

Full Length Research Paper

Exploring the lifeworlds of children in Hong Kong: Parents' report on after school time use

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This study aims to discuss the findings of a survey completed by 335 parents of children in Kindergarten 1 (3 to 4 years), Primary 1 (6 to 7 years) and Primary 5 (10 to 11 years) in Hong Kong, about their children's out of school time use. We wanted to explore the widely held notion that Asian students spend much of their time studying, with little leisure time, and there is scant information about Asian children's everyday lives outside schooling. The findings from the survey indicate that this cohort of parents reported that their children spend their time out of school engaged in a variety of activities. The children don't spend large amounts of time (that is, > 4 hours) on academic activities, but do on visiting friends and relatives and playing, indoors, outdoor and in organized sporting contexts. Doing school homework fell in the mid-range of activities. The students also did not spend a lot of time using technology. These findings reflect existing data collected in western contexts in terms of the time spent on leisure activities and homework, but contrast to other findings with older students where students in East Asia spent more time out of school engaged in academic work with minimal leisure time.

Key words: Children's time use, after school activity, Hong Kong, parents, lifeworlds.

INTRODUCTION

There has been significant commentary about the high performance levels of East Asian students in international high stakes tests (Mervis, 2010), and thus their schooling systems have been subjected to too much scrutiny.

Researchers and commentators have attempted to isolate features in schooling that support the persistent high performances of East Asian students for over a decade (McKinsey, 2007). Some researchers (Reid, 2012) maintain that the focus on in school variables to inform this discussion, is limited, and the issues of performance need a more balanced consideration. The example of Finland often provides a counterpoint. They

have maintained consistently high performance rankings in Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) yet have a very different educational system (Hattie, 2012) than any of the East Asian contexts.

Heckman and Krueger (2005) asserted that most of the effects that correlate with strong student performance in high stakes tests are related to out of school variables, yet he does not specifically explain or outline the effects. Goldhaber et al. (1999) concur, maintaining that background factors account for 60% of student achievement in school. And despite this, empirical research has largely focused on

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the *features of schooling systems* (McKinsey, 2012) to explain particular countries' consistently high performances. Secondary analyses of PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data have been concerned with demographic and family variables (McGaw, 2010; Ho, 2010), length of school year (Cheung and Chan, 2009), out of school tuition (OECD, 2011, 2014), school quality (Ng, 2008), the extent of local autonomy for schools (McConney and Perry, 2008), and the quality and type of homework set (Zhu and Leung, 2011).

There is obviously a clear need for this focus on such systemic and structural features to be complemented by research into a broader and more comprehensive range of the out-of-school variables, that take place in families and communities that may also have a critical influence on academic performance (Harding, 1991).

Hence, we were interested in investigating the lifeworlds of students. The lifeworlds of children include all aspects of their lived experiences that occur in school, at home and in social/community contexts. We use the term to explore the range of activities that students participate in and out of school, with their families and in their communities (Chen and Stevenson, 1995)

Specifically, in this study, we explore the after school activities of children in Hong Kong, from 3 to 11 years of age, as reported by their parents in responses to a survey, after school on weekdays and on the weekend.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Larson and Verma (1999) have noted that the study of how adults use their time has long been of interest in terms of establishing a measurable input to society in a human capital view of economics.

Similarly, while less time has been spent studying children's time use (e.g. Newman et al., 2007; Pew, 2015), from this perspective, the time factor can be viewed as a capital resource, where, "the quantity of hours and years that a population of children spends in school provides an approximate measure of human capital production" (Larson and Verma, 1999), and time spent on school related work is viewed as supporting the acquisition of skills and knowledge that can be marketised. Stevenson also contended that, "the way young children divide their time between home and school tells us something about the emphasis societies spend on schooling" (Stevenson, 1992).

Children's time use has also been of interest to those who are concerned about their well-being. Such studies have been designed in order to obtain better understandings about children's daily lifeworlds, and the socio-cultural factors at play as children participate in school and out of school experiences (Vogler et al., 2009).

So, for example, the time spent on playing computer

games and on the internet rather than engaging in physical activity (Mulvihill et al., 2000) has been of concern, as well as other considerations such as the amount of time fathers spend with their children (Yeung et al., 2001).

Vogler et al. (2009) also noted that exploring the family and social characteristics that impact on children's time use also gives us insights about how decisions are made in families based on cultural beliefs and informs us about how parents and children negotiate the nature of the activities in the context of such restraints. One relevant consideration here is the notion of the 'Tiger Mother' (Chua, 2011; Kiddera, 2001) in Asian cultures, and the major restrictions this places on the lives of middle class offspring in particular, both in and out of school (Chao and Tseng, 2002). It has also been noted by Tan (2017) that in Singapore, "better-educated parents with higher incomes adopt a more proactive interventionist parenting style by paying more for both academic and non-academic enrichment classes".

In their review of global trends in the afterschool activities of children from 5 to 18 years of age, Larson and Verma (1999) indicated that even when the data compared originates from different forms of reporting, there are large and consistent differences in findings across nations and different parts of the world. For example, they found that students in East Asia spent most of their after school time engaged in school associated work and students in North America and Europe had more leisure time than the East Asian students. These differences were most pronounced in adolescents from Junior High School onwards where students in Korea spent more than double the time on school related work at home than students in North America. Of interest was the time spent watching television was similar across the post-industrialised nations.

Larson and Verma (1999) did not discuss the role of socio economic class but rather focused on the differences between pre/ post industrialised nations, and the cultural traditions that are characterized in the East/West binary. In fact, Harding (1997) suggested that, "the relationships between race and class, and children's time use and between time use and outcomes have not been addressed adequately in the literature".

Some studies have indicated that socio-economic status is an important factor when related to organized activities after school (Caradoso et al., 2008; Lareau, 2000; Shih and Yi, 2014; Yamamoto and Brinton, 2010). The studies have noted that middle class parents tend to participate in organized after school activities, and they indicate that they do this because of the perceived benefits to their child's school work.

In comparing the after school time of students in the US and East Asia, Stevenson (1992) highlighted the cultural traditions noted by Larson and Verma (1999) in Asian families, who encouraged the children to always work hard at school and be diligent in their approach. In their

study, East Asian mothers stipulated that the primary task of their child was to do well at school. Further, Stevenson also found that US students had about half as much homework as their Asian counterparts, and that children in Chicago spent nearly twice as much time watching TV than children in Beijing. Interestingly, Stevenson (1992) contended that since Asian children had more breaks from class time for play that they were satisfied with less time to play after school.

The context for the current study was Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region (SAR)). Hong Kong consistently performs in the top five 'nations' in high stakes testing, and generates a great deal of interest regarding the reasons behind their consistent ranking in the top five countries performance globally. While we are aware that there are a number of studies about Asian minorities living in western countries (Jerrim, 2014) there is limited empirical data about Asian students living in their own location.

Further, most of the studies we found were with secondary students (OECD, 2011, 2014) with only a few located in the upper elementary grades. And, it is only recently that a few of these researchers have considered socio-economic class as a variable (Lareau, 2000; Shih and Yi, 2014) but again these were with older students.

Karsten (2015) study was concerned with Hong Kong childhoods in relation to the high-rise living environment, and the dominant parenting cultures among the middle-classes. She also noted the limited data on Hong Kong childhoods, and referred to a small study by Playright (a NGO located in HK) which indicated that children in Hong Kong (aged 6 to 16) spent more time doing their homework and watching television than playing. And when they did play it was mainly indoors.

Karsten (2015) project included 20 families, sixteen of whom had domestic helpers and three the assistance of a grandmother who lived in close proximity. The findings revealed highly organized after school activities that supported their definition of providing a 'good' childhood for their children with activities that developed their skills set. The children ranged in age from 4 to 14 years, and their schedules meant that they were never unsupervised with little leisure or free time and virtually no outdoor playtime since play was not high on the agenda for these families.

Accordingly, in order to broaden the body of inquiring concerning whether Asian students do in fact spend much of their time studying and little time engaged in leisure activities, we sought to collect empirical data from across the age range from 3 years of age to 11 years of age, from low socio-economic families.

METHODOLOGY

The study

This study reports on the results of survey data from the parents of children attending Kindergarten 1 (3- to 4 years), Primary 1 (6 to 7

years) and Primary 5 (10 to 11 years). The survey was part of a larger research project entitled Millennial Kids Learning, which took place over a period of two years in Hong Kong.

The study sought to gather empirical information about the lives of young people in Hong Kong of these ages from the students themselves but also from their parents. The junctures were chosen because Kindergarten (K1) represents the beginning of formal classes in Hong Kong, Primary 1 (P1) is the first year of Primary school and Primary 5 (P5) is the penultimate year of primary schooling, and we were advised that it was not possible to research in Primary 6 since the preparation for secondary school was intense and driven by specific agendas that focused on being able to perform well in tests in order to obtain a place in the school of your choice.

Conducting research in intact classrooms is not common in many areas of Hong Kong, and the schools were selected on the basis of Chinese colleagues informal networks in three different locations in the New Territories, and one in Kowloon. We needed schools that could be considered as being in low socio economic areas, and in the first instance we used Hong Kong Census data (Hong Kong Government, 2012) to isolate particular areas and then used the study networks in order to delineate specific school sites to ask their permission to conduct the research project.

The data for the study also included interviews with the teachers and classroom ethnographies (Yelland and Leung, 2016). Surveys were completed, analyzed and reported, by the P1 and P5 children in school (Yelland et al., 2013a, b) but here we concentrate on the surveys completed by parents, and how they reported how their children spend their time after school on weekdays and at the weekends.

A total of 335 parents of Kindergarten1 (123), Primary 1 (102) and Primary 5 (110) parents completed the survey that was sent home with their child with a written endorsement from the principal encouraging them to participate and return the survey. There were parents of 163 boys (49%) and 172 girls (51%). The percentages of boys and girls differ slightly across the three year levels, but the differences are not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2.24, p = 0.54$).

We advised that the survey could be completed by parents or guardians, since there is an increasing trend in Hong Kong for Mainland Chinese parents to send their children to school in Hong Kong with a relative or another person to care for them while they attended school.

Survey

The following research questions guided the design of the survey, for P1 and P5 children and all parents:

- (1) How do students in Hong Kong kindergartens and primary schools spend their time out of school?
- (2) How widespread are educational practices associated with private tutoring in this age group within this cohort?
- (3) Do students in low socio-economic areas have domestic helpers who support them with school work?
- (4) What types of technologies do students have in their homes and how are they used?
- (6) What are the students' views about aspects of their lives and schooling?

The survey was designed to contain direct (factual) and indirect (attitudinal) measures (Sapsford, 1999), and sought to discover how the students spent their time after school on weekdays and weekends, as well as information about the physical space, what resources (toys, media technologies) they owned as a family or individually, and also some items related to how they viewed the purpose of schools in Hong Kong, and if they thought it was

relevant to their child's needs and interests.

The survey consisted of three parts. The first part contained questions pertaining to the demographics of the cohort. Section 2 was related to the types of activities that the child might do after school and at weekends, as well as additional questions about how any 'free' time might be spent, what items the child has in his/her bedroom, and whether the bedroom was shared with a sibling? Information about the ownership of traditional and electronic toys was also sought.

Finally, in this section, we asked the parents to rate their level of agreement (Likert scale), they agreed with particular statements about education in general and in particular about their child's schooling experience. Section 3 was concerned with the levels of satisfaction about the school, how the parent felt about their child's experience at school, and how technologies were used in school. The survey was trialled in two kindergarten and primary schools in the year prior to the start of the study and modified on the basis of feedback received from Principals, teachers, parents and Primary 5 (aged 11 years) children. Here, we focus on the responses to the first two questions in Section 2 of the survey:

"How much time during weekdays and weekends (separately) outside school hours does your child spend on the following activities?" Parents responded to 28 activities.

Methods of analysis

The two survey questions required that the parents report how long their children were engaged in the particular activities in hours. In the next section, we present summaries of the parents' responses in a graphic format (Figures 1 and 2).

Also, we compare parent's responses according to the year level of their child (Kindergarten, P 1, and P2 in Figures 3 and 4), their child's gender, and to weekday activities as well as those on the weekend. We employed permutation tests to explore these relationships. The p-value returned by the permutation test can be interpreted in the same way as the p-value returned by conventional tests of statistical inference, but strictly, it is the proportion of random permutations of the data (here, 50,000 permutations) that generate a test statistic equal to or larger than the test statistic returned by the sample. The *coin* package (Hothorn et al., 2006; Hothorn et al., 2008), a package of the R statistical system (Team, 2015), was used to compute the permutation tests.

Parents responded on a four point scale (Not done; < 1 h; 1 - 3 h; > 4 h). The ordered nature of the response scale was taken into account in the analyses. Further, because each point on the scale is a time span, we assigned the mid-point of each span to each category so that the differences between the spans could be taken into account. The four midpoints were: 0, .5, 2.5, and 4.5 respectively (strictly, the last point on the scale is open ended, but it seems reasonable impose an upper limit of 5 h, and thus a midpoint of 4.5 h). Similarly, the children's year levels are ordered (Kindergarten, P1, and P5), and to assign a quantity to each category, we assigned an average age of children in each of the year levels: 3.5, 6.5, 10.5.

Testing for associations between times spent on an activity and year level was thus a test of linear-by-linear association, and extension of the general Cochran-Mantel-Haenzel (CMH) tests. Similarly, testing for association between gender and time spent on an activity was a linear-by-linear association test. Testing for associations between times spent on an activity on a weekday compared to the weekend required slightly different versions of the analysis: a test of marginal homogeneity was applied. Both tests are implemented in the *coin* package. Finally, in order to take account of multiple testing (across the 28 activities), we present Holms' adjusted p-values in Tables 1 and 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The cohort of parents

Gender

Of the 335 surveys received from parents, 242 (72%) were completed by women (that is, wives, partners, mothers) while 93 (27.8%) were completed by men. Small differences across the three year levels of the child were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.8$, $p = 0.70$).

Location of residence

Most (80%) lived in the New Territories of HK (SAR). Smaller numbers (18%) lived in Kowloon, and 3% lived elsewhere (on the Islands off HK.).

Income

The parents were mostly low to middle income earners (Government of Hong Kong, 2012a, b). Nearly 31% reported a combined household income less than \$10,000 Hong Kong dollars per month (approximately \$1,300 US dollars), with another larger group (35%) reporting an income between \$10,000 and \$20,000; that is a total of 67% reporting an income less than the median income (the median monthly combined household income in Hong Kong is \$20,000 (approximately \$2,600 US dollars) (Government of Hong Kong, 2012a, b). Another 27% reported incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000, and only 20 (6%) with incomes higher than \$40,000.

Domestic helper

Only 58 (18%) said they employed a domestic helper. These are foreign workers who live and work for families in HK at a fixed price determined by the Government, with many living in the family house. For this data there was a statistically significant association with Year level of the child ($\chi^2 = 9.15$, $p = 0.01$). A larger percentage of parents of kindergarten children (26%) employed domestic help compared to 12% for parents of P1 and P5 children.

Qualifications

The majority (88%) of parents had completed high school, either in Hong Kong (54%) or elsewhere (33%). Smaller numbers reported holding Associate Diplomas (16) or Bachelor degrees (18) or higher (Masters (1), PhD (1)). Six reported some other qualification. Of those with a spouse (56 reported not living with a spouse), 92%

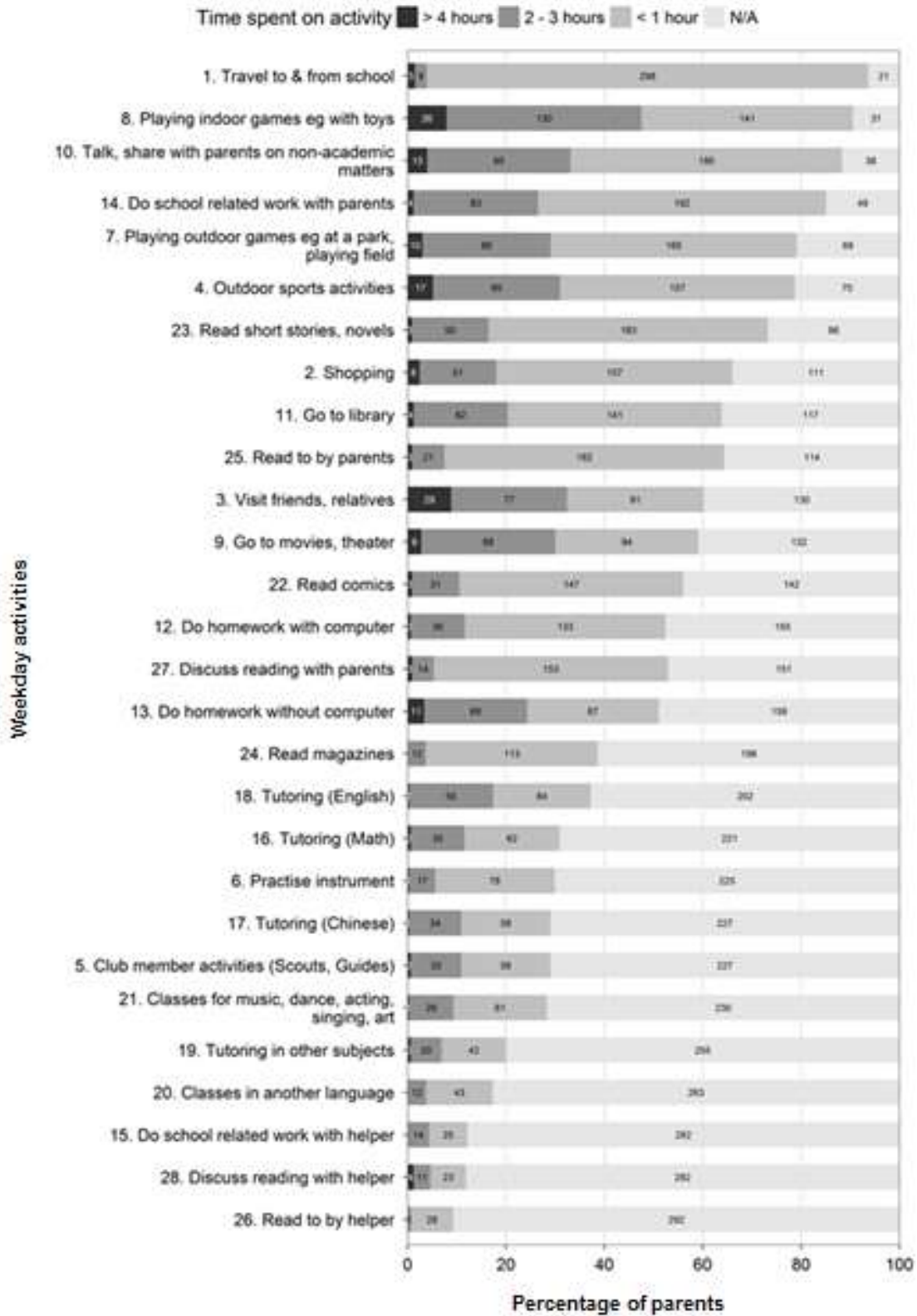


Figure 1. Parents' reporting of time their children spend on activities outside of school on a weekday.

reported that their spouse had completed high school, 4% reported tertiary qualifications, and 4% reported

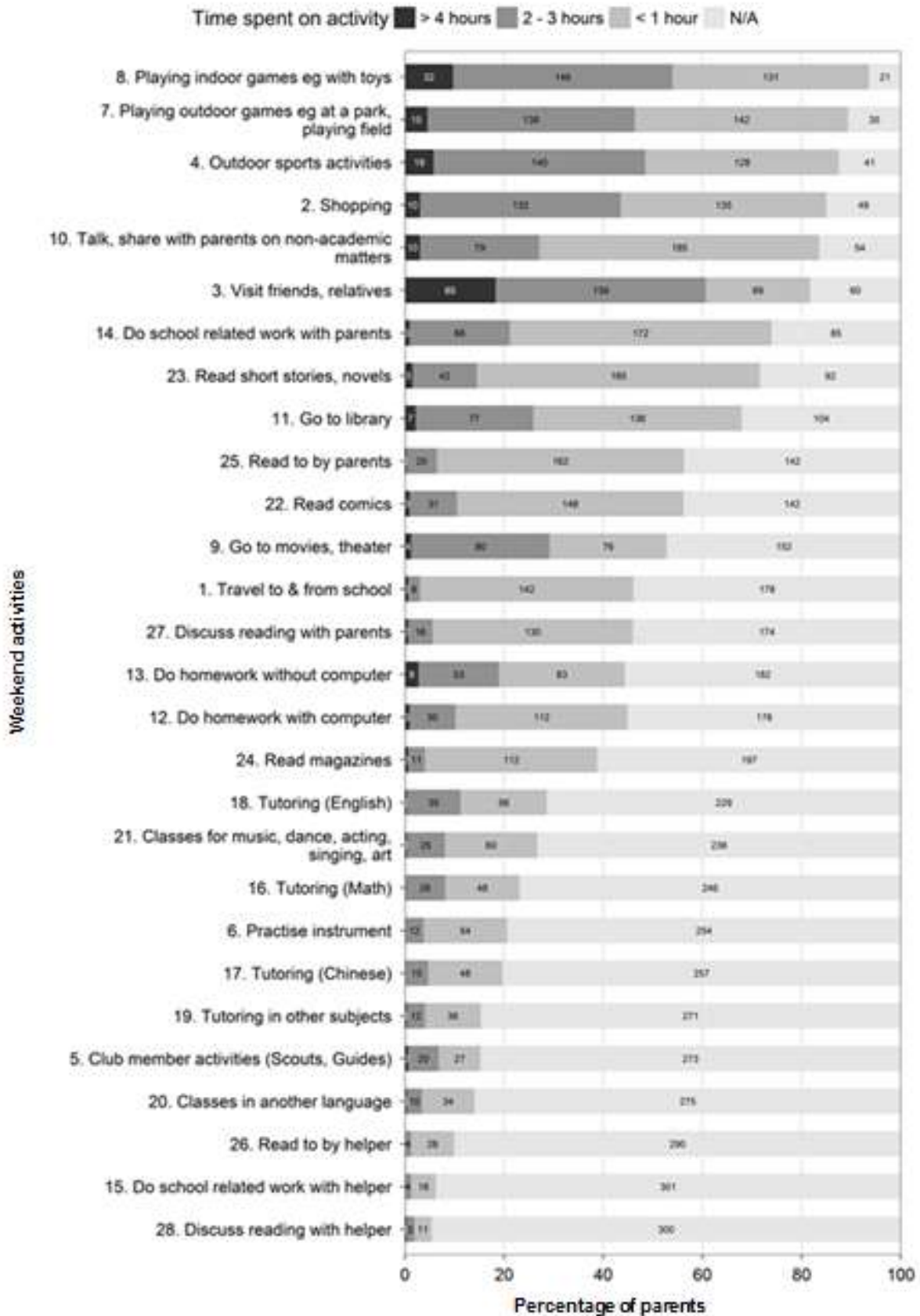


Figure 2. Parents' reporting of time their children spend on activities outside of school on a weekend.

another qualification.

Occupation

Twenty-six respondents did not answer this question. This meant that there were 309 responses, and of these 41% were housewives, 42% indicated that their employment was clerical, manual employment or in the service industry. 16% can be classified as professional for example, small business owner, civil servant, IT consultant) and 3% were not working or unemployed. This means that the majority of the cohort were either working in non-professional positions or were housewives.

What the parents say their children do out of school on weekdays and weekends

Parents were asked how long their children were engaged in certain activities after school on a weekday, and on weekends. There was some missing data among the responses so that the number of valid responses ranged between 318 and 332 for the weekday activities, and between 317 and 330 for the weekend activities.

Figures 1 and 2 show summaries of the parent's responses. The stacked bar charts gives the percent of parents (read off the horizontal axis) and the number of parents who responded in each category (the numbers in the bar segments). The charts organize the activities from top to bottom in increasing order of the number of parents who claimed that their child engaged in the activity.

At the top of Figure 1, is "travel to and from school", followed by activities to do with playing and sporting activities as well as activities related to parent involvement with school work at home. At the bottom of Figure 1 are tutoring activities, activities to do with extra classes, and activities involving the domestic helper, if the family had one.

At the top of Figure 2 (Weekends), are playing and sporting activities as well as broader leisure activities like visiting friends and shopping. That is, the activities to do with school work have moved down the list a little. At the bottom of the Figure are, again, activities to do with tutoring, extra classes, and activities involving the domestic helper that might occur on weekends.

According to the parents, their children are not spending extraordinary amount of time doing homework, being tutored, or in extra classes. Rather, they assert their children are engaged in non-school/ non-academic activities that can be described as 'leisure' time

With respect to doing homework, parents reported that their children spend approximately the same amount of time on the weekend doing homework as on weekdays, either using a computer or not (weekday: 51%, weekend: 44%), with a computer (weekday: 52%; weekend: 45%).

The majority of parents indicated their child does school related work with them (weekday – 87%; weekend – 80%). In addition, large numbers of parents claim that their child talks and shares with them regarding non-academic matters (weekday – 93%; weekend – 92%).

With respect to reading, large numbers of parents claimed their children read, in particular, short stories, novels (weekday – 73%; weekend – 72%), and comics (weekday – 55%; weekend – 56%) most often; but somewhat smaller numbers claimed that their children read magazines (weekday – 39%; weekend – 39%).

Table 1 shows a summary of results from the linear-by-linear association tests applied time spent of the activities and year level of the child for weekday and weekend activities. Significant χ^2 values have been bolded. For the set of activities common to both weekday and weekend, the direction of the association is that older children engage in the noted activities for longer periods of time. It should not be surprising that older children engage in homework activities, tutoring activities, reading activities, and activities associated with clubs for longer amounts of time.

Also, older children spend more time at the movies and the theatre than younger children, but only on the weekends. There are two weekday activities for which younger children spend more time than older children, that is, being read to by parents, and playing indoor games.

According to the parents, there are not large differences in the amount of time boys and girls spend on most of the activities listed. There are however, two exceptions to this in the weekday activities; tutoring in mathematics, and classes in the arts (music, dance, acting, singing, art). Not many students did these, but the direction of the relationship was that boys tend to be engaged a little more often than girls in mathematics tutoring; and girls tend to be a little more engaged in music and dance classes than boys.

Table 2 shows a summary results from the marginal homogeneity tests applied time spent of the weekday activities compared with time spend on weekend activities. Significant χ^2 values have been bolded. As one would expect, the children spend more time on a weekday than on a weekend travelling to and from school. Also, they do club activities, and school related work with parents more often on a weekday than on the weekend. There are also three activities in which only a few students participated (English tutoring, Chinese tutoring, and reading discussion with help) that they did more often on weekdays than weekends.

As it is also expected, there are activities that occur more on a weekend that included shopping, visiting relatives, and playing outdoor sporting activities. There is also a slight tendency for the children to visit a library more on a weekend than on a weekday. For the remaining activities, there are no significant differences between weekday and weekend.

Table 1. Summary of linear-by-linear association tests testing for significant associations between time spent on weekday and weekend activities.

Activity	Weekday		Weekend	
	χ^2	Holm's adjusted p	χ^2	Holm's adjusted p
Travel to and from school	0.02	1	0.70	1
Shopping	5.87	0.224	1.10	1
Visit friends, relatives	0.37	1	0.00	1
Outdoor sports activities	2.43	1	1.40	1
Club member activities (Scouts, Guides)	28.76*	<0.001	10.40*	0.015
Practise instrument	3.73	0.714	6.30	0.180
Playing outdoor games eg at a park, playing field	2.75	1	2.20	1
Playing indoor games eg with toys	11.30*	<0.001	2.29	1
Go to movies, theater	0.94	1	15.90*	0.001
Talk, share with parents on non-academic matters	0.02	1	0.	1
Go to library	15.90*	<0.001	21.60*	<0.001
Do homework with computer	34.54*	<0.001	26.10*	<0.001
Do homework without computer	35.95*	<0.001	33.50*	<0.001
Do school related work with parents	1.28	1	0.60	1
Do school related work with helper	1.74	1	1.20	1
Tutoring (Math)	31.06*	<0.001	28.80*	<0.001
Tutoring (Chinese)	16.72*	<0.001	16.80*	<0.001
Tutoring (English)	32.47*	<0.001	32.00*	<0.001
Tutoring in other subjects	7.36	0.102	5.70	0.204
Classes in another language	0.04	1	0.10	1
Classes for music, dance, acting, singing, art	3.02	1	4.40	0.497
Read comics	28.71*	<0.001	21.60*	<0.001
Read short stories, novels	21.31*	<0.001	20.30*	<0.001
Read magazines	7.10	0.102	6.40	0.139
Read to by parents	9.82*	0.018	2.70	1
Read to by helper	0.92	1	1.90	1
Discuss reading with parents	0.79	1	4.59	0.426
Discuss reading with helper	1.47	1	0.00	1

Conclusions

The parents' responses to the survey provide a view of the after-school lives of children in the age range from 3 to 11 years living in Hong Kong. Overall, the responses reveal that the children did not spend great amounts of time (that is, more than four hours) on any one activity, but rather engaged in a range of activities both on weekdays after school and on the weekend. They also did not appear to spend a great deal of time using technology.

Thus, the commonly held view that Asian students spend most of their time doing schoolwork and little time engaged in leisure activities is not borne out by these survey results. In fact, the data shows that the children spent most, that is more than 4 h, of their out-of-school time visiting friends and relatives, playing indoors and outdoors, playing organized sport or club activities, shopping and sharing (non academic talk) with their

parents.

Doing homework, with and without a computer, was basically in the middle of the 28 activities provided on the survey in terms of time spent engaged in each. We included a category of 'school work', that is not set homework, but time spent on, for example, seeking out information for a project as well as practice in the basics of literacy and numeracy. This activity had more time spent on it, both after school on weekdays as well as on weekends, than homework. After homework, and in the lower half of the time ranges, a variety of other schoolwork related tasks followed.

It was also interesting to note that reading (short stories/ novels) was in the upper part of the activity range but with most parents saying their child spent less than an hour on this type of reading. They also read to their children and discussed reading for short periods of time. The parents also indicated that their children read magazines and comics but not for great lengths of time.

Table 2. Summary marginal homogeneity tests testing for significant associations between time spent on weekday activities and time spent on weekend activities.

Activity	χ^2	Holm's adjusted p
Travel to and from school	14.12	<0.001
Shopping	28.11	<0.001
Visit friends, relatives	28.28	<0.001
Outdoor sports activities	6.52	<0.001
Club member activities (Scouts, Guides)	14.10	0.005
Practice instrument	2.50	0.169
Playing outdoor games for example, at a park, playing field	13.77	<0.001
Playing indoor games for example, with toys	4.13	0.133
Go to movies, theater	1.12	1
Talk, share with parents on non-academic matters	0.18	0.134
Go to library	7.26	0.047
Do homework with computer	1.76	1
Do homework without computer	1.61	0.144
Do school related work with parents	4.41	0.013
Do school related work with helper	1.78	0.089
Tutoring (Math)	2.88	0.109
Tutoring (Chinese)	5.93	<0.001
Tutoring (English)	2.82	0.017
Tutoring in other subjects	3.72	0.104
Classes in another language	0.40	1
Classes for music, dance, acting, singing, art	0.04	1
Read comics	0.09	1
Read short stories, novels	0.01	1
Read magazines	0.41	1
Read to by parents	0.00	0.964
Read to by helper	0.00	1
Discuss reading with parents	0.07	1
Discuss reading with helper	2.61	0.005

Most of the parents reported that their child visited the library both on weekdays after school, but also on weekends. Again the majority reported this to be for less than an hour.

In this cohort, there were not many parents who indicated that their children were engaged in doing 'extra' academic work. That is, there was minimal time spent in tutoring schools, learning a musical instrument or learning another language. As is often the case, this initial exploration of the after-school lives of Hong Kong children raised additional questions that might be fruitful for future investigations, including:

- (1) What differences in types of activities might be apparent with a different socio-economic class cohort of parents?
- (2) What type of organized after-school activities (after school, weekend and school holidays) are provided in Hong Kong, if any, and to what extent do children participate in them?
- (3) Do families with domestic helpers have children with

more or less focus on academic time after school?

Answering these questions might make it possible to ascertain whether the empirical data collected and analyzed here is unique to low socioeconomic families in Hong Kong. Further, in lamenting the lack of research on the topic of the after school lives of East Asian students, Larson and Verma (1999) also posed some questions that they believe need to be answered. They were:

- (1) How do differing populations of children and adolescents spend time? With rapid changes occurring in nearly all societies of the world, it is critical to have data on youths' time as a social indicator.
- (2) What is the relationship between time in specific contexts and developmental outcomes?
- (3) What shapes time use?

Taken together, the questions illustrate that there is still a lot of space for new investigations. The age range of the children in this study was broad in order to consider the wide array of possibilities at the different junctures of

schooling. While it is apparent that the literature indicates age is an important variable, it is also evident that middle class East Asian parents (Stevenson, 1999) do place a premium on academic work and this is reflected in the structure and nature of out of school activity. With no studies conducted with parents in the low socio economic range, there is still a long way to go to collect evidence if they share the beliefs and child rearing practices of their more affluent counterparts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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