moreover, from an

emotional capital perspective, educators can draw on their emotions when interacting with

parents to secure their goals such as forming relationships (Zembylas, 2007; Cottingham, 2016).

Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to offer an alternative perspective on how educators

understand their roles and responsibilities to engage with low SES parents who are disengaged in

educational environments. Specifically, I focus on how educators perceive their relationships

with low SES parents and their opinions on ways to engage and interact with these parents to

build more meaningful and productive relationships.

Emotional Labour Theory

In this chapter, I use the concept of emotional labour theory to understand the purpose of specific

strategies that educators adopt when interacting with low SES parents. Emotional labour theory

has its roots in Erving Goffman's impression management theory (Goffman, 2006), which first

explained how we manipulate our appearance (e.g., clothing, hairstyles) to give off a particular

type of impression during social interactions. For instance, Goffman used the concept of a front

stage performance, which consists of how we behave relating to a setting, appearance, and

manner (e.g., how we behave in front of others). Hochschild's (1979, 1983) extends Goffman's

impression management theory to focus on the role of emotional labour such as how individuals

manage, control, and regulate their emotional responses and signals. Hochschild's emotional

labour theory explains how certain occupations require the use of emotions during interactions

with others to satisfy external pressures or expectations. In the context of occupational settings

that demand emotional labour, such as teaching, employees make an effort to align their

emotions with norms or specific rules that govern their emotions. Not only do individuals

express these expected emotions but also internalize these emotions themselves (Hochschild

1979, 1983). For instance, employees who work in the service industry are expected to not only control their emotions but also to engage in 'emotional work' to elicit prescribed emotions of customers. According to Hochschild (1983), occupations that demand emotional labour consist of those that have regular contact with the public (e.g., customers) and are expected to control their emotions when in the presence of customers, for example. In these occupations, employees are expected not to show negative attitudes towards others but instead to display positive emotions.

Conceptually, emotional labour theory explains why and how educators need to manage their emotions when interacting with low SES parents: so that they avoid the possibility of intimidation or other negative emotions that low SES parents may experience at first when approached by educators. In other words, educators manage their emotions in ways to impress parents. I also investigate how external factors (e.g., parent engagement policies and educators' professional duties) might primarily drive such pressures to appeal to low SES parents. For instance, in school environments, educators are required and expected to possess skills in emotional labour and engage with others in a fair but emotional manner. When teachers deal with a child's behavioural issue, for example, they need to conduct themselves 'professionally;' within this context, teachers are expected not to lose control of their emotions and to regulate their true feelings (e.g., panic, anger, fear). From this perspective, well-trained educators can translate their compassion toward their students' well-being, emotional and academic needs (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). While teachers might care for low SES children, it is unclear how emotions work in the context of relationship-building efforts among low SES parents.

Emotional Capital

As emotional labour emphasizes the process of doing emotional work, emotional capital explains how individuals' capacities to feel and express emotions could benefit members of a social network or relationship. For instance, educators (such as elementary school teachers) often are drawn to education for various altruistic reasons such as wanting to educate children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Christianakis, 2011). While many reproductionist scholars view teachers' attitudes and intentions as not serving the interests of low SES parents but to fulfill their roles of serving those of more privileged, or the middle-classes, my position in this chapter is to consider educators who express a desire to help low SES communities and those who want to build meaningful relationships. Moreover, many teachers enter the teaching profession and community as part of a moral and intrinsic calling and vocation to serve and educate, especially among the disadvantaged (Wolf, 2013). While it is their job to educate children, studies find that teachers care about the needs of children and their communities. Vogt (2002) describes the teaching occupation as a "caring culture" based on an ethic of caring, nurturing, and a personal commitment to care for students, especially younger children (see also Darby, Mihans, Gonzalez, Lyons, Goldstein, and Anderson, 2011). When it comes to interacting with low SES children's parents, however, it is not clear how educators might express care or positive emotions (such as empathy, compassion, understanding) towards the needs of parents.

Conceptually, I view emotional capital and management as a vital resource critical to the strength and bond of any social relationship. It is the foundation of happiness, trust, compassion and other positive emotions between individuals. Emotional capital, more specifically, relates to how emotions are internalized (felt and embodied) within individuals that goes beyond any occupational requirement or pressures on how to behave in a given context. In other words, while emotional labour theory focuses on the roles and responsibilities an employee has in order

to satisfy the demands of customers, managers, and others within their organization, the concept of emotional capital refers to how individuals use their emotions in the context of any interactions or relationships because they are caring individuals.

Although emotional labour theory can explain how educators need to manage their emotions during interactions with parents, emotional capital explains how emotions are used as potential social resources and benefits. As a form of capital, emotional capital acts as a currency which is both managed and activated when needed and embodied within the individual (Cottingham, 2016). Emotional capital is also closely linked and can be transformed into other forms of capital (e.g., social and cultural), as emotions act as resources which are circulated, accumulated and exchanged among members in groups or environments and exchanged as resources (Zembylas, 2007).

While Bourdieu did not use the term, emotional capital was first conceptualized as an extension of his forms of capital. Nowotny (1981) first used the term "emotional capital" as a form of capital as it related to the social and cultural resources obtained via affective relationships. In this sense, emotional capital consists of how one utilized their emotions (e.g., love, care, compassion, and concern) to transfer knowledge and skills to another. However, Nowotny's conception of emotional capital was limited as a "feminine resource" in that women possess a higher degree of emotional capital than men given their more emotional tendencies and ability to express empathy towards children and in the workforce (Reay, 2000, 2004).

Reay (2000, 2004) extended emotional capital along the lines of Bourdieu's cultural capital. She emphasized how emotions exist as resources that are exchanged and accumulated, much like other forms of capital. Like Nowotny (1981), Reay also viewed emotional capital as a gendered concept to explain how mothers' involvement in their children's education is shaped by

emotions (both positive and negative). The contribution of Reay's work was to show how emotions shape behaviour and outcomes. When looking at the role of emotions in mothers' involvement in their children's education, Reay (2004) found that mothers' positive emotions towards their children's schooling (such as enthusiasm, empathy, and encouragement) could produce negative effects for children's academics. In contrast, negative emotions (e.g., guilt, anger, anxiety, and frustration) could relate to academic success. For instance, mothers' anger could encourage "clear expectations of educational performance" to their children, which could result in the child "making increased efforts" (p. 573).

Interestingly, Reay (2004) found that negative emotions were more predominate among working-class mothers who experienced more pressure in the context of the educational success of their children. Therefore, Reay (2004) reasoned that emotional capital, unlike the other forms of capital, may not have a clear connection to educational success but might help us understand the role of emotions in behaviour, especially when it comes to educational achievement. However, Reay (2004) recognized that emotional capital is still an emerging concept and viewed emotional capital as a "heuristic device than as an overarching conceptual frame" (p. 569).

Zembylas's (2007) contribution to the development of emotional capital is to broaden the concept to include how emotions act as investments that have real outcomes related to social, economic, and cultural capital. However, this also requires individuals to control or manage negative or undesirable emotions successfully and instead draw on desirable ones. For Zembylas (2007), emotions are developed via an individual's "affective habitus" or how individuals' emotions shape how they perceive their social world. For Zembylas, emotional capital is developed alongside one's "affective habitus" in which an individual views their world via an emotional perspective (Zembylas, 2007).

From the perspective of emotional capital, moreover, emotions are exchanged within what Zembylas (2007) refers to as "affective economies", which are environments that reward emotional labour or displays of compassion, kindness, and concern, such as schools. Although Zembylas's contribution to emotional capital is essential to understand the role of emotion as resources and its positive social and cultural outcomes and to understand educational relationships, this conception still leaves out an understanding of how emotions are developed via the habitus and how educators manage this in observable settings.

While previous conceptualizations of emotional capital stress the role of habitus and emotions as resources, Cottingham's (2016) framework views emotions as rooted in both Bourdieu's emphasis on habitus and forms of capital in addition to Hochschild's rational approach to emotional labour. For instance, according to Cottingham (2016), emotional capital operates as a form of cultural capital that allows individuals to have an understanding of appropriate emotional behaviour that is both internalized and displayed during interactions with others. And, positive emotions such as compassion, empathy, and concern are embodied within the individual and acted upon whenever needed (such as during interactions with parents). In this case, emotional capital is "trans-situationally available regardless of its use in practice", and is "trans-situationally available alongside the lasting dispositions of habitus" (Cottingham, 2016, pp. 460-461). As a result, emotional capital captures a broader understanding of how emotions are embodied, internalized, and strategically managed during interactions in social environments. Also, the concept of emotional capital can provide a more detailed analysis of cross-class social interactions. While researchers find that social class shapes interactions and reinforces class-based distinctions in society (e.g., DiMaggio, 2012; Lareau and Calarco, 2012), emotional capital explains how educators (many of whom are middle-class) can use their emotional capital as a

resource bridge these differences in such cross-class interactions.

The crucial difference between previous conceptions of emotional capital is that Cottingham (2016) explains how emotional capital can be developed in the early and later stages of social life. Emotional capital is embodied and developed through two distinct processes of socialization. The first is what Cottingham (2016) refers to as *primary emotional capital* which involves aspects of an individual's habitus as developed during the formative years. This early stage of emotional capital development is linked to who people are. The second process of socialization is *secondary emotional capital*, which is further developed through training, experience, and practice. During this stage is where emotional capital is actively accumulated as individuals seek to meet practical goals. Also, emotional capital becomes recognized as a resource an individual possesses rather than representing what one is. Emotional capital can also be further developed throughout an employee's experiences, training, and interactions with others in their chosen field (Cottingham, 2016).

For this project, I combine previous conceptions of emotional capital to understand how educators' beliefs and perspectives on how they reach out to low SES parents reflects their possession and use of emotional capital. To understand educators' use of emotional capital, I draw on Nowotny's (1981) original conception of emotional capital as a resource embedded within relationships. Once established, emotions act as a resource within social networks. Moreover, as a form of capital, emotional capital is exchanged in the form of other capital (cultural and social) within schools. For instance, teachers who care or feel compassionate towards low SES parents might act on these emotions and help low SES parents in terms of gaining resources (whether in the form of economic, social, and cultural capital, for instance). These relationships, when developed, allow for the transfer of emotional resources into further

opportunities for low SES communities. In other words, I argue that emotional capital is one aspect of schools' compensatory function via the role of educators.

This chapter contributes to the sociology of emotions and sociology of education literature in the following ways. First, I offer an extension to the concept of emotional capital by considering how educators (teachers and principals) use their emotions in the context of relationship-building with low SES parents. I consider educators' use of compassionate attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs towards the needs of low SES parents and how their emotions are used as strategies for connecting with parents. Theoretically, I argue that educators' use of emotional capital may provide low SES parents opportunities and resources via their relationships. For instance, educators who are understanding towards low SES parents might recognize the negative impact on poverty, negative experiences in education, and how to better navigate around these barriers when interacting with low SES parents. Therefore, improving these relationships is perhaps only possible when educators successfully manage or control their undesirable emotions and instead show their desirable emotions in order to build these relationships. Second, this chapter makes an empirical contribution to the literature on parent-school relationships by focusing on educators' perspectives and beliefs on how they build relationships with low SES parents. While previous efforts looked at the role of emotional capital in relationships between teachers and their students (Zembylas, 2007), to my knowledge this is the first article to explore how educators draw on emotional capital in the setting of building relationships with low SES parents. I argue that given these educators have experience interacting with low SES communities, they have valuable insights into how to connect with disadvantaged communities, which may require alternative approaches such as displaying their sensitivity, compassion, and understandings (Rogers & Webb, 1991), and to purposefully make

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these emotions clear to low SES parents. Currently, I am unaware of other research that explores how educators use their emotional capital in the context of low SES parent-school interactions, which, I argue would require a micro-level analysis of how educators (teachers and principals) perceive their relationships with low SES families to discuss their strategies used to connect with parents and how their emotions shape their approaches.

Research Questions and Methods

The main research questions this chapter are the following: 1) what do educators believe are useful strategies to build relationships with low SES parents? 2) what role do emotions play in their strategies to engage with parents? Moreover, 3) according to educators, what are the challenges and benefits as a result of these strategies to engage with low SES parents?

This chapter examines data from 32 semi-structured, face-to-face, interviews with teachers and principals, referred to as 'educators', from elementary schools from the Province of Ontario, Canada (see Appendix B for the full interview schedule). These data were obtained as part of a larger study on summer learning in Ontario (see Davies & Aurini, 2013) which focuses on the role of summer learning programs to boost numeracy and literacy for children in the grade 1-3 range. Educators were recruited for interviews using an invitation letter. Interviewees were chosen and scheduled for interviews because they showed interest in the study, and, therefore, all interviews were voluntary. The interviews lasted for approximately an hour and took place in schools over the summers of 2012, 2013, and 2014. Some teachers and principals were interviewed twice due to educators' interest and availability to be subsequently interviewed. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. For purposes of participant anonymity, names

were changed using "Canada's most popular names of 2016" [14] to replace the original names. Pseudonyms were also used to hide the identity of schools. It is important to note that although these educators were interviewed onsite of these summer learning programs, they were asked questions about their general experiences, not about their experiences with children and their parents who participated in the summer learning programs.

Participants were asked to examine the connection between family-school relationships and achievement gaps. The general theme of the interview questions reflects educators' perceptions of their interactions with parents, the challenges or barriers they experience in the context of these interactions, and the strategies educators find work best to increase involvement among these parents. Themes that were discussed in the context of this question included the role that parents should play in schools and how they wanted parents to reinforce what was learned in the classroom at home. For instance, the following questions were asked of educators during the interviews:

1. *What are the main challenges for you teaching in this community?*

2. *How would you describe this particular school community? Students? Parents?*

3. *How would you describe the ideal parent-teacher relationship?*

4. *How would you describe the typical parent-teacher relationship?*

The following questions also asked the educators' opinion on what current role they believe parents have in their child's education – it also addresses the degree of boundaries around parent-teacher responsibilities in the child's education and what role parents feel that they should have.

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14 See https://www.babycenter.ca/most-popular-baby-name-trends-of-2016

5. *How do parents see their role in their children's education? How do they conceptualize the role of the school/teacher?*

6. *During the school year, how would you describe your contact/communication with parents? When does this contact/communication most often happen?*

This question gets at the typical relationships and means of communication with parents. The question generated such responses as limited contact and communication with many lower SES parents and the educators' reasons for this.

7. *What do you think influences parental attitudes about schooling?*

This question identifies how educators view the circumstances or background factors behind why parents have their particular view or attitude towards schooling. Overall, these questions speak to the various perspectives and issues associated with having relationships with lower educated parents.

Coding Approach

I used Atlas.ti, version 7.5[15] to organize and code the interview transcripts. As suggested by Saldaña (2015), I pre-coded the interview data to highlight the essential aspects of the interview transcripts, which gave me something to reflect on as I moved through the initial planning of my project. For instance, this approach included writing notes and memos on which to reflect what I thought were essential insights and general ideas about educators' perspectives on their relationships with low SES parents.

Next, I conducted a first-cycle coding approach as an initial pass through the interview transcripts to gain a sense of the types of ideas and potential themes that emerged from the data.

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15 see http://atlasti.com/

Also, this process included descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2015), which consisted of summarizing the main contents of the interviews such as essential descriptive information such as what educators were generally expressing throughout the interviews. Using the interview schedule as a guide, I coded the questions that spoke to educators' perspectives on interacting with low SES parents and how they perceived this community of parents. Next, I added sub-codes to these initial descriptive codes to further detail emerging themes and insights (Saldaña, 2015).

For the second-cycle phase of coding, I used pattern coding (Saldaña, 2015) to group previously identified patterns of quotes that resembled common and recurring themes related to emotional capital such as "emotions as embodied", "management of emotions" and "exchange of emotions into forms of capital". The conceptual frame of emotional capital as reflected in the literature inspired these themes. Additional coding was conducted to enhance codes and to further categorize them into common themes, concepts, and patterns (such as common strategies educators use to engage parents in relationships and to overcome barriers to relationships).

I then used a more focused-coding approach to focus on trends that were defined, categorized and then grouped around common themes that emerged from the data (Lawson, 2003). For the final stage of coding, I then refined these codes to develop further thematic codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) based on the theories of social, cultural, and emotional capital that describe the challenges educators face in their relationships with low SES parents and how they strategize efforts to improve such relationships. This coding strategy was largely based on Saldaña's (2015) notion of using an open-coding approach to allow for the themes to emerge from the data inductively. For instance, I moved on to develop a master code of emotional capital which related to the degree to which educators activated, managed, and used their emotions (either positive or negative) when interacting with low SES parents. This coding strategy allowed me to understand

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how educators perceive their emotions as a tool or strategy to increase their quality of relationships with lower educated parents.

Findings

During their interactions with low SES parents, educators believe that they need to emphasize their positive emotions (compared to negative) emotions as a strategy to connect with low SES parents. Educators believe that, because low SES parents are often disengaged from their children's schooling environments, it is important to be compassionate, understanding, and sympathetic towards the needs among low SES parents. Educators believe that using positive emotions is essential to gain the trust of low SES parents and to avoid problems such as misunderstandings or negative impressions. Three key themes emerged from the interviews with educators about their beliefs on how to build relationships with low SES parents: 1) Empathy; 2) Activation of Emotional Capital; And, 3) Emotional Capital as a Resource.

Empathy

Educators believe that low SES parents face more barriers to relationships with schools than do higher SES parents. One such barrier, according to educators, is that low SES parents might have had bad experiences in schools when younger. While educators discuss the importance of being understanding and accepting of low SES parents' limitations in terms of engaging in schools, they also admit that they are frustrated and disappointed with the current state of their relationships with low SES parents. As stated in the literature, many educators feel that their relationships with low SES parents are inadequate. For example, it is quite common for educators to have brief interactions with low SES parents, which usually occur when parents

drop off and pick up their children from school (Lareau, 1987). During these brief interactions,

educators find that they have little opportunity to discuss any critical issues, such as their

children's academics. According to educators, when they attempt to discuss these issues with

low SES parents, the response has been negative. Educators believe that low SES parents often

respond in a passive-aggressive manner, in that parents are unwilling to accept what educators

tell them about their children and, as a result, become hostile and confrontational. One example

of how educators deal with negative interactions with low SES parents is described by Sophia, a

school principal, who believes that lower SES parents are more confrontational than higher SES

parents when educators attempt to discuss academic issues with them. Sophia believes that many

lower SES parents deny help and come across confrontational:

> I would say that the lower the SES, the more that they probably think they do
> have all of the answers and that they don't need any outside intervention, they
> think that they are doing the best that they can for their child and it's us vs. them,
> and any outside intervention is they don't know what they are talking about, this
> is my kid, and I know what is best for my kid…

According to Sophia, many lower SES parents have developed a "victim mindset" in that

parents feel like they are being "picked on by [the] principal, by the teacher" which

creates divisions between parents and schools. Sophia's perceptions are supported by

literature that finds that many low SES parents hold negative attitudes of schools due to

their educational background and experiences (Benson & Martin, 2003; Lareau, 2000,

2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Educators believe that many low SES parents are young,

poor, and generally, do not enjoy interacting with teachers, and so will be quite reluctant

when interacting in schools, and will only communicate with educators if called into

schools. Moreover, educators believe that when low SES parents attend school meetings,

they are more likely than higher SES parents to react in an aggressive manner when

approached, which makes it difficult for educators to establish meaningful and productive conversations such as discussing their children's academic development or any issues that occur during the school day. Educators discussed occasions when low parents would yell and become hostile when educators attempt to discuss any academic or behavioural issues. For instance, Zoey believes that sometimes low SES parents can become confrontational when first approached by teachers:

> I would, you know, be discussing with them how can I help? You know, what's going on at home so that I can know what's going on here, like what kind of strategies do you do at home and I would help try to give them suggestions and let them know what's working at school especially for some students that we were struggling with and one parent said to me "Do you even have kids?" ... I was the one being judged.

As suggested by the above quote, educators discussed that they become frustrated with the lack of engagement among many low SES parents. Some educators believe that many low SES parents can do better when it comes to parent engagement and should not just rely on schools to support their children. According to one principal, Liam, low SES parents "have no clue" about how serious their role is in school and that expecting educators to handle all educational issues is burdensome and should be changed. Another teacher, Noah, also believes that low SES parents' lack of engagement would have negative consequences on their children's educational futures and that these bad traits would "rub off" onto their children.

When comparing their relationships with other parents, educators believe that it is easier to interact with parents from higher SES backgrounds. For instance, Emily, a teacher from Royal School, believes that social class differences explain the quality of her relationships with parents:

I remember when I was at one very poor school, and I would try to get the parents

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to come in, even if I set up a meeting they wouldn't show up for the meeting and then I went to a very high SES school after… I'm not sure if it's the SES, but the parents were calling me and asking me if they could come in for an interview. Which I thought was amazing, I went from trying to drag parents into an interview [with] them calling me and asking me for an interview. So, I do think there was a major difference, so the engagement part I think the parents [are] wanting to be in the school and encouraging the children to do well at school and understand what's going on [in] the school…

Educators' beliefs that social class plays a role in their relationships with parents reflects the literature in the sociology of education. Researchers find that high SES parents tend to be more involved and share the same educational aspirations and values as educators, such as investing in their children's educational development and volunteering in the classroom (Auerbach, 2007; Christianakis, 2011; Lareau, 2000, 2002). The general difference in these relationships is that higher SES parents have stronger relationships with schools while lower SES parents are more likely to be alienated from the schooling experience (Lightfoot, 1978).

Educators believe that many low SES families are "needy" and are in desperate need of essential resources such as money, food, and transportation that go beyond educational problems. As stated in the literature, poverty is related to lower quality of relationships with schools (Calarco, 2011). During their interviews, educators discuss the adverse effects that poverty has on relationships with parents. As Olivia, a teacher from Sunnyside Elementary describes how personal problems negatively affect these relationships:

Ya, a lot of them are on unemployment, they're on welfare, things of that nature. And we even have some that just kind of team up with their parents and just kind of stay there… again, most of these ones don't have desires to find jobs or things like that. Very kind of, set in their ways, not a lot of movement, and that's what we deal with.

Educators complain that low SES parents are often at first unwilling to listen to

educators' advice, act out defensively (Keyes, 2004), and therefore refuse help from educators because they lack trust and confidence in the educational system to support their children (Christianakis, 2011). While much literature finds these social class differences in terms of the quality in relationships between schools and parents, the educators believe that their relationships with low SES parents can be improved when they adopt specific strategies (e.g., drawing on their positive emotions during interactions). Although they acknowledge social-class differences in their quality of relationships with parents, educators believe that schools can do more to help low SES parents feel comfortable interacting in schools. For instance, educators believe that schools need to be more considerate of lower SES communities and to understand the adverse effects of poverty that prevent low SES parents from engagement. Ella, a teacher from Cranston school, believes that school boards can be "very intimidating to parents" and that schools overlook any positive forms of contribution that low SES parents have to offer schools. Instead, Ella believes that many schools and school boards are judgemental towards low SES communities and are more favourable towards middle-class families.

Other educators agree that schools could do more to support the needs of low SES communities. One teacher, Charlotte, believes that, for the most part, schools lack empathy when it comes to developing relationships with lower SES parents. During her interview, Charlotte imagines what it must feel like for lower SES parents to discuss academic issues with educators:

> Here you want me now to put my guard down and then go approach teachers? Approach them to say "Hey, how's my child doing in school? What can I do at home?"… Maybe I can't read. Maybe I can't help my child at home…

Charlotte believes that the idea of parent engagement must feel intimidating to a parent

who might not feel that they can help their children's education. While low SES parents' lack of involvement in schools is frustrating and disappointing for educators, they did express their empathy towards low SES parents' problems that prevent them from engaging in schools. For instance, educators discussed stories of many low SES parents who live in extreme poverty and who have mental illness and drug abuse. Educators believe that expecting these parents to engage in schools at the same degree as more advantaged parents is not practical nor fair.

Other educators also discussed what it must feel like to be a low SES parent and to face pressures to engage with schools, and how low SES parents might not trust educators. As discussed by Charlotte, a teacher from Smith Elementary:

> [The] parent doesn't want to come in because maybe they don't agree with the teaching style or the suggestions that the teacher is giving them, they don't like hearing the weaknesses that their students, or the next steps that their students need to continue working on or things like that. I mean I don't have children, but they are your first love right, you don't want to hear bad things about them.

Although they expressed frustration with low SES parents' lack of engagement in schools, educators believe that schools should support these parents' needs and do more to help them adjust to schools. For the most part, educators believe that low SES parents' needs (e.g., related to financial, health, behavioural) take priority over parent-school relationships and acknowledge that schools should do more to support low SES communities. Many educators believe that low SES parents are disengaged from schools and therefore have poor relationships because of poverty. This belief that low SES parents struggle with barriers is expressed by Sophia who states:

> Nothing against the parents, I think a lot of times they are struggling, a lot of them are unemployed, they don't have enough money, so they are self-medicating or out trying to find work…

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Many of the educators interviewed stated that, while they want low SES parents to become more involved, they understand that the barriers prevent them from doing so. As a result, educators stated that they accept responsibility to educate their children and do not place pressure on parents to engage in schools, even though they do encourage it and invite parents when possible. Educators imagine what low SES parents are going through on a daily basis. As Sophia says, "They've got so much on their plate that it's really hard…We just try to support them as best we can and do what we can for the kids at school". According to educators, they believe that their role is to help low SES parents become better adjusted to schools and that schools should play a more significant role in supporting low SES communities.

Activation of Emotional Capital

> I'm out there Johnny on the spot, tapping them on the shoulder, squeezing their shoulder, in their face smiling, just making them, my name is [Liam] it's not Mr. [Jones], my door is always open, my teachers' doors are always open if you want to spend a half a day with your kids come on in, if you want to come in and have breakfast with your kids at the breakfast program – Liam, Principal

Managing Emotions. Although educators believe that they are responsible for engaging with low SES parents, they feel that it is important to be sympathetic and compassionate when interacting with low SES parents. From an emotional capital perspective, the role of emotions may be necessary for educators to develop trust with parents. Theoretically, educators' knowledge about the importance of emotions reflects their *activation of emotional capital* in the context of relationships with low SES parents. Moreover, educators discuss having experience and knowledge of how to effectively communicate and interact with low SES parents. Such insights, from an emotional capital perspective, reflects educators' activation of emotional

capital which allows them to develop a good rapport with low SES parents. However, educators believe that trust is essential before any relationships can be developed because they believe low SES parents are easily intimidated by educators. Therefore, educators also find that they need to know how to manage their emotions to reduce conflict or issues effectively.

From an emotional labour management perspective (Hochschild, 1983), educators' strategies focus on trying to avoid intimidating parents and not expressing anger. Instead, educators discuss deliberately using positive emotions when interacting with low SES parents (e.g., love, concern, compassion), which educators feel results in better outcomes for gaining the trust of parents. During their interviews, educators discussed their beliefs on how to best manage their emotions with low SES parents, which might result in more productive and meaningful relationships. For instance, educators discussed the importance of clearly communicating to low parents that schools are welcoming, friendly, and genuinely supportive of their needs.

According to Liam, one of the principals, the parent-school relationship reflects a business transaction. Liam believes that his role is a "customer service provider" and that parents are the "customers" in the schooling experience. From this perspective, interacting with parents is analogous to how employees deal with their emotions with customers. According to the theory of emotional labour management, employees in the customer service industry feel pressure to manage their emotions by displaying positive ones over negative ones and not letting the customers' anger or any other negative emotions affect them (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, educators have to conceal negative emotions effectively and instead emphasize positive emotions during their interactions with low SES parents to avoid problems and to gain their trust and cooperation. Educators want low SES parents to have a better impression of them. For instance, another principal, Abigail, believes that she needs to change low SES parents' negative

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impressions that they might have of educators due to their previous experiences in schools:

> …it's changing the attitude of parents of what even a principal is. Because to them, the principal was the person you went to get the strap or you got yelled at by, but not the person who goes [to] the class and talks to you.

Educators believe that many lower SES parents might view schools as intimidating and unwelcoming environments. To combat these concerns, educators believe that they need to redefine the image of schools from negative or "scary" places to more welcoming and supportive environments in which parents can feel comfortable. To do this, educators believe that they need to be careful about how they behave and interact with low SES parents, which includes what educators say to parents and the manner and tone with which they express their emotions. During these interactions, educators believe that it is essential to avoid any expression of negative emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment) but instead express their positive emotions (e.g., compassion, care, love). Educators believe that controlling their emotions during interactions with low SES parents allows them to avoid any potential problems that could disrupt their ability to form relationships. Educators believe that low SES parents need to feel supported by schools beyond academic help, as many of them deal with life stressors and social inequality. As a result, educators believe that they need to make a conscious effort to avoid negative discussions with parents (even if there was an issue that happened during the day), but instead, emphasize positive behaviours or situations that occurred. Educators believe that doing so helps to establish trust and respect from low SES parents.

However, educators feel that more often than not low SES parents are easily overwhelmed when confronted about how badly their children were behaving in class or how poorly they are doing academically. For instance, Ella believes that educators are too negative towards low SES parents. By only discussing negative aspects of their children's behaviour and

academics, this will only give wrong impressions for lower SES parents and reduces their self-esteem and comfort levels when interacting with schools. Another teacher, Jessica, also believes that only being negative has significant consequences for parent-teacher interactions: if parents only hear criticism of their kids, then they will most likely get a "bad vibe" from her and will inevitably withdraw from further interactions with educators. Even if true, educators feel that discussing such negative behaviours and issues only make things worse, especially during initial interactions low SES parents. To prevent any issues that might occur, educators believe that they need to avoid discussing any negative issues with low SES parents. One teacher, Sophia, believes that "being careful" when engaging with low SES parents is essential for relationships:

> There's been a few days where the older boy has gotten into some trouble. So I phone, phone, phone and it rings and rings and rings. So I'm like "Okay, mom needs to know about this." So I'll just run out to the parking lot and usually soften my message with some positives. "So-and-so did so great at floor hockey. You should have seen him at floor hockey. I'm so proud of him. However,…" I don't really say, however. I just said "We did have a little issue. This is how I dealt with it…" I always tell the parents "This is the issue. This is how the school dealt with it. I think you need to know about it so that you can follow up at home." I'm really careful about that approach with parents because some parents get really angry when you're always phoning them or communicating with them something negative. So I always try to soften it with a positive. Always trying to give positive, positive so they're receptive and they know, they understand that I'm not trying to, that there are good things that we see and good things that we foster. There's not always a negative.

Educators believe that "softening" any negative issue that occurred during school will help low SES parents feel more comfortable when approached by educators.

Another approach or strategy that educators believe helps to gain trust among low SES parents was first to develop good relationships with children. According to educators, children are more likely to discuss their positive experiences at schools with their parents. Therefore, educators believe that it is essential to create good impressions with children first before they can have good relationships with parents. In contrast, if educators do not have good relationships

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with their students, educators believe their reputations will be damaged. For instance, Charlotte

believes that it is more useful to establish a good relationship with her students, which will create

a good impression on their parents:

> I think it's building a relationship with the student, as [odd] as that sounds when
> you build a strong relationship with kids, they talk about you at home. So once
> that happens, the parents feel more comfortable coming to talk to you, and I think
> that's the key. The key is when they feel good when the kids love you; then the
> parents start to love you too, even if they don't know you. It's kind of like a head
> game thing, but they feel that they know you because their kids know you and
> they love you, and they care about you. Some of the parents come to school.
> They feel good, and it's about being honest and open with them, right? And
> having that open communication.

As stated in the literature, educators express that they want to be liked by their students' parents,

but believe that they need to first gain their trust and respect (Keyes, 2004). For Charlotte,

having the whole family "love" her and care about her is beneficial: she can develop a positive

relationship with her students and parents. Another teacher, Tori, also believes that when her

students are happy with her as a teacher, then this will result in more positive relationships with

parents:

> …if school is a place where their kids enjoy coming to and want to spend more
> time there. "Oh, my teacher is so nice." Or "We did this today." I think maybe
> that would be encouraging to get their parents involved and a parent is a parent no
> matter where you live or how you grow up. They only want the best for their kids.
> So if you can make it a really positive experience for the kids, hopefully…

According to educators, developing good relationships with students may be easier for educators

to connect with their families since parents will value their children's opinions and impressions.

Gaining trust from low SES parents is based on using many strategies that focus on

clearly showing compassion and empathy towards low SES families. However, according to

educators, being successful with parents requires patience and understanding:

> just making that relation to say "I get where you're coming from." That whole
> conversation piece to say "I'm listening. I understand what you're saying. I get

where you're coming from. I know because this is an experience." You know, making that connection to each other and then saying "Here are some strategies" and finding out what works. Sometimes it just needs to be said over and over again until one day it clicks for them.

Charlotte believes that she needs to display compassion and understanding to parents before introducing any strategies or suggestions on how to help their children with schooling or to suggest areas of improvement. Although educators find that their strategies to connect with low SES parents is successful, they also believe that relationships require a substantial amount of time to develop. In most cases, educators find that they have a limited opportunity to interact with low SES parents, and so they discuss making deliberate efforts not to overwhelm them. Instead, educators usually begin their conversations with something light and less threatening. As discussed by Emma:

> I'm out there with the kids waiting. "Okay come on." Talk to the parents, "Hi, how are you? How was last night?" Or if little Johnny had a soccer game, "How was it?".

By not discussing anything too important, educators are also able to prevent any unnecessary conflict that might emerge during interactions. Often, educators have to deal with angry and confrontational parents, especially when discussing important academic or behavioural issues that have to do with their children. Commonly, low SES parents are protective of their children and feel threatened whenever educators criticize them.

Educators expressed concern that they will come across as condescending towards low SES parents, which can result in hostile interactions. For instance, Liam is critical of teachers who fail to interact with low SES parents in a meaningful way:

> …lots of teachers who come at it are arse backwards where "I need this from you because my life is a living hell with your son or daughter" that's their mindset. That's the mindset of going into the conversation if that's your mindset going into the conversation parents pick up on that. They're not stupid. They can read right through sugar sweetness, kindness when a teacher [is] self-serving…

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Even though educators need to build relationships with parents in order to fulfill their roles, they believe that they need to approach these relationships with genuine altruism and convince them that their concerns are sincere. According to educators, schools need to be careful not to offend or anger low SES parents or to intimidate them during interactions. Sophia, a principal, believes that educators have to be "very, very careful" to not upset low SES parents as they are very vulnerable, shy, and easily intimidated. Instead, Sophia stresses that schools need to draw more on positive communication and strategies when interacting with low SES parents:

> …we've really worked hard to engage our parents, even if it's just a phone call… …We try to make the positive calls home and sometimes the teachers will see parents in the grocery store or whatever. We always encourage stop and say "hi" at least, "How are you doing?" Just to make that condition because I find too, in my role as [a] principal I need to have that connection because sometimes you have to talk about things that are not that, like discipline problems or whatever. So, you need to have some kind of positive rapport with the parent. And then you don't want to scare the parent away too. You want the parent to understand that you're there to help their child. You're there for them as well. We're in this together. It's a team kind of approach.

Sophia believes in not discussing any negative issues such as "discipline problems" when interacting with low SES parents, especially when those relationships have not yet been developed. Sophia believes that doing so could result in backlash and anger from parents who feel intimidated by educators. For instance, experienced educators believe that many inexperienced educators overreact to low SES parents' hostility or defensiveness. Liam, a principal, believes that these teachers need to "deal with it", or to let parents "get angry", as Amelia suggests:

> You got to give them that opportunity to say what they're really feeling and not take offense to it. And not take it personally. I think a lot of my teachers would as soon as a parent says something about what they're doing, they take it really personally and then they don't want to work with that -- so you've got to give them time to vent. And so, if they have that time, they say, "You know what? I'm listening to you, and I hear what you're saying, and I get…" again, back to --

> "I get your problem. You know, you were bullied at school. Let's talk about what we can do for your daughter." You know? But you have to -- you have to listen and give them the time…

Experienced educators believe that educators should not "take things personally". However, this may be more difficult for less experienced educators. In contrast, experienced educators believe that they can more effectively navigate around low SES parents' vulnerabilities and insecurities that generally prevent them from engaging with schools. In contrast, less experienced educators believe that they have to overcome more significant challenges when it comes to gaining the trust of low SES parents.

Supportive Environments. Educators believe that low SES parents are disadvantaged in traditional school environments in which they feel intimidated in the presence of educators. According to the literature, low SES parents typically shy away from schools due to prior negative experiences with schools and intimidation in the presence of educators (Lareau, 1987). To engage with low SES parents, therefore, educators believe that schools should reject the traditional model of parent-school interactions and instead embrace and encourage environments that focus on the needs of low SES communities. According to educators, the problem with interacting with low SES parents in a more traditional environment is that educators fail to meet the needs of low SES parents. In these situations, educators believe that it is common for low SES parents to feel intimidated and not welcomed in schools.

In contrast to traditional school environments where schools invite parents for a meeting with the teacher, educators believe that alternative environments are more appropriate for low SES parents. For instance, Liam advocates for a "community approach" that focuses not just on what schools want but on the various barriers to learning that low SES communities endure. According to Liam, many low SES parents often view

schools as a "big and scary place". Therefore, Liam wants to low SES parents to feel more comfortable engaging in schools and "feel welcome just like we want them". Other educators also agree with this approach that low SES parents should feel welcome and to know that schools are compassionate places for them to interact. Educators discussed using an "open door policy" when it comes to interacting with low SES parents. In this type of environment, educators state that the school-parent relationship is more open to the suggestions, feedback, and general comments that low SES parents have about their experiences and what they would like to see changed. Also, educators believe that this open door policy allows parents to participate and interact with educators in whichever way parents want. The perceived benefits of an open-door approach are discussed by a teacher, Jessica:

> I know for me we have an open door policy, so parents can come in at any time that they want. They don't have to call; they don't have to make an appointment. They can just come in whenever they want. If they want to come in for the day, if they want to volunteer, if they just want to watch, if they just have questions they're more than welcome to come. Like that's not a problem. Usually, at the end of the day, we'll just be standing in the coatroom talking to parents. Most of them have questions like "Oh, how did he do today?" or "Were there any issues?" or "This is what we're doing this week, these are our plans."

With an open-door policy, educators feel that lower SES parents are more comfortable during their interactions with them as they can get their feedback as opposed to just merely telling parents what to do. According to educators, lower SES parents are often intimidated by educators' presence and do not feel confident during interactions with them. As a result, Tori, a teacher, feels that it is important to ask parents what they need, and what they want to talk about during interactions. Educators discuss their need to increase parent engagement among all parents but believe that low SES parents are more vulnerable (i.e., they require more sensitivity

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than do higher SES parents). Educators find that once low parents feel more comfortable interacting with educators, parents will open up to them during their interactions. Educators find that once a good relationship is developed, educators believe that communication between low SES parents and educators increases and as a result can help in solving problems such as overcoming barriers that occur when low SES parents have a negative impression of schools. Zoey believes that making low SES parents feel more comfortable and relaxed during interactions has positive results:

> …if they were having a concern about something that was going on with their child or something that was going on in the school that they felt comfortable enough after a month or so of me being here and me just sitting back and letting them do their thing they would come to me and say "Listen, this is what [Stacy] came home and said to me. Is this really what's happening in the classroom? Or, I got this note home from the teacher. I'm not really sure how to take it or how to respond to it."…And so I kind of was the bridge to help the communication better between the parents and the teachers, and they felt more comfortable asking questions. They didn't feel stupid asking me the questions. So they didn't get their backs up because they knew they could come to me and before they got all defensive and ask for clarification on what was going on in the school…

Some educators find that in more relaxed and informal environments low SES parents feel more comfortable and confident, which brings more opportunities to participate in schools. As a result, teachers feel more comfortable approaching low SES parents when they know that they have good relationships with them. In some cases, educators encourage low SES parents to volunteer and participate in their children's schooling. However, educators believe that low SES parents need to feel welcomed and that their contribution is valued and appreciated, as Wendy, a teacher, discusses:

> …letting parents know, yes, it's okay to come and ask me questions; yes, it's okay to come in and volunteer. I would love it. So it's just to make yourself available for them to come and talk to you if they need anything…

In a more relaxed, open, and supportive environment, educators believe that they are successfully

engaging with low SES parents, primarily when they use humour and informally interact with

parents. For instance, educators discussed their strategies to interact with low SES parents in a

personal or "down-to-earth" way. The interviewees discussed making school as a "fun place" for

low SES parents, as discussed by Emma, especially since many low SES parents had negative

experiences in schooling. By creating a fun environment for parents, the goal is to create

incentives for parents to participate without fear of acting in any formal way.

Educators find that by merely being "funny" during their conversations with low SES

parents can reduce any tensions or anxiety that occur during interactions with parents. For

instance, Chloe, a teacher, tries to make parents laugh during conversations:

> I find myself…I'm pretty approachable I think, and I do find myself outgoing.
> So, I always do make that first step to let the parent know, and it's usually with a
> funny joke on the side. Like today I said, "Oh, you're signing your life away right
> here." and that's a parent that hasn't made eye contact when they drop off, and
> they found it kind of funny…

According to educators, these types of informal interactions seem to attract low SES parents and

make them feel more comfortable interacting in school environments, especially when discussing

anything that might cause parents to feel anxious. According to Benjamin, it is essential for

parents to feel "safe" when talking about important and sensitive issues. For the most part,

educators avoid discussing negative or serious issues with low SES parents out of concern for

how they will react, especially if their relationship has not yet been established. For instance,

Charlotte believes in cracking jokes and being funny with low SES parents during her initial

interactions with them and does not discuss anything too serious until a relationship is developed

where she feels more comfortable speaking "more vocally about certain situations" with low

SES parents. According to educators, making light of serious issues is important and reduces any

awkwardness or anxieties associated with stressful situations for parents and teachers. Also,

according to educators, it is essential to have a relaxed and funny personality, which allows

educators, like Noah, to build meaningful and productive relationships with both his students and

their parents. Noah argues that many educators take themselves "way too seriously" when

interacting with parents. Instead, he takes the position that educators should make "light" of

situations with parents to "crack a few jokes" with them. Using this approach, Noah finds

changes in how his students and their parents interact with them:

> I had a student who would throw chairs and stuff like that, and every day you kinda just have a little debriefing with the parent outside, and you know you crack a few jokes and keep it light, and say "ok this is [what] we're working on", the next thing. So more of an informal agenda. And the kid would come back, and the student would be more on track, and you would notice changes.

According to educators, interacting with low SES parents in more relaxed and informal settings

allows parents to feel more comfortable interacting in schools and enjoying their time without

pressures to act in any formal or specific manner and provides a safe and encouraging

opportunity to engage in their children's education while in school.

Another strategy used by educators is to show low SES parents that they care and support

them beyond academic needs. Many of the educators discussed situations in which they would

help out low SES parents in any way they could. Educators feel responsible for forming

relationships with parents to not only support children's schooling but also repair low SES

communities. This idea of school as a form of institutional support for low SES communities was

also discussed by Zoey who feels that her school does an excellent job of welcoming low SES

parents and helping them with their troubles:

> I've seen the principal here and the vice-principal here have parents in for meetings that have nothing to do with the academics or school, but they just see that there's something going on and they bring the parents in, and they're… kind of [there] to help mediate through it, which I think is a really good thing. I think you have a school in this kind of area as more than just an educational facility. It becomes kind of like the hub where the people can go … it's a safe place.

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Through their activation of emotional capital (i.e., the ability to use emotions to gain low SES parents' trust), educators believe that they develop good relationships with low SES parents when they embrace their emotions during interactions with parents. Educators believe that establishing good relationships with low SES parents develops. However, when it comes to the needs of many low SES communities, educators believe that they have to go beyond academic support but also emotional. In many cases, the educators discussed helping low SES families with basic yet essential needs (clothing, transportation, food) that allow their children to show up to school. For instance, Liam is a principal at a school in Northern Ontario that has a large population of poor parents. Often, Liam believes that these parents lack resources to allow their children to get to school on time. As a strategy to get more children into schools, Liam discusses his idea of offering them free transportation for their children to get to school:

> Anything that I can do to make them feel welcome gives me a greater chance of getting their kids here on a daily basis or if an issue arises it gives me the opportunity to have an open and honest dialogue with them as opposed to a chastising one or an accusatory one or a blaming one or one where they just put their hands up and buck the school. I need their support. I give kids lots of rides. So, if a kid misses the bus, I give them rides home. If parents come here for meetings and stuff I'll go pick them up and drop them off. Anything that I can do to remove barriers that [don't] cost me a lot of money I will do.

Because many low SES parents deal with barriers (mental health issues, low income, and disability) that prevent them from engaging in schools, educators believe that schools have to provide resources and opportunities to these families, which allow them to help get their children to school. Educators refer to their ability to help low SES communities with basic needs as developing a "personal approach", as stated by Sophia, which serves low SES communities with basic needs beyond helping them academically:

> So I would say a lot of our parents do have mental health issues and have very low income. They're on welfare or some kind of disability. So we have to really

personalize our approach because they're afraid of the school. They're intimidated by teachers. They don't feel they've got the skills to help kids with their homework. They might have one vehicle and no gas in the tank until they get a check. So we have to really look after those kids. We have to be really extra vigilant. They can't miss the bus… We do a lunch program and a breakfast program. So we've always got food available if anybody needs something to eat. And we keep extra clothes, you know, jackets, snowsuits, and stuff just for kids who might need them. We find that we have to do that because it's a really needy population….

According to educators, being personal with low SES parents allows them to develop good and productive relationships. As a result of better relationships with low SES parents, educators find that they have better access to learning more about their family lives such as insight into children's issues that might need to be addressed from a school-level approach. According to Charlotte, having more low SES parents involved has many benefits for her as a teacher:

I go talk to all of my parents at my school on a personal note. If there are personal issues at home, I address them. So to me, I think it's important as a teacher to be a part of that community process and kind of exemplify that... So if there's something personal that I need to talk to parents about, say there's alcoholism issue in the house. Where my parents are at the school level, I would go up to them and say "Listen, what's going on at home? I've heard this, this and this is happening".

Educators believe that successful interactions with low SES parents consist of going beyond serving the academic needs of their children but also focusing on additional needs such as access to school or addressing their emotional needs. Educators believe that if schools do not support low SES communities beyond their academic needs, then this will result in too many barriers for low SES children to overcome. For educators, relationships between low SES families and schools require offering these families additional sources of support but also encouraging their involvement in informal environments where parents can feel more relaxed and comfortable when interacting with educators.

Managing relationships. Although educators believe that parent involvement is important, they disagree on what role low SES parents should have concerning parent engagement in school. Despite beliefs that they need to foster strong relationships with low SES parents and encourage them to be involved in schools, some educators believe that many low SES parents do not understand how actually to engage in schools in terms of academics. For instance, educators believe that although low SES parents are receiving the message that parent engagement is essential, they do not understand how to implement these practices (Aurini et al., 2016). This perspective was shared by Dora, a teacher, who believes that parent engagement means more than parents merely showing up to school:

> I think parent engagement is more than getting the parents in the building…I think as [the] board tends to default, "Well we can get them in the building, we offer them food, we offer them coffee." Those are no-brainers. We know how to get people in the building. We know how to do that. But that's not parent engagement. I'm not saying that's always easy because we have to get them through the door before we can do anything else with them. But it's what we do with them once we've got them through the door. That's the question.

In contrast, other educators believe that parents can be too involved in schools. Benjamin, a teacher from Wright School, believes that too much involvement is overwhelming and can have negative consequences:

> The parent can call you if there's an issue, but not a parent who's going to be hanging over your shoulder 24 hours a day going, "What about my kid? What about my kid? What about my kid?" It's great that they want to be involved, but there is that point of, "Back off. This is my room. We'll talk to you if there is any issue, but it's nice to know that the parents are there…

According to educators, school boards and some principals place too much pressure on schools to engage parents in the school. As a result, educators believe that such efforts to increase parental engagement can interfere in their professional boundaries and control in the classroom. Specifically, although educators want more parental engagement in schools, they disagreed on

having parents as "partners" in schools, which is a significant part or recommendation of the

2010 parent engagement policy. Among the interviewees, only one principal (Mia) believes in

the partnership model:

> …parents talk about what they see, we talk about what we see, and then we come
> up with a plan together with check-in in four weeks; really trying to involve them
> as a partner in what we're doing…

In contrast, another principal Sophia believes that an ideal relationship between parents and

schools should be "two-way" or more along the lines of cooperation:

> The parent is supporting them at home. The parent is receptive if I need to call
> home or need to email [them]. The parent will do something about it. And then
> the parent also [feels] like "My child is getting what they need in school. My child
> is doing well in school. The teacher pays attention to my kid. The teacher knows
> who my kid is. The teacher is helping my child get what they need to be
> successful and have good grades." To me, that's what the two-way relationship
> would be.

Also, since low SES parents face more barriers when interacting with schools, educators believe

that it is unrealistic and thus unfair to place high expectations on low SES parents to be equally

involved as high-SES parents. Educators do not have the same quality of interactions with low

SES parents for a variety of factors. Commonly, low SES parents are not available due to their

work schedules. This can create many issues for interactions, as argued by Chloe:

> They just don't have the time. They're either rushing to drop the child off or
> rushing because they've worked all day or it's daycare. Like we do have some
> children that come to us from daycare in the morning, and we take them back to
> daycare…I think it's the working parent that we have the most difficult time with.

Many of the interviewees believe that it is unrealistic and unfair to expect low SES parents to

engage in schools in the same way as higher SES parents. For instance, some educators believe

that schools hold low SES parents to the same standards as higher SES parents when it comes to

parent involvement. Teachers, Oliver and Lilly, blame schools for using a "middle-class

measuring rod" when judging the quality of relationships with all parents, which can occur

among some educators (e.g., Cohen, 1955). As a result of these high expectations on all parents to engage, educators believe that this will result in lower levels of involvement among low SES parents.

Instead, educators believe that parent involvement with low SES parents may need to look different from other types of parent involvement among higher SES parents. However, despite social class differences, many educators want their relationships with all parents to function as "cooperative" not "partnerships". They believe that parents' role is to reinforce what is learned in school in the home, to show respect and cooperation, and not challenge educators' authority. Also, when it comes to ideals on parent volunteering, educators do consider it a good idea and value parents volunteering, but not at high rates of frequency. As Sophia states, it should be occasional and should be "a couple of times a month or once a month or once every two months. I would think it's the teacher feeling like the parent knows what is going on". Other teachers also agree that parents volunteering would be a good idea, but there are some who feel reluctant. For instance, Madison, a teacher from Simcoe, expressed concern that she would be the only one who did as her school did not implement any official policy on parent volunteering. She would only feel comfortable having parents volunteer if other teachers also allowed it. However, currently, she does not offer opportunities for parents to volunteer and feels that her school does not have any clear policies or school guidelines on how to manage it. Overall, these findings suggest that educators have the knowledge and resources on how to build stronger relationships with low SES parents. However, educators did express concern over how to best implement parent engagement policies.

Emotional Capital as a Resource. Establishing a good rapport with low SES parents has another

advantage for educators: providing opportunities for low SES parents to feel more comfortable in schools. While educators use their emotions as a tool to develop relationships with parents, it is possible that lower SES parents could also benefit from these interactions. From an emotional capital perspective, emotional capital is activated and transformed into other types of capital (e.g., social and cultural capital) (Cottingham, 2016; Zembylas, 2007) via interactions with low SES parents. The use of emotions when building relationships with low SES parents is viewed as essential according to educators. In the context of parent-school interactions, educators use their emotions (for example, concern, passions, and sympathy) to create opportunities and support in the form of information and academic resources.

In addition to teaching children, educators believe that they can also offer support to the needs of low SES parents and communities. The educators interviewed for this study believe that they can help repair their relationships with low SES communities, but this requires differences in strategy when it comes to using more positive emotions and avoiding negative emotions not to offend low SES parents. Therefore, the fact that educators believe they can engage low SES parents into schooling may have beneficial outcomes for their children. From an emotional capital perspective, it may be that emotional capital is transformed into other types of capital (social and cultural) for low SES parents in the form of social relationships, knowledge, and value about educational experiences (e.g., how to help their children navigate through educational issues) and the importance of parent-school relationships. On the other hand, the activation of emotional capital also allows educators to gain the trust of low SES parents (e.g., social capital) who are otherwise disengaged from educational institutions. In many cases, the interviewees were optimistic about their relationships with low SES parents and found creative ways to engage with them and discussed some of the positive outcomes of their interactions with

parents.

From an emotional capital perspective, outcomes of emotional capital can be either negative or positive (Reay, 2004). Educators believe that by merely providing food and beverages as incentives attracts low SES parents to participate and meet with them. Many educators, for instance, discussed their strategies of inviting parents to BBQs, potlucks, and other events that had free food. In these environments, low SES parents felt comfortable engaging with educators, which created opportunities for dialogue. The majority of interviewees discussed how their strategies to engage with parents resulted in positive outcomes, such as when parents opened up to them and discussed important information about their lives such as not being able to read or specific fears that may prevent them from engaging in schools. During these interactions, low SES parents build trust with educators and can now open up and share information that can be helpful. For instance, Olivia discusses how low SES parents can develop trust with educators during informal meetings:

> When I was in the inner city we used to do a lot of coffee clutch kind of thing, like come and watch a video of how to read with your kids…and then I would actually really talk with the parents and find out things. They'd tell me stories how they're afraid to take their driver's licenses test because they're not good at reading.

According to educators, developing trust with low SES parents is crucial for meaningful relationships. Educators need to know the issues that prevent parents from engaging with schools. In these relationships, educators have access to valuable knowledge and can understand how these issues affect their lives and ability to engage in school. In some cases, these relationships with low SES parents can result in good outcomes. One teacher, Noah, noticed significant improvements in children's education because of stronger relationships with low SES parents:

> You gotta keep it "loosey goosey" and really relax and joke a lot with these parents, which I find helps big-time. If you don't take yourself seriously, they tend to be more approachable in coming towards you, so you know, treading the water between being professional and being unprofessional. But that makes them feel good, and they tend to open up a little bit more. And then, the benefits that I see by doing that they kind of buy into what you're preaching and what you are trying to do, and you'll see changes in homework patterns and things like that.

From this perspective, interacting with low SES parents and creating opportunities to develop good relationships can translate into more engagement in their children's learning. Overall, educators found that their relationships with low SES parents are successful when parents feel comfortable and want to cooperate with them. By interacting with low SES parents on a more informal and personal level, educators feel that this has positive results such as changes in how their students behave and, in some cases, these relationships may result in improved academics.

Discussion

These findings reveal several key factors that are important for how educators perceive their relationships with low SES parents. First, educators perceive the importance of using their emotions as strategies when interacting with low SES parents (e.g., the problems they have to deal with), and how to interact with parents, so they do not overwhelm them. The challenge for educators, however, is that they have to ensure parents that schools are welcoming environments and to help them overcome previous negative impressions of educators. From an emotional labour perspective, educators believe that they can manage their emotions by expressing their positive emotions (e.g., understanding, compassion, sympathy) while concealing their negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) during initial encounters until they feel that their relationships are developed. Once they have developed good, trusting relationships, educators believe that they can communicate any issue with parents freely. However, until these relationships have been built, educators believe that they must approach low SES parents with sensitivity and care so that they do not intimidate them. According to educators, these strategies seem to be effective

when establishing relationships with low SES parents.

Second, from an emotional capital perspective, educators believe that they must beyond the need to help their children but also to help low SES communities more generally. In this case, emotional capital is distinguished from emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 1979) in that educators are not merely using their emotions due to environmental expectations or pressures but also internalize and express these emotions (Cottingham, 2016), which did come across during many interviews

Third, from an emotional capital perspective, educators' use of emotions to help repair relationships with low SES parents provides more opportunities to benefit low SES children. According to educators, specific strategies help to build these relationships with low SES parents: low SES parents need to know that schools are welcoming institutions and that they will be treated with respect and care. According to educators, their strategies to build relationships with low SES parents has produced some positive results: educators believe that low SES parents feel more comfortable and confident discussing issues with them such as their children's academics or other issues because they are interacting in informal ways where parents can freely be themselves without pressures to act or behave any differently (such as in more formal parent-teacher settings).

In some cases, educators believe their improved relationships had a positive impact on children's academics. With more information about the lives of low SES families, educators feel like they can more effectively help parents and their children. From a theoretical perspective, these findings suggest that while cultural and social capital explain why higher SES parents have stronger relationships with schools, emotional capital is critical to explaining how educators' use of their emotions may create opportunities and benefits for low SES parents and their children.

Fourth, although educators believe that they can build productive and meaningful relationships with low SES parents, many disagreed the nature of these relationships. Some educators support the idea that parents should be "partners" with schools, while others want a cooperative relationship. While the former approach views parents as equals with educators, the latter approach encourages involvement in schools and interactions with educators but without intruding on educator's professional expertise and boundaries. Furthermore, despite creating opportunities for parents to engage in school, not all low SES parents engage in productive ways. For instance, some educators found that parents treat schools as a place to socialize with other parents instead of supporting their children's schooling experiences. As a result, some educators have questioned the overall purpose of parent engagement practices as currently implemented by school boards.

Conclusion

In many ways, educators deal with many issues that extend beyond the classroom. Not only are they held responsible for educating children, but also they are now expected to engage in meaningful relationships with parents (Thorne, 1994). Moreover, compared to teaching children, interacting with parents might be even more difficult for educators to endure (Miretzky, 2004). However, educators believe that they can engage with low SES parents, even though these relationships may be more challenging. I argue that educators' beliefs about their role in building relationships with low SES parents reflect schools' *meso-level* mechanism of compensation to reduce SES-based inequality. In this study, educators perceive that their strategies to engage with low SES parents are successful but that these relationships take time to develop (e.g., developing trust and respect from low parents).

In this chapter, I view such strategies from an emotional capital perspective. As a form of capital, using emotions might allow educators to obtain their goals such as building relationships with low SES parents. For instance, according to educators, one strategy is to engage with low SES parents in informal environments which allow parents to interact with educators without additional pressures to conform to traditional schooling environments. In other words, educators discussed the need to adopt a community-based approach to encourage low SES parents to engage in schools without fear of being judged or intimidated by educators.

Given that educators find that emotions are needed to help engage low SES parents, it may be that other forms of capital such as social capital need to coexist with emotional capital. While cultural and social capital explain why higher SES parents are more comfortable and engaged in schools, these concepts do not account for how educators discuss building relationships with low SES parents. In this sense, greater insight into how emotional capital is used to repair relationships between schools and low SES families could change how we understand how low SES communities could access other forms of capital such as social capital via schools or educators. As Small (2009) points out, little is known about how people establish social capital or make connections with their social ties, which is an essential missing piece of social capital theory. The development or formation of social ties depends on the opportunities for individuals to interact. In this sense, the formation of ties could develop unexpectedly because of social interactions with strangers. People develop ties during occasions where there is an opportunity to interact and cooperate with a common mission (Small, 2009). Emotional capital also refers to how individuals who care for others can transfer resources, which can establish opportunities for educators such as gaining the trust and respect from lower SES parents who typically shy away from school environments. In this sense, emotional capital

benefits both low SES parents (in the form of developing strong relationships with educators who can help them with their children's educational experiences), and it can help educators (in the form of connecting with disengaged low SES parent populations).

Third, educators believe that gaining trust and respect from low SES parents requires the strategic management of emotions (Cottingham, 2016; Hochschild, 1983). For instance, teachers are required and expected to display their positive emotions while controlling their negative emotions during interactions. Even when confronted by angry or defensive parents, teachers are expected by the principal to remain calm and not express any negative emotions as this could make things worse for relationships. To use emotional capital as a tool for building relationships with low SES parents requires knowledge and familiarity with low SES communities and how to interact with them. As a result, some educators expressed concern over the purpose of parent engagement in schools. While some educators believe that their relationships with parents should be based on a "partnership model", others believe that their relationships with parents should be based on a cooperative model in which educators maintain their professional boundaries and control.

Moreover, some educators believe that a community-based approach, as opposed to the traditional school approach, is more helpful when engaging with low SES parents. In this setting, low SES parents are not judged on the quality of their engagement or involvement with schools but are instead valued for what they can offer. While a community approach is a welcoming and supportive environment for parents, a cooperative approach also allows educators a high degree of authority and status as educators.

Overall, the findings present a perspective often overlooked by sociologists who focus on schools role in perpetuating inequality. Instead, my findings suggest that educators want to help

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low SES communities become more involved in schools and give them more opportunities. In contrast, reproductionists generally ignore perspectives on how educators might care about the disadvantaged (Wolf, 2013). As shown Paulle (2013) argued, reproductionist theory focuses on problems rather than solutions to inequality in education. As my findings suggest, educators' strategies to connect with low SES parents may offer insight into the need for an alternative approach to building relationships with all parents.

Limitations

A few limitations of this study are important to note. Since this study focused only on the perspectives of educators, no verification of the events or details they depict is possible. Thus, any interpretations of their discussions and views do not necessarily reflect the entire situations or interactions with parents. Furthermore, the educators who were interviewed were part of the summer learning project, which could imply a degree of exceptionalism among educators who may be more compassionate, tolerant, or understanding towards parents of low SES backgrounds. It may be that these educators are not common and thus other teachers may or may not share the same views as these teachers who participated in the summer learning project. However, efforts were made to compensate for these limitations. For instance, the research team for the summer learning project studied the summer learning programs over three summers with these educators and spent significant time on the school sites, attended events held by the school (e.g., parenting information sessions). Also, over 100 parent interviews were conducted across this research period, which would provide a useful perspective on parent-teacher relationships for future projects. However, I chose not to include these parents' perspectives since these parents were "engaged" rather than disengaged during the summer learning program sites. Therefore, I chose not to incorporate these interviews as they do not address the research

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question of *how do educators view their roles in building relationships with disengaged low SES parents?* I suggest that future studies should consider methodological strategies to include a sample of "disengaged low SES parents" to understand from their perspectives their barriers to educational engagement. Furthermore, future studies should also investigate why educators become teachers and the role that emotional capital (via an "affective habitus") might play in their decisions to become teachers. Moreover, it is also important to consider how parents use their emotions as capital to connect with educators.

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this article can inform policymakers about the importance of using emotions as a resource to build relationships with low SES parents. One of the critical findings from this study is that, according to educators, low SES parents may feel more comfortable during informal interactions (e.g., having an "open-door" policy or engaging in safer environments in schools for parents). If true, parent engagement policies should focus on establishing more informal or comfortable environments in which low SES parents can interact with educators, in contrast to traditional parent-teacher meetings held in classrooms, for example. Moreover, the findings also reveal a need for training and skills development for educators to build more confidence and knowledge on how to build high-quality relationships with low SES communities. While teachers develop skills on how to educate and interact with their students, many inexperienced teachers need training via workshops or in teachers' college about how to engage with parents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is also clear from the findings that more developments should be made about parent engagement practices and for schools to inform

parents about the importance of engagement and some strategies to engage meaningfully in schools.

Although research on how to effectively interact with low SES parents is minimal, the consensus is that effective strategies are based on organizational efforts to support the needs of low SES communities. In the United States, various programs were established to inspire low SES parents to get involved in their children's schools and to help low SES parents learn (e.g., many schools offer literacy and math programs, school events, parent-teacher meetings) (e.g., Benson & Martin, 2003). While there is no direct statistical evidence of these program's effectiveness, at minimum educators feel that these programs help to inspire parents to get on board with their children's educational experiences. Educators acknowledge that low SES parents shy away from schools more so than higher SES parents, so at a minimum, low SES parents' involvement is valued "regardless of their own formal educational experiences" (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999, p. 452). Velsor and Orozco (2007) advocate for a "community-centered approach" rather than a traditional approach (e.g., expecting parents to participate in parent-teacher meetings) that exists in many schools, which includes efforts around understanding the barriers that prevent low SES parents from engagement in schools (e.g., financial and social barriers related to poor educational backgrounds).

Furthermore, for these low SES populations, educators need to reach out to them actively and not merely invite them to participate in school-related activities and events (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Since research has shown a significant cultural gap between middle-class school personnel and low-income families (O'Connor, 2001), educational training is needed on understanding such differences (Velsor & Orozco, 2007). The goal with this type of training is to increase parents' social capital — skills and information consistent with existing school culture

and to make parents better able to aid their children in school-related activities (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Overcoming the barriers to the school involvement of low-income parents and incorporating community-centric strategies for involvement most likely requires a paradigm shift and is therefore quite difficult to implement (Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Moreover, the needs of low SES parents go beyond just the educational needs of their children. Often, low SES populations lack food, work, and access to proper healthcare. Schools may need to provide on-site services and activities for low SES communities as incentives for engagement. Also, the findings of this chapter show that less experienced teachers need to develop more skills in low SES parent engagement. By training educators to respond to the basic needs of low SES communities and finding ways to establish comfort, trust, and cooperation, educators may be able to develop more effective and productive relationships with members of low SES communities that could result in positive change and improvements in children's education.

CHAPTER FOUR: Generating Cultural Mobility at the Micro Level: How Educators Partially Compensate for Social Inequality

Introduction

Inequality in education is a crucial topic in sociology. However, schools do not receive enough credit for compensating for children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. Although reproductionists (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) hold schools responsible for reproducing social inequality, this perspective ignores evidence that schools help low SES children develop cognitive skills**,** as shown in the summer learning literature (Alexander et al., 2007; Davies & Aurini, 2013; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; von Hippel et al., 2018). While these large-scale quantitative studies on seasonal learning have shown that schools reduce disparities in learning among students despite their social class, the precise mechanisms by which they do so, however, are yet to be demonstrated. Sociologists of education lack an understanding of the micro-level processes by which educators attempt to compensate for social inequalities.

In this chapter, I offer a perspective of one particular instance of the compensatory function of schools focusing on what educators (e.g., teachers and principals) believe their role is in helping low SES children improve their quality of learning. To understand educators' beliefs about their compensatory role in reducing SES-based inequality, I draw on Lareau and Weininger's (2003) conception of cultural capital which refers to aligning family practices with school requirements. However, unlike Lareau and Weininger's emphasis on higher SES children, I extend this concept to DiMaggio's (1982) cultural mobility framework to consider how schools and educators are a potential source of cultural capital for low SES children. Specifically, the goal in this chapter is to understand whether and how schools are a source of cultural mobility

from a micro-level analysis. It is important to note that the goal of this chapter is not to show evidence that educators are actual sources of cultural mobility but to provide a perspective of what educators believe is important for helping low SES children in the schools. I argue that educators' voices and opinions about their role in helping low SES children are lacking in the sociology of education: while reproductionist view schools as reproducing inequality, educators believe their role is to help all children, regardless of social class background. Further, since these educators have experience educating low SES communities, it is important to understand what these educators have to say about improving educational opportunities for low SES children.

To understand educators' perceptions and beliefs on how to reduce inequality among low SES children, I draw on interview data from 32 educators. In this chapter, I discuss what educators believe to be successful approaches to help low SES children become better adjusted to learning environments. Compared to higher SES children, educators believe that low SES children face barriers in their learning. As stated in the literature, before educators have a chance to support children, SES-based inequalities such as gaps in cognitive and developmental skills are present (Davies et al., 2016; von Hippel et al., 2018). However, educators believe that they are responsible for providing additional resources and support for low SES children (e.g., providing children food, clothing, and supplemental learning resources). They also believe that low SES children need emotional support (such as engaging with students with care, sensitivity, patience, and finding ways to build relationships with them). From a compensatory perspective, I argue that educators' beliefs about their role to help low SES children reflects the idea that schools help compensate for low SES inequality rather than reproduce it.

Overall, this chapter contributes to the literature by presenting a micro-level analysis of how educational supplements such as summer programs attempt to compensate for family processes by helping low SES children become more prepared to learn. I argue that while partial compensation is created at the macro level through funding formulae and supplementary initiatives such as summer programs, it is also enacted at the micro level through educators' beliefs about their ethical commitments and sense of responsibility to serve low SES children. I find that educators' understanding of their roles reflects the concept of partial compensation in two respects:1) cognitively — by being knowledgeable about their low SES children's lives and using appropriate strategies to engage with low SES children; and 2) emotionally — by generating senses of professional duty and responsibility to support low SES children.

Literature Review

Social class inequality is one of the most popular topics in the sociology of education (Davies, 1995a). As found by Mehta and Davies (2018), a majority of the sociology of education articles focus on differences between students' social class and educational outcomes and opportunities. While most sociologists acknowledge that children from lower SES backgrounds face more barriers throughout their educational careers ranging from pre-school to higher education (Alexander et al., 2007), sociologists disagree on the sources of inequality. On a basic level, sources of inequality may be placed on schools (e.g., teachers, curricula, organization) or societal factors (e.g., family practices, home environments). Reproductionists generally argue that schools are responsible for why inequality exists in education. These scholars portray the relationship between educators and low SES children as distant and hostile and that schools are the causal agents in worsening or maintaining inequality. Conceptually, reproductionists argue

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that low SES children fail in school due to a lack of understanding of the "rules of the game" of education and therefore are mistreated by educators (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In contrast, they find that higher SES children have a higher appreciation and knowledge of what schools consider appropriate behaviour, values, and attitude.

At the macro level, reproductionists blame school organization (e.g., streaming or tracking) and curricula that bias against low SES children as found in schools' "hidden curriculum" (Apple & Weis, 1983). Also, low SES children are more likely to attend lower income schools staffed with less effective teachers (Warren, 2002). Many sociologists believe that these lower income schools reduce learning opportunities among low SES children (Jencks, 1972; Kozol, 1991, as cited in von Hippel et al., 2018).

At the micro level, reproductionists claim that educators are mostly ignorant or dismissive of low SES children's lives, and fail to establish genuine emotional connections. Some studies show that teachers rate high SES children more favourably than low SES children (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008), that there is a relationship between teacher expectations and their students' achievement levels (Hamilton, Sherman, & Ruvolo, 1990; Rist, 1970), and that teachers have stronger social bonds with students from their same social class (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; MacLeod, 1995; Rist, 1970). Other researchers focus on the conflict between a working-class culture and school culture. For instance, Willis's (1977) work points to a bias in education that unfairly serves working-class culture, and that low SES students hold resistant attitudes towards learning (Davies, 1995a) and an equal belief that schools do not care about working-class students (Davies, 1995b).

In their book, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976)*,* which serves as a Marxist critique on modern education institutions (Davies, 1995a), authors Bowles and Gintis criticized the idea

that student intelligence correlates to academic achievement. Instead, they argue that academic success is mostly a product of social class. They argue that low SES students are mere victims of schools and its sorting mechanisms based on the values and demands of capitalism (Davies, 1995a). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) also argued this view that schools were mostly responsible for the reproduction of inequality and biased towards middle-class families. Higher SES children were successful in school because of their better understanding and familiarity with the high-status culture, and schools in the guise of merit rewarded this. However, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that this notion of meritocracy was merely an illusion or as they put it, "misrecognized". Instead, schools functioned as a legitimate (or perceived to be) process of stratification. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, schools had adopted arbitrary and class-biased rules, which only middle-class children could effectively understand (Davies & Rizk, 2018).

The problem with reproductionists, however, is that they offer no solution to the problem of SES-based inequality in education. For instance, Bowles and Gintis did not offer school as a solution (e.g., reform). Instead, inequalities are viewed as inevitable due to the exploitative function of capitalism. Also, many claims made by reproductionists are based on small amounts of empirical data and lack careful reasoning. For instance, Willis (1977) did not consider the positive implications around the fact that half of the working class youth in his study (i.e., "the ear'oles") held positive views towards schooling and got along well with their teachers. Therefore, many of these claims that schools are harmful towards low SES children are unsubstantiated based on the reproductionist framework.

In contrast to viewing schools as the driving force behind SES inequality, other sociologists examine the adverse effects of unequal homes and children's family environments.

This perspective examines how low SES children do poorly in schools because of their personal and social disadvantages, which are rooted in their families' social class (or lack of education and financial stability) (von Hippel et al., 2018). One of the most important sociologists in this camp is Annette Lareau whose research focuses on the relationship between family practices and inequality in the educational system. For Lareau, the source of inequality stems from unequal family practices: high SES families know how to play the game of schooling expectations and standards via their "concerted cultivation" approach in contrast to low SES families "natural growth approach" (Lareau, 2011). These two parenting logics work differently regarding educational rewards such as academic achievement or strong relationships between families and schools. Lareau argues that higher SES children are taught by their parents how to follow and adhere to school standards and expectations successfully. In contrast, low SES children are raised without any of the schools' values or expectations in mind.

Inequality between social classes also occurs before children enter kindergarten or even preschool (von Hippel et al., 2018). As Davies et al. (2016) describe, lower SES children are more likely to enter kindergarten less school-ready, have developmental, behavioural, and mental health problems. Low SES children are also more likely to lack social skills (Comer, 1988), and are also subject to increased stress, violence at home, and lack positive role models (McLoyd, 1998). Compared to higher SES children, low SES children are more likely to lack in the emotional support from their caregivers which affect their schooling and sense of well-being in the classroom. Therefore, the reproductionist view that schools are responsible for causing social class inequality is not accurate as it does not account for these non-school sources of inequality.

Although lower SES children fare worse in education due to a variety of factors (e.g., cultural, economic and social capital), these gaps in learning are not universal or reflective of all

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children. A few recent studies examined why some low SES children succeeded in education. These studies found a relationship between family practices and low SES children academic achievement (Bempechat, 1998; Slates et al., 2012). For instance, Siraj-Blatchford (2010) found that these low SES child had parents with higher educational aspirations and supported their academics in the home. While these studies show that low SES children can succeed in schooling when their parents are more engaged in their education, for the most part, however, many low SES children are not supported by their families along these lines (Lareau, 2011).

Schools as Partial Compensatory Institutions

However, research has shown that schools can accommodate low SES children in the form of academic resources, mentorship, and educational opportunities (O'Sullivan & Howe, 1999). To put schools' compensatory role into perspective, Downey and Condron (2016) argue that while schools cannot completely compensate for the inequalities associated with unequal homes, schools can partially compensate for these inequalities in educational outcomes. Perhaps the best evidence comes from summer learning studies (e.g., Alexander et al., 2007; Davies & Aurini, 2013; von Hippel et al., 2018). During the school year, students from all backgrounds learn cognitive skills (e.g., literacy and numeracy) at similar rates of success. Initially, these studies found that during the summer months, in contrast, is when SES-based gaps in learning widen. When children return to school in the fall, children from low SES backgrounds are further behind in cognitive skills. The explanation is that when low SES children are out of the schooling environment, they do not participate in educational activities that help them further develop cognitive skills.

In contrast, children from higher SES families are exposed to more educational resources

and learning opportunities and maintain their learning routines and schedules that align with schooling norms. However, a recent study by von Hippel et al., (2018) found that schools' compensatory effects may be more significant than previously understood. While they found that SES gaps in learning grow during first summer vacation and shrank in kindergarten and first grade school years, the variance in SES gaps are larger at the beginning of kindergarten but shrink significantly over 2-3 years "by about 20 percent after two to three years" (p. 346), which suggests that schools' compensatory function carries over long after school begins. Therefore, targeting inequality is best before kindergarten begins, although schools do help to mitigate inequality once schooling begins (von Hippel et al., 2018).

These findings generated by summer learning studies are best illustrated by Entwisle, Alexander, and Olsen's (2000) faucet theory of learning, in which school resources can' turn on' learning processes of learning during school time for all students regardless of their social class background. During the summer months is when this faucet is largely 'turned off' for low SES children. In this chapter, I aim to explore what schools do at a micro-level to help low SES children learn to understand how this compensatory process develops fully. Specifically, I draw on educators' perspectives of their roles in reducing inequality and promoting learning opportunities for low SES children. For instance, according to educators, how do educators help low SES children with significant learning barriers as a result of poverty and unsupportive family environments?

From a micro-level, the role of teachers could provide a further explanation behind schools' partial compensatory function. Teachers are quite skilled at understanding not just academic instructor but also the unhealthy relationship between poverty and children's quality of learning. Specifically, educators have the experience, and are skilled and trained at recognizing

children are facing difficulties in school as a result of their home environment. Once such problems are identified, teachers can help children with educational challenges via intervention programs and mentoring (O'Sullivan & Howe, 1999). Although some researchers blame teachers for their bias against lower SES children (Comer, 1988), other research finds teachers as supportive and compassionate towards low SES children. These teachers often recognize children's issues that affect their concentration in the classroom (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) and are well-trained to help children overcome their challenges to learning.

Adapting the learning environment to focus on the needs of low SES children may a necessary solution to inequality. One study compared the effectiveness of elementary schools and found that schools that prioritized creating a positive and friendly school environment were considered most useful to help children from low SES backgrounds (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). In addition to their experience and qualifications, educators are moral actors whose compassion and genuine concerns about the lives of low SES children are often overlooked and underappreciated in the sociology of education field (McGee, 2004). Often, teachers pursue the field of education because of the caring aspect involved (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). One study based out of Illinois found that principals will ensure that all students have access to basic needs such as healthcare, dental care, and are provided with mental health support if required. Also, these principals ensured that low SES children had access to nutritional breakfasts and lunches (McGee, 2004). In addition, other studies have found that teachers' warmth and compassionate care towards low SES children can increase children's emotional responsiveness and respect towards educators' role in the classroom (McNally & Slutsky, 2018), and that this can result in increased student confidence, fewer behavioural problems, improved literacy, language development, and overall academic achievement (Landry, 2008).

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Cultural Mobility: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I draw on cultural mobility to reflect educators' perspectives and beliefs on how to help low SES children establish better learning opportunities and experiences. However, to understand cultural mobility, it is important to discuss how it relates to cultural capital. The concept of cultural capital is complex yet essential to understanding the relationship between low SES children's success in education and their social background. Davies and Rizk (2018) describe that the concept has developed over three generations and has been used in various ways by researchers in education. For instance, cultural capital has been initially theorized in the context of understanding the persistence of social class reproduction in education and why children from low SES backgrounds do worse in learning than higher SES children, as initially used and developed by Bourdieu. Annette Lareau's approach to cultural capital went further with the notion that middle-class or higher SES families were successful in schools because of their familiarity with the institutional rules or know-how and could demonstrate their knowledge with institutional standards. For Lareau, cultural capital is conceptualized as to how home advantages and family practices align with educational rules and standards. Specifically, children's cultural knowledge, which is developed and nurtured by families, aligns with schools' norms and is rewarded by schools in the form of academic success and credentials (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, Adia Evans, & Yee, 2016).

However, such cultural knowledge is complex and challenging for many parents to grasp, even among higher SES parents. For instance, studying the topic of school choice in the United States, researchers Lareau et al., (2016) found that not all high SES parents were successful in access to their preferred school choice for their children. This finding implies that cultural capital

is even more complicated than traditionally thought in that successful activation of cultural capital consists of understanding the "rules of the game" that apply to specific fields that each have their own rules or standards for individuals to achieve. Such findings imply that if higher SES parents have difficulty activating their cultural capital (i.e., understanding of institutional standards, procedures, and deadlines), then lower SES children are further disadvantaged. Therefore, these schooling standards and rules themselves were not only generated through class-biased processes but were instead generated through bureaucratic and professional processes, expressing those procedures and interests, rather than class-based ones per se. So, these 'rules' were hardly generated by or for high SES parents. However, according to Lareau et al., (2016) higher SES parents still have advantages in trying to 'play by those rules', having greater familiarity and confidence with institutional processes, more time and resources to negotiate those processes.

However, Lareau's conception of cultural capital theory lacks focus on why some low SES children succeed in education. As previously discussed, not all low SES children do worse than high SES children in learning, which is not explained by Lareau's conception of cultural capital. In contrast, DiMaggio's (1982) concept of cultural mobility adds a perspective of how low SES children can access cultural capital. While some of his models supported the theme of reproduction (i.e., that higher SES children had access to cultural capital and, therefore, was rewarded in academics), other models showed that low SES children could also access cultural capital and benefit from it. In contrast to Bourdieu's view that schools exacerbate unequal conditions for low SES children, a cultural mobility perspective focuses on how schools provide low SES children with social mobility. From a cultural mobility perspective, access to cultural capital is not dominated by higher SES families or elites. Instead, when low SES children are

exposed to cultural resources, they have opportunities to improve in education (De Graaf et al., 2000).

The concept of cultural mobility also explains that schools are a source of cultural capital for lower SES children. For instance, low SES children gain literacy skills from schools (Alexander et al., 2007; DiMaggio, 1982; Downey et al., 2008), provide additional academic and learning opportunities in the form of reading and numeracy intervention (Davies & Aurini, 2013), and teach children critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for children's future success in the job market and other aspects (Kingston et al., 2003). From a cultural mobility perspective, schools bring opportunities for lower SES children by exposing them to values, attitudes, and behaviours that align with appropriate schooling norms and standards such as being respectful in class and fulfilling academic responsibilities. For instance, schools encourage all students to engage in academic exercises, problem-solving skills, and reasoning. In school environments, lower SES children have opportunities to interact with educational professionals (Milne & Aurini, 2015). These opportunities consist of more effective classroom instruction, and school management can help lower SES children become academically successful (Martina, 2006).

From a cultural mobility perspective, schools function as partial compensatory institutions for lower SES children due to a lack of cultural capital in the home (Blaskó, 2003). Studies have shown that organizational restructuring of schools that address children's barriers to learning have successful outcomes (O'Sullivan & Howe, 1999). Specifically, educators (teachers and principals) are at the frontline of this compensatory framework to help low SES children succeed in education. Focusing on how educators compensate for low SES children's lack of resources and developmental challenges helps us understand how educators provide a

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compensatory function from a micro-level analysis. Beyond academic support, educators help children develop their emotional, social, and personal skills. From a cultural mobility perspective, educators can help low SES children by providing them with the cultural knowledge and tools for educational success that help low SES children connect with and understand the "mainstreams" of culture and society (Baker, 1999). For instance, educators are "agents of culture" (Bempechat, 1998) who provide low SES children with access to more opportunities and resources beyond their families' abilities, which are essential for securing their future well-being and social mobility in society (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

As a departure from DiMaggio's (1982) approach to cultural mobility which draws on large-scale survey designs, my approach is to bring cultural mobility to the micro-level via the perspectives of educators and their experiences educating and interacting with low SES children. I view the theory of compensation based on educators' views of their role and the use of the summer learning program to compensate (or reduce) for SES-based inequality by helping low SES children have better experiences in school. For instance, as shown in the previous chapter, educators' believe that their role is to help low SES communities become more comfortable in schools. However, educators feel that this requires adopting a new strategy: one that focuses on the personal and behavioural needs of low SES communities.

According to the literature, the relationship between educators and their students can work as protective factors against the harmful effects of poverty. Studies have found that when low SES children have strong bonds with their teachers and principals, they gain more confidence and trust in the educational system (Rowan, 2011), have better academic achievement outcomes and improved well-being (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001), which can continue to have positive effects across children's lives (Crosnoe et al., 2004). For instance,

one study found that these relationships between teachers and low SES children relate to increased school satisfaction as early as third grade (Baker, 1999). Other studies have found that teachers' positive attitudes and behaviours towards low SES children have a positive impact on their quality of learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Since these relationships can have meaningful differences in the lives of low SES children, many educators value these relationships and are careful to develop them early on (McNally & Slutsky, 2018). Developing strong relationships between teachers and low SES children has become a focus of early school intervention programs in many schools (Baker, 1999). Therefore, building on the cultural mobility concept, I see the role of educators as compensating for low SES children's lack of access to cultural capital in the home. Educators believe that their role in schooling is to provide more access to better learning environments. Theoretically, I view this as educators' exposing low SES children with cultural capital in the form of understanding and appreciating appropriate behaviours, values, and attitudes, which align with schools' standards and expectations and are rewarded in the form of academic achievement. As shown in the previous chapter, educators understand that poverty has negative consequences on the quality of learning environments and school interactions and relationships. Also, the positive attitudes and sense of responsibilities to serve disadvantaged communities contrasts arguments made by reproductionists who view and characterize low SES communities and relationships with schools as fragmented or separate. From a compensatory perspective, in contrast, it is also important to consider what educators feel works in terms of reducing inequality in education. While reproductionists focus on schools as a problem for reproducing inequality, a compensatory framework views schools as possible solutions to inequality.

Moreover, as shown in the previous chapter, educators expressed that their emotions play

an important role in their abilities to engage with low SES parents. Therefore, educators'

emotions to help low SES children may also play an important role. As stated in the literature,

emotions are embedded in many aspects of teaching, especially in elementary school (Darby,

2008) as teachers' emotions (and regulation of it) can largely impact student lives (Zembylas,

2011). The teaching occupation is viewed as a "caring culture" based on the values of caring,

understanding and nurturing, especially among young and socially disadvantaged children (Vogt,

2002). As discussed in the previous chapter, I also consider how educators' emotions might

reflect their "compensatory mindsets" towards the academic and personal needs among low SES

children. Overall, the central research questions of this chapter include:1) what do educators

believe are essential strategies to compensate for SES-based inequality among children? And 2)

what does this form of compensation look like at a micro-level?

Methodology[16]

Since the focus of this chapter is to understand educators' beliefs towards the needs among low

SES children, this chapter draws on interview data with teachers, summer learning program site

coordinators, and principals who work in schools located in the province of Ontario, Canada

(2012-2013). The interviews were conducted on school sites during a summer learning program,

funded by Ontario's Ministry of Education. The purpose of the summer learning program was to

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[16] My findings come from a larger project on the summer learning program (Davies & Aurini, 2012). I draw on these findings to place educators' responses in the context of the effects of the summer learning program on student achievement outcomes. Using both the qualitative and quantitative findings establishes two findings: 1) the benefits of the program on students' learning, and 2) the benefits of the program from the perspective of educators. While the former addresses the academic benefits for all attendees, the latter addresses educators' perspectives specifically for low SES children's experiences in the program. In addition, both perspectives provide a more complete understanding of the important role educators and summer learning intervention programs have on the academic achievement and well-being among low SES children.

offer literacy and numeracy support to children from the first to the third-grade range (Davies & Aurini, 2013). In 2012, six school boards were invited to participate in these programs to improve children's literacy and numeracy scores (Davies & Aurini, 2012).

Moreover, I have personal experience in the collection of these data. In the summers of 2012 and 2013, I helped conduct thirty-two interviews with principals, site coordinators and teachers working at four schools that were running summer literacy or numeracy programs. I generated a sample at these sites by interviewing participates who expressed interest in the study. To recruit participants, an invitation letter was sent out to educators. Those who responded to the letter and showed an interest in the project were interviewed. The breakdown of participants consists of 5 principals and 27 teachers, 4 of whom served as 'site coordinators.' Site coordinators were responsible for managing the summer program including organizing the program and scheduling recreational activities (e.g., an afternoon trip to a local swimming pool). The interviews lasted for approximately an hour and were conducted at the school site. Also, two follow-up interviews were conducted with teachers (2012 and again in 2013) due to their interest in the research project and their availabilities for the second interview. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Atlas. ti, version 7.5, which allowed me to tag, code, and make memo notes to specific passages relevant to my research questions.

To ensure interviewee anonymity, I assigned pseudonyms using "Canada's most popular names of 2017" [17] to hide participants' real names. Interviewees were asked about their experiences with lower SES students, which included their general experiences with students during the school year and their experiences with students involved in the summer learning program. These interviewees were asked to comment on their involvement as educators in the

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17 https://www.babycenter.ca/a25024668/canadas-most-popular-names-of-2017-top-20-and-trends

summer learning program and how they perceive their students' issues and how they respond to such issues. The general theme of these interviews was on educators' perceptions of barriers (personal, behavioural, mental health-related) that impact low SES children's schooling and abilities to learn, and how educators responded to these problems to help low SES children meet their basic needs and become more prepared to learn and engage in the classroom.

First, I consider questions that relate to how educators recognize the barriers faced by lower SES students:

1. How would you describe this particular school community?

2. As an educator, what are the main challenges of teaching in this community?

3. What are the greatest barriers/challenges faced by students in this community? What factors limit their educational success?

These questions identify what the educators believe are significant barriers to low SES children's academic and well-being. Such issues relate to children's home lives and living with poverty and lack of educational resources. These questions address the relationship between poverty and children's academic experiences from the perspective of educators.

Next, the following questions relate to how educators help low SES children (those who participated in the summer learning program) in terms of their academics and well-being:

1. How would you describe the summer program students at this site?

2. What are the biggest challenges faced by students attending this program?

3. As an educator, what do you think will be your greatest challenges this summer?

These questions address specific examples of what strategies educators used to help low SES children who participate in the summer learning program and how educators dealt with the

challenges during the program. Lastly, the following interview questions relate to what educators believe are the benefits of their efforts to help low SES children regarding their academics and well-being:

1. What do you feel have been your greatest successes in the summer learning program?

2. What do you feel are your students' greatest successes that they experienced in the summer learning program?

These questions more specifically relate to notions of cultural mobility in the sense that they provide an insight into perceptions of how schools more generally and how educators more specifically help low SES children concerning their academics and well-being.

It is important to note, however, that educators present their views which may be biased. Therefore, in this chapter, I focus instead on what are educators' beliefs about what they say they do regarding their compensation for low SES children and not the outcomes of their strategies to assess their effectiveness. In other words, I focus on educators' perceptions, opinions, and self-reported assessments of their roles and what they believe schools can do for low SES children to help increase their opportunities for learning.

Coding Strategy

Transcripts were uploaded onto Atlas.ti, version 7.5 and were organized and coded. I followed Saldaña (2015)'s suggestions to first pre-code the data to identify general ideas and statements throughout the transcripts and then used an open-coding approach to allow themes and information to emerge inductively without any pre-conceptions of what I would find. Given my conceptual interests of cultural mobility, I focused on topics and discussions that discussed how

low SES children benefited from their participation in the summer learning program and also how educators strategized to help them. Also, to establish the effectiveness of such efforts to help these children, I also highlighted discussions on the barriers that low SES children face in school environments and the harmful effects of poverty. Next, I used a first-cycle approach to specify the themes and how these statements informed my research questions related to 1) the educational problems educators identified among lower SES children and 2) the strategies used by educators to help them with their schooling experiences. The coding cycle consisted of descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2015) to identify essential information such as educators' perspectives, opinions, and issues related to how to engage with low SES children successfully, and used the interview schedule as a reference during this coding cycle. For instance, I coded information on what educators believe are the barriers to school readiness among low SES children, and what they believed were helpful strategies to address these barriers to learning. The next coding cycle consisted of creating sub-codes to the descriptive codes to further detail the emerging themes (Saldaña, 2015).

Next, I conducted a second-cycle coding approach to identify further pattern codes (Saldaña, 2015), which allowed me to group quotes and information that was relevant to the literature and theory of cultural mobility and how educators help low SES children's educational experiences. During this phase, I developed a set of master codes related to how educators' improve low SES children's learning, which allowed me to develop a sense of what educators believed are effective strategies for helping low SES children overcome their barriers to learning and have more successful experiences in school. During this stage, I discovered themes related to educators' perspectives of children's successful adjustments to schooling standards, which I refer to as "rudiments of alignment", which describe how children become adjusted to schooling

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environments. Becoming academically competent is what educators view as a successful

outcome of the summer learning program and to help low SES children meet the basic needs that

prepare them for learning environments. Also, the theme of cultural mobility relates to the degree

to which educators perceived changes in low SES children's learning experiences and how the

summer learning intervention gave them more opportunities to learn in the form of resources

(personal and educational).

The findings of this chapter are based on what educators perceive to be benefits of their

role in the lives of low SES children and the effectiveness of these programs on objective

outcomes such as students' academic achievements. It is important to note, however, that

questions about students' social class were not a main focus in the interview schedule. Rather,

questions were based mostly on how educators perceived to be real challenges for students who

participated in the program. While these questions did not directly speak to issues of social class

inequality, this topic emerged during the interviews. Most of the interviewees discussed the

relationship between social class among their students and academic outcomes and their general

quality of educational experiences. Therefore, while the initial questions did not speak to issues

of social class inequality, I did intentionally select quotes that spoke to the relationship between

students' social class background and how this related to their education.

Background: Ontario's Educational Policies to Target Poverty in Schools

Educational policies now target the adverse effects of poverty on children's learning experiences

and outcomes. The Ministry of Education outlines their agenda to invest in policies that target

anti-poverty reduction strategies in early education[18]. The Ministry's approach to eradicating the

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18 See: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/annualreport/1112/index.html

harmful effects of poverty consists of millions of dollars into special intervention programs, services, and opportunities for lower SES children. Over the last decade, the Ministry of Education has invested in $7.5 million towards priority schools and a Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) worth $351.2 million towards lower income communities (during the years 2011-2012), which provides funding for food programs, extracurricular activities, and mentoring programs for low SES children [19]. Other efforts that the Ministry of Education has funded for low SES children and their families include child care programs, partnering with Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, Ontario Focused Intervention Partnerships, and full-day kindergarten programs specifically in low-income communities.

The Ministry also advocates a new teaching philosophy that focuses on the well-being and academic progress among lower SES children who are most at risk of academic failure. In Ontario, the Ministry of Education understands the relationship between inequality and children's quality of learning and is focused on promoting more effective ways to serve low SES students [20]. In 2009, the Ministry of Education implemented an "Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy", which focuses on how schools need to identify and remove any barrier (whether discriminatory or systemic) that affects children's learning and achievement outcomes [21]. Under this strategy, every school board in Ontario will now focus on student achievement and their well-being and are expected to support all children equally regardless of their family background. This shift in emphasis on students' well-being is in contrast to previous policies that only consider developing instruction and curriculum changes, which is still a common problem with educational reform (Comer, 1988). To help children overcome barriers in education, the

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19 See: https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/P4E-Annual-Report-2015.pdf
20 http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_MindsetPractice.pdf
21 http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf

Ministry will continue to fund programs that target poverty reduction and ways to provide educational resources and program interventions to address the well-being and academic challenges among low SES children. The educators praise the Ministry of Education's direction to serve low SES children and find that these programs make a meaningful difference.

Findings

In the sections that follow, I present findings on educators' perceptions of how the summer learning program helps low SES children adjust to school environments and support their needs. Also, educators discuss their role in helping lower SES children in terms of providing additional support (personal, behavioural, emotional) to these children. Theoretically, I argue that these perspectives, opinions, and assessments (although self-report) reflect schools' role in partially compensating for class-based inequality in education from a micro-level analysis. As found in the previous chapter, educators discuss the relationship between poverty and children's academic barriers. From a cultural mobility perspective, I view educators as potential sources of cultural capital for low SES children to succeed and become academically competent (i.e., in the form of academic skills, abilities, values, behaviours that align with school's expectations of success (Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

Furthermore, educators discuss utilizing the summer learning program to compensate for low SES children's learning needs in the form of educational resources, opportunities, and emotional support. These findings are also supported by summer learning reports that show, quantitively, that summer learning programs help reduce summer learning inequality. Below, I first detail educators' perspectives on what they find are barriers to learning for low SES children and what they believe are practical solutions.

Conceptually, I categorize the findings in the context of two forms of compensation: 1) schools provide a *macro-level form of partial compensation*, as displayed by the summer learning programs that provide the funding and additional initiatives for schools to help low SES children, or as I refer to as *economic compensation*. Moreover, 2) educators' perspectives and attitudes reflect a compensatory mindset, which, I argue, provide a *micro-level form of partial compensation* to support low SES children. These forms of partial compensation are categorized into *cognitive* and *emotional* types of compensation that characterize educators' attitudes and contributions towards the needs of low SES children. Together, both the macro level and micro-level forms of partial compensation characterize the benefits and purposes of the summer learning program. I find that embedded within these summer learning programs are educators who reflect on the negative aspects of social-class inequality and strategies to support the needs of low SES children and their communities. Overall, I argue that these perspectives reflect a level of compassion and desire to support low SES children often not addressed by reproductionist theory. The below section presents findings that show educators' understandings and perspectives of the barriers that negatively affect low SES children's education. I then follow up with findings on educators' reflections on their role in compensating for these sources of inequality among low SES children and what they consider to be effective strategies at the classroom level.

Recognizing the Harmful Effects of Poverty on Learning

> If I'm hungry or I've got emotional problems because I don't know where dad is
> and I don't know if mom's crying because she's, like why. It's really hard to
> concentrate on that silly thing that you're trying to teach. So I think there's a lot
> of issues on the social issues that are really challenging… (Emma, teacher).

According to educators interviewed, low SES children's educational challenges are related to poverty. Educators believe that low SES children are more likely to lack access to basic needs such as food and reliable transportation to and from school. Educators believe that when children are denied their basic needs, their learning opportunities are significantly compromised and are unlikely to succeed in school. For example, Olivia believes that low SES children are often distracted in the classroom due to what goes on at home and that they do not "have food in the morning…They are not really ready to learn because they've had all of the challenges already at the beginning of the day". When interacting with low SES children, educators believe that low SES children have emotional and social problems and are deeply deprived of emotional affection. Many of them have attachment issues and are characterized as being "needy".

As previous studies have found, educators believe that low SES children come to school with various learning setbacks that are difficult for educators to overcome. However, according to educators, they are often first to recognize and respond to low SES children's emotional, behavioral, and social issues that negatively affect their learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In some cases, teachers discussed that they would need to inform the children's parents about their child's behavioural or emotional issues that need to be addressed. As Abigail discusses, one of her students had autism and was having problems in school and was not provided with additional academic support such as an independent educational plan (IEP). So, she knew she needed to inform the child's parents about this who had no idea the child required academic assistance. Unfortunately, educators find that many low SES parents fail to recognize their children's academic needs. As a result, educators feel that they are the ones who need to solve children's academic problems even when they are rooted in poverty or personal barriers. However, educators believe that low SES parents are not responsible for any academic setbacks that their

children may endure; instead, educators state that they are responsible for providing not just academic instruction to children but to also help them with their basic needs.

According to educators, children from low SES backgrounds have worse behavioural problems that disrupt their abilities to learn. Compared to higher SES children, educators believe that low SES children are more likely to experience anxiety and stress as a result of their home life. Educators believe that in low SES homes, parents are more likely to argue in front of their children (e.g., such as arguing over unemployment or finances). Alternatively, in some cases, low SES children may live in homes that deal with drug and alcohol abuse. As a result, educators feel that low SES children face additional issues that prevent them from learning. As one teacher described: "You can tell that [low SES children] are taking on [many] things that maybe six and seven-year-olds shouldn't be taking on, in just the way they talk, because of the way they interact with the adults in this building" (Ava, teacher).

Summer Learning Programs: Macro-Level Partial Compensation

From a macro-level, educators believe that the summer learning program provides low SES children with cognitive benefits. Since 2010, the summer learning program helped students with significantly low scores, ranging from students on individual education plans (IEP) and low school-administered spring test scores (known as PMB or DRA scores)[22]. Dr. Scott Davies (University of Toronto) and Dr. Janice Aurini (University of Waterloo) tested attendees' academic scores before they entered the summer intervention program and compared these scores their scores after the program and found that students had significantly lower achievement scores before they attended the summer learning programs, which reflects a successful

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22 See: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/research/summerliteracy.pdf

intervention program. This trend is the case for every year tested thus far: children who participate in these summer learning programs show noticeable gains in their summer learning scores, and this shows progress from previous years the summer learning program was offered. According to the quantitative findings as discussed in the report by lead researchers Drs Davies and Aurini (2012), the summer learning program has been successful in promoting academic growth among children who attend. During their interviews, educators also believe that the summer learning program helped low SES children improve in their academics. As stated by Madison, one of the benefits of the summer learning program is that it helps low SES children "get reacquainted and gather some of those literacy and numeracy skills that slide a little over the summer". The summer learning program provides schools resources in the form of funding and staff to host these camps (Davies & Aurini, 2012). As described by Milne and Aurini (2015), summer learning programs and are an essential component of Ontario's strategy to address at-risk children who have social, emotional, and behavioural problems. These programs have resources and organization in place for educators to fulfill all the educational needs of attendees (Davies & Aurini, 2012).

During the interviews, educators spoke highly about the summer learning program which provided resources and opportunities to help low SES children overcome their barriers to learning. Educators discussed the reasons why low SES children were helped when they attended the summer learning program. The program has been praised for its organization, structure, and funding opportunities that allow schools to help low SES children especially in the form of providing children with food, opportunities to learn during the summer for free, and developing skills that help them when they return to school in the fall.

Overall, educators believe that low SES children's successes had to do with the resources

and structure of the summer learning program that allowed educators to help them. Educators'

ability to help low SES children would not be possible without the help of the Ministry's funding

and organization. From the perspective of educators, children who attend these programs benefit

regarding access to educational resources, highly trained educational professionals and

connections to social services. Educators believe that without the summer learning program,

children from lower SES backgrounds would continue to have summer learning loss since they

do not have access to family support and educational resources during the summer months. The

summer learning program requires funding from the Ministry of Education to staff educators, site

coordinators, and other educators to work at these programs. Also, funding is required to provide

educational resources during the operation of these learning camps, which is important for

children from low SES families. For lower SES children and their families, it is essential that

schools offer community-based approaches to children's well-being and to provide low-cost or

free services. For example, additional benefits of the program include cooperation with

community partners who supplied breakfast and snack programs and other social services for

attendees. Madison discussed how offering free programs for children in her community is

important and is attractive to low SES children and their families because of its no-cost

opportunities to learn and have no barriers in place regarding resources:

> I think it's fabulous that it's free; I think the fact they get lunch and all that it's all
> amazing. I really do like it and advocate for it every year in our building because
> we do like it. It's a great opportunity for our kids and for parents.

Educators discussed how providing children with food is incredibly important for their ability to

learn, as discussed by Jackson:

> [With] our nutrition program…There's a lot of kids that don't come to school
> with breakfast, and we've kind of set that framework going. And then we send
> them nutritious snacks throughout the day, just to kind of keep them fed, because
> some kids come without lunches and things like that. So, those would be the big

things.

As described by Amelia, a teacher, schools can do a lot for low SES children when children can

get to school:

> …it'll be just like getting to school on time and having food and having outdoor
> clothes is like one major thing I find. It's getting to school and being fed and
> having clothes. That I think because if we can get them here [then] they want to
> be here. They want to learn; they want to be here. They love being around their
> friends; they love learning, so it's getting them to school on time.

Sophia, a school principal, also believes that summer learning programs benefit lower SES

children as they are "getting what they need". As a result, Sophia wants the summer learning

program to continue for other students every year:

> So, I think we need to have this every year. I think the funding needs to be there.
> We need to have these programs every year even though the classes might be
> small and we might have missed like some of the parents didn't bring their kids.

According to educators, not only do low SES children develop more academic skills during the

summer months, but they also show educators that they can overcome barriers to their learning,

as discussed by Lilly:

> …the reading is definitely improving. You can see the kids' faces light up when
> they can actually make it through a whole book. Like just with Stacey, she was
> pretty excited with the book, and she did a really good job reading, and she's kind
> of struggled with that in the past. So that's successful…

Theoretically, in addition to cognitive compensation, the summer learning program also provides

a degree of *emotional compensation* in that low SES children develop more positive attitudes

towards learning and schooling in general when they attend these programs. When these children

display positive attitudes towards learning, educators find that these children have more

opportunities for academic achievement. Educators believe that because of the learning

opportunities that low SES children have with the summer learning program, they are no longer

that worried about their academics. Even when children have problems, they are minor, as

discussed by Anna, a teacher:

> …overall I think they've done really well…There's a few kids that are still having some difficulties, but I think they've overcome almost all of their challenges. I can't pinpoint one that's huge; they're all here basically on time, they're picked up, they're having a great time while they're here.

Micro-Level Partial Compensation: The Role of Education in Cultural Mobility

The findings show that, in contrast to arguments made by the reproductionists (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), educators perceive their roles to support low SES children in various ways (e.g., supporting children's emotional and personal needs). In other words, educators believe that schools should address the needs of low SES children and help them succeed in education. In contrast, educators did not discuss any instances where low SES children cannot succeed in learning.

Theoretically, educators' beliefs about how to help low SES children in education reflect a micro-level version of compensation. From a cultural mobility perspective, educators may be essential sources of cultural capital for low SES children who lack support from their parents. Educators believe that low SES children should develop positive attitudes towards learning and feel more comfortable in school. Educators also stated that they want low SES children to be ready for school in the morning and to demonstrate a range of positive traits consistent with schooling expectations. From a cultural mobility perspective, these characteristics that educators discuss reflect cultural capital such as having the attitudes, values, and behaviours that align with educational standards and practices for children to succeed in schools. Educators also stated that they want low SES children to become more independent and take more risks in their learning. According to educators, low SES children developed more risk-taking efforts in their learning as a result of participating in the summer learning program. Ava, a teacher, believes that developing confidence in learning is essential for academic success. As Ava describes, "we want them to be

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confident learners....[and] have confidence about themselves that maybe they hadn't thought of before". Also, low SES children are encouraged to develop more confidence and self-control when it comes to solving relationship problems with their peers. As described by Riley, low SES children are taught how to handle their problems with their classmates. Riley believes that these skills are important for children to develop:

> You know, one of the students saying, "He hit me, he hit me." So, if instead of me saying, "Okay, come on over." it's, "What can you do?" So, putting that onus back on the students and saying, "What can you do to solve the problem? What can you say to make him understand?" And they've now gotten to that, so for me, that's the biggest success is their self-regulation. They're able to handle it first and then come to us after.

As found in the literature, low SES children often lack confidence in schools. Lareau (1987) characterized higher SES children as having more confidence in interacting with authority figures (such as teachers). However, the interviewees believe that low SES children gain more confidence in learning as a result of the summer learning program where they are offered additional sources of support. In many ways, the summer learning program has provided opportunities for smaller classroom sizes and positive interactions between low SES children and educators. Since these summer learning camps were designed as enjoyable and more relaxed, educators believe that children have more opportunities to interact with educators without risk of judgment or fear of failure. As a result, educators feel that low SES children can increase their learning skills once their basic needs are met.

Educators expect low SES children to develop the attitudes and behaviours that align with schooling expectations and standards, but also believe that their role is to provide low SES children with additional resources to support their learning and readiness for school. For instance, educators believe that access to basic needs (e.g., food and clothing) takes priority over academics and that they feel responsible for ensuring that all children have access to such needs.

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As Emily and Isabella, state, "if they don't have food, it's our job to feed them. If they don't have clothes, it's our job to clothe them".

According to educators, being ready to learn also includes emotional security and comfort. In their interviews, educators discussed that low SES children need to know that educators support their needs and that schools are a "safe place" for them to learn. As expressed by Liam, it is important for low SES children to "feel like somebody respect them, somebody cares about them". Liam also states that the benefits of providing low SES children with a safe and supportive environment is that children can "come to school with an issue" and "they can deal with it at school". Other educators discussed efforts in informing low SES children that school is a "place where you need to feel safe, but you want to have fun", as stated by Jackson, a teacher.

While educators find that the summer learning program helps to provide children with support and resources for education, at the micro-level, educators believe that they can provide additional motivation and educational aspirations for low SES children. As a result, they believe that schools encourage low SES children to work harder in schools and to develop more confidence as learners. This attitude was expressed by Mila who believes that low SES children need motivation and encouragement in learning as these positive attitudes provide educational benefits and emotional stability: "when they know that you care about them, they just put that effort in". Educators believe that low SES children lack strong role models and therefore depend on schools for motivation to succeed in schools. As Ava, a teacher states: "life is sometimes hard, and I want them to come here and feel like people love them and want to care for them". Also, educators believe that low SES children can increase their engagement in learning, which can have an impact on their academics, as discussed by Victoria:

> With the reading program, it motivates them to want to read. I think we do academic things here too, they have more of a grasp on the alphabet or they know some of the songs that they are going to be singing. They are comfortable being away from their parents with an educator at the front. They know [that] school is a safe place.

Having low SES children become more interested or excited about learning is another important goal discussed by educators. Educators believe that their role is to help children enjoy school and learning. According to one teacher, Lily, an effective strategy to increase student engagement was to use comic books, which, according to Lily, helps children become more "excited about literacy".

However, educators believe that they need to be more patient with low SES children when it comes to increasing their levels of engagement, especially among children with learning delays. For example, Jackson, a teacher, discusses a situation with one of his students who has been diagnosed with ADHD. While this child did have learning problems, Jackson would spend extra time to help develop his mathematic skills:

> I was just shocked, and I was so proud of him. I couldn't believe that he used that strategy of rounding to add the 60 and 60 and then add the eight to that. So, I got him to stand up, and he explained it all. Then I was able to use that to help the other kids.

According to educators, being patient with low SES children who have behavioural problems seems to be most beneficial and interacting with them requires a "different way". Jackson discussed that new teaching techniques that focus on teaching material in more interactive and entertaining ways to help children with behavioural problems focus on the material and not get bored. Jackson finds that this approach "work for the better for sure" and it "totally changed teaching" and how he interacts with these children with developmental problems. Educators state that they hold high expectations and standards for low SES children to succeed in school as well as other students and believe that low SES children need additional resources that prioritize

academics or cognitive skills. These include emotional and economic forms of compensation such as providing low SES children with access to basic needs and ensuring that they are comfortable and safe in learning environments. Once these conditions are met, educators feel confident that low SES children have increased opportunities to succeed just like other students.

Discussion

Educators believe that they are responsible for supporting the personal and academic needs among low SES children. The findings of this chapter help to advance the theory of cultural mobility from a micro-level. In contrast to DiMaggio's (1982) version of cultural mobility, my version of cultural mobility requires a micro-level perspective of how educators transfer their expertise of the educational system towards efforts to improve the lives among low SES children (Bempechat, 1998). According to educators, this is done by encouraging low SES children to develop the necessary cognitive and emotional skills and behaviours that meet schooling standards. However, unlike higher SES children, educators believe that these characteristics cannot come from their families. Instead, educators feel responsible for helping low SES children have access to such basic needs as well as help develop their cognitive and emotional skills in learning, which includes ensuring that low SES children are fed, clothed, and have access to reliable transportation. Educators' perspectives that they help low SES children reflect DiMaggio's (1982) findings that cultural capital is not limited to higher SES families but instead are made available for low SES children. I find that these educators also want to instill such standards among low SES children. The rationale behind this, I argue, is that educators know how to become successful in education and also seem compassionate towards low SES children and their needs. Theoretically, these two characteristics could play a significant role in serving low SES communities that need to be addressed in future research: whether educators'

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perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours towards helping low SES children actually translate into positive outcomes such as academic success or other positive results (e.g., behavioural or attitude improvements in school). As stated in the literature, educators' play an important role in the development of children's self-confidence, emotional and behavioural skills in addition to cognitive skills (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). According to the interviewees in this project, it is the educators' goal to reduce inequality and help low SES children have more access to learning opportunities.

According to the educators, their role is to help address the needs among low SES children and to help them have better learning experiences in school. From a cultural mobility perspective, these beliefs reflect educators' role in the generation and transfer of cultural capital to low SES children who lack support from their families. Educators believe that they have had a positive impact on low SES children's learning experiences and help them address their personal needs. However, educators believe that low SES children require additional resources and strategies to increase student engagement and learning opportunities. As discussed in the previous chapter, educators also believe that low SES children need to know that schools are safe and trusting environments and that in these environments learning can be fun and enjoyable.

The findings in this chapter suggest that compensation exists at many levels. First, compensation can be done at the macro level via the summer learning programs that offer children resources and opportunities to learn during the summer months; second, compensation may exist at the micro-level via educators' interactions and attention to the needs of low SES children who require additional forms of support such as addressing their basic needs (e.g., emotional, behavioural) that help them become more school ready. At the macro level, the summer learning program provides funding, supplementary initiatives, and access to basic needs

(e.g., breakfast and lunch) to all children who attend. Also, these programs (that last about two weeks) occur during the summer months are staffed by qualified educators. These programs provide educators with financial and institutional support to help children with their summer learning and to help close the SES-based gaps in learning that generally occur during the summer and primarily affect children from low SES backgrounds (Davies & Aurini, 2012). According to the educators interviewed, they feel confident that the summer learning program provides both cognitive and personal support for all children who attend.

At the micro-level of compensation, educators believe their role is to not only teach academic skills but to also provide care and compassion towards the needs of low SES children, as displayed by their stories and examples of how they help low SES children become more school ready. From another angle, the findings suggest that educators feel confident in their ability to support the needs of low SES communities when they have sufficient experience working in low SES communities and when they have governmental support as exemplified with the summer learning program. According to educators, they gain knowledge about the harmful effects of poverty when they have experience working in schools that serve low SES communities. With this experience, educators discussed their strategies to help engage low SES children such as being patient, understanding, and sensitive towards their learning needs that go beyond academics. On a more emotional level, educators believe that it is essential to engage with low SES children on an emotional level to help them feel more comfortable, as many of these children may have learning or developmental challenges. Educators believe that schools should respond to these children with more compassion and sympathy.

Although educators expect low SES children to adopt positive values and attitudes towards learning, they are also aware that low SES children face additional barriers to their

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learning compared to higher SES children. These barriers include lack of access to basic needs (e.g., food) and problems in the family (e.g., lack of positive role model, or parents who can help them academically). Educators do their part to help low SES children meet these basic needs and find that once children are provided with such resources, as made possible via the summer learning program, they have higher learning potentials.

While these findings only show the perspectives of educators, such insights offer another an alternative way to conceptualizing the role of schools in inequality. In contrast to the arguments made by the reproductionists (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) who portray educators as biased towards middle-class children and disconnected from low SES children's lives, educators state that they are concerned about low SES children's educational and personal needs (e.g., emotional and physical well-being). Therefore, educators' role in reducing inequality in learning requires more attention. Considering how many low SES children struggle with developmental and personal problems, educators may be essential sources of social mobility for these children. As stated by Milne and Aurini (2015), schools "encourage cultural mobility by exposing lower-SES students to the values, behaviours and skill sets that are needed to comply with schools' standards of behaviour". Specifically, these children rely on schools for these types of support when it is not available from their family (Dobbie & Fryer Jr, 2011).

Limitations

Discussing the limitations of this chapter is essential. Since this study only considered the perspectives among educators (teachers and principals), additional perspectives are needed. Most importantly, this study could be enhanced by perspectives among parents and other family

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members among low SES communities to provide more insight into what educators do for low SES children to help promote their well-being and academic development. Also, future studies could examine in what way educators have an impact on low SES children's academic grades and how children's socio-emotional support shapes these outcomes. For instance, studies that use a mixed-method approach may help further explain how educators' relationships and help towards low SES children's basic needs and school readiness preparation relate to academic outcomes, and how these outcomes compare to higher SES children. Also, it is also important to compare how educators interact with and educate higher vs. lower SES children, which can reveal how educators' practices may differ between class and whether these relate to student academic outcomes. For instance, educators may devote more energy and time towards low SES children compared to higher SES children so that low SES children can catch up in their learning (Downey et al., 2004).

While I found that educators do express positive attitudes and goals towards the needs among low SES children, this study did not focus on whether or not educators have sound, direct and positive effects on children's learning. This area of research is essential for future studies. As stated by Bempechat (1998), low SES children mostly benefit from supportive yet demanding educators who believe in children's learning potential and who are optimistic that these children can surpass odds against them (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Moreover, it is also essential to understand the impact of relationships between low SES children and educators, as there is a substantial literature showing that these relationships are vital to children's well-being and cognitive growth (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta et al., 2003).

Policy Suggestions

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This chapter highlights the need to fund summer learning interventions and support educators in their efforts toward helping low SES children, such as financial support (Dobbie & Fryer Jr, 2011). While the educators are compassionate towards lower SES communities, they depend on the funding and organizational support from the Ministry of Education, as was the case with the summer learning program. Sponsored by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, this program funded school boards and schools with resources to ensure that basic needs were met for children, mostly in the form of food, educational resources, free access to programs, and trained and compassionate educators who helped children develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Although all children had access to these programs, educators noted that these programs significantly benefited low SES children who otherwise would not have access to these educational opportunities especially during the non-school time or in the summer months.

In many ways, educational policymakers are tasked with the challenge and responsibility to make schools more productive and successful concerning increasing students' academic achievement levels. Since the findings show that educators are compassionate towards the socio-emotional needs among low SES children, from a policy perspective, more attention should be placed on establishing opportunities for educators to support low SES children's basic needs and access to high-quality and supportive learning environments. Recently, the Ministry of Education has laid out their goals for children's education [23]. These strategies include: 1) achieving excellence; 2) ensuring equity, 3) promoting students' well-being, and 4) enhancing public confidence. The strategies used by educators to help low SES children in schools specifically speak to the first and third goal of promoting students' academics and well-being. In a sense, these goals are not mutually exclusive when it comes to supporting the academic and emotional

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[23] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/wellbeing.html

needs among low SES children. Compared to higher SES children who are generally more school ready and have supportive home environments need to navigate through the school system, low SES children rely on schools in important ways. In addition to academic and cognitive development, low SES children benefit from supportive educational environments that help meet their well-being needs. As stated by the interviewees in this study, many low SES children deal with personal and family issues that negatively affect their learning or school readiness. As the educators discussed, living in poverty has serious consequences and takes priority over children's learning. If children lack access to basic needs such as food, clothing, or emotional and mental health support, they will not be able to learn at similar rates as children's whose needs are met. Once their needs have been established, low SES children can then appreciate learning new material and engaging in educational instruction.

While the Ministry of Education's goals emphasize children's academics and well-being more generally regarding promoting the idea that children should feel welcomed, the findings of my study show that educators rely on school funding and organization to meet the basic needs of low SES children. Educators have the skills and knowledge on how to help; however, more resources and social services are required to ensure educators are not alone in their efforts. Solutions to poverty and lack of educational resource opportunities cannot be solved by schools alone, nor by just educators. Instead, educators must be supported by the financial and organizational support for their school boards and the Ministry of Education who together can make significant improvements for low SES children. With continued support from the province, educators believe that they can continue to provide care towards the well-being and academic needs among low SES children who might depend on schools to help.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion: The Partial Compensatory Function of Schools

Introduction

Sociologists often study the relationships between students' SES background and academic

outcomes (e.g., Downey et al., 2004; Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005). Generally, sociologists of

education know that low SES children underperform compared to their higher SES peers in

many stages of education. Longitudinal research confirms that low SES children are at an

increased risk of dropping out of high school (Archambault, Janosz, Dupéré, Brault, & Andrew,

2017) and not enrolling in selective post-secondary institutions (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011).

While many sociologists use the reproductionist framework to explain these differences in

outcomes, other evidence shows that inequality originates in children's home environments

(Downey & Condron, 2016; Lareau, 1987), suggesting that inequality in learning is not directly

caused by schools, as reproductionists have previously claimed (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990),

but instead schools may buffer these learning disparities. As shown by summer learning studies,

children's exposure to non-school environments accounts for more variance in inequality than

during the school year (Alexander et al., 2007; Downey et al., 2004). Recently, von Hippel et al.

(2018) confirmed that SES inequality largely occurs before children enter school and that the

total variance in children's learning inequality significantly shrinks over the school years.

Studies on early childhood developmental disorders offer some insight into sources of

learning delays which mostly affect low SES children. These studies have shown that low SES

children score lower in cognitive testing (Davies et al., 2016; von Hippel et al., 2018), are at risk

of developing socio-emotional problems (Phipps & Lethbridge, 2006) and are more likely to

develop learning disabilities (Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011). Also, low SES children tend to

live in more stressful home environments where they are exposed to unhealthy eating habits and exposure to violent neighborhoods, which are associated with children's physical and mental health problems (Nelson & Sheridan, 2011). In particular, low SES children are at risk of developing early emotional and behavioural problems as early as 24 months of age (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). Given that inequality exists before schooling, and that schools reduce learning disparities, it is essential that we understand the role schools have on reducing inequality.

Downey and Condron's (2016) compensatory framework offers another way of considering what schools can do to reduce inequalities rather than reducing them. From a compensatory perspective, schools may partially compensate for SES inequality in academic achievement and the quality of learning opportunities. This framework clearly distinguishes between causal forces and outcomes of educational disparities. In contrast to reproductionists who blame schools for reproducing class-based inequality in schooling outcomes, the compensatory framework views educational outcomes as the aggregate consequence of competing for causal forces: those emanating from schools themselves, which tend to compensate, and those from families, which tend to generate inequalities. While schools cannot eliminate inequality that originates in children's home environments, this framework views schools as fulfilling at least a partial compensatory function to reduce SES-based gaps in children's academics.

However, lacking from this framework are empirical and theoretical understandings of *how* schools compensate for low SES children. Therefore, my dissertation attempted to contribute to the compensatory framework via three different perspectives of compensation for low SES children. The first consists of a *macro-level* of compensation via academic outcomes

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(chapter two); the second consists of a *meso-level* compensation via building relationships with low SES parents (chapter three); and, the third consists of a *micro-level* compensation via supporting the personal needs and academic needs of low SES children in the classroom (chapter four).

As shown in chapter two, low SES children can excel in summer learning, and their parents' relationship with teachers seem to account for their success. Chapters three and four focused on educators' beliefs about their role in supporting the needs among low SES communities and helping to increase engagement in schools. In these chapters, I discussed that educators view their role as essential in building relationships with low SES communities and feel that they are successful. The main contribution of this dissertation is that for low SES children, schooling practices may compensate for when families cannot adequately support their children in education. Overall, the chapters highlight schools' partial compensatory mechanisms in three general aspects: 1) communication with teachers result in academic gains for low SES children; 2) educators strategize to build relationships with low SES parents, and 3) educators and summer learning programs may help low SES children acquire additional resources and support needed for academic success. The below sections discuss each chapter's main findings and how they contribute to the compensatory framework.

Summary of Main Findings

Each chapter examined schools' compensatory mechanisms from three unique units of analyses: In chapter two, I examined the *macro-level* mechanisms of compensation by analyzing the relationship between summer learning achievement and children's family practices and communication with educators (teachers and principals). Both chapters three and four explored

qualitative data as evidence of compensation (from 32 interviews with educators) but focused on

school's compensatory mechanisms from two different perspectives. In chapter three, I examined

the *meso-level* mechanisms by which schools may compensate for low SES children via

relationship building and engagement with low SES parents. Finally, in chapter four, I examined

the *micro-level* mechanisms of compensation by how educators view their role in helping low

SES children. Each chapter contributes to empirical evidence of schools' partial compensatory

mechanisms. Chapter two provides a macro-level perspective of compensation via an analysis of

282 low SES children and the explanations for why low SES children achieve summer learning

skills. Specifically, I compared school-based explanations over in-home family practices. In this

chapter, I tested this relationship along three constructs: 1) *expressive* parent involvement (such

as low SES parents' volunteering, attending parent-teacher meeting); 2) *cultivation* (such as

helping with homework, reading to child, and providing books in the home); and 3:

communication with educators (such as meeting with principal, meeting with teacher). I used

these constructs because previous research suggests that family practices (i.e., being more

engaged in their children's learning) could promote low SES children's learning. While the

majority of summer learning research finds differences in low vs. high SES children's

achievement in summer learning (Alexander et al., 2007; Alexander et al., 1987; Davies &

Aurini, 2013; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992), the findings from chapter two suggest that low SES

children can develop summer learning skills and that their success is related to their parents'

communication with teachers. Overall, findings from chapter two reveal that not all types of

parent engagement promote summer learning literacy among low SES children. Instead,

evidence shows that low SES children gain in summer literacy when their parents meet with their

teacher, which raises important questions and warrants further investigation about the nature of

these relationships and why they might help low SES children.

Chapter three investigated these relationships further from a qualitative perspective via educators' beliefs about their relationships with low SES parents and how to improve them. Specifically, I focused on what strategies educators believe are important when building relationships with low SES parents who are typically less engaged in their children's education compared to high SES parents (Lareau, 1987). Drawing on interviews by 32 educators from the province of Ontario, I presented my findings in the context of Ontario's Ministry of Education parent engagement policy (2010) that places responsibilities on schools to build relationships with all parents. Although it was their responsibility to engage with all parents, educators felt responsible for developing these relationships because they knew that it is crucial for parents to participate in their children's learning. However, to engage with low SES parents, educators rely on strategies to manage their emotions and how they are received during interactions with low SES parents. These strategies consist of being sensitive and not displaying any negative emotion or attitude towards low SES parents. Conceptually, I described that educators effectively manage their emotions (Hochschild, 1979,1983), when interacting with low SES parents, which educators found successful given these parents are often reluctant to engage. Also, I found that educators draw on their emotions as a form of capital during their interactions with low SES parents in that they express empathy and compassion towards parents' needs and personal circumstances. I used the concept of *emotional capital* to explain how emotions operate in this context. Educators use emotions to their advantage when securing the trust and respect from low SES parents. Thus, emotional capital has its similarities with other forms of capital (e.g., social, economic, and cultural) in that it ultimately serves as a resource; it is a type of investment that can be exchanged for other kinds of benefits (Zembylas, 2007).

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According to educators, when they draw on their emotions and empathy, it allows them to build relationships with low SES parents who are considered quite vulnerable during interactions in schools. Therefore, from a *meso-level* form of compensation, educators' role in helping low SES parents become more involved in their children's education could, subsequently, result in better learning experiences for their children. Overall, these relationships improve communication between schools and low SES parents, and have the following benefits: low SES parents can inform schools about the home environment that is helpful for educators to be aware of and, vice versa, educators can inform low SES parents about what goes on in school and areas to help their children.

Finally, in chapter four, I presented a *micro-level* analysis of how educators view their role in compensating SES-based inequality among children. As done in chapter three, I used interviews with 32 educators from Ontario but focused on their perspectives among low SES children. This chapter found that educators believe their role is to address the needs of low SES children, which I argue reflect educators' compensatory mindsets or attitudes. According to educators, they feel responsible for helping low SES children both in terms of their academic and personal needs (e.g., food, transportation). Educators believe that helping low SES children consist of using various strategies such as having more patience and being sensitive towards the needs of children, especially those with developmental or learning delays. However, educators also believe that government support (i.e., funding for summer learning programs by the Ministry of Education) is essential for schools to support the needs of low SES children. In other words, educators believe that they alone cannot help low SES children without the support of interventions such as the summer learning program.

Summary of Main Contributions

Overall, the findings of these chapters suggest that while partial compensation is created at the *macro* and *meso* levels through funding formulae and supplementary initiatives such as summer programs, partial compensation also operates at the micro level through educators' actions and orientations that are reflected by their positive and compassionate attitudes towards low SES communities. Specifically, micro-level compensation is generated through educators' positive attitudes and perspectives towards low SES children and communities. Also, I find that compensations may exist in additional forms: 1) when educators have experience interacting with low SES communities, and 2) such experience interacting with them shapes their strategies or approaches to increase engagement. For instance, educators believe that traditional teaching strategies are not appropriate for low SES communities. Instead, educators stressed that these communities need to feel more comfortable when interacting in schools. As found in chapter three, educators' emotions also play a role in how they interact with low SES children. Educators expressed the importance of schools helping low SES communities engage in learning and felt responsible for building meaningful relationships with low SES communities.

In addition to empirical contributions to the compensatory framework, each chapter also contributes new theoretical concepts to understand how schools can benefit low SES children and communities. Chapters two and four both use the concept of cultural mobility but from different perspectives. Chapter two uses DiMaggio's (1982) version of cultural mobility that connects low SES children's exposure to cultural resources as related to academic success. Chapter two also makes a theoretical contribution to a school-based version of cultural mobility by demonstrating which type of parent involvement practice relates to positive learning outcomes among low SES children. I found that using cultural mobility theory as a framework

helps to understand the role of schools beyond family involvement. In other words, when low

SES children's families cannot support their children's education, school effects matter for their

academics. Since parent involvement practices, specifically in the home, do not account for

summer learning outcomes, while school effects do, this raises critical questions regarding the

nature of schools and homes and which factors help benefit low SES children in their education.

From a cultural mobility perspective, therefore, schools and educators may help low SES

children and their parents when it comes to promoting skills or values that translate into

academic success (DiMaggio, 1982).

Chapter four advances the concept of cultural mobility using a micro-level perspective on

how educators can expose low SES children to cultural capital (i.e., how their behaviours,

attitudes, and practices align with schooling standards and expectations). Further, educators'

perspectives and stories reflect how schools can offer cultural capital to low SES children. For

instance, while educators discussed that they could not completely compensate for inequalities

that result from home, they feel confident that schools can, at a minimum, try to get low SES

children to see school as an essential component of their lives or to have less emotional

separation from it.

Suggestions for Future Research

These chapters offer further suggestions for future research on the topic of how schools

compensate for low SES children. Although I found in chapter two that meeting with the school

teacher is essential for low SES children's summer learning, I was unable to explore what issues

or problem-solving strategies teachers discussed when interacting with low SES parents. I was

also not able to examine which types of discussions seem to matter regarding promoting summer

literacy. Also, there could be other necessary measures of these relationships that are not captured by the survey that I used in this chapter. For example, we could ask the following questions: Are low SES parents *reacting* to the requests from educators to meet with them to discuss their children's academic needs? Or are these low SES parents acting more *proactively* to ensure schools are aware of what their children need to become academically successful? Or are educators helping low SES parents become better 'teachers' in the home? Or are low SES parents asking teachers to offer additional support to their children at school? Future research should investigate these questions.

Future studies also should use larger data sets and more representative samples that could be generalizable to larger populations. For instance, the small sample size was a limitation in chapter two (n=282) as a result of a significant number of missing items on the parent survey. These small sample sizes and problems of missing data meant that I could not generalize these findings to the larger population of Ontario low SES children. Therefore, future research should address these limitations by ensuring larger sample sizes and data collection. Chapters three and four also only included educators' perspectives, which could potentially introduce bias. Future research on teacher-low SES parent and children relationships should also include the perspectives of both parents and children in how they perceive their relationships with schools. For instance, in chapter three, I introduced the concept of emotional capital and how it allowed educators to develop relationships with low SES parents. Could it also be that low SES parents have a degree of emotional capital used to interact with educators? Alternatively, do educators only exert emotional capital while parents do not? While these chapters find the existence of educators' compensatory mindsets and stances, future research should explore how these compensatory mindsets and stances impact children's learning.

Educational Policy Suggestions

The findings in this dissertation speak to the compensatory role of schools in the lives of low SES communities. In 2010, Ontario's Ministry of Education introduced an official parent engagement policy that promotes and supports schools' efforts to engage parents and encourage them to work as partners to support children's academics. This vision involves a stronger role for parents to participate in school-based activities and to provide a more supportive home environment for their children to learn important academic skills. The policy also envisions a partnership between parents and educators to work together to solve educational issues and collaborate on important educational decisions and responsibilities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Advocates of parent engagement and partnership practices see the role of parents and educators working together to solve educational problems among children such as closing achievement gaps (Epstein, 1992, 1995). The central claim of the policy also supports this notion that when parents are more involved in their children's education, there is a direct and substantial increase in academic achievement. In contrast, when parents are not involved, advocates of both parent engagement and partnership models claim that children's academics will suffer.

However, research finds a lack of substantial evidence that parent engagement and partners matter for the development of academic skills for all children across social strata. Although in principle, having parents on board with schools and more involved in their children's school may seem like a positive solution to improving the educational system, the research community cast a significant doubt on such claims that parent engagement and partnerships translate into academic gains, especially among children from lower SES

backgrounds (Baker & Soden, 1998; Domina, 2005; Downey, 2002). Research finds that the impact of parent engagement practices is mixed at best. While some research finds that some forms of parents' involvement matter, other research finds the opposite: family practices do not produce any meaningful benefits to children's academic outcomes. For instance, a meta-analysis by Fan and Chen (2001) revealed that while parent involvement has a small to moderate effect, it is mostly a result of parents' aspirations and expectations that account for children's academics as opposed to any measures of parents' involvement in schools. In another study by Sui-Chu and Willms (1996), the authors found that parents' involvement in schools partially explained children's academic scores in math and reading. More importantly, however, they suggest that greater emphasis should be on what parents do inside the home that accounts for why students do well academically. Other studies have found a negative effect of parent involvement on academic achievement (Senler & Sungur, 2009). For instance, Desimone's (1999) study used NELS which has roughly a sample size of 25,000 eighth graders and found that parents' communication with schools had a negative association with students' math and reading scores. Other research by Reay (2005) found no relationship between parent involvement measures and students' academics.

In most cases, when parent involvement measures relate to academic achievement among children, it is likely due to social class differences, whether explained by cultural, economic, or social factors. Sociologists of education have demonstrated that schools have more productive relationships with parents from higher SES backgrounds than with parents from lower SES backgrounds (e.g., Lareau, 1987). Moreover, other research finds that many educators and parents are not comfortable with the idea that they should develop partnerships with each other (Shumow & Harris, 2000).

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Similarly, the findings from chapter two mostly contradict Ontario's 2010 parent engagement policies. For instance, I found that family practices in the home did not account for why low SES children do well in summer learning. Instead, parents' interactions, specifically, meeting with both their child's principal and teachers to discuss their child's academic issues explained why some low SES children did well over the summer months while their low SES peers lost in summer learning. I also showed that parent engagement practices, at least as discussed in the 2010 policy, are not currently ideal. In chapter three, I showed that educators preferred low SES parents to be involved in a relatively limited way. While many educators encouraged volunteering, communication, and participating in the school, the findings in this dissertation showed that educators wanted parents to be cooperators, not partners according to the definitions laid out in the Ministry of Education Parent Engagement 2010 policy. For instance, some teachers expressed hesitation towards parent volunteering. Many teachers, especially less experienced, spoke about their difficulties engaging low SES parents; these parents faced too many barriers related to resources and were less likely to want to be engaged in the first place. Therefore, chapter three revealed that not all educators support the partnership approach, which allows equal power and contribution from both parents and educators. Instead, educators want low SES parents to cooperate with them and follow their instructions regarding how to best handle their children's academic issues. As a result, educators ensure that low SES parents can engage more effectively in their children's education while also respecting educators' professional boundaries.

The findings of this dissertation confirm other findings from previous research on what teachers expect of parents. While studies have shown that some teachers do support the partnership model (Comer, 1980; Morgan, Dunn, Cairns, & Fraser, 1993; Pelco & Ries, 1999),

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other teachers had no awareness that parents want to get involved in this type of relationship or partnership with educators (Munn, 1985; Ramirez, 2001). Furthermore, Shumow and Harris (2000) found that not all forms of involvement are needed or valued by teachers. Instead, teachers reported a need for parents to help in the home (e.g., with homework), to communicate with the school about their child, and to provide more access to books and trips to the library. The author also found that teachers lack the resources (time, funding, professional training) needed for parents to be involved. Instead, teachers wanted parents to participate in schools but in a limited way, especially when it comes to decision making in schools. For instance, as I found in chapter three, many teachers are against the idea that parents should have a say in any school funding or planning or curriculum design or whom their child's teacher should be or whom schools should hire or not (Shumow & Harris, 2000). Furthermore, other studies find that teachers want limited contact and contribution from parents and some report denying parents' request for additional communication beyond more traditional interactions such as parent-teacher meetings (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999; Todd & Higgins, 1998). Specifically, some teachers reported that interacting with low SES parents required additional resources and responsibility for which they were not adequately prepared or felt comfortable to do (Seginer, 2006).

Aside from the lack of evidence that partnerships matter for academic achievement, in many ways, the 2010 parent engagement policy overlooks the complexity and potential issues that would allow for partnerships to exist between schools and families, especially with low SES communities. Fostering partnerships between schools and parents involves the use of strategies to adequately address all members involved, including parents, educators (teachers and principals), children, and sometimes other members of the educational community (school counselors, therapists, psychologists, speech pathologists, for instance) (Kim & Sheridan, 2015).

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Ensuring all members of a partnership have an equal say, power, and contribution to their roles is a difficult task for schools to handle with respects to the amount of time, energy, and other resources involved for effective relationships (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996). For instance, it is difficult for schools to communicate and frequently update parents on essential educational policies and procedures required for educational success or development. It is also difficult for all parents to update schools on their children, home life, and any issues related to behaviour, health, and mental health. However, under the partnership model, schools are expected to handle such complexity.

Moreover, parents are responsible for communicating and working with schools. However, for low SES families, these expectations may be difficult to meet regularly. For instance, low SES parents may require schools to assist them as they deal with lack of funds for transportation, daycare, or other situations that prevent them from engaging in schools (Pattni-Shah, 2008).

The partnership model also overlooks the fact that not all parents choose to participate in schools (Lareau, 1996). Quite simply, some parents are more motivated and active in their levels of participation, and therefore schools' impression of parent involvement could be biased. According to a study on teachers' attitudes towards the partnership model, not all parents want to be involved in schools' decision-making and might instead want schools to inform them about their children's educational experiences and progress (Pelco & Ries, 1999). For many low SES parents, in particular, they rely on the expertise, advice, and planning of educators. Therefore, expecting all parents to be on board with the partnership model would be unrealistic and unfair for low SES populations (Flessa, Gallagher-Mackay, & Parker, 2017). For instance, even when schools do attempt to reach out to lower SES parents in an attempt to engage them, teachers

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report that low SES parents do not choose to engage in the same level as higher SES parents (Downey, 2002). Apart from a lack of ability to participate due to resources or time, lower SES parents may shy away from schools due to being uncomfortable associating with schools (Kim & Sheridan, 2015).

Even in instances when low SES parents are motivated to engage with schools, studies find that low SES parents have a limited understanding of what parent engagement is and its purpose (Ludicke & Kortman, 2012). A recent study by Aurini, Milne, and Hillier (2016) found that social class shapes interactions between teachers and parents. The authors found that while low SES parents viewed themselves as engaged in their child's education, they did not have an optimal strategy for engagement or involvement with schools. While low SES parents felt comfortable during informal levels of parent-teacher interactions (e.g., during a BBQ or meet-and-greet sessions), low SES parents were unable to address any critical educational issues or to speak openly with teachers. In contrast, higher SES parents were able to communicate with teachers on similar grounds and felt that they could interact with them in more meaningful and productive ways. Moreover, lower SES parents had difficulty understanding materials sent home, felt that they could not help their children with homework, and were often dependent on professionals and the school to inform them about how to help. Overall, the authors found that while low SES parents were "engaged" in schools, it was clear that their level of understanding of engagement differed from higher SES parents.

Broadly, the emphasis on parent engagement (or involvement) and partnerships between schools and parents shifts some of the responsibilities from schools onto families. In many respects, this shift raises important issues. Requiring all parents to partner with schools would likely only benefit higher SES families while potentially creating more barriers for low SES

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families. Since teachers view their relationships with low SES parents as weaker compared to higher SES families (Pelco & Ries, 1999), it would be more difficult for low SES parents to contribute to schools in similar ways. As a consequence of these higher standards in parent engagement, lower SES families could be further disadvantaged and marginalized from schools.

Given the problems schools face when it comes to interacting with low SES parents, it is difficult for schools to implement parent engagement policy that positively affects low SES communities. Instead, experts on educational research call for alternative approaches to the partnership model, especially for low SES populations (Desimone, 1999). Educators need to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs and resources of low SES families and their communities. Schools should also recognize and appreciate the level of interactions or parent engagement practices low SES parents can offer on their terms without expectations. It is likely that parent interactions among low SES communities will be different from higher SES parents and therefore should call for unique approaches when schools want to engage with low SES populations (Smith, 2006). In many ways, educators have to accept differences between low SES and higher SES parenting styles and that many parents are not comfortable in schools.

As an alternative to focusing on improving relationships between schools and parents, others call for a more "student-centred approach" (Flessa et al., 2017) where students are the main priorities, not the parents. Teachers are better able to manage their classrooms and have direct contact with students, rather than the added pressure to build successful relationships with parents. Likewise, more attention should be on improving the child-parent relationship to ensure that children have a welcoming and supportive home environment to learn, especially when school is not in session (Downey, 2002). Rather than encouraging more involvement from parents, educational research experts suggest that schools should focus more on how to train

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parents to provide a supportive home learning environment for their children. Downey (2002) argues that more attention is needed on what parents do for their children in the home. Therefore, when it comes to low SES communities, the findings in this dissertation reflect the need for more emphasis on school-based solutions to educational inequality that respect educators' expertise in supporting the academic and personal needs of low SES communities. Another important issue with the 2010 parent engagement policy is that it ignores the problem of when low SES parents are not involved. Also, this policy assumes that parent engagement would be an answer to children's academic problems, when in fact, we know that schools do a good job supporting the educational and personal needs of low SES communities.

Despite such challenges and limitations of the parent engagement and partnership models, however, Ontario's official parent engagement policy claims that parents' role in school has many benefits. The disconnect between the claims made in the parent engagement policy and the academic literature is concerning and signals that the Ontario Ministry of Education is not embracing the best available evidence-based research (Lunn & Ruane, 2013). Also, this issue raises questions about what role parents should play in their children's education, and how to implement best a policy that benefits children in practical and significant ways (Flessa, 2008). Therefore, it may be unnecessary to promote parent engagement policies for low SES communities since we lack good evidence on its effectiveness (e.g., on children's academic achievement levels).

Final Thoughts

The main implication of my findings is that researchers should also consider how schools might operate as partial compensation institutions for low SES communities. The findings in my

dissertation suggest that previous understandings of schools as reproducing inequality among children is a limited perspective. For instance, at the macro and *meso* levels, reproductionists target educational practices such as streaming and curricula. At the micro level, they tend to assume that teachers fail to genuinely care about low SES children or connect with them personally. In contrast, in this dissertation, I present an alternative view of schools as compensatory rather than reproducing inequality. As shown in chapters three and four, I find that in contrast to reproduction theory, educators express care about the lives and education of low SES children; they are not merely responding to institutional pressures to interact with low SES parents but state that these interactions are essential for helping low SES children. Therefore, while the reproductionist argument would be that low SES children do poorly because their schools and educators do not care about them but instead ignore their needs, I find that instead educators want to bring low SES parents into schooling environments and to make them feel like they belong.

Overall, my findings help advance the compensatory framework by showing that low SES children do well in summer learning when their parents interact with and discuss academic problems with their teachers (chapter two) and that low SES communities' needs are not neglected by schools (chapters three and four). Also, I also showed that educators believe they are responsible for supporting low SES communities. The problem with reproductionist theory, therefore, is the lack of discussion on how schools might serve the needs of low SES communities. Instead, these theorists tend to discuss how schooling reproduces inequality. I argue that the compensatory framework offers alternative reasoning to the reproductionist framework: that the actual amount of mobility is more than many sociologists understand. While schools cannot eliminate inequality that originates in families and home environments, the

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compensatory framework at least credits schools for offering low SES children opportunities for their futures. As this dissertation has shown, educators care about low SES communities and see potential in their success. I argue that we should criticize schools for when educational policies fail children, but we should also acknowledge and appreciate how schools (and specifically, educators) support the needs of low SES communities. Understanding both perspectives will help create more effective educational strategies and policies that both target the root causes of inequality and address realistic approaches to help reduce educational inequality and continue to support low SES communities and help them escape poverty and educational barriers.

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APPENDIX A: The Ontario Summer Learning Project: Parent Survey

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

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

STUDENT INFORMATION

1.   What grade was your child enrolled in this past year?
☐   1
☐   2
☐   3
☐   Other: Please specify: _____

2. What is your child's date of birth?   /_____/_____

                                                            month   day   year

3. Is your child on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?:
☐   Yes
☐   No, If no, skip the next question
☐   I don't know

4. Thinking of this past year, how much does your child like coming to school?
☐   Not at all
☐   A little
☐   Somewhat
☐   A lot
☐   Quite a lot
☐   Not sure

A. AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

1.   During this past school year, did your child participate in clubs or organized activities
after school?

☐   Yes, at school
☐   Yes, in the community
☐   Yes, in both the school and community
☐   No

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

☐   1-2 hours per week
☐   3-6 hours per week
☐   7-10 per week
☐   Other: Please specify_____
☐   Not Applicable

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

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

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

_____

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

☐   Yes
☐   No

6.   If yes, why did you hire a tutor? Please select all that apply:
☐   To 'catch up'
☐   To 'get ahead'
☐   To maintain skills
☐   To improve grades
☐   Other: Please specify_____
☐   Not applicable

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

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

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

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

☐ Books
☐ Newspaper, magazines
☐ Computer
☐ Internet
☐ Arts/craft materials
☐ Musical instruments
☐ Other: Please specify_____

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

☐ 0 (None)
☐ 1-4 hours
☐ 5-10 hours
☐ Other: Please specify

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

☐ 0 (Never)
☐ 1-4 hours
☐ 5-10 hours
☐ Other: Please specify

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

☐ 0 (Never)
☐ 1-4 hours

☐   5-10 hours
☐   Other: Please specify_____

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

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

13.   During this past school year, how often do you allow your child "free" or
unstructured playtime of at least 30 minutes (alone, with other children or with adults)?
☐   Daily
☐   (weekly) Numerous
☐   (weekly) One time
☐   Never
☐   Not sure

14.   During this past school year, have you done the following? check all that apply:
☐   Attended a parent-teacher meeting
☐   Met privately with your child's teacher to discuss his/her schooling
☐   Met privately with your child's school principal to discuss his/her schooling
☐   Volunteered at your child's school
☐   Participated in your child's school parenting council
☐   Attended an event at your child's school (e.g., play)
☐   Other: Please specify

A. SUMMER ACTIVITIES

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

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

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

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

☐   Not applicable

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

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

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

_____

_____

_____

A. FUTURE PLANS:

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

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

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

☐   Very important
☐   Important
☐   Somewhat important
☐   Not important at all

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

☐   Nothing
☐   Trouble with learning
☐   English language problems
☐   Emotional problems or worries

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

4. Do you (and/or your family) have a financial plan for your child's postsecondary education (e.g., RESP)?
☐   Yes
☐   No

B. PARENT INFORMATION:

1.   What year were you born? _____

2.   How many children live with you?
☐   One
☐   Two
☐   Three
☐   Four
☐   Other: Please specify _____

3.   What age(s) are your children?

☐   Child one:_____
☐   Child two: _____
☐   Child three: _____
☐   Please list others:_____

4.   Are you currently:
☐   Married or common law

☐ Separated/Divorced
☐ Widowed
☐ Single

5. If you are currently separated or divorced, does your child regularly see his/her other parent?
☐ Yes
☐ No

6. What level of education have you completed?
☐ Elementary School
☐ Some High School
☐ High School graduate

☐ Private technical College (e.g. Toronto School of Business)
☐ Community College
☐ University B.A./ BSc.
☐ Postgraduate University (e.g. law degree, Masters, Doctorate)

7. What level of education has your child's other parent completed?

☐ Elementary School
☐ Some High School
☐ High School graduate
☐ Private technical College (e.g. Toronto School of Business)
☐ Community College
☐ University B.A./B.Sc.
☐ University Postgraduate (e.g. law degree, Masters, Doctorate)
☐ I don't know

8. Are you currently employed? Yes____No_____

9. If yes, are you employed part-time or full-time?

10. What is your occupation?_____

11. What is the occupation of your child's other parent?

12. Would the total income of all household members from all sources during the last 12 months be:
☐ Less than $15,000
☐ $15,000 to less than $30,000
☐ $30,000 to less than $45,000
☐ $45,000 to less than $60,000
☐ $60,000 to less than $80,000
☐ $80,000 to less than $100,000

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☐ $100,000 to $200,000
☐ $200 000 or more

15. What background and/or ethnicity apply to you? Please select all that apply:

☐   Canadian
☐   British (England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales)
☐   French
☐   Chinese
☐   Italian
☐   German
☐   Aboriginal (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit)
☐   South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)
☐   Ukrainian
☐   Dutch (Netherlands)
☐   Polish
☐   Portugese
☐   Filipino
☐   Jewish
☐   Greek
☐   Arab
☐   Latin American
☐   African
☐   South East Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, etc.)
☐   Other: Please specify

_____

16. Were you born in Canada?
☐   Yes
☐   No

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

Years: _____
Months: _____

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

_____

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

Thank you for participating in the Ontario Summer Learning Survey.

APPENDIX B: Questions on Summer Literacy Camp

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

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