



Universidad Autónoma  
de Madrid

**Biblos-e Archivo**  
Repositorio Institucional UAM

**Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid**

<https://repositorio.uam.es>

Esta es la **versión de autor** del artículo publicado en:  
This is an **author produced version** of a paper published in:

Children's Geographies 5.4 (2007): 423 – 441

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733280701631890>

**Copyright:** © 2007 Taylor & Francis

El acceso a la versión del editor puede requerir la suscripción del recurso

Access to the published version may require subscription

*“This is an Accepted Manuscript version of the following article, accepted for publication in Children's Geographies. Children's Geographies 5.4 (2007): 423 – 441. It is deposited under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.”*

**THE AFTER SCHOOL ROUTINES OF LITERATURE-DEVOTED URBAN  
CHILDREN**

David Poveda

Marta Casla

Claudia Messina

Marta Morgade

Irene Rujas

Laura Pulido

Isabel Cuevas

Contact address:

David Poveda

Departamento Interfacultativo de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación

Facultad de Psicología

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Campus de Cantoblanco

28049 Madrid

Spain

e-mail: david.poveda@uam.es

tlf: (34) 91-497-3250

fax: (34) 91-497-5215

(17 January 2007)

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the out of school routines of a group of ‘literature-devoted’ children of the city of Madrid (Spain). The children and families were recruited for the study at a library, a children’s bookstore and a puppet show in a park. Participants provided information on their weekly routines through several procedures: surveys, photographs of their daily lives, interviews based on the photographs and interviews with parents. We develop a spatially based model that allows us to identify four styles of activity in children’s out of school lives: *homebound* children, *non-scheduled* children, *outdoor and scheduled* children, and *fully scheduled* children. Our results suggest that there is significant diversity in the ways in which children’s after-school time is organized, even within a middle-class and socially homogeneous sample as the one in this study. Also, the range of activities our participants engage in seems to contradict current portraits of Western urban children’s lives as constrained.

**Keywords:** daily routines - after-school activities - urban childhood - literacy - qualitative methods

This paper examines the daily lives of urban predominantly middle-class children and families from Madrid (Spain), a large and modern European capital. The main purpose of the analysis is to show the diversity of ways in which children with similar backgrounds organize their daily lives and how the urban environment is taken up as a resource in this organization. A central part of the analysis is to propose an empirical spatially oriented model of children's after school settings which may allow to place individual children and to identify styles (i.e. clusters of children) of after school time use. Our analysis grows out of work in Developmental Psychology and Sociology but incorporates ideas stemming from Children's Geographies in an attempt to build an interdisciplinary and holistic portrait of children's daily after school routines. In this introduction we present the broader framework we draw from to study children's routines and in a later heading, where we introduce our model, the specific place of Children's Geographies research is discussed in more detail.

Different strands of research have focused on the city as a developmental context. Many of these studies begin with a 'historical argument' stating that, especially in Western countries, societies have become increasingly urbanized and cities are where the majority of children currently grow up. However, as the development of urban areas has not taken into consideration children as inhabitants of the city, this transformation has 'pushed' children out of public spaces and into their homes (cf. Karsten, 2005). This, in combination with the generalization of schooling, has limited children's opportunities to engage with the resources available in unregulated public spaces (e.g. streets, fields, vacant lots, etc.) (Christensen & O'Brien, 2003; Abu-Ghazze, 1998). A more positive strand of thinking present in different public policy moves promotes a view of the city as an educational space that, if designed taking into consideration the needs of families, can provide rich cultural and physical resources for children (Bartlett, Hart, Satterthwaite, de la Barra & Missair, 1999). At the very least, as several reports document, urban children in industrialized countries have access to

numerous after-school activities and programs with which they can complete their afternoon and evening schedules (MacBeth, Kirwan & Myers, 2001; McLaughlin, 2000). However, the availability of these resources does not mean that they are used evenly by different kinds of urban children. Parental work schedules, the direct and indirect costs they may involve and the cultural and ideological dispositions they are based on (Lareau, 2002) are aspects that mediate children's participation in different types of after school settings, whether regulated or unregulated. In fact, because of these variables, limited access to and participation in a variety of out-of-school quality settings could be a key factor in the reproduction of social inequality and disadvantage.

Under these circumstances it would seem that the study of children's after-school routines should be a major research concern but, as Ben-Arieh & Ofir (2002) point out in their review of the literature, this expectation apparently has not been fulfilled empirically. These authors adopt a macro-sociological approach and make a programmatic call for studies of children's time-use and daily activities "on a large scale, using large samples of children" (Ben-Arieh & Ofir, 2002, p. 239) and quantitative analysis of the data as a means of obtaining general indicators of children's well-being. We will use this review as a starting point for our argumentation because, in our view, the possibilities that are disregarded by these authors can also make important contributions. In this introduction we discuss three alternative paths for research on children's out of school time-use as we present the goals of our study. These 'alternatives' are: (a) reconsidering the contributions of qualitative research to this topic; (b) assessing the possibilities of using multiple procedures of data collection offered in qualitative research traditions; (c) discussing further the rationale behind focusing on particular groups of children.

Qualitative studies stemming from various disciplines (Zehier, 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2002; Karsten, 2005) provide portraits of Western children's urban life in different national

contexts. These studies suggest, even when not stated in these terms, that children seem to cluster around different styles of organizing their time and daily routines. We define a *style* as a pattern of organizing and interrelating time, space, activity and social interactions with basic elements that groups different participating children together and sets them apart from others (clustered in other styles). The elements considered relevant in each particular style are determined by the data, the specific research problems and the theoretical rationale of each study. Yet, in general, this approach allows organizing the literature around three central issues: (a) the complex of factors underpinning each style; which can vary from discrete social or individual variables (e.g. social class, geographical location, age, gender, etc.), to differing family configurations (e.g. patterns of parental work, participation in pre-school, etc.), to more complex processes (parents or children's ideologies); (b) the more distal consequences these styles can have for other developmental indexes (e.g. measures of literacy or academic achievement, cognitive skills, other measures of well-being and adjustment, etc.), whether these are retrospectively or longitudinally identified or simply discussed as possible outcomes; and (c) in proximal terms, how each style constructs for children different developmental micro systems with particular constraints and affordances. Individual reports may attempt to address, theoretically or empirically, different combinations of these issues.

In Spain, Álvarez (1994), using video recordings, open-ended interviews, self-registers and questionnaires, examined differences between urban/suburban and rural children. She argues that urban/suburban families and children lead much more stressful lives centered on getting through daily routines and spend most free-time around their home, while rural children seem to lead a less hectic life and spend much more time in leisure activities outdoors, in the streets of the village or in its natural surroundings. Vila (1998) in a larger survey study of urban children's lives in north-eastern Spain found different patterns of organizing time depending on factors such as: if the children attended school for a full-day,

they participated in formally organized after-school activities, or were cared for by their parents, grandparents or hired caretakers. Age also played a role in these differences, with older children participating in more after-school activities or doing homework and spending less time in public unstructured spaces (e.g. parks or plazas). The data of the Spanish studies are about two decades old so we try to provide a more contemporary picture of a set of Spanish children's daily routines, although focusing on a more particular sample of urban children (see below). This 'update' is especially relevant given the rapid rate of social change Spain has experienced in the last two decades which is particularly visible in the organization and configuration of urban life and, potentially, has affected children's routines in the city.

In relation to methodology, most quantitative studies aim for 'large' samples of children ( $N > 100$ ) and to do so have to limit the collection of data to one or two techniques, mostly questionnaires or structured self-reporting instruments perhaps combined with (telephone) interviews. Overall these procedures involve little interaction with the children and families being studied and literally no contact on the part of the researcher with the settings and environments that are actually being investigated. In contrast, qualitative research is most often characterized by intense, direct contact with participants and preferably in the natural settings that are being researched. Qualitative research also favors relying on several research procedures which can be triangulated to attempt to control for the shortcomings and cost-benefit relationship that each data source may have regarding the problem under study - which is only possible with smaller number of participants.

Finally, while Ben-Arieh & Ofir (2002) argue in favor of gathering something close to nationally representative samples of children for research, a review of studies on the topic reveals that this, in fact, is not the approach usually taken. Rather, studies explicitly pre-select and focus on particular social groups or compare them with other (pre-selected) social groups and attempt to provide contextually based interpretations of children's daily routines. Social-

class, rural-urban contrasts (e.g. Rasmussen, 2004) and contrastive analysis of different urban settings are among the most frequent criteria used to select and define the populations under study. In North American research, a focus on urban settings is often intertwined with social-class and understood as pertaining to lower working class (and ethnic minority) participants. However, this association may not be so strong in other national contexts where cities are more socio-economically heterogeneous (e.g. Zehier, 2003; Karsten, 1998, 2005) than suggested in the North American literature and, paradoxically, what is missing in the literature is a better examination of the daily lives of urban middle-class children and families.

There may be some analytical advantages in focusing on middle-class urban children. Western cities provide a number of cultural resources and programs in which children can participate during their out of school time. Some of these resources do not involve much direct costs (e.g. libraries, museums, public after-school programs, community cultural and sports centers, etc. may be of free access or relatively inexpensive) while others can be significantly expensive (e.g. private academies and tutors, participation in elite sports, commercial parks and spaces, etc.). Under these circumstances it may be possible to examine the factors that mediate children's participation in these contexts and how they influence children's daily routines, potentially being able to separate more clearly strictly economic constraints from other socio-ideological dispositions. Using Bourdieu's (1986) terminology, by focusing on participation in specific cultural domains we may be able to examine how aspects of *economic capital* and *cultural capital* relate to each other. Enrollment in costly activities is necessarily restricted by economic factors and will therefore exclude certain families - while others may use this investment as a means to obtain 'cultural' capital. Examining patterns of participation under these circumstances will mainly inform about socio-economic differences and inequalities. However, participating in cost-free activities within certain cultural fields (e.g. museum and library programs, bookstore readings, etc.)



supposedly reduces economically based restrictions and foregrounds the ideological dispositions (i.e. cultural capital) that draw families to these settings - which, hypothetically, may or may not be tied to socio-economic capital. In terms of public cultural policy, eliminating economically-based restrictions is seen as a way of increasing the diversity of families and children that can participate in certain cultural fields (i.e. public sports and music centers, free-entrance to museums, building a library network system). However, it could be that even under these conditions the profile of users of these settings still fitted with certain (predictable) economic, geographic and ethnic patterns. If so, potential policy-oriented measures would have to scrutinize the ideological and social underpinnings of certain cultural practices.

From the above it follows that another way to define a sample is by selecting participants that engage differentially in particular cultural domains. This was the original goal of our larger study. As part of a project focused on processes of *literature socialization* outside school contexts we attempted to document the daily routines of children who attended “regularly” storytelling events organized during the weekend in different urban environments: a district library (a public institutional space), puppet shows in the city’s major park (a public space) and a children’s bookstore (a commercial private space). Analytically we hypothesized that there would be socio-demographic differences between the children and families participating in these contexts given the differing material constraints that are involved in accessing them (schematically the park would be the most unconstrained environment and the bookstore the most restrictive). Yet, by choosing these events rather than engaging in other ‘Saturday morning family activities’, in Lahire’s (2004) terms, all these families and children seem to have an interest in the cultural field of literature, specifically in the various forms in which contemporary children’s literature is delivered and made available to children. Also, advancing some of our results, questionnaire data and interviews suggest that, if we take as a

reference other studies on the topic (e.g. Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988), the children in our sample seem to be in the higher percentiles of time spent in daily ‘book reading’. In other words, in our project we tapped into the daily routines of a particular group of urban children, which could be described as *literature-devoted*: children who seem to have and use extensively one form of the ‘cultural capital’ related to participating in a ‘literate culture’ (Gregory & Williams, 2000).

However, in contrast to our expectations, the socio-economic and socio-cultural differences between the participating families were relatively small. In fact, all families tended to have similar middle-class backgrounds and even shared a number of ideological dispositions (for example, as articulated in decisions regarding housing or formal education). Nonetheless, there were important differences in the ways these children organized their weekly out of school routines, the number of structured activities they were enrolled in and other aspects of their daily life; thus providing a more heterogeneous picture of children’s daily lives within a single socio-economic group than previously reported in the research literature.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Children and families were recruited from three different out of school contexts that provide literary events for children. In this part of the project, focusing in depth on children’s out of school routines, 32 children belonging to 24 different families participated in the study. The participants are representative of the diversity of children who attend these storytelling events. Children’s ages are between 1-9 years of age (mean = 4 years, 6 months; mode = 3 years), distributed almost equally along gender lines (18 boys and 14 girls). Also, the library and the bookstore scheduled regularly storytelling sessions with sign language translation so there was a significant presence of Deaf children in these events and, consequently, three of

the participating children were Deaf (two siblings with Deaf parents and one child with hearing parents). Since one of our main findings is related to participant's socio-economic and socio-educational background, the information on these variables will open the following results sections.

### *Procedure*

As part of the study, all families that attended storytelling events in the three contexts were asked to fill out a brief one-page questionnaire that gathered socio-demographic data on the families and surveyed the range of activities that children engaged in after school Monday through Friday and during the weekends. The list of activities was closed and was adapted from Vila's findings (1998) for Spanish children's daily routines but also included open slots where respondents could add activities not included in the list. The survey gathered data on the weekly frequency of particular activities but did not provide information on their temporal sequencing or on the overall organization of daily routines. The survey included an entry where parents could leave their contact details if they were interested in participating in the next stages of the study focusing on children's everyday routines. During this period of fieldwork (January - April 2005) volunteer families were contacted through the telephone or were approached directly by the researchers at each site after filling out the questionnaire. In this initial contact we explained the procedures and purposes of the study and invited them to continue their collaboration.

The children and families who agreed to participate were given a disposable camera (one for each participating child in the family), or alternatively could use their own digital cameras if they preferred to do so, and were asked to take photographs of their daily activities outside of school Monday through Friday and during the weekend. This task was explained in an open ended fashion without any indications regarding the minimum or maximum number of photographs that should be taken and without precise instructions regarding who should

'take care' of the camera or shoot the photographs (cf. Rasmussen, 2004). In this way, in the case of smaller children (5 years and below) it was parents who mostly took photographs, while older children took care of the camera themselves. The number of photographs participants took ranged between 119 and 11, with most participants taking between 20-30 photographs of their weekly lives [1].

After this period (sometimes families requested and were granted an extra week to complete the photographs) the cameras/photographs were collected and printed out. Then we interviewed in a semi-structured fashion the participants responsible for taking the photographs (individual children or children and adults) about the pictures and more broadly their daily routines using the pictures as an initial stimulus. The interviews took place in children's homes or in parks close to their homes (as chosen by participants), lasted approximately 30-60 minutes and were gathered between February and June 2005.

Finally, a second interview took place only with parents in which we explored in more depth their beliefs and decisions regarding a range of practical family issues (housing, education, their children's after-school schedules and reading habits). We attempted to interview both parents together (when both lived in the same home - only one participant was a single divorced mother and the rest of the children lived with both their parents) but if this arrangement was impractical given their work schedules a single interview with the available parent took place - in all cases in which we did this it was the child's mother who was interviewed. As an opening to the interview, the parents were given a one-page summary description of their child's daily life and were asked to comment, update or correct it if necessary. This one page summary was written specifically to incorporate the elements we considered relevant in our analysis of children's routines and was used by the research team as a way of classifying children within the model (see below), so parent's comments of the summary can be seen as a way of triangulation or participant corroboration. Of the initial

sample, 21 families agreed to complete this second interview, all interviews took place in participant's homes, lasted approximately 40-90 minutes, and were gathered between October and December 2005.

In summary, different sources of information regarding children's daily lives were gathered (survey data, visual data and different types of interview data) over close to a full calendar year and overlapping two school years. Thus, to some degree, variations in children's routines in relation to changes in the weather and changes as they move up in their schooling could be taken into account. Although children's daily routines were not observed directly, sometimes researchers visited children's homes twice, taking note of their domestic space and the physical surroundings of the home. Also, the daughter of one the authors acted as a participant in the study and this child's family is a long-time resident in the main district of the study, thus one of the researchers was familiar with the environments, resources and spaces that many of the participating families reported in their interviews and photographs. Finally, a relevant difference between this methodological outline and other studies on the topic is that in our sample of children there is a larger proportion of younger children. In this way, while the focus is on children's routines and their environments and our methods attempt to have children as active participants, adults do play an important role as data sources of their offspring's lives - and not only of their own parental ideologies and decision-making.

### **Families in context: The socio-cultural composition of Retiro district**

Over half of the participating children were residents of Retiro district and the three sites of the study (the public library, the bookstore and the park of the city that names the district) were located in this area. Retiro is a district in the central part of the city of Madrid with a population of about one hundred and twenty six thousand inhabitants in a city of just over three million inhabitants (municipal census data of the year 2003). It is a middle class

residential district but it is composed of six neighborhoods ranging from modern residential areas built in recent decades to older neighborhoods which were previously industrial areas currently being reconverted or older housing blocks that are now occupied by immigrant families. The library is located between two of the more modest (although internally very diverse) neighborhoods of the district which also have higher percentages of immigrant population (approximately 10% of residents) and higher numbers of adult residents who have only completed primary education. In contrast, the children's bookstore is located in an upper-middle class residential area with the lower percentage of immigrant population (approximately 5% of residents) and a higher proportion of residents who have completed higher education studies. Retiro park is an emblematic space of the city and during the weekends has various street performing artists (including puppeteers) that attract families and visitors from the metropolitan area. In terms of schooling, the district has two private, eleven private-subsidized (eight of which are run by the Catholic Church) and six public schools offering pre-school and primary education (3-12 years of age). 74% of the district's children in this age range attend private (subsidized or not) schools while 26% of students attend public state run schools.

-----  
INSERT TABLE I AROUND HERE  
-----

Table I summarizes the demographic and educational data of the participating families reported mainly in the surveys. As shown in the table, the vast majority of children have at least one parent in their home with a higher education degree (College or advanced technical training). Also, all families are of Spanish origin or European Union natives, most children have Spanish (or Spanish Sign Language) as their first language and two of the participating children live in English-Spanish bilingual homes. As Table I shows, most children attend

private or private-subsidized schools but in a more balanced proportion than the general pattern in the district. More significant is the choice of particular schools made by the families. Six of the children who attend private subsidized schools go to a well known progressive education school and just four children attend Catholic religious schools - when two of the largest and most reputed Catholic schools of the city are located in the district. Also, the three Deaf children of our sample are enrolled in the same state subsidized sign language bilingual school which is also known for its progressive educational methods and philosophy. Finally, only four families attend with some regularity Catholic religious services and only two have their children enrolled in religious instruction classes. In Spain, decisions regarding type of schooling are seen as ideologically charged (Marchesi, 2000) and participant's preference for public or private progressive non-confessional education can be seen as indexing important aspects of their belief systems.

In short, the families that have participated in our study seem to share several traits that would not be 'statistically predictable' given their demographic and socio-economic background. These particularities will be taken into consideration in our presentation and final discussion of children's daily routines.

### **Children's styles of time use outside of school**

#### *A model of children's social spaces and styles of time use outside of school*

Recent work in Children's Geographies has contributed to conceptualize *space* as a construct that includes the physical dispositions of the environment, the social aspects and relationships present in these environments and the meaning and significance that particular 'places' have for children's own developmental experiences (Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Philo, 2000). Different authors have attempted to identify these spaces for Western urban children. In the United Kingdom, Philo (2000) makes a three-fold distinction between the home, the street and institutions (which includes schools and non-formal organizations) as the

main sites in which children's activities take place. Rasmussen (2004), based on Danish children, argues that the country's highly elaborate welfare state structures children's daily lives around an 'institutional triangle' in which each of the corners is occupied by home, school and after-school recreational facilities, while non-regulated public space is left to the physical transitions from one 'corner' to the other. Karsten (2005), focusing on Amsterdam and adding a historical perspective to the meaning of 'home' and 'street' as social spaces, shows how children's presence in them may vary through time and that these changes also involve reconstructions in the meaning, organization and use of domestic and public space. Geographical work has also focused specifically on children's use and appropriations of particular spaces, such as street (Matthews, Lamb and Taylor, 2000), homes (Christensen, James and Jenks, 2000) and after-school clubs (Smith and Baker, 2000), showing how the nature of these spaces and their meanings are actively constructed in use by children and youth. These studies, focused on children's own constructions and practices, also tend to contradict popular and adult-centered discourses circulating about each of these spaces (e.g. that streets are dangerous places children have retreated from or that family 'quality time' is deteriorating).

Based on our empirical data, we also propose a triangular model of children's after-school spaces. This model focuses on the activities, social interactions and developmental affordances that take place in the spaces that configure children's use of time and routines once formal education is completed. It attempts to capture how different ways of organizing family routines orient children to each of these spaces as their preferred activity settings and, thus, constitute different 'types' of children. In this way, it is less comprehensive than some of the above proposals (since it does not examine empirically formal educational sites) but it also examines with some detail children's out of school lives without pre-establishing the research focus on any particular non-school site (e.g. *only* domestic space, *only* parks, etc.). We



consider the model to be data-based and reflect participant's particular constructions of these spaces. The model acknowledges that to some degree all children may make some use of each corner of the triangle but their primary orientation to one corner also projects specific ways of using and organizing activity in the other spatial domains. Thus, it establishes a series of oppositions and postulates a limited number of trajectories within these spaces that may seem to not fulfill completely what theoretically or conceptually could be said about them but, that in fact, we consider reflect how they are uptaken and constructed by participants themselves.

The first corner is occupied by *domestic* space. Domestic space as the primary arena of action antagonizes with structured extra-curricular activities and outdoor free play. In our data, a child who is a prototypical user of domestic space goes home shortly after school and spends the evening with one or both of his/her parents and siblings (if there are any) doing a variety of things at home, such as homework, playing games, reading books, watching television or playing with computer games. Further, when she/he plays outdoors, in places such as parks, his/her interactions are mostly limited to members of the nuclear family.

The second corner is occupied by *extra-domestic unregulated* space. This space comprises all outdoor/indoor activities that are not subjected to time-schedules or pre-arranged structured activities. In this way both public spaces (parks, school playgrounds and streets) and private spaces (children's homes) can be used in unregulated ways. In our data a child who is a prototypical user of extra-domestic unregulated space is also not involved in any (or very few) structured extra-curricular activities but, in contrast to the above, does not go home once the school day is finished. Rather, he/she spends the major part of the evening playing outdoors in spaces such as the school playground or neighborhood parks with a variety of peers from school or the neighborhood. Alternatively, an 'extra-domestic unregulated child' may invite friends to play in his/her house after school or may be invited to play at friend's homes but in both cases the main social interactions continue to be with peers.

This child may also visit with his family other public institutions such as libraries or accompany family members in a number of daily errands (going to shops, visiting the dentist, etc.). Family or individual play at home is limited to the final moments of the evening before and in between night routines (baths, supper, bed-time, etc.).

The third corner is occupied by *structured extra-curricular* spaces. These spaces comprise all out-of-school non-formal learning settings in which children can enroll after school. These activities may take place in the school facilities after school time (in Spanish schools they are often organized by the school's parental association and are not part of school curricular planning), in a number of private settings (e.g. music or language academies) or public institutions (e.g. cultural or sports centers). A child who is a prototypical user of this corner is enrolled in numerous out-of-school activities that occupy most of his/her weekday evenings and even part of their weekends. Typically the child spends an hour or more each day in each of these after school settings and consumes the rest of his/her time getting to/from the formal activities and returns home once his/her commitments are completed.

This model captures three physical, social and interactional spaces which can be occupied to different degrees by individual children. In participant's practices, these spaces can be seen as antagonizing with each other, since time and activity investments in one of them necessarily restricts time in and use of other spaces. In this way, each child may 'move along' the three sides of the triangle configuring a personal way of organizing daily routines and time-use. Based on the information we have for each child, we have placed him/her in the model depicted in Figure 1 (each participant child is represented as a dot in the model). The particular position in the figure reflects three basic distinctions: (a) children inside the circle of each corner represent non-ambiguous cases which are heavily oriented to each spatial corner (domestic, unregulated or extra-curricular); (b) children are placed along the sides of

the figure to indicate their secondary orientation (e.g. a child who is mostly domestic but is enrolled in one extra-curricular activity would be placed in the ‘domestic-structured extra-curricular line’, closer to the upper corner and would move down as he/she enrolls in more activities); (c) each child is placed in the figure in comparison to children with similar profiles taking into consideration what aspects they share and which contrast between them without attempting to capture precise quantitative differences. Conceptually, it is possible to consider a child with a weekly time-balance between the three spaces (i.e. placed in the middle of the figure) but, empirically, this has not been the case and, rather, children organize their routines along a continuum between two spaces as defined in our model. By placing the participating children within this model we found that four distinct styles of organizing children’s after-school routines emerge, as shown in Figure 1.

-----  
 INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE  
 -----

Ten participants (31%) are classified as *homebound* children (cluster 1 in the figure). These children are closest to the domestic circle of the figure. They are not enrolled in any or very few structured out-of-school activities and spend most of their time playing at home with part of the members of their nuclear family - siblings and/or the parent that is with the child while the other one is at work. Four of the most prototypical children in this group rarely go to parks or play outdoors during the week and the other children in the outer-circle may be enrolled in a single activity or spend some time at parks or the playground (for not more than an hour) before going home, but in these cases they interact mostly with members of their family - or a paid care-taker in on case. At home, the children may play games, read, do home-work or paint and color and watch TV, mostly video movies rather than regular television. Given that the routines of these children from Monday through Friday gravitate

around the home, their activities during the weekend change significantly, since it is here when they will visit parks, museums, go to the county side or attend storytelling events in any of the three sites of our study.

Seven participants (22%) are considered *non-scheduled* children (cluster 2 in the figure). These children are also not enrolled in any or very few structured out-of-school activities but instead of going home directly after school they spend a good part of their evening, between 1-2 hours, playing in the school playground, going to parks or going to friend's homes (or inviting friends to their homes). Later in the evening they go home, where they continue playing, read or look at books, or watch television (which in this case may be regular children's programs). In the case of older children they do their homework before beginning the night routines. In other words, children in this cluster move along the 'unregulated-domestic' line of the figure.

Seven participants (22%) are classified as *outdoor and scheduled* children. During the week these children hardly spend an evening at home – they are opposite to the domestic corner in the middle of the 'extra-curricular-unregulated' line of the figure. Some days they are enrolled in structured out-of-school activities (one or two activities which may occupy between one and four days a week), which they attend at school or other facilities in their neighborhood. Before and after these activities, which may last for an hour and start immediately after school or an hour later, they play outdoors in the school playground, neighborhood parks or around the facilities where they attend the activities (e.g. swimming pool and sports center). These children also have evenings in which they are not enrolled in any activity, which they consider "days off", and use to spend the whole afternoon in parks or playgrounds, to invite friends to their homes or visit friend's homes.

Finally, eight children (25%) can be seen as *fully scheduled* children. These children are enrolled in two to three after-school structured activities that may occupy three or more

evenings a week. These are also the only children who may attend more than one structured after-school activity a day (e.g. first a library workshop and then after-school mathematics) or continue with other structured activities during the weekend (e.g. children scouts or special workshops organized during the weekends). When fully scheduled children finish their activities they go home, where sometimes they spend the rest of the evening engaged in a number of games and artistic projects with their siblings or parents or watching television, either videos or children's programs or, in the case of older children, completing their homework. Some of the children have in their same neighborhood their school, home and the after-school activities so they walk from one site to the other using the brief free periods available in the transitions to one or another space to play in the street or in parks with siblings or neighbors (cf. Rasmussen, 2004).

In the following sub-headings we present cases that illustrate each style of after-school time use. The cases are written as shortened versions of the narrative summaries we presented to parents at the beginning of the second interview. Each case exemplifies the main characteristics and differences between the four styles we have identified; yet they vary in the degree to which they are prototypical (i.e. 'inside/outside the circle') of each cluster, illustrating the continuum of possibilities between each corner of our triangle.

*Santiago: A prototypical homebound child*

Santiago is a three year-old only boy who lives with his parents in a modern apartment complex with a private playground, swimming pool and sports court in Retiro district. His paternal grandparents live in the same neighborhood and he has frequent contact with them. He also has several older cousins who live in different parts of the city but that he sees regularly. His father explicitly describes him as *casero* 'homely' and his after-school daily routines reflect this preference for domestic life.

Santiago attends a private school several blocks away from his home so he wakes up around 7:30 am to go to school. He finishes school at 5:00 pm and is picked up by his father or grandparents Monday through Thursday and by his mother on Fridays. Friday has a "special routine", since Santiago and her mother go to a restaurant next to his school to have pancakes and cream as 'evening snack'. Other weekdays he is taken home by his father or grandparents and after having his snack may go to the public park or his private playground to play with his soccer ball. However, especially during the winter, he often stays at home where he watches videos, plays games with his father, looks at books or reads stories with his father or plays by himself in his room. This orientation to domestic space and nuclear family relations is captured in Santiago's photographs, all of which were taken at home, as shown in Figure 2.

-----  
INSERT FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE  
-----

Since his school has a long schedule that offers supplementary curricular subjects (English language, sports, etc.), his parents do not consider it necessary to have him attend any structured activities after school. At night, he goes to bed early, around 8:30 pm, and usually does not have time to listen to a bed-time story since he is often too tired and his parents have not even finished dinner by the time he asks to be put in bed.

In summary, Santiago's life after school takes place in his home, and his social relationships gravitate around his nuclear and extended family. His leisure time is spent mainly in the domestic realm, where he engages in a number of activities, and when he goes out-doors he continues to play with the adults in his family.

*Laura: An older non-scheduled child*

Laura is an eight year-old girl who lives with her brother and parents in Retiro district in a modern apartment complex with a private playground, swimming pool and tennis court. Her three living grandparents live in nearby districts of Madrid and she has frequent contact with them, both on weekends and during the week.

Laura attends a public school located practically across the street from her house. After school (which finishes at 4:00 pm) she stays playing in the school playground with a mixed-aged and gender group of children from her school. She is usually picked up from school by her mother, who stays in the playground while Laura plays. After forty five minutes or an hour Laura and her friends are urged to move on by their parents and then they may go to play to a nearby park (see Figure 3), make arrangements to go to each others homes or head to other personal commitments. During the school year of the study Laura went to English lessons and swimming lessons for an hour a week in each case. The English classes were informally organized by her aunt at her home and attended by Laura and her cousin. Also, the main reason to enroll Laura in swimming lessons was because there is a swimming pool in her apartment complex and her parents wanted to be sure she was safe in her own home.

-----  
INSERT FIGURE 3 AROUND HERE  
-----

Since she started third grade, the homework she must complete after school has increased. This has also made her reluctant to enroll in more after-school activities because it would mean she would have to sacrifice "play time" in order to complete her homework after or before the activities, as explicitly stated during her interview (translated into English from Spanish):

(...)

Researcher: And this year why don't you have some many (out-of-school activities)?

Laura: Because I have more homework and I have less time to play and do homework.

(...)

After finishing homework she still has some time in the evening to watch television, play with her brother or play in her room, where she likes to dress up and paint. As her mother explained, although she plays outdoors after school, once she gets home she is reluctant to leave the house again.

At around 8:00 pm she begins to pick up, wash up and then she helps her mother a little in the preparation of dinner. They whole family has dinner together in the kitchen and only on Fridays, as a special family event, they watch a movie in the living room while they eat. At night she sometimes reads a story or is read to but this is not something she can do every day, either because it is too late or she is too tired to do so.

In summary, Laura's after school time gravitates around different settings in her neighborhood, such as her school, parks and sports centers, her cousin's home and her own house. She is enrolled in some non-formal learning activities (English and swimming) but these are chosen for practical and 'non-academic' reasons. In many of these spaces she is accompanied by her brother and interacts with a range of peers or family members of different ages and gender.

*Martin: a flexible outdoor and scheduled child*

Martin is a five year-old boy who lives with his parents and younger brother in a large remodelled apartment in Retiro district. The building where he lives is surrounded by big public parks and Retiro park is only a few minutes away by foot. His aunt and uncle live nearby and they meet very often during the week. Fridays, Martin's aunt is in charge of picking him up and walking him home.



Martin attends a private Catholic pre-school that is very close to his home. His mother or care-taker picks him up at lunch time and they go home, where he eats with his younger brother, and then goes back to school. His school organizes after-school activities during the afternoon and Martin is enrolled in soccer and English language lessons, so after lunch he leaves his home and stays about an hour at school. His mother usually picks him up after the activities and they often stay some more time in the school playground playing with his friends (see Figure 4) and eating a snack.

Sometimes, after school, his friends visit him or he visits them at their homes. Depending on the home they play in, Martin and his friends engage in different games. Martin especially likes to visit some of his friend's homes because he can play with their videogames, something he is "not allowed to do at his home".

-----  
INSERT FIGURE 4 AROUND HERE  
-----

When Martin is at home every activity that takes place is organized for both siblings and in the later part of the evening Martin and his brother spend time playing together. The children and the family do not spend much time watching television. Other evenings Martin spends some time looking at his books or doing "school-type homework", such as arts and crafts. He has many books and he is told that there is no special time for reading, since books in his house are considered as "other toys". Around 8:00 pm the family starts with "night routines". Martin and his younger brother try to help with household tasks, although they do not do it every day. Every night before going to bed, his father reads Martin and his brother a story book.

In summary, Martin spends most of his free time in the evening outside of his home, either at school in after-school activities or the playground, parks and other children's homes

and only later in the evening does he return to his home. His social interactions in these settings include his family (brother, parents and extended family), caretaker and peers.

*Cristina: an active fully scheduled child*

Cristina is a nine year-old girl who lives in a traditionally working-class residential neighborhood in the south-east of Madrid with her parents and younger brother. Her grandmother lives in another apartment of the same building and her aunt and family also live nearby. Cristina, her brother and her parents are Deaf. She attends a bilingual sign language school located in the other extreme of the city. To go to school she has to wake up very early and travel in public transport with her brother and mother for over an hour. In the evening she is picked up by one of her parents or a neighbor and driven back home.

School finishes at 4:00 pm but Cristina does not always go directly home since she is enrolled in several structured activities in her school, her neighborhood and an association of Deaf families that her family is a part of. Two days a week she attends supplementary language therapy at school, where she does mostly language exercises with the help of a computer (see Figure 5). She is also enrolled in painting classes once a week which she enjoys a lot. Fridays she participates in a sports club organized by the regional Deaf association, where throughout the school-year they are introduced to and practice different sports.

-----  
INSERT FIGURE 5 AROUND HERE  
-----

After her activities she goes directly home. Once she is at home she has a snack and starts with her homework. Even on the only weekday she does not have after-school activities she goes directly home to start with her homework which she can do more calmly. During the week she does not watch television and dinner time is reserved for conversations with her

parents. Before going to bed she reads books with her mother. Usually they have a ritual by which each one of them reads part of a story separately, and then they sign the story to each other. This allows them to read long novels, such as books from the *Harry Potter* series, over several nights. Alternatively, sometimes they change book-reading for riddles that Cristina's mother tells her.

At weekends she watches video movies, plays with her friends in the street and parks surrounding her home and reads books or magazines of her choice. Yet on weekends she is sometimes also involved in activities structured for the Deaf community, such as theatre workshops or storytelling events. In summary, Cristina's weekday schedule is organized around her after-school activities and homework time at home. During the week her social interactions gravitate between her class-mates in these activities and her family. She interacts with her neighborhood friends in informal play on weekends, however even during this time she also sometimes enrolls in structured programs.

### **Conclusions**

The results of our study show children making use of the city as a social and informal educational resource, but within this general orientation there are different ways of organizing time and after school routines. This diversity occurs within a relatively homogeneous sample in socio-economic and cultural terms. In comparison to previous work on children's out of school routines there are both similarities and differences which may help clarify what can be seen as broader patterns in Western urban children's lives and what is specific to this sample of Spanish children [2]. Conceptually, our research shares Zehier's (2003) interest in examining children's activity-location interrelationships and how they constitute children's "individual temporalized life space" (p. 66). However, in contrast to Zehier, we do not consider our results to show processes of *insularization*, understood either as a confinement to particular social settings (which, in any case, would only be the case of 'homebound

children') or the fragmentation between different social spaces. Rather, while it is true that children participate in different social settings in which they engage in specific activities, they establish selective interrelationships and connections between these settings through the organization of a system of daily and weekly routines. In other words, these supposed 'islands' are connected to each other and project forms of activity onto each other, so they cannot be seen as working in isolation. A focus on routines is the defining aspect of our approach, since we consider it allows tapping into the potential developmental implications these routines have, to explore the practical and ideological conditions that constitute routines and to discuss how they configure particular ways of using urban contexts. In this way, our approach attempts to find a balance (which has its own advantages and disadvantages) between classic work in Children's Geographies, that scrutinizes in detail children's spatial mobility but does not provide insights into the developmental patterning of these trajectories and activities (e.g. Hart, 1979), and work in Developmental Psychology, that examines in detail the frequency and relevance of different activities and their settings (e.g. Tudge, Doucet, Otero, Sperb, Piccini and Lopes, 2006) but does not insert these frequencies in a daily or weekly temporal pattern.

As advanced in the introduction, examining routines leads to determine routine styles. We have identified four styles in our data, which can be contrasted to other categories in the literature. In comparison with Karsten's (2005) study in Amsterdam, there are some parallels. Our 'homebound' children are similar to her 'indoor children' in that they mainly play and spend time at home; however, our homebound children do not spend the evening only watching television and are more varied in the activities they engage in. Our 'non-scheduled' children seem to be quite similar to her 'outdoor' children and also help disconfirm overgeneralizations regarding children's retreat from urban public space. Finally, our 'fully-scheduled' children are similar to her 'backseat generation' children and also have parallels

with other reports of children's growing institutionalization and engagement in out-of-school structured activities in the United Kingdom, the United States and Denmark (Smith and Barker, 2000; Laureau, 2000; Rasmussen, 2000). Yet, there are some particularities in how this style is organized in Madrid. Unlike what is described for the United Kingdom and Denmark, holistic settings such as after-school clubs are not prevalent in Spain; rather, children are enrolled in particular activities and after-school lessons (sports, music, languages, etc.) that take place in various premises. In this way, children move from school, to these premises, to their homes or other settings - in the case of our participants, who are younger than those studied in the above references, escorted by their parents. For our participants, these after-school settings are within their neighborhoods and district, so they mainly walk to these sites or, in any case, use public transport to reach them; which contrasts with the depiction of this style in Amsterdam and the United States where children are transported by car [3].

What seems to be a previously unreported style are our 'outdoor and scheduled' children, who hardly play at home in the central hours of the evening and seem to balance an engagement in after-school structured activities with time for unstructured play in parks, plazas and friend's homes. In this way, these children could be considered to be the ones that make the most use of the opportunities offered by their urban surroundings. Also, given that they are not a marginal segment of children, their presence is especially relevant to re-examine current discourses focusing on the city as a hostile environment, which in the case of Spain are prevalent (Delval & Moreno, 2003; Cabanellas & Eslava, 2005). These children in our sample make extensive use of the resources in their communities and these communities offer a number of spaces for children that do not necessarily involve substantial economic costs or complicated time logistics. More generally, this seems to be a trait of established middle-class districts and neighborhoods of the city of Madrid. Therefore, at the very least, as long as cities are able to maintain a certain degree of socio-economic and cultural

heterogeneity these negative assessments of the city cannot be over-generalized. More broadly, these children in combination with non-scheduled children (in total, 44% of our participants) also show how some adults and children are still value and use urban public space. Retiro district is a rather privileged area in the city of Madrid in this respect but, nevertheless, this orientation prevails in a context in which urban planning policies (for example, in the design of housing and public facilities) have been clearly moving in the opposite direction. Also, this tendency unfolds in a large a complex city such as Madrid but shares traits with reports from smaller mid-sized Spanish cities (Baylina, Ortiz & Prats, 2006) and, thus, may reflect broader values in relation to contemporary Spanish childhood.

In any case, the sociologically most relevant result of our study is that we have found this diversity of styles within the same socio-economic and socio-cultural group. This complicates greatly the associations between social-class and particular patterns of after-school time use and routines that have been made previously (Karsten, 2005; Laureau, 2000, 2002). Yet, this may have other analytical advantages. Given that not all middle-income families of the district attend the literary events participants were recruited from, it does seem that we are tapping into the particular cultural dispositions and routines of ‘literature-devoted’ children and families. In other words, this configuration of results allows disentangling analytically *economic* and *cultural* aspects of *social capital* (Bourdieu, 1986; Gregory & Williams, 2000) and, for future studies, points out the need to examine in more detail parental ideologies and their interrelationship with different family social practices. This would allow untangling they way in which particular socio-economic conditions permit certain cultural dispositions and preferences to unfold.

To conclude, as part of our analysis we have proposed a model of children’s after-school spaces and grouped children’s styles within the logic of this model. Given that it is an inductively produced and data-based model it fits well with our results and the little

longitudinal information we have suggests it accounts for changes in children's time use. Hopefully, future studies could further test the validity of this model in different national settings and, even, across the different socio-economic and cultural groups that could be contemplated by the model. In any case, we want to argue that an important strength of this model is that it allows to capture variability in children's use of after-school time, incorporating forms of analyzing routines that move beyond dichotomous oppositions (i.e. solitary vs. sociable children, enrolled in structured activities vs. homebound, watching television vs. reading books) and can provide a richer view of children's daily lives.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank David Slavit, Gisela Ernst-Slavit and the two anonymous reviewers of the journal for their helpful and critical comments to previous versions of this paper.

### **Notes**

[1] All parents gave their written consent to use the photographs for research purposes and the majority also extended this consent to use in scientific and academic publications and presentations. Individual cases for discussion are drawn from this later group and all names have been changed to help protect children's identities.

[2] To simplify the discussion we will leave aside methodological differences as a factor in the production of different results.

[3] The exceptions to this pattern are the Deaf children who participated in our study. These children's schools are very far away from their homes and they also incorporate to their routines the settings provided by Deaf associations, which are located neither close to their schools nor homes.



## References

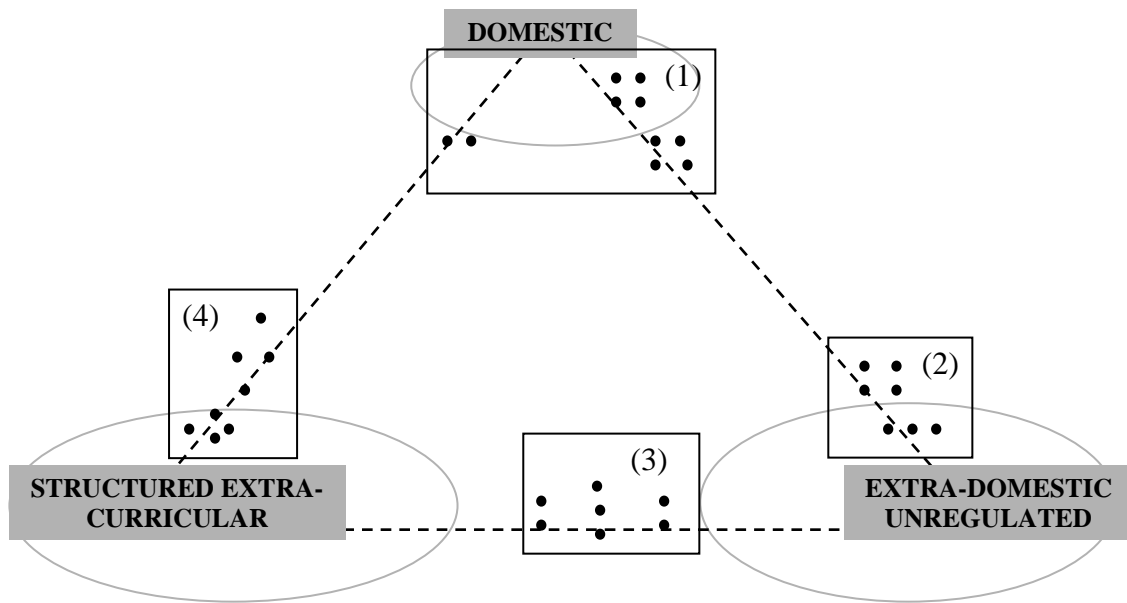
- ABU-GHAZEH, T. (1998) Children's use of the street and the playground in Abu-Nuseir, Jordan, *Environment and Behavior*, 30 (6), pp. 799-831.
- ÁLVAREZ, A. (1994) Child's everyday life. An ecological approach to the study of activity systems, in: A. ÁLVAREZ & P. DEL RIO (Eds.) *Education as Cultural Construction*, pp.23-38 (Madrid, Fundación Infancia y Aprendizaje).
- ANDERSON, R; WILSON, P. & FIELDING, L. (1988) Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 23 (3), pp. 285-303.
- BARLETT, S; HART, R; SATTERTHWAITE, D; DE LA BARRA, X. & MISSAIR, A. (1999) *Cities for Children : Children's rights, poverty and urban management* (London, Earthscan Publications).
- BAYLINA, M; ORTIZ, A. & PRATS, M. (2006) Children and playgrounds in Mediterranean cities, *Children's Geographies*, 4 (2), pp. 173-183.
- BEN-ARIEH, A. & OFIR, A. (2002) Time for (more) time-use studies: Studying the daily activities of children, *Childhood*, 9 (2), pp. 225-248.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1986) The forms of capital, in: J. E. RICHARDSON (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, pp. 241-158 (Westport, Greenwood Press).
- CABANELLAS, I. & ESLAVA, C. (Eds.) (2005) *Territorios de la Infancia: diálogos entre arquitectura y pedagogía* [Childhood Territories: Dialogues between architecture and education] (Barcelona, Graó).
- CHRISTENSEN, P; JAMES, A. & JENKS, C. (2000). Home and movement: Children constructing 'family time', in: S. L. HOLLOWAY & G. VALENTINE (Eds.) *Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning*, pp. 139-155 (London, Routledge).

- CHRISTENSEN, P. & O'BRIEN, M. (2003) Children in the city: Introducing new perspectives, in: P. CHRISTENSEN & M. O'BRIEN (Eds.) *Children in the City: home, neighborhood and community*, pp. 1-12 (London, RoutledgeFalmer).
- DELVAL, J. & MORENO, M.C. (2003) Las cultural infantil y juvenil [Child and youth cultures], *Cuadernos de Pedagogía*, 326, pp. 25-29.
- GREGORY, E. & WILLIAMS, A. (2000) *City Literacies: learning to read across generations and cultures* (London, Routledge).
- HART, R. (1979). *Children's experience of place*. New York: Irvington.
- HOLLOWAY, S. & VALENTINE, G. (2000) Children's geographies and the new social studies of childhood, in: S. L. HOLLOWAY & G. VALENTINE (Eds.) *Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning*, pp. 1-26 (London, Routledge).
- KARSTEN, L. (1998) Growing up in Amsterdam: Differentiation and segregation in children's daily lives, *Urban Studies*, 35 (3), pp. 565-581.
- KARSTEN, L. (2005) It all used to be better? Different generations on continuity and change in urban children's daily use of space, *Children's Geographies*, 3 (3), pp. 275-290.
- LAHIRE, B. (2004) Del consumo cultural a las formas de experiencia literaria [From cultural consumption to forms of literary experience], in: B. LAHIRE (Ed.) *Sociología de la Lectura [Sociology of Reading]*, pp.179-197 (Barcelona, Gedisa).
- LAREAU, A. (2000) Social class and the daily lives of children: a study from the United States, *Childhood*, 7 (2), pp. 155-171.
- LAREAU, A. (2002) Invisible inequality: social class and childrearing in Black families and White families, *American Sociological Review*, 67, pp. 747-776.
- MACBETH, J; KIRWAN, T. & MYRES, K. (2001) *The Impact of Study Support* (London, Department for Education and Skills).

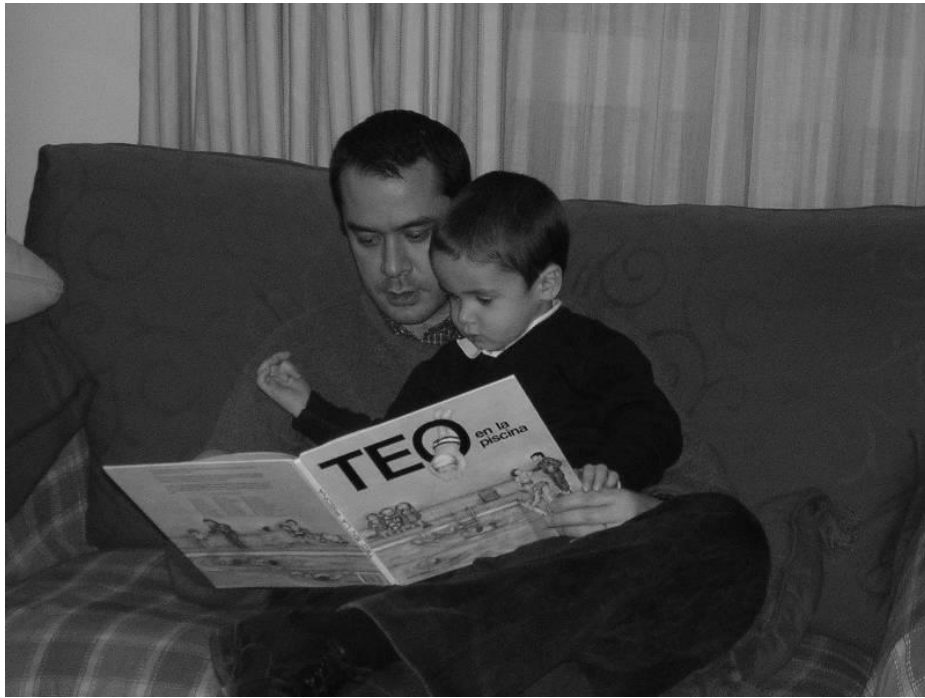
- MARCHESI, A. (2000) *Controversias en la Educación Española [Controversies in Spanish Education]* (Madrid, Alianza).
- MATTHEWS, H; LIMB, M. & TAYLOR, M. (2000) The street as 'thirdspace', in: S. L. HOLLOWAY & G. VALENTINE (Eds.) *Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning*, pp. 63-79 (London, Routledge).
- MCLAUGHLIN, M. (2000) *Community Counts: how youth organizations matter for youth development* (Washington, Public Education Network).
- PHILO, C. (2000) "The corner-stones of my world": editorial introduction to special issue on spaces of childhood, *Childhood*, 7 (3), pp. 243-256.
- RASMUSSEN, K. (2004) Places for children - children's places, *Childhood*, 11 (2), pp. 155-173.
- SMITH, F. & BARKER, J. (2000) 'Out of school', in school: A social geography of out of school childcare, in: S. L. HOLLOWAY & G. VALENTINE (Eds.) *Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning*, pp. 245-256 (London, Routledge).
- TUDGE, J; DOUCET, F; ODERO, D; SPERB, T; PICCINI, C. & LOPES, R. (2006) A window into different cultural worlds: Young children's everyday activities in the United States, Brazil and Kenya. *Child Development*, 77 (5), pp. 1446-1469.
- VILA, I. (1998) *Familia, Escuela, Comunidad [Family, School, Community]* (Barcelona, ICE-Horsí).
- ZEHIER, H. (2003) Shaping daily life in urban environments, in: P. CHRISTENSEN & M. O'BRIEN (Eds.) *Children in the City: home, neighborhood and community*, pp. 66-81 (London, RoutledgeFalmer).

**Table 1: Profile of the participating families**

<b>Parental education (highest degree in the nuclear family)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
(University) Post-graduate	4	12.5
Higher education	21	71
Secondary education	4	12.5
Primary or less	1	4
Not specified	2	6
<b>Type of school children are enrolled in</b>		
Public	11	35
Private (including subsidized)	21	65
<b>Frequency of literary practices with children</b>		
<i>Storytelling events</i>		
2-3 times a month	21	65
once or less a month	7	22
'Occasionally'	4	13
<i>'Book reading' at home</i>		
Daily	28	88
'Approximately' once a week	2	6
'Rarely'	2	6



**Figure 1: Children's four styles of after-school routines: (1) *homebound* children, (2) *non-scheduled* children, (3) *outdoor and scheduled* children, (4) *fully scheduled* children.**



**Figure 2: Santiago reading a book with his father at home**



**Figure 3: Laura playing in a public park after swimming lessons**



**Figure 4: Martin in the playground with his best friends from school**





**Figure 5: Cristina at speech therapy after-school classes**