

# **Athletics, Music, Languages, and Leadership: How Parents Influence the Extracurricular Activities of Their Children**

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## **Abstract**

In this study, we explore the impact that parents have on the participation of their children in extracurricular activities (ECAs) in a sample of Canadian parents with children between the ages of four and 17. Employing a concurrent, nested, mixed methods strategy, we use the insights gained through semi-structured interviews with parents to inform the creation of four regression models with which we investigate four types of activities (athletics, music, languages, and leadership). Our findings reveal that, depending on the type of activity, ECA participation by children varies by parental education. Values and experiences held by parents with the lowest educational attainment were stronger predictors of participation in specialized music programs, and those of parents with advanced degrees were stronger predictors of participation by their children in specialized language

programs. We conclude by discussing the equity implications of our study for Canadian children.

*Keywords:* extracurricular activities, parenting, cultural reproduction, post-secondary educational attainment, survey research, mixed methods, French-language learning

## **Résumé**

Dans cette étude, nous analysons l'impact des parents sur la participation de leurs enfants à des activités parascolaires et ce, à partir d'un échantillon de parents canadiens ayant des enfants âgés entre 4 et 17 ans. À l'aide d'une stratégie fondée sur une méthodologie mixte, emboîtée et synergique, nous utilisons les observations qui se dégagent des entrevues semi-structurées avec les parents pour créer quatre modèles de régression avec lesquels nous étudions quatre types d'activités (athlétisme, musique, langues et leadership). Nous avons ainsi découvert que, selon le type d'activité, la participation des enfants aux activités parascolaires varie en fonction de la scolarité des parents. Les valeurs et les expériences des parents ayant le moins de scolarité étaient de meilleurs indicateurs prévisionnels de la participation de leurs enfants à des programmes spécialisés d'athlétisme et à des programmes spécialisés de musique et celles des parents plus scolarisés étaient de meilleurs indicateurs prévisionnels de la participation de leurs enfants à des programmes spécialisés de langue. Nous concluons en discutant des implications de notre étude sur le plan de l'équité pour les enfants canadiens.

*Mots-clés :* activités parascolaires, reproduction culturelle, éducation postsecondaire, recherche par sondage, méthodologie mixte, apprentissage du français

## Background

It is no surprise that family background has significant power to explain disparities in educational participation and attainment (Andres, 2009; Dumais, 2006a, 2006b; Lareau, 2000). However, a great deal remains unknown regarding the nature of family influences on the educational achievement of their children. Numerous benefits have been associated with participation in extracurricular activities (ECAs), including higher academic achievement (Andres & Wyn, 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Scott-Little, 2002), improved non-cognitive skills (Broh, 2002; Dumais, 2006a, 2006b), greater life satisfaction and well-being (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Kim & Kim, 2008), better career prospects (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Rivera, 2011), and lower instances of school dropout (Holloway, 2002; Kronholz, 2012; Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). These benefits, combined with lower ECA participation rates observed for children from lower-income families, have positioned ECAs as a mechanism that parents may use to transmit advantage (Guèvremont, Kohen, & Findlay, 2010). Parents typically play an important role in the organization of the leisure time of their children (Andersen & Hansen, 2011). Because the majority of ECAs require significant investments of parental time and financial resources, most children are unable to become involved in such activities without some level of parental support. Several studies have linked parental support and encouragement to the sustained involvement of their children in ECAs (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Case, 2007).

Research has pointed to class-based differences in parental values to explain lower ECA participation among working-class children. One of the most influential studies—Home Advantage by Lareau (2000)—posited that class-based differences in parental values were strongly associated with class-based differences in ECA participation. Lareau argued that parents from different social classes exhibited distinctive parenting styles. She used the term “concerted cultivation” to describe the parenting style she observed to be characteristic of middle class parents and “natural growth” as distinctive of working-class parenting styles. One of the three key indicators Lareau used to characterize a “concerted cultivation” approach to parenting was a strong role in organizing children’s time, with an emphasis on involvement in structured activities. In contrast, she observed that working-class parents typically did not play such a strong structuring role but rather let their children take that responsibility on themselves. She stressed that

neither parenting style is superior and that children whose parents employed a “natural growth” approach were often more creative and independent.

The idea that lower ECA participation among working-class children results from fundamental, class-based differences in parental values is not without contest. Andres (2009) found that the values parents held for their children did not differ by social class; specifically, all parents wanted their children to be academically literate, educationally enriched, cultured, and in possession of cooperative skills. Davies and Aurini (2011) asserted that whereas parental valuation of specialized learning activities did not depend on social class (e.g., education, occupational status, income), their actions did. An alternative argument is that ECA participation differences correlated with social class are the result of the significant financial outlay required (Chin & Phillips, 2004; Lagacé-Séguin & Case, 2010; White & Gager, 2007).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The guiding framework for this study is Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Bourdieu (1997/2000) posited that the habitus is a system of dispositions, primarily acquired within the family and inscribed within bodies by past experiences, which constructs and gives meaning to the social worlds of individuals as agents. Bourdieu (1987/1990) advanced the idea of the habitus as a way to explain why “types of behaviour can be directed toward certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or determined by them” (p. 11). Bourdieu (1989) noted that actions guided by the habitus can often be mistaken for rational action because, “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself ‘as a fish in water,’ it does not feel the weight of the water” (p. 43). Habitus is created as a result of the dialectical relationship between free will and social structures.

When considering ECAs, on the surface there seems to be a significant conflict between the characterization of the habitus as something that is not consciously inscribed and ECAs, which are formally arranged. Although ECAs are indeed formally arranged, Bourdieu (1989) would argue that the habitus can direct behaviour toward certain ends without conscious intention. The idea that through the habitus “expectations tend universally to be roughly adapted to the objective chances” is key here (Bourdieu, 1997/2000,

p. 216). In other words, the way families invest in education for their children, and the way that children invest in their own education, is dependent on perceived probability of success and understanding of the role of educational experiences in capital attainment (Bourdieu, 1972/1977). For example, if parents do not believe that they or their family are particularly musically gifted, they may be less inclined to consider music as a possibility for their children and may unconsciously place less emphasis on music participation. Simultaneously, their own lack of confidence in their musical abilities may be perceived unconsciously by their children; hence, it has an impact on the possibilities their children see for themselves and decreases the likelihood that they would participate in music.

Although the habitus provides a theoretical framework for understanding differences in ECA participation, Bourdieu's ideas regarding capital present a framework for understanding why these differences are important. He proposed different types of capital: social, cultural, educational, and economic. Bourdieu (1986) theorized that cultural capital consists of three elements: embodied capital, objectified capital, and institutional capital. Embodied capital refers to attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions. It is initially acquired from the family, but as children age, it can be acquired from different sources, such as participation in ECAs. Objectified capital refers to cultural objects like a painting or a rookie card of a famous athlete. The item itself is not necessarily of importance; rather, understanding the significance of the item is key. Institutional capital refers to credentials and qualifications. As Bourdieu (1987/1990) explains, institutional capital acts as a "certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, consistent legally guaranteed value with respect to power" (p. 248). Individuals can convert embodied capital into institutional capital (educational credentials) and ultimately into economic capital (material wealth). Rather than the proximal set of skills that children gain through participating in an activity, it is the less tangible cultural routines children may learn through participation in ECAs that have the most important benefits. Those cultural routines may then become social or cultural capital that the child can wield later in her or his life.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of parents on the participation of their children in ECAs. We pose the following central question: How do parents consciously and/or unconsciously have an impact on the participation of their children in ECAs? As mentioned earlier, there is considerable disagreement in the current literature regarding the intersection of social class, parental influence, and the participation of their children in ECAs. In this study, we endeavour to illuminate these relationships through a mixed methods design.

## Sample and Research Design

We employ data from the longitudinal Paths on Life's Way project. Beginning in 1989 and spanning 22 years, the data provide a unique perspective on the lives, education, work, experiences, and values of a provincially representative sample of the British Columbia, Canada, high school graduates of the Class of 1988 and a smaller interview sample. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the form of mail-out questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. First, in this article we employed interview data collected in the 2010 wave as part of the Paths on Life's Way project. In total, seven waves of interviews have been conducted (1989, 1990,<sup>1</sup> 1993, 1998, 2003, 2010). Originally, the interview sample included 51 participants who were attending either one metropolitan, one urban-rural, or one remote British Columbia high school (Andres & Wyn, 2010). Between 1990 and 2010, the same 24 interviewees participated in seven waves of interviews. All interviews were conducted by the principal investigator. In this study, the 14 interviewees (11 female and 3 male) who had children were included in the analysis.

In addition, the Paths project contains five waves of data collection through mail-out survey questionnaires conducted in 1989, 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2010. In this article, we employ data collected during the most recent survey in 2010, but we also use data from the 1989 questionnaire in order to investigate the relationship between parents' ECA experiences during high school and ECA participation by their children. In the 2010

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<sup>1</sup> Two waves of interviews were conducted in 1990: one extensive face-to-face interview in May and one short telephone interview in October.

wave, 574 individuals responded, representing a full 3% of the graduating cohort. Only data collected from participants who self-identified as parents of children between the ages of four and 17 in 2010 and who reported being married or in marriage-like relationships were included in our analysis ( $N = 342$ ).<sup>2</sup> Survey data were analyzed using the participants' children as the unit of analysis. In doing so, we assumed that parents were able to report accurately the activities in which their children had participated. Ultimately, 674 child observations made up the sample used for the analysis that follows. Despite excluding those survey participants who did not have children, the demographics of the parent sample remained very similar to the sample in its entirety.

We utilized a concurrent, nested, mixed methods strategy to conduct our analysis. Integration of the qualitative and quantitative data occurred during both the analysis and interpretation phases of the study. Sequential procedures were used to analyze the data. Qualitative analyses were conducted first. Several key themes, discussed in greater detail below, emerged from the qualitative analysis. These themes guided the creation of four regression models. Finally, the quantitative data and qualitative data were interpreted concurrently.

## **Research Results**

*Enforcers, facilitators, and encouragers.* The roles of the interview participants. During the 2010 interviews, interview participants with children were asked the following questions specifically about their children: “What values do you hold for your children?” “How do you put these values into action?” “What do you do for your children?” In their responses, almost all parents commented immediately and directly, without being prompted, on ECA participation. All interview participants described ECAs as being important for their children; however, their views differed substantially regarding their own roles in such activities. After reading the interview transcripts several times and revising our original coding scheme (see Appendix A and see Ashbourne (2013) for

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2 Prior studies have demonstrated that children from single-parent families were less likely than children from two-parent families to participate in ECAs. Only 4% of survey participants reported being single parents therefore there was not enough variation to provide meaningful differences between the groups. Hence, single parents were excluded from the analyses.

a description of the trustworthiness of the data), three categories were devised to describe the ways in which parents acted regarding ECA participation by their children. It was clear from their descriptions that interviewees did not necessarily act consciously in these roles. Rather, their life experiences, dispositions, and values converged to influence their actions and the way they interacted with their children regarding ECAs. Our findings support Bourdieu's (1987/1990) description of habitus as a way to understand why "types of behaviour can be directed toward certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or determined by them" (p. 11).

The first category we identified was *parent as enforcer*. Parents who acted as enforcers believed very strongly that there were certain activities in which their children must participate and hence required their children to participate regardless of an expressed interest in the activity by the child. Enforcer parents also tended to hold similar values, many of which were future oriented. They believed ECA participation (especially well-rounded ECA participation) would help their children get ahead of the curve. One mother exemplified the motivation behind enforcing ECA participation, "*That tiger mom*<sup>3</sup>, I can see the value in that, and if you don't push your kids a little bit, of course the majority of them won't want to do anything but watch the telly" (female participant 14). Enforcer parents made it clear that they were motivated by the belief that ECAs would help their children gain academic and economic capital. One mother said, "You always have [scholarships and the future] in the back of your mind... Both of [my children] are very athletic. They're very smart. So *I'll* work on the music... We're going to get them a guitar" (female participant 13). Trying to cultivate children who are "balanced" or "well-rounded" seemed to be a common motivator. Enforcer parents were further motivated by ensuring their children were physically active: "I think it's really good. It keeps them active... [Our oldest one] would be a video game kid *if we let him*" (male participant 5). Enforcement in specific activities by parents was also motivated by their spouses' or their own life experiences. Female participant 8 explained that because her husband is not Canadian, "languages and understanding other cultures" are very important to her and, because her daughter speaks Spanish, "it's important [that she] is going to French immersion." Another mother intended to enforce her daughter's participation in dance.

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3 This interviewee is referring to the Anna Chua's (2011) concept of "tiger mom."



She said, “I’m afraid *she’ll have to* try dance lessons. I was a dancer when I was a kid so I’d like her to try” (female participant 2).

The second category was *parent as facilitator*. Parents who acted as facilitators let their children’s interests guide their participation and did not try to steer them toward participation in any activity in particular. For instance, one mother explained that her daughter will have “a lot of ideas of her own in the coming years about how she’ll want to explore and how we can facilitate” (female participant 6). One father responded that he did not believe in forcing his children to do things they are not interested in. He said,

I have expectations for them as being their dad, of course. Homework, do your chores and that type of thing, but I support what they want to do. I don’t try to direct them to do things that I want them to do as far as, “you have to play soccer, you have to do this, you have to do that.” If it’s something they don’t want to do, then I’m not going to force them to do it. (Male participant 10)

Another parent indicated that she played a facilitator role in order to let her children discover their own strengths: “We’re just letting our kids try whatever they want right now and go find their thing” (female participant 9). In contrast to enforcer parents, facilitator parents tended to be more focused on the present. They were concerned with ensuring their children had enough time for free play and for discovering their own interests and talents. They also tended to express more concerns, particularly the competitive nature of many ECAs, and seemed more conflicted regarding how extensively their children should participate.

The third category was *parent as encourager*. Parents who acted as encouragers had ideas about what activities would be beneficial for their children and tried to encourage participation but they did not force their children to participate in any activity in which they were not interested. For example, one mother explained that she could only encourage her son to participate in ECAs to a certain extent: “I’ll ensure that he does what he has to do to pass and to get by but I can’t give him the desire to compete and to care” (female participant 2). Encourager parents tended to hold a mix of future-oriented motivators and present-focused concerns. As with the other categories, parents’ perceptions of motivators and concerns regarding ECA participation were determined by their values and prior experiences. Another mother wanted it to be clear that she tried her best to ensure her children were well-rounded. When asked whether her children had

participated in any non-athletic ECAs, she replied, “No, I tried to get them to... Oh! My older son plays the trombone” (female participant 1). Another mother indicated that the reason she was comfortable with the relatively low level of ECA participation by her son was that he participated in enough non-structured activities to keep her satisfied that he was engaging in adequate physical activity:

He doesn't like organized activities that much... He stuck it out with the swimming long enough to be a proficient swimmer. He stuck it out in rugby until it got to the point where I actually felt nervous for him... But he snowboards and he skateboards. He's very physically active so that's all right. (Female participant 2)

The most important finding from the interviews was that most of the parents did not fall into only one of these three categories. According to their accounts, almost half of the parents enforced participation in certain activities, facilitated some activities, and encouraged others. The following comment made by one mother is illustrative: “Every once in a while [my daughter will] get upset and say, ‘I don't want to do it anymore,’ and I say, ‘Well, that's fine. You have to finish up the term. But you can *never* give up tutoring, and you *never* give up swimming” (female participant 14). This mother enforced participation in what she considered to be foundational activities while encouraging participation in other activities and facilitating participation in activities in which her children demonstrated interest. All but one of the remaining parents' actions fell into two of the categories, most commonly encourager and facilitator. One of the fathers described his and his wife's concern that their children were not more well-rounded in their extracurricular pursuits and their attempt to correct this: “It's mainly sport and then we've tried to offset it with some music and then drama” (male participant 5). Many other studies have examined the relationships among possible parental determinants of ECAs and actual participation by their children without disaggregating different activities. In doing so, it was assumed that parental determinants functioned the same way across different types of ECAs. By first analyzing the interview data, we have been able to identify the different roles parents played in terms of influencing the extracurricular activities of their children.

## Variables and Measurement

Themes emerging from the qualitative analyses were used to guide the creation of our regression models. First, our qualitative findings indicated the need to create a different regression model for each of the activities for which we had data—athletics, music, language, and leadership. A total of four regression models were created using Stata. Participation by the children of Paths respondents in each of these activities served as the dependent variable in each model. These variables were created using the following question from the 2010 Paths survey: “Has your child attended or participated in the following? Leadership programs; specialized music programs; specialized athletic programs; specialized language programs (e.g., French immersion, private language classes),” and were coded zero = no or one = yes.

Various parental experience and parental value variables served as independent variables. Parental experiences emerged during our qualitative analysis as one important factor in determining the roles parents played in ECA participation. The majority of interviewees who discussed their own experiences with ECAs in relation to their children focused on their current experiences with similar activities. Three parental *current experience* variables—current experience with ECAs with athletics, artistic, and leadership activities—were created by recoding responses to the following open-ended question: “Please list any other education and training—including courses, private lessons, correspondence courses, workshops, recreation courses, arts, crafts—you have taken since September 2003 but have not yet told us about” (coded 0 = no; 1 = yes). Current experience with a language-learning variable was not created because none of the parents reported participating in language-learning activities. Our use of habitus as a guiding framework for this article also motivated the use of the *past participation* of parents themselves in ECAs—ECA participation during high school—as one of our key independent variables. Recalling Bourdieu’s (1997/2000) assertion that the habitus is inscribed within the body by past experiences, it follows that parents’ past experiences with ECAs would likely (either consciously or unconsciously) have an impact on their interactions with their children regarding ECAs. Six parental experience variables were created using the following question from the 1989 Paths survey: “Did you participate in any of the following types of activities during your years in secondary school? Athletic teams; band,

drama or dance; school newspaper, yearbook, annual; student council; other clubs (e.g., photography, crafts, chess, science, debating, etc.); and community or church youth organizations (e.g., YMCA/YWCA, Scouts, Guides, etc.).” These variables were measured on a three-point scale, 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, and 2 = often. The data show good variability (Ashbourne, 2013, Table 7, p. 64).

Parent participants who completed the 2010 Paths on Life’s Way survey questionnaire answered many questions concerning their values regarding the importance of several different dimensions of their children’s schooling, activities, and well-being. The specific questions were as follows: “When it comes to schooling these days, how important are the following for your children?” A wide range of closed responses was included. Because each independent variable added to a regression analysis would use up degrees of freedom and reduce the precision of the model by increasing the standard error, factor analysis in Stata was used as a method of data reduction to consolidate the parental value indicators into thematic variables. As a result, the 28 survey questions specified parental values regarding the importance of certain aspects for their children’s schooling, activities, and well-being, which were reduced and employed in the analysis as composite variables<sup>4</sup>.

Three of the factors that emerged from the analysis were theoretically justifiable according to the responses of the interviewees as well as findings in the related literature. Three composite variables were created out of each cluster of variables. The first two composite variables reflect parents’ *general values*, the first of which is the importance of *competitive and networking skills*. This variable includes values regarding the importance of participation in athletics, competitive skill development, and developing a large network of friends. The second parental general value composite variable, *community and cultural knowledge and experiences*, includes values regarding the importance of knowledge of one’s own culture, exposure to other cultures, knowledge of society, a close circle of friends, cooperative skills, public education, and a multicultural student body as aspects of children’s wellbeing or schooling. An additional general parental value variable (a single measure variable)—*parental valuation of university attendance*—deemed

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4 Five variables regarding parents’ beliefs about the importance of mathematical literacy, scientific literacy, computer literacy, writing skills, and reading skills were excluded from the initial factor analysis because there was very little variation in parents’ responses to these questions. The vast majority of parents answered these questions with “very important.”

theoretically important based on our qualitative findings and the prior literature, was also included in the models. The following three parental *activity-specific values* were included in the corresponding models: *parental valuation of fine arts activities* (a single measure variable) was included in the music model; *parental valuation of leadership activities* (a single measure variable) was included in the leadership model; *parental valuation of command of the French language and other languages* was the third composite variable, which used measures of values regarding a command of French and other languages and was included in the languages model. As noted above, parental valuation of athletic activities was highly correlated with the variables included in the competitive and networking skills index and so was included as part of this index rather than on its own like the other activity-specific variables.

The following demographic variables were included as control variables: household income, parent's sex, child birth order, number of children in family, child age, parental employment status, and community type. Decisions regarding the inclusion of variables in the models were motivated by the findings of other research, as well as by the responses of the interviewees. Coding decisions for each variable included are summarized in Appendix B.

The survey questionnaires did not contain any information directly comparable with the parental categories of enforcer, facilitator, and encourager, as described above. We will comment further on this finding in the "Discussion" section. Due to the small size of the interview sample, we were unable to draw conclusions based on parental education as a proxy for social class. However, interviewees' responses prompted further investigation regarding the role played by parental education and we treated parental educational attainment as a moderator variable. That is, separate analyses were run for children where neither parent had earned a baccalaureate-level credential as their highest educational credential; at least one parent had earned a baccalaureate credential; and at least one parent possessed greater than a baccalaureate credential, including a professional degree, master's degree, and doctorate degree. Due to the binary nature of the dependent variable (participation versus no participation), logistic regression was used to examine possible parental determinants of participation by children in each of the four types of ECAs.

The reliability of the model estimates was examined by conducting robustness checks for influential and discrepant cases and collinearity. No serious violations were found.

### **Participation in Athletics Activities**

The findings of the first regression analysis are presented in Appendix C, Table 1. It is clear that the independent variables included play different roles across the parental education categories.

In households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, parental participation in student council during high school was significantly related to participation in specialized athletics programs by children ( $p < .05$ ). The odds of a child participating in specialized athletic programs were 2.98 times greater when the child's parent participated in student council during high school. Other significant variables included the age of the child ( $p < .001$ ; odds 2.88) and parental job status ( $p < .05$ ; odds 1.65)<sup>5</sup>.

In households where one or more parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, parental participation in church and community activities during high school were significant predictors of participation by their children in athletic activities ( $p < .05$ ) with odds 1.54 times greater. Parental valuation of competitive and networking skills was significantly related to participation in specialized athletics programs ( $p < .05$ ) for parents in this category; the odds ratio was 1.78. Also significant were the number of children in the family ( $p < .05$ ; odds 1.50) and the child's age ( $p < .01$ ; odds 1.79). There were no significant predictors of participation in athletics activities for children in households where one or more parents had earned graduate level credentials.

### **Participation in Music Activities**

In households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, parental participation in athletics, yearbook, and miscellaneous clubs during high school were all significantly related to participation by their children in specialized music programs for children (all at  $p < .05$ ) as seen in Appendix C, Table 2. The odd ratios were 2.47, 2.83, and 2.14,

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5 Odds ratios less than 1.0 are not reported.

respectively. Parental valuation of participation in fine arts activities was significantly related to participation by their children in specialized music activities ( $p < .01$ ; odds 3.40). In addition, two control variables, child age ( $p < .05$ ; odds 2.06) and job status ( $p < .05$ ; odds 1.50) were significant.

In households where one or more parents had earned baccalaureate credentials, only one parental experience variable was significant for children ( $p < .05$ ) with odds 1.60 times greater. Parental valuation of participation in fine arts activities is also a predictor of participation in specialized music programs; however, when compared with children in households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, the odds were much lower, only 1.60 times greater. Two control variables, household income ( $p < .01$ ; odds 1.00) and child age ( $p < .01$ ; odds 1.74) were significant.

In households where one or more parents had earned graduate credentials only one parental experience predictor—participating in student council during high school—was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) with odds 2.48 times greater. The control variable “number of children in the family” was significant ( $p < .05$ ; odds 2.12), indicating that the larger the family size, the more likely were children to participate in specialized music programs.

## **Participation in Language Activities**

In households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, the odds of a child participating in specialized language programs were 2.41 times greater when the child’s parent believed in the importance of a command of French and/or other languages ( $p < .05$ ) as seen in Appendix C, Table 3. No other variables were significant.

Children in households where at least one parent had obtained a baccalaureate credential, the odds of a child participating in specialized language programs were 2.22 times greater when the child’s parent participated in miscellaneous clubs during high school ( $p < .05$ ). Parents who valued competence in French and/or other languages ( $p < .001$ ) were significantly related to participation by their children in specialized language programs, with odds increasing by 3.01.

For children in households where one or more parents had earned graduate credentials, one parental experience predictor of participation in specialized language programs—parental participation in church and community organizations during high

school—was significant ( $p < .05$ ; odds 1.89) as was high school participation in student council ( $p < .01$ ). Parental valuation of competence in French and/or other languages was also a significant predictor of participation by children in specialized language programs ( $p < .001$ ) with odds 5.69 times greater. These odds are considerably higher than those for children in households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials. Notably however, this variable was significant across all three parental post-secondary education categories.

### **Participation in Leadership**

In households where neither parent had earned baccalaureate credentials, parental participation in athletics ( $p < .05$ ) and in yearbook/school newspaper ( $p < .01$ ) during high school was significantly related to participation by their children in leadership programs, with odds 2.46 and 2.74 times greater respectively (Appendix C, Table 4). Parental valuation of leadership opportunities ( $p < .01$ ) was also significant with odds at 4.08 times greater. Child age was significant ( $p < .001$ ) with odds at 5.75 times greater.

For children from households where at least one parent had obtained baccalaureate credentials, parental valuation of leadership opportunities was the only parental value variable significantly related to participation by children in leadership programs ( $p < .01$ ) with odds at 3.17 times greater. Also significant was one control variable—child age—with the odds of children participating in leadership activities at 5.18 times greater for older children.

In households where one or more parent had earned graduate credentials, two parental experience variables—participation in miscellaneous clubs ( $p < .01$ ; odds 3.24), and yearbook ( $p < .05$ ; odds 2.61)—were significantly related to participation in leadership activities by children. Also, parental valuation of leadership opportunities was significantly related to participation by children in leadership programs ( $p < .05$ ; odds 3.09). In addition, the control variable—child age—was significant ( $p < .01$ ; odds 4.81).

Two variables in Appendix C, Table 4—parental valuation of leadership opportunities and child age—were significant across all three parental post-secondary categories. It is logical that older children would be more likely to participate in leadership activities; however, this variable is significant in all three parental post-secondary categories only in relationship to participation in leadership activities.



## **Discussion and Conclusions**

It is common practice in the research literature not to distinguish among various extracurricular activities in which children participate. As our study has demonstrated, by doing so these study findings rely on an untested assumption that parents interact with their children the same way regardless of the type of ECA in question. Parents have different experiences and have developed a set of values specific to particular ECAs. Analyses of the interview data reveal that most parents discussed specific ECAs, and not ECAs in general, and they specified how different experiences and values influenced the roles that they fulfilled, depending on the activity. As a result, parental roles varied from one ECA to another. It was not uncommon for parents to encourage participation in one type of activity, enforce participation in another type, and facilitate participation in a third type depending on their values and experiences regarding different activities. The logistic regression analyses reinforce this finding and suggest that future research should disaggregate, rather than pool, participation in different types of ECAs by activity type. Although there has been some movement in this direction in terms of distinguishing sport and non-sport ECAs, to fully appreciate ECAs from an equity perspective, researchers and policy makers would benefit from examining participation in ECAs both separately and in relation to each other.

When the models were separated by parental education, interesting results emerged in terms of parental values. On the one hand, parents' activity-specific values—valuing of fine arts participation—acted as stronger predictors of participation in specialized music programs for children in households with parents who had earned less than baccalaureate credentials. On the other hand, parents' activity-specific values—valuing language learning—acted as much stronger predictors of participation by children in specialized language programs for households with one or more parents with graduate level credentials. Regarding participation in athletics programs, parents who valued competitive and networking skills were significant predictors only for children in households with one or more parents with baccalaureate credentials. In other words, these findings demonstrate that the role of parental education, and by extension social class, also differs based on the types of ECA under consideration. Perhaps less educated parents rely more on formalized methods, such as ECAs, to nurture the attainment of their children's dispositions, while more educated parents feel less pressure to ensure that their children participate in

formal activities because they are confident that their children will learn these dispositions at home and within family-related social networks. More educated parents may trust that their children will learn the dispositions that will help them get ahead through “conductorless orchestration” (Bourdieu, 1972/1977, p. 81) during informal activities such as participating in conversations at the dinner table. These findings deviate from Lareau’s (2000) study as they suggest that it is the less educated parents who are engaging in “concerted cultivation” and middle class parents who are taking a “natural growth” approach.

Our findings suggest that future discussions regarding equity in access to ECAs for Canadian children should consider policies targeted to particular types of ECAs as they may be more effective. For example, our analysis indicates that parents who were more educated played a more influential role in the participation of their children in specialized language activities. Thus, policies aimed at increasing parents’ awareness regarding the benefits of additional language acquisition may serve to enhance participation by children in these ECAs<sup>6</sup>. The opposite pattern is true for music and athletic activities. Parents with lower education attainment appear to play a stronger role in encouraging participation by their children in athletic and music activities; yet Canadian statistics indicate that children from lower-income households report lower participation in these activities. In this case, policies aimed at removing systemic barriers such as tax credits may reduce inequality of access to these activities.

From a theoretical perspective, the capital gained by parents earlier in life through participation in ECAs can be exchanged for educational capital both individually and intergenerationally by the parents’ children. Although the quantitative analyses indicate that participants’ experiences during high school were significantly correlated with participation by their children in ECAs, the interviewees focused on the role of their present experience and rarely mentioned the impact that their prior experiences may have had on the

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6 A related tangential finding that emerged during our preliminary analyses was that despite Canada’s well-established dual language policy, a relatively small number of participants believed that French-language proficiency was important for the well-being of their children. This finding suggests that many parents hold similar beliefs to those that motivated the B.C. Ministry of Education’s 2011 plan to place French on a level playing field with Mandarin, Punjabi, Japanese, and German in terms of second-language learning for students in Grade 5 and above (Septilingualism in B.C. Schools, 2011). Although ultimately the B.C. Ministry of Education abandoned this plan out of respect for the status of French as an official language in Canada and in recognition of the value of French as a “gateway” to learning other languages (Steffenhagen, 2011), parents in this study clearly valued opportunities for their children to learn other languages. More research should be conducted to examine parents’ beliefs regarding the value of learning second, and third, languages.

ECA participation of their children. This suggests that parents' embodied capital, gained over 20 years earlier while they were in high school, was, in many cases, unconsciously exchanged by participants far down the road on behalf of their children. This serves as another reminder of the complexities involved in studying inequality. Inequality cannot be fully understood in one place in time. Rather, it is a result of the complex, dialectical interactions between personal history, family history, present situation, institutions, and society. Moreover, this finding suggests that the potential for inequality of access to ECAs is cyclical. If a parent did not have the opportunity to participate in certain types of ECAs during her or his childhood and/or adolescence, our findings suggest that this may decrease the odds of their children participating in certain types of ECAs. This should bring greater urgency to the issue of ECA participation as an equity issue in Canadian schools.

This study highlights the need to take in-school ECAs seriously as an equity issue in schools, particularly in the face of ongoing disruptions in several jurisdictions due to labour unrest. In-school ECAs tend to be the most accessible for lower income families. Our findings stress the importance of thinking about the impact of ECA equity issues not only for children currently in the school system but also for their children and their children's children. The capital gained by children through participation in ECAs can be exchanged for institutional capital both individually by the children themselves and inter-generationally by the children on behalf of their own children.

This study has several limitations. First, because the data were secondary in nature, not all desirable variables were available. For example, data regarding the sex of the participants' children was not available; neither was information as to whether ECAs were in-school activities or out-of-school activities. We intentionally excluded both race and sexual orientation as control variables in the analysis because the available variables were not specific enough (e.g., no information on Canadian-born versus immigrants born abroad) to be able to make any meaningful claims. The small sample of interviewees prevented us from making any claims by gender or social class. Second, attrition in the sample has resulted in a slight bias toward women and those who have completed higher education; however, the sample is representative enough to be generalizable to similar populations. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the relationships examined in this paper are vastly more complex than can be accounted for by the technique of regression analysis. That said, it is still useful to model relationships in the social sciences because, although these models are often overly simplistic, they do nonetheless contribute to our

understanding of the social world, especially when analyzed in conjunction with complex qualitative data which allows the messiness of the world to remain.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Qualitative Codes

<u>Facilitator</u>	[F]
<b>Parents' perception of their role in children's ECAs [PPR]</b> .....	PPR
▪ child directed [CD] .....	PPR-CD
<b>Reasons for allowing child to direct [CD]</b> .....	F-CD
▪ concern about overscheduling [OS] .....	F-CD-OS
▪ importance of free time [IFT] .....	F-CD-IFT
▪ concern ECAs too competitive [TC].....	F-CD-TC
▪ exploring talents [ET] .....	F-CD-ET
▪ child enjoyment and interest [CEI].....	F-CD-CEI
<u>Encourager</u>	[EN]
<b>Parents' perception of their role in children's ECAs [PPR]</b> .....	PPR
▪ parent and child combined responsibility [CR] .....	PPR-CR
<b>Reasons for offering choice [OC]</b> .....	EN-OC
▪ reflection on childhood [RC] .....	EN-OC-RC
▪ learn about culture [LC] .....	EN-OC-LC
▪ balanced children [BC] .....	EN-OC-BC
▪ scholarship opportunities [SO] .....	EN-OC -SO
▪ physical activity [PA] .....	EN-OC -PA
▪ concern about overscheduling [OS] .....	EN-OC-OS
▪ importance of free time [IFT] .....	EN-OC-IFT
▪ concern ECAs too competitive [TC].....	EN-OC-TC
▪ exploring talents [ET] .....	EN-OC-ET
▪ child enjoyment and interest [CEI].....	EN-OC-CEI
<u>Enforcer</u>	[EF]
<b>Parents' perception of their role in children's ECAs [PPR]</b> .....	PPR
▪ Emphasis on parent responsibility [EPR] .....	PPR-EPR
<b>Reasons for pressure [P]</b> .....	EF-P
▪ getting ahead of the curve [GAC] .....	EF-P-GAC
▪ reflection on childhood [RC] .....	EF-P-RC
▪ learn about culture [LC] .....	EF-P-LC
▪ balanced children [BC] .....	EF-P-BC
▪ scholarship opportunities [SO] .....	EF-P-SO
▪ physical activity [PA] .....	EF-P-PA

**Appendix B: Logistic Model Variable Specifications**

Variables	Coding
<b>Dependent variables: Child participation variables</b>	
Athletics programs	No, child has not participated = 0, Yes, child has participated = 1
Music programs	No, child has not participated = 0, Yes, child has participated = 1
Language programs	No, child has not participated = 0, Yes, child has participated = 1
Leadership programs	No, child has not participated = 0, Yes, child has participated = 1
<b>Independent variables: Parent experience variables</b>	
Current participation in artistic activities	No = 0, Yes = 1
Current participation in leadership	No = 0, Yes = 1
Current participation in athletics activities	No = 0, Yes = 1
Church or community organizations in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
Band, drama and/or dance in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
Athletics in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
Misc. clubs in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
Yearbook in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
Student Council in HS	3 category variable representing the frequency of participating during high school: Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2
<b>Independent variables: Parental value variables</b>	
General value: university attendance	5 category variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to their children attending university: Not at all important = 1, Not very important = 2, Neutral = 3, Somewhat important = 4, Very Important = 5
Activity specific value: participation in fine arts activities	5 category variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to their children participating in fine arts activities: Not at all important = 1, Not very important = 2, Neutral = 3, Somewhat important = 4, Very Important = 5
Activity specific value: leadership opportunities	5 category variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to their children having access to leadership opportunities: Not at all important = 1, Not very important = 2, Neutral = 3, Somewhat important = 4, Very Important = 5

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Activity specific value: language learning	Variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to their children having a command of French and other languages
General value: Competition and networking	Variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to their children participating in athletics, having competitive skills, and having a large network of friends
General value: Community and citizenship	Variable representing the extent of importance parents assign to a multicultural student body, public education, their children having knowledge of society, their children having knowledge of their own culture, their children having knowledge of other cultures, their children having a close circle of friends, and their children having cooperative skills
 <b>Control variables</b>	
Household Income	Variable representing families' household income in thousands of dollars (CAD)
Parent Sex	Male = 0, Female = 1
Birth Order	First born = 1, Second born = 2, Third born = 3, Fourth born = 4, Fifth born = 5
Number of Children in Family	Variable representing the number of children in the family
Child Age	Variable representing children's ages
Parent education	3 category variable representing parents' and spouse/partners' combined highest level of educational attainment: Neither parent with a baccalaureate level degree = 1, At least one parent with a baccalaureate degree = 2, At least one parent with an advanced degree = 3
Job status	5 category variable representing the amount of responsibility parents' jobs entail: No supervisory or managerial responsibility = 0, Limited supervisory or managerial responsibility (5 persons or less) = 1, Self-employed without employees = 2, Extensive supervisory or managerial responsibility (More than 5 persons) = 3, Self-employed with employees = 4
Community type	2 category variable representing the type of community in which each family resides: Rural = 0, Urban = 1 where urban and rural are determined by population density as specified by Statistics Canada. Urban = 400 or more people per square kilometer. Rural = less than 400 people per square kilometer.

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**Appendix C: Logistical Models**

**Table 1.** Model A: Determinants of Participation by Children in Athletics Programs

	Non-Baccalaureate Degree Households (n=127)			Baccalaureate Degree Households (n= 234)			Graduate Degree Households (n=136)		
	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio
Constant	-0.92	3.38		-5.74**	2.16		2.08	2.37	
<b>Parent experience variables</b>									
Current participation in athletics	-1.98**	0.79	0.14	-0.06	0.44		0.32	0.51	
Parent regular exercise	0.28	0.20		0.03	0.16		0.01	0.26	
Church or community organizations in HS	-0.06	0.35		0.43*	0.21	1.54	0.07	0.26	
Band, drama and/or dance in HS	-0.49	0.36		0.15	0.19		-0.01	0.31	
Athletics in HS	0.69	0.41		0.17	0.24		0.05	0.28	
Misc. clubs in HS	0.43	0.45		-0.08	0.24		0.06	0.32	
Yearbook in HS	0.10	0.33		-0.81***	0.24	0.45	-0.01	0.40	
Student Council in HS	1.09*	0.49	2.98	0.35	0.22		0.44	0.34	
<b>Parental values variables</b>									
General value: university attendance	0.04	0.26		0.18	0.16		-0.47	0.27	
General value: Competition and networking	-0.06	0.59		0.58*	0.29	1.78	0.62	0.46	
General value: Community and culture	-0.70	0.68		0.15	0.37		-0.72	0.48	
<b>Control variables</b>									
Household Income	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	
Parent Sex	-0.47	0.56		0.22	0.34		0.18	0.46	
Birth Order	0.16	0.38		-0.27	0.24		0.12	0.34	
Number of Children in Family	-0.14	0.43		0.41*	0.24	1.50	-0.11	0.31	
Child Age	1.06***	0.34	2.88	0.58**	0.23	1.79	0.37	0.38	
Job status	0.50*	0.21	1.65	-0.04	0.10		-0.09	0.13	
Community type	-0.02	0.19		-0.14	0.15		-0.90	0.47	
<b>Model evaluation</b>									
Log likelihood	-55.65			-136.37			-80.33		
Likelihood ratio chi square test	48.47***			36.10**			20.27		
Pseudo R square	0.30			0.12			0.11		
BIC	38.72			62.09			68.16		

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

(Paths on Life's Way, 2010 & 1989)

**Table 2.** Model B: Determinants of Participation by Children in Music Programs

	Non-Baccalaureate Degree Households (n=127)			Baccalaureate Degree Households (n= 233)			Graduate Degree Households (n=136)		
	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio
Constant	3.18	3.85		-2.12	2.17		-0.91	2.33	
<b>Parent experience variables</b>									
Current participation in artistic activities	-2.23*	1.11	0.11	-0.72	0.60		0.77	0.96	
Church or community organizations in HS	0.06	0.38		0.14	0.20		0.33	0.29	
Band, drama and/or dance in HS	-0.11	0.37		0.04	0.19		-0.56	0.33	
Athletics in HS	0.91*	0.41	2.47	-0.42	0.24		-0.20	0.30	
Misc. clubs in HS	1.04*	0.45	2.83	0.47*	0.24	1.60	0.21	0.33	
Yearbook in HS	0.76*	0.34	2.14	-0.28	0.23		-0.74	0.43	
Student Council in HS	-0.02	0.39		0.23	0.22		0.91*	0.39	2.48
<b>Parental values variables</b>									
Activity specific value: fine arts	1.22**	0.50	3.40	0.47*	0.23	1.60	-0.15	0.33	
General value: university attendance	0.13	0.28		0.03	0.16		0.31	0.29	
General value: Community and culture	-2.27**	0.88	0.10	-0.32	0.36		-0.04	0.50	
General value: Competition and networking	-0.85	0.65		-0.04	0.27		-0.21	0.49	
<b>Control variables</b>									
Household Income	0.00	0.00		0.00**	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	
Parent Sex	-0.74	0.54		0.03	0.36		0.38	0.47	
Birth Order	-0.13	0.37		-0.22	0.24		-0.58	0.38	
Number of Children in Family	-0.09	0.43		-0.02	0.23		0.75*	0.38	2.12
Child Age	0.72*	0.36	2.06	0.55**	0.22	1.74	0.63	0.42	
Job status	0.41*	0.19	1.50	0.06	0.10		-0.07	0.14	
Community type	0.46	0.28		-0.10	0.16		-0.91	0.51	
<b>Model evaluation</b>									
Log likelihood	-57.14			-139.86			-73.07		
Likelihood ratio chi square test	59.49***			38.59***			34.74**		
Pseudo R square	0.34			0.12			0.19		
BIC	27.71			59.53			53.82		

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

(Paths on Life's Way, 2010 & 1989)



**Table 3.** Model C: Determinants of Participation in Language Programs

	Non-Baccalaureate Degree Households (n=127)			Baccalaureate Degree Households (n= 233)			Graduate Degree Households (n=136)		
	Logit $\beta$	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit $\beta$	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit $\beta$	S.E.	Odds Ratio
Constant	5.28	4.72		-0.48	2.68		-7.64*	3.42	
<b>Parent experience variables</b>									
Church or community organizations in HS	-1.53**	0.54	0.22	0.10	0.24		0.63*	0.34	1.89
Band, drama and/or dance in HS	-0.53	0.44		0.12	0.24		-0.27	0.43	
Athletics in HS	0.03	0.47		-0.57*	0.30	0.56	-0.06	0.38	
Misc. clubs in HS	0.10	0.48		0.80**	0.28	2.22	0.12	0.46	
Yearbook in HS	0.73	0.40		0.18	0.28		-0.19	0.56	
Student Council in HS	0.70	0.50		-0.32	0.30		-1.55**	0.50	0.21
<b>Parental values variables</b>									
Activity specific value: Language learning	0.88*	0.44	2.41	1.10***	0.28	3.01	1.74***	0.43	5.69
General value: university attendance	-0.45	0.31		0.16	0.20		0.20	0.36	
General value: Competition and networking	-2.29**	0.75	0.10	0.10	0.33		-0.86	0.70	
General value: Community and culture	0.42	0.92		-1.04*	0.48	0.35	0.84	0.59	
<b>Control variables</b>									
Household Income	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	
Parent Sex	0.36	0.68		-0.52	0.44		0.12	0.58	
Birth Order	-0.64	0.48		-0.50	0.31		-0.57	0.41	
Number of Children in Family	0.25	0.51		-0.10	0.27		0.45	0.40	
Child Age	0.14	0.42		0.05	0.27		0.20	0.47	
Job status	-0.32	0.24		-0.04	0.12		-0.02	0.17	
Community type	0.00	0.26		0.16	0.22		-0.23	0.58	
<b>Model evaluation</b>									
Log likelihood	-43.84			-98.88			-54.39		
Likelihood ratio chi square test	41.06***			47.11***			57.72***		
Pseudo R square	0.32			0.19			0.35		
BIC	41.29			45.56			25.79		

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ *(Paths on Life's Way, 2010 & 1989)*

**Table 4.** Model D: Determinants of Participation by Children in Leadership Programs

	Non-Baccalaureate Degree Households (n=127)			Baccalaureate Degree Households (n= 233)			Graduate Degree Households (n=136)		
	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Logit β	S.E.	Odds Ratio
Constant	-4.80	3.77		-9.32***	2.71		-5.30	3.40	
<b>Parent experience variables</b>									
Current community leadership	-0.98	0.60		0.43	0.36		-1.47*	0.69	0.23
Church or community organizations in HS	-0.23	0.41		0.15	0.23		0.59	0.34	
Band, drama and/or dance in HS	-0.30	0.41		0.28	0.22		-1.54**	0.49	0.21
Athletics in HS	0.90*	0.42	2.46	0.40	0.29		-0.33	0.35	
Misc. clubs in HS	0.10	0.41		0.03	0.28		1.17**	0.48	3.24
Yearbook in HS	1.01**	0.35	2.74	-0.05	0.28		0.96*	0.49	2.61
Student Council in HS	-0.13	0.38		-0.01	0.25		-0.11	0.39	
<b>Parental values variables</b>									
Activity specific value: Leadership	1.41**	0.51	4.08	1.15**	0.37	3.17	1.13*	0.51	3.09
General value: university attendance	0.36	0.31		0.17	0.17		0.25	0.32	
General value: Community and culture	-1.82*	0.77	0.16	0.21	0.40		-0.31	0.60	
General value: Competition and networking	-0.76	0.64		-0.64	0.34		-1.15	0.63	
<b>Control variables</b>									
Household Income	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	
Parent Sex	0.16	0.56		0.01	0.41		1.21	0.63	
Birth Order	0.39	0.40		0.00	0.29		-0.52	0.43	
Number of Children in Family	-0.06	0.46		-0.53*	0.27	0.59	0.37	0.38	
Child Age	1.75***	0.49	5.75	1.64***	0.29	5.18	1.57**	0.52	4.81
Job status	0.32	0.19		0.02	0.11		0.12	0.17	
Community type	0.32	0.26		0.16	0.16		-0.54	0.58	
<b>Model evaluation</b>									
Log likelihood	-57.25			-109.95			-58.59		
Likelihood ratio chi square test	54.77***			82.68***			52.54***		
Pseudo R2	0.34			0.28			0.34		
BIC	27.45			9.92			30.98		

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

(Paths on Life's Way, 2010 & 1989)