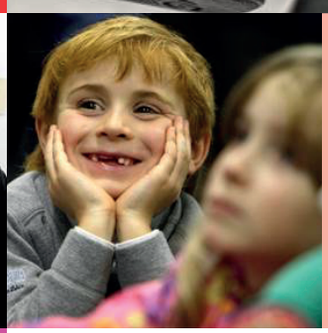
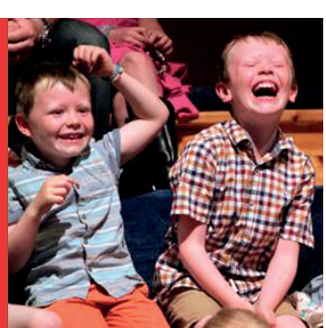


Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the *Growing Up in Ireland* Study

Dr EMER SMYTH

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon

ESRI



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Emer Smyth

September 2016

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The Arts Council of Ireland is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. The Arts Council works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policymakers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

The Author

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This report has been peer reviewed prior to publication. The author is solely responsible for the content and the views expressed.

Foreword

The Arts Council commissioned this research to improve our knowledge and understanding of children's participation in cultural life and the arts in Ireland. We considered this an essential first step in addressing our commitment to plan and provide for children and young people as part of *Making Great Art Work, Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025).*

Children and young people's experience of the arts and culture is clearly impacted by their parents and by a range of personal circumstances, which are not easily addressed by a single initiative or policy commitment. However, there is no doubt that their experiences are impacted by decisions that are made in the public realm – in particular the quality of their early childhood care and education, their school experiences, and the availability and accessibility of cultural activities after school: all of these have a direct impact on children's creative and cultural lives. This research provides an evidence base that will inform the work of the Arts Council over the coming years. We hope that it will also be of assistance to all of our partners who are committed to ensuring children are given every opportunity to participate in the cultural life of their communities, to express themselves freely in the medium of their choice, and to reach their full potential.

Growing up in Ireland – the National Longitudinal Study of Children was not designed with arts and culture specifically in mind. The data provide us with a holistic view of the lives of children – and their creative and cultural experiences are revealed within that context. This is one of the key strengths of this piece of research. It allows us to take a broad view of children's cultural participation and to consider the range of ways in which they express themselves creatively.

The study underlines the importance of arts policy recognising 'the mosaic of ways in which children and young people express themselves and interact with the world of culture'. The Arts Act 2003 takes a similarly broad definition, where 'arts' is taken to mean, 'any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form…and includes any medium when used for those purposes'. The research provides insights into a range of forms of participation, including young children's engagement in creative play and make-believe games; reading for pleasure; arts subjects at school; screen-based activities; and structured cultural activities.

Some key findings give us particular pause for thought. In particular, the highly gendered nature of children's participation in arts and culture is striking, with girls much more likely to participate than boys from as young an age as three. The report underlines the importance of ensuring that children's participation in arts and culture is understood as part of a quality preschool experience. This would ensure broad exposure across all social groups, and in addition could challenge gender stereotyping from an early age.

The report provides very useful insights in terms of children's exposure to arts and culture during school. One finding is that children who have exposure to arts and culture during school time are more likely to engage in out-of-school cultural activities. In addition, it shows that children in smaller schools currently have fewer opportunities to engage in these activities, prompting us to consider the need for linking school and community arts initiatives in these areas. The high level of library use by families with young children across the country provides confirmation that libraries are an important community resource, and suggests possibilities in terms of diversifying the cultural experiences available to families there.

Barriers to engagement are identified. These include household income, with most structured cultural activities outside of school requiring payment. Language emerges as a barrier for immigrant families with young children. There are currently low levels of participation by young people with special educational needs in structured cultural activities. All of these have policy implications for the Arts Council and for our partners.

It is heartening that the research confirms that arts and cultural participation leads to a range of positive outcomes for children, both in terms of their cognitive development and their wellbeing. Building on earlier international research, the report clearly demonstrates these broader benefits to participation. There is every reason for us to make sure children and young people have opportunities to participate in cultural life and the arts. This research strengthens our knowledge and helps us to plan effectively as we aim to make these opportunities a reality for more children in Ireland.

Orlaith McBride
Director, The Arts Council

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Acronyms

AMF	Anonymised Microdata Files
CSO	Central Statistics Office
GUI	*Growing Up in Ireland*
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DSP	Department of Social Protection
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
RMF	Researcher Microdata Files
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Executive Summary

The topic of arts and cultural participation among children and young people has been receiving increasing policy attention in recent years in Ireland. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* – the national policy framework for children and young people – includes among its aims that young people's lives are enriched through their enjoyment of arts and culture, among other experiences. The *Arts in Education Charter*, and curriculum developments from Aistear to the new junior cycle, indicate the importance of fostering young people's creativity, and providing them with opportunities to engage with the arts at school. However, relatively little is known about how children and young people engage in arts and cultural activities within and outside the formal school curriculum. This report draws on *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data to look at arts and cultural participation among three, five, nine and 13 year olds, addressing the following research questions:

1. What groups of children are more likely to engage in (different forms of) cultural activities?
2. What schools and classrooms place greater emphasis on cultural activities, and how does this potentially influence children's engagement outside school?
3. How is participation in cultural activities related to other child outcomes, including academic skills and socio-emotional wellbeing?

Studies of cultural participation among adults in Ireland and elsewhere have tended to focus on participation in a specific set of activities, largely centred on attendance at arts exhibitions and performances such as the theatre, ballet and opera, as well as on reading for pleasure. In contrast, this study takes a broader view of arts and cultural participation. For those in middle childhood and adolescence, this means taking account of their engagement in popular culture, including television viewing and digital engagement, as well as involvement in music, dance and drama lessons and in reading for pleasure. For younger children, the study takes account of their involvement in creative play (such as painting, drawing and playing make-believe games) as well as the more traditional cultural pursuits of reading and attending educational or cultural events with their parents. While not designed as a specific survey of arts and cultural participation,

GUI nonetheless provides rich insights into children's engagement in a range of activities across multiple contexts – those of home, school and community.

PARTICIPATION IN THE EARLY YEARS

Three year olds frequently engage in a range of cultural activities at home: on an everyday basis, over half are read to, half of families sing and recite rhymes and poems with their children and almost half of children paint or draw. The majority – over two-thirds – have access to more than 30 children's books at home. Half of three year olds watch television for two hours or more a day. Even at this early age, gender and social background differences are apparent in children's exposure to cultural activities. Those whose mothers have degree-level education are 1.5 times more likely to be read to every day than those whose mothers who have lower secondary education or less. Among more advantaged families, girls are more likely to be read to frequently than boys. Gender differences are evident too in engaging in singing and painting or drawing, with gender being a much more important influence on taking part in these activities than socioeconomic background. In contrast, there are few gender differences in the frequency of television watching at this stage, though children from highly educated or middle-class families watch much less television than their peers.

Information was collected on a more diverse range of activities for five year olds, reflecting the increasingly child-driven nature of such participation. As at three years of age, reading is a very frequent activity, with two-thirds of parents reading to their children every day. Educational visits tend to take place on an occasional basis while visits to the library are regular or occasional for about half of families. The majority of five-year-old children paint or draw, enjoy dance or music and play make-believe games every day. Over half of five year olds play with an electronic device at least once a week, with total screen time (time spent watching television and using electronic devices combined) typically being one to two hours a day. In terms of family outings, six in 10 children had been to a concert, play, museum, art gallery, community or school event in the past month while half had been to the cinema.

Five year olds from more highly educated families are more involved in many cultural activities, including reading, painting/drawing, cultural outings (with the exception of cinema) and educational visits. This group

of children have less screen time than their peers. There are marked gender differences in the proportion engaging in painting/drawing and playing make-believe games, with some gender differences also emerging in relation to reading and educational visits.

The GUI study provides new information on two groups of children generally underrepresented in existing national studies: those from migrant backgrounds and those with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN). The research findings point to lower participation in reading and cultural outings among migrant groups, with higher levels of screen time, at both three and five years of age. Children with disabilities tend to watch more television than their peers but have families more highly engaged in reading and singing with them (at three years) and taking them on educational visits or to the library (at five years).

PARTICIPATION AT 9 AND 13 YEARS

As children grow older, their own interests and preferences are likely to assume a greater role in shaping the activities in which they engage. At this stage, involvement in structured cultural activities becomes more prevalent. Just under half of nine-year-old children and one-third of 13 year olds take part in a structured cultural class or club (such as dance, drama and music) outside school time. Such involvement is highly differentiated by social background and by gender, with girls from more advantaged families having the highest level of involvement. As the majority of such activities are paid for, income emerges as a barrier to participation, with higher levels of involvement among those in the top two income quintiles (fifths). Children from migrant backgrounds are less likely to be involved in such structured activities, though the gap narrows somewhat between the ages of nine and 13. At nine years of age, children with SEN are less likely to participate, though again this gap narrows slightly by the age of 13.

Involvement in less structured cultural activities continues into middle childhood and adolescence, with high levels of reading for pleasure. There are striking differences in the frequency of reading by gender, with working-class girls spending as much or even more time reading than middle-class boys. Among both girls and boys, those with more highly educated mothers spend more time reading and engage in less screen time than other groups. Girls spend much less time on computer games than boys but levels of time on television are roughly similar for both genders.

Young people with SEN tend to spend more time playing computer games than their peers. As with younger children, those from migrant backgrounds watch more television but the gap in terms of reading is narrower than in the early years.

SCHOOLS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

All children encounter visual arts, music and drama as part of the primary school curriculum, though there is variation between schools and teachers in the amount of time spent on these subjects. The transition into second-level education involves a choice of subjects, with only four in ten 13-year-old students taking art and two in ten taking music. Girls are much more likely to take these subjects than boys.

Significant differences are also found between schools in the number and type of cultural activities offered on an extracurricular basis. In particular, smaller schools are less likely to provide extracurricular activities and, at primary level, are less satisfied with their arts and music facilities. The nature of provision also varies by student composition, with girls' schools more likely to provide cultural activities outside school. Children and young people attending schools with a stronger emphasis on cultural activities are more involved in such activities outside school; they are more likely to take part in music, dance or drama lessons and to read for pleasure.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOMES

The longitudinal nature of the GUI study allows for an analysis of the influence of arts and cultural participation on child outcomes. The analyses assess two sets of outcomes: cognitive development (as measured by performance in standardised tests) and wellbeing (as measured by the prevalence of socio-emotional difficulties). Among young children, being read to frequently and having more access to books contributes to improved vocabulary between three and five years of age, all else being equal. Watching more television is related to improved vocabulary but is also associated with greater socio-emotional difficulties. In contrast, painting/drawing more often is related to having fewer socio-emotional difficulties. Among older children, self-directed reading and taking part in structured cultural activities outside school time contribute to cognitive development (in terms of both verbal and numeric skills) as well as to academic self-confidence. Reading also contributes to socio-emotional wellbeing. As in the early years, watching a lot of television promotes verbal skills but at the expense of greater socio-emotional difficulties.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The report highlights significant socioeconomic and gender differences in the types of cultural activities engaged in by children and young people. Those from more advantaged families, particularly girls, are much more likely to engage in the kinds of activities, such as reading and attending music or drama classes, that enhance their within-school learning, thus contributing to a social gap in achievement. The scale of these differences poses challenges for policy attempting to achieve more equitable engagement in arts and cultural activities. However, the findings point to a number of potential levers for intervention.

Patterns of cultural engagement are established from an early age, highlighting the importance of early intervention. The Aistear early years' curriculum, which covers those from birth to six years of age, emphasises the importance of children expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively. However, little is known about the use of arts and cultural activities within preschool settings. The expansion of the Early Childhood Care and Education programme to two years from September 2016 offers huge potential for early years settings to become an important avenue for children's access to the arts. It is important that staff are supported through professional development in this domain and that activities are presented in such a way as to challenge stereotyping on the basis of gender or other background factors. Levels of library use among families with young children are found to be relatively high, suggesting that they could be used as sites to promote cultural engagement among young children.

Schools provide an important arena for giving all children at least some access to a variety of cultural activities through the formal curriculum and through after-school provision. The analyses point to the challenges facing small schools in providing facilities for the arts, particularly after-school activities, indicating the importance of linking school and community initiatives centred on the arts. While it is important that schools provide activities to engage their students, it is vital that assumptions are not made about which after-school classes are deemed suitable for different groups of students, and that both boys and girls are provided with access to a range of activities. The promotion of 'Arts Rich Schools', proposed by the *Arts in Education Charter*, could also provide a way of disseminating good practice across the education sector.

The study findings highlight the need for cultural provision to be inclusive in a broad sense. Participation levels in many cultural activities are lower among children from migrant families, especially at early years and primary stages. Language emerges as a significant barrier, with particularly low levels of involvement for families who have difficulties reading English language material, highlighting the importance of providing information on arts activities in a variety of languages and of using schools as an arena to promote participation across all groups. Children and young people with SEN are less involved in structured cultural activities than their peers, highlighting the importance of ensuring that provision is accessible to all.

DEIS schools, which have a concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, appear to be using School Completion Programme funding to provide cultural activities to promote student engagement. However, cuts in funding to the School Completion Programme over the recession negatively impacted upon after-school and holiday provision (Smyth et al., 2015). It would therefore be helpful, in the context of the current review of the DEIS programme, to look at increasing resources for the most disadvantaged schools to enhance their provision of after-school and summertime cultural activities.

Most of the structured cultural activities in which children engage outside school require payment, resulting in lower participation among lower-income families. The *Arts in Education Charter* recommends the introduction of subsidies for those in full-time education to attend arts venues and performances. Given financial barriers to participation, there is a case for going further by providing subsidies to disadvantaged families. Given that not all disadvantaged young people attend DEIS schools and not all cultural provision is provided through schools, this is a crucial avenue for ensuring more inclusive arts engagement.

Children and young people are found to engage in a variety of structured and unstructured cultural activities in their daily lives, embracing reading and after-school music/drama classes as well as popular and digital culture. It is important therefore that arts policy recognises the mosaic of ways in which children and young people express themselves and interact with the world of culture.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In Ireland, there have been a number of studies on cultural participation among the adult population (see, for example, Lunn and Kelly, 2008) but much less is known about how children and young people engage in arts and cultural activities within and outside the formal school curriculum. *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data provide the potential to look at how children and young people at different ages engage in various kinds of cultural activities and how these activities relate to other dimensions of their lives. This evidence base is all the more important in a context where there is growing policy recognition of the value of cultural participation for children and young people. One of the aims of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*, is that 'children and young people are ... enjoying play, recreation, sports, arts, culture and nature' (DCYA, 2014, p. 4). Similarly, the Aistear early years curriculum (NCCA, 2009), which covers those from birth to six years of age, emphasises the importance of children expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively. 'Being creative' is also mentioned as a key skill in the revised junior cycle. The *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) has committed to a number of measures, including the involvement of all publicly funded arts organisations in arts-in-education work, the promotion of 'Arts Rich Schools', and discounted entry for those in full-time education to a number of arts venues.

In this study, commissioned by the Arts Council, GUI data are used to address the following research questions in relation to three, five, nine and 13 year olds:

- What groups of children (in terms of gender, social class, parental education, income, migrant status, having a disability or special educational needs (SEN) and living in a rural/urban area) are more likely to engage in (different forms of) cultural activities?
- What schools and classrooms place greater emphasis on arts activities? Is this associated with children's participation in cultural activities outside school?
- How is participation in cultural activities related to other child outcomes, including academic skills and socio-emotional wellbeing?

Previous studies of arts and cultural participation have tended to focus on attendance at performances such as the theatre, classical music and ballet, going to visual arts exhibitions and reading for pleasure (see, for example, Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005; Lunn and Kelly, 2008; Eurobarometer, 2013). These studies have generally only taken account of television viewing where this involved cultural programming (like watching a ballet or classical concert on television). A similar approach has been taken to examining participation among children and young people; the *Taking Part* survey in England, for example, takes account of patterns of attendance at arts events and participation in music, but not television viewing or using computers (Shibli et al., 2014). In contrast, other researchers have highlighted the need to take a broader perspective to encompass:

> *the provision of opportunities for young people to make art and to engage with creative work made for them by others.* (Harland et al., 1995, p. 3)

This includes not only attendance at performances but painting/drawing, watching television and videos, and listening to (all kinds of) music (see also Robinson, 1999). Among younger children, play activities such as painting/drawing and playing make-believe games are increasingly seen as a way in which children express themselves and their view of the world in a creative way (NCCA, 2009; Arts Council, 2013). Given the increasing importance of digital technology to children's lives (see, for example, Marsh et al., 2005), commentators have argued that this constitutes an important 'form of direct cultural participation for young children' (Edwards, 2014, p. 219). This study adopts a similarly broad definition of arts and cultural participation, taking account of involvement in popular culture, including television viewing and engagement in computer games, and creative play as well as participation in music, dance and drama lessons, attending cultural events and reading for pleasure (more details of the precise measures used are given in Section 1.3.2 and Table A1 in the appendix). While not designed as a specific survey of arts and cultural participation, GUI nonetheless provides rich insights into children's engagement in a range of cultural activities across the multiple contexts of home, school and community.

The following section of the chapter places this study in the context of previous research, international and Irish, on children's participation in arts and cultural activities. Section 1.3 provides an overview of GUI data, the approach taken to defining arts and cultural participation, and the specific measures used in this study.

1.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHILDREN'S CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Studies of cultural participation among adults in Ireland and elsewhere have shown significant variation by socioeconomic characteristics. Research in England has shown that the highest levels of attendance occur for the cinema, with a minority attending the theatre and much smaller numbers going to ballet or other dance performances (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005). The group of people who attend a range of cultural events, including theatre, drama and dance, tend to be of a higher social class, be more highly educated and have higher incomes than those who go to the cinema only. Visual arts exhibitions or other events are found to attract a small percentage of the population, again highly selective in terms of education, income and social class background (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007). In an analysis of Irish survey data, Lunn and Kelly (2008) found differences in participation by income, education and social class not only in 'high culture' activities (such as theatre and visual arts) but also in attending rock/pop concerts, going to the cinema and reading. Even people with the same level of stated interest in the arts were found to differ significantly in their attendance levels by social background and income, suggesting the presence of other barriers to participation. Their study also found marked gender differences, with women more likely to take part in a range of cultural activities, including reading.

Studies of children and young people reveal similar patterns of higher participation among more advantaged groups, which have been attributed to the way in which parents socialise their children to have particular tastes and, more importantly, use cultural activities as a way of promoting the academic and social development of their children (Bodovski and Farkas, 2008; Kraykamp and Van Eijck, 2008). This parenting style, which has been termed 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2003), has been found to promote the dispositions and skills that help middle-class children succeed at school. These differences in parenting styles contribute to social inequalities in academic achievement since middle-class children are exposed to reading and other cultural activities, which foster their development of the skills rewarded within the school system. Research indicates that parents' use of concerted cultivation is more pronounced among daughters than sons (Cheadle and Amato, 2011; Warner and Milkie, 2015). Furthermore, a study in the US has attributed the gender gap in cultural participation among adults to differences in this early participation in music, art and dance classes (Christin, 2012).

Participation in a range of different structured out-of-school activities, including organised sports, art or music classes, and school clubs, is found to be associated with higher academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Fredericks and Eccles, 1996; Covay and Carbonaro, 2010) and improved socio-emotional wellbeing (Metsäpelto and Pulkkinnen, 2012). A more detailed study of arts engagement across the domains of home, school and community showed a positive impact on a number of academic and non-academic outcomes, including self-esteem and life satisfaction (Martin et al., 2013). There is a large body of work that indicates that parents reading to their children, and older children reading themselves, have long-term benefits for cognitive development (see, for example, Sullivan and Brown, 2013). Studies of the impact of watching television or playing video games have yielded more variable results (see, for example, Kirkorian et al., 2008).

Previous analyses of GUI data on nine year olds in Ireland has shown significant social class, parental education, income and gender differences in the kinds of out-of-school activities in which children participate, with middle-class girls more likely to engage in reading and music/dance lessons, while working-class boys tend to take part in unstructured activities such as 'hanging out' with friends (McCoy et al., 2012a, 2012b). In addition, participation in cultural lessons or clubs was found to be lower among those from non-English-speaking migrant families and among those from families in receipt of social welfare payments (Coughlan, 2014). Taking part in cultural activities was found to be associated with higher reading and maths scores but children with 'over-scheduled' lives, where they were spread thinly over a range of activities, did not display the same high scores (McCoy et al., 2012a, 2012b). This study develops upon this work by looking at both earlier and subsequent engagement in cultural activities.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Data

The GUI study was commissioned by the Department of Health and Children through the (then) Office of the Minister for Children, in association with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The study has been carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD). It focuses on two cohorts of children: a nine-month (infant) cohort and a nine-year-old (child) cohort.

The infant cohort survey was based on a nationally representative sample of 11,134 children drawn from the Child Benefit register. Parents were first surveyed when the child was nine months old. This report draws on the second and third waves of this survey, which were conducted when the child was three years of age (2010–2011) and five years of age (2012–2013).[1] At both waves, detailed interviews were conducted with the primary caregiver (who was the mother in over 99 per cent of cases) and the secondary caregiver, if resident in the household.[2] Physical measurements were taken of the child and children completed cognitive tests at both waves. At the time of the third wave, most, but not all, five year olds had started school. In the autumn and winter of 2013, by which time almost all had entered primary education, questionnaires were sent to their school principal and classroom teacher to gather information on the characteristics of their school and class as well as on teacher perceptions of the study child.

The nine-year-old sample contains information in respect of 8,568 study children, their primary and secondary caregivers, their school principals and teachers. The sample was generated through the primary school system in 2007 and early 2008. This sample was followed up in 2011–2012, when the young people were 13 years of age. As with the infant cohort, detailed interviews were conducted with the primary and secondary caregivers. The child/young person completed questionnaires on their family relationships, self-concept, experience of school and leisure activities, among other topics, and took part in standardised tests of their achievement/aptitude. Information was also gathered from their school principal and, for the nine year olds, their class teacher.

For the child cohort, analyses presented in this report are based on the GUI detailed Researcher Microdata Files (RMFs). As the RMF for the five year olds was not available at the time of writing, analyses for the infant cohort are based on the Anonymised Microdata Files (AMFs). The data for all waves and both cohorts have been re-weighted (statistically adjusted) to ensure that the information is representative of the population of children and young people in Ireland. In each chapter of this report, descriptive analyses of the main patterns are presented, followed by multivariate models designed to look at a number of factors simultaneously. Multilevel

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1 Parents were also surveyed when the child was nine months old but, given the young age of the children, information on cultural activities was not collected at this stage.

2 Because of this pattern, primary caregivers are referred to as 'mothers' in the remainder of the report.

models are used in analysing the child cohort data because of the clustering of the sample within schools. This allows for a more precise estimate of the potential effect of school factors on cultural participation.

1.3.2 Measures Used

As indicated above, the study adopts a broad view of arts and cultural participation, encompassing reading, attending cultural events, taking music or dance lessons, watching television, using digital technology and engaging in different forms of creative play. The indicators examined vary across the ages of three to 13 years, reflecting the fact that different activities may be more or less salient at different stages of children's lives. The wording of the questions used across waves is provided in Table A1 (appendix).

For the infant cohort, the following aspects of cultural participation are assessed:

- frequency of different activities, including reading, songs/poems, painting/drawing (age three);
- frequency of different activities, including reading, creative play, painting/drawing, dance/music (age five);
- frequency of different outings with the child, including visiting the library, going on educational visits (such as to museums) and going to a concert or other cultural event (age five);
- number of children's books in the home (ages three and five); and
- time spent watching television (age three) and total screen time (including television and electronic devices) (age five).

For the child cohort, the following aspects of participation are assessed:

- frequency of reading for fun or pleasure (ages nine and 13);
- participation in after-school cultural activities (such as music or drama lessons);
- whether the activity is paid for (ages nine and 13);
- time spent watching television and playing computer games (ages nine and 13); and
- take-up of art and music in the formal curriculum (age 13).

For comparative purposes, contextual information is also provided about participation in other activities, including sports and active games.

Information from school principals and teachers allows for the analysis of the potential relationship between school context and cultural participation. Measures include:

- principal satisfaction with arts and music facilities (primary);
- importance of music and drama to the ethos of the school (primary);
- importance of music and speech and drama as curricular activities within the school (primary);
- importance of music and speech and drama as extracurricular activities within the school (primary);
- time spent per week by the teacher on visual arts, music and drama (primary); and
- whether the school provides cultural extracurricular activities (primary and second level).

GUI data provide very rich background information on the socioeconomic circumstances of the children and their families, allowing for an analysis of the factors influencing arts and cultural participation. The individual and family variables used for analysis throughout this report include the following.

- Family social class: A social class classification, based on the Irish Census of Population measure, was assigned to both mother and father (where the latter was resident) based on their respective occupations. In line with standard procedures, a dominance approach (see Erikson, 1984) was used, whereby in two-parent families in which both partners were economically active outside the home, the family's social class group was assigned on the basis of the higher of the two. This approach provides a more accurate picture of the social position and resources of the family as a whole. A four-fold classification of family social class is used: professional/managerial (for shorthand, termed 'middle class' in the text); non-manual/skilled manual; semi-skilled/unskilled manual (for shorthand, termed 'working class' in the text); and non-employed. In order to explore the potential interaction of gender and social class (see above), this is disaggregated between boys and girls.

- Family Income: Total household income has been adjusted for household size and composition (number of adults and children) and grouped into quintiles (fifths).
- Mother's education: The groups are 'lower secondary or less', 'Leaving Certificate', 'post-secondary' and 'degree (or higher)'. Mother's education is commonly used in the literature as it has been found to be more highly predictive of child outcomes (Stevenson and Baker, 1987).
- Family structure: A two-fold classification of family structure is used: one-parent or two-parent.
- Immigrant status: A family is defined as being an immigrant family if both parents were born outside Ireland (or the sole parent in a one-parent family). Because of the heterogeneity of immigrant families, descriptive analyses are also presented on whether these patterns vary by language of origin and/or nationality group.
- Disability or special educational need (SEN): Reflecting differences in the stage of the child, for the infant cohort, this is based on the mother's report of whether the child has a chronic illness or disability (excluding the most common illnesses, such as asthma). For the child cohort, this is based on whether the child has a SEN, as reported by the teacher.
- Whether the family is living in an urban or rural area and, for older children, which of the eight regions of the country they are living in.

As well as looking at the influence of child and family characteristics on arts and cultural participation, the report also examines the relationship between cultural engagement and outcomes for children and young people. For young children (at five years of age), two tests to assess cognitive development were administered by the interviewers: the Naming Vocabulary and Picture Similarities scales from the British Ability Scales (Elliott et al., 1996). For older children (at nine years of age), cognitive development was assessed using the revised 2007 versions of the Drumcondra Reading and Mathematics tests (ERC, 2007a, 2007b), tests which were developed for Irish school children and which are linked to the national curriculum. At 13 years of age, young people completed a special form of the Drumcondra Reasoning Test (of verbal reasoning and numerical ability), developed by the Educational Research Centre for the GUI study. At all four time-points, emotional wellbeing was assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman et al., 1997). The questionnaire, completed by the mother, includes four scales:

emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems. Combined, these give a total score indicating the scale of socio-emotional difficulties. In order to take account of young people's own perspective on their wellbeing, nine and 13 year olds completed the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (second edition; Piers, 1963), widely used internationally. This measure captures several dimensions (or subscales) of children's self-image; the analyses presented in this report focus on three of them: self-reported happiness and life satisfaction; intellectual and school status (academic self-image); and freedom from anxiety.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 looks at the nature of engagement in a wide range of cultural activities, including creative play, among three and five year olds. Chapter 3 looks at participation among nine and 13 year olds, focusing on reading, taking part in music or drama lessons, and screen time. Chapter 4 analyses the kinds of cultural activities provided in primary and second-level schools and the potential impact of such provision on children's engagement outside school. Chapter 5 looks at the relationship between cultural participation and child outcomes while Chapter 6 summarises the main findings and discusses the implications for policy development.

Chapter 2

Cultural Participation in the Early Years

2.1 INTRODUCTION

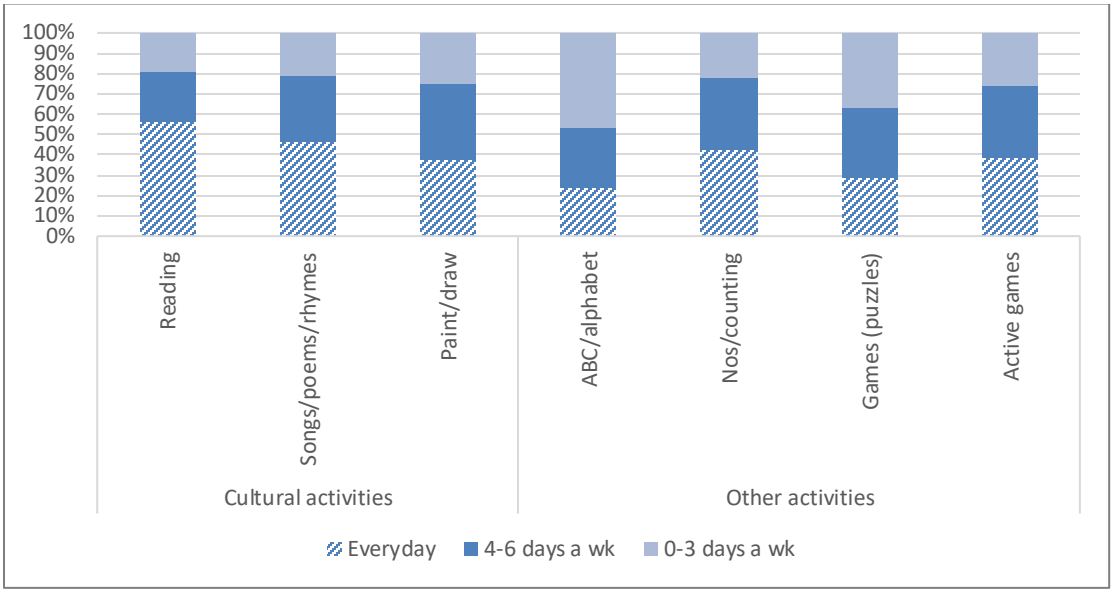
International research has pointed to social differentiation in the cultural participation of children and young people (see Chapter 1). This chapter and Chapter 3 examine whether children's participation in Ireland is shaped by their socioeconomic circumstances, looking at children and young people at different stages (three to 13 years of age). The analyses presented build upon previous research by looking at the potential impact of being from an immigrant background or having a special educational need (SEN) or disability on cultural participation, issues rarely explored in large-scale studies. These chapters also analyse spatial variation by looking at the influence of living in an urban or rural area.

2.2 PARTICIPATION AMONG 3 YEAR OLDS

For three year olds, mothers were asked about anyone at home engaged in a range of cultural and other activities with their child.[3] Figure 2.1 shows the proportion of children who engaged in these activities at three levels of frequency: every day; four to six days a week; or less often (three days a week or less often or never). In terms of cultural activities, over half of children were read to every day while half of families sang or recited rhymes or poems with their children. Painting/drawing were also relatively frequent activities, with over one-third (37 per cent) of children doing these activities at home every day. In terms of other activities, active and puzzle games were common, as was teaching the child numbers or counting, while a significant proportion engaged in teaching the alphabet.

[3] The wording of the question leaves open the possibility that mothers may have included activities undertaken by childminders minding the child in his or her own home.

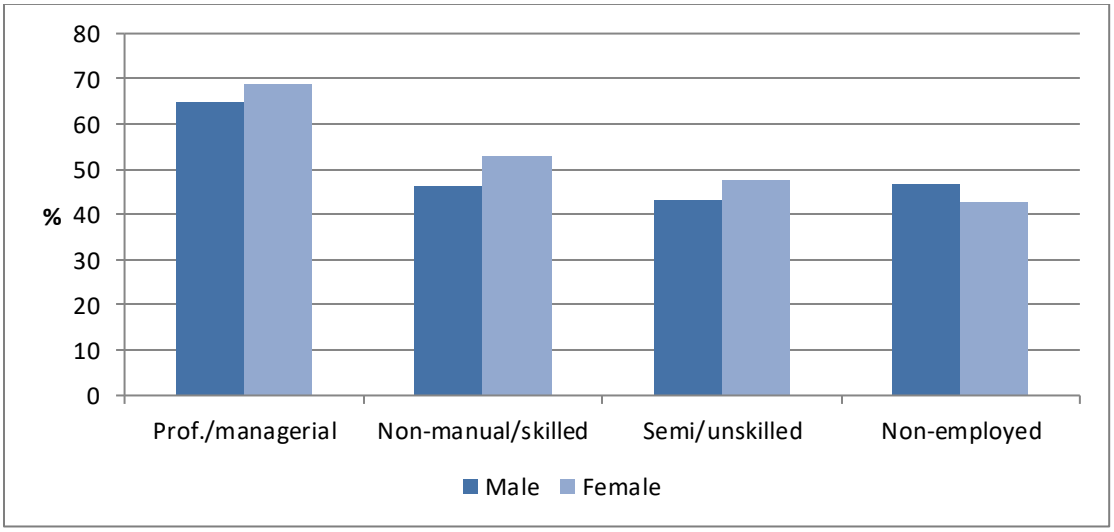
FIGURE 2.1 Frequency of 3 Year Olds Engaging in Cultural and Other Activities with Someone at Home



To what extent does engaging in cultural activities – reading, painting or drawing and singing – vary across different groups of children? Figure 2.2 shows a clear social gradient in reading, with middle-class families (professional/managerial groups) more likely than other groups to read to their children every day. Within social classes, girls are more likely to be read to than boys, with the exception of the non-employed group. The frequency of reading also varies significantly by mother's education, with 70 per cent of graduate mothers reading to their child every day compared with 39 per cent of mothers who have Junior Certificate education or less. A similar gradient is found by household income, with reading every day occurring in almost three-quarters of households in the top income quintile (fifth) compared with 43 per cent of those in the lowest income group. Analyses presented below examine whether all of these background factors have an independent influence on reading behaviour. Lone mothers are somewhat less likely to read to their child every day, with 48 per cent doing so compared with 58 per cent of those in couple households. Whether this is related to lower average incomes or levels of education in lone parent households is analysed below. Children from immigrant families are less likely to be read to every day; one-third (32 per cent) are read to less than three days a week compared with 18 per cent of Irish children. The frequency of reading is also lower among families whose language of origin is not English and those who do not read English. Reading behaviour varies somewhat by whether the three-year-old child has a disability, with children with disabilities less likely to be read to

infrequently (less than three days a week) – 15 per cent compared with 20 per cent of children without a disability).

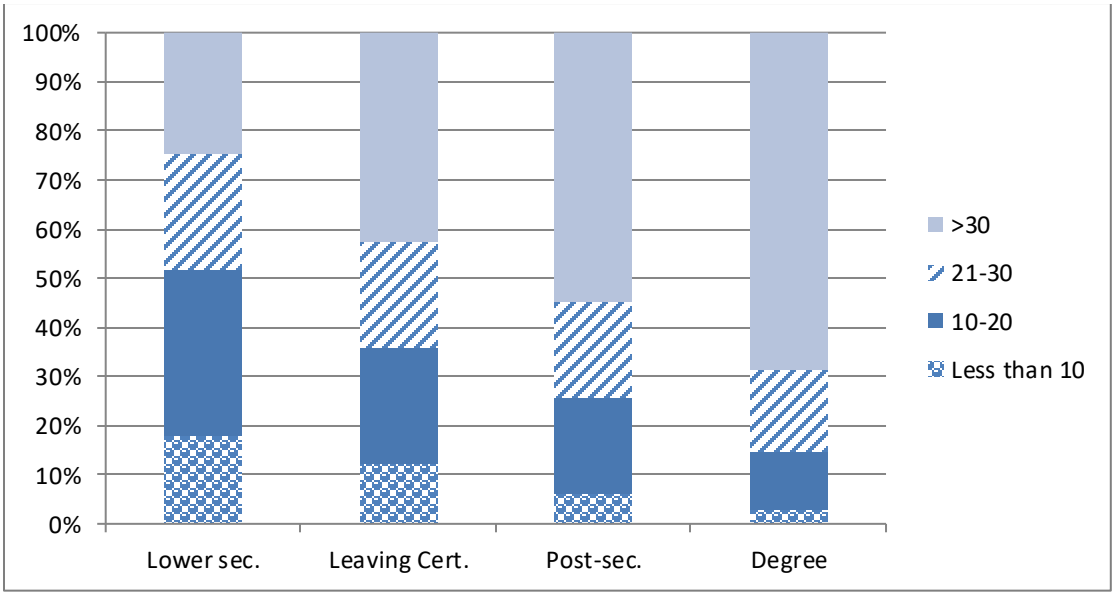
FIGURE 2.2 Frequency of 3 Year Olds Being Read to Every Day, by Social Class and Gender



Note: Figure shows social class of family and gender of child.

The frequency of reading is closely related to the number of children's books in the home (including books on loan from a library). Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of those in homes with more than 30 books are read to every day compared with 42 per cent of those in homes with 10–20 books. While it is difficult to definitively determine a causal relationship (since parents may buy more books if they feel their child has a greater interest in reading), it is likely to be a strong signal of the emphasis on reading within the household. There is a clear gradient by mother's education, with over two-thirds of graduate mothers having 30 or more children's books in the home compared with just over one-quarter of mothers with Junior Certificate education or less (Figure 2.3). Book ownership also varies by social class, household income and family type, with working-class, non-employed, lower-income and lone parent households typically having fewer books. Interestingly there is a slight gender gap, with three-year-old girls slightly more likely to live in homes with a lot of books. Immigrant families tend to have fewer children's books in the home, with 34 per cent having 30 or more books compared with 57 per cent of Irish families. As with reading patterns, levels are lower for those whose language of origin is not English or who cannot read books in English.

FIGURE 2.3 Number of Children's Books in the Home, by Mother's Education



Somewhat surprisingly, the frequency with which someone in the home sings or recites rhymes with the child varies by the child's gender; half of the girls experience this activity every day, compared with 42 per cent of the boys. This gender difference is apparent within social classes and, while singing does not vary by social background for boys, girls from working-class or non-employed households are somewhat more likely to experience rhymes or singing every day than their middle-class counterparts (Figure 2.4). In contrast to the pattern for reading, singing does not vary markedly by mother's education, household income or family structure (lone parent or couple). Singing/reciting poems is somewhat less common in immigrant families with 26 per cent in the 'low frequency' group (three days a week or less often) compared with 21 per cent of Irish children. Engaging in singing or reciting rhymes does not vary markedly by whether the child has a disability or not.

FIGURE 2.4 Frequency of Someone at Home Singing or Reciting Rhymes or Poems with a 3 Year Old Every Day, by Social Class of Family and Gender of Child

There is a somewhat surprising gender gap in the frequency with which three year olds paint or draw; 55 per cent of girls do so six to seven days a week compared with 36 per cent of boys. This gender gap is evident within social class groups, though there is relatively little difference in the frequency of painting or drawing by socioeconomic characteristics of the household. In contrast to the patterns for reading, immigrant children are slightly more likely to paint or draw frequently, with 49 per cent doing so every day compared with 45 per cent of Irish children; levels are especially high among those of non-English-speaking origin (50 per cent) and those who cannot read books in English (55 per cent).

Parents were also asked how much television their child watched each day. The most common pattern (37 per cent) was one to two hours a day, with 29 per cent watching for two to three hours, 12 per cent watching for three hours and 10 per cent watching for four or more hours. Half of three year olds watch television for two hours or more a day, with no difference in this pattern by gender. The social gradient in television watching is the reverse of that for reading, with the children of graduate mothers watching fewer hours of television than other groups (38 per cent watch two hours or more a day compared with 64 per cent of those whose mothers have lower secondary education or less). Similar differences are found by household income and social class, with less television watching among more advantaged groups. The children of lone parents tend to watch more television, with 59 per cent watching two or more hours compared with 49 per cent of those in couple households. Immigrant children watch more television, with 18 per cent watching four hours or more a day compared with eight per cent of Irish children. This pattern applies across all language

groups, though levels of television watching are especially high where English is not the language of origin. Children with disabilities tend to watch somewhat more television (14 per cent watch four or more hours of television compared with nine per cent of others).

While the other activities engaged in by children do not involve cultural participation in the same way, it is worth outlining some of the patterns briefly as context for understanding differences in cultural participation. Children across all social groups play board games, card games or puzzles with someone at home on a frequent basis and no differences are found by child gender or disability. In migrant families where the mother cannot read books in English, the parents are more likely to play board games with their children. When it comes to active games (such as football), however, gender differences are apparent, with 43 per cent of boys and 35 per cent of girls playing these games every day. Furthermore, children from working-class or non-employed households engage in active games slightly more frequently. Interestingly, variation is greater by household income than by social class or education, with 43 per cent of those in the bottom quintile playing active games every day compared with 34 per cent of those in the top quintile. There is little systematic variation in whether the mother counts or teaches the child numbers by family or child characteristics. However, children in less advantaged or lone parent families are more likely to be taught letters of the alphabet at home on a frequent basis.

The analyses so far have looked at the relationship between individual characteristics and frequency of engagement in cultural activities. Multivariate analysis can provide further insights into the relative importance of different influences as well as examining the effect of being in a lone parent or migrant household, taking account of socioeconomic characteristics. In addition, the potential influence of living in an urban or rural area is examined. Because three year olds vary in the childcare arrangements they experience, those being cared for by a relative or non-relative, or in centre-based care or another care arrangement, are distinguished from those being cared for full-time by their parents. Because the analysis focuses on unstructured activities, not requiring payment for joining a club, for example, and because income is closely related to social class and education, household income is not included in these models. The models presented are multinomial logistic regression models, seeking to identify the factors predicting medium and high levels of participation in cultural activities. The coefficients are presented as odds

ratios, with values greater than one indicating that factors are associated with being more likely to engage in an activity, while values less than one indicate that the characteristic is associated with lower levels of engagement. For example, Table 2.1 shows that girls from professional/managerial backgrounds are 2.424 times more likely to be read to every day than children in the base category: boys from working-class homes.

TABLE 2.1 Factors Associated with Frequency of Reading at Home for 3 Year Olds

	4–5 days a week	6–7 days a week
Constant	0.808	1.085
Social group:		
Professional – boy	0.995	1.536***
Professional – girl	1.283	2.424***
Non-manual – boy	0.893	0.991
Non-manual – girl	1.047	1.534***
Working-class – girl	0.944	1.343±
Non-employed – boy	0.718	1.091
Non-employed – girl	0.592**	0.877
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	1.128	1.520***
Post-secondary	1.412***	2.105***
Degree or higher	1.945***	4.471***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	0.910	0.880
Immigrant background	0.499***	0.386***
Has disability	1.578*	1.447*
Lives in an urban area	0.965	1.127
Childcare:		
Relative	0.963	0.815*
Non-relative	0.989	0.881
Centre-based	1.176±	1.259***
Other	3.010	2.954
(Ref.: Parents)		
Nagelkerke R^2	0.104	

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: reads with the child 3 days a week or less often.*

Table 2.1 shows the factors associated with more frequent reading to the three-year-old child. Mother's education is the strongest driver of reading behaviour among the characteristics examined. Graduate mothers are 4.5 times more likely to read to their child (almost) every day than those with lower secondary education or less. Even taking account of mother's education, variation is evident by social class background, though this pattern operates differently for boys and girls. For boys, those from middle-class backgrounds are read to more often with little variation among the other social groups. Girls from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to read to than middle-class boys and reading frequency is as

high for girls from non-manual or working-class backgrounds as it is for middle-class boys. In contrast to the descriptive findings presented above, there are no differences between lone parent and two-parent families when social class and educational differences are taken into account. All else being equal, children in immigrant families are less likely to be read to frequently than their Irish counterparts, being 38 per cent as likely to be read to every day taking account of other socioeconomic backgrounds. Children with disabilities are more likely to be read to on a frequent basis, at least four days a week, than other children. Reading behaviour does not vary between rural and urban areas once social characteristics are taken into account. There is no clear evidence that being in non-parental care is associated with less frequent reading behaviour. Frequency is higher for those in centre-based care and somewhat lower for those being cared for by a relative, but this may reflect the profile of those in different care types rather than the impact of care setting per se. Overall, the factors included in the model – gender, family characteristics and locality – explain a modest amount (10 per cent) of the overall variation in reading behaviour, suggesting that other factors such as parent and child interest in reading may play a role.

TABLE 2.2 Factors Associated with Frequency of Someone at Home Singing to or Reciting Rhymes/Poems with a 3-Year-Old

	4–5 days a week	6–7 days a week
Constant	0.788	1.478
Social group:		
Professional – boy	1.407*	1.136
Professional – girl	1.974***	2.017***
Non-manual – boy	1.223	1.050
Non-manual – girl	1.992***	2.133***
Working-class – girl	1.466±	2.313***
Non-employed – boy	0.936	1.089
Non-employed – girl	1.781**	2.241***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	1.030	1.078
Post-secondary	1.045	1.148
Degree or higher	1.105	1.314***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	0.979	0.966
Immigrant background	0.636***	0.717***
Has disability	1.237	1.308±
Lives in an urban area	0.999	1.028
Childcare:		
Relative	0.962	1.025
Non-relative	0.875	0.727***
Centre-based	0.188	0.999
Other	0.962	0.645
(Ref.: Parents)		
Nagelkerke R^2	0.028	

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: 3 days a week or less often.*

In contrast to the patterns for reading, there are fewer background differences in engaging in singing or reciting rhymes, suggesting this activity is common across very different types of family. However, a clear gender gap is found, with girls twice (2–2.3 times) as likely to be frequently involved in these activities as boys. The children of graduate mothers are somewhat more likely to engage in singing almost every day. Levels of engagement are lower among migrant families and slightly higher where the child has a disability. No urban–rural differences are apparent and there is little systematic variation by whether or not the child is receiving non-parental care. These objective factors account for only a small amount of the variation in the frequency of children's involvement in singing and/or reciting rhymes.

TABLE 2.3 Factors Associated with Frequency of a 3-Year-Old Child Painting or Drawing

	4–5 days a week	6–7 days a week
Constant	1.256	1.418
Social group:		
Professional – boy	1.064	0.810
Professional – girl	1.867***	2.048***
Non-manual – boy	1.142	0.867
Non-manual – girl	1.314±	2.145***
Working-class – girl	1.820**	2.902***
Non-employed – boy	0.981	0.774
Non-employed – girl	0.988	1.788***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	0.825±	0.909
Post-secondary	0.895	1.028
Degree or higher	0.834±	1.114
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	0.918	1.116
Immigrant background	0.837	1.188±
Has disability	0.938	0.879
Lives in an urban area	0.879*	1.025
Childcare:		
Relative	0.953	0.839±
Non-relative	1.030	0.916*
Centre-based	0.794***	0.646***
Other	0.869	0.159
(Ref.: Parents)		
Nagelkerke R^2	0.063	

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: 3 days a week or less often.*

What is notable in the frequency of painting or drawing is the gender gap in participation, with girls much more likely to engage in these activities frequently than boys. There is little variation by socioeconomic characteristics, whether the child has a disability or immigrant background. Frequent participation of children in painting or drawing is less evident among families using non-parental care. It may be that children are painting or drawing in these care settings rather than at home (though this cannot be captured in the survey). Alternatively, it may be that some activities (such as painting and drawing) are constrained by the time available at home for such activities, while others (such as reading) are not.

TABLE 2.4 Factors Associated with Number of Hours of Television Per Day Among 3 Year Olds

	1–2 hours	2–4 hours	>4 hours
Constant	2.199	4.358	2.044
Social group:			
Professional – boy	1.006	0.936	0.514**
Professional – girl	0.979	0.860	0.470**
Non-manual – boy	0.918	0.989	0.807
Non-manual – girl	0.923	0.918	0.664±
Working-class – girl	0.902	0.897	0.641
Non-employed – boy	1.111	1.243	0.903
Non-employed – girl	0.874	0.911	0.994
(Ref.: Working-class boy)			
Mother's education:			
Leaving Certificate	1.488**	1.285±	0.773±
Post-secondary	1.550***	1.157	0.649**
Degree or higher	1.098	0.590***	0.298***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)			
Lone parent family	0.889	1.023	1.254
Immigrant background	1.152	1.685***	2.693***
Has disability	1.113	1.206	1.645*
Lives in an urban area	1.018	0.991	1.209±
Childcare:			
Relative	1.492**	1.142±	0.997
Non-relative	0.964	0.641*	0.398***
Centre-based	0.866±	0.459***	0.303***
Other	0.597	0.295	0.946
(Ref.: Parents)			
Nagelkerke R^2	0.102		

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: less than an hour.*

The three-year-old children of graduate mothers tend to watch less television than other groups, while those from middle-class families are less likely to watch a lot of television (that is, four or more hours a day). The analyses indicate that the pattern of more television watching in lone parent families described above is due to socioeconomic characteristics, with no net difference found when these factors are taken into account. All else being equal, children from immigrant families watch television for longer periods than their Irish counterparts; this group is 2.7 times more likely than similar Irish children to fall into the 'high' (four hours or more) group. No marked variation is found between rural and urban areas. There are no systematic differences by child disability but children with disabilities are more likely to fall into the high watching group (four hours or more). Being cared for by a non-relative or in a crèche is associated with less time watching television at home, compared with those cared for by parents or other relatives. As with the other cultural activities, it may be the case that children are watching some television in their care settings.

These analyses of cultural activities among three year olds indicate the emergence of gender and social class differences, even at this young age. Section 2.3 examines whether these differences persist to five years of age and whether early experiences influence later engagement.

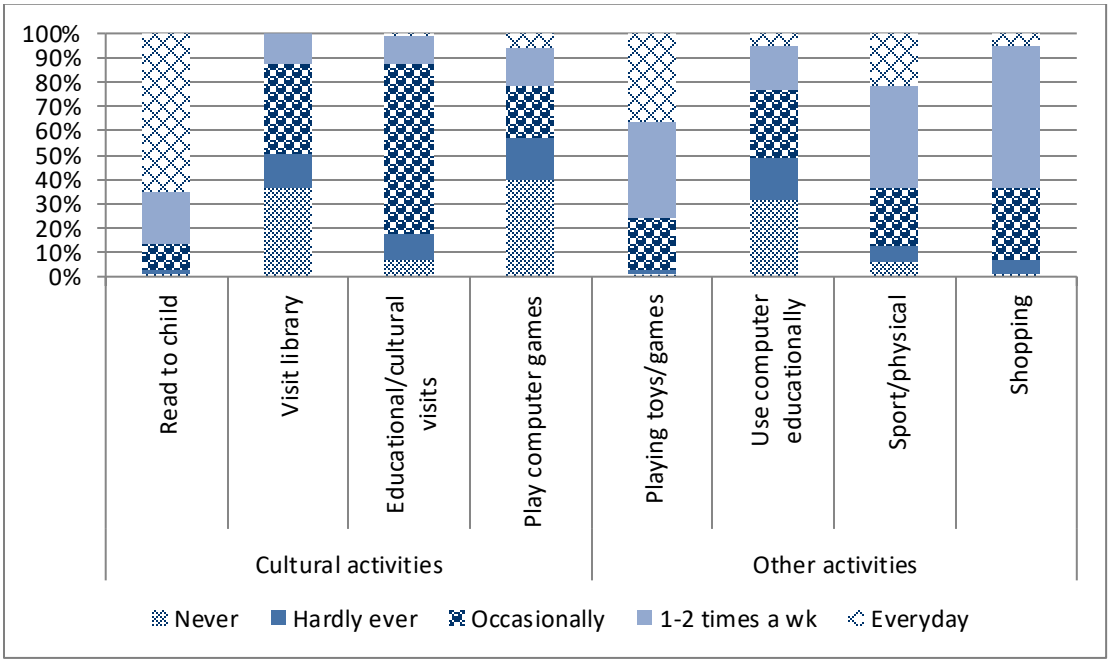
2.3 PARTICIPATION AMONG 5 YEAR OLDS

Reflecting the age of the child, more detailed information was collected on the activities of five year olds, including activities they took part in with their parents, those they participated in alone, and family outings (see Table A1 in the appendix for detailed definitions).

Figure 2.5 shows the frequency of a number of different cultural and other activities parents and children could take part in together. Reading to the child was the most frequent activity among those listed, with two-thirds of parents reading to their child every day.[4] Educational visits (which potentially include both cultural and other outings) tended to occur on an occasional basis while visits to the library were regular or occasional for about half of families. A significant minority of parents never or hardly ever played computer games with their children, though it was fairly common for five year olds to play these games themselves (see below). Other popular activities include: playing with toys and games; sports and physical play; and shopping. As was the case with computer games, a significant minority of parents never or hardly ever used the computer for educational purposes with children of this age.

[4] Mothers were also asked how often they listened to their child reading. As this reflects the child's ability to read as well as participation, it is not included here.

FIGURE 2.5 Frequency of Parent–child Activities when Child is 5 Years Old



As was the case at three years of age, the frequency of reading to the child differed significantly by social class and parental education; 72 per cent of graduate mothers read to their child every day compared with 55 per cent of those with lower secondary education. There is a difference in reading frequency between immigrant and Irish children, but this is narrower than it was at the age of three years; at five, 61 per cent of immigrant mothers read to their child every day compared with 66 per cent of Irish mothers.

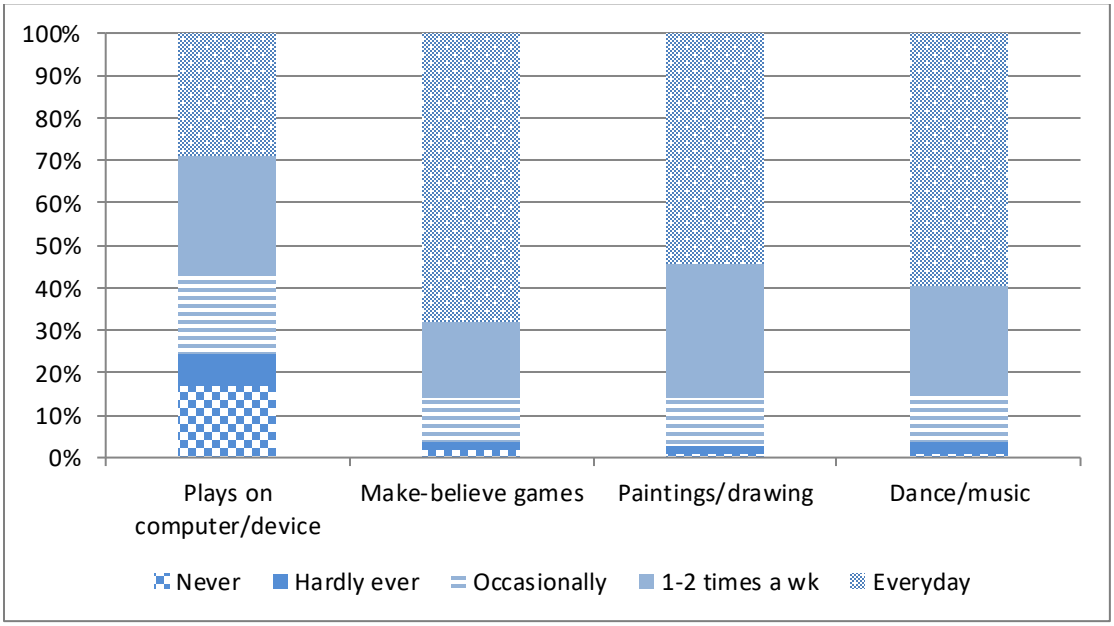
Reading to the child did not vary by family structure or child disability. Visits to the library were more common among more highly educated families, with 61 per cent of children with graduate mothers visiting the library at least occasionally compared with 32 per cent of those with lower secondary education. Visits were also more frequent among higher income and two-parent families. Children with disabilities were more likely to have been taken to the library. Library visiting rates were somewhat lower among migrant families, with especially low rates where mothers could not read books in English (when the child was three years of age). Educational or cultural visits were less common in less educated households (26 per cent doing so never or hardly ever compared with 12 per cent where the mother had a degree) and among low income and lone parent families. They were also less common among migrant families (29 per cent did so never or hardly ever compared with 16 per cent of Irish families). Playing computer games with a five year old does not vary markedly by social

background but is more prevalent in lone parent families (with 31 per cent playing at least once a week compared with 20 per cent of two-parent families) and in migrant families (29 per cent compared with 20 per cent). Participation in cultural activities did not vary markedly by rural or urban location. Later analyses explore whether urban–rural differences are evident when the profile of families in different localities is taken into account.

Socioeconomic differences in cultural activities did not reflect less frequent parent–child activities overall. Parents across all social groups played with toys or games with their children, though engaging in sport or physical play was somewhat more common in more advantaged households. While gender differences were not marked in parents and children engaging in reading and other cultural activities, parents were much more likely to take daughters shopping and slightly more likely to engage in physical play with their sons. Using the computer in educational ways with the child was more common in highly educated households and was much lower in non-employed households. It was also more common in immigrant families, with 31 per cent doing so at least once a week compared with 22 per cent of Irish families.

Parents were also asked about child-directed cultural activities, that is, the extent to which their child painted or drew themselves, enjoyed music, dance or movement, played with a computer or other electronic device or engaged in make-believe games. With the exception of computers, five year olds engaged in these activities frequently, the majority doing so every day or at least once a week. Around half of five year olds played with an electronic device regularly, but almost one-fifth never did so.

FIGURE 2.6 Frequency of Child-directed Cultural Activities Among 5 Years Olds

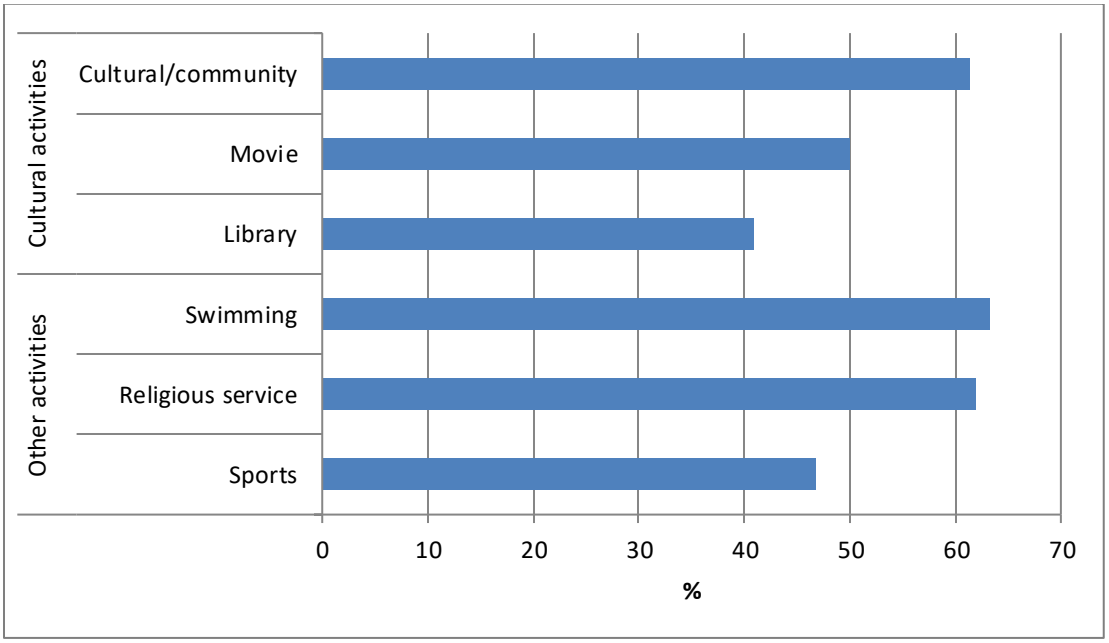


Strong gender differences were evident in these child-directed activities. Girls were somewhat less likely than boys to use electronic devices, with 53 per cent doing so regularly compared with 61 per cent of boys. In contrast, girls were more likely to engage in 'pretend' games (74 per cent compared with 62 per cent boys doing so every day). Remarkable gender differences were evident in the prevalence of painting or drawing (67 per cent of girls did so every day compared with 42 per cent of boys) and in enjoying music or dance (73 per cent compared with 46 per cent doing so every day). The use of electronic devices varied somewhat by social background, being more frequent in more advantaged families, with marginal social differences also evident in make-believe games. Children in immigrant families were more likely to play on electronic devices, with 38 per cent doing so every day compared with 28 per cent of Irish children; use of these devices was higher among immigrants for whom English was not a first language. Children with disabilities were slightly more likely to use electronic devices (35 per cent compared with 29 per cent of other children doing so every day). Painting/drawing was common across all social groups but music/dance was enjoyed more frequently in less educated, lower-income and lone parent households. The frequency of painting/drawing and music/dance were slightly higher for immigrant families, though the difference in painting narrowed between three and five years. The frequency of playing make-believe games was somewhat lower for immigrant families. Children with disabilities were just as likely as other children to enjoy music/dance but those who were hampered by their disability (as reported by their mother) were less likely to paint or

draw. Use of electronic devices was somewhat more common in urban areas (33 per cent every day compared with 26 per cent), reflecting variation in broadband infrastructure.

The most common family outings involving the five year olds in the month prior to the survey had been swimming and attending a religious service. The majority – six in ten – had been to a concert, play, museum, art gallery, community or school event, while one half had been to a movie and two-fifths had visited the library. Just under half of the five year olds had attended a sporting event in which they had not participated. Attending concerts or other cultural events was more common in more advantaged families; 69 per cent of those with graduate mothers attended such an event compared with 52 per cent of those whose mothers had lower secondary education. As discussed above, going to the library was more common among more socioeconomically advantaged families. In contrast to other cultural events, going to the cinema did not vary much by social class or parental education, though it was more common among higher income groups (53 per cent of the top quintile compared with 45 per cent of the bottom quintile) and Irish children (51 per cent compared with 42 per cent). Children from lone parent families were also more likely to go to the cinema (58 per cent compared with 49 per cent). The frequency of family cultural outings was lower for immigrant families, particularly where mothers had language difficulties. Attending a cultural event or movie did not differ by disability but children with disabilities were more likely to be taken to visit the library than their peers. Going to the cinema was more prevalent among those living in urban areas, reflecting local infrastructure (54 per cent compared with 47 per cent), though there was no urban–rural difference in attendance at other cultural events.

FIGURE 2.7 Frequency of Cultural and Other Family Outings Among 5 Year Olds



Parents were asked about the total screen time (including television as well as electronic devices) five year olds had every day. The most common pattern (55 per cent) was one to two hours a day. A further 28 per cent had two to three hours of screen time, 14 per cent had three or more hours, while a final three per cent did not have any screen time. As with television at three years of age, screen time was lower among more advantaged families; 21 per cent of those whose mothers had lower secondary education had three or more hours of screen time compared with eight per cent of those with graduate mothers. Immigrant children tended to have more screen time, with 48 per cent having more than two hours compared with 32 per cent of Irish children. Children with disabilities also tended to have more screen time, with 49 per cent having two or more hours compared with 40 per cent of other children.

As with the data on three year olds, multivariate models were used to examine the relative influence of different background factors at five years of age (see Table 2.5). These analyses highlight the strongest influences on participation in cultural activities and assess the extent to which some of the descriptive findings (for example, in relation to lone parent or immigrant families) hold when we take account of differences in social class and parental education.

At the time of the survey, 72 per cent of the five year olds had already started primary school; Chapter 4 examines potential differences in activities between this group and those children not yet in school.

TABLE 2.5 Factors Associated with Frequency of Reading with 5-Year-Old Children

	1–2 times a week	Every day
Constant	0.821	2.085
Social group:		
Professional – boy	1.127	1.141
Professional – girl	1.353±	1.357*
Non-manual – boy	1.213	0.998
Non-manual – girl	1.363±	1.321±
Working-class – girl	1.801**	1.523±
Non-employed – boy	1.116	1.114
Non-employed – girl	1.322	1.214
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	1.353**	1.343**
Post-secondary	1.785***	2.025***
Degree or higher	2.106***	3.157***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	0.891	1.076
Immigrant background	0.958	0.695**
Has disability	0.883	1.130
Lives in an urban area	1.059	1.161*
Nagelkerke R^2	0.033	

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: never, hardly ever or occasionally.*

The frequency of reading at the age of five is mainly driven by the mother's level of education (Table 2.5), with graduate mothers 3.2 times more likely to read with their child every day compared with mothers with lower secondary education. There are some gender differences, with girls (except for those from non-employed households) being read to more frequently than boys. There are no differences in reading behaviour between one and two-parent families when socioeconomic characteristics are taken into account. Reading frequency is somewhat lower among immigrant families but the gap narrows between the ages of three and five years. As at three years, reading is less frequent for five year olds in families where English is not the first language and where mothers have difficulties reading English (analyses not shown here). There are no significant differences in reading behaviour by whether the child has a disability or not. Children in urban areas are more likely to read to every day, even taking account of other family characteristics. Later analyses will show the extent to which reading behaviours established at an early stage (three years of age) influence reading frequency at five years old.

TABLE 2.6 Factors Associated with Frequency of Educational Visits with a 5-Year-Old Child

	Occasionally	At least once a week
Constant	2.555	0.334
Social group:		
Professional – boy	1.528**	1.882**
Professional – girl	1.343*	1.478*
Non-manual – boy	1.068	1.345
Non-manual – girl	1.098	1.209
Working-class – girl	1.258	1.053
Non-employed – boy	0.741*	0.749
Non-employed – girl	0.934	1.037
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	1.078	1.106
Post-secondary	1.487***	1.685***
Degree or higher	1.991***	2.516***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	0.711***	0.774*
Immigrant background	0.477***	0.383***
Has disability	1.862***	2.335***
Lives in an urban area	1.063	1.371***
Nagelkerke R^2	0.052	

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: never or hardly ever.*

Educational visits were strongly structured by parental education, with graduate mothers 2.5 times more likely to take their children on more frequent excursions than mothers with Junior Certificate education or less (Table 2.6). Over and above the effect of parental education, girls and boys from professional/managerial households had more frequent educational trips. Lone parent families had fewer such trips, even taking account of social class and education. The frequency of such visits was significantly lower among children from immigrant families, with these children being only a third as likely to have trips on a weekly basis. Frequency is especially low among families for whom English is not their first language and where mothers have language difficulties. Parents of children with disabilities were more likely to take them on educational visits, all else being equal. Geographical accessibility also seemed to play a role, with more frequent visits among those living in urban areas.

Table 2.7 shows the factors influencing high levels of involvement in creative play. In keeping with the descriptive analyses presented above, a clear gender gap is evident, with girls more likely to engage in all forms of creative activities. These differences are very large; girls are three to 4.5 times more likely than boys to paint/draw every day and 5.5 to 13 times more likely to enjoy music/dance. There are few differences by family social class in relation to painting/drawing and music/dance. However,

working-class boys are found to have the lowest level of engagement in make-believe games. Children with more highly educated mothers are more likely to draw or paint and to play make-believe games on a frequent basis but are slightly less likely to enjoy dance or music. No differences are evident in participation by family structure. Children from immigrant backgrounds are less than half as likely as Irish children to engage in make-believe games but are just as likely as Irish children to paint, draw or enjoy music. Children with disabilities are slightly less likely to paint or draw, a pattern accounted for by lower levels of involvement among those who are hampered by their disability, but they do not differ from their peers in involvement in other creative play. Although these activities are not site specific, they are somewhat more common among children in urban areas.

TABLE 2.7 Factors Associated with Engaging in Painting/drawing, Music/dance and Make-believe Games Every Day

	Painting/drawing	Music/dance	Make-believe games
Constant	2.104	1.919	1.902
Social group:			
Professional – boy	0.852	0.849	1.637***
Professional – girl	3.687***	8.539**	3.651***
Non-manual – boy	0.880	0.925	1.349*
Non-manual – girl	4.141***	6.098***	2.860***
Working-class – girl	4.455***	13.052***	3.317***
Non-employed – boy	0.761	1.217	1.548**
Non-employed – girl	3.092***	5.559***	3.088***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)			
Mother's education:			
Leaving Certificate	0.900	0.908	1.047
Post-secondary	0.911	1.059	1.360**
Degree or higher	1.537***	0.825±	1.625***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)			
Lone parent family	0.914	1.041	0.933
Immigrant background	1.053	1.023	0.429***
Has disability	0.760±	1.066	1.091
Lives in an urban area	1.140±	1.185**	1.153*
Nagelkerke R^2	0.091	0.136	0.046

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Coefficients for 1 to 2 days a week are not shown here. Odds ratios from a series of multinomial logistic regression models, with base category: never, hardly ever or occasionally.*

Table 2.8 looks at the factors associated with having gone on a cultural outing in the previous month. Because some of these are paid for activities, household income is also included in the models. Going to a concert or play and visiting a library are more prevalent among children in more highly educated households. In contrast, attending the cinema is more prevalent for families with medium levels of education. Even taking account of mother's education, girls from middle-class families are more likely to attend a concert or play. Income appears to act as a barrier to attending the cinema, with highest attendance among the top two quintiles, but not

to the other activities examined here. The children of lone parent families are more likely to attend the cinema, which may relate to activities engaged in with the non-resident parent. Immigrant children are less likely to engage in any of these activities; as with the other cultural activities examined above, these patterns are largely driven by lower levels among families whose native language is not English and especially among those with language difficulties. Children with disabilities are more likely to visit the library but equally likely to attend a play or movie. Visiting the library or cinema is more common in urban areas but going to a play, concert or other community event is just as likely in urban and rural areas. The latter pattern may reflect the broad definition used, which also includes community and school events.

TABLE 2.8 Factors Associated with Participation in Cultural Outings in the Previous Month for 5 Year Olds

	Concert, play etc.	Cinema	Library
Constant	0.917	-0.645	0.413
Social group:			
Professional – boy	1.152	1.017	1.104
Professional – girl	1.267*	1.019	1.315*
Non-manual – boy	1.117	1.059	0.849
Non-manual – girl	1.309*	1.019	1.055
Working-class – girl	1.188	0.865	1.182
Non-employed – boy	1.013	0.981	1.110
Non-employed – girl	1.232	0.791±	1.033
(Ref.: Working-class boy)			
Mother's education:			
Leaving Certificate	1.074	1.193*	1.186*
Post-secondary	1.374***	1.304***	1.495***
Degree or higher	1.906***	1.070	1.908***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)			
Income quintile:			
Second	1.028	1.011	0.975
Third	0.973	1.149±	0.965
Fourth	1.057	1.301**	0.937
Highest	1.122	1.249**	1.017
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)			
Lone parent family	1.077	1.656***	0.928
Immigrant background	0.779**	0.704***	0.804**
Has disability	1.148	0.989	1.393**
Lives in an urban area	1.071	1.276***	1.181***
Nagelkerke R^2	0.026	0.023	0.034

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a series of logistic regression models.*

Screen time (that is, time spent watching television and using electronic devices combined) at the age of five years was strongly affected by mother's education, with children of graduate mothers only a third as likely to have three or more hours of screen time as other children. Over and above the influence of mother's education, boys from professional or non-

manual backgrounds spent less time on television/ devices while girls across all social groups tended to have less prolonged screen time than boys. Children living in lone parent families were somewhat more likely to have more than three hours of screen time a day, even taking account of parental education and social class. Screen time was more prolonged among children from immigrant families, especially those for whom English is not a first language. It is slightly longer for children with disabilities. No differences in overall screen time were evident between rural and urban areas.

TABLE 2.9 Factors Associated with Amount of Screen Time Per Day for a 5-Year-Old Child

	2–3 hours	More than 3 hours
Constant	0.585	0.491
Social group:		
Professional – boy	0.913	0.742*
Professional – girl	0.871	0.538***
Non-manual – boy	1.069	0.743*
Non-manual – girl	0.966	0.806
Working-class – girl	0.827	0.709±
Non-employed – boy	0.925	1.093
Non-employed – girl	1.041	0.584**
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	1.128	0.926
Post-secondary	0.906	0.670***
Degree or higher	0.633***	0.356***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Lone parent family	1.061	1.229*
Immigrant background	1.342***	1.401***
Has disability	1.122	1.316±
Lives in an urban area	1.031	0.944
Nagelkerke R^2	0.042	

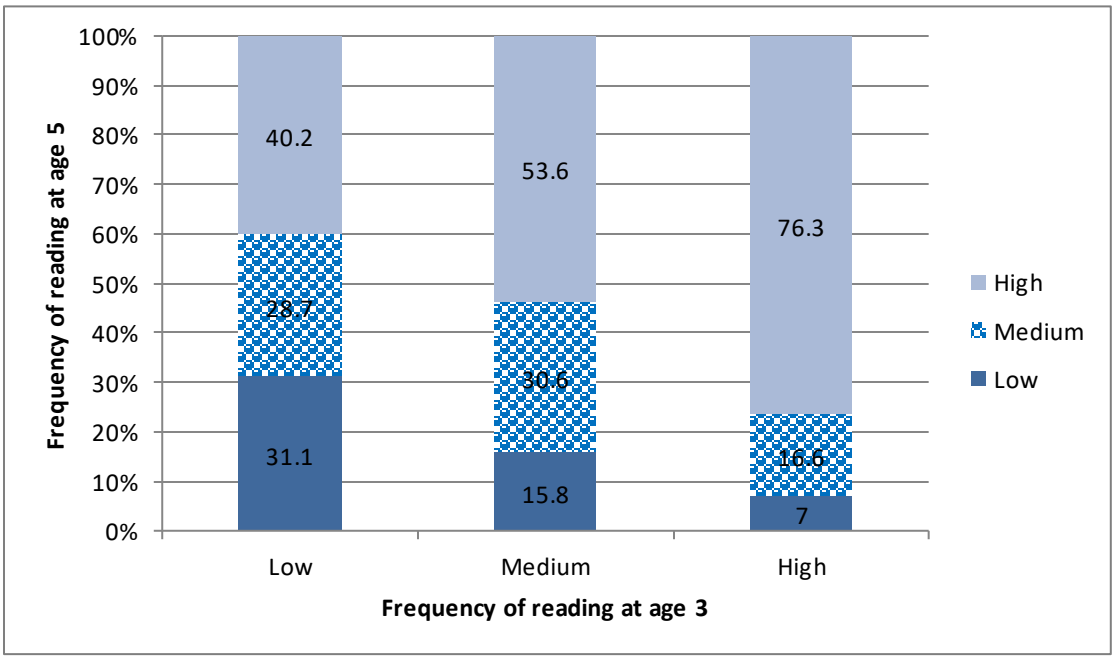
*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: less than 2 hours.*

The longitudinal nature of the study means that we can explore the extent to which children engage in the same kinds of activities as they grow older. Activities at five years may resemble those at three years because parents consistently encourage the same activities over time and/or because sparking early interest can maintain interest as the child grows older. Figures 2.8a to 2.8c show the relationship between reading, painting/drawing and television/screen time at three and five years of age.

Figure 2.8a shows three columns, each representing a level of reading frequency at three years (low, medium and high). The vertical axis measures the level of reading frequency at five years, which is represented in the columns. It shows that three-quarters (76 per cent) of children who

were read to frequently at three years were still being read to often at five years; for the remaining one-quarter, the rate fell to medium or low levels. Some increases in reading frequency were seen for those who had low or medium levels at three years; 40 per cent of those with low reading levels at three years had high reading levels by five years. This was also the case for 54 per cent of those who had medium levels of reading at three years. This increase in reading behaviour among those with relatively low levels at three years was at least partly driven by starting school; 72 per cent of this group who had started school increased their reading frequency compared with 59 per cent of those who had yet to start school. In contrast, starting school appears to lead to little change in reading behaviour for those who already had medium or high levels of frequency.

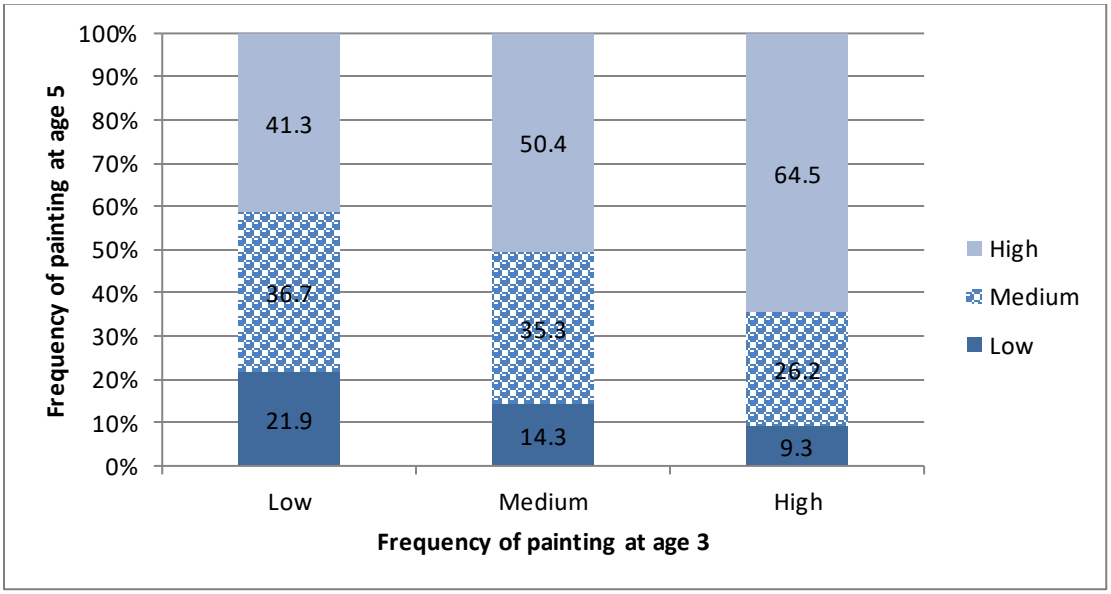
FIGURE 2.8a Engagement in Reading at 5 by Reading at 3 Years



Note: 'High' = 6–7 days (at 3 years)/every day (at 5 years); 'Medium' = 4–7 days (at 3 years)/1–2 times a week at 5); 'Low' = 3 days or less (at 3 years)/occasionally, hardly ever or never (at 5 years).

Similarly, children who painted or drew more frequently when they were three years also did so often at the age of five (Figure 2.8b). Almost two-thirds of those who drew (almost) every day when they were three years continued to draw every day two years later. As with reading, a significant group of children increased their engagement in painting/drawing over time. Among those with a low level of engagement at the age of three, this increase was greater among those who had started school.

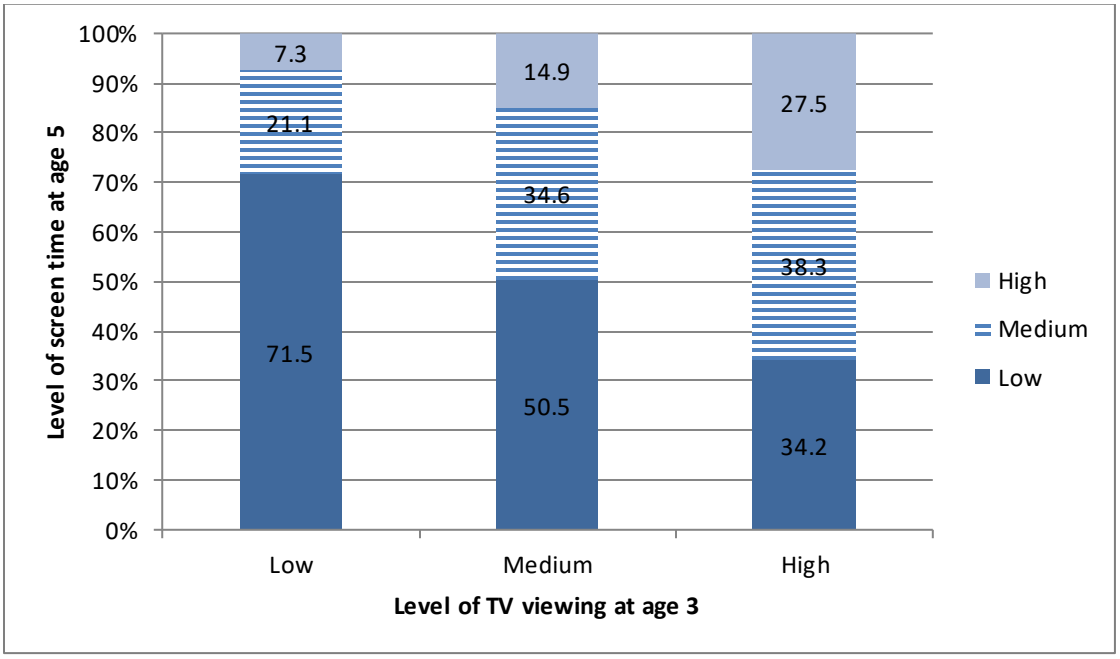
FIGURE 2.8b Engagement in Drawing/Painting at 5 by Drawing/Painting at 3 Years



Note: 'High' = 6–7 days (at 3 years)/every day (at 5 years); 'Medium' = 4–7 days (at 3 years)/1–2 times a week at 5); 'Low' = 3 days or less (at 3 years)/occasionally, hardly ever or never (at 5 years).

The categories used for television/screen time at three and at five years were somewhat different, with all forms of screen time being considered at the age of five years. In spite of using this broader category, which would potentially increase viewing time, a significant number of children reduced their viewing levels between the ages of three and five years (Figure 2.8c). Thus, half of those with medium levels (two–three hours a day) at age three had low levels (less than two hours) at age five. The majority (72 per cent) of children who watched less television at the age of three years maintained these low levels two years later. Starting school was associated with a reduction in the amounts of high levels (three hours or more) of screen time (see Chapter 4).

FIGURE 2.8c Engagement in Screen Time at 5 by TV Watching at 3 Years



Note: 'High' = 3 or more hours per day; 'medium' = 2–3 hours per day; 'low' = less than 2 hours per day.

Multivariate models (not shown here) were used to examine whether earlier activity was associated with activity levels at five years of age, taking account of the kinds of socioeconomic characteristics that influenced engagement. Even taking account of family and child characteristics, reading frequency at three years of age was highly predictive of reading habits two years later. Social class differences in reading at five years were largely driven by earlier reading engagement. In contrast, among children with the same reading frequency at three years, those with more highly educated mothers were likely to be read to more often when they were five years. Thus, the gap in reading by parental education widened over time. In relation to painting/drawing, prior engagement was also predictive of later engagement. However, the gender gap in engagement widened between three and five years of age. Furthermore, the children of graduate mothers had greater involvement in painting/drawing over time. Regarding screen time, the gap between more and less advantaged families also widened over time; children from graduate or professional households reduced their screen time more when compared to television watching levels at three years.

2.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at the prevalence and profile of cultural participation among young children. Even at a young age, clear gender differences are evident, with girls more likely to be read to and to engage

in painting/drawing and music/dance. Children from more socially advantaged homes are more likely to be read to and be brought on educational visits and cultural outings. In contrast, children from less advantaged homes are more likely to spend more time watching television or other screens. Differences in cultural participation between one and two-parent families largely reflect differences in educational and social background, though five year olds living in lone parent families have more screen time and cinema trips but fewer educational or other cultural outings. A significant difference is found between immigrant and Irish children in their involvement in a range of activities, encompassing formal outings and informal activities within the home. This appears to be related at least in part to language barriers, with lower levels of participation where English is not the native language and especially where there are difficulties reading English. For children with disabilities, parents appear to promote some activities (such as library and educational visits) to a greater extent with no significant differences in relation to many other activities. The cultural activities in which children are involved at the age of three are predictive of involvement two years later, though more advantaged families are more likely to intensify involvement in reading and painting/drawing over time.

Chapter 3 examines whether similar gender and social background differences are evident among older children.

Chapter 3

Cultural Participation at 9 and 13 Years

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at cultural participation during the primary school years (at age nine) and after the transition to second-level education (at age 13). For these age groups, their own interests and preferences are likely to assume a greater role in their participation, while engagement in more structured activities, such as taking part in organised classes and clubs, become more important. In contrast to the survey at five years of age (which involved interviews with their parents/caregivers), survey information was not collected on activities such as going to the cinema or educational outings among nine and 13 year olds. As a result, the chapter focuses mainly on less structured activities (reading, watching television and playing computer games), as well as on participation in structured cultural lessons or clubs. The analyses presented in this chapter focus on out-of-school activities while Chapter 4 considers young people's exposure to cultural activities within the school context.

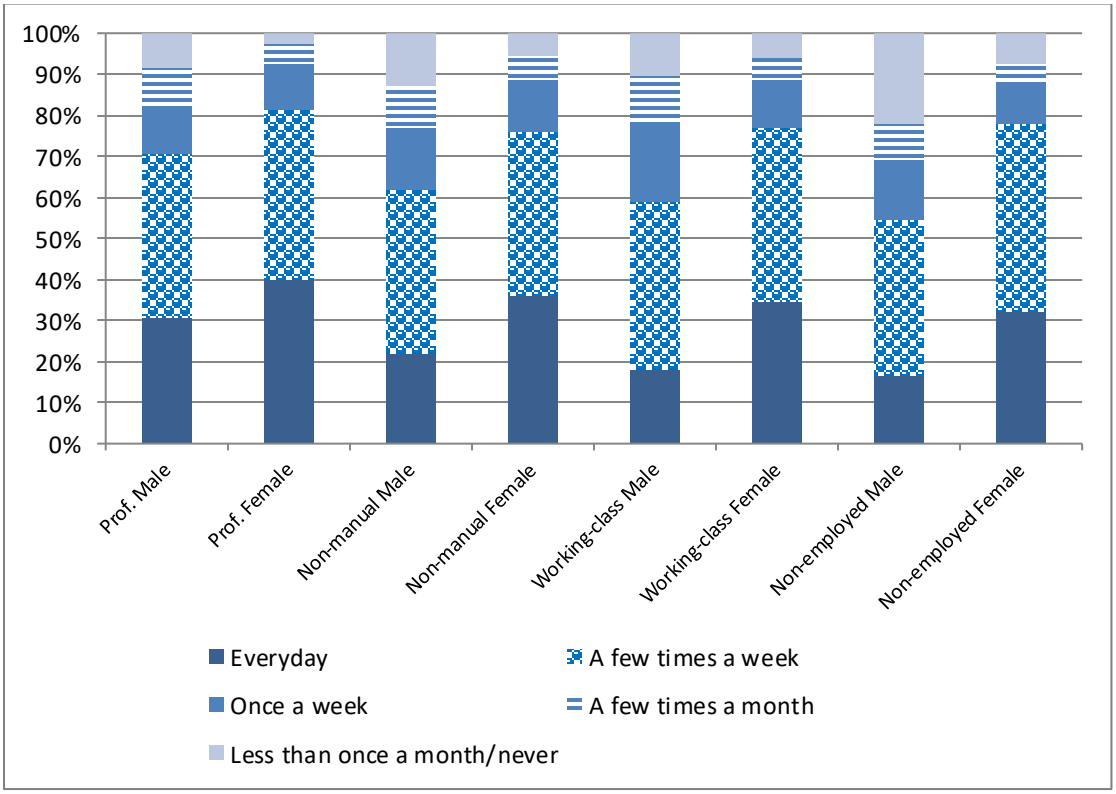
3.2 PARTICIPATION AMONG 9 YEAR OLDS

3.2.1 Reading

Relatively high levels of reading for fun are found among the nine year olds – 31 per cent read every day while a further 41 per cent read a few times a week; only six per cent said that they never read for fun. Figure 3.1 shows that the frequency of reading varies by both gender and social class background. Girls read more frequently than boys – 37 per cent of girls read every day compared with 25 per cent of boys. This gender difference is evident within social class groups, with girls reading more frequently than boys from similar backgrounds. For boys, there is a clear social gradient in the frequency of reading, with boys from middle-class (professional/managerial) households almost twice as likely to read every day as those from non-employed households. Among girls, social differentiation is much less evident, with much smaller differences between middle-class and working-class or non-employed girls. In fact, reading frequency among girls from working-class or non-employed households is on a par with that found among middle-class boys.

Other dimensions of social background are also associated with reading frequency. There is a clear social gradient by mother's education – 38 per cent of those with graduate mothers read every day compared with 24 per cent for those whose mothers have Junior Certificate education or less – and household income – 35 per cent of those in the top fifth (quintile) of household income read every day compared with 27 per cent of those in the bottom quintile. Children from lone parent families read less frequently; analyses presented below will explore whether this pattern is due to differences in the educational and social resources available to children in lone parent households. In contrast to the pattern found among very young children, children from immigrant backgrounds do not differ from Irish children in their frequency of reading for fun. Further analyses revealed no significant differences in reading behaviour by language of origin.

FIGURE 3.1 Frequency of Reading for Fun, as Reported by 9 Year Olds

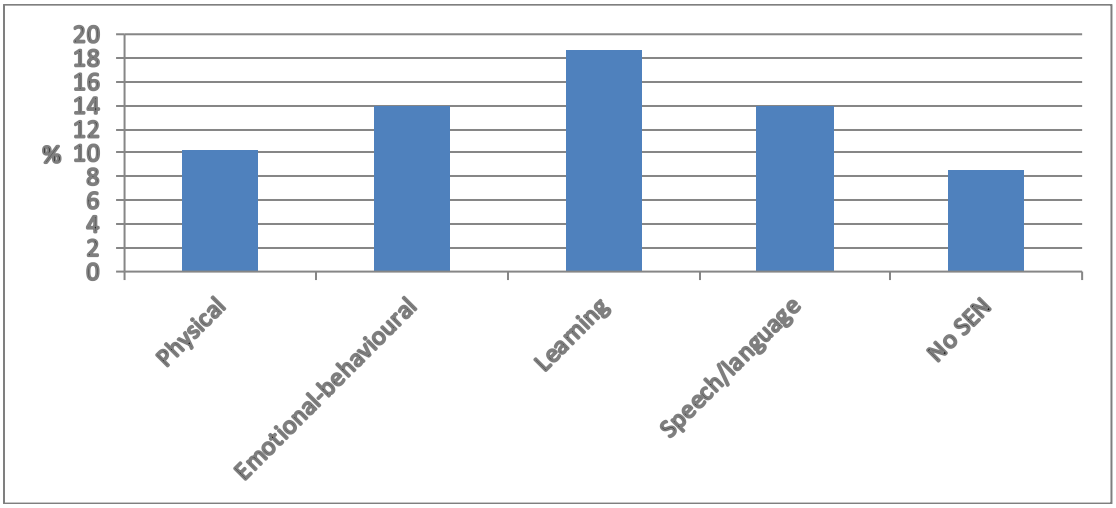


Children with special educational needs (SEN) have a more polarised profile in terms of reading than other children. They are almost as likely to read every day as other children but there is a larger proportion who read less than once a month or never (15 per cent compared with seven per cent). On closer investigation, this pattern varies markedly by the type of SEN (Figure 3.2). Children with physical disabilities do not differ from their

peers in their reading habits. Those with speech/language or emotional–behavioural challenges are somewhat more likely to read less frequently, while levels of reading are least frequent among those with learning disabilities.

Frequency of reading does not vary between those living in rural and those living in urban areas. Later analyses will explore variation between regions in the cultural participation of children.

FIGURE 3.2 Low Levels of Reading (Less Than Once a Month or Never) Among 9 Year Olds, by Type of SEN

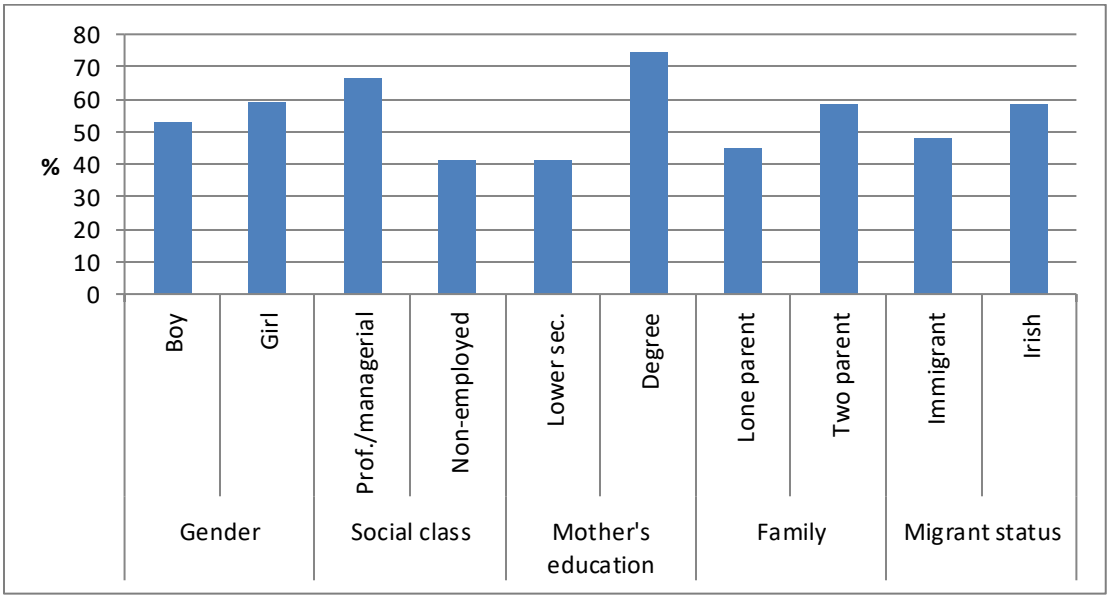


Reading behaviour can be encouraged by parents reading with their children, by having books in the home or by visiting the local library. Just under half (47 per cent) of the nine year olds reported reading with their parents in the previous week. Gender and social background differences in reading with their parents were much smaller than was the case for children reading independently. At the same time, reading alone and with parents emerged as mutually reinforcing, with children who had read with their parents in the previous week more likely to report reading every day for fun (76 per cent compared with 67 per cent).

Over half (56 per cent) of the children lived in families where there were 30 or more children's books in the home. Figure 3.3 shows that there are more children's books in the home of girls and of children from more highly educated, professional/managerial, higher income and two-parent families. Children from immigrant families, especially those whose first language is not English, have fewer books in the home than their Irish

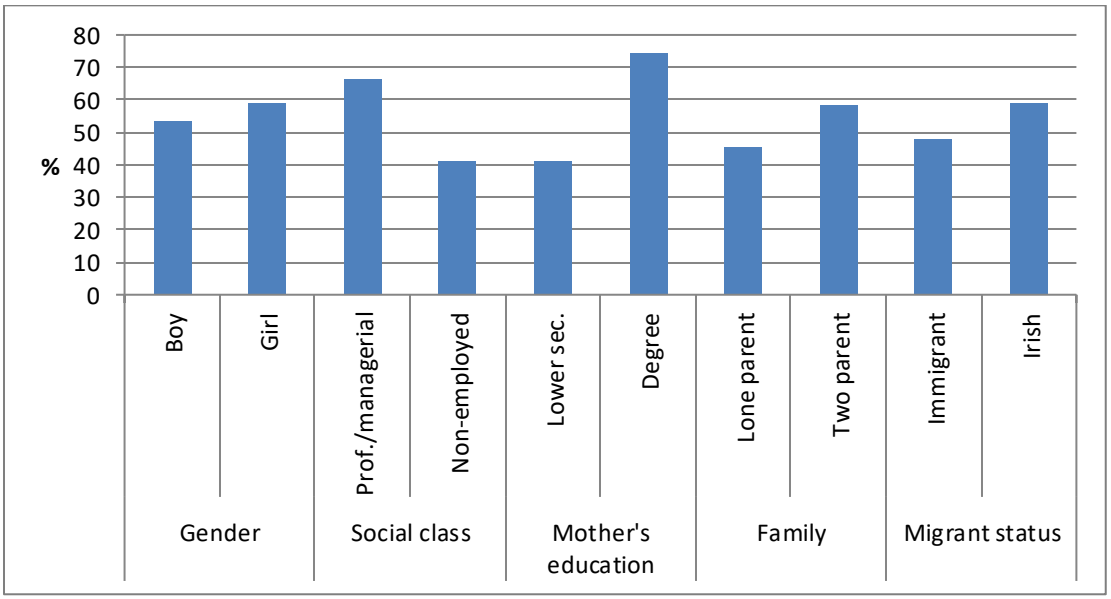
counterparts. Children living in rural areas tend to have slightly greater access to books (58 per cent having 30+ books compared with 54 per cent of those in urban areas), though later analyses look at whether this difference relates to other characteristics. Children living in homes with more than 30 books are more likely to read every day, with 38 per cent doing so compared with 23 per cent where there are only ten to 20 books. The direction of influence is difficult to determine when looking at only one time point; children may read more frequently when they have access to more books and/or parents may buy (or borrow) more books when their child is interested in reading.

FIGURE 3.3 Proportion of 9 Year Olds with More than 30 Children's Books in the Home, by Selected Background Characteristics



Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) used the public library with the study child. This was more common among girls and those from more highly educated and middle-class mothers but did not vary systematically by income (Figure 3.4). Interestingly, this social differentiation was much smaller in scale than for possession of books in the home. There were slightly lower levels of library usage among immigrant families, those living in urban areas, and those in Dublin and the South East region (counties Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford). Frequency of reading was associated with greater use of the public library, with 34 per cent of users reading every day compared with 25 per cent of non-users. As with number of books, the direction of influence cannot be clearly determined – those interested in reading are more likely to visit the library but being brought to the library by parents may prompt engagement.

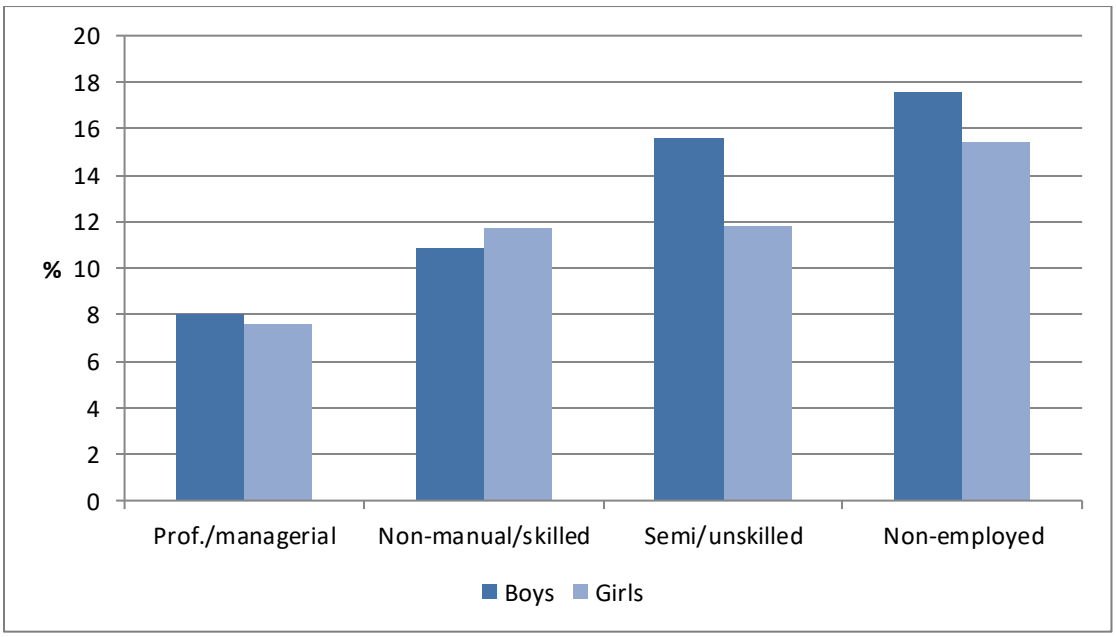
Figure 3.4 Proportion Using the Public Library with their 9-Year-Old Child, by Selected Background Characteristics



3.2.2 Screen time

Two-thirds of nine year olds watched one to two hours of television (or videos or DVDs) a day. Almost one-quarter watched less than an hour of television or none at all, while just over one-tenth watched television for three or more hours. Figure 3.5 shows the proportion watching three or more hours by gender and social class background. A sharper social gradient is evident for boys than for girls, with boys from working-class or non-employed households twice as likely as middle-class boys to watch a lot of television. The extent of watching television is roughly similar for boys and girls from middle-class backgrounds but among working-class and non-employed groups, boys watch significantly more television than girls. Television watching habits also vary by household income and mother's education, with six per cent of those with graduate mothers watching a lot of television compared with 16 per cent of those whose mothers have lower secondary education. Nine year olds from immigrant backgrounds are slightly more likely to watch a lot of television (three or more hours) than Irish children – 15 per cent compared with 10 per cent. This pattern applies whether or not English is the native language but is somewhat higher among those of non-European origin. Children with SEN were more likely to watch a lot of television than their peers, with rates being higher for all types of SEN, particularly those with emotional–behavioural difficulties. This may be related to children with a SEN having fewer friends than their peers (see McGinnity et al., forthcoming). There is little variation in rates of television watching by rural or urban location.

Figure 3.5 Proportion Watching 3 or More Hours of Television Per Night, by Gender and Social Class

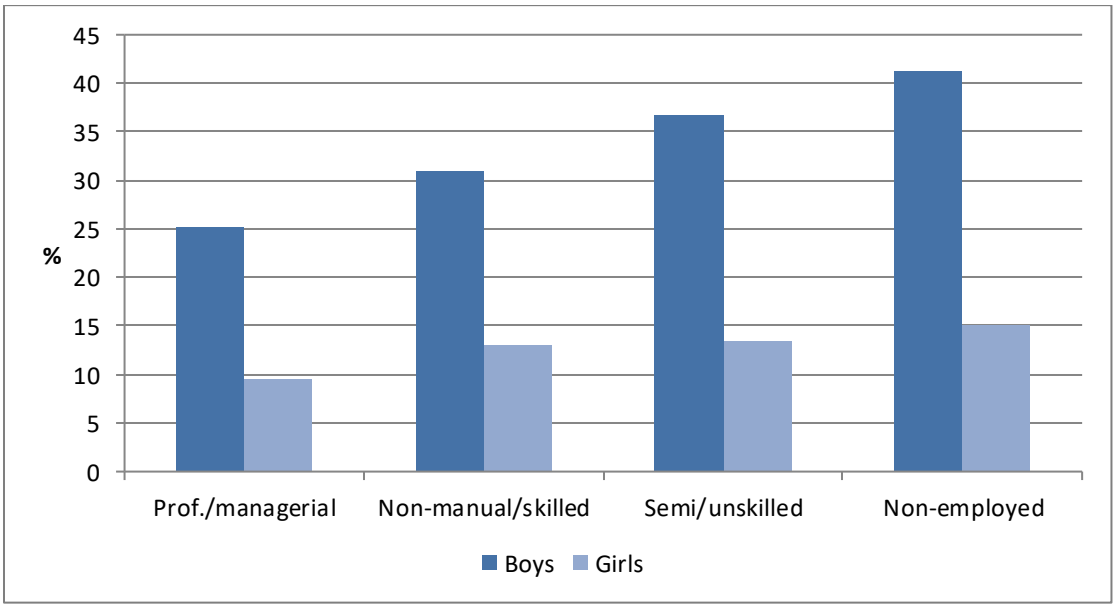


Television viewing was often a family activity, with the vast majority of nine year olds (89 per cent) saying they had sat and watched television with their parents in the past week. This was slightly more common among girls than boys. It was less common among the higher educated group (84 per cent compared with 91 per cent for those with less than Junior Certificate). It is also slightly less common among the professional/managerial group and highest income group, but the class and income differences are not marked. There were no significant differences by region, location, household structure or immigrant status. Thus, it appears that; family television viewing is a component of children's lives, regardless of the social group to which they belong.

Four in ten of the nine year olds spent less than an hour a day playing video games while over one-third never played video games. Figure 3.6 shows the profile by gender and social class of those who spent more than an hour a day playing these games. As with television, there is a clear social gradient for boys, with boys from working-class and non-employed households spending much more time playing video games. Across all social groups, girls are much less involved than boys and there is only a slight variation by social class for girls. The children of graduate mothers are less likely to ever play video games, with 42 per cent never doing so compared with 33–35 per cent of other education groups, while children from lone parent families are more likely to do so. Children with a SEN are

somewhat more likely to spend one or more hours playing video games than other children, with the greatest prevalence found among those with physical disabilities. Levels are somewhat higher in urban areas, most likely reflecting differences in broadband speed and access at the time of the survey.

FIGURE 3.6 Proportion Spending One or More Hours a Day on Video Games, by Gender and Social Class



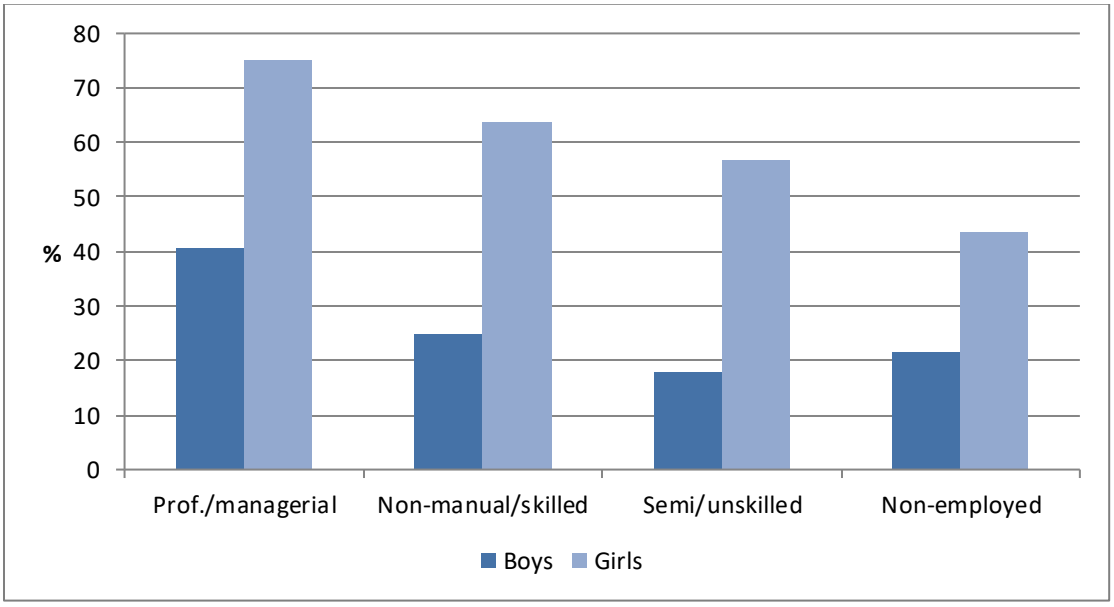
Using the internet to watch movies or download music was reported by 29 per cent of nine year olds. This pattern does not vary by gender or mother's education. Rates are slightly higher among those from non-employed and lone parent households. There are significant differences by immigrant background (37 per cent of immigrant children download movies/music compared with 28 per cent of Irish children). Children with learning disabilities are somewhat more likely to watch movies online (33 per cent) while those with speech and language difficulties are less likely to do so (21 per cent). Rates are also higher in urban areas (33 per cent compared with 25 per cent) and in Dublin, reflecting broadband access and speed.

3.2.3 Structured cultural activities

Just under half (47 per cent) of nine year olds took part in a structured cultural class or club outside school time. In the vast majority (94 per cent) of cases, these activities had to be paid for. As with reading, there are striking differences by both gender and social class. There is a social gradient for both boys and girls, with those from middle-class families

much more likely to take part in such activities than those from working-class or non-employed households (Figure 3.7). Within social groups, girls are much more likely to take part than boys. The gender differences are remarkable, with girls from non-employed backgrounds slightly more likely to take part in structured cultural activities than middle-class boys. There is also a clear social gradient in terms of mother's education (63 per cent of those with graduate mothers taking part compared with 36 per cent of those whose mothers have Junior Certificate or less), income (59 per cent of the top quintile versus 37 per cent of the bottom quintile), and household type (50 per cent for two-parent families versus 38 per cent for lone parent households). Nine year olds from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to take part in these activities, with 39 per cent doing so compared with 48 per cent of Irish children. Further investigation revealed a significant difference in participation between immigrant families whose first language was English (45 per cent) compared with those who had another first language (31 per cent). Children with SEN were much less likely to take part in structured cultural activities (37 per cent compared with 50 per cent of those without a SEN). Participation was lower across types of SEN but was especially low – at 23 per cent – among those with emotional–behavioural difficulties. There is surprisingly little difference in participation by location or region.

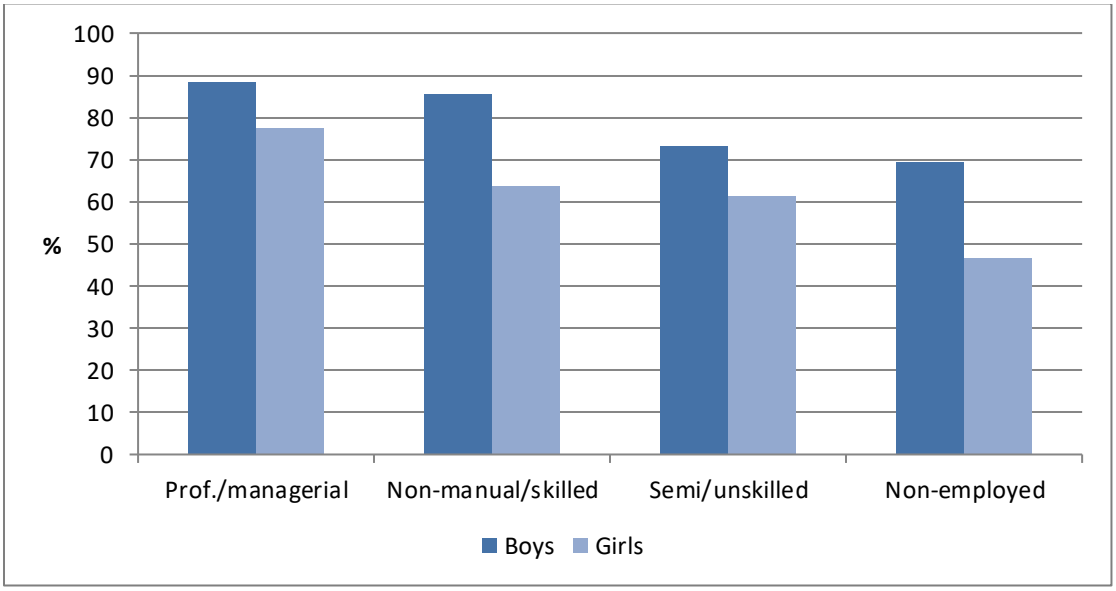
FIGURE 3.7 Proportion Taking Part in Structured Cultural Activities, by Gender and Social Class



International research has shown that middle-class children and young people tend to take part in more structured activities outside school than their working-class contemporaries (see Chapter 1). In order to assess whether this was the case in Ireland, involvement in structured sports activities was examined. Figure 3.8 shows that there is also a social gradient in participation in structured sports activities, with middle-class children much more likely to take part than those from working-class or non-employed families. Unlike cultural activities, boys are more likely to take part than girls, with a larger gender gap among those from non-employed backgrounds. It is worth noting, however, that the gender gap is not as large for structured sports as for structured cultural activities.

A further issue is the extent to which there is a zero-sum trade-off between involvement in sports and cultural activities; in other words, do children involved in sports clubs shun taking part in music or dance lessons? A significant proportion of nine year olds were involved in both activities, with girls being more likely to do so; six in ten girls from middle-class backgrounds were involved in both sets of activities compared with 15 per cent of working-class boys. At the same time, girls from non-employed households were less likely to be involved in any structured activities; over one-third (35 per cent) had no involvement compared with seven per cent of middle-class girls.

FIGURE 3.8 Proportion Taking Part in Structured Sports Activities, by Gender and Social Class



3.2.4 Children's own perspectives

The analysis so far has focused on what activities children take part in, rather than what they necessarily enjoy. Two questions asked of nine year olds tap into their own preferences. Children were asked to rate a number of specified activities in terms of their favourite. Hanging out with friends and playing sport received the highest ratings from nine year olds. Television, videogames, reading and listening to music also received high ratings. Boys rated screen-based activities more highly, while girls rated reading and music more favourably. Working-class and non-employed groups rated videogames and music more highly. For reading, the main difference in ratings was between professional/managerial and all other social groups. Children from lone parent families rated music more highly but differences were small for other activities. Immigrant children rated screen-based activities and reading more highly but there was no difference in the extent to which they liked music. There was an urban–rural difference only in relation to the ranking of videogames.

Nine year olds were also asked about their favourite hobbies. This was an open-ended question, so they were able to specify whatever they wished. These responses were then grouped into four categories: sports, cultural, screen-based and other. Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) mentioned sports, while just over one-fifth mentioned arts/cultural activities. This latter group consisted of: arts and crafts (5.8 per cent); dancing (5.5 per cent); reading or writing (4.9 per cent); acting, singing, drama or playing an instrument (3.7 per cent) and listening to music (0.8 per cent). Only one in

20 mentioned screen activities, while nine per cent mentioned other activities.[5] Girls were less likely to mention television or sports than boys and three times more likely to mention cultural activities. In contrast to the patterns of involvement in structured cultural activities, the proportion mentioning cultural activities as their favourite hobby did not vary by social class, family income or household type. It was slightly but not appreciably higher among those with more highly educated mothers. Immigrant children were less likely to mention sports but as likely to mention cultural activities as Irish children. Urban children were more likely to mention cultural pastimes.

3.2.5 Which factors matter most?

The analyses presented so far in this section have examined whether specific dimensions of social background are related to involvement in different cultural activities. In this subsection, multilevel models are used to explore the simultaneous impact of these different factors on participation. Multilevel models are used because the sample of nine year olds was clustered within particular primary schools, making it necessary to take account of the way in which attending a particular school could influence experiences and outcomes.

[5] The proportion mentioning screen-based activities may appear very small given the large proportion who cited watching television and who rated TV watching highly (see above). However, it may be that TV assumes a taken-for-granted position within family life and is therefore not seen as a 'hobby' or 'pastime' by children.

TABLE 3.1 Factors Associated with Frequency of Reading for Fun among 9 Year Olds

	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day
Constant	0.906	1.808	0.663
Social group:			
Professional – boy	0.742±	0.953	1.445*
Professional – girl	1.597**	2.088***	4.242***
Non-manual – boy	0.661*	0.829	1.047
Non-manual – girl	1.242	1.910***	3.908***
Working-class – girl	1.142	1.917***	4.129***
Non-employed – boy	0.407***	0.749	0.902
Non-employed – girl	1.028	2.818***	4.568***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)			
Mother's education:			
Leaving Certificate	1.148	1.296***	1.639***
Post-secondary	1.035	1.458***	2.128***
Degree or higher	1.093	1.758***	2.620***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)			
Income quintile:			
Second	0.785±	0.894	0.809*
Third	0.996	1.007	1.042
Fourth	0.880	1.113	1.078
Highest	0.985	1.079	1.191±
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)			
Lone parent family	1.456***	1.036	0.910
Immigrant background	0.898	0.968	0.864±
Has SEN	0.883	0.610***	0.641***
Lives in an urban area	0.930	1.013	0.992
Between-school variance	0.030	0.051*	0.085***

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel multinomial logistic regression models. Odds ratios from a multilevel multinomial logistic regression model, with base category: reads a few times a month or less.*

Table 3.1 indicates the complex interaction between gender and social background in shaping reading behaviour. Reading is strongly associated with mother's education, with the children of graduate mothers 2.6 times more likely to read every day than those whose mothers have lower secondary (Junior Certificate) education or less. Even taking account of mother's education, boys from professional/managerial families are more likely to read every day than their working-class counterparts. However, very clear gender differences are evident with girls from all social classes more likely to read than boys from the same social group. The gap is large, with girls being 3.9 to 4.6 times more likely to read every day than working-class boys. Household income has little association with reading habits once social class and education are taken into account, though the top income group are slightly more likely to read for fun every day. The lower levels of reading among children in lone parent families described above are no longer evident when differences in parental education, income and social class are taken into account. Children from an immigrant background are slightly less likely to read every day but differences between immigrant and Irish children are very small. As indicated in the descriptive analyses shown above, children with SEN read less often than

other children. No difference is found in reading behaviour between urban and rural areas. The between-school variance term indicates that there is significant variation in reading habits between individual primary schools, even taking account of the gender and social composition of the student population; this issue is further explored in Chapter 4.

TABLE 3.2 Factors Associated with Taking Part in Structured Cultural Activities such as Music or Dance Lessons among 9 Year Olds

	Takes part
Constant	0.187
Social group:	
Professional – boy	1.972**
Professional – girl	8.491***
Non-manual – boy	1.285
Non-manual – girl	7.135***
Working-class – girl	5.847***
Non-employed – boy	1.449
Non-employed – girl	4.855***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)	
Mother's education:	
Leaving Certificate	1.470***
Post-secondary	1.772***
Degree or higher	2.635***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)	
Income quintile:	
Second	1.037
Third	1.139
Fourth	1.224*
Highest	1.398**
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)	
Lone parent family	0.776*
Immigrant background	0.564***
Has SEN	0.849*
Lives in an urban area	0.969
Between-school variance	0.221***

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel logistic regression models. Odds ratios from a multilevel logistic regression model, with base category: does not take part.*

Table 3.2 again shows the interplay between gender and social background, this time in shaping involvement in structured cultural activities. Such involvement is higher among those whose mothers have higher levels of education, with the children of graduate mothers 2.6 times more likely to take part than those whose mothers have lower secondary education or less. Boys from middle-class (professional/ managerial) families are also more likely to take part. However, over and above social background, there is a large gender difference in participation across all social groups, with particularly high levels of involvement among middle-class girls. The gender gap is even larger than for reading, with girls 4.9 to 8.5 times more likely to take part than working-class boys. Because these

activities tend to be paid for, an independent effect of income is found, with families in the top 40 per cent of incomes more likely to take part in such activities.

Even taking account of income and other socioeconomic differences, the children of lone parent families are less likely to participate. There is also a noticeable participation gap between immigrant and Irish families. As discussed above, participation is lower among families for whom English is not their native language and especially low among those who report difficulties in reading in English. Children with SEN are also significantly less likely to take part in structured cultural activities. Interestingly, there is no significant difference between urban and rural areas in participation levels, so it does not seem to be the case that provision is greater in urban areas.[6] The between-school variance term indicates significant variation between primary schools in participation levels.

[6] Further analyses (not shown here) explored whether a more detailed measure of population density, taking account of size of town, made a difference. However, no significant variation was found, suggesting that even in sparsely populated areas, children may be accessing these structured classes or clubs through school-based or community-based facilities.

TABLE 3.3 Factors Associated with High Levels of Television Watching (3+ Hours) and Playing Computer Games (1+ Hours) Among 9 Year Olds

	Television (3+ hours)	Computer games (1+ hours)
Constant	1.075	1.467
Social group:		
Professional – boy	0.782	0.871
Professional – girl	0.583*	0.201***
Non-manual – boy	0.721	0.916
Non-manual – girl	0.783	0.199***
Working-class – girl	0.868	0.172***
Non-employed – boy	0.744	1.069
Non-employed – girl	0.703	0.183***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	0.598***	0.783***
Post-secondary	0.467***	0.577***
Degree or higher	0.259***	0.365***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Income quintile:		
Second	1.228	1.197
Third	0.870	1.031
Fourth	0.757*	1.170
Highest	0.659**	0.975
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)		
Lone parent family	1.608**	1.598**
Immigrant background	1.350*	0.986
Has SEN	0.834	0.881
Lives in an urban area	1.021	1.229*
Between-school variance	0.121*	0.126**

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel multinomial logistic regression models. Odds ratios from 2 multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

High levels of watching television and playing computer games are much less common among nine year olds with highly educated mothers; those with graduate mothers are only one-quarter as likely to watch a lot of television and one-third as likely to play a lot of computer games as those whose mothers have Junior Certificate education. Middle-class girls and children living in higher income families are also less likely to watch a lot of television. There is a large gender gap in the frequency of playing computer games but no difference by household income. The children of lone mothers are much more likely to have prolonged engagement in these screen activities, even taking account of socioeconomic characteristics. Immigrant children watch more television but do not differ from Irish children in relation to high levels of videogame use. No significant difference is found between children with SEN and their peers, all else being equal. Those living in urban areas spend more time playing computer games, most likely reflecting differential access to broadband. Between-school differences are found in the level of involvement in screen activities at the age of nine.

TABLE 3.4 Regional Variation in Participation in Cultural Activities at 9 Years of Age

	Structured cultural activities	Reading frequently	High levels of television watching	High levels of computer games
Region:				
Border	0.84	0.75**	1.90***	1.49***
Mid East	0.78*	0.92	1.38*	1.26±
Midlands	0.66**	0.84	0.77	1.13
Midwest	1.01	1.11	1.28	0.91
South East	0.73**	0.94	1.23	1.08
South West	0.85	1.38***	1.04	1.02
West	0.94	1.32**	0.89	0.84
(Ref.: Dublin)				

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models which control for individual, family and school characteristics. Odds ratios from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

The models above had allowed for variation between rural and urban areas. A further set of models (see Table 3.4) examined whether regional variation in involvement in cultural activities was apparent. All else being equal, structured cultural activities were less prevalent in the Mid East, the midlands and the South East. Reading frequency is somewhat lower in the border region but higher in the South West and the West. Screen-based activities (television and computer games) tend to be more frequent in the border region and, to some extent, in the Mid East. These patterns are not easy to explain and there is little evidence that specific regions have particularly high (or low) levels of cultural engagement across the board. However, there does seem to be a zero-sum trade-off between screen-based activities and reading/cultural lessons in the border and Mid East regions. Later analyses will examine whether regional differences in participation are similar at 13 years of age.

3.3 PARTICIPATION AMONG 13 YEAR OLDS

In this section, in order to compare like with like, analyses are confined to those in second-level education; the small number of young people who have not yet made the transition or who are in a special school (which is classified as part of the primary sector) have been excluded.

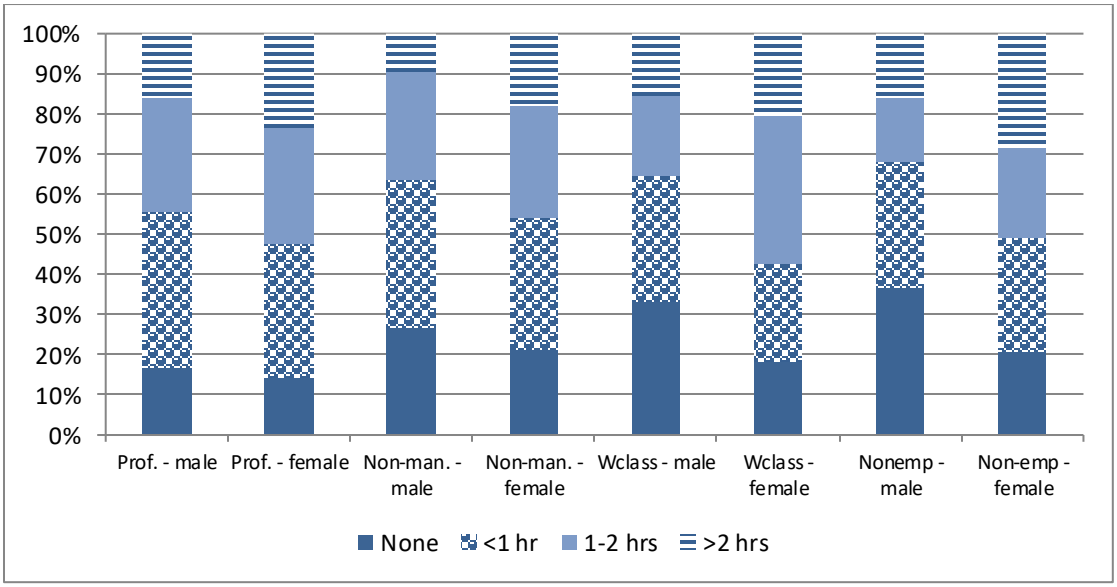
3.3.1 Reading

At the age of 13, young people were asked to indicate how many hours they spend reading for pleasure on a normal weekday during term-time. Over one-fifth (21 per cent) reported that they usually spend no time reading for pleasure, one-third read for less than an hour a day, 28 per cent read for one to two hours, while 18 per cent read for more than two hours

on an average day. The change in question wording between the ages of nine and 13 years means that it is difficult to compare self-reported time on reading at the two time-points. However, when the children were nine, mothers were asked how long their child spent reading on an average day, which can be compared to the young person's estimate of time spent reading at the age of 13. This comparison shows some polarisation in reading habits, with the proportion reporting no time increasing from eight to 21 per cent, while the group spending more than three hours reading increased from four to eight per cent.

Figure 3.9 shows marked variation in reading habits by gender and social class background. Girls spend more time reading than boys. Furthermore, these gender differences have intensified over time, with working-class girls now spending more time reading than boys from professional backgrounds. A very significant proportion of boys from working-class or non-employed backgrounds (33–36 per cent) report that they do not read for pleasure at all. Reading habits also vary by mother's education; here the main differentiation is among those who do not read at all (making up 27 per cent of those whose mothers have lower secondary education compared with 14 per cent for those with graduate mothers), with much less variation in intensive reading (two hours or more). Household income also differentiates those who do not read at all. Young people from lone parent households are less likely to spend any time reading (with 27 per cent spending no time reading compared with 19 per cent of those in couple families). Immigrant young people are more likely to fall into the intensive readers group (24 per cent compared with 17 per cent), indicating a greater increase in reading habits over time among these young people. This pattern applies whether the language of origin is English or not. Young people with a SEN spend less time reading than their peers on average, with the highest levels of 'never reading' found among those with emotional–behavioural difficulties (38 per cent) and those described by their mother as being hampered by their disability (34 per cent). There are no marked differences between urban and rural areas in reading habits.

FIGURE 3.9 Amount of Time Per Day Spent Reading for Pleasure Among 13 Year Olds, by Gender of the Young Person and Social Class Background



3.3.2 Structured cultural activities

Thirteen year olds were asked whether they took part in dance, drama or music lessons outside school; nine per cent did so less than once a week, 22 per cent did so one to three times a week while two per cent did so more often. In three-quarters of cases, these activities were paid for. As at the age of nine, participation in these activities is strongly structured by gender and social class, with the highest involvement found among middle-class girls (Figure 3.10). A large gender gap is found within all social classes. Participation also varies significantly by mother's education, with 40 per cent of the children of graduate mothers taking part compared with 29 per cent of those whose mothers have lower secondary education. Participation among migrant teenagers is slightly lower than among Irish 13 year olds (30 per cent compared with 34 per cent), with lower levels for those families where English is not their first language. Young people with SEN are less likely to take part in structured cultural activities (27 per cent compared with 34 per cent); unlike at nine years, participation rates do not vary markedly by type of SEN but are much lower (18 per cent) among those who are hampered by their disability.[7] There is very little variation in participation by region and no difference between rural and urban areas.

[7] It should be noted that this figure most likely underestimates the participation gap as, being focused on those in second-level education, it excludes young people with the most complex needs who are attending special schools.

FIGURE 3.10 Proportion of 13 Year Olds Taking Part in Structured Cultural Activities, by Gender and Social Class

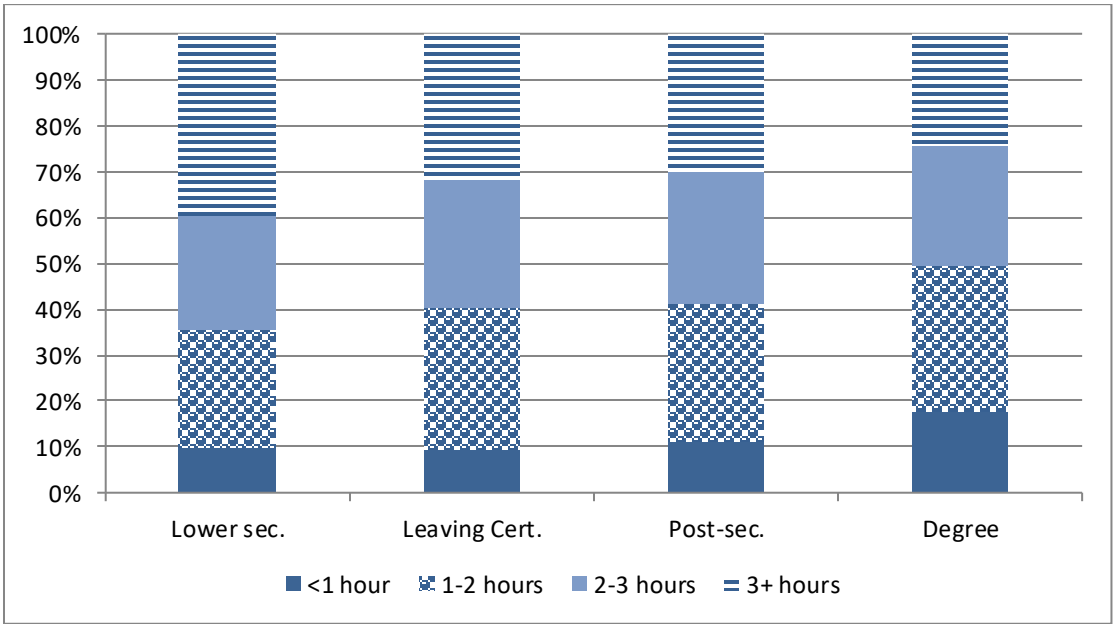
At 13 years, overall levels of involvement in structured cultural activities are lower than they were when the young people were nine years of age. Only half of those involved at the age of nine were still involved at the age of 13 and very few young people commenced involvement; only 18 per cent of those not taking part at nine years took part when they were 13. Analyses presented below explore the profile of those who discontinued or commenced engagement. At the age of 13, young people are much less likely to be involved in structured cultural activities than in organised sporting activities (33 per cent compared with 77 per cent). Just over one-quarter are involved in both kinds of activities, while one in six are involved in neither.

3.3.3 Screen time

Thirteen year olds were asked about the time they spent watching television and playing computer/video games. They tended to spend more time watching television, with almost one-third (32 per cent) watching three or more hours per day, while only 15 per cent spent more than two hours playing games. Television watching is influenced by mother's education, with 24 per cent of the children of graduate mothers watching three or more hours compared with 40 per cent of those whose mothers have lower secondary education (Figure 3.11). The amount of time spent watching television is also lower among those from middle-class (professional/managerial) backgrounds. Thirteen year olds in lone parent

families tend to watch more television, with 37 per cent watching three or more hours compared with 30 per cent in couple households. Young people from immigrant families tend to watch more television (37 per cent watching for three hours or more compared with 31 per cent in Irish families), though differences by language of origin are not as marked as they are for younger children. Young people with SEN are slightly more likely to watch a lot of television, that is, three or more hours (35 per cent compared with 31 per cent), with little marked variation by type of SEN. There is little difference in television watching levels between rural and urban areas.

FIGURE 3.11 Time Spent Watching Television, by Mother's Education



As at the age of nine, there are very marked gender differences in the frequency of playing computer games; 87 per cent of girls play for less than one hour (or never play) compared with only 46 per cent of boys, and over one-quarter of boys play for two or more hours per day. Gaming is more prevalent among those from working-class or non-employed households and those where mothers have lower levels of education. Prevalence is slightly, but not markedly, higher among teenagers from lone parent families. Rates of engagement are slightly higher for immigrant families but not markedly so. Young people with SEN tend to spend more time playing computer games, with 20 per cent spending two or more hours doing so compared with 15 per cent of other teenagers; involvement is greatest (27 per cent) among those with emotional–behavioural difficulties. In contrast to the pattern four years earlier, there are few differences between rural

and urban areas, most likely reflecting broadband improvements between the two waves of the survey.

3.3.4 Influences on participation

This subsection looks at the simultaneous influence of individual and background characteristics on cultural participation. As at the age of nine, reading habits at 13 years are strongly associated with mother's education, with more frequent reading for pleasure among the children of graduate mothers. In keeping with the descriptive analyses presented above, there is a strong gender difference, with higher frequency of reading among girls than boys within each social class (Table 3.5). Even taking account of social class and mother's education, children in lower-income households read for pleasure less often. Levels of reading are also lower among teenagers from lone parent families; they are only three-quarters as likely to read for more than two hours as those in two-parent families, even taking account of differences in parental education, income and social class. There are few consistent differences by immigrant background, though 13 year olds from immigrant families are more likely to be in the high involvement group. Having a SEN is not strongly associated with reading behaviour when other factors are taken into account; it may be that those with particularly complex needs have not made the transition to a (mainstream) second-level school and so are not included in these analyses.

TABLE 3.5 Factors Associated with Levels of Reading Among 13 Year Olds

	Low (<1 hour per day)	Medium (1–2 hours per day)	High (2+ hours per day)
Constant	1.014	0.640	0.425
Social group:			
Professional – boy	1.366*	1.522*	1.330
Professional – girl	1.752**	2.226**	2.291**
Non-manual – boy	1.188	1.296	0.744
Non-manual – girl	1.522**	1.916**	1.781**
Working-class – girl	1.290	2.452**	1.804*
Non-employed – boy	1.213	1.106	1.215
Non-employed – girl	1.384	1.713*	2.707**
(Ref.: Working-class boy)			
Mother's education:			
Leaving Certificate	1.121	1.082	1.085
Post-secondary	1.411*	1.528*	1.474*
Degree or higher	1.790**	1.879**	1.802**
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)			
Income quintile:			
Second	1.300*	1.225*	1.281*
Third	1.164	1.061	1.241*
Fourth	1.323*	1.100	1.274*
Highest	1.338*	1.218*	1.416**
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)			
Lone parent family	0.640**	0.656**	0.752*
Immigrant background	0.780*	1.040	1.288*
Has SEN	0.881*	0.969	1.045
Lives in an urban area	0.889*	0.962	0.927
Between-school variance	0.000	0.001	0.027

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel multinomial logistic regression models. Odds ratios from a multilevel multinomial logistic regression model, base category: never reads.*

Taking part in structured cultural activities varies significantly by mother's education, with the highest participation among the children of graduate mothers. However, the single biggest differentiating factor is gender, with higher participation among girls across all social classes (Table 3.6). Girls are five to six times more likely to take part in these lessons than boys. Due to the fact that most of these activities are paid for, participation is found to be higher among those in the top 40 per cent of the income distribution. Thirteen year olds from lone parent families are less likely to take part than other teenagers, even taking account of income differentials. Immigrant teenagers are less likely to take part in these activities, though the gap is smaller than four years previously. Although raw differences in participation are lower for those with a SEN (see above), these differences are not significant once other factors are taken into account. As at the age of nine, no significant difference is found by whether the young person is living in an urban or rural area.

TABLE 3.6 Factors Associated with Involvement in Structured Cultural Activities (Dance, Drama or Music Lessons) Among 13 Year Olds

	Takes music, drama or dance lessons
Constant	0.136
Social group:	
Professional – boy	1.274
Professional – girl	6.411***
Non-manual – boy	1.054
Non-manual – girl	5.296***
Working-class – girl	5.496***
Non-employed – boy	1.305
Non-employed – girl	5.585***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)	
Mother's education:	
Leaving Certificate	1.009
Post-secondary	1.294*
Degree or higher	1.763**
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)	
Income quintile:	
Second	1.092
Third	1.186
Fourth	1.208*
Highest	1.402**
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)	
Lone parent family	0.732*
Immigrant background	0.843±
Has SEN	0.935
Lives in an urban area	1.062
Between-school variance	0.038

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel logistic regression models. Odds ratios from a multilevel logistic regression model, base category: does not take part.*

The above analyses point to a decline in participation in structured cultural activities during the transition to second-level education. Table 3.7 presents two models looking at the chances of discontinuing involvement (among those involved at nine years) and of starting engagement (among those not involved at nine years). The groups less likely to discontinue involvement were girls and those from more highly educated or high income families. Those from lone parent or immigrant families were slightly more likely to discontinue involvement, as were those with SEN. Among those not involved in structured cultural activities at nine years, girls were more likely to take up involvement by the age of 13, though no other factors appeared to make a difference. Taking the patterns for starting and discontinuing involvement together, it is evident that involvement became more highly gendered and socially differentiated over time.

TABLE 3.7 Factors Associated with Discontinuing or Starting Cultural Activities Among 13 Year Olds

	Discontinued (among those involved at 9)	Started (among those not involved at 9)
Constant	3.281	1.099
Social group:		
Professional – boy	0.985	0.996
Professional – girl	0.265***	1.409**
Non-manual – boy	1.225	1.022
Non-manual – girl	0.311***	1.202**
Working-class – girl	0.293***	1.478**
Non-employed – boy	0.688	1.009
Non-employed – girl	0.298***	1.228*
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	0.926	0.976
Post-secondary	0.684*	1.006
Degree or higher	0.571**	1.021
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Income quintile:		
Second	0.969	1.014
Third	0.814	1.009
Fourth	0.878	0.959
Highest	0.725*	0.994
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)		
Lone parent family	1.266±	0.980
Immigrant background	1.273±	1.021
Has SEN	1.186±	1.016
Lives in an urban area	0.944	1.036
Between-school variance	0.050	0.123***

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel logistic regression models. Odds ratios from 2 multilevel logistic regression models.*

All else being equal, 13 year olds from highly educated families watch less television and play less computer games than their peers; the children of graduate mothers are less than half as likely to spend a significant amount of time on these activities as those whose mothers have lower secondary education (Table 3.8). Middle-class girls have lower levels of television watching while working-class girls have higher levels than working-class boys. For computer games, there is a large gender difference, which is evident across all social classes; girls are only five to six per cent as likely as boys of similar backgrounds to play computer games for more than two hours per day. Over and above the influence of class and education, higher income households tend to watch less television and play computer games less often, perhaps reflecting other (paid for) options being open to them. Those from lone parent families have significantly more screen time than their peers. Immigrant young people watch more television but do not differ significantly in their use of computer games. Young people with a SEN play computer games more often but do not differ in their television viewing habits. High levels of television watching are slightly less common in urban areas.

TABLE 3.8 Influences on High Levels of Television Watching (3+ Hours) and Playing Computer Games (2+ Hours) Among 13 Year Olds

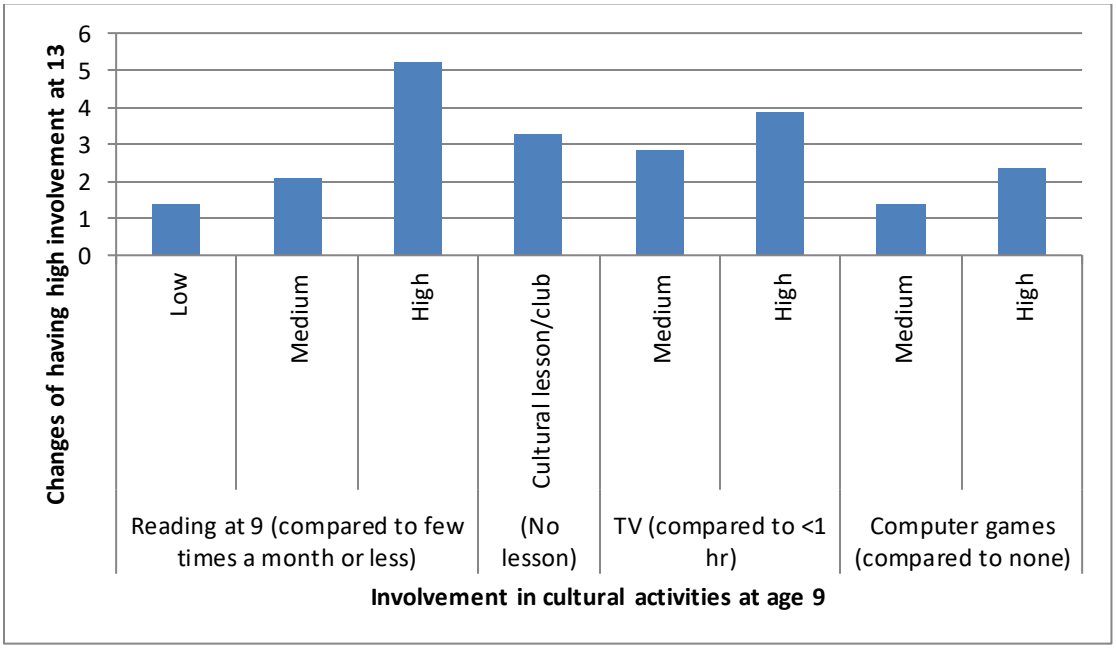
	Television (3+ hours)	Computer games (2+ hours)
Constant	4.711	0.730
Social group:		
Professional – boy	1.038	0.839
Professional – girl	0.613*	0.059***
Non-manual – boy	1.163	0.967
Non-manual – girl	0.891	0.056***
Working-class – girl	1.499*	0.054***
Non-employed – boy	0.717	0.822
Non-employed – girl	1.172	0.069***
(Ref.: Working-class boy)		
Mother's education:		
Leaving Certificate	0.794*	0.777*
Post-secondary	0.726**	0.666**
Degree or higher	0.416***	0.436***
(Ref.: Junior Certificate or less)		
Income quintile:		
Second	1.318*	1.247±
Third	0.973	1.029
Fourth	0.908	0.926
Highest	0.643**	0.795±
(Ref.: Lowest quintile)		
Lone parent family	1.293*	1.649**
Immigrant background	1.235*	1.226
Has SEN	1.035	1.347*
Lives in an urban area	0.886*	1.129
Between-school variance	0.000	0.117*

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. R^2 cannot be calculated for multilevel multinomial logistic regression models. Odds ratios from 2 multilevel multinomial logistic regression models, base category '<1 hour', with other categories not shown here.*

The longitudinal nature of the study means that we can look at the extent to which cultural participation at nine years is associated with involvement four years later, even taking account of individual and family characteristics. Figure 3.12 shows the relationship between participation at nine and at 13 separately for each of the four cultural activities; the patterns are derived from models that also take account of the gender and socio-demographic factors discussed above. For all of the activities, involvement at nine years is highly predictive of levels of involvement at the age of 13 (Figure 3.12). Thus, those who read every day at nine years of age are five times more likely to be reading for two hours or more a day at 13. Those who took part in structured cultural lessons or clubs at nine years are more than three times more likely to be involved in similar activities four years later than those who had not taken part. Similarly, those who had high levels of television watching (three hours or more) at nine years were four times more likely to have high levels at 13 years of age. The relationship between frequency of playing computer games at

nine and at 13 is less strong than for the other activities but is nonetheless significant.

FIGURE 3.12 Likelihood of Being Highly Involved in Activities at 13 Years Given Involvement at 9 Years



Notes: These are odds ratios calculated from a series of multilevel models that control for individual and family characteristics. High levels of involvement at 13 are: 2 hours plus reading; attending a drama, music or dance lesson; 3 hours plus watching television; 2 hours plus playing computer games. At 9 years, for reading, low = once a week, medium = a few times a week, high = every day; cultural lesson = involvement in a structured cultural activity (lesson or club); for television, medium = 1 to 3 hours, high = 3 hours or more; for computer games, medium = less than 1 hour, high = 1 hour or more.

Table 3.9 looks at involvement in all of these activities at primary level and the extent to which it is associated with later participation. Here, being involved in organised sports at the age of nine is also included in case it draws young people away from other activities. Children's involvement in various activities was found to be interdependent. Even taking account of involvement in structured cultural activities at nine years, those who read frequently were 1.3 times more likely to be involved in such activities at 13 years. Involvement in organised sports and time spent on screen-based activities had very little impact on later take-up of cultural lessons. Frequency of reading at 13 years was also higher among those who had been involved in structured cultural activities, but lower among those who had taken part in organised sport. Reading a lot or being involved in structured cultural activities reduced the amounts of screen activity (television or computer games) at 13, even taking account of earlier screen time.

Watching a lot of television at nine years was associated with playing computer games more often at the age of 13; those who had spent three or more hours a day watching television at age nine were 3.2 times more likely at age 13 to play computer games than those who had spent less than an hour watching television at age nine.

Being involved in organised sports reduced television watching but had no impact on computer games.

TABLE 3.9 Relationship Between Participation in Activities at 9 Years of Age and High Levels of Involvement at 13 Years of Age

	Structured cultural activities	Reading frequently	High levels of television watching	High levels of computer games
Structured cultural activities at nine years	3.23***	1.79±	0.78*	0.63**
Reading at nine years:				
Low	0.79*	1.36*	1.19*	0.85
Medium	1.06	2.09**	0.85	0.77*
High	1.26*	5.27***	0.74**	0.70**
Television at nine years:				
Medium	0.85*	0.94	2.58***	1.24*
High	0.86	1.20	3.18***	1.12
Video/computer games at nine years:				
Medium	1.06	1.14*	1.25*	1.37**
High	0.99	1.08	1.39***	2.36***
Sports club at nine years	0.90	0.84*	0.82*	0.87

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual, family and school characteristics. Odds ratios from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

The models presented so far look at differences in cultural participation between urban and rural areas. As in Chapter 2, separate analyses were conducted to explore whether activities varied by region, using an eight category classification, and contrasting other regions with Dublin. Table 3.10 indicates remarkably few regional differences in cultural participation. Levels of reading are highest in the South West and levels of television watching are highest in the midlands. The extent of television watching and playing computer games is lowest in the West, all else being equal. It is also noticeable that, other than higher levels of reading in the South West, there are no similarities in the regional patterns of cultural participation for younger children (those aged three to five) and for adolescents (those aged nine to 13).

TABLE 3.10 Regional Variation in Participation in Cultural Activities at 13 Years of Age

	Structured cultural activities	Reading frequently	High levels of television watching	High levels of computer games
Region:				
Border	1.07	1.03	1.08	0.90
Mid East	1.03	1.06	1.98	0.91
Midlands	0.89	0.82	1.62*	1.22
Mid West	1.14	1.12	0.97	0.79
South East	0.93	0.89	0.92	1.14
South West	1.04	1.34*	0.92	0.88
West	0.98	1.12	0.77*	0.46**
(Ref.: Dublin)				

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual, family and school characteristics, as well as participation at the age of 9. Odds ratios from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models*

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined levels of cultural participation among nine and 13 year olds. As was evident for young children, strong gender and social background differences are found in the kinds of cultural activities engaged in by those in middle childhood and adolescence. Girls are much more likely to be involved in structured cultural activities and to read frequently than boys. In keeping with international research, more advantaged groups have higher levels of involvement in structured cultural activities and reading and spend less time watching television and playing computer games. Even taking account of their education and income levels, children and young people from lone parent families have more screen time and spend less time reading or engaging in music or dance lessons than those in two-parent families. Differences in participation by immigrant status are somewhat less marked at 13 than at nine years. Furthermore, differences for those with a SEN are less apparent, though this may reflect the fact that young people with more complex needs are in special schools. Few regional differences are found in levels of participation, even in relation to participation in music, drama or dance lessons, where provision might be expected to vary across areas.

The nature of cultural participation at the age of nine is highly predictive of activities four years later. However, patterns of involvement in structured cultural activities become more highly gendered and socially differentiated over the transition to second-level education, as boys and less advantaged groups discontinue involvement in greater numbers. Gender and social background differences in the frequency of reading for pleasure are also found to intensify over time, with the proportion not

reading for pleasure increasing over the transition to second-level education.

Chapter 4

Schools and Cultural Participation

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the exposure of children and young people to cultural subjects and activities within the school context. Using data from school principals at three time-points (when the surveys of five, nine and 13 year olds were conducted), it provides insights into both primary and second-level patterns. It examines the kinds of activities provided in different types of schools and assesses whether in-school activities can help promote out-of-school cultural engagement.

4.2 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

4.2.1 Types of cultural activities

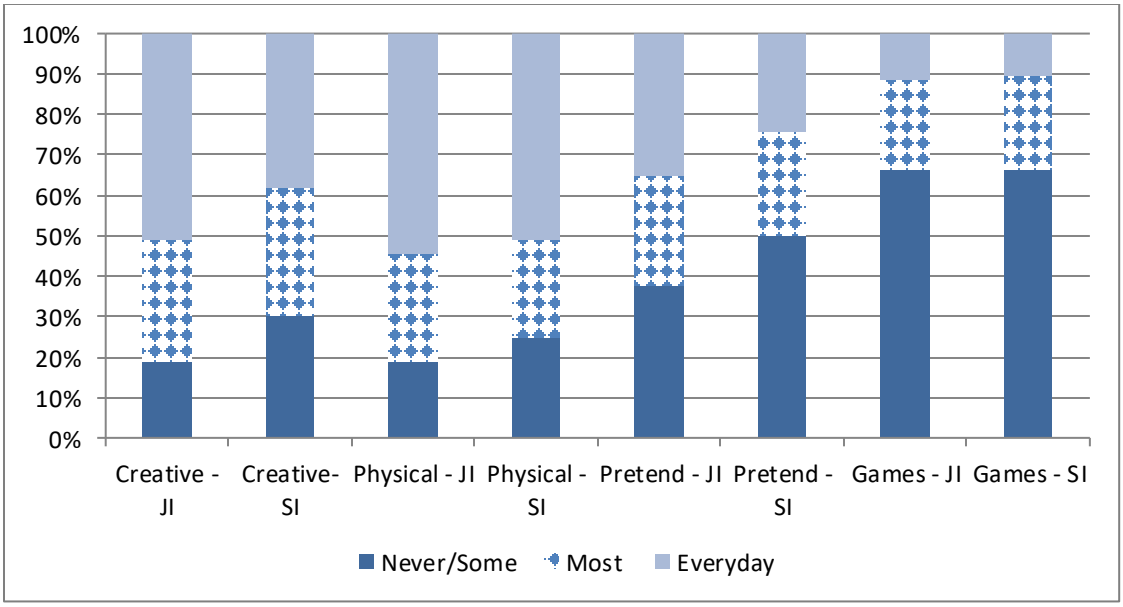
Chapter 2 shows the importance of creative play and make-believe games in the daily lives of young children, with these activities increasingly seen as an important precursor to the development of an artistic and creative imagination (see Chapter 1). Teachers of the five year olds were asked about the frequency with which children in their classes were facilitated in engaging in different forms of play within the school day, distinguishing between creative (such as painting and drawing) and pretend (e.g. make-believe games) play, considered as cultural participation for the purposes of this study. They were also asked about levels of involvement in physical play (such as running and jumping), and game play (board games or puzzles). Because of the child-focused nature of the study, patterns are reported in terms of the percentage of five year olds in classes or schools where they experience this activity rather than as a proportion of teachers.

Creative play and make-believe games are prevalent in early years' classrooms; half of those in junior infants paint or draw every day, while over one-third engage in make-believe games (Figure 4.1). It is noteworthy, however, that almost one-fifth of five year olds are in junior infant classrooms where they 'never' or only on 'some days' engage in creative play.

The five year olds in the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study are more likely to experience physical play than creative or make-believe games on a

frequent basis. Children are less likely to play board games or puzzles in school. All types of play-based activity become less frequent when children reach senior infants, with the proportion who never or only sometimes draw or paint increasing from 19 to 30 per cent. Among junior infant classes, there is less use of creative and make-believe games in small schools (those with less than 150 pupils): 37 per cent every day compared with 55–60 per cent in larger schools for creative play and 28 per cent compared with 39–41 per cent for make-believe games. This may reflect the constraints of multi-grade teaching (where each class contains a mix of class levels or year groups) in smaller schools. There are some differences between DEIS and non-disadvantaged schools. Children in urban DEIS schools are more likely to engage in painting or drawing on a frequent basis at junior infant level (66 per cent every day compared with 48 per cent in rural DEIS schools and 51 per cent in non-DEIS schools). In addition, junior infants in urban DEIS schools are more likely to engage in make-believe games (with 52 per cent doing so every day compared with 29 per cent in rural DEIS schools and 36 per cent in non-DEIS schools).[8] These patterns are not evident for other forms of play so it does seem to reflect a wish to provide more creative activities to young people from very disadvantaged backgrounds.

FIGURE 4.1 Proportion of 5 Year Olds Experiencing Different Play-based Activities in School, by Class Level

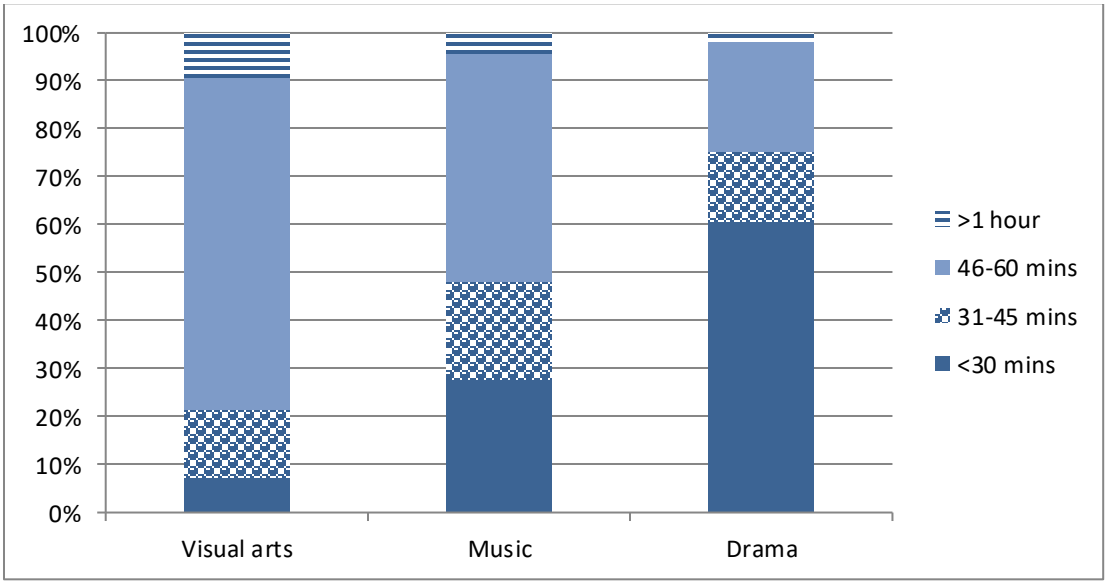


Note: JI – junior infants; SI – senior infants.

[8] The gender mix of the school is not available on the AMF so is not analysed here.

Teachers were also asked how much time they spent on the different subject areas over the average week. The largest part of the school week was spent on English and maths; four in ten five year olds spent more than four hours a week on English, while over one-half (58 per cent) spent more than three hours a week on maths. The majority (69 per cent) of children spent 46–60 minutes on visual arts, with less time being spent on music (48 per cent spending 46–60 minutes on this) and, especially, drama (60 per cent spending less than half an hour per week). The time spent on these subject areas did not differ between junior and senior infants, although there was slightly less time spent on drama in senior infants than in junior infants. There was little systematic variation in the time spent on cultural subjects by the school's size or DEIS status.

FIGURE 4.2 Time Per Week Spent on Arts Subjects During the School Day for 5 Year Olds



Principals were asked about the kinds of extracurricular activities provided in their school (in the school year 2013–2014). The vast majority of primary school children were in schools providing team sports (Figure 4.3). Around three-quarters were in schools with music or dance while this was the case for half of primary school children in relation to drama and almost half for arts and crafts. Arts and crafts were almost as frequently provided as individual sports and provided more often than computer clubs. There were some differences between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in the provision of extracurricular activities. Children in urban DEIS schools were more likely to be in schools that provided music/dance (83 per cent compared with 73 per cent for rural DEIS schools and 75 per cent for non-DEIS schools). These children were more also more likely to be in a context where arts/crafts were offered (59 per cent compared with 47 per cent for

rural DEIS and non-DEIS students) but slightly less likely to have access to extracurricular drama (51 per cent compared with 50 per cent in rural DEIS schools and 54 per cent of non-DEIS students).[9] Marked differences were evident by school size, with smaller schools less likely to provide all kinds of extracurricular activities, including those focused on cultural pursuits (Figure 4.4).

FIGURE 4.3 Proportion of 5 Year Olds Attending Schools Providing Extracurricular Activities

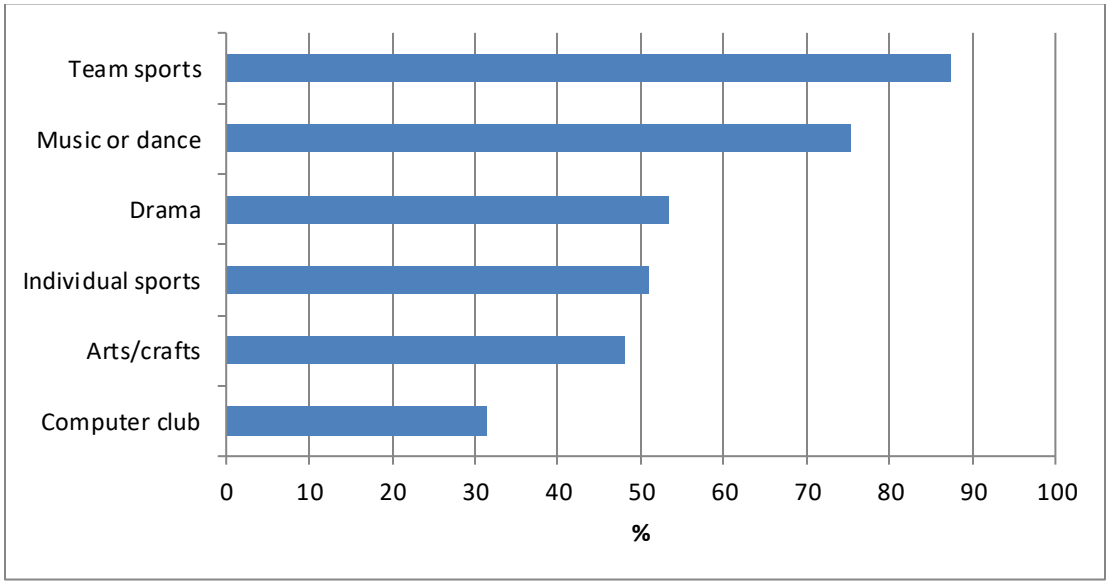
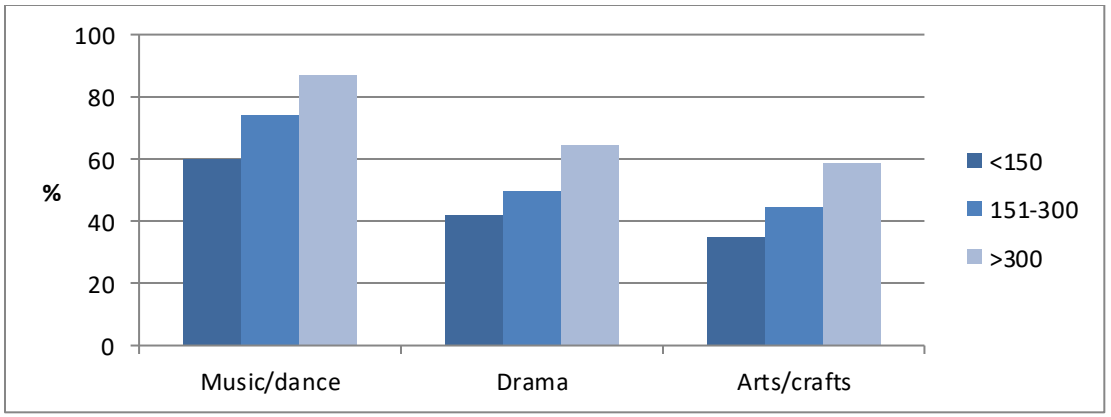


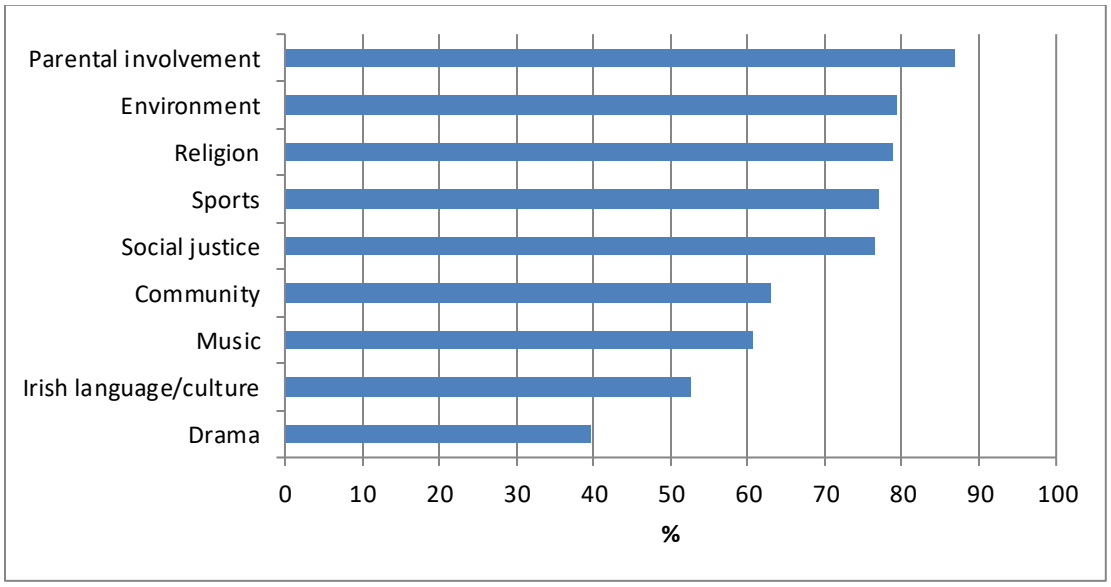
FIGURE 4.4 Proportion of 5 Year Olds Attending Schools Providing Cultural Extracurricular Activities, by School Size



[9] The Research Microdata File (RMF) will provide additional information on whether these activities are provided through DEIS or School Completion Programme funding.

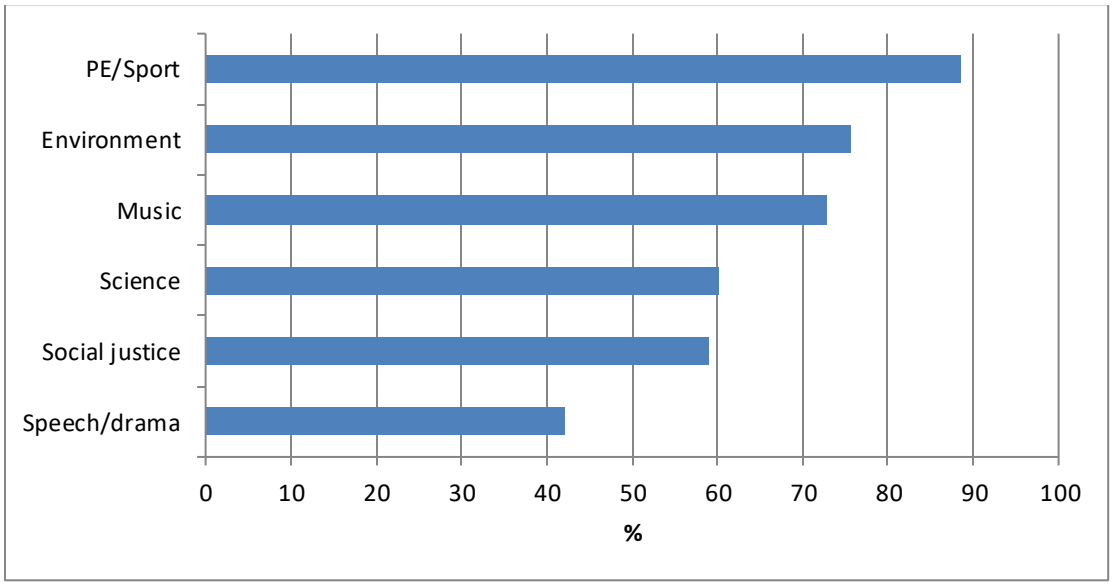
Primary school principals in the earlier survey (undertaken at the time of the survey of nine-year-old children in 2008–2009) were asked a different set of questions regarding the cultural ethos of the school. Taken together, the two sets of surveys provide a more rounded picture of cultural provision in primary schools. When asked to rate the importance of a number of different dimensions to the ethos of the school (Figure 4.5), parental involvement emerged as the most highly rated dimension with environment, religion, sports and social justice also receiving high ratings. Among nine year olds, six in ten attended schools where music is seen as a very important dimension of the school ethos, as was the case for four in ten regarding drama. Music was rated as more important to ethos in girls' schools and in private primary schools. Drama was rated as more important to ethos in private schools but also, to some extent, in DEIS schools.

FIGURE 4.5 Proportion of 9 Year Olds in Schools Where These Dimensions are Seen as 'Very Important' to School Ethos



Physical education/sport is rated very highly as a curricular activity by primary school principals (Figure 4.6). Regarding music, almost three-quarters of nine year olds attend schools where it is rated as a very important curricular activity by principals; but this is the case for only 42 per cent in relation to speech and drama. Music is rated less highly as a curricular activity in small schools and DEIS schools, and more highly in girls' and private schools. Drama is rated more highly as a curricular activity in girls' schools but there is little other systematic variation by school type.

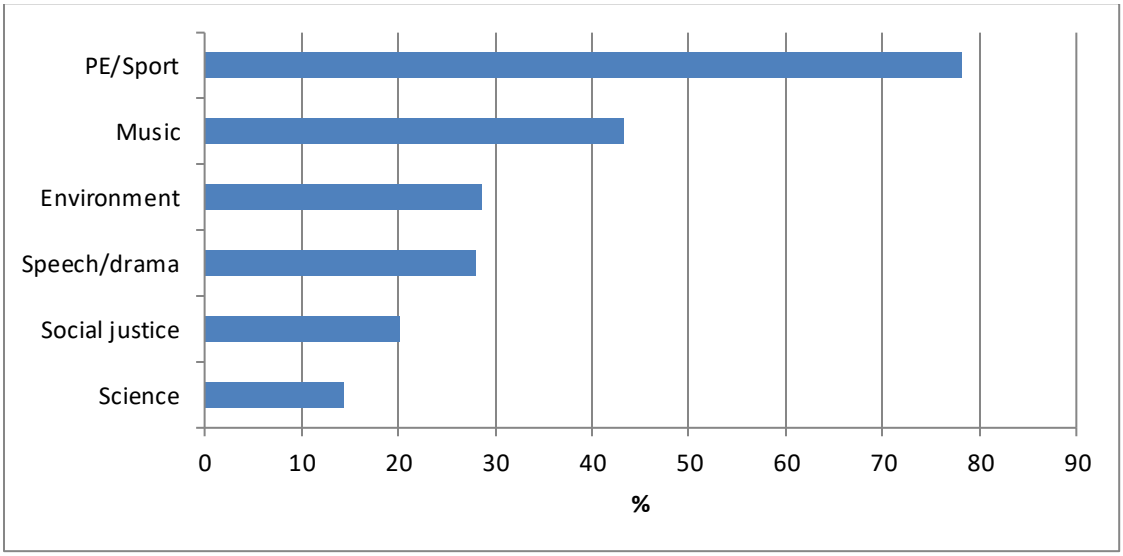
FIGURE 4.6 Proportion of 9 Year Olds in Schools Where These Dimensions are Seen as 'Very Important' Curricular Activities



Regarding extracurricular activities, physical education/sport was rated very highly again by primary school principals (89 per cent deeming it 'very important'). Other extracurricular activities that were seen as important by principals were: music, with about four in ten primary school children attending such schools; and speech/drama, with about three in ten primary school children in such schools.

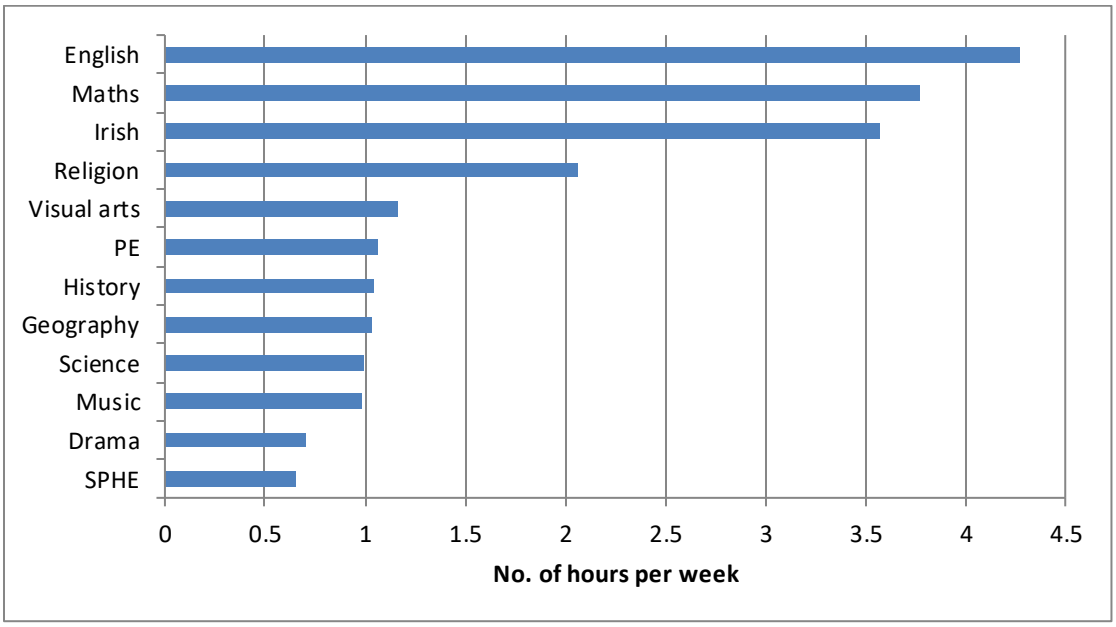
Music is rated more highly as an extracurricular activity in larger primary schools, while extracurricular speech and drama is more highly rated in larger schools, girls' schools and private schools.

FIGURE 4.7 Proportion of 9 Year Olds in Schools Where These Dimensions are Seen as 'Very Important' Extracurricular Activities



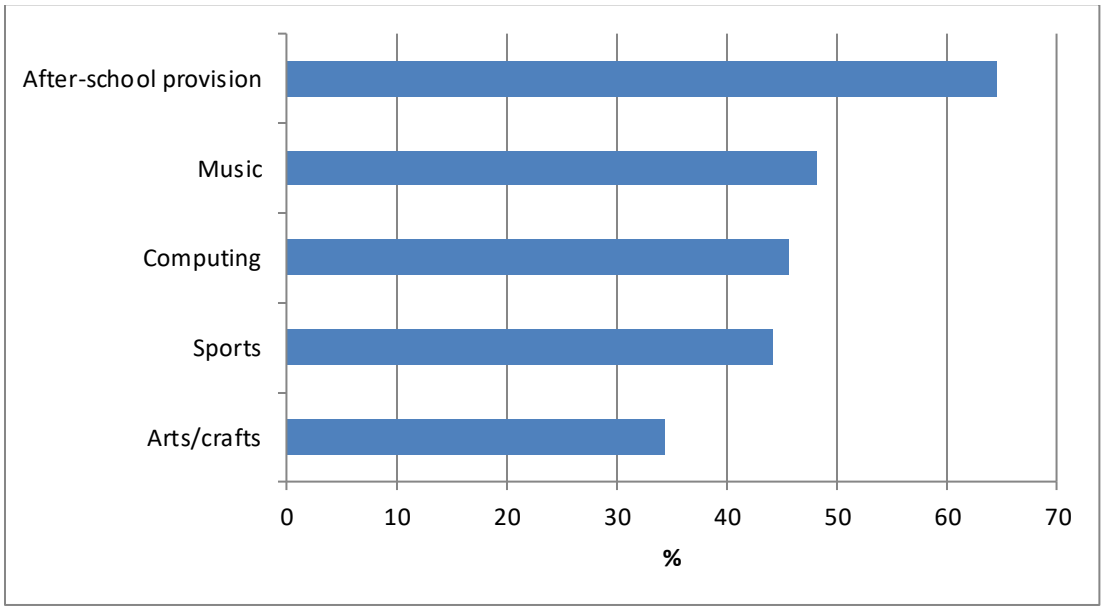
As with the five year olds, teachers of the nine year olds were asked about the time spent on different subject areas (Figure 4.8). More class time is spent on Irish, English and maths than on other subject areas. About one hour per week each is spent on music and visual arts, with around 40 minutes spent on drama. More time is spent on drama in DEIS urban band 1 schools, with less time spent on drama and music in private schools. More recently qualified teachers spend more time on visual arts and less on drama. Female teachers tend to spend somewhat more time on cultural subjects, with the gender gap largest for drama.

FIGURE 4.8 Average Time Per Week Spent on Different Subject Areas for 9 Year Olds



Principals were asked about the adequacy of school facilities. One-third of children attended schools where arts/crafts facilities are described as poor or fair. For music facilities, this is the case for almost half of children. Principals in private schools tend to be more satisfied with facilities. DEIS school principals are less satisfied in relation to arts/crafts but not music. School size is significantly associated with the perceived adequacy of facilities, with the principals of small schools being less satisfied with music and arts/crafts facilities (as well as with other kinds of facilities).

FIGURE 4.9 Proportion of 9 Year Olds in Schools Where the Principal Describes Facilities as 'Poor' or 'Fair'



4.2.2 School and out-of-school activities

The parents of five year olds were surveyed several months before the school survey. At that stage, not all had started school so we cannot assess the extent to which school exposure to cultural activities influences out-of-school activities for this age group. However, it is worth looking at the extent to which parent–child and child-directed activities as well as outings change when children start school. Table 4.1 shows the chances of engaging in a particular cultural or other activity among those who have started school, compared with those who have yet to start, taking account of other gender and socio-demographic differences between the two groups of children. As with earlier analyses, these are expressed in terms of odds ratios, so that values greater than one indicate a greater likelihood of being involved in the activities, while values less than one indicate a reduced level of involvement. These activities declined in frequency: parents and children engaging in physical activity together; going swimming; the child playing make-believe games every day; and frequent educational visits or outings (Table 4.1). Some activities become more frequent among school-goers while others reduce in frequency. Children at school read 1.2 times more frequently with their parents than those yet to start; analyses presented in Chapter 3 indicate that this increase is even greater for those families where reading levels were lower in the preschool years. The frequency of painting/drawing also increases, which may suggest that children are trying out skills at home that they have developed in the classroom. Attending the cinema is also more common, and may be

related to attending movies with school friends (for birthdays, for example). There is a reduction in the frequency of make-believe games and a very significant reduction in the regularity of educational/cultural visits (with those at school only 58 per cent as likely to be brought on such outings). It may be that parents do not feel the need to promote these educational outings when children are in full-time education; alternatively, school attendance may constrain the time available for other outings. In relation to other activities, school attendance involves a shift from less structured activities (swimming and physical activity) to more organised clubs and events. It is likely that these clubs and events may be school-based but that cannot be discerned from the data.

TABLE 4.1 Differences in Activities Among 5 Year Olds by Whether the Child is Attending School

	Influence of being in school
Cultural activities	
Frequent reading	1.24**
Enjoys dance/music	0.96
Make-believe games	0.80**
Drawing/painting	1.16*
Attended cultural event	0.93
Video/computer games – high levels	0.99
Went to cinema	1.17***
Educational visits – frequent	0.58***
Other activities	
Sport/physical activity – high levels	0.51***
Organised sports club	1.91***
Swimming	0.73***
Attended sports event	1.46***

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models which control for individual and family characteristics. Odds ratios from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

For the nine year olds, it was possible to look at the potential influence of school characteristics and experiences on out-of-school activities. The information on the relative importance of cultural activities to the school ethos and as curricular and extracurricular activities was combined to give an overall scale of the school emphasis on cultural activities. Taking account of social background and other family characteristics, children attending schools with a strong cultural emphasis were significantly more likely to be involved in structured cultural activities and frequent reading and were less likely to spend a lot of time watching television (Table 4.2). No relationship was found with playing computer games. While these are small effects, it is noteworthy that there is a relationship between the

school emphasis and out-of-school activities, even when a number of other factors are taken into account. [10]

The type of school attended is also found to make a difference. Children attending gaelscoileanna were more involved in structured cultural activities and reading and less involved in screen time than those in English medium schools, even taking account of differences in social background. While school size was associated with the provision of extracurricular activities and perceived adequacy of facilities, it was not systematically related to engagement in out-of-school activities. [11] Children in the most disadvantaged schools (urban band 1) were less involved in structured cultural activities and read less often; they also tended to watch television more often than other children, even taking account of their more disadvantaged profile. Thus, those in urban band 1 schools are only 79 per cent as likely as those in non-DEIS schools to read for pleasure on a regular basis and 62 per cent as likely to take part in a cultural lesson or club. Playing computer games was more prevalent in DEIS schools overall but the difference was only significant for urban band 2 schools and rural schools. Children attending private schools were much less likely to play computer games for prolonged periods (being only one-quarter as likely as other children to do so) but they did not differ in respect to other activities. Being in a single-sex school appeared to amplify gender differences in some activities, with more frequent reading in girls' schools and more frequent game playing in boys' schools. Thus, the findings indicate that the social, gender and language mix of a school play a role in shaping out-of-school engagement in cultural activities.

[10] Time on subject areas and perceived adequacy of facilities were not found to have a significant influence so are not included here.

[11] The frequency of playing computer games was lower in very small schools, though this may reflect remoteness (in terms of broadband access) rather than school size per se.

TABLE 4.2 Influence of School Factors on Cultural Participation Among 9 Year Olds

	Structured cultural activities	Reading frequently	High levels of television watching	High levels of computer games
DEIS status:				
Urban band 1	0.621**	0.790*	1.449*	1.219
Urban band 2	0.817	0.756*	1.262	1.508*
Rural	0.787	1.007	0.884	1.487*
(Ref.: Non-disadvantaged)				
Private school	0.922	0.646	0.538	0.273*
Gender mix:				
Boys only	0.919	1.057	0.905	1.192±
Girls only	0.912	1.315*	1.062	1.166
(Ref.: Coed)				
School size:				
100–199	1.116	0.929	1.103	1.332*
200–299	1.039	1.037	1.366*	1.452*
300–399	1.065	1.290*	1.003	1.355*
400–499	1.048	1.138	1.391*	1.369*
500+	1.110	1.230*	1.259	1.252±
Gaelscoil	1.289*	1.344*	0.691*	0.694*
School emphasis on cultural activities	1.031*	1.027*	0.964*	1.003

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual and family characteristics. Odds ratios estimated from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

4.3 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS

Within junior cycle education, young people have increasing choice over the subjects they take, although these choices can be constrained by school provision and allocation policy (see Smyth et al., 2006). Thirteen year olds in the GUI sample were evenly divided between first and second year of junior cycle. At that stage, 45 per cent were taking art as a school subject and 22 per cent were taking music. There is a marked gender difference in take-up rates for both subjects (see Figures 4.10 and 4.11). Variation by social background is not as marked, though girls from professional/managerial backgrounds are much more likely to take music than other groups and those whose mothers have lower levels of education are more likely to take art (53 per cent compared with 40–44 per cent of other groups). Students with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to take art (52 per cent compared with 43 per cent) but there is no difference in relation to music take-up. Take-up of art is higher in girls' schools (57 per cent compared with 40–43 per cent in other school types) and very slightly higher in DEIS schools (47 per cent compared with 44 per cent). Music take-up is highest in girls' schools and lowest in boys' schools (31 per cent compared with 15 per cent). It is low in very small schools (eight per cent in schools with fewer than 200 students compared

with 20–21 per cent in larger schools) and only very slightly lower in DEIS schools (20 per cent compared with 22 per cent).[12]

FIGURE 4.10 Proportion of 13 Year Olds Taking Art as a School Subject, by Social Class and Gender

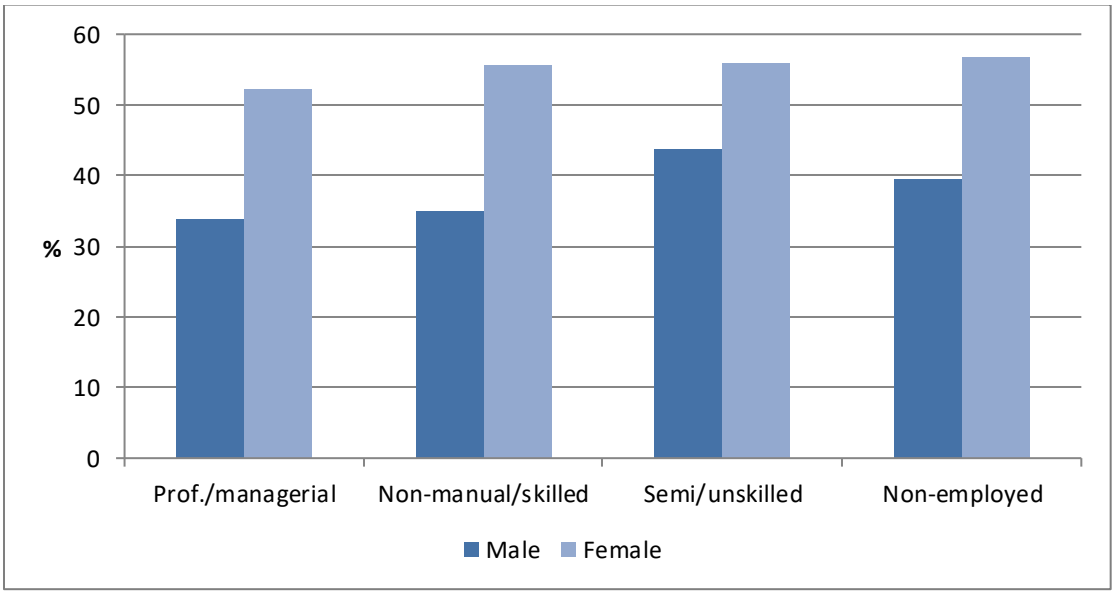
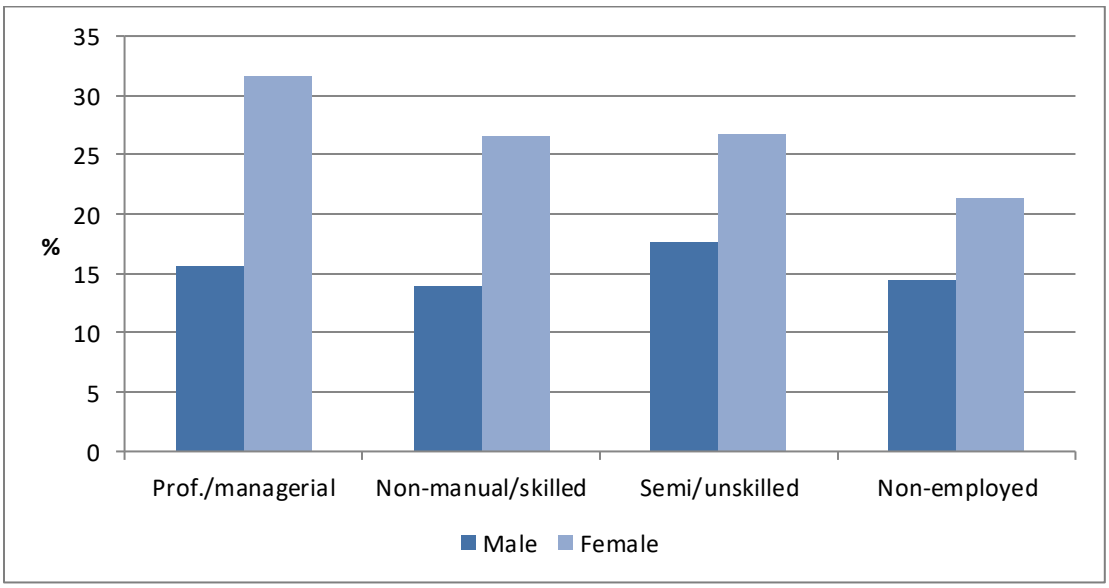


FIGURE 4.11 Proportion of 13 Year Olds Taking Music as a School Subject, by Social Class and Gender



[12] Because of the larger average size of second-level schools in Ireland, the cut-off for small schools is different across the two levels.

As with primary principals, second-level principals were asked about the kinds of extracurricular activities provided in their school (Figure 4.12). Significant levels of provision of extracurricular cultural activities were found in second-level schools, though sports (team and individual) were more likely to be provided than cultural activities. Three-quarters of 13 year olds were in schools where choir was offered and two-thirds were in schools that provided support for learning musical instruments and drama.[13] Dance was less commonly provided but four out of ten teenagers potentially had access to dance provision.

The kinds of cultural activities offered varied by school type. Provision of choir was more prevalent in larger schools (80 per cent in schools with 400+ students, compared with 59 per cent in schools with fewer than 200 students) and least prevalent in boys' schools, with only half providing choir compared with 81 per cent in coeducational and 90 per cent in girls' schools. Furthermore, DEIS schools were somewhat more likely to provide choir (82 per cent, compared with 76 per cent). Learning musical instruments was also less common in boys' schools, though the difference was not as marked as was the case for choir (57 per cent, compared with 67 per cent in both coeducational and girls' schools). As with choir, provision was more prevalent in larger schools (71 per cent, compared with 46 per cent), with DEIS schools being only slightly more likely to offer musical tuition (68 per cent, compared with 64 per cent). Drama is less likely to be provided in single-sex secondary schools (55–58 per cent, compared with 71 per cent). Provision is again less prevalent in very small schools (38 per cent, compared with 70 per cent). Provision of drama is very slightly higher in non-disadvantaged schools but the difference is small. Dance is more likely to be provided in girls' schools (55 per cent) and is hardly provided in boys' schools (four per cent). Dance provision varies somewhat by school size but not as markedly as for other activities. In contrast to the other cultural activities, dance is much more likely to be provided in DEIS schools (54 per cent, compared with 37 per cent). Thus, access to particular forms of after-school cultural activities is found to vary according to the gender mix, social profile and size of the second-level school attended.

[13] Unfortunately, it cannot be discerned from the survey data whether support for learning musical instruments involved individual or group tuition.

FIGURE 4.12 Proportion of 13 Year Olds in Schools with Different Extracurricular Activities

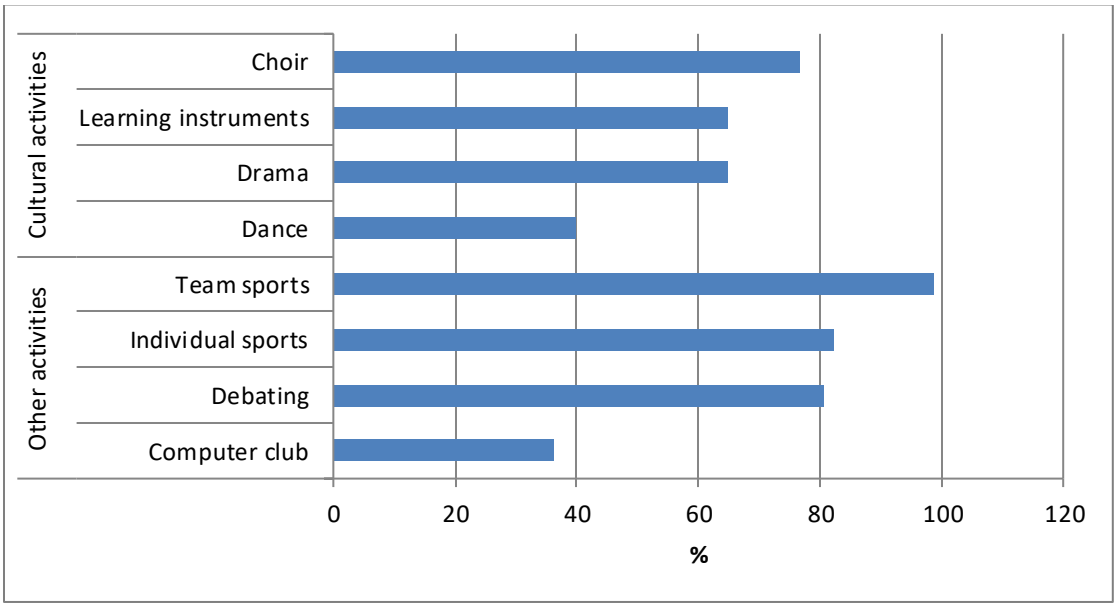


Table 4.3 looks at whether school characteristics and the provision of extracurricular activities are associated with out-of-school engagement in cultural activities. Students attending schools that provide choir and drama are more likely to be involved in structured cultural activities (music, dance or drama lessons), all else being equal. This may be related to the direct involvement of young people in these extracurricular activities, but it cannot be determined from these data whether these structured activities are school-based or not. Young people attending schools providing drama are also more likely to read frequently outside school, so school provision appears to play a broader role in fostering interest in cultural activities. Levels of television watching are lower among students in schools providing choir or dance, while computer playing levels are lower among those in schools that provide music within the school day. Somewhat surprisingly, the provision of musical instrument tuition is associated with higher levels of computer game playing, with no apparent explanation for this pattern.

TABLE 4.3 Influence of School Factors on Cultural Participation among 13 Year Olds

	Structured cultural activities	Reading frequently	High levels of television watching	High levels of computer games
DEIS school (Ref.: Non-disadvantaged)	1.016	0.728**	1.285*	1.404*
Fee-paying school	1.031	0.918	0.391**	0.463**
Gender mix:				
Boys only	0.910	1.059	0.809*	0.892
Girls only	1.066	0.862	0.839*	0.891
(Ref.: Coed)				
School size:				
200–399	0.765	1.122	0.799	0.828
400–599	0.780	1.162	0.956	0.925
600+	0.723	1.122	0.895	0.896
Gaelscoil	1.429*	1.806**	0.895	0.767
School provides art	0.915	0.797	1.189	1.112
School provides music	1.023	1.069	1.110	0.801*
Extracurricular activities:				
Choir	1.178*	0.946	0.837*	0.857
Musical instruments	1.024	0.925	0.925	1.303*
Drama	1.127*	1.161*	0.982	1.010
Dance	1.000	0.899	0.895±	0.899
In second year (Ref.: First year)	0.723**	0.696**	0.968	0.813*

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual and family characteristics. Odds ratios estimated from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regression models.*

School type is also associated with engagement in out-of-school activities. Young people attending gaelcholáistí are more likely to engage in structured cultural activities and to read for pleasure. Those in fee-paying schools spend less time on screen activities (television and computer games); these differences are substantial as they are less than half as likely to spend a lot of time on television and games than those in other schools, even taking account of parental education and other factors. Young people in single-sex secondary schools also spend less time watching television, perhaps reflecting the academic orientation of these schools and the emphasis on homework. In contrast, young people attending DEIS schools are less likely to read a lot and they spend more time playing computer games. Second year students are less likely to be involved in structured cultural activities and they spend less time reading or playing computer games. However, television viewing patterns do not appear to differ between first and second year. These findings are consistent with earlier work by Fahey et al. (2005), which indicated that less time is spent on leisure activities as young people progress through second-level education and face increasing demands in relation to homework and study.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at the provision of cultural activities in primary and second-level schools within and outside the school day. All children are exposed to cultural subjects (visual arts, music and drama) as part of the primary school curriculum, though the amount of time spent on these subjects varies across schools and classrooms. As young people move into second-level education, subjects such as art and music become optional in many schools, so only a minority of 13 year olds are taking these subjects.

Cultural activities are found to form an important part of extracurricular provision in primary and second-level schools, with music featured at both levels and learning musical instruments and drama commonly provided for second-level students. However, significant differences are found in the number and type of extracurricular activities provided across different school settings. School size emerges as a particular constraint. Smaller schools are much less likely to provide cultural and other extracurricular activities and, in the primary sector, are more dissatisfied with their facilities for arts and music. This pattern may also reflect the location of very small schools in areas with a dispersed population, making it more difficult for children relying on school bus services to stay on for after-school activities. Extracurricular provision also reflects the composition of the student population, with girls' schools more likely to provide cultural activities outside school.

The pattern of provision in DEIS schools is interesting, particularly given the marked social differences in out-of-school cultural participation, outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. DEIS schools appear to use cultural activities outside and, to some extent, within school to promote student engagement. Thus, junior infant classes in urban DEIS schools use a lot of creative (painting/drawing) and pretend play during the school day. After school, urban DEIS schools are more likely to provide music/dance and arts/crafts at primary level and choir, musical instruments and dance at second level. This provision most likely draws on resources provided through the School Completion Programme and can be seen as part of a broader suite of activities and interventions designed to promote engagement and retention (see Smyth et al., 2015). In spite of urban DEIS schools' promotion of cultural activities, their students are much less likely than others to read for pleasure or to take music/drama lessons and are more likely to spend a lot of time watching television or playing computer games.

Why does school-based provision matter? School can be an important arena for ensuring children's exposure to a range of cultural subjects and activities. Given the social and gender differences in cultural participation outside school (see chapters two and three), school may be the main point of access to arts and cultural activities for many students. Furthermore, the kinds of experiences children have within school are found to influence the activities they take part in outside school. This can happen because they provide a vehicle for taking music lessons after school, for example, or because they foster children's interests and prompt them to take up new pastimes. Thus, the study findings show that schools with a strong emphasis on cultural activities appear to promote out-of-school engagement, not just in the kinds of structured activities provided on an extracurricular basis but also in reading for pleasure. This influence can be direct – through the provision of after-school cultural activities in the school itself – and/or indirect – by fostering a love of reading and arts among children and young people.

Chapter 5

Cultural Participation and Child Outcomes

5.1 INTRODUCTION

International research has pointed to the positive impact of participation in structured activities and other cultural pursuits on outcomes among children and young people (see Chapter 1). Previous research using *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data has shown that reading and mathematics achievement is better among nine year olds who engage in structured cultural activities and who read frequently (McCoy et al., 2012). This chapter extends these analyses by taking advantage of the longitudinal nature of the study to look at the impact of earlier and current participation on cognitive development and socio-emotional wellbeing.

5.2 OUTCOMES IN THE EARLY YEARS

Three sets of outcomes among five year olds were analysed: two objective measures of cognitive development (naming vocabulary and picture similarity test scores) and a measure of socio-emotional difficulties, the total score children were awarded by their mothers on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; see Chapter 1). In all cases, controls are included for the relevant test score at the age of three; thus, the findings can be interpreted to indicate factors associated with a *change* (increase or decrease) in scores over time. This estimate of the impact of cultural participation is a conservative one, since cultural activities undertaken before three years of age will have already influenced test scores at three years.[14] Looking at changes over time provides a more robust way of exploring the potential impact of cultural activities on child outcomes; however, some caution should be advised as some factors not included in the models may potentially influence both the likelihood of cultural participation and the outcome in question.

[14] Previous analyses of GUI data have indicated that reading to infants as young as nine months is associated with improved measures of cognitive development (Murray and Egan, 2014).

TABLE 5.1 Influence of Cultural Participation on Naming Vocabulary Test Scores among 5 Year Olds, Controlling for Naming Vocabulary Test Scores at 3 Years

	Activities at 3	Plus activities at 5
Parent–child reading at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	0.076	-0.031
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	0.883**	0.627±
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Parent–child singing/rhymes at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	0.255	0.281
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	0.262	0.287
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Child drawing/painting at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.077	-0.186
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	-0.252	-0.207
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Television time at 3:		
Medium (1–2 hours a day)	0.740*	0.620±
High (2+ hours a day)	0.768*	0.546
(Ref.: <1 hour a day)		
Books in the home: 30+ (at 3)	0.730**	0.717**
(Ref.: <30 books)		
Parent–child reading at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		0.233
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		0.831*
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Child drawing/painting at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		0.540
Very frequent (1-2 times a week)		0.032
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Screen time at 5:		
Medium (2–3 hours)		0.921***
High (3+ hours)		0.516
(Ref.: <2 hours)		
Child enjoying music/dance at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		-0.689±
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		-0.813*
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Educational visits with parents at 5:		
Frequent (Occasionally)		0.246
Very frequent (At least once a week)		0.908*
(Ref.: Less often)		
In the last month (5 years old):		
Went to cinema		-0.749***
Attended a cultural event		-0.010
Visited the library		0.170
Adjusted R^2	0.270	0.272

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual and family characteristics; type of childcare at 3 years and whether the child is attending school at 5 years are also taken into account. OLS regression models.*

Table 5.1 looks at the relationship between cultural participation and naming vocabulary test scores among five year olds, taking account of prior test scores (at the age of three) as well as a range of child and family characteristics. The first column examines the potential influence of activities at three years of age while the second column adds in activities at five years. More frequent parent–child reading and more cultural

resources in the form of books at the age of three are significantly related to an improvement in vocabulary over the subsequent two years. Interestingly, time spent watching television is also associated with an improvement in verbal test scores, while engaging in singing/rhymes and painting/drawing has no significant effect.

Reading frequency when the child is five years old is associated with a greater improvement in verbal test scores, though earlier reading habits continue to have a direct impact. Progress is greater among those with medium exposure to screen time than it is among those with low or high levels, at ages three and five. Test score improvement is also greater among those whose parents take them on very frequent educational visits. There is an improvement in vocabulary scores among those who frequently paint/draw, though this is not as large as for reading or educational visits. In contrast, those who went to the cinema in the previous month tend to have a relative disimprovement in their test scores, a pattern that is difficult to explain. While the size of the effects of cultural activities may not appear large (in the order of 0.6–0.9 points), they are in fact at least as large as the improvement in scores for the children of graduate mothers (0.6 points before cultural activities are taken into account).

TABLE 5.2 Influence of Cultural Participation on Picture Similarity Test Scores Among 5 Year Olds, Controlling for Picture Similarity Test Scores at 3 Years

	Activities at 3	Activities at 5
Parent–child reading at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.466	-0.619±
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	-0.045	-0.321
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Parent–child singing/rhymes at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	0.266	0.226
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	0.077	0.009
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Child drawing/painting at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.370	-0.431
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	-0.470	-0.556*
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Television time at 3:		
Medium (1–2 hours a day)	0.207	0.211
High (2+ hours a day)	0.526	0.706*
(Ref.: <1 hour a day)		
Books in the home: 30+ (at 3)	0.882***	0.840***
(Ref.: <30 books)		
Parent–child reading at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		-0.100
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		0.611±
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Child drawing/painting at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		0.408
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		0.663±
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Screen time at 5:		
Medium (2–3 hours)		-0.112
High (3+ hours)		-1.180***
(Ref.: <2 hours)		
Child enjoying music/dance at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		-0.114
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		-0.066
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Educational visits with parents at 5:		
Frequent (Occasionally)		-0.209
Very frequent (At least once a week)		-0.584
(Ref.: Less often)		
In the last month (5 years old):		
Went to cinema		-0.170
Attended a cultural event		0.422±
Visited the library		0.121
Adjusted R^2	0.108	0.110

*Notes: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from models that control for individual and family characteristics; type of childcare at 3 and whether the child is attending school at 5 are also taken into account. OLS regression models.*

Picture similarity test scores are not strongly influenced by participation in cultural activities at the age of three.[15] However, those with more cultural resources in the form of books experience greater test score

[15] In fact, relatively little variation in picture similarity test scores is explained by child and family characteristics, a pattern that has been reported in other studies (see McGinnity et al., 2015).

improvements than their peers. No other cultural activities at the age of three are found to be significantly predictive of changes in test scores. There is some relationship with activities at the age of five. Some improvements in test scores are found among those who read and paint/draw frequently and attend cultural events with their families. There is quite a sizeable disimprovement in test scores among those who are still spending three or more hours a day on screen activities at the age of five.

Socio-emotional difficulties at the age of five are less common among those whose parents read to them frequently and who painted/drew often at the age of three, even taking account of initial levels of emotional wellbeing. In contrast, there is some increase in such difficulties among those who spend a lot of time watching television and whose parents sing or recite poems to them a lot.[16] Participation in cultural activities at age five is strongly related to the prevalence of socio-emotional difficulties at the same time point. These patterns should be interpreted with some caution since it may be the case that children with greater socio-emotional difficulties may be less likely to engage in such activities in the first place (for example, children high on the hyperactivity scale may lack the concentration to sit and paint or draw). Reading, painting/drawing, going on educational visits and attending cultural events are all significantly related to an improvement in socio-emotional wellbeing relative to children's position two years earlier. In contrast, prolonged screen time is associated with an increase in reported difficulties.

[16] The frequency of singing does not have a significant effect when it is considered in isolation but only when reading and other activities are included in the model. Thus, it appears that frequent singing/reciting rhymes is associated with poorer wellbeing only in cases where children are not exposed to other activities such as reading and painting.

TABLE 5.3 Influence of Cultural Participation on Socio-emotional Difficulties among 3 and 5 Year Olds

	Activities at 3	Activities at 5
Parent–child reading at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.264±	-0.125
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	-0.291*	0.118
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Parent–child singing/rhymes at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.015	0.057
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	0.242*	0.336**
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Child drawing/painting at 3:		
Frequent (6–7 days a week)	-0.192±	-0.047
Very frequent (4–5 days a week)	-0.286*	-0.147
(Ref.: <3 days a week)		
Television time at 3:		
Medium (1–2 hours a day)	-0.037	0.100
High (2+ hours a day)	0.239±	0.108
(Ref.: <1 hour a day)		
Books in the home: 30+ (at 3)	-0.037	0.021
(Ref.: <30 books)		
Parent–child reading at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		-0.661***
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		-0.741***
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Child drawing/painting at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		-0.794***
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		-0.996***
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Screen time at 5:		
Medium (2–3 hours)		0.165
High (3+ hours)		0.848***
(Ref.: <2 hours)		
Child enjoying music/dance at 5:		
Frequent (Every day)		0.058
Very frequent (1–2 times a week)		0.094
(Ref.: occasionally or less often)		
Educational visits with parents at 5:		
Frequent (Occasionally)		-0.329**
Very frequent (At least once a week)		-0.286±
(Ref.: Less often)		
In the last month (5 years old):		
Went to cinema		-0.137
Attended a cultural event		-0.211*
Visited the library		-0.162
Adjusted R^2	0.347	0.359

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Socio-emotional difficulties are calculated using the SDQ total score, whereby high scores indicate greater difficulties, and the coefficients are based on OLS regression models that control for SDQ score at 3 as well as individual and family characteristics; type of childcare at 3 and whether the child is attending school at 5 are also taken into account.*

5.3 OUTCOMES AMONG 9 AND 13 YEAR OLDS

Outcomes at nine years of age are assessed in terms of scores in reading and mathematics achievement tests (using Drumcondra standardised tests) and the same measure of socio-emotional difficulties used with three and five year olds. In addition, because the children were older, self-reported measures of wellbeing were collected using the Piers-Harris self-concept scale. Here, analyses focus on three subscales: happiness, intellectual and school status (academic self-image) and freedom from anxiety. It should be noted that these outcomes were measured at the same time point as cultural participation, so the extent to which causal inferences can be drawn is limited. Analyses of the relationship between cultural activities at nine and outcomes at 13 will provide a more robust test (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.4 shows that reading frequency is associated with more positive outcomes at nine years of age for all domains except freedom from anxiety, where no significant difference is found. Thus, those who read for fun more often have higher levels of achievement in reading and maths, are happier, more self-confident as learners[17] and have fewer socio-emotional difficulties. Being involved in a structured cultural activity is associated with positive outcomes across all domains, with higher achievement levels, academic self-confidence and happiness, and lower levels of anxiety and socio-emotional difficulties where children are involved in after-school music or dance lessons/clubs. Medium to high amounts of television watching are associated with better reading achievement but higher levels of anxiety and greater socio-emotional difficulties. Achievement is somewhat lower among those who use computers to download movies or music, while playing computer games has no significant relationship with child outcomes.

[17] The relationship between reading and academic self-image becomes slightly weaker when reading performance is taken into account but is still highly significant and relatively large.

TABLE 5.4 Influence of Cultural Participation on Academic and Socio-emotional Outcomes Among 9 Year Olds

	Reading	Maths	SDQ	Happiness	Intellectual and school status	Freedom from anxiety
Reading for fun:						
Low	2.369***	1.757**	-0.512*	0.082	0.663***	0.056
Medium	4.501***	2.681***	-0.640**	0.217**	0.912***	0.069
High	8.181***	3.530***	-0.652**	0.200**	0.954***	0.131
Involved in a structured cultural activity (e.g. music or drama lesson)	1.968***	1.432**	-0.422*	0.102*	0.200**	0.126*
Watching television:						
Medium	1.000**	-0.003	0.341*	-0.081	0.045	-0.153*
High	1.382**	-0.413	0.822***	-0.094	-0.096	-0.430**
Playing computer/video games:						
Medium	0.380	-0.237	-0.312	-0.032	0.004	0.009
High	0.574	0.206	0.320	-0.049	-0.126	-0.092
Using computer to download music/movies	-1.292**	-0.713*	0.320*	-0.015	-0.076	0.054
Proportion of variance explained among children	18.1	12.8	13.2	3.4	4.6	5.2

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from multilevel regression models that control for individual, family and school characteristics. High values indicate positive outcomes except in the case of SDQ.*

As discussed above, the positive outcomes for particular kinds of cultural activities may be related to the characteristics of the children who engage in these pursuits, rather than the effects of participation per se. Looking at the influence of participation four years later provides a more accurate estimate of potential impact. Table 5.5 shows that frequent reading at nine years of age is associated with improvements in verbal and numeric skills as well as in academic self-image by 13 years.[18] Attending a cultural class or club at nine years is also associated with subsequent improvement in self-image, attitudes to school and numeric skills.[19] High levels of television watching are related to an improvement in verbal skills but a decline in socio-emotional wellbeing (with lower happiness and academic self-image levels and greater socio-emotional difficulties and anxiety). Playing computer games at nine years, in contrast, is associated with improved numeric skills and academic self-image.[20] However, those who continue to spend a lot of time on computer games when they are 13 tend to have poorer socio-emotional outcomes (more anxiety, less happiness and more difficulties) and poorer verbal and numeric skills.

In addition to the other outcomes, attitudes to school among 13 year olds were also assessed. Those who read a lot at nine years are much more likely to like school very much at 13, even taking account of their prior attitudes to school. Being involved in a structured cultural activity at nine years is significantly associated with more positive attitudes to school at 13; the negative coefficient in the table reflects the fact that participation at nine and 13 are highly correlated (see Chapter 3). Those who spent a lot of time watching television and playing video games at primary level are more negative about school after the transition to second-level education.

As at the age of nine years, caution should be exercised in interpreting the relationship between cultural participation and outcomes at the same point in time. However, it is worth noting that strong relationships are evident. Those who read more frequently at the age of 13 have better verbal and numeric skills, are more self-confident as learners and positive about school, are happier and have fewer socio-emotional difficulties. Those involved in music, dance or drama classes have better academic

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18 The positive coefficient for SDQ is related to the inclusion of reading habits at 13 years and is not significant otherwise.

19 The coefficient becomes negative for attitudes to school only because participation at nine and 13 are highly correlated.

20 The negative coefficient for SDQ is related to the inclusion of computer games at 13 and is not significant when games at 9 is considered by itself.

skills and academic self-image and more positive attitudes to school. Prolonged television watching is associated with more anxiety, less self-confidence, being less happy, having poor numeric skills and more negative perspectives on school relative to these outcomes four years earlier.

TABLE 5.5 Influence of Cultural Participation at 9 and 13 Years on Academic and Socio-emotional Outcomes Among 13 Year Olds, Controlling for Outcomes at 9 Years

	Verbal reasoning	Numeric reasoning	SDQ	Happiness	Intellectual and school status	Freedom from anxiety	Attitudes to school (liking it very much)
Activities at 9							
Reading for fun:							
Low	-0.933	0.122	0.153	0.192*	0.156	0.269*	1.902***
Medium	0.317	0.421	0.099	0.040	0.227*	0.041	0.441***
High	1.960***	1.747***	0.285*	-0.028	0.331*	0.002	0.433***
Involved in a structured cultural activity (e.g. music/drama lesson)	0.144	0.717*	-0.158	0.027	0.140*	-0.010	-0.266*
Watching television:							
Medium	0.888**	0.143	0.045	-0.050	-0.143	-0.450	-0.123*
High	1.614**	-0.142	0.383*	-0.213*	-0.349*	-0.469**	-0.555***
Playing computer/video games:							
Medium	0.296	0.712*	-0.240*	-0.016	0.202*	0.020	-0.090*
High	0.177	0.899*	-0.306*	0.031	0.228*	-0.054	-0.328**
Activities at 13							
Reading for pleasure:							
Low	2.019***	2.782***	-0.481**	0.142*	1.217***	0.073	1.653***
Medium	3.365***	2.209***	-0.485**	0.225**	1.732***	0.102	1.507***
High	4.802***	3.509***	-0.650**	0.130*	1.826***	-0.006	2.194***
Involved in a structured cultural activity (e.g. music or drama lesson)	0.725**	0.847**	-0.122	0.081	0.402**	0.094	1.405***
Watching television:							
Low	-0.714	-1.431***	-0.199	-0.020	-0.154	0.002	0.334**
Medium	-0.833	-1.514***	-0.110	-0.050	-0.346*	0.025	-0.370**
High	-0.466	-2.398***	0.078	-0.182*	-0.747**	-0.237*	-0.306**
Playing computer/video games:							
Medium	-0.696±	-0.528	0.252*	0.028	-0.194*	0.054	0.629***
High	-1.406***	-1.467***	0.656**	-0.146*	-0.687**	-0.304*	-0.141
Proportion of variance explained among young people	17.1	13.1	14.5	2.2	11.7	4.9	-

*Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. These are calculated from multilevel regression models that control for individual, family and school characteristics. High values represent positive outcomes, except for SDQ. Percentage of variance explained cannot be derived for attitudes to school as the model is a multilevel multinomial logistic model.*

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at the relationship between cultural participation and academic and socio-emotional development among children and young people. The longitudinal nature of GUI data means that we can examine the effect of earlier participation on later outcomes, taking account of those outcomes at the earlier time point. The patterns indicate that the effect of cultural activities varies across different kinds of pursuits and across different outcomes. Among young children, being read to often and having access to cultural resources (books) contribute to improved vocabulary development between three and five years of age. Painting/drawing on a frequent basis is associated with fewer socio-emotional difficulties, all else being equal. Watching more television in the early years is related to improved vocabulary but also to greater socio-emotional difficulties. Among older children, self-directed reading and taking part in structured cultural activities contribute to cognitive development in terms of verbal and numeric skills; they also enhance confidence to cope with schoolwork and attitudes to school in general. Watching television for prolonged periods also promotes verbal skills but at the expense of poorer socio-emotional wellbeing and more negative attitudes to school.

Chapters 2 and 3 have shown clear social background and gender differences in participation in different forms of cultural activities. Children from more advantaged families read more frequently and are more likely to take part in structured cultural lessons or clubs; these activities serve to enhance their within-school learning, thus contributing to the social gradient in school achievement. Children from less advantaged families watch more television, which does facilitate the development of language skills but also contributes to the kinds of socio-emotional difficulties (such as inattention and hyperactivity) that are likely to be disruptive to their school engagement. While arts and cultural participation should not be valued in instrumental terms alone, the study findings regarding its impact on child outcomes reinforce the importance of an inclusive arts policy for children and young people. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study uses *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data to explore arts and cultural participation among children and young people from three to 13 years of age. It adopts a broad definition of cultural participation, reflecting the diversity of activities in which children and young people engage during their daily lives. For young children, the study takes account of creative play, including painting/drawing, enjoying music, being read to, and going on cultural outings as well as engagement in popular and digital culture (watching television and playing computer games). For older children and adolescents, the findings capture the importance of involvement in structured after-school activities, such as music and drama lessons, as well as reading for pleasure and screen time. While GUI was not designed as a survey of arts participation, it captures the more frequent cultural activities in which children engage, placing participation in the context of detailed information on the characteristics of the families in which children live and the schools they attend. The study builds upon earlier analyses of GUI data on nine years olds (McCoy et al., 2012a, 2012b), to look at the activities of these children after the transition to second-level education and to look at the cultural engagement of very young children.

6.2 MAIN FINDINGS

International and Irish research has highlighted the social differentiation in cultural participation among the adult population (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007; Lunn and Kelly, 2008), with middle-class, highly educated and higher income adults more likely to engage in structured cultural activities (so-called 'high culture'), such as attending the theatre, an art gallery or a classical concert. Studies of children and young people reveal similar patterns, which are attributed to the way in which parents socialise their children to have particular tastes and, more importantly, use cultural activities as a way of promoting the academic and social development of their children. This parenting style, which has been termed 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2003), has been found to contribute to social inequalities in academic achievement because middle-class children are more likely to be exposed to reading and other cultural activities that foster their development of the skills rewarded within the school system.

The findings presented in this report show significant social differentiation in children's cultural participation, with the nature of such variation depending on the type of activity considered. Even from an early age, more advantaged families are more likely to read to their child, take them on educational visits and cultural outings, and encourage them to engage in creative play. They are also less likely to allow their young children to watch a lot of television and to play computer games for prolonged periods. Among older children and young people, those from more advantaged families are more likely to read for pleasure and attend after-school music or drama lessons/clubs. The latter activities typically require payment so, even taking account of parental education and social class, those in the higher income families are much more likely to attend.

A notable feature of the study findings is the highly gendered nature of children's engagement in cultural activities, even from a very early age. While the greater engagement of girls in reading has been well documented internationally (see, for example, OECD, 2015), the scale of the gender difference found in the study is remarkable. Among nine and 13 year olds, girls from working-class background are as likely as, or even more likely than, middle-class boys to read every day. While gender differences in cultural activities are often attributed to wider cultural stereotypes, there would appear to be no ready explanation as to why five-year-old girls are much more likely to paint/draw or enjoy music/dance than their male peers, given the prominence of male role models in the visual arts and music.

The study provides new insights into the cultural activities of two groups of children rarely included in previous large-scale Irish research: children from immigrant families and those with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. Among young children, parents of children with disabilities appear to engage in a greater range of cultural activities with their child than would be expected given their other characteristics. As activities become more child directed by the age of nine, children with SEN are less likely to take part in structured cultural activities or to read on a frequent basis. Such differences are less marked within second-level education, though this may reflect the fact that children with more complex needs may be in special schools, thereby excluded from these analyses.

Significant differences are found between Irish and immigrant children in their engagement in cultural activities. Young children from immigrant backgrounds read less often with their parents and are less likely to go on educational/cultural outings. Nine year olds from migrant families are less likely to take part in structured classes. Language barriers emerge as a potential explanation for this pattern, with lower levels of engagement among those families whose native language is not English, and especially where mothers report difficulties in reading material in English. The potential impact of language barriers is further evidenced by the narrowing of the participation gap between nine and 13 years of age, at which stage teenagers from migrant families are more likely than their Irish counterparts to read for two or more hours a day.

Spatial variation in cultural participation is much less striking than socio-demographic and gender differences. Living in an urban area facilitates greater access to some amenities and is associated with more educational visits, cultural outings, library visits and trips to the cinema. Some regional variation is apparent in participation in structured activities among nine year olds. However, such variation is not evident among 13 year olds. Furthermore, regional variation is different across age groups, suggesting that there are no regions with consistently high (or low) levels of cultural participation across the board. The lack of spatial variation may reflect the fact that GUI does not focus specifically on visits to theatres or art galleries, which are concentrated in particular towns and cities. At the same time, it indicates that much of the arts and cultural engagement in which children and young people are involved takes place at home or in a local venue such as a school or other community location.

The school attended has a significant influence on the exposure of children to different cultural subjects and activities during and after the school day. At primary and post-primary level, smaller schools are less likely to provide extracurricular activities. Provision also reflects the composition of the student population, with girls' schools more likely to provide certain cultural activities outside school. DEIS schools appear to use cultural activities to promote student engagement, using high levels of creative play over the transition to primary school and providing a range of after-school activities focusing on the arts. Schools with a strong emphasis on cultural activities tend to promote out-of-school engagement, not just in the kinds of structured activities provided on an extracurricular basis but also in reading for pleasure.

Children and young people who read for pleasure and take part in structured cultural classes tend to be more engaged in school, have better academic skills and improved wellbeing. However, it is difficult to disentangle the direction of causality when cultural activities and outcomes are measured at the same point in time. The longitudinal nature of GUI data facilitates a more robust analysis of the effect of earlier participation on later outcomes (such as reading), taking account of those outcomes (reading habits) at the earlier time point. Among young children, parents reading to them (almost) every day and having access to cultural resources (books) contributes to improved vocabulary between three and five years of age. Other forms of creative expression, such as painting /drawing, are associated with fewer socio-emotional difficulties for the same age group, all else being equal. In contrast, watching more television is related to improved vocabulary but also to greater socio-emotional difficulties. Among older children, self-directed reading and taking part in after-school cultural activities foster cognitive development in terms of verbal and numeric skills and also enhance academic self-image, that is, the confidence to cope with schoolwork. As is the case with younger children, watching television for prolonged periods promotes verbal skills but at the expense of poorer socio-emotional wellbeing.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The study findings indicate significant socioeconomic and gender differences in engagement in the kinds of cultural activities – mainly reading and structured cultural activities –that promote cognitive and socio-emotional development among children and young people. These patterns pose significant challenges for policy aimed at ensuring equitable access to, and engagement in, cultural activities. The fact that patterns of cultural engagement are established at a young age makes them potentially less amenable to policy intervention. At the same time, the influence of earlier activities on later participation highlights the importance of fostering cultural engagement among very young children as a means of ensuring longer term involvement.

Aistear is a curriculum framework designed to support children's learning across all care settings (parents, relatives, crèches and schools) from birth to six years of age. It places a strong emphasis on children being able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively through the visuals arts, music, story and role playing, among other activities. The study findings indicate that children are engaging in creative activities such as painting/drawing from an early age and are read to by their families on a

frequent basis. However, little is known about the nature of cultural participation for children in non-parental care and this represents an important avenue for future research. There is currently a strong policy emphasis on improving the quality of early years' education, especially in the context of the extension of free preschool provision to two years from September 2016. It is important that arts and cultural engagement be seen as an important part of a 'quality' preschool experience and that staff are provided with the appropriate professional development to support this domain of children's activities (see Arts Council, 2013). Preschool settings also provide a potential arena for providing children across all social groups with exposure to the arts and culture and for challenging the gender stereotyping in activities evident from an early age.

Schools provide exposure to a range of cultural experiences, which in turn influence children's engagement in out-of-school activities. While schools cannot provide a solution to broader socioeconomic and gender inequalities, they nonetheless represent an important arena for providing all children with at least some access to a variety of cultural activities through the formal curriculum and through the provision of lunchtime and after-school activities. A comparative study of 21 countries and states (including Ireland) has indicated that arts subjects are compulsory at primary level in all countries but are compulsory at lower secondary level only in half of cases (Taggart et al., 2004). In Ireland, all primary school children have exposure to visual arts, music and drama as part of the formal curriculum, though the amount of time spent on these subjects varies across schools and classrooms. In a context where curriculum overload has been raised as an issue by many primary teachers (NCCA, 2008), there would appear to be considerable potential to use the tools of drama, art and music as a way of enriching other curricular areas. As young people move into second-level education, they have increasing choice over the subjects they take, and, as a result, exposure to the arts subjects becomes highly gendered and, to some extent, socially structured. The ongoing junior cycle reforms will give schools greater input into the kinds of subjects offered to students and the overall number of subjects taken will be reduced. While this provides a valuable way of reflecting student interests, it may lead to arts subjects being taken by an increasingly select group of students. In this context, it is important that schools be encouraged to offer (at least) short courses in the arts to provide all students with some exposure and that they adopt an approach to subject choice that reduces the potential for gender stereotyping; for example, they could provide first year students with the chance to sample an array of subjects before making their final choices (see Smyth et al., 2004).

The *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) describes the government's commitment to place the arts, alongside other subjects, at the core of the education system, with a student-centred vision that emphasises creativity. Its implementation requires a joined-up approach involving school and arts organisations. At present, smaller schools appear to find it more difficult to offer facilities for arts activities, particularly after-school provision, highlighting the importance of linking school and community initiatives around the arts. Schools quite rightly provide the kinds of after-school activities that suit the needs and interests of their students. However, there is a risk that provision may reinforce rather than counter gender stereotyping, with low levels of after-school cultural activities in boys' schools. Activities through the Charter could play a role in encouraging schools to provide some exposure to a broad range of activities for boys and girls. The promotion of 'Arts Rich Schools', proposed by the Charter, could provide a way of disseminating good practice across the education sector.

DEIS schools appear to be using School Completion Programme funding to provide cultural activities to promote student engagement. However, this has not yet been enough to bridge the gap in participation between those living in very disadvantaged families and neighbourhoods and their peers. Cuts in funding to the School Completion Programme over the recession particularly impacted upon after-school and holiday provision (Smyth et al., 2015). It would therefore be helpful, in the context of the current review of the DEIS programme, to look at increasing resources for the most disadvantaged schools to enhance their provision of after-school cultural activities. The social gap in provision is likely to widen over the summer period as children and young people from more advantaged families engage in a range of structured classes and summer camps. Providing engaging summertime cultural activities through schools or local communities is therefore crucial to prevent a further widening of the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged children.

The vast majority of the structured cultural activities in which children and young people engage require payment and low income therefore emerges as a barrier to participation, over and above other social background factors such as parental education and social class. The *Arts in Education Charter* recommends reduced ticket prices for those in full-time education to attend arts venues and performances. However, given financial barriers to participation, these measures could go further by providing greater

subsidies for disadvantaged families. In a context where not all disadvantaged young people attend DEIS schools and not all cultural provision is provided through schools, such subsidies are a crucial avenue for ensuring more inclusive arts engagement.

The study findings also point to the need for cultural provision to be inclusive in a broad sense. Children from immigrant backgrounds, especially at primary level and even earlier, are less likely to take part in cultural activities, even taking account of other socioeconomic characteristics. Language emerges as a significant barrier, with particularly low levels of involvement for families who have difficulties reading English language material. This highlights the importance of providing information on arts activities in a variety of languages and of using schools as an arena to promote participation across all groups. There is a significant need to consider whether existing arts and cultural provision adequately supports the participation of children and young people with SEN. Children with these needs are less likely to be involved in the kinds of structured cultural activities that facilitate their learning and socio-emotional development. This is especially evident for children with emotional–behavioural difficulties, whose cultural participation centres on television watching rather than the kinds of activities that foster their socio-emotional development. The *Arts in Education Charter* does not make explicit mention of the inclusion of children and young people with SEN but its implementation could draw on complementary policy work on catering for adults with disabilities (see, for example, Arts Council, 2010).

The study identifies another potential lever for intervention. Levels of library usage among families in the GUI study, while varying by socioeconomic characteristics, are relatively high. Thus libraries could (continue to) be used as vehicles or sites to promote cultural engagement among very young children. This approach is consistent with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government's 2013 strategy on public libraries, which points to libraries as important spaces to promote and celebrate local and national culture among families. However, research points to barriers, including lack of space and staff training in catering to the needs of teenagers (McGrath et al., 2010) so there appears to be potential for further development in library provision across age groups.

Finally, it is worth noting that children and young people engage in a diversity of structured and unstructured cultural activities in their daily

lives, embracing reading and after-school music/drama classes as well as popular and digital culture. It is important therefore that arts policy recognises the mosaic of ways in which children and young people express themselves and interact with the world of culture.[21] In the same way that film studies have been used to broaden second-level student engagement with the English curriculum, there is potential to leverage popular and digital culture as a means of self-expression and creative learning for children and young people.

6.4 POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The longitudinal nature of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study presents a number of opportunities for future research on arts and cultural participation among children and young people. The older cohort has just completed another wave of surveys, at 17 years of age. These data provide information on involvement in a broader range of activities (including listening to music and singing/playing musical instruments) than at 13 years. This wave of data could be used to look at the patterns of cultural involvement among young people as they approach the end of formal schooling and whether participation at this stage is still influenced by experiences at primary and junior cycle levels. A further round of surveys will be conducted with the infant cohort next year, when this group is nine years of age. This means that data will be available on the contrasting experiences of nine year olds over a decade of rapid economic and social change and will provide particularly interesting insights into the changing nature of digital engagement among children.

The lives of children and young people are highly structured by the school day and associated homework and study. As a result, cultural activities may be squeezed into a small amount of time after school and at weekends. However, little is known about the timing of this cultural engagement. Time use diaries were collected for the nine and 13 year olds taking part in GUI (as well as the 17 year olds), detailing the activities engaged in by young people for each 15-minute period throughout the day. These data, which have not yet been subject to in-depth analyses, provide a rich source of information on the times at which children are 'free' to take part in cultural activities, a crucial evidence base for planning the scheduling of future provision.

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[21] Both Willis (1991) and O'Connor (2010) have pointed to the difficulties in, and dangers of, making a clear separation between the 'arts' and 'popular culture'.

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Appendix A

TABLE A1 Wording of Questions on Arts/Cultural Participation and Other Activities in the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) Survey

Infant Cohort
Three years (Wave 2)
Now I'd like to ask you about activities [child] may do at home. **On how many days in an average week does anyone at home:** **Read to [child]?*** **Help [child] learn the ABC or alphabet?** **Help [child] learn numbers or counting?** **Help [child] learn songs, poems or nursery rhymes?*** **Play games (board games, jigsaws, card games etc.) with [child]?** **Does [child] paint, draw, colour, or play with Play-Doh at home?*** **Play active games with [child] (e.g. football)?**
About how many child's books does [child] have access to in your home now, including any library books?*
Typically how many hours a day does [child] sit and watch television or videos/DVDS?*
Infant Cohort
Five years (Wave 3)
How often would you do any of the following with [child]? **Play with [child] using toys or games/puzzles** **Play computer games with [child]*** **Visit the library*** **Listen to [child] read[1]** **Read to [child]*** **Use computer with [child] in educational ways** **Sport or physical activities** **Go on educational visits outside home such as museums, farms*** **Go shopping**
Does [child] do any of the following at home? **Plays on computer, tablet device (e.g. iPad) or smartphone (e.g. iPhone) by themselves*** **Plays 'make-believe' or pretend games*** **Paints, draws or makes models*** **Enjoys dance, music, movement***
In the past month, has [child] done these with you or another family member? **Gone to a movie*** **Gone to a sporting event in which the child was not a player** **Gone to a concert, play, museum, art gallery, community or school event*** **Attended a religious service, church, temple, synagogue or mosque** **Visited a library*** **Swimming**
About how many child's books does [child] have access to in your home now, including any library books?*
I would like to think about all the time [child] spends on an average weekday looking at the TV, videos, DVDs, computers, iPad, smartphones, electronic games system. We are talking about the amount of time [child] spends in front of any 'screen' (computer or TV or game) in an average weekday. How much time would [child] spend on this type of 'screen time' on an average weekday? * **(continued overleaf)**

Child cohort: Nine years (Wave 1)
Here are some things that children could do in their free time. Can you please tell me which of these you like to do best, second best and third best? **Hanging out with friends** **Chatting to friends on phone or computer** **Playing sport** **Watching TV*** **Playing computer games*** **Reading*** **Playing games outside*** **Listening to music*** **Talking to your family** **Something else (please write it down)**
How often do you read for fun (not for school)?*
On a normal weekday during term-time, how many hours does the Study Child spend watching television, videos or DVDs? Please remember to include time before school as well as time after school.*
On a normal weekday, during term-time, about how much time does the Study Child spend playing video games such as, PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo etc.? Please include time before school as well as time after school. DO NOT include time spent using computers in school.*
During an average week does the Study Child participate in any clubs or organisations outside of school hours. If yes, does this activity have to be paid for? • **Sports/fitness club (gym, GAA, soccer, hockey etc.)** • **Cultural activities (dance, ballet, music, arts, drama etc.)*** • **Youth club** • **Scouts/Guides/Boys' Brigade/Girls' Brigade** • **Homework club** • **Other**
Child Cohort: 13 Years (Wave 2)
13 years (Wave 2)
Please tick what subjects you are taking from September 2011. • **Art*** • **Music***
On a normal weekday during term-time, about how many hours do you spend watching television, videos or DVDs? Please remember to include time before school as well as time after school.*
On a normal weekday during term-time, about how many hours do you spend reading for pleasure (books, magazines, newspapers, novels, comics)? [DO NOT INCLUDE TIME SPENT READING AT SCHOOL OR DOING HOMEWORK]*
On a normal weekday, during term-time, about how much time do you spend playing video games such as PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo, etc.?*
Please tick below to indicate (a) how often do you do each of these activities and (b), if you do them, whether or not they are paid for by your parents or by yourself: • **Play sports or undertake physical activities without a coach or instructor (e.g. biking, skate-boarding etc.)** • **Play sports with a coach or instructor, or as part of an organised team, other than in PE class (swimming, soccer, hockey etc.)** • **Take part in dance, drama or music lessons*** • **Take part in a homework club (either in school or elsewhere)** • **Take part in clubs or groups such as Guides or Scouts, youth club, community or church groups.**

*Note: * indicates that these items are taken as reflecting arts and cultural participation. 1. This item is not analysed in the report as there are significant differences in whether children have started primary education and their stage in relation to reading.*

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