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The perceptions of families from different socioeconomic contexts about learning and about the extracurricular activities carried out by their children

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the perceptions and arguments used by families to encourage their children to participate in different extracurricular activities and also the representations these families have about the activities in which their children are involved. It is postulated that investment in extracurricular activities is higher in families of middle-high socioeconomic status compared to families of low socioeconomic status and, at the same time, there is an influence on academic performance, as well as on the development of social and cognitive skills. For this purpose, 17 focus groups were conducted in which families of different socioeconomic status with children of different ages (10, 13 and 16) attending different primary and secondary schools in Catalonia participated. Analyses were carried out according to the relationship concerted cultivation and natural increase (Lareau, 2003); supposedly prototypical from middle and upper class families, in the former, and low class families in the latter. This distinction is based on prior ethnographic studies which suggest the existence of prototypical patterns in middle-class families characterized by a tendency to organize, coordinate and propose a variety of learning activities for their children (*concerted cultivation*), different to the patterns of lower class families (*natural growth*). The results show the existence of these patterns in the families participating in our research.

Keywords: Learning, extracurricular activities, concerted cultivation, natural growth.