

## **Abstract**

Title of dissertation:           EXPLORING PARENTS' CROSSINGS INTO  
SCHOOLS: UNDERSTANDING A CRITICAL STEP  
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOME-SCHOOL  
RELATIONSHIPS

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This study seeks to deconstruct the process by which home-school relationships develop. This study suggests these relationships develop as the result of “crossings” between home and school where crossings lead to foundational interactions that establish these relationships. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), this study investigates school and home factors associated with kindergarten parents’ crossings into schools. In addition, this study explores the relationship between crossings and student reading achievement at the end of the kindergarten year.

Multilevel methods are applied to explore the impact of both individual and school level factors on parent crossings and reading achievement. This study uses a quantitative criticalist lens and proposes an alternative conceptual model to explore how relationships between home-school form. Crossings potentially lead to interactions that

form relationships and impact parent/teacher perceptions of each other, the child's experience at school, and school cultural practices. Findings illustrate the varied nature and impact of these crossings. Not all families or communities cross at the same rate; crossings differ by family education level, race/ethnicity and average income of the school community. Families also experience different degrees of barriers, with families with lower rates of crossings reporting higher barriers to school entry. Schools that offer more events and are successful in helping parents learn how to support their child academically and socially have greater numbers of crossings. School poverty level has a differential impact on crossings based on how much a child praises the school and how much the school contacts the home about student learning.

Parent crossings at the individual level and average parent crossings at the school are associated with reading achievement at the end of kindergarten. However, crossings have differential effects on reading achievement based on children's reading skills at the time of entering kindergarten and between parents with no high school diploma versus those with a high school diploma.

EXPLORING PARENTS' CROSSINGS INTO SCHOOLS:  
UNDERSTANDING A CRITICAL STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOME-  
SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

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## Preface

*“A la raíz va el hombre verdadero. Radical no es más que eso: el que va a las raíces. No se llame radical quien no vea las cosas en su fondo.” – Jose Martí, Cuban Poet & Activist, 1893*

The quote above translates to “A truthful man goes to the roots. Radical is no more than that: to go to the roots. He should not be called radical who does not see things at its foundation.” The concept of *going to the roots* reflects my goal for this study. This study attempts to ask and answer a basic yet essential descriptive question—who crosses the sociocultural border between home and school and enters into schools, and, what are the outcomes for doing so? In my review of studies on home-school relationships few studies described the development of these relationships. In focusing on the actual literal crossing, I am returning to the root of these relationships and questioning assumptions about parental involvement. Parent involvement often equates parent behaviors with a relationship. Other studies about these relationships focus exclusively on difficult encounters between school staff and parents. Elemental steps in the formation of relationships less often are discussed. Yet to understand a phenomenon, the entirety of the process must be explored. I seek to return to the roots of these relationships by exploring the context that impacts these crossings.

My early engagement with this topic began with a qualitative pilot study looking at a group of diverse middle class mothers’ understanding of their relationship to their child’s teacher (González, 2012). This pilot study emerged from a course paper in a transcultural education course in which we explored the ideas of literal and metaphorical

border crossings and borderland spaces that emerge when two or more cultures edge upon each other. The concept of borderlands, in which a person is neither of one place nor of another, resonated with me as someone who lives *in-between* multiple cultural contexts. This pilot study found that these mothers, through their engagement with their child's teacher, potentially entered into a cultural borderland between the culture of their homes and the culture of their child's school. This borderland emerged because the mothers actively engaged within the school and often altered the school space. In addition, the mothers often altered the home space to support their child's schooling. The mothers often were unclear of their appropriate role in the school and yet forged a path. These mothers experienced moments of intimacy and support with the teachers and moments of frustration and disagreement. I realized that these stories captured a complexity, nuance, and ambiguity under-described in the literature.

In this dissertation, I decided to engage with these ideas using quantitative data. This desire to combine ideas from cultural studies, a largely qualitative interdisciplinary field, to a quantitative study was not merely an intellectual exercise. Rather this desire reflects an honest belief that in using the lens of borders and border crossings I could see and engage with a pre-existing quantitative dataset differently than if I did not use this lens. The idea of crossings allowed me to seek and explore nuance within a large quantitative dataset. Still, there are limits to what I could explore with this data. Yet, I believe I have been successful in seeing what I could not see without a border lens and that this study captures some of the conflicting messages and concepts about home-school relationships found in the larger discourse around these relationships.

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Stephanie Timmons Brown has been not only a committee member, but as Executive Director of the Maryland Institute for Minority Achievement and Urban Education (MIMAUE) also has supervised me during four years of my graduate assistantship (GA). My experience at my graduate assistantship should be a model for all GAs. I did meaningful work and was respected as an equal, while my time as a student was equally respected. I am glad to say that Stephanie has served as a mentor in

both personal and professional issues and is also a friend. During my time at MIMAUE, I also had the support and friendship of two additional persons, Martin L. Johnson, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Curriculum and Instruction and founder of MIMAUE and Tamika Montgomery Smith, MIMAUE Program Manager.

Of the numerous communities at Maryland that supported me, I was lucky to be in a department where I felt valued and where I could grow. I learned much from professors in my department. Through a research apprenticeship my first year with Betty Malen, my thinking and writing skills were sharpened in ways I could not have imagined. My thinking skills continued to be sharpened through coursework taken with other faculty members in my department, namely, Barbara Finkelstein, Steve Selden, and Jennifer Rice King. I also felt a great sense of support from staff in the department, especially from, Lattisha “Tish” Hall. Anyone who can endure graduate students’ neuroses and repeated questions, and still be pleasant, lovely, helpful, and competent accomplishes a grand feat, this Tish does amazingly well.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Parent and teacher relationships exist because children attend schools. The schoolhouse becomes one of the first and primary places where the child moves from the private sphere of the home into a public sphere. As children begin school, they begin to commute through two culturally-embedded spaces: home and school. When home and school are conceived as binary locations, each space separate from the other, we simplify the relationships that result from this rich process of movement, crossing, and encounter. Parents and teachers play a critical role in the child's negotiation between home and school spaces because of their roles in these spaces as administrators, moderators, enforcers, educators and co-learners with children. Children live their daily lives in both spaces. Due to the important role parents and teachers play in each space, parents and teachers will inevitably come into contact. Parents and teachers form relationships as they cross spaces and interact with one another, in confrontation or collaboration, in person or through the mediation of the child.

The crossings between the home and school spaces reflect one of the first critical steps in the development of home-school relationships. While it is difficult to determine how many interactions are needed before a relationship is established, relationships develop through interactions or encounters that occur as a result of this crossing (Hinde, 1997). Movement and crossings are essential prerequisites that lead to encounters that form relationships. All relationships depend on crossings occurring, though not all crossings lead to the development of a relationship. A parent and teacher relationship cannot develop if crossings never occur between the home and school. For example, a mother may enter the school daily to pick up her child, but never engage with the teacher

and thus form a weak or tentative relationship or no relationship at all. Even when crossings do lead to interactions, a relationship may not form. Teachers meeting parents once a year at an open house event may not be enough to establish a relationship. Nevertheless, these initial crossings may provide the elemental opportunities for home-school relationships to occur.

Cultural matters such as unspoken expectations and assumptions often mask the complexity of how these crossings come about, form, and function. The existence of this movement between home and school is not inevitable or natural, but instead the result of constructed understandings of the appropriate manner in which school and home should interact. In the United States, at its most basic, we expect parents and teachers to enter into each other's "territory," in predetermined ways, during the school year and to form relationships. School traditions and rituals, such as *Back to School Night* and Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) meetings or home visits, as sometimes found in programs such as Head Start, create prescribed reasons for crossings between home and school.

Other cultural expectations also suggest the permeability of borders between home and school. Minimally, laws expect school officials to intervene in the home in situations where the child is endangered. Policies such as *No Child Left Behind* (Department of Education, 2004) create a vision for home-school relationships where parents are expected to enter the school for a variety of activities. NCLB envisions "that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child..." [Section 9101(32), ESEA.] (Department of Education, 2004, p. 3). Understanding these



crossings, then, is critical to the understanding of home-school relationships (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978).

There are myriad ways in which crossings occurs in these relationships, with varying purposes, different frequencies of crossings, and multiple outcomes. Numerous studies (e.g., Goldstein, 2008; Henry, 1996; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) explore the interactions that result from crossings between the home or school space. Since this crossing is assumed or seen as natural, a common belief about culturally determined habits, few studies critically examine or explore this phenomenon.

While many studies in education on home-school relationships focus on prescribing parent behavior regarding their child's schooling, often discussed as "parent involvement," the intent of this study is to better understand these relationships by returning to the "roots" of these relationships. Specifically, I deconstruct the process by which these relationships develop and explore a critical step in the development of these relationships – parent crossings into schools. These crossings into the school represent the potential for encounters between parents and the larger school community, such as teachers, administrators, additional school staff and other parents. These encounters then may form the basis for the development of a relationship between home and school.

This dissertation explores factors associated with kindergarten parents entering or "crossing" into the school space. Using data from the Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten (ECLS-K), this study explores predictors of parents' crossings into school including factors that measure school cultural practices, and school demographics; home characteristics, including race/ethnicity and parent education level and barriers to entry; and child/parent/teacher perceptions. In addition,

the association between parents' crossings into school and student learning in reading achievement is explored.

Focusing on kindergarten parents' crossings into schools provides an alternative model of home-school relationships. This model is different from common discussions of these relationships primarily because it defines and sets to describe the process by which these relationships form. Offering this alternative model represents a "quantitative criticalist" (Stage, 2007, p. 5) approach. While the methods are different for critical scholars of qualitative and quantitative research, the motivation is the same: to question what we know, describe and investigate that which is there, and to promote equity and the possibility of social transformation (Stage, 2007). With its quantitative criticalist perspective, I build on the cultural study concept of border crossings and test the usability of this concept in exploring and understanding parent-school relationships using quantitative data. Additionally, a scholar grounded in a critical lens seeks out information about an issue of equity using methods and methodologies less utilized. In the case of home-school relationships, the majority of the scholarly literature is qualitative. By providing a larger framework and narrative, I build on these prior studies and focus on a gap in the literature – the development of these relationships.

This quantitative criticalist perspective includes more than the use of a cultural studies lens and informs the entire research process. With this perspective, I continuously reflect on the framing of the study, the language I use, the context I provide or not, the statistical models I consider, and the interpretation of data. This perspective also informs the use of interaction terms in the quantitative models to determine if associations – and therefore potential social processes – differ for groups.

These descriptions of crossings as leading to home and school interactions reflect the conceptualization of these relations used in this study, including the questions asked and the operationalization of variables. The remainder of this chapter further elaborates. First, I delve into the conceptual framing of this study and briefly contrast this framing with current treatments of the topic. Next, I present a conceptual model, describe the dataset used, list the research questions, and conclude with a discussion of this study's contribution to the field.

### **Conceptual Framing**

Home-school relationships develop due to the movement, crossings, and encounter between two cultural spaces, home and school. Culture, defined in this study as, the “habits of heart, mind, and association” is conveyed through various means such as language use, traditions and rituals, rites of passage, physical objects, architectural spaces and remnants, and hierarchies of power (Finkelstein, Pickert, Mahoney, & Barry, 1998, p. 9). The culture of schools is reflected through the schools' mission or philosophy, books and curricula used, the teaching styles, the teachers' and staff's personalities; school traditions and rites of passages, such as *Back to School Night*, graduation ceremonies, student performances; and the organization of schools including the daily school schedule, the distribution of resources, the typical nine month school calendar, and the distribution of power. Similarly, the home space has its own culture including a hierarchy of power; architectural spaces such as family rooms, shared bedrooms between siblings, and home offices; and traditions, rituals, values, priorities, and rites of passage often associated with a families' race, ethnicity, religion, countries of origin, locations of arrival, language use, and/or socioeconomic status.

Crossings by parents and school staff not only reflect the culture of schools and homes but through time, these crossings lead to encounters that shape, alter, and form the relationship between home and school. In the last 30 years, schools have sought to strengthen relationships with parents by increasing parents' entry into schools through invitations to school events and functions (Cutler, 2000). Efforts to increase crossings and interactions between parents and teachers may represent new norms regarding associations between parents and teachers, in which parents' presence is expected within the school. In addition, some school rituals provide symbols for parents and teachers to decode to understand the expectations of their relationship. School report cards may signify that parents have an interest and role in their child's academic progress. Yet the infrequent mailing of this diagnostic appraisal and the often terse information sent in the report cards reflect pre-established understandings of how/when/why such information should be shared with parents. In addition, the mailing of report cards to the home indicates that the school can "enter" the home, even if done so in specific ways.

Home-school relationships form because of the movement across space and encounters between individuals in these spaces. Parents who plan children's time to promote "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2003) may physically cross into the school to speak with a teacher. A parent may also move into the school sphere when he/she challenges a teacher's role, authority, and professional autonomy (e.g., Landeros, 2011). In contrast, some parents may never or rarely enter the school and thus establish no, or weak, relationships with teachers as they view the school as a domain in which they have little power or influence (e.g., Valdés, 1996). In this instance, few literal movements into

the school may occur for the parent, yet other movements still occur, such as the movement of the child between home and school or calls to the home by the teacher.

It may seem natural to assume that more crossings by parents reflect stronger and positive relationships with teachers, regardless of the characteristics of the parents or schools. However, the lens of border crossings does not accept this assumption. Theorists, such as Anzaldúa (1987) and Bhabha (1994), who describe literal and metaphorical border crossings often depict the unease and struggles that arise through this movement, especially when the crossing occurs between two culturally different spaces. This implies that the encounters might be different and more difficult when the culture of home and school are quite distinct than when they are more similar.

In other words, if schools reflect White middle class norms (deCarvalho, 2001; Henry, 1996) then White middle class parents may have less difficulty crossing into schools than, for example, working class Latino parents. Numerous studies on home-school relationships (e.g., Cutler, 2000; Henry, 1996; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005) describe the tension between racial and ethnic minority families' encounter with schools. Power and conflict may become heightened when movement is occurring between two very distinct cultural spaces. This study examines the context around these crossings and rejects a normative view of these crossings – namely, that more crossings are associated with higher levels of achievement for all children. As described in the following section, using the metaphor of border crossing provides additional language and concepts to investigate home-school relationships.

### **Limitations of the Current Treatments of Home-School Relationships**

Home-school relationships, like all relationships, are complex. Home-school relationships, of course, include conversations about parent involvement in schools, but these relationships encompass much more than commonly discussed and culturally determined notions of parental engagement. Home-school relationships form through crossings between home and school, reflect expectations each participant has for the other, represent a negotiation of power between home and school, change due to the impact of other persons such as a child or principal, and reveal a historic and social time and place. One limitation of the current treatment of this topic is that discussions often begin with an emerged or assumed relationship. However, less is known about how these relationships form. What is the process that describes the development of these relations? What factors are important in the early steps of these relationships? A lack of knowledge about the roots of these relationships limits the ability to diagnose and understand the relationship in its entirety.

Another limitation in the current treatment of home-school relations is that two common themes, collaboration or conflict, are treated in isolation. Often, the collaborative nature of these relationships is extolled through a focus on parent involvement. The discourse of parent involvement promotes an idealized version of home-school relationships that prescribes the activities appropriate for parents to engage with regarding their child's schooling (deCarvalho, 2001). The diverse ways families may engage with schools often is ignored in favor of specific modes of engagement (deCarvalho, 2001). In addition, the conflict that may arise when a parent becomes "involved" and challenges school authority (e.g., Attantucci, 2004; Landeros, 2011) is

generally minimized in the discourse on parent involvement. Another series of studies apart from parent involvement describes the conflict or difficulties in these relationships. The conflict in these relationships arise from communication issues, varying perspectives, or cultural differences between home and school. Taken as a whole these two strands in the literature describe the conflict and collaboration in these relationships, yet these two strands are often not connected as describing one larger topic – home-school relationships. This disconnection in the literature and a focus on established relationships represent two limitations in the field.

By providing a model that captures both the possibility of conflict and collaboration as well as the development of these relationships, I attempt to address these two limitations in the field. My study explores the foundation of these relationships so that we can re-emerge with a model that would provide a larger and primarily descriptive understanding of these relationships. As part of this broader research agenda, I present in the next section a model that begins at the roots of home-school relationships: the crossings that facilitate the occurrence of encounters between home and school. Specifically, I set out to understand the frequency of crossings, the barriers to crossings, the academic consequences of crossings, and the school context around which crossings occur.

By using the concept of crossings rather than participation, I recognize the ambiguities inherent in interactions between home and school and encourage a more complex understanding of how home-school relationships emerge. That is, crossings are non-normative or standardized and can encompass moments of conflict and collaboration and everything in-between these extremes. The same crossings can also reflect different

experiences and different meanings for different types of families at different types of schools.

### **Conceptual Model**

Figure 1.1 provides a conceptual model deconstructing the process by which home-school relationships form. In the center of the model are two ovals: School Factors and Home Factors. Different school and home factors impact both parents' crossings into schools and school crossings into the home. These crossings then create opportunities for interactions and/or opportunities to form impressions. This opportunity for an interaction to occur may result in a parent talking to a teacher, principal, another parent, or school staff. An opportunity to form impressions may arise when a parent receives a newsletter at home or sees a bulletin board at school honoring his/her child. The parent then may form impressions about the school and his/her relationship to the school. These interactions/impressions form the basis for the home-school relationship. They inform the home about the school and vice versa. The interactions/impressions impact the beliefs and expectations parents and school staff have of each other and can impact future behaviors or encounters. Not all movement and crossings may occur at the same rate or have the same influence. Below I describe a potential scenario and how the process in this scenario might be illustrated in the model.

*A cultural practice of schools (School Factor)* may be frequent communication sent home about school activities. That is, a school routine/tradition may be frequent communication with families via newsletters, report cards, and other materials. This communication sent home leads to a *School Crossing into the Home*, which results in a parent's *Opportunities to Form Impressions*. Parents learn about the school and make



some judgment about the school based on these communications. The form, content, and frequency of communications sent home inform parents of the *Home-School Relationship* and potentially encourage (or discourage) *Parent Crossings into the School*. Parents who work full-time, for example, and struggle to find time to enter the school, may appreciate the frequent contact by schools and build a stronger connection with the school as a result of these communications. For parents who do not read English, frequent communication sent home in English may further reinforce the divide between home and school. The context around these crossings matter then as different outcomes may occur for families.

If *Parent Crossings* result from this frequent communication, parents in their crossing into school will experience additional *Opportunities for Interaction(s) and/or Opportunities to Form Impression(s)*. These opportunities may lead to direct encounters school staff or other parents or observations about the school, which further informs the parent about the nature of the *Home-School Relationship*. With each *Parent Crossing* more *Opportunities for Interaction(s) and/or Opportunities to Form Impression(s)* occur which further inform the *Home-School Relationship*.

Although the conceptual model presented does not make connections with improved student outcomes, such connections can be incorporated using other models in the literature. For example, Epstein's (2001) conceptual model of spheres of influence can be used to connect crossings with improved reading achievement (a research question for this study). Epstein builds on the work of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory which suggests different layers of an environment can impact a child's development. In Epstein's model, home, school, and community form the multiple layers that each has a sphere of influence over the child. The more aligned these spheres of

influence are the better outcomes, both academically and socially, for the child. This alignment would suggest that students receive “common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school” (Epstein, 1995, p. 702). Epstein suggests these common messages then support positive student outcomes. As part of this overlapping spheres, in partnerships to support children schools become “*family-like*” and parents create more “*school-like*” families (Epstein, 1995, p. 702). Alignment from this perspective is seen as a form of cultural mirroring or the extent to which cultural commitments, beliefs, and values of each space become like the other. As such, school efforts to partner and engage with families in parent involvement activities are seen by Epstein as a mechanism to align the spheres of influence of home and school.

A major difference between Epstein’s model and the one I have proposed is that it does not assume that parent involvement activities always align the spheres of influence. These activities may misalign spheres, especially when they create challenges or barriers for different types of families. From this perspective, crossings may promote, inhibit, or differentially influence student outcomes. In addition, the connection between the spheres of influence aligning and improved student outcomes in Epstein’s model is tenuous. This study also makes a more explicit connection between crossings and achievement. Improved student outcomes may not result if the spheres become misaligned through parent involvement activities. Or student outcomes may not improve if parent involvement activities create more interactions but not necessarily promote alignment of the spheres of influence. For example, a parent may attend numerous school events, but

not necessarily make the home more *school-like* as a result of attendance. Entering the school often to attend performances, then, may not lead to improved student outcomes.

As noted above, most studies on home-school relationships assume that interactions between home and school result in a particular type of relationship, often either a positive or negative relationship between home and school. Although this study does not examine all aspects of the model presented, it does focus on a lesser emphasized phenomenon in the literature—the frequency of, barriers to, and context for parent crossings into schools (the right half of the model). It also examines the impact that these crossings may have on a student outcome, reading achievement. Specifically, items from ECLS-K operationalize crossings as a series of actions taken by the parents of kindergarten students that require them to enter schools. I also examine school and home factors that might influence the nature of crossings, including the schools' practices to engage parents, the schools poverty status, parents' beliefs about barriers to crossings, and parents' race and educational attainment. Numerous composite variables are created from individual survey items to explore the contours of parents' crossings into the school and the possible impact of crossings on student reading achievement in kindergarten.

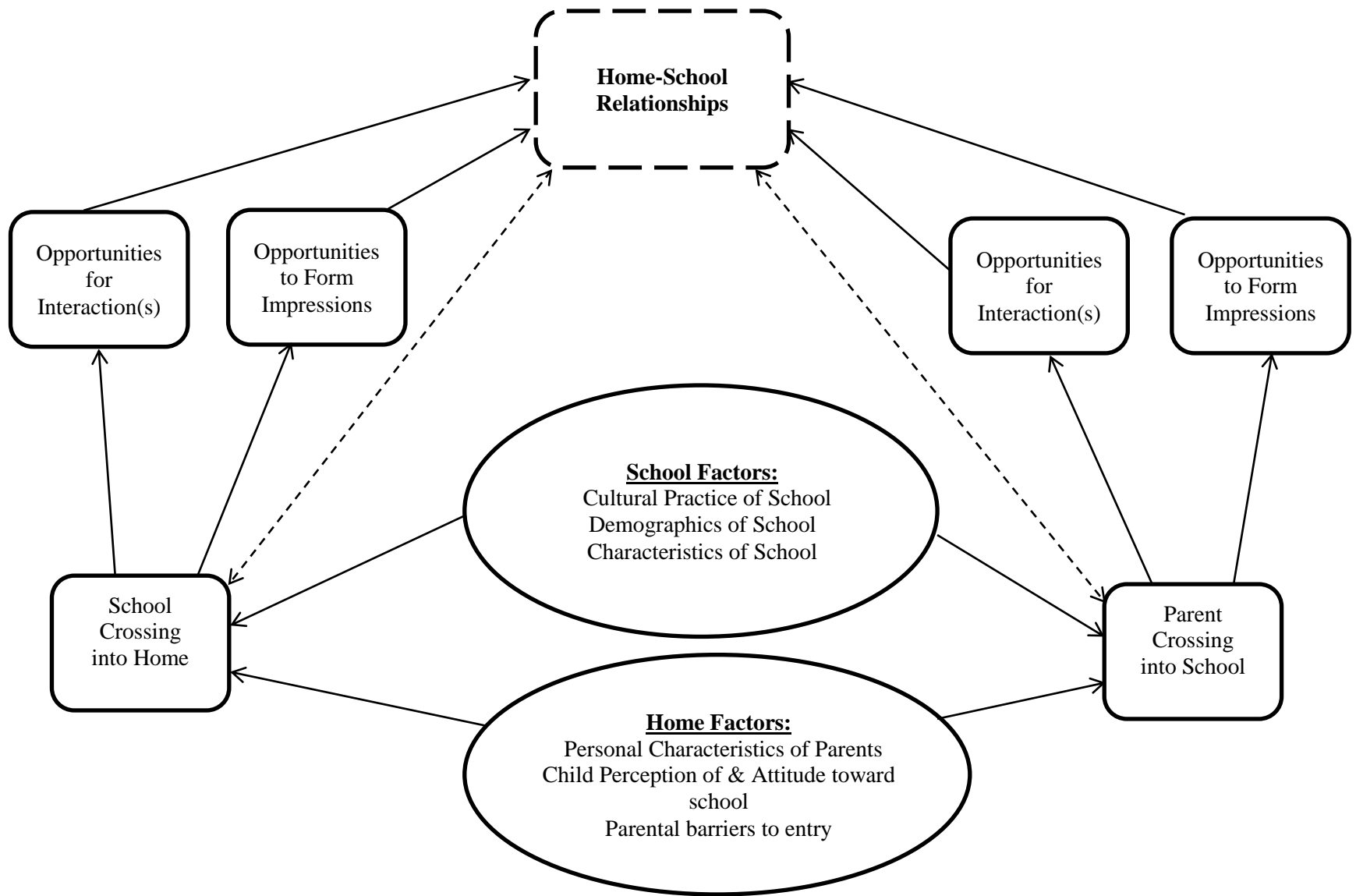


Figure 1.1. Conceptual model of the development of home-school relationships

### **This Study**

This dissertation investigates a critical point in the development of home-school relationships by exploring some contextual elements related to kindergarten parents' crossings into the school. These crossings are crucial for interactions to occur, and interactions form the basis for the development of relationships. Specifically, I examine the extent to which different social identities of parents, parent experiences, school cultural practice, and school characteristics predict kindergarten parents' reported crossings into schools. In addition, I also explore the relationship between crossings and student achievement in reading.

This study utilizes the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). ECLS-K is a longitudinal study conducted in the U.S. that followed a group of kindergarten students (in 1998-99) through their eighth grade. Teachers, administrators, and parents completed surveys and students were tested using item response theory (IRT) scales in reading and mathematics (Tourangeau, Nord, Lê, Pollack, & Atkins-Burnett, 2006). This dataset is attractive as a platform to explore parent crossings due to both the structure of the ECLS-K study and the nature of parent and teacher relations in the early grades of a child's schooling. The study includes over 19,000 students in over 800 schools.

Through three main survey instruments, the ECLS-K study includes numerous items that capture aspects of school practice, parent perspectives of school engagement, home characteristics, parent crossings, and student achievement. These instruments provide an adequate selection of items to use to investigate parent crossings and include the perspective of three main stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, and parents).

Not only are there numerous items to use in this dataset but the focus on early childhood education is also appealing in that parents generally have more interactions with their child's school when their children are young (Henry, 1996; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978). The greater number of interactions with their child's schooling may also occur due to the less specialized nature of the school curriculum at earlier grades, a factor which arguably makes parents better equipped to support their child academically (Henry, 1996). If so, more encounters may occur between home and school for young children, making it easier to investigate parent crossings in the earlier grades. Moreover, earlier encounters for parents of kindergarten students may establish patterns and expectations for teacher and parent relationships that persist into later grades (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).

Significant changes occur in the life of the child and parent when the child begins kindergarten, making this a potentially informative year of study (McClelland, 1995). Home routines change as the child begins school. Parents feel anxiety and mixed feelings about their child beginning school and the transition this represents (McClelland, 1995). The ECLS-K data provide a range of items that reflect on these beginning interactions between home and school (i.e., the child's kindergarten year) and focus on a period in the child's schooling where interactions between home and school may be greatest. As such, ECLS-K appears to be an appropriate and opportune dataset to use for this dissertation.

The focus on reading achievement in this study also is appropriate as kindergarten teachers in the ECLS-K study report they devote most of their instructional time on reading. A comparison of teacher instructional time shows teachers spend more instructional time on reading versus mathematics. Slightly over 50% of the teachers

report spending more than an hour on reading, while about 14% report spending more than an hour on mathematics,  $\chi^2(1, N = 2968) = 471.56, p < .0001$ . In addition, teachers report spending even less time on the following subject areas: social studies, science, music, and art. Teachers also report teaching reading on more days of the week than other subjects. Ninety-five percent of teachers report focusing on reading daily, versus 82% on mathematics,  $\chi^2(16, N = 3052) = 4238.30, p < .0001$ . Given the instructional focus on reading in kindergarten, the focus on reading achievement seems appropriate (See Table A.1 in the Appendix for the percent breakdown of instructional time committed by hours and days of the week).

### **Research Questions**

My research questions explore kindergarten parents crossing at the school and individual level. The analyses are multi-level (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) to address variation in the number of crossings between and within schools. Multi-level analysis provides an opportunity to explore how the individual characteristics of a family and the particular characteristics of a school impact these crossings. Multi-level analysis recognizes that parents are not individuals acting alone and independently in their crossings into the school. Rather, parents may be impacted by school practice and broader contextual factors associated with the beliefs of other parents and the characteristics of families served by schools. Multi-level analysis considers that parents are nested within schools and therefore, the school's characteristics and ways of engaging with families may impact parents crossing into the school.

For this study, exploring the context of kindergarten parents' crossings requires more than simply identifying predictors of the type and frequency of parents' crossings. I

also explore differential relationships associated with the frequency of crossings and its possible effects on reading achievement. I propose the following three research questions

(RQ):

RQ1: Are there differences in the number of crossings reported by parents whose children attend different schools?

RQ2: Are the differences in the number and type of crossings reported by parents associated with different individual and school characteristics? Are there differential effects of school characteristics and school practice related to these crossings?

RQ3: Are the number of crossings reported by parents' associated with student learning in reading in kindergarten? Do the children of parents who report more crossings do better in this subject than the children of parents who report fewer crossings, regardless of family characteristics and the school setting?

Research question one seeks to determine if any variability exists in parents' crossings between schools. If variability exists, a hierarchical model allows the possibility to explore the school level factors that predict these crossings. Research question two begins to explore what school and individual factors predict parents' self-reported crossings into the school. Lastly, since more crossings may not represent positive relations or outcomes, research question three seeks to study the relationship between crossings and student learning in reading.

### **Contributions**

Examining a critical point in the development of home-school relationships refocuses the dialogue about home-school relationships. This critical point is when



parents cross into schools when their children enter kindergarten. Parent crossings through the borders that delineate home and school provide a lens to re-imagine these relationships and make visible less commonly examined factors important in the relationships between parents and schools. The idea of crossings also provides an opportunity to emphasize the ambiguity inherent in these relationships where crossings can be, for example, the result of or cause of conflict between the home and school, or can reflect collaboration one day, and conflict the next. Using these concepts, the conceptual model presented earlier shifts from a prescription as to how these relationships are assumed to be to a return to the roots of these relationships. Using the ECLS-K study provides an opportunity to investigate aspects of the model and make large-scale comparisons not commonly done in studies on home-school relations.

In addition, I approach this study as a quantitative criticalist. While this approach is not common in quantitative studies, I engage with what it means to have a critical lens with quantitative methods, explore the limits and possibilities of this lens, and provide insight for future researchers who may also seek to use this lens in conducting quantitative studies.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I review studies that examine the varied nature of crossings between home and school. Most studies, while reflecting the notion of crossings, do not use this terminology, but they do inform the concept. While I organize the literature thematically, the difference in focus and findings amongst the studies means that many questions about these crossings remain unanswered, such as how many contacts must parents and teachers make before they establish a relationship, how does the child's own movement and crossing impact this relationship, or how do parents negotiate with employers time during the workday to enter the school.

Various methods are used to explore this phenomenon. Many studies reviewed in this chapter use interviews as a methodology, where the researchers interview parents and teachers. Other common qualitative methods include ethnography, case study, and focus groups. A few of the studies are literature reviews and historical analyses. While quantitative studies are less common, the quantitative studies in this review use simple linear regression or provide descriptive analyses of surveys. Using both quantitative and qualitative studies in this review strengthened the ability to explore crossings between home and school.

In an attempt to get to the roots of home-school relationships, I will interrogate the context around parents' "border crossings" into school and the impact of these crossings on reading achievement. This literature review, therefore, explores how other scholars have discussed the varied nature of crossings. This chapter is divided into three main sections: an overview of crossings, school cultural practices and crossings, and the influence of parents' social identities on crossings.

### **An Overview of Crossings**

Crossings, as conceptualized in this study, are more than the physical movement of a person from one place to another, such as a parent entering a classroom or, less common, a teacher visiting the home of a student. Metaphoric crossings also occur in these relationships. Metaphoric crossings do not represent physical movement; rather it is a symbolic movement into a space. Space is more than a classroom or home; space can represent a person's role. A parent and teacher can stand in the physical space of the classroom, but the encounter can "cross" into the home space when the teacher asks about home routines such as the amount of time the child spends watching television, the frequency of the child's visits with his father, or the disciplinary tactics used by the parent. Likewise, the parent can "cross" into the school space through an email to the teacher questioning the child's grade on an assignment or the teacher's pedagogy. This study centers on the physical crossings of parents from home into the school.

Crossings occur through movement between borders, and schools have more permeable borders, as public spaces, than homes. Schools are sites of constant crossings, whether it is the continuous movement of children through its doors; the policing of the school space through local, state, and federal policy; or changing personnel that result from such things as staff retirements, transfers to other schools, or teachers leaving the profession. Through rules and norms, schools attempt to regulate entrance into the school, such as requests to have all visitors sign in at the main office, limits to the number of parent volunteers at the school, or school websites that do not list staff emails.

Homes have borders managed by families. Families constantly cross the borders into and out of the home, as they live their daily lives. Parents leave the home to work,

families attend church, or mothers take their children to medical appointments. Even though homes represent private spaces, which may presume less permeable borders, border crossing into the home occurs frequently by not only individuals such as neighbors and extended family members, but institutions as well. Laws meant to protect children, for example, establish a standard of child welfare and safety within the home. Parents who are neglectful or abusive may experience child protective services or other government agents entering the home to regulate that space. Schools also cross the borders into the home through requests made of the home, such as when teachers ask the child or parent to “practice this with Mom at home” (Henry, 1996, p. 47).

The borders of home and school separate places; they “define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 3). In home-school relations, the crossings of a child, parent, teacher, principal, or other family members, may create a borderland between home and school spaces (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003), an ambiguous place with unclear rules and expectations (Anzaldúa, 1987). This ambiguity arises over the role and expectations of parents within the school space.

For example, a tension and uncertainty in parent–teacher relations exists between parents advocating for their own child and teachers balancing the needs of all children (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Parents and teachers are not natural enemies, but participants who cross boundaries and live both in contested terrain and on common ground. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) argues parents and teachers need to live in the borderlands between home and school, with bridges and boundaries to both domains – open access and closed doors. Focused on teachers’ perspectives, she provides insight into ways teachers negotiate parents’ crossings into the school and suggests teachers must

manage classroom borders to keep professional autonomy. However, she does not discuss how parents might manage crossings into the home space.

This study explores the context around kindergarten parents' crossings into the school and its subsequent association with student reading achievement. In the next two sections, I review literature that informs on these two variables: studies that discuss the frequency of crossings and the potential outcomes of the crossings.

### **Frequency of the Crossing**

The frequency of crossings between home and school often is discussed in studies on home-school relationships. The discussion includes descriptive statistics about the crossings, problems caused by a lack of crossings, and school programs to increase engagement between home and school.

**Providing descriptive statistics about the crossings.** A couple of articles' (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004; Epstein, 1986) provide descriptive statistics of the crossings of families and teachers. A survey of almost 1,300 predominantly (76%) White parents of elementary school children in Maryland found that about 16% of parents reported never receiving a memo from teachers, over 35% had no parent and teacher conferences, and about 60% never spoke to a teacher by phone (Epstein, 1986). At least 70% of the parents never attended a class trip, volunteered in the classroom, participated in fundraising, or assisted in the library or cafeteria.

Another study provides descriptive data on parents' involvement regarding their child's schooling with a Head Start program (Castro et al., 2004). In this study, the most frequent type of parent involvement was volunteering in the classroom, attending parent meetings, helping on field trips, and helping from home (e.g., doing laundry). Parent

employment was the strongest predictor of volunteering. Working parents were less likely to volunteer or volunteered less often. In addition, more experienced teachers had more volunteers. These studies suggest different types of crossings may have different frequencies associated with them; parents may enter schools more for one activity versus another.

**Experiencing a lack of crossings.** Commonly, studies describe or allude to the lack of crossings between home and school. Sometimes this is due to varied cultural understandings of parents' entrance into the school, where a parent might not feel it is necessary or appropriate for them to enter the school space (e.g., Sy, 2006; Valdés, 1996). Other times the lack of crossing is attributed to communication problems between parents and schools, where parents and teachers blame each other for a lack of communication (Allen, Thompson, Hoadley, Engelking, & Drapeaux, 1997; Baker, 2001a; Baker, 2001b; Jayanthi, Nelson, Sawyer, Bursuck, & Epstein, 1995). Parents complain about timeliness, consistency and frequency of communication. Teachers report a lack of time to communicate with parents and differences in attitudes, behavior, and expectations around schooling (Jayanthi et al., 1995).

**Attempting to increase the frequency of interactions.** When schools attempt to strengthen relationships with parents (e.g., Comer, 1984; Epstein, 2001; Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005) or increase communication (e.g., Bauch, 1994; Chapman & Heward, 1982; Chrispeels, 1996; Strom & Strom, 2002-2003; Westat and Policy Studies Associate, 2001), this is often done through programming to increase interactions with families. Programs may be effective in increasing communication with the home through automated messages for parents about school activities and child specific information

(Bauch, 1994; Chapman & Heward, 1982; Strom & Strom, 2002-2003). District policy also can promote greater communication between home and school. A school district's effort to evaluate teacher relationships with families resulted in teachers increasing communication with parents through newsletters, materials about class rules, additional parent and teacher conferences, and daily calendars for parents to review, respond to, and sign (Chrispeels, 1996).

These efforts to increase the frequency of interactions may lead to increased engagement with families. A regression analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 sought to determine if parents' reports of high schools' outreach would positively predict parents' involvement (Simon, 2004). Regardless of teenagers' socioeconomic status, gender, family structure, race/ethnicity, and achievement, parents who perceived more outreach by their teenagers' high schools reported higher attendance at college-planning workshops and school activities, more parent-teenager discussions about postsecondary educational planning and employment, more work with their teenagers on homework, and more parent-teenager discussions about school activities and coursework. Similar to Simon's (2004) analysis, this dissertation will explore the impact of school behaviors, routines, and teacher perspectives on the frequency of kindergarten parents crossing into the school.

### **Potential Outcomes of the Crossings**

Numerous outcomes may result from crossings between home and school; a school policy may change due to a parental challenge, a family may become connected to social services through a school social worker, or the school community becomes more collaborative. This section does not provide an inventory of all possible outcomes, but

discusses three important outcomes: changed perceptions between parents and teachers, improved student outcomes, and altering home and school behaviors and routines.

**Changing perceptions between teachers and parents.** Additional interactions between parents and teachers may result with parents and teachers changing perceptions of each other (Epstein, 1984). Teachers who actively involve parents may come to have similar perceptions of single and married parents. In contrast, teachers who do not involve parents may regard single parents as less cooperative and less reliable than married parents (Epstein, 1984). The researcher suggests teachers who engage with parents come to have positive perspectives of parents.

Similarly, parents report better relationships with teachers when teachers engage more with parents, through increased communication (Bauch, 1994; Chapman & Heward, 1982; Chrispeels, 1996; Strom & Strom, 2002-2003), outreach strategies (Epstein, 1996) and the development of partnerships (Comer, 1984; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999). Parents report higher ratings of teacher personality and quality when teachers have more outreach strategies (Epstein, 1986). Sanders et al. (1999) find school efforts to engage with and create partnerships with parents improve parents' attitude about their child's high school. In addition, increased engagement with families and parental influence in the school can help parents develop a positive emotional attachment and identification with school staff (Comer, 1984). These studies focus on the changed perceptions that occur when parents and teacher increase their encounters; other studies explore the process by which perceptions change due to encounters.

Stoner et al.'s (2005) study of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder presents a model of changing parental perception about their relationships with teachers



based on their experiences advocating for services for their child. Parents' negotiations with doctors over their child's diagnosis influences parents' perception of and ability to work with schools as advocates for their children. Having worked with the medical community to provide treatment to their child from an early age, parents in this study were knowledgeable and experienced in dealing with a third party to garner services for their child. These parents used this knowledge and experience to negotiate for services when their child began school. Consequently, when parents lost trust with school personnel, parents became more vigilant about ensuring their child received the services they needed. The parents' movement amongst different institutions (i.e., medical and school) constantly informed and shaped parents movement into these spaces.

Similarly, Davern (1999) describes how parents' develop perceptions about teachers based on interactions regarding the development of their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). During meetings to develop the IEP, parents noted teachers' attitudes about the child in inclusion settings and the extent to which teachers tried to accommodate the family. In addition, parents assessed whether teachers would take advice from them. In some instances, school staff listened and allowed for parent contributions to the IEP process. At other times, though, the school personnel acted as experts and dismissed parents' suggestions, which parents found frustrating. Parents' interactions with teachers led parents to judge teachers as collaborative or uncooperative. Crossings into the school provided an opportunity for parents to interact with teachers and develop perceptions of teachers based on numerous interactions.

**Improving student outcomes.** Whether using parents as a lever for school reform (e.g., Malen & Ogawa, 1988) or promoting learning at home by encouraging parents to

read with their child (Smylie & Wenzel, 2003), schools often seek to engage parents with the goal of improving student outcomes. Numerous studies make connections with home and school encounters and improved student achievement. Studies report increased student achievement resulting from additional communication between parents and teachers about a child's school problems (Westat Policy Associates, 2001), workshops to improve parenting (Shaver & Walls, 1998), and teacher outreach efforts (Xu & Gulosino, 2006). Indeed, a dominant discourse in the parent involvement literature is the association between involvement and student outcomes. The improved student outcomes include higher grade point average and test scores, student enrollment in more challenging courses, more courses passed and credit earned, improved attendance, and better behavior and social skills at home and school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). However, while a dominant discourse seeks to connect parent engagement with improved student outcomes the evidence is inconclusive about the degree to which engagement results in improved student outcomes (Boethel, 2003).

Not all types of crossings that schools ask of parents have the same outcomes; programs aimed at engaging families with helping their child learn at home are associated with higher student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This finding suggests the crossing most associated with improved student outcomes is that in which parents cross into the school role. Often in these studies (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), learning at home reflects school-like activities, such as helping the child with homework or engaging in literacy activities or mathematics skills. Inevitably, children always learn at home with their families, such as through play or helping adults with tasks (e.g., Valdés, 1996). However, when the learning at home activities attempt to bring the school environment

and formal academic activities of school to the home, schools may be asking that parents cross into the school's role. The shift of responsibility for academic growth from the school to the family may allow schools to shift the blame to home for school failure (e.g., Cutler, 2000; deCarvalho, 2001; Landeros, 2011) and may represent neo-liberal education policy that shifts the burden from the public sphere to the individual (Landeros, 2011). Even without such a critical view, the resulting outcome of this crossing may include the blurring of home and school borders.

**Altering home and school behaviors and routines.** The crossings in these relationships can result in alterations made to the home and school space in response to the encounters. Teacher requests to parents' such as a teacher asking parents to review schoolwork at home with the child can create new unwanted responsibilities for parents (Henry, 1996). Homework, for example, changes the home routine, not only for the child, but potentially creates an additional burden for a parent who tries to ensure that his/her child completes the homework assigned (Bennett, 2007). Conversely, when parents enter the school to challenge a teacher or school policy, the teacher's and the school's professional autonomy may erode (Goldstein, 2008; Henry, 1996; Landeros, 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) as the school reacts to parents' presence. A parent's request may have schools revisit or change school policy (Attanucci, 2004; Glasman & Couch, 2001). Teachers may negotiate this challenge by limiting crossings into the classroom space to maintain professional autonomy (Goldstein, 2008).

The changes that occur in the home and school space may be an unwelcomed result of a parent's crossing. Attanucci (2004) presents the account of a teacher's interactions with a mother over a new school policy that eliminated the National Honor

Society's (NHS) seniors from leading the graduation ceremony parade. Through a series of confrontational conversations that reflect the mother's metaphoric crossing into school processes, the mother insists on a reversal of the policy, while the NHS advisor continues to block the mother's request. When the teacher is unable to resolve this conflict, she involves the principal in the negotiations, who to the dismay of the teacher, tells her to ask the NHS students to vote again on the matter.

Still, some changes are positively sought or accepted. Radaszewski-Byrne (2001) describes her collaboration with a teacher to provide additional services to her gifted child. The mother enters the classroom space and becomes an instructional partner with her daughter's third grade teacher as they collaborate to enhance the curriculum for the child. While the majority of the activities the child engages in through this process occur outside of the classroom, the teacher provides opportunities for the child to share her work with classmates. Thus, both home and school routines and behaviors change.

Similarly, in a study of a home literacy portfolio (Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair, & Durán, 1999), parents and teachers willingly participate in a program which includes changing home and school behaviors and routines to promote the development of the child's reading skills. The home literacy portfolios established a mechanism to balance parent and teacher dialogue and to create collaborative relations between parents and teachers (Paratore et al., 1999). Through the use of home literacy portfolios, the parents became active participants in parent and teacher conferences and teachers made connections about the child's learning and abilities during these meetings.

When school and home become altered and more similar, these spheres of influence might be better aligned resulting in improved student outcomes (Epstein, 2001).

However, another interpretation is that school attempts to alter the home space may create a school “gaze” into the home space when requests are made of parents at home (e.g., Baker, 2001a; Bennett, 2007; deCarvalho, 2001; Henry, 1996) or teachers’ hold certain expectations for parent behavior within the home (e.g., Allen et al., 1997; Baker, 2001b).

Institutions coerce and control through a gaze on the individual (Foucault, 1975). Modern forms of power are “exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility” (Foucault, 1975, p. 187). Programs that seek to enter and alter the home space (e.g., Epstein, 2001) become invisible by shifting the focus to the home, while simultaneously, making visible, differentiating, and judging actions and behaviors of the parent at home. In extending a gaze into the home through parent home activities or prescriptions for parent behavior within the home, schools may be extending their control into the home space. When schools demand certain actions at home, it may strengthen the role of the school institution over the private sphere (deCarvalho, 2001). Delpit (1988) even suggests that a form of “cultural genocide” occurs when schools attempt to change home routines, such as having parents support more learning at home (p. 286).

The research described in this section addresses various types of outcomes of the crossings between parents and teachers, such as changed perceptions between teachers and parents, improved student outcomes, or altered home and school spaces. These outcomes may appear contradictory. While more encounters may lead to better perceptions between parents and teachers, it may also lead to feelings of decreased professional autonomy for teachers or a burden of new responsibilities at home for

parents. Simultaneously, increased interaction through parent and teacher crossings may improve student outcomes. Border crossings are filled with complexity and ambiguity (Anzaldúa, 1987); the conflicting narratives presented in this section reflect this ambiguity.

### **Summary**

Crossings occur both between the home into the school and the school into the home. Some of the crossings that occur are physical movements, such as a parent entering the school, or a teacher conducting a home visit. Sometimes this crossing occurs through material artifacts, such as newsletters or report cards sent home. The child in their daily movement, also constantly crosses between the home and school. Other crossings are metaphoric and represent a symbolic crossing into another persons' role.

Crossings occur at different rates and with varying outcomes. Parents, for example, do not enter the school at the same rate for all activities. At other times, parents and teachers complain about a lack of contact from the other. In addition, schools may attempt to increase these contacts through the use of specific programs. These crossings may result in improved perceptions between parents and teachers, increased student achievement, and/or altered home and school space. Most of the studies presented in this section are qualitative, which provides insight into these crossings, but cannot suggest large-scale patterns around these crossings. This quantitative study will seek to determine some larger patterns around crossings by focusing on the frequency of parents' physical crossings into the school and a potential outcome of these crossings – improved student reading achievement in kindergarten.

### **School Cultural Practices and Crossings**

In the previous section, I defined the crossings that occur between home and school, described different rates of crossings, and discussed various intended and unintended outcomes of crossings. In this section, I explore how school cultural practice, such as school programming and teacher practice, encourages parent crossings. School practice, around how schools engage with families, can be seen as reflections of culture because this engagement represents cultural choices about the ways parents and school staff can, do, or should associate with each other. These cultural choices inform the behaviors allowed in the interactions between home-and school and the responsibilities each has to each other and the child. These cultural choices reflect learned ways and behaviors (Naylor, 1996) and the social legacy individuals acquire from the group (Kluckhohn, 1949). Teachers, for example, begin to learn the traditions of schooling prior to entering the profession; student teachers learn either explicitly or implicitly a view of parents and methods for working with them (Patterson, Webb, Krudwig, 2009). These learned traditions inform the associations persons have with one another and the learned rules, duties, or expectations for members within and across cultural groups (Naylor, 1996).

While some cultural practices of schools promote crossings, not all schools engage in such practices. Even when schools do encourage engagement, families may interpret these requests as limited when they are discouraged from challenging school authority. The last section then provides a discussion of ways in which school cultural practice may limit crossings.

## **Encouraged Crossings**

Proponents of parent involvement or home and school partnerships often promote increased contact and stronger relationships between home and school (Epstein, 2001). Often specific school programming meant to engage with families is encouraged as a method by which to strengthen these relationships. A popular home and school partnership model created by Epstein (2001) suggests partnerships between home and school as the ideal association between parents and teachers. Epstein's model envisions that the partnership between home and school can align the spheres of influence between these spaces and thus improve student outcomes.

Using this model, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) provides school staff a blueprint for working with families as well as technical assistance to build partnerships with families and communities (Sanders et al., 2005). Schools in the NNPS engage in efforts to create partnerships with parents and increase contact with parents via workshops on parenting, increased communication, requests for parent volunteers, information about learning at home, and inclusion in decision making (Sanders et. al, 1999). In other words, schools in the NNPS seek increased parent crossings by invitations to school activities and greater contact with the home.

Another well-known parent engagement program is the school reform model created by Comer (1984), a model that engages parents as active participants within the schoolhouse walls. The model's four critical elements include a government and management body (which includes the principal, teachers, parents, aides, and other support staff), a parent program, a mental health team program, and a staff and curriculum development program. This school reform attempts to provide parents with



meaningful opportunities to engage in the school. This engagement in turn would allow parents to develop positive relations with school staff.

Hiring parent liaisons to work with parents (e.g., Hones, 1999; Martínez-Cosío & Iannacone, 2007; Sanders, 2008), creating site based governance plans that require parent representation, increasing communication with parents (e.g., Bauch, 1994; Chapman & Heward, 1982; Chrispeels, 1996; Strom & Strom, 2002-2003; Westat and Policy Studies Associate, 2001) or establishing adult education programs within schools are different ways in which schools may alter or expand the ways of engaging with parents and the different reasons families may have to enter the school.

These different cultural practices within schools may reflect a caring environment. A caring school environment is associated with a school offering more involvement opportunities for parents, seeking advice of parents, providing information, and initiating contact (Bauch & Goldring, 2000). In addition, a caring school environment has been found to be associated with greater collaboration between parents and teachers (Bauch & Goldring, 2000). These studies provide examples of school cultural practice aimed at increasing parent crossings and interactions with the school.

At the classroom level, teachers' efforts to increase parent engagement and involvement may lead to parents having greater interactions and better relationships with teachers (Lewis, Kim, & Bey, 2011). The sample of teachers in Lewis et al.'s study (2011) reached out to parents, taught parents how to support their child's schooling, created a positive classroom climate with child-centered approaches, and connected the parents and school with the community. The teachers also encouraged students to talk to their parents about school, conducted home visits, talked with parents casually in the

hallway, encouraged parents to observe the classroom, provided parents guidance on how to support their child's academics at home, and included community volunteers in the classroom (Lewis et al., 2011). These teachers then encouraged parent entry into the classroom, but also crossed into the home space (e.g., through home visits).

Teachers also may engage with families beyond academics, in these instances, teachers may have metaphoric or symbolic crossings into the home space. A teacher might host a workshop to discuss health issues important for a community (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Teachers might even engage with families to mediate family disputes (Phelps, 1999). Phelps (1999) explores the ways in which a group of teachers engage with parents regarding home issues. Teachers describe their role working with parents in three ways as: brokers, menders, and reinforcers. As brokers, the teachers advocate for the child when working with parents. As menders, teachers describe mending relationships between parent and child. In one instance, a teacher mended the relationship between a suicidal student and parent. As a reinforcer, the teacher works with parents to reinforce schoolwork at home. For these secondary school teachers the relationship with some parents is more than academic. The teachers involve themselves in the family, cross into the home space, work with parents and students to strengthen family relations, and attempt to alter the interactions within the home. Still, while some teachers may view the appropriateness of symbolic crossings into the home, other teachers may have little knowledge about the home life and parents' home activities with the child (Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Lamb Parker, 1999).

A delicate balance exists for teachers between engaging with families and negotiating parents' crossings into the classroom space (Goldstein, 2008; Lawrence-

Lightfoot, 2003). Goldstein (2008) explores the balancing act of two experienced teachers. These teachers accept and invite parental input. However, the teachers resist parents' intrusion into the kindergarten curriculum they believe is age inappropriate, such as parents' requests for mathematics worksheets for their child. These teachers engage with parents, but their association with parents is framed within an understanding of their status as professionals. When parents move into the spheres of the curriculum, these teachers limit crossings into the classroom space to maintain professional autonomy.

### **Limited Crossings**

Encouraging parents to enter schools may still only represent a symbolic entrance if parents are limited in their ability to shape the school space. Parents often report receiving conflicting messages regarding their role at school (Allen et al., 1997; Baker, 2001a; Fish, 2006; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Lindle, 1989); what schools expect of parents' crossings is unclear. Parents in these studies view little ownership of the school space and describe their relationships with their child's teacher and principal to be one-sided (Allen et al., 1997; Baker, 2001a; Fish, 2006; Lindle, 1989). Parents report that schools ask for parental involvement at the convenience of the school, but resist parent input when it challenges the school authority (Baker, 2001a). Parents of special education students also report the IEP meetings as a formality, since teachers often dismiss parental input into their child's IEP (Fish, 2006).

Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) articulate this lack of parental ownership of the school space by describing parents as subordinate consumers or receivers of the school's information. Parents receive information from schools such as calls from school staff.

Letters are sent home to inform about the school but not to solicit input; unannounced visits to classrooms are not allowed.

Parent and teacher understandings of their role may also differ. Middle school teachers who report a desire for parent presence within the classroom may not receive it if parents interpret teachers' lack of interactions with them as defining a new role for parents' of middle school students (Halsey, 2005). That is, parents can interpret a lack of a personal invitation to the classroom as an indication that parental presence in the classroom is not appropriate for students at this age (Halsey, 2005).

The organization of schools also may strongly shape parents' experience within schools by limiting parental voice to ensure stability and minimize power sharing (Henry, 1996; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). The increased professionalization of schools throughout U.S. history has created schools where teachers are experts and parents, as non-experts, have less ability to influence school policy and practice (Cutler, 2000). This professional sphere allows teachers to close or limit parent negotiations with schools (e.g., Fish, 2006; Goldstein, 2008; Henry, 1996; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).

Managing time, through specific activities and time schedules, is another mechanism institutions use to exert control (Foucault, 1975). Rituals, such as school based activities for parents, like PTA, or teacher conferences, might increase parent presence within a school, but through prescribed ways, which legitimates schools and reinforces the distinct spheres of school and home (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Ten minute parent teacher conferences may be a way of controlling parents' presence in the school. Parents may interpret the short ten-minute parent and teacher conference as a hidden message that schools do not desire parental input (Lindle, 1989). Controlling

parents' time and activities in the school may represent some of the limits parents encounter in their entries into schools.

### **Summary**

Particular cultural practice of schools can encourage contact between home and school and subsequently, increase parent crossings into schools. Often these school practices center around increasing parent involvement. Teachers, too, can encourage more contact through their engagement with families. Sometimes, teachers can both encourage parent crossings into schools and symbolically cross into the home space. Still, parents may receive mixed messages about their role in the school. Parents report that schools invite them to participate in activities, but not challenge school authority. Indeed, the organization of schools and school rituals for families may further limit parents' encounters with schools.

This dissertation explores different cultural practices of schools and both its relationship to parent crossings and student reading achievement. However, while these cultural practices of school will be explored, this study will not be able to determine if these practices reflect a natural engagement with parents or specific, planned programming for families. Nonetheless, I will be able to understand which types of practices may increase crossings by parents and their relationship to achievement. While this study may not be able to describe some of the actual encounters that occur, in using interaction terms, the analysis may suggest the possibility of different understandings or experiences with the crossings.

### **The Influence of Parents' Social Identities on Crossings**

Identities and cultural perspectives associated with socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and language, and the intersection of these identities, can impact a parent's (e.g., Colbert, 1991; Lareau, 1987; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978; Valdés, 1996) or a teacher's lens (e.g., Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). These multiple intersecting identities influence how parents understand their crossings, their interactions with school staff and subsequently, the relationship parents establish with schools. Parents' identities represent past experiences, historical narratives, and even the experiences parents had as a child when his/her parent engaged with a teacher (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Parents also hold particular views for their place within the school and subsequently, impact their rate of entries and their experiences once they enter the school. The cultural understandings of how often the crossings should occur, what home-school relationships are or should be, and how they look and come to be are transmitted generationally through time.

Still, the multiple and intersecting identities held by parents do not represent fixed views of the world. Identities can be contradictory, comprised of more than one discourse and change over time (Hall, 2000). While the fluidity of identities should be recognized, these identities still inform how parents understand their placement in their child's schooling, how much influence they believe they can or should exert, and where parents view the borders of school and home. In the following section I explore the influence of two social identities on parents' engagement with schools: race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. These two identities align with individual level characteristics used in this study.

Some of these identities are better explored in the literature and as such, I present more data on them. Few studies focus on Native American families or third generation Latino families. While numerous studies reference parents multiple identities, teasing out which identity or what aspects of each identity is most essential to parents' engagement with schools is difficult to accomplish. To address this issue, I separate the studies by the identity that seemed most salient in each study, while recognizing this is an imperfect manner to deal with intersectional identities.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

For racial/ethnic minorities encounters with schools are set within historic narratives that reflect the legacy of racism within the U.S., the dominance of White culture within schools, and a lack of cultural sensitivity by schools to diverse families. These legacies can manifest itself as an unwelcoming school environment for Native American families (Mackety & Linder-Van Berschot, 2008), teachers evoking racial stereotypes of African American fathers (Jackson & Richards, 2009), or schools lacking translators to support communication with immigrant families (e.g., Sohn & Wang, 2006).

Still, families are not passive in their interactions. African American and Latino families, for example, have a long history of collective action in seeking improved schooling for their children (Cutler, 2000; MacDonald, 2004). From court cases to desegregate schools to the development of advocacy organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) (MacDonald, 2004), African American and Latino families historically have challenged their perceived role within schools. Parents' understanding of their place within the school and their actual

encounters upon school entry may influence parents' current and future crossings into schools.

For African American families, the history of discrimination and unequal resources in schooling for Black students may continue with parents' mistrust of schools (Colbert, 1991; Davern, 1999) or teachers relying on stereotypes of Black families (Jackson & Richards, 2009). Colbert (1991) uncovers African American parents' ambiguity about schools based on their own experiences. Although a few parents expressed comfort in working with school staff, many parents expressed a feeling of mistrust, disempowerment, and tension with schools (Colbert, 1991).

Similarly, Davern (1999) explores the intersections of race and a child's special education status on parental perception of teacher relations. The African American parents described a belief that school personnel often faulted the parents for the child's disability, teachers did not honestly attempt to establish partnerships with the family, and teachers lacked cultural responsiveness (Davern, 1999). Even for a group of Black middle class fathers who report positive relations with their child's teachers, they still expressed unease about teachers relying on stereotypes of the absent Black father (Jackson & Richards, 2009). Racial tensions in schools also may emanate from White parents to Black school personnel. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) provides an encounter of a racialized confrontation by an African American principal as White parents complained about an African American teacher. Often though, the literature on race relations between home and school focuses not on teachers or staff personnel, but on parents as bearers of the historical legacy of racism.



Immigrant families also carry past experiences with schooling into their engagement with teachers, often, based on their home countries' expectations of parents' role in their child's schooling (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Sy, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Yang & McMullen, 2003). In addition, language barriers are common for immigrant families (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Valdés, 1996). Parents may struggle to find translators (Valdés, 1996) and need additional time to communicate with teachers during parent teacher conferences (Sohn & Wang, 2006). Communication problems may even arise for parents who speak English but are unfamiliar with educational terms in English (Sohn & Wang, 2006).

For Latino immigrant parents engaging with the school may be part of the process of understanding and gaining access to the host culture (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005). Latino immigrant parents may struggle in obtaining information useful to support their child's education even when the parent actively seeks to engage with and enters the school (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Valdés, 1996). Valdés (1996) discovers recent Mexican immigrants exhibit a lack of awareness of American schools' expectations for parents and engage infrequently with teachers as is customary in Mexican culture. In the few occasions the mothers engage with the school, expectations for the home and school spaces vastly differ; the mothers are ineffective in working with the school. In addition, Latino parents may provide different types of support for their child's schooling than what is traditionally considered parent engagement and valued within school norms (López, 2001; Valdés, 1996).

Still, these understanding of interactions with schools can change. Parent empowerment programs focused on Latino parents use critical reflection and consciousness and collective social action to address the educational inequities faced by their children (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Furomoto, 2003). Parent empowerment seeks to help parents understand, name and challenge the power schools have in these relationships. Parents' encounters with teachers become a political act, a means of struggle. Latino families who participate in parent empowerment may come to hold new understandings of their crossings and encounters within schools (Chrispeels & River, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Furomoto, 2003).

Studies of Asian families also illustrate different cultural understandings of the expectations for parents in schools (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Sy, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). Asian parents may view teachers as experts and authority figures and may not be comfortable being an equal partner with the teacher (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Sy, 2006). Like Latino immigrant families (López, 2001; Valdés, 1996), Asian parents often do not have as much direct contact with teachers regarding their child's schooling, and focus more on the home domain (Sy, 2006). In Korea visits to the school occur when the child misbehaves shaping mothers' perceptions of entering the school space (Sohn & Wang, 2006). A lack of cultural understanding from teachers and differences in expectations for school goals creates encounters parents and teachers interpret differently (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). Cultural differences between teachers and immigrant parents may create additional barriers to the development of these relationships.

### **Socio-economic Status**

Beyond race and ethnicity, the narratives parents bring to their engagement with schools may be rooted in their daily lives and socioeconomic status (Lareau, 1987, 2003). Lareau (1987, 2003) finds middle-class culture provides parents with more ease in schools and sets the expectations that parents actively engage with the teacher regarding their child's schooling. Working class parents view their relationship to the school differently, these parents intervene less over academic issues, regard teachers as authority figures, and engage less in academic activities at home (Lareau, 1987; 2003). Similarly, other studies describe the lack of power and influence poor families have in schools (Henry, 1996; Fine, 1993; Furomoto, 2003; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001) or the confounding effects of poverty on recent immigrants' and their engagement with schools (e.g., Valdés, 1996). In addition, school outreach efforts with families can have differential effects on student achievement by the poverty level of the school (González & Jackson, 2012). Different cultural and social capital of families may impact families' abilities to translate school outreach efforts into improved student achievement (González & Jackson, 2012).

A study of "entitled mothers" explores the ways in which a group of well-educated mothers in an affluent neighborhood challenge teacher authority (Landeros, 2011). The mothers in this study leave work to raise a child and utilize their corporate skills and personal resources to advocate on behalf of their child. These "entitled mothers," who in their need to have continued high status no longer received from work, exert power in the school, often at the expense of teachers' professionalism (Landeros, 2011).

Parents may have varying cultural capital to engage effectively with schools. Cultural capital is a “conservation of a culture...” for the elites “...inherited from the past,” transmitted through the family (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 488). Parents with cultural capital can travel more easily into the school; well-educated mothers may view their status and knowledge to be greater than the teachers (Landeros, 2011). A parents’ social position then may impact their perspective of the school space, their crossing into the school, and subsequently, their ability to effectively advocate on behalf of their child.

### **Summary**

The ways in which parents construct their ideas around school crossings and their relationship to their child’s schooling is influenced in part by parents’ multiple and intersecting identities. Parents of higher socioeconomic status who share the cultural capital represented in schools may feel more comfortable entering the school space. Immigrant parents carry particular traditions of associating with teachers that may inform what they view as appropriate crossings into schools. A legacy of racism might mean that African American parents enter schools wary of teachers’ intentions. Recognizing the importance of these varied intersecting identities, this study will look at the association between crossings and parents’ race/ethnicity and education level (as a proxy for socioeconomic status).

### **Conclusion**

This study envisions home-school relationships as being defined and formed through crossings between home and school. Studies on this topic reflect these concepts, though not always explicitly. This review explored these crossings and the frequencies and outcomes of this movement. In addition, this chapter provided a discussion of the

influence of school cultural practice and parent social identities on crossings.

Overwhelmingly, studies on home-school are qualitative. These studies often provide description of the actual interactions between parents and teachers. This dissertation use of quantitative methods will provide an opportunity to explore at a national level the context around parents' crossing into the school and the association between crossings and student reading achievement.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten (ECLS-K), this study explores the context around parent crossings into schools by examining the relationship between individual and school characteristics and kindergarten parents' crossing into schools. This study also investigates the impact of these crossings on student reading achievement. The analyses use multilevel modeling to reflect the nested nature of schooling and differentiate between individual and school effects. This dissertation includes three research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Are there differences in the number of crossings reported by parents whose children attend different schools?

RQ2: Are the differences in the number and type of crossings reported by parents associated with different individual and school characteristics? Are there differential effects of school characteristics and school practice related to these crossings?

RQ3: Are the number of crossings reported by parents' associated with student learning in reading in kindergarten? Do the children of parents who report more crossings do better in this subject than the children of parents who report fewer crossings, regardless of family characteristics and the school setting?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the quantitative criticalist perspective used. Next, I discuss the ECLS-K study, variables included in this study, the sample, and conclude with an overview of the analyses.

### Being a Quantitative Criticalist

*Even though he was born in the United States my brother began preschool in 1979, speaking only Spanish. My parents, fluent in English, spoke to him solely in Spanish so he could learn their mother tongue. When my mother enrolled my brother in preschool, she began a new routine, the daily crossing into the preschool. As she entered the school to drop off and then pick up my brother, she experienced a series of difficult encounters with the teacher who chastised her for not speaking to her son in English. As my mother recalls with acrimony, the teacher told her, "This is America, speak English." My mother responded, "I know I'm speaking to you in English." Disturbed by the encounters and offended by the teacher's remarks, my mother complained to the director of the city's preschool program. The director reassigned my brother to another preschool where my mother did not have any problems with his new teacher.*

This personal vignette illustrates the complexities of home-school relationships and the importance of understanding the context and varied nature of a mother's crossing into schools. As my brother entered pre-school and began commuting from home into a public institution, my mother also began moving from the home into the school space. These crossings led to encounters between my mother and the teacher that influenced their understandings of each other and ultimately led to a difficult relationship.

Context situated my mother's actions; a recent refugee, she wanted to transmit to her child habits of the heart and mind. These crossings also were set within a historical place and time. When my brother began preschool in the 1970s, the bilingual movement brought to national attention the desire for immigrants, especially Spanish-speaking immigrants, to have their children keep the parents' native tongue (MacDonald, 2005). Historical tensions between prior immigrants and recent newcomers over cultural differences set the backdrop for the encounter between parent and teacher. These encounters led to additional crossings into other areas of the education system, as my mother met with the director of the city's preschool program to complain. When my brother was reassigned to a different preschool, once again my mother crossed borders

into an unknown school, and through another series of encounters established a relationship with his new preschool teacher.

I offer this vignette about my mother as an entrance into a discussion about the intersection of my own autobiography and my research interest in home-school relationships. The difficult encounter described above would turn out to be an anomaly for my mother, as she generally would have good relations with most of our teachers. Yet, the encounters described in the vignette did not occur naturally. Only through crossings from the home into the school did my mother come to learn of the teacher's views and receive challenges to her parenting. Yet, the importance of this border crossing to the establishment of the relationship, the varied nature of these types of crossings, and differential impact of them often are overlooked.

In home-school relationships, a common focus is either prescribing what the relationship should be or diagnosing an established relationship. These two foci, though, do not provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon, as the context around these crossings often is left unexplored. When a phenomenon is not explored in its entirety, a narrow narrative arises. Consequently, engagement with the phenomenon will be incomplete, because only a partial picture is understood. In this partial picture, collaboration as embodied in parent involvement and conflict do not co-exist. Nor is the varied nature of these relationships fully acknowledged, in which a parent may enjoy attending school performances and yet at times feel unwelcomed at the school.

My desire to better understand home-school relationships led me to an interest in further understanding the context around parents' crossing into schools, a critical process in this development of these relationships. Exploring the context that informs these



crossings provides an opportunity to study the surrounding conditions around an event and recognizes that conditions vary. This interest in crossings makes me consider what other questions may not have been asked before; it challenges my conceptualization of variables, and it shapes my conclusion and discussion. This reflection of my biases also provides me with reasons to be cautious, to stop and judge the merit of my critiques, to see where there is potential for building on prior knowledge, or to examine the limits and possibilities of my own framing of these relationships.

In qualitative research it is more common for the researcher to name themselves within the research, place their positionality, and discuss their biases (Carter & Hurtado, 2007), in other words to be reflexive (Elliott, 2005; Ryan & Golden, 2006). This discussion often is omitted in quantitative research mainly because of the assumption of objectivity and the belief that the researcher can remain distant to the work (Carter & Hurtado, 2007). Rejecting this assumption, in this study I attempt to be reflexive. Reflexivity allows for an honest and open discussion about the role of the researcher in the research process (Elliott, 2005; Ryan & Golden, 2006). What is identified as worthy of study, how hypotheses are selected and research designs created, how data are collected and analyzed all reflect someone's lens and perspective (Mills, 1997). For this study, not only do the ECLS-K data represent a lens that the U.S. Department of Education, the sponsors of the study, had about home-school relations, but the way I create indicators and the variables of interest, construct the statistical models, and interpret the data reflect my own lens of home-school relations.

Being critical involves more than naming the researcher in the study and rejecting the idea of a detached social scientist. I am guided by the quantitative criticalist

perspective presented in a special edition of the journal, *New Directions for Institutional Research*. In this special edition, Stage (2007) reviews and summarizes various definitions of critical theory including seeking experience of others not normally discussed; recognizing the importance of power in human subjects and the importance of cultural difference; investigating how knowledge gets defined and changed; extending theory into action; rejecting the idea of a detached social scientist; rejecting traditional notions of empirical science which seeks to eliminate crises, conflict, and critique; embracing research as a potential for transformation and social change; uncovering contradictions; and illuminating the hidden assumptions in research.

While many critical theorists use qualitative methods, both critical qualitative and quantitative researchers seek to question what we know, describe and investigate that which is there, provide alternative models, and promote equity and the possibility of social transformation (Stage, 2007). Two tasks of a quantitative criticalist researcher are to, “Use data to represent educational processes and outcomes on a large scale to reveal inequities and to identify social or institutional perpetuation of systematic inequities in such processes and outcomes,” and “Question the models, measures, and analytic practices of quantitative research in order to offer competing models, measures, and analytic practices that better describe experiences of those who have not been adequately represented” (Stage, 2007, p. 10).

In my conception of home-school relations, where parents’ crossing is a critical process in the development of the relationship and thus an area worthy of study, I attempt to offer an alternative model from how these relations are normally described. However, using a secondary dataset limits the ability to offer competing measures. Interaction terms

allow me to explore differential relationships, in other words, to uncover contradictions. The inequities that I seek to deliberate on are the varied relationships between school and home, by rejecting that all crossings and its impact are the same for all schools and families. To be a critical quantitative researcher required reflexivity on my part throughout the entire process of the study. I constantly questioned the framing of my study, the language I used, the context I provided or not, the statistical models I considered, and my interpretation of data.

### **The ECLS-K Study**

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 is a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that focuses on the early childhood experiences of children. The ECLS-K study sampled a nationally representative cohort of kindergarten students entering school during the 1998-99 school year. A total of 21,260 students throughout the U.S. participated in the study. The study followed a cohort of students through eighth grade. Data were collected during the fall and the spring of students' kindergarten year (1998-99), the fall and spring of their first grade (1999-2000), the spring of third grade (2002), the spring of fifth grade (2004), and the spring of eighth grade (2007) (Tourangeau et al., 2009). The instruments administered yearly were very similar, with only minor changes made from year to year. As with any longitudinal study, ECLS-K had participant attrition and at various points throughout the study additional students were sampled to replace students and families that stopped participating in the study or could no longer be found.

The conceptual model guiding the development of the ECLS-K was a framework recognizing the interrelationships between the child, family, school, and community

(Tourangeau et al., 2009). As such, data included interviews of the parents of the sampled child and surveys of the child's teacher and the school administrator. Survey items included indicators of the child's social, emotional, and intellectual development and of the child's health status and factors that incorporate home, classroom, school, and community environments. Data from kindergarten – the base year, included parent, teacher, and administrator questionnaires as well as an assessment of students' reading knowledge (Tourangeau et al., 2009). Because this study will focus on the kindergarten year, only instruments from the kindergarten year will be discussed.

### **Instruments Administered in Kindergarten**

**Parent interview.** Parent interviews were conducted in the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999 during the students' kindergarten year (Tourangeau et al., 2009). The parent interview was administered using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) or computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) for families without a telephone. The respondent chosen for the parent interview had to be knowledgeable about the child, 18 years of age or older, and live with the child. Generally, the respondent was the mother, but also included the father or other guardians, such as stepparents, adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents, or other relatives. During the fall interview, the study gave preference to interviewing the mother, reflecting current understandings of mothers as primary caretakers of children. If the mother did not meet the requirements for the parent interview or was unavailable, another parent or guardian was selected to complete the interview. Most parent interviews were conducted in English. However, the questionnaire was translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Lakota amongst other languages. Bilingual

interviewers conducted the surveys for non-English speaking families (Tourangeau et al., 2009).

During the spring administration, the same families were asked to complete the interview and the study sought to have the same respondent who completed the fall interview complete the spring interview. Both the fall and spring interview consisted of predominantly close-ended items, with both scaled scores and dichotomous options. To avoid redundancy of items and lessen the burden of the interview most items appear in either the fall or spring survey. Only a few items were asked in each administration (Westat, ETS, University of Michigan, NCES, ESSI, n.d.).

The parent interviews were quite extensive. The interview protocol is slightly over 100 pages long and includes a variety of demographic items about the family, such as parents' race/ethnicity, family income, and parents' highest level of education. Beyond demographic information, the interviews included items to capture the culture of home, such as items that ask about behaviors and routines at home and the beliefs of the parents. Items also captured the ways in which the school relate and communicate with families, such as whether the school sends home information about how to prepare the child for kindergarten, topics or skills that are part of the kindergarten program, procedures for the parent if the child is absent or late, and ways to contact the teacher (Westat et al., n.d.).

**Teacher questionnaire.** Teachers of the sampled students received a self-administered questionnaire in the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999. The teacher surveys included items about teachers' direct and indirect engagement with parents. Teacher survey items asked about the ways in which teachers communicated with parents, the beliefs teachers had about parents' role in their child's schooling, and if the teacher had

met the sampled student's parent(s). Other survey items captured information about the teacher's routines in the classroom, the teacher's sense of professional self-efficacy, and the degree to which the teacher enjoyed his/her job.

**Administrator questionnaire.** The administrator questionnaire was a self-reported questionnaire administered during the spring of 1999. The school principal, administrator, or headmaster was asked to complete the survey. This questionnaire included items to measure demographic characteristics about the school, student body, teachers, and the administrator completing the survey. Other general information collected included the school size and school type (i.e., private or public). This survey had items which measured normative ways in which the school interacted with parents, such as items that asked about specific programs offered to families and the frequency of various parent programming.

**IRT Scale.** Amongst a variety of assessments, students were given a direct cognitive assessment in reading in the fall and spring of the 1998-1999 school year. Children who passed a language screener were administered a reading assessment (Westat et al., n.d.). The assessments were given in two stages; first the students completed a routing test that included items from each ability level. Based on these results, students were given a level test corresponding to their performance on the routing test. Item response theory (IRT) procedures were used to calculate scores on these assessments; "IRT uses the pattern of right, wrong, and omitted responses to the items actually administered in a test and the difficulty, discriminating ability, and 'guess-ability' of each item to place each child on a continuous ability scale" (Westat et al., n.d., p. 3-2). The items from the routing test of ability given to the child and then the subset of

items given as part of the assessment were used to estimate the score the child would have received if he/she had been administered all the items and to develop a common scale.

## **Variables and Measures**

### **Creating Variables**

The conceptualization, creation, and naming of variables to include in the statistical models is an important process in quantitative research of secondary data. As noted earlier, the items used from a survey to create composite variables for the analyses reflect the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon and his/her beliefs about what a series of survey items might measure. A composite variable of items about parent behaviors at home, such as reading to the child, attending museums, and enrolling the child in music lessons, may be understood by the researcher to represent parent involvement. Another researcher may use these items and others to create a measure of cultural capital. Variables can be created and named that represent deficit models or seek to explore processes that might be important for some groups, but not others. While the researcher is still bound by statistical procedures and presenting the reliability and validity of their variables, the naming and creating of variables clearly positions the researcher in the study.

In an effort to be transparent, I will describe the process used to identify potential predictor variables. The initial step in this analytic procedure was to learn more about the ECLS-K dataset through a review of all 45 instruments (excluding child assessments) used for the entire ECLS-K study. This review led to a record of items of interest that might inform home-school relationships. After downloading these items of interest from

the ECLS-K dataset, items were “cleaned” and recoded as appropriate. I looked at descriptive statistics for these variables, to determine the mean, distribution, and the amount of missing data. I thought about these items conceptually. I considered what cultural practice of school and home were represented in these items and how these items might provide insight into home-school relationships.

Using individual survey items, items appearing to be measuring the same constructs were made into scales, with all items having equal weight. I created composite variables by averaging a group of items or conducting a factor analysis, to reflect different facets of school and home noted in the literature as important in these relationships. Confirmatory factor analyses, including reliability checks, were performed to verify items were measuring the same latent trait. This process provided potential key variables of interest. Distributions were checked for normality. Non-normal composite variables were created into “high” or “low” amounts. I also created a series of interaction terms to determine if certain factors have different impacts for different populations. In addition, I created variables to reflect various demographic characteristics for both the school and individual. The final statistical models include variables that had the most explanatory fit, as well as other variables that conceptually were appropriate. The following section describes the variables used in the statistical models.

### **Variables for Parent Crossing Models**

**Outcome variable.** The number of parent crossings into a school is the outcome variable addressed in research questions one and two. This outcome measures the literal movement of parents into schools and is an indicator of parents’ association with the school. I created this variable from a series of questions in the spring parent interview



centered on seven different activities for which a parent may enter the school. The first item would ask if the parent ever entered the school to engage in a particular activity. If the parent responded affirmatively, then the following question asked the parent how often he/she or another adult in the household entered the school for that activity. The seven different types of activities were if parents entered the school to: attend an open house, a PTA meeting, a parent teacher conference, a parent advisory group, a school event, a fundraiser; or to volunteer. Each activity was asked about in a separate question.

In order to obtain the number of parent crossings, I first recoded the number of entries so that parents who had not entered the school for an event would receive a zero for how often they entered. Reliability for this aggregate scale is  $\alpha=.59$ , an appropriate cut-off for preliminary research (Nunnally, 1967). These activities were summed, and the aggregate variable explored for normality. Outliers were capped. A mean for each event for parents who reported they attended an event, but had not responded how often was imputed for 334 parents (1.5% of the total dataset). Then I took the log of this aggregate variable to adjust for skewness. This variable, as are all continuous variables in the model, is standardized ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) so that results can be reported in effect sizes. A more thorough discussion of the different types of crossings will be explored in the following chapter (See Table A.2 in the Appendix for a complete list of all variables used in the study and select characteristics).

**Level one variables.** Level one variables reflect characteristics and experiences of the parent and child. I created these variables from the parent interviews. Parent education level serves as a proxy for parents' familiarity, experience, and knowledge of schools, as well as a proxy for class status. Parents with limited formal education often

know less about the ways of school and how to navigate within the school (Lareau, 1987, 2003). Both models include dummy-coded variables to represent parents' highest education level with the following educational levels: no high school diploma, high school diploma, some college, bachelor's degree, and some graduate school/graduate degree. High school diploma as parents' highest education level is the referent group in the models.

In addition, dummy coded variables were created to reflect the following race/ethnicities: White; Black/African American; Latino/a; Asian/Asian American; Native American, American Indian, Other-Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander; and Multi-racial. White families are the referent group in the models.

Numerous studies illustrate that parents often have different experiences in schools related in part to their race/ethnicity (Colbert, 1991; Cutler, 2000; Davern, 1999; deCarvalho, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Henry, 1996; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Pérez Carreón et. al, 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Sy, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Yang & McMullen, 2003). These studies often illuminate the cultural divide between schools and families of color. This divide includes a lack of trust between parents and teachers, ambiguous knowledge about school processes, complaints that teachers do not understand the home culture, limited power and influence within the school, and language barriers between immigrant families and teachers.

In addition, the characteristics of schools serving predominantly minority children have been shown to be different from schools serving predominantly White students (Kozol, 2005; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Orfield & Lee, 2007). Using variables to represent race/ethnicity will highlight if differences exist in crossing. However, these variables will

not illuminate on the reasons for the difference. As such, I interpret results related to race/ethnicity cautiously and suggest that readers should likewise use caution.

In many studies, presumably, controlling for race is meant to serve as a proxy for the association of racial stratification of an individual within society (James, 2008).

Several researchers note that when race is used as a control, researchers often still do not learn what about being of that race makes it predictive of the outcome (Bowleg, 2008; Carter & Hurtado, 2007; Holland, 2008; James, 2008; Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008).

Using race/ethnicity without any explanation as to the processes that result in race/ethnicity as predictive of an outcome reifies the notion of race as a fixed entity. The edited book *White Methods, White Logic* is dedicated to exploring this issue (Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008). Since race/ethnicity is a social construct using race in statistical models without

any contextualization or explanation implies that the causal mechanism for social differences lies in the categories themselves....When race is assumed to *cause* differences....without comment or argument about how or why the experience of race in U.S. society may result in different outcomes...conceptual understanding of race as a fixed characteristic is being promoted (James, 2008, p. 43).

Several strategies, which I employ, are promoted by researchers to address this concern.

When interpreting results race/ethnicity should not be described as having a causal relationship to the outcome, as causality suggests the phenomenon can be altered and race/ethnicity generally cannot (Holland, 2008). Race/ethnicity, at best, is associated with an outcome, but does not cause an outcome (Holland, 2008). Additional context in the interpretation and discussion provides an opportunity to suggest other social processes

that lead to race/ethnicity as a predictor of an outcome (Bowleg, 2008). Additional analyses regarding crossings and barriers to crossings by race/ethnicity were conducted to further inform about what might be occurring. While the use of race/ethnicity to describe inequities in society must be used carefully and thoughtfully, given the lasting effects of racism within the U.S. there still is a necessity to use race/ethnicity in social science research to explore different experiences for different populations (Holland, 2008).

Seven additional individual level variables were included in the model predicting parents' crossings. Three of the individual level variables tap into potential difficulties parents may have crossing into schools. Immigrant families often experience language barriers in dealing with teachers (Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Calbrese Burton, 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Valdés, 1996). As such, the models include a variable indicating whether parents spoke English (1 = English speaker, 0 = non-English speaker). English language abilities can serve as a proxy for parent's ability to engage with teachers and may tap into the ease in communication between the home and school.

Another dummy coded variable represents if parents reported high barriers to entry. This variable was created by aggregating eight reasons that made it difficult for parents to participate in activities at their child's school: unable to get time off from work, inconvenient meeting times, no child care, not hearing of interesting events at school, not feeling welcomed at school, problems with transportation to the school, school events/meetings not held in native language/without a translator, and concerns with safety going to the school. Since the aggregate of total barriers was not normally distributed, looking at the distribution of responses informed empirically based cut-points, where three or more barriers represent high barriers to entry [1 = High (3 or more)

barriers to entry, 0 = Mid-low (less than 3) barriers to entry]. Similarly, another dummy coded variable represents if parents live a high distance to school, where high distance was greater than two miles [1 = High (greater than 2 miles) distance to school, 0 = Mid-low (2 miles or less) distance to school].

Reliability for the eight variables to barriers to entry is  $\alpha=.39$ . While this reliability is lower than often accepted, alpha provides some guidance for researchers, but “is not a panacea” (Cortina, 1993, p. 103). Alpha must be interpreted with the number of items in mind. Alpha can be high and acceptable by commonly used standards, when a large number of items are used, while still having low average intercorrelation or multidimensionality (Cortina, 1993). In addition, variable creation can be influenced by the construct created. In this case, while reliability is low, combining these eight variables is appropriate as the items conceptually represent barriers for parents.

Other variables provide insight on parents’ perceptions of the child’s experience at school. In meeting with teachers, parents often act as advocates for their own child (Landeros, 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Therefore, the child’s experience at school, may suggest the need (or not) for parent advocacy for his/her child (e.g., Stoner et al., 2005), and thus the need or not for parent crossings into school. I conducted a factor analysis which included six variables in which parents reported how often (1=*not at all*, 2=*once a week or less*, 3=*more than once a week*) their child: complained about school, was upset to go to school, claimed to be sick to stay home, praised the school, said he/she liked the teacher, and was eager to go to school. Two factors emerged from this factor analysis. The first three variables created a factor representing a child’s complaints about school ( $\alpha=.75$ ) and the remaining three variables represented a child’s praise for school

( $\alpha=.63$ ). Again since these new variables were not normally distributed, empirically based cut-points were created to represent high amounts of complaints or praise. Two dummy coded variables represent these factors (1 = High child complain, 0 = Mid-low child complain; 1 = High child praise, 0 = Mid-low child praise).

Lastly, a variable compares parent and teacher reports of encounters with each other. Parents and teachers can have different perceptions of each other (e.g., Allen et al., 1997; Baker, 2001a; Baker, 2001b; Fish, 2006; Fish 2008), which shapes their relationship. By comparing the degree of concurrence between parents and teachers, this variable taps into parent and teacher perceptions of their own engagement. I extracted from the teacher survey two items that asked if the teacher had ever met the parent in a parent teacher conference and if the parent had ever volunteered. I then compared the teacher reports to the parent report and created a dummy coded variable that represented if there was 100% parent/teacher agreement (1 = 100% Parent/teacher agreement, 0 = Not 100% parent/teacher agreement) on these two items. Due to the large number of missing responses, I also created a dummy coded variable to capture instances where a parent or teacher report was missing (1 = Parent/teacher report missing, 0 = Parent/teacher report not missing).

**Level two variables.** The level two variables represent characteristics of the school and include composite variables derived from the parent and principal surveys. Three variables represent how often schools provide specific programming to parents and the type of information sent to parents. Increased efforts by schools to engage and increase communication with families can result in improved relationships and greater interactions between the home and school (e.g., Chrispeels, 1996; Comer, 1984; Epstein,

2001; Sanders et al., 1999; Westat and Policy Studies Associate, 2001). The three composite variables describe cultural practices of the school that tap into school routines, beliefs, and ways of associating with parents. In other words, these variables reflect schools' understanding of how to engage with parents and parents' role in the child's schooling.

Two of these variables were created from a factor analysis of items in the principal survey. The individual variables included in the factor asked the frequency of activities and contact for families (0 = *Never*, 1 = *Once a year*, 2 = *2 to 3 times a year*, 3 = *4 to 6 times a year*, 4 = *7 or more times a year*). The first factor labeled frequency of events ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ), represents frequency of: performances for parents, classroom programs, fundraisers, PTA/PTO meetings, and workshops. Reliability for this variable is  $\alpha=.63$ . The second factor, frequency of contact about student learning ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) represents frequency of: parent-teacher conferences and report cards ( $\alpha=.36$ ). As noted above, reliability may be low when factors are not unidimensional (Cortina, 1993). In this instance, two factors have been identified.

The third variable was created from parent interviews. First, a factor analysis of school engagement efforts with parents was run leading to a factor named school efficacy in helping parents support the child. The reliability for this variable is  $\alpha=.70$ . This factor reflects the following items, all with the same response scale (0 = *Doesn't do this at all*, 1 = *Just O.K.*, 2 = *Does this very well*): the school helps you understand what children at the child's age are like; the school provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help the child learn at home; the school lets you know between report cards how the child is doing in school; the school provides information on community services to help the

child or your family; and the school makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school. Responses were aggregated at the school level and standardized ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ).

A couple of variables also explore children's experience at school. A caring school environment has been found to be associated with improved parent and teacher relations (Bauch & Goldring, 2000) and as such, may be associated with parent crossings. I aggregated by school the factors created from parent reports of the child's experience and created the variables average child complain ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) and average child praise ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) scores. In addition, as leaders of school communities, principals' often wield a large influence on the tone of the school environment, with potentially different effects on student outcomes depending on principal experience (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). As such, I include a variable to determine any association between principal tenure and crossings. The variable labeled new principal distinguishes between new principals (less than 2 years' experience) and all other principals (2 or more years' experience).

School characteristics are included to control for differences across schools. The school characteristics are whether the school offers a full- or half-day kindergarten (1 = full-day, 0 = half-day); is 50% or more minority [1 = High minority school (school 50% or more minority), 0 = Mid-low minority school (school less than 50% minority)]; is public (1 = Public, 0 = Private); and serves predominantly low income students, where 50% or more of the students participate in the Free and Reduced Price School Meals (FARMS) program [1 = High FARMS school (school 50% or more FARMS), 0 = Mid-low FARMS school (school less than 50% FARMS)].



In addition, I included three interaction terms to explore if differential associations exist between school poverty (as measured by being a high FARMS school) and the school environment and engagement with family on crossings. Interaction terms can provide insight if processes have different impacts for different populations. School engagement efforts with families have been shown to have differential effects on student achievement based on the average socioeconomic status of families within a school (González & Jackson, 2012). Therefore, school poverty may have differential effects on crossings. The interaction terms were a product of school FARMS and average child complain (High FARMS school X Child complain), average child praise (High FARMS school X Child praise), and frequency of contact about student learning (High FARMS school X Frequency of contact student learning).

### **Variables for Learning in Reading Models**

**Outcome variable.** The second outcome variable addresses research question three and explores the relationship between crossings and student reading achievement. This second model uses the child's standardized reading score ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) at the end of kindergarten as the outcome variable.

**Level one variables.** For these analyses, the outcome variable, parents' crossings into school ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) from the prior model becomes a predictor variable. The remaining level one variables are parents' highest education level and race/ethnicity as used in the previous models; students' entering reading skills ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ), in other words, students' IRT-equated test score in reading in the fall of kindergarten year; and a series of interaction terms. In controlling for the entering skills of students in reading, the

outcome – student reading achievement – then becomes a measure of learning over the course of the year.

Interaction terms allow for recognition of intersectional identities (Bowleg, 2008). The interaction terms for level one of this model are the product of parents' standardized number of crossings and entering reading skills (Crossing X Entering reading skills) and education level (e.g., Crossing X No high school diploma, Crossing X Some college, etc.). The interaction terms seek to determine if any differential association exists between crossings and entering reading skills and crossings and parents' highest education level.

**Level two variables.** Except for the interaction terms, all of the variables at level two from the prior model are used: full-day kindergarten, high minority school, public school, high FARMS school, new principal, frequency of events, frequency of contact about student learning, and school efficacy in helping parents support the child. In addition, I aggregated the parent crossing by each school and created an average school crossing ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) to determine if the average number of parent crossings by school is associated with reading achievement. Including the school aggregate crossing explores if the norms of a school community (i.e., degree of crossing) can also be associated with student outcomes.

### **Analytic Sample**

The analytic sample is a large subset of students sampled in the ECLS-K 1998-1999 study. Three primary filters were employed to determine the analytic sample. The first filter focused on the kindergarten year, as that is the focus of the analysis. For many children, kindergarten is the beginning of a child's schooling and the first year the child is

mandated to attend school. As such, this focal year represents an important time in the life of the child and parent.

Next, I restricted the sample to individuals and schools that did not have missing data on variables of interest, although I tried to be sensitive to dropping excessive cases. For example, since one of the variables of interest, 100% parent/teacher agreement had about 3,000 missing cases, I created a dummy variable for those persons with missing data. As noted above, I also imputed partial crossings for 334 parents (1.5 % of the total dataset). Lastly, since the analysis is multi-level, I restricted the sample to individuals who had school level data and conversely, schools that had sufficient student level data.

Table 3.1 compares means for characteristics of students in the analytic sample with students in the full sample. As shown in Table 3.1, the analytic sample includes about 77% of the students from the full sample. Differences between the analytic and full sample appear small and thus suggest, that multiple imputations were not warranted for missing data. Average crossings for the analytic sample is about 10.5 crossings, with slightly fewer ( $M=10.3$ ) crossings for the full sample. Ninety one percent of families in the analytic sample speak English at home versus 90% in the full sample. Similarly, there is about only a 1% difference in the reporting of high barriers, high distance to school, and high child praise of the school.

Table 3.1

*Selected Characteristics of the Analytic Sample and the Full Kindergarten Cohort*

	Analytic Sample			Full Sample		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Total Crossings	11,428	10.47	9.26	14,203	10.26	9.12
English Home Language	11,428	.91		14,732	.90	
High Barriers to Entry	11,428	.17		14,200	.18	
High Distance to School	11,428	.37		14,120	.38	
Child Praise School (High)	11,428	.25		14,763	.24	
Child Complain School (High)	11,428	.11		14,763	.11	
Parent/Teacher Same Report	11,428	.51		14,763	.48	

*Note.* Means and standard deviations are weighted; n is unweighted. The full sample comparison does not include the 2,297 students for which there were no school level data.

When comparing demographics (see Table 3.2), the analytic sample is slightly more White (63% vs. 60%) with slightly less African American (12% vs. 13%) and Asian (5% vs. 6%) families. While the demographics for the analytic and full sample are similar, the analytic sample may slightly underrepresent students with low English skills. As noted earlier, students who were not proficient in English were not administered the reading exam. However, given that the analytic and full samples are similar across all individual level variables, this underrepresentation of students with low English skills is most likely minimal.

Table 3.2

*Demographic Characteristics of Analytic and Full Sample*

	Analytic Sample		Full Sample	
	N	%	N	%
No High School diploma	876	8	1,261	9
High School Diploma	2,881	25	3,731	25
Voc/Tech & Some College	3,825	33	4,897	33
Bachelor's Degree	2,173	19	2,723	18
Some graduate schooling or Graduate degree	1,673	15	2,151	15
White	7,256	63	8,909	60
Black/African American	1,382	12	1,901	13
Latino/a	1,682	15	2,264	15
Asian/Asian American	529	5	826	6
Native American, American Indian, Other-Nat				
Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	286	3	444	3
Multi-Racial	293	3	386	3

*Note.* Percentages are weighted; n is unweighted. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Comparing schools, the analytic sample represents 76% of schools in the full sample. The schools in the analytic sample are generally similar to the schools in the full sample. However, the analytic sample includes slightly more public schools (72%) than the full sample (65%) (see Table 3.3). Since families choose to send their children to private schools and private schools may have more leverage to require parent interactions, it is possible that having an analytic sample that has slightly more public schools may underestimate crossings and some variance in parents' crossings. Although the analytic sample slightly over represents public schools, the difference, and presumably any bias, would be small.

Table 3.3

*School Characteristics of Analytic and Full Sample*

	Analytic Sample		Full Sample	
	N	Mean	N	Mean
High Minority School	662	.25	850	.25
Public	662	.72	866	.65
High FARMS School	662	.23	866	.21
New Principal	662	.31	841	.30
Full-Day Kindergarten	662	.46	866	.44

*Note.* Means are weighted; n is unweighted.

The ECLS-K dataset includes weights to adjust for over sampling of students and schools with specific characteristics. I employ the school weight (S2SAQW0) for the full sample in the analyses. I use this school weight and an individual panel weight (BYCOMWO) for the full sample to obtain the within weight used at level one. These weights enable generalization to any student (and his/her parent) who began kindergarten in 1998 in the United States.

### **Data Analysis**

The analyses uses multi-level or hierarchical linear models (HLM). While the statistical theory for HLM has been around for at least half a century, HLM is more commonly used today in social science research, due in part to stronger and more accessible statistical software that makes it easier to model at multiple levels (Arnold, 1992). As with any simple regression, in HLM the researcher is trying to determine the relationship between variables of interest (i.e., the independent variables) and the criterion (i.e., the dependent variable or outcome variable).

One key assumption, often violated in simple linear regression, is the independence of observations, in which each case is independent of every other case. However, we know this is not true in much social science research, particularly when

research designs call for cluster sampling. In this study, students, their families, and schools in ECLS-K are not entirely random from one another. For example, students are nested within classrooms and schools. Because students share and experience particular aspects of schools, the students in a particular school are not independent of each other. To assume that students, families and schools are random and not related violates the assumptions of a simple linear regression resulting in improper test statistics. Multi-level modeling allows the researcher to correct for violations of this assumption and provides more precise estimates of coefficients associated with individual and school characteristics. With multi-level modeling the researcher can explore relationships across levels and determine the impact of individual level characteristics, called level one, and the grouping characteristics (e.g., schools), called level two.

The research questions relate to two outcomes: parent crossings (RQ1 and RQ2), and student reading achievement (RQ3). Below I describe the unconditional model that is the first step in running any HLM analyses. Then I delve into the additional procedures for modeling at level one and two.

### **Unconditional Models**

The first step in HLM analyses is to run an unconditional model, which includes only the outcome variable with no independent variables. The unconditional model at level one provides estimates of the school mean on the outcome of interest and also the amount of variance in the outcome between schools. The two continuous outcome variables (i.e., number of crossings into the school by the parent, learning in reading over the course of the year) were first modeled using the fully unconditional model. Research

question one specifically addresses the unconditional models for the outcome parent crossing. The fully unconditional level one model is

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + r_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where

$Y_{ij}$  is the outcome variable (i.e., number of crossings into the school by the parent or student learning in reading),

$\beta_{0j}$  is the mean outcome of school  $j$ , and

$r_{ij}$  is the random “individual effect,” the deviation of individual  $i$  from the school mean. This random effect, or the error, is assumed to be normally distributed with a mean of 0 and a variance of  $\sigma^2$ .

The fully unconditional level two model is

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} \quad (2)$$

where

$\beta_{0j}$  is the mean outcome of school  $j$ ,

$\gamma_{00}$  is the grand mean outcome of the populations, and

$u_{0j}$  is the random “school effect,” or the deviation from school  $j$ 's predicted outcome. This random effect, or the error, is assumed to have a mean of 0 and a variance of  $\tau_{00}$ .

After running the unconditional models for the two continuous variables, the intraclass correlation (ICC) can be calculated. The ICC represents the proportion of total variance in a dependent variable that is between groups (level two), in this instance, between schools. The amount of variance between schools is an important measure to obtain, because if there was no between school variance, there would not be a need to have a



multi-level model because all the variance could be explained within one level. That is, a low ICC would suggest that differences do not exist at the school level that impacts the outcome. These results are presented in Chapter 4.

### Fully Conditional Models

After running the fully unconditional models, I created fully conditional models. A general two level model explores the impact of individual and school level factors on the outcome of interest. This general two-level model addresses research questions two and three. The level one model for these continuous outcome variables is

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \sum_{q=1}^Q \beta_{qj} X_{qij} + r_{ij} \quad (3)$$

where

$Y_{ij}$  is the outcome variable (i.e., number of crossings into the school by the parent or student learning in reading),

$\beta_{0j}$  is the mean outcome of school  $j$ ,

$Q$  is the number of individual predictors,

$\beta_{qj}$  is the average effect of the  $q$ th individual predictor on the outcome in school  $j$ ,

$X_{qij}$  is the value of the  $q$ th predictor for individual  $i$  in school  $j$ , and

$r_{ij}$  is the error term or the deviation from the predicted outcome for individual  $i$  in school  $j$ .

The level two model is

$$\beta_{qj} = \gamma_{q0} + \sum_{s=1}^S \gamma_{qs} W_{sj} + u_{qj} \quad (4)$$

where

$\beta_{qj}$  represents the level one coefficient for predictor  $q$  in school  $j$ ,

$\gamma_{q0}$  is the intercept or the grand mean of the  $q$ th level one coefficient across all schools,

$\gamma_{qs}$  is the average effect of the  $s$ th school predictor on the  $\beta_{qj}$  coefficient,

$W_{sj}$  is the value of the  $s$ th school predictor for school  $j$ , and

$u_{qj}$  is the random “school effect,” or the deviation from school  $j$ ’s predicted outcome.

This two level model examines the variation of crossings and student learning in reading between and amongst schools. Individual and school characteristics illuminate different relationships between specific characteristics and crossings and student learning. Using a two level hierarchical model accounts for the nested nature of schooling, in which students and families are nested within classrooms and schools.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Inevitably, any study has strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing both the limits and possibilities of a study helps the researcher and audience understand what we can learn about the phenomenon and what is left to explore. Using a secondary dataset comes with some limits. For one, I am bound by the items asked in the ECLS-K, which mainly employs the lens of parent involvement to understand home-school relationships. Thus, items more commonly capture behaviors of parents and teachers. As a result, some concepts are not as well explored in ECLS-K, such as parents’ perception of the teacher or the results of actual encounters between parents and school staff.

The timing of this data collection which occurred in 1998-1999 may mean that new trends in education and society are not captured. For example, social media, a tool that may facilitate home and school encounters, was in its infancy in 1998-99. NCLB,

which further expanded the profile of parent engagement with schools, had not yet been issued. The number of students enrolled in charter schools, which often require parent entries (e.g., mandatory volunteering), has tripled from 1999 to 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). These changes in education and our society that may impact parent crossings may not be captured in the ECLS-K data.

In addition, reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher during the data collection process. I did not conduct or participate in data collection, so I do not know how respondents engaged with the survey researchers. Technical reports provide some description about data collection and challenges, but these reports are not the same as actually observing the interactions of survey researchers, parents, and children.

Many studies of home-school relationships focus on the encounters between a small group of parents and/or teachers or a program implemented across several schools. Since this is not an investigation of the results of an intervention, results capture crossings that occur naturally and not through specific programming. The ECLS-K study has a large reach and includes nearly 20,000 students in over 800 schools across the country. Through the use of this dataset, this study allows exploration of the context around parent crossings and the potential impact of these crossings on reading achievement at a national scale.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted in the exploration of parent crossings' into schools. The chapter begins by discussing parent crossings' and providing descriptive statistics around the types, frequencies, and barriers to crossings used in this study. I examine the disaggregation of these statistics by parent education level, race/ethnicity, and school FARMS.

Then the discussion moves to the results from a series of hierarchical linear models (HLM) created to address the research questions. In the first series of statistical models, I explore family demographics, child/parent/teacher perceptions, school demographics and what I refer to as cultural practices of schools associated with parent crossings into schools. The second set of analyses attempts to further explore parent crossings by determining if there is any association between crossings and student learning in reading. In the analysis, I explore individual (level one) and school (level two) characteristics to measure variation across and between levels associated with the dependent variables – parent crossings into schools and student learning in reading in kindergarten.

The analysis of each dependent variable includes three models; each model adds more predictor variables than the previous model. Model one is the fully unconditional model, which has no independent variables. The fully unconditional model determines if variation in the dependent variable exists across schools. This analysis justifies the need for modeling at two levels. In other words, it shows that not only individual characteristics but school characteristics are associated with the dependent variable. The second model includes only predictor variables at the individual level, and, in the case of

reading achievement, a series of interactions with a measure for number of crossings. The third and final model for each dependent variable includes predictor variables at both the individual and school level. The final crossing model also includes a series of school level interactions to determine if there are differential effects associated with key variables (e.g., whether a student attends a high or mid-low FARMS school).

Results from the HLM models illustrate whether the independent variables are associated with the dependent variable. Causality cannot be established. This methodology only demonstrates whether a relationship exists. All continuous variables in the models, including both outcome variables, have been standardized ( $M=0$ ,  $SD=1$ ) to allow for interpretation of the coefficients as effect sizes. All level one and level two variables are grand mean centered. In addition, the analyses use restricted maximum likelihood estimation (RML) to estimate the regression parameters. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of findings, which I elaborate on in chapter 5.

### **About the Crossings**

Numerous types of crossings exist that occur between home and schools. The child moves daily into the home and school. Newsletters are sent home; parents drop off children at the classroom door. While there are a myriad ways these crossings occur, this study looks at a set of seven traditional types of parent crossings into the school. These crossings occurred for the following activities: open house, a PTA meeting, a parent teacher conference, a parent advisory group, a school event, volunteering, or a fundraiser. For clarity, any descriptions of crossings include the reported number of crossings during the child's kindergarten year that occurred only for these seven activities.

Parent entries into schools may be impacted by numerous barriers. Parents were asked about eight different barriers: not being able to have time off from work, inconvenient meeting time, no child care, not hearing about anything interesting at the school, not feeling welcomed at the school, transportation problems, having school meetings only in English, and safety going to the school. Exploring these barriers to entry also provides a deeper understanding of parents' experiences. The following section provides descriptive information about both types of crossings and barriers to crossings reported by families.

### **Types of Crossings**

As noted in chapter 3 and presented again below in Table 4.1, parents on average crossed about 10.5 times a year into the school. Most crossings occur when parents volunteer and the fewest crossings occur for attendance at advisory board meetings. The overwhelming majority of parents (97%) crossed into the school at least once, about 75% crossed at least four times, and about 20% crossed at least 16 times. At the high end of crossings, about 1% of parents crossed at least 40 times. Assuming a 9-month school year, these parents crossed about 4.5 times a month.

Table 4.1

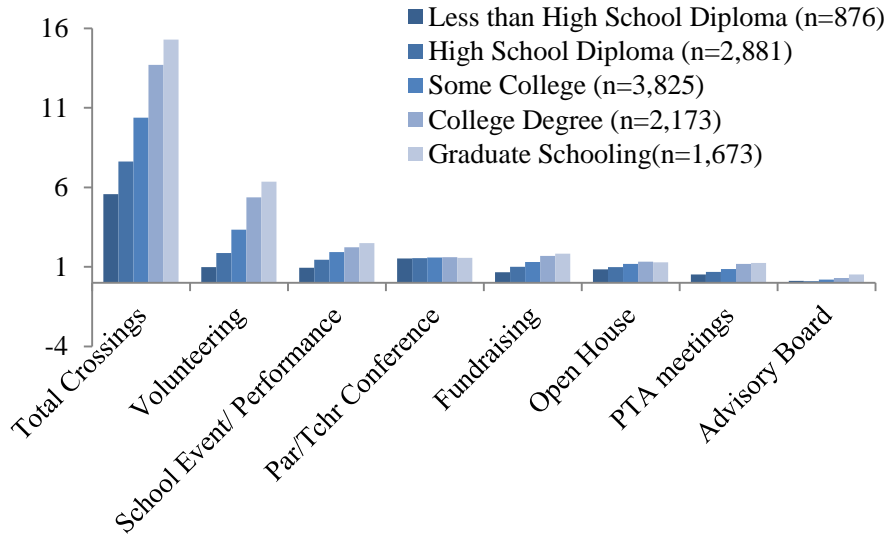
*Parent Crossings, by Type of Crossing and Overall*

	N	Mean	SD
Total Crossings	11,428	10.47	9.26
Volunteering	11,423	3.50	6.27
School Event/ Performance	11,420	1.84	2.09
Par/Tchr Conference	11,422	1.57	1.02
Fundraising	11,418	1.31	1.57
Open House	11,413	1.14	.96
PTA meetings	11,418	.89	1.65
Advisory Board	11,415	.23	1.01

*Note.* Means and standard deviations are weighted; n is unweighted.

I also looked at the distribution in parent crossing activities by education level, race/ethnicity, and whether a school could be categorized as having high or low enrollment of FARMS students. An ANOVA test shows there are significant differences in reports of parent crossings by subpopulations and types of crossings at  $p < .01$ , except for crossings for parent/teacher conference across parent education level and school FARMS and crossings for advisory board meetings across race/ethnicity and school FARMS (see Table A.3 in Appendix A for complete  $F$  statistics). These results illustrate that families cross into schools at different rates.

As seen in Figure 4.1, parents with more education enter schools more often. Parents with graduate schooling cross into schools about 15 times a year versus 6 times for parents with no high school education. This difference in crossings, though, varies by activity. Parents of all education levels enter the school about one and a half times a year for parent/teacher conferences, and in general, parents rarely enter the school to participate in advisory board meetings. The most notable difference is around volunteering. Parents with graduate schooling volunteer about six times a year compared with once a year for parents with no high school diploma.



*Figure 4.1.* Average number of parent crossings in kindergarten by school activity and parent education level

In addition to parent education level, I also looked at the distribution in parent crossings by race/ethnicity (see Figure 4.2). White parents crossed on average about 12 times during the school year, while Asian and African American parents had about 4 to 5 fewer crossings, respectively. White parents volunteered and participated in fundraising more than any other racial/ethnic group. All parents attended about one open house and one PTA meeting a year.



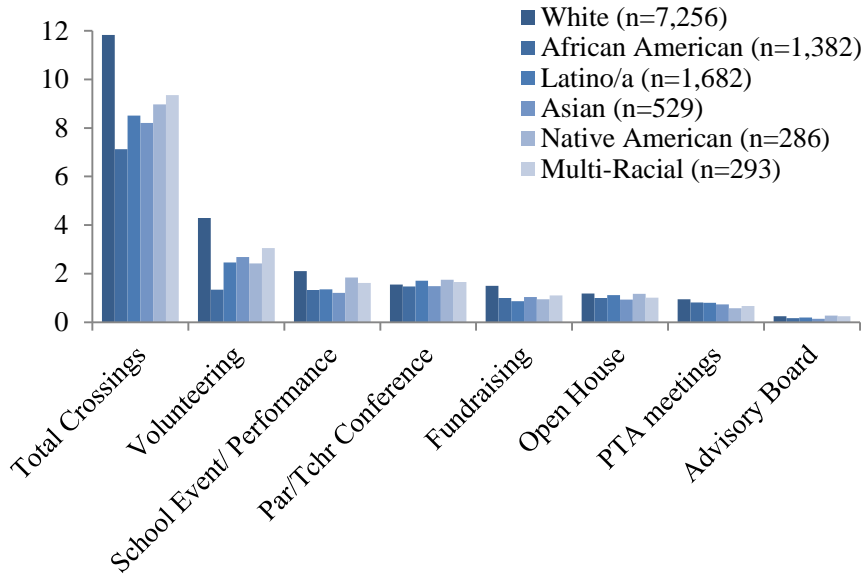


Figure 4.2. Mean parent crossings in kindergarten by school activity and family race/ethnicity

I also looked at the school level and compared crossing activities for schools with high FARMS enrollments (50% or more FARMS) with schools that have mid-low FARMS enrollment (less than 50% FARMS) (see Figure 4.3). Mid-low FARMS schools, on average, saw about three more parent crossings. Parents volunteered more often, attended more school events, and participated in more fundraisers in the mid-low FARMS schools compared to the high FARMS schools. In both types of schools, parents appeared to attend about the same number of parent/teacher conferences, PTA meetings, and advisory board meetings.

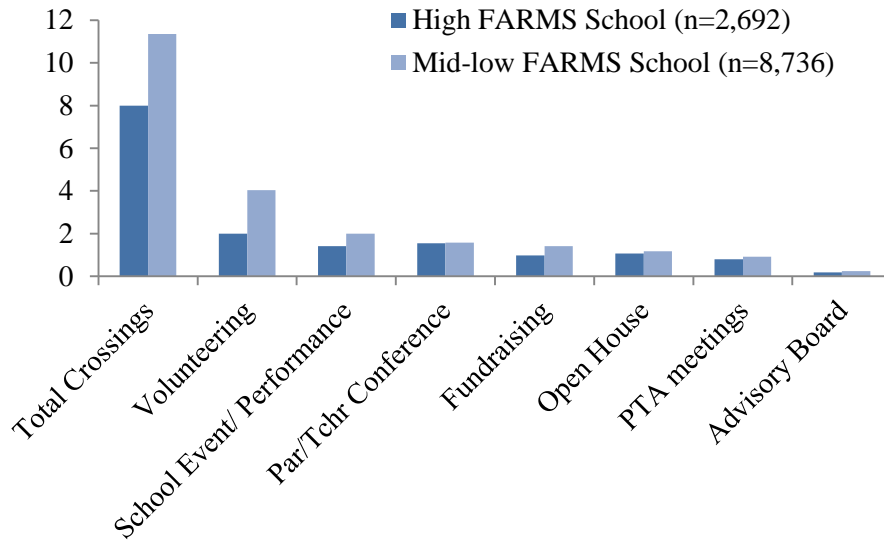


Figure 4.3. Mean parent crossings in kindergarten by school activity and percent FARMS school

### Barriers to Entry

In addition to exploring crossings, I also wanted to examine the barriers that parents reported when considering whether or not to enter schools. Table 4.2 presents eight different barriers that parents could report. This table also includes whether parents had high barriers to entry, where parents with “high” barriers reported having three or more barriers to entry. About 17% of families reported having high barriers to entry. The most common barrier to entry was being unable to get time off from work, with slightly over half of the parents reporting this as a barrier. The least commonly reported barrier was safety of going to the school; only 2% of families reported this was a barrier.

Table 4.2

*Barriers to Entry*

	N	Mean
High (3 or more) Barriers	11,428	.17
No time off from work	11,422	.53
Inconvenient meeting time	11,413	.37
No child care	11,420	.25
Nothing interesting	11,413	.12
Don't feel welcomed	11,407	.05
Transportation problems	11,426	.05
Meetings only in English	11,428	.03
Safety going to school	11,422	.02

*Note.* Means are weighted; n is unweighted.

Differences exist in the distribution of reported barriers by education level (Figure 4.4), race/ethnicity (Figure 4.5), and school FARMS (Figure 4.6) at  $p < .01$ , except for differences in reports of being unable to get time off from work across race/ethnicity and school FARMS and no child care by school FARMS (see Table A.4 in Appendix A for complete  $F$  statistics). Parents who reported the fewest barriers had the highest crossings; this holds true for education level, race/ethnicity, and school FARMS. Only 11% of parents with graduate schooling, 14% of White parents, and 15% of parents attending mid-low FARMS schools reported high barriers. In contrast, 29% of parents with only a high school diploma, 29% of Asian parents, and 23% of parents attending high FARMS schools reported high barriers to entry.

In addition, looking at the disaggregation of barriers illustrates that some barriers affect some families more than others. Fourteen percent of families without a high school diploma report problems with transportation versus 1% of families with a college degree. Twelve percent of African American families report not feeling welcomed at school versus 4% of White families. Parents attending high FARMS schools versus those

attending mid-low FARMS schools more often report inconvenient meeting times (45% vs. 35%) as a barrier to entry. Language issues appear to be a barrier most for Asian (23%) and Latino (11%) families, whereas only 3% of all families reported language barriers.

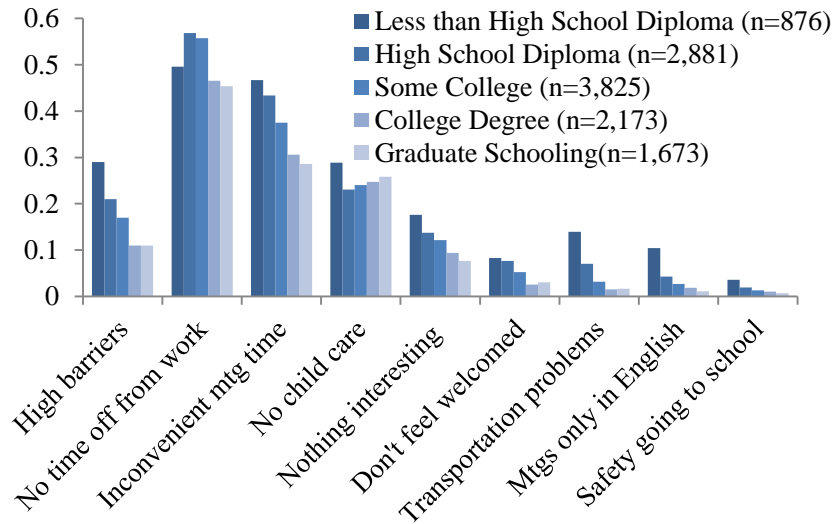


Figure 4.4. Barriers to entry by parents' education level

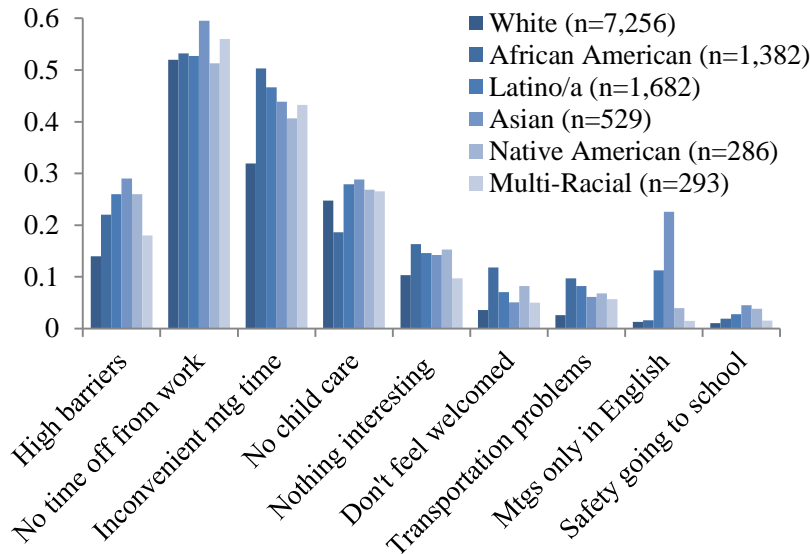


Figure 4.5. Barriers to entry by family race/ethnicity

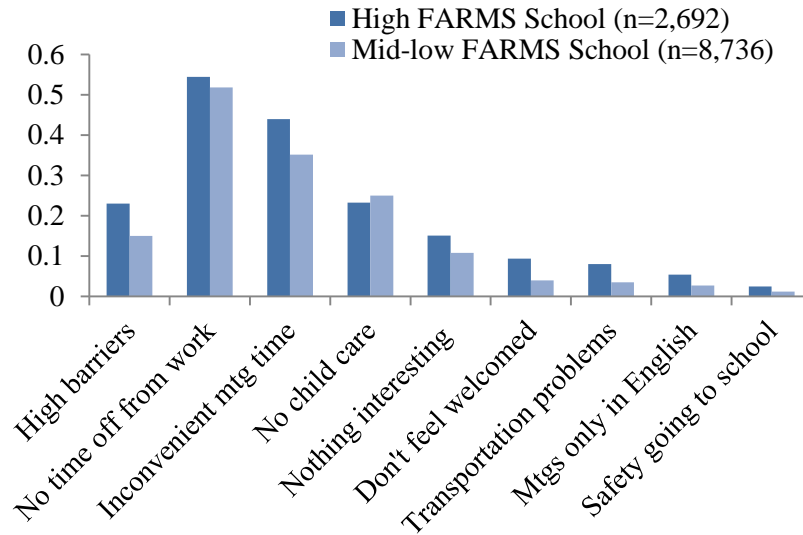


Figure 4.6. Barriers to entry by school FARMs

### Summary

In summary, disaggregating crossings by type of crossing and different subpopulations allows differences and similarities in these crossings to emerge. The majority of parents (97%) cross into the school at least once a year; with most parents with kindergarten children crossing into the school about 10.5 times a year. Parents of kindergarten students appear to enter the school most often to volunteer. In contrast, parents by all subgroup categories, on average, appear to attend one open house, one fundraiser, and one PTA meeting a year. When looking at difference by subgroup, more educated and White parents enter the school more often to volunteer and fundraise. In addition, schools that are mid-low FARMs have more parent crossings than schools that are high FARMs.

Exploring barriers to entry also provides some insight into challenges parents face when trying to attend schools. All parents report the same two main barriers: being unable to get time off from work and inconvenient meeting times at school. Still, differences exist by subgroup comparisons. While the ANOVA tests only highlight that

differences amongst groups exist, not which groups are most different, these results still indicate that not all experiences are the same. Only a third of White parents report inconvenient meeting times, while half of African American parents report this as a barrier to entry. A higher percentage of parents with less than a high school diploma report safety going to school as barrier compared with families with more education. About twice as many families whose children attend high FARMS schools report not feeling welcomed versus families whose children attend mid-low FARMS schools. These preliminary descriptive analyses begin to provide some context around and highlight the variability of the crossings. The next two sections present the models that predict parent crossings into school and the relationship between crossings and student reading achievement.

### **Predicting Parent Crossings**

Schools play an important role in establishing partnerships with families (Epstein, 2001) and school practice and environment have been shown to impact parents' perceptions and engagement with schools (e.g., Davern, 1999; Sanders et al., 1999; Stoner et al., 2005). Given the role schools play in the development of home-school relationships; presumably, parent crossings into schools would capture variation across schools. Research question one specifically focuses on whether variation across schools exist in the number of crossings reported by parents. This variation can be determined by obtaining the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). The ICC represents the amount of variance found between groups (schools, in this case); for parent crossings the ICC is .25. In other words, variation does exist across schools with 25% of the variance in parent

crossings occurring between parents whose children attend different schools and 75% occurring between parents whose children attend the same school.

Reliability ( $\lambda$ ) is another important consideration in multi-level modeling and particularly in early data analysis. Reliability is a ratio of “true” score variance to total observed variance of a measure. In other words, reliability estimates the extent to which level one parameters can be estimated without error based on the within-group sample size and the variation within and between groups (Rowan, Raudenbush, & Kong, 1991). In these analyses, the intercept ( $\beta_{0j}$ ) or the average crossings per school is the parameter of interest. For this parameter, reliability was high ( $\lambda = .84$ ) for the unconditional model and remained robust throughout the models as level one variables ( $\lambda = .77$ ) and level two variables ( $\lambda = .69$ ) were added.

After running the unconditional model and considering reliability, I included only individual level variables (Model 2) and then ran a third model that added school level variables (Model 3) (see Table 4.3). These models answer research question two. Because results were similar across all models, the discussion focuses on the final two-level model (Model 3). An individual coefficient can be interpreted as the proportion (or percentage when multiplied by 100) of a standard deviation change in the dependent variable controlling for all other variables in the model. I report parent-specific level one coefficients first, followed by the school level two coefficients and interactions with school FARMS status.

### **Individual Level Results**

The descriptive statistics presented in the previous section suggests that parent crossings vary by parent education level and race/ethnicity. The results from this two-

level model further support this observation, as parent education level and race/ethnicity were statistically significant predictors of parent crossings. Having more education is associated with more crossings. For example, having a bachelor's degree is associated with 44% of a standard deviation (SD) increase in crossings compared to a parent with a high school degree, controlling for all other factors in the model. White families have more crossings than African American, Latino, Asian, and multi-racial families. For example, White families cross 27% of a SD more often than Asian families and Black families. In addition, English speakers cross more often than non-English speakers by 19% of a SD.

Besides individual demographic characteristics, I also wanted to explore the relationship between varying perceptions and crossings. Perceptions may reflect different understandings of a phenomenon. Therefore, variables included in the models look at the association between crossings and student experiences in the school and parent and teacher reports of their engagement. Crossings were not associated with the amount of praise a child had for the school. However, crossings were associated with the amount a child complained about school. Parents whose children complained more reported fewer crossings (-.16 SD) than parents whose children did not.

Parents and teachers who agreed entirely on how many times they met were associated with a 28% of a SD increase in crossings. As noted in Chapter 3, this variable had a lot of missing data, so the model includes the variable parent/teacher agreement missing. Since this variable was not significant, the results from the analysis suggest no difference exists between parents for whom there was parent/teacher agreement data and for those lacking these data.



Finally, having a high number of barriers to entry also was associated with fewer crossings (-.25 SD). In addition, a small negative effect (-.05 SD) was associated with families who lived farther from school.

### **School Level Results**

The variables at the school level (level two) suggest that attending a private school (.32 SD), a mid-low FARMS school (.08 SD) and a school with a new principal (.11 SD) are associated with more crossings. However, there were no significant relationships between crossings and minority enrollment or whether the school has a full-day or half-day kindergarten.

In addition, the two variables that reflect what I have described as cultural practices of school have the largest coefficient in the model. These practices reflect culture since they represent rituals, traditions, and behaviors of the school. Specifically, more crossings are associated with schools that, as reported by parents, effectively help parents learn how to support their child (1.19 SD) and offer more school events (1.10 SD). These effect sizes are especially large compared to all of the other effects in the model. Results also indicate there were no school level effects associated with higher proportions of parents reporting that their children complained about school or praised their teachers. Nor was the frequency of contacts about learning associated with crossings, though, two of these effects did vary by school FARMS status.

One of the primary interests in conducting this analysis is to determine whether school level variables, particularly contextual variables, have the same or different effects in high versus moderate-low FARMS schools. I explored a series of interactions between school FARMS status and school level variables. These analyses indicated differential

effects for school frequency of contact about student learning and schools with higher proportions of students praising the school. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 use bar graphs to assist in interpretation of these interaction terms. For schools that serve less than 50% FARMS students (mid-low FARMS school), the frequency of contact around student learning does not appear to be associated with crossings. Note in Figure 4.7 that the bars for mid-low FARMS schools hover around zero, regardless of the frequency of contact. In contrast, the effect of frequency of contact varies in schools with high proportions of FARMS students. Note that the bars for these schools vary depending on whether the parents report high, moderate, or low contact (defined as plus 1 SD, average or 0 SD, and -1 SD for number of school contacts). In high FARMS schools, high levels of contact are associated with low levels of crossings whereas low levels of contact are associated with high levels of crossings. The difference in the effect of school contacts is 1.08 SD between high and low contact high FARMS schools.

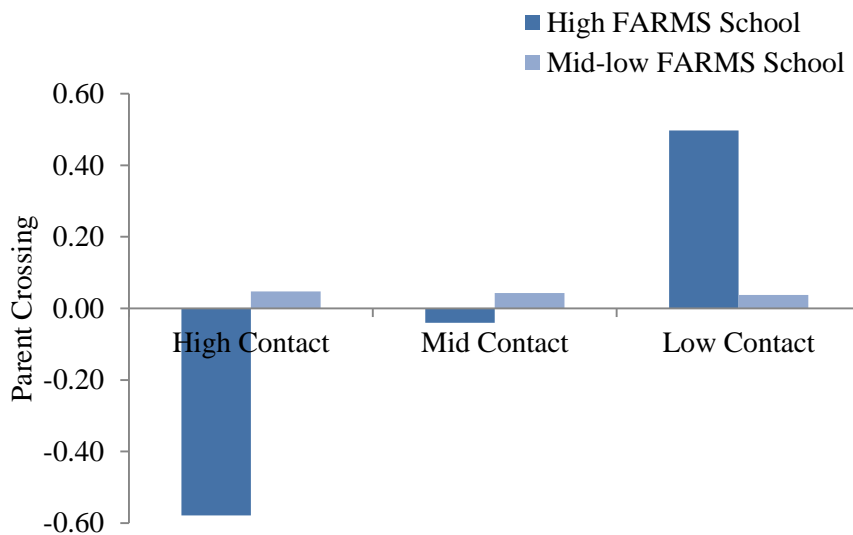


Figure 4.7. Crossing by frequency of contact about student learning and high/mid-low FARMS schools

When looking at the average frequency of children's praise of a school, the difference again in crossings is most stark in high FARMS schools versus mid-low FARMS schools. Note in Figure 4.8 that the bars associated with mid-low FARMS schools have less variability and rise in an opposite direction than the bars for the high FARMS schools. In high FARMS school, high proportions of child praise are associated with fewer crossings whereas low proportions of child praise are associated with more crossings. The difference in these crossings by child praise is -1.46 SD between high praise and low praise schools. The relationship for mid-low FARMS schools is just the opposite, though not as strong. High child praise is associated with higher crossings while low child praise is associated with fewer crossings. The difference between high proportions of child praise and low proportions in mid-low FARMS schools is .48 SD.

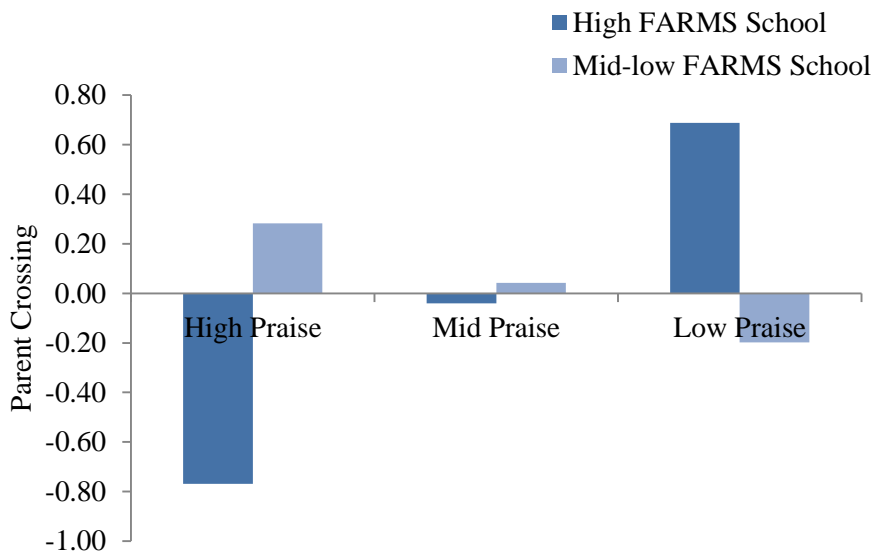


Figure 4.8. Crossing by degree child praises school and high/mid-low FARMS schools

### Summary

In summary, research question two asked if differences in the number of crossings reported by parents' were associated with different individual and school characteristics.

The results in Table 4.3 from the analysis indicate that, yes, parent crossings are

associated with different individual and school characteristics. White highly educated English speakers that do not report high barriers to entry, hold the same perceptions with the child's teacher about prior interactions, whose child does not complain often about attending school, and who live less than two miles from school cross the most into schools, regardless of the schools they attend. At the school level, private schools, schools with new principals, and schools that are not high FARMS are associated with more parent crossings. The largest coefficients predicting crossings are for schools that have many events for parents and, as reported by parents, are more effective in providing parents with information on how to support their child.

Research question two also asked if any differential effects existed for high and mid-low FARMS schools in predicted crossings. Findings suggest a differential association of crossings by whether a school is high (or not) FARMS and the proportion of children praising the school and the frequency of school contact about student learning. The frequency of school contact had no influence on crossings in mid-low FARMS schools but it did have an effect in high FARMS schools. In these latter schools, more crossings were associated with fewer school contacts. The relationship of high praise schools and crossing was the opposite in mid-low FARMS schools versus high FARMS schools. In mid-low FARMS schools, high praise was associated with more crossings, whereas in high FARMS schools it was associated with fewer crossings.

The initial analysis suggested that 25% of the variance in school crossings was explained by differences between schools. The level one variables in Model 2 explained 44% of the variance in the intercept. This reduction suggests that slightly less than half of the variance in school crossings is associated with differences between schools in the

characteristics of parents and their children who attend schools. Inclusion of level two predictors reduced the intercept variance by 35%. Using individual and school level predictors and holding school type, kindergarten day length, and school level demographics constant, the final model explains 63% of the variance in the intercept. This is roughly equivalent to an  $r^2$  of .63 for the between school variance. Findings from this model reveal some of the context around parent crossings and suggest that crossings vary by both home and school characteristics. The next section continues to uncover dimensions of crossing, by determining if a relationship exists between crossing and student reading achievement.

Table 4.3

*Multilevel Model Predicting Kindergarten Parent Crossings into Schools*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.
			Fixed effects			
Intercept	.06*	.03	.04*	.02	.04**	.02
Level 1 (parent-specific) <sup>a</sup>						
100% Par/Tchr Agrmt			.29***	.02	.28***	.02
Par/Tchr Agrmt Missing Variable			-.03	.06	-.02	.05
English Speaker			.19***	.05	.19***	.05
High Barriers to Entry			-.25***	.03	-.24***	.03
No High School Diploma <sup>b</sup>			-.20***	.05	-.20***	.05
Some College <sup>b</sup>			.28***	.03	.28***	.03
Bachelor's Degree <sup>b</sup>			.47***	.03	.44***	.03
Graduate Schooling <sup>b</sup>			.57***	.03	.54***	.03
African American/Black <sup>c</sup>			-.28***	.04	-.27***	.04
Latino/a <sup>c</sup>			-.14***	.04	-.14***	.04
Asian/Asian American <sup>c</sup>			-.29***	.07	-.27***	.07
Native American/American Indian <sup>c</sup>			-.10	.08	-.03	.09
Multi-racial <sup>c</sup>			-.18***	.06	-.18**	.06
High Distance to School			-.04 <sup>†</sup>	.02	-.05*	.02
High Child Complain about School			-.16***	.03	-.16***	.03
High Child Praise School			.01	.02	.01	.02
Level 2 (school-specific)						
Full-Day K					.05	.04
High Minority (schl 50% or more minority)					.01	.05
Public					-.32***	.05
New Principal (less than 2 yrs experience)					.11**	.04

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.
High FARMS (schl 50% or more FARMS)					-.08*	.04
Frequency of Events					1.10***	.18
Frequency of Contact about Student Learning					.01	.21
Average Child Complain about School					-.24	.23
Average Child Praise School					.24	.26
School Efficacy in Helping Parents Support Child					1.19***	.20
High FARMS X Freq of Contact Stud Learning					-.54 <sup>†</sup>	.31
High FARMS X Child Praise					-.97*	.45
High FARMS X Child Complain					-.13	.35
	Random parameters					
Intercept, $\tau_{00}$	.25***	.50	.14***	.37	.09***	.30
Level 1, $\sigma^2$	.74	.86	.67	.82	.67	.82

Note. Level 1 n=11,428, Level 2 n=662, <sup>†</sup> p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> All level 1 variables are grand mean centered.

<sup>b</sup> The referent group is High School Diploma.

<sup>c</sup> The referent group is White parent.

### **Crossings' Relationship to Student Learning in Reading**

The second series of models looks at the relationship between crossings and student learning in reading. I began by running an unconditional model and determining the ICC and reliability. The ICC for student reading is .23 and reliability is .83. In other words, 23% of the variance in student learning in reading occurs between children who attend different schools, and estimates of the school means are highly reliable. Reliability remains high after level one predictors are included ( $\lambda = .69$ ) and with the final model ( $\lambda = .67$ ). Similar to the analysis for parent crossings, after running the unconditional model, I ran a second model with only individual level variables (Model 2) and then ran a third model that included school level variables (Model 3) (see Table 4.4). These models answer research question three. Because results were similar across all models, the discussion focuses on the final two-level model (Model 3).

The interpretation of coefficients continues to be the same. An individual coefficient can be interpreted as the proportion of a standard deviation change in the dependent variable controlling for all other variables in the model. I report individual level one coefficients first, including level one interaction terms, followed by the school level two coefficients and interactions with school FARMS status.

#### **Individual Level Results**

A primary interest for this analysis is whether parent crossings predict reading achievement. Results from the analysis suggest, that on average, parent crossings are not associated with reading achievement. In addition to crossings, other individual level variables were included in this model. The greatest predictor of student reading achievement is entering reading skills (.85 SD). In regards to parents' education level,



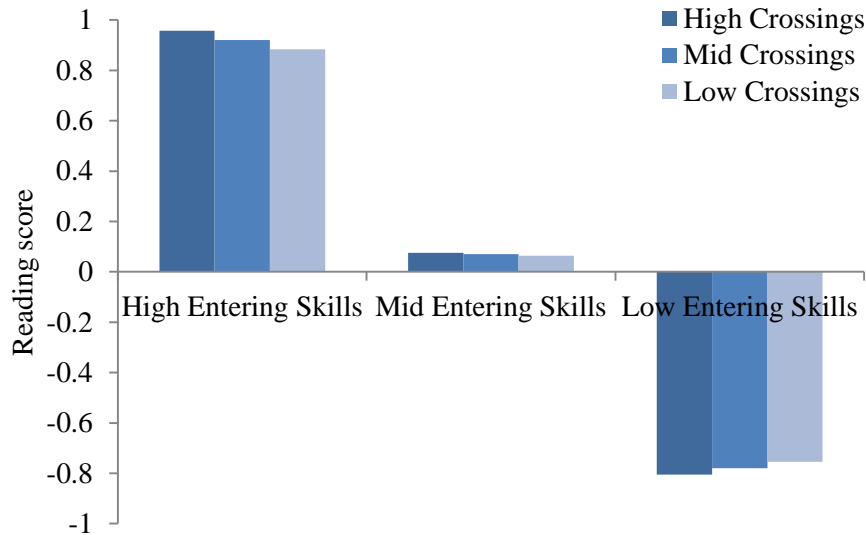
having at least a college degree is associated with higher student reading achievement (.05 SD) when compared to having only a high school diploma. Not having a high school diploma or some college was not associated with increased achievement compared to having only a high school diploma.

Race/ethnicity categories also were used as predictors of end of year reading scores. Being Asian (.22 SD) and Latino/a (.04 SD) are associated with higher end of year reading scores than White students. Being White is associated with higher reading scores than African American (-.10 SD) and Native American students (-.07 SD), while no difference existed in reading score between White and multi-racial students. As noted earlier, differences in reading achievement by race/ethnicity suggest different social and educational processes (which are not explored in this study) may occur for various students and do not suggest that racial differences in achievement are inherent.

The analysis also explores if a differential relationship between crossings and reading achievement exists by individual level characteristics. Specifically, I included interaction terms as part of the level one variables to determine if crossings have a differential effect by a child's characteristics. Both entering reading skills and parent education level when comparing parents with a high school diploma and no high school diploma were statistically significant.

Figure 4.9 presents a bar graph to assist in the interpretation of the differential effect of crossings on entering reading skills. Note in Figure 4.9 that the direction of the bars for reading achievement vary depending on whether a student enters with high, moderate, or low reading skills (defined as plus 1 SD, average or 0 SD, and -1 SD for entering skills or crossings). For students with high entering skills in reading, more

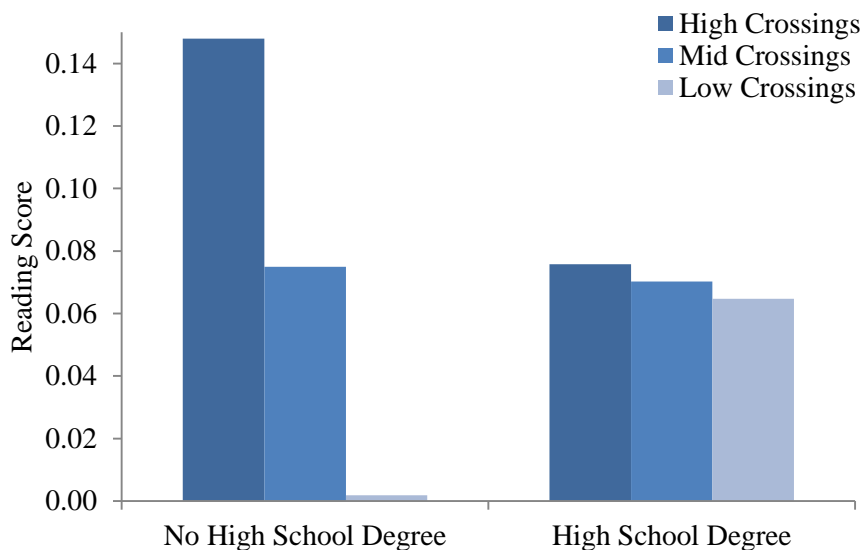
crossings by their parents are associated with a small increase in reading scores (.10 SD) compared to a comparable student whose parents have few crossings. However, the opposite relationship seems to exist for students with low entering skills. For students with low entering skills in reading, more crossings by their parents is associated with a slight decrease in reading scores (-.06 SD) compared to a student whose parents have few crossings. For students with average entering skills, the effects of crossings seem to be about the same; reading scores for high versus low crossers is only .02 SD, favoring high crossers.



*Figure 4.9.* Kindergarten reading score by degree of crossings and entering reading skills

The second interaction is the differential effect of crossings by parent education level. The effects of crossing are the same for all education levels when compared with a high school diploma except for the comparison between parents with and without a high school diploma (see Figure 4.10). More crossings are associated with increased reading achievement for both families with a high school diploma and without. However, the rate of association with student reading achievement is greater for crossings among families

with no high school diploma than when conducting a similar comparison among families with a high school diploma. Note in Figure 4.10 the predicted reading achievement is larger for students whose parents have no high school diploma by parent crossings compared with parents with a high school diploma. That is, for families with no high school diploma higher crossings by parents is associated with 15% of a standard deviation increase in student reading achievement at the end of kindergarten. In contrast, the association between families with a high school diploma who cross often and families with a high school diploma who cross infrequently is 2% of a standard deviation.



*Figure 4.10.* Differential association of crossings on kindergarten reading by parents' with no high school diploma vs. parents' with a high school diploma

### **School Level Results**

The variables at the school level (level two) suggest full-day kindergarten programs (-.09 SD) and schools that successfully (as reported by parents) help parents support their child (.19 SD) are associated with student learning in reading. The results that full-day kindergarten is associated with lower reading achievement appear

surprising, as full-day kindergarten has been shown to be associated with increased achievement (Lee, Burkam, Ready, Honigman, & Meisels, 2006). However, the use of different controls and variables in this study might explain this difference; indeed, the relationship found in this study between full-day kindergarten and lower reading achievement is small.

The remaining variables at the school level were not associated with reading achievement. Average parent crossing at the school level was not associated with reading achievement. Whether a school was public or private, predominantly minority or not, has a new principal or more experienced principal, or high or mid-low FARMs were not associated with reading achievement. The frequency of school events for parents and contact with parents about student learning also was not associated with reading achievement. Lastly, the proportion of children complaining or praising the school was not associated with reading achievement.

### **Summary**

In summary, results suggest parent crossings are not associated with reading achievement at the end of kindergarten. However, crossings have a differential effect on achievement by entering skills and by parents with no high school diploma versus a high school diploma. A child with high entering skills whose parent crosses frequently into schools is associated with higher reading achievement, than a comparable child with high entering skills whose parent crosses infrequently into the school. The opposite relationship occurs for a child with low entering skills – more crossings are associated with lower reading achievement. The rate in which crossings are associated with reading achievement also varies between families with no high school diploma versus families

with a high school diploma. Comparing across these education levels, in both instances, more crossings are associated with higher reading achievement. However, the rate of association is greater for families with no high school diploma.

At the school level, average crossings by parents at a school were not associated with increased reading achievement. School practice, specifically, schools that are effective in helping parents learn how to support their child is also associated with increased reading achievement. In addition, being a full day kindergarten was associated with lower reading achievement. None of the other school level factors were associated with reading achievement.

The analyses began by suggesting that 23% of the variance in reading achievement was explained between schools. The level one variables in Model 2 explained 84% of the variance in the intercept. Inclusion of level two predictors reduced the intercept variance by 8%. Using individual and school level predictors and holding school type, kindergarten day length, and school level demographics constant, the final model explains 85% of the variance in the intercept – roughly equivalent to an  $r^2$  of .85.

Table 4.4

*Multilevel Model Predicting Kindergarten Learning in Reading*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.
	Fixed effects					
Intercept	.10***	.02	.07***	.01	.07***	.01
Level 1 (individual-specific) <sup>a</sup>						
Parent Crossings			.01	.01	.01	.01
No High School Diploma <sup>b</sup>			.01	.03	.00	.03
Some College <sup>b</sup>			.02	.01	.02	.01
Bachelor's Degree <sup>b</sup>			.05**	.02	.05**	.02
Graduate Schooling <sup>b</sup>			.05*	.02	.05*	.02
African American/Black <sup>c</sup>			-.08***	.02	-.10***	.02
Latino/a <sup>c</sup>			.05*	.02	.04*	.02
Asian/Asian American <sup>c</sup>			.22***	.04	.22***	.04
Native American/American Indian <sup>c</sup>			-.06 <sup>†</sup>	.03	-.06 <sup>†</sup>	.03
Multi-racial <sup>c</sup>			.02	.03	.01	.04
Entering Reading Skills			.85***	.01	.85***	.01
Crossing X Entering Rdg			.03*	.01	.03*	.01
Crossing X No HS diploma <sup>b</sup>			.07**	.02	.07**	.02
Crossing X Some College <sup>b</sup>			.00	.01	.00	.01
Crossing X Bachelor's Degree <sup>b</sup>			-.02	.02	-.02	.02
Crossing X Grad Degree <sup>b</sup>			.01	.02	.01	.02
Level 2 (school-specific)						
Full-Day K					-.09***	.02
High Minority (schl 50% or more minority)					.03	.03
Public					.00	.03
New Principal (less than 2 yrs experience)					.00	.02

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.	Coef.	Std. Er.
High FARMS (schl 50% or more FARMS)					.00	.02
Frequency of School Events					.00	.11
Frequency of Contact about Student Learning					.09	.09
Average Child Complain School					.09	.10
Average Child Praise School					.09	.09
School Efficacy in Helping Parents Support Child					.19*	.10
Average School Crossing					.16	.12
	Random parameters					
Intercept, $\tau_{00}$	.18***	.43	.03***	.17	.03***	.16
Level 1, $\sigma^2$	.60	.78	.22	.47	.22	.47

Note. Level 1 n=11,428, Level 2 n=662, † p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> All level 1 variables are grand mean centered.

<sup>b</sup> The referent group is High School Diploma.

<sup>c</sup> The referent group is White parent.

## Overview of Results

Results illustrate the varied nature of crossings. Crossings, factors that influence crossings, and the outcome of the crossings are not the same for all families or all situations. Most parents enter the schools at least once when their child is in kindergarten, and enter on average a little more than once a month throughout the school year. Parents do not cross at the same rate for all school activities; parents cross the most to volunteer. Different barriers exist for parents. Parents who enter schools less often report more barriers. White, highly educated parents, who speak English cross the most into their child's schooling. School practice also impacts the degree of crossings. Two school practices related to more crossings are frequency of school events and effectiveness in providing parents information on how to support their child. Lastly, differential relationships exist between the degree of child praise of the school and frequency of school contact about student learning and parent crossings by school FARMS.

This study sought to not only describe the context around the crossings, but also determine the impact of these crossings as measured by reading achievement. Both crossings associated with individuals and average number of crossings at a school do not appear to have any association with student reading achievement in kindergarten. However, there are differential effects of crossing on reading achievement for parents with no high school degree and for parents with a high school degree and by student entering skills. As described in the next chapter, all these results suggest that crossings are not a standard experience; context matters in understanding these crossings and the outcomes that can be attributed to it.



## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This dissertation seeks to explore a facet of home-school relationships by focusing on why and when parents of kindergarten-aged children cross into schools. Using the concept of “crossings” between home and school helps to re-imagine the phenomenon of home-school relationships by providing language and a frame to describe and deconstruct the elements which come to shape these relationships. This study suggests home-school relationships are formed by a series of encounters that are only possible when crossings between home and school occur. The focus on crossings provides a spotlight on a critical step in the development of these relationships. This focus does not suggest that the crossing is the entirety of the relationship, just that it is a foundational step in the relationship’s development. While the focus on crossings does not capture all aspects of the home-school relationship, it does allow us to describe this relationship before prescribing solutions to enhance these relationships. Through the use of cultural studies ideas of “border crossings,” in this instance focusing on the borders between home and school, this study reveals the complexity inherent in these relationships.

Detailed analyses of why, when, and how parents cross into schools reveals how varied and context-dependent these crossings are. Not all parents cross at the same rate or experience the same degree of barriers to crossing. Some school practices impact the frequency of these crossings similarly for all parents. Other school factors, though, have a differential effect on crossings by school poverty level. Delving further into crossings, I explore if crossings are related to a student outcome, reading achievement, arguably the main instructional focus in kindergarten. Crossings at both the individual level and

average school crossings are not related to reading achievement, though, they are predictive of improved reading achievement for specific groups. Therefore, the assumed normative value and importance of crossings is not a given, and needs to be thought about in more intersectional and context-dependent ways.

In the following chapter of this dissertation, I begin by describing some limitations of the study. Then I review results by research question. Next, I discuss how this study attempts to reveal the complexity of home-school relationships using the lens of crossings. Specifically, I illustrate the importance of context and critique normative assumptions about parents' entries into schools. I then discuss expanding the ideas of home-school relationships. I also revisit the quantitative criticalist lens that I used, what I learned from the process, and how it may inform other researchers. Finally, I provide a brief conclusion.

### **Limitations of the Study**

My study attempts to explore home-school relationships by looking at a critical element in the development of these relationships, parent crossings. The crossings explored imply that an encounter between a parent and school staff occurred. However, based on the data, this study cannot confirm or dispute that an actual encounter occurred, nor can it characterize the nature or quality of the encounter. A parent may enter the school for a PTA meeting and not make contact with a teacher or administrator. The limited knowledge of the details of each encounter constrains what I present about these crossings and how they contribute to our understanding of home-school relationships.

Another limitation is that the concept of crossings represents more complex processes than I can capture. Many types of crossings exist including metaphorical

crossings. A metaphoric or symbolic crossing into the teacher's role may occur when a parent challenges a teacher's pedagogy. Similarly, a teacher may symbolically cross into the home when he/she inquires about home routines, by, for example, asking a child if they went to bed early the previous evening. Due to the difficulties in measuring these other types of crossings and the limitations of the data, this study only focuses on parents' physical crossings into schools associated with seven types of traditional parent engagement activities: volunteering, school events/performances, parent and teacher conferences, fundraising, open house, PTA meetings, and advisory board meetings. Indeed, other common crossings into the school, such as parents entering the school to pick up a sick child are not captured in this study, as these data were not available.

In addition, I only measure one outcome, student reading achievement. Other important outcomes exist beyond student achievement. Some outcomes may be more easily measured such as greater trust between parent and teacher or improved communication. Other outcomes, though, like the emergence of new cultural spaces or borderlands between home and school (see Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) may be more abstract and difficult to reveal. The exploration of other types of crossings and outcomes might be better illuminated through qualitative studies that may allow for thick description of this phenomenon.

In addition, limitations exist in using a pre-existing, general purpose dataset. ECLS-K was conducted in 1998-1999 and the timing of the data collection may not capture new trends in schooling (e.g., the use of websites to share information with parents). First, ECLS-K is not an experimental study design. Therefore, the statistical models indicate an association exists between the predictor and outcome variables;

causality cannot be established. I cannot determine if school practices associated with crossings cause the additional crossings or if high amounts of parent crossings lead to certain school practices. Similarly, this holds true for the impact of school practice on student reading achievement. Lastly, since I used a pre-existing dataset, I was unable to create the data collection instruments, and thus, I am bound by the questions asked in ECLS-K. For example, many studies often discuss the imbalance of power between families and teachers or principals (e.g., deCarvalho, 2001; Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1993; Henry, 1996) and its impact on home-school relationships. Items in ECLS-K, though, did not adequately capture components of this potential power struggle.

My variables, measures, and analyses also are limited in what they inform about these crossings. This study focuses on kindergarten, but parent crossings often vary by the age and grade of the child (Halsey, 2005; Henry, 1996). The context around crossings and even the range of outcomes may be different when comparing a kindergarten to a high school student. Individual level factors including race/ethnicity and parents' education level imply different social processes, expectations, or understandings of home-school relationships may exist for different families. While I use interaction terms to explore some differential impacts, this study does not fully unpack all of the possible differential associations between family characteristics and outcomes. For example, this study does not explore additional and more subtle ways in which families' race/ethnicity or parent education level influences school experiences. Nor do I explore the impact of other identities, such as gender or religion, on parents' crossings.

The school level factors only capture three practices of school, but undoubtedly other school practices, that could not be captured, impact these crossings. In addition,

while I suggest the influence of outside factors, most notably those captured by parents' barriers to entry (e.g., being unable to take time off from work) and distance to school; this model does not capture the wide range of additional contextual factors, such as actual commute times for families, additional time constraints on teachers, or changing societal expectations about parent engagement that may impact crossings.

While this study has the limitations of many quantitative studies, it similarly has the strength of quantitative methods, that is, the ability to find patterns and describe experiences for large groups of people. ECLS-K includes a nationally representative sample of students entering kindergarten. Results from this study are generalizable to other kindergarten students and their families. In addition, this study while limited in the measures used, begins to expand notions of home-school relationships.

### **Reviewing Results**

The following section reviews select results of the analysis by research question and provides some interpretation of these results. As noted earlier, results only suggest whether a relationship exists between predictor variables and the dependent variables. Causality can be determined. The interpretation of results should be considered within this context.

### **Determining if Differences Exist in Number of Crossings**

The first research question asks if variability exists in the number of crossings by school. Specifically, research question (RQ) 1 asks:

RQ1: Are there differences in the number of crossings reported by parents whose children attend different schools?

Findings from the analysis suggest that the number of crossings vary across schools. This variation is determined by obtaining the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), where the ICC represents the amount of variance found between schools. Results from the analysis show that 25% of the variance in parent crossings occurs between parents whose children attend different schools and 75% occurs between parents whose children attend the same school.

Disaggregating the frequency of crossings by type also provides additional information about the variation of crossings. On average, parents enter school during their child's kindergarten year about 10.5 times, or a little over once a month for a 9 month school year. This average, though, is probably an underestimate as other types of crossings, such as a parent entering the school to pick up a sick child, is not included in this count. Parents enter most often to volunteer ( $M=3.5$ ) and less than once a year ( $M=.23$ ) to participate in advisory board committee meetings.

In summary, RQ1 asks if variability exists in crossings between schools. Findings suggest that variability exists not only across schools, but also based on type of activity. The next two research questions further tease out differences in the individual and school level characteristics associated with crossings and its association to reading achievement.

### **Exploring Individual and School Characteristics Associated with Crossings**

The second research question delves further into the differences in crossings. RQ2 asks what individual and school characteristics, if any, are associated with the frequency and type of crossings. RQ2 also seeks to explore any differential effects of school characteristics related to these crossings. Specifically, RQ2 asks:

RQ2: Are the differences in the number and type of crossings reported by parents associated with different individual and school characteristics? Are there differential effects of school characteristics and school practice related to these crossings?

Below I begin by discussing differences by types of crossings, and then I discuss findings around differences by number of crossings.

**Types of Crossings.** Results suggest that differences exist in the type of crossings by both parent and school characteristics. Specifically, disaggregation of the type of crossings reported by parents' education and race/ethnicity and school FARMS enrollment illustrates statistically significant different rates of crossings by type of activity for various families and school communities at  $p < .01$ . Only a few activities are not found to be significantly different across individual and school characteristics (i.e., crossings for parent/teacher conference across parent education level and school FARMS enrollment, crossings for advisory board meetings across race/ethnicity and school FARMS enrollment).

The greatest variance appears to be around volunteering. Parents with a college degree volunteer, on average, about five times a year, compared with two times a year for parents with a high school diploma. Similarly, parents with a college degree participate in twice as many fundraisers and attend twice as many school performances as parents with a high school diploma. In contrast, parents of all education levels enter about the same rate to attend parent/teacher conferences. White parents also enter the school more often than families of other race/ethnicities. On average, White parents volunteer, attend school performances/events, and fundraise more often than families of other race/ethnicities.

In mid-low FARMS schools versus high FARMS schools, parents volunteer and attend school events about twice as often. As noted, though, differences in the rate of crossings do not exist for advisory board meetings. On average, few parents attend advisory board meetings, with parents at both mid-low FARMS ( $M=.24$ ) and high FARMS ( $M=.19$ ) schools attending less than one advisory board meeting a year.

These results indicate that parents enter the school for a variety of reasons and enter at different rates. Some activities, like volunteering or school performances, garner more parental entries than others, such as PTA or advisory board meetings. In addition, the rates of crossing for some activities vary by parent education level, race/ethnicity, and school FARMS enrollment. Still, we see that some activities equally receive the same rates of crossings, so both differences and similarities exist in parent entries into school by parent and school characteristics.

**Number of Crossings.** Results confirm that individual and school characteristics are associated with number of crossings. At the individual level, parents with more education cross more often than parents with less education. White families also appear to cross more than other racial/ethnic groups, and parents attending mid-low FARMS schools cross more than those in high FARMS school. Results from the analysis align with the perspective that schooling and ways of association between parents and school reflect White middle class standards (deCarvalho, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Henry, 1996; Lareau, 1987; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Yang & McMullen, 2003). White college educated English speaking parents have one of the highest rates of crossings into schools, about 110% of a standard deviation more, for example, than non-English speaking Asian parents without a high school diploma.



The range in crossings is greater when comparing across education (.74 SD difference in crossings between parents with graduate schooling vs. parents with no high school diploma) versus race/ethnicity (.27 SD difference in crossing between White families vs. Asian and African American families). These results indicate that class, as proxy measured by parents' education, may be more important in understanding parents' engagement and subsequent crossings into school than race/ethnicity; an observation made in other studies (e.g., Lareau, 1987, 2003). Still, differences exist in the relationship between race/ethnicity and crossings, suggesting the need to explore parents multiple and intersecting identities to understand the varied nature of these crossings. This study shows that assuming that class or race alone are predictive of crossings would be erroneous.

Other individual characteristics related to crossings include parents' English proficiency, parent reported barriers to crossings, the child's experience at the school, and congruence in parent/teacher reports of parent crossings. English speakers (.19 SD) and parents with low barriers to entry (.24 SD) enter the school more often than non-English speakers or parents with high barriers to entry, respectively. Numerous studies document the difficulty in establishing relationships with teachers for parents who do not speak English (e.g., Hones, 1999; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Valdés, 1996). Therefore, it should not be surprising that parents who do not speak English (or speak limited English) may be discouraged from entering the school if they struggle to communicate with school staff.

High levels of child complaints about school are associated with fewer crossings (-.16 SD) and congruence in parent/teacher reports are associated with more crossings

(.28 SD). Parents and teachers may have accurate reports of their encounters when they have an honest perspective of the other. The child complaints also may serve as reporting of the school to parents. When the child complains often, the parents may interpret the school space as unwelcoming and therefore, cross less into the school. Or through these complaints the child provides additional information about his/her experience at school, reducing the need for parents to enter the school to learn about the child's experience.

Beyond the individual, school characteristics and practice also are related to parent crossings. Specifically, school type, principal experience, school FARMS, frequency of events offered to parents, and school efficacy in helping parents support their child are related to parent entries into schools. Parents at private schools cross more (.32 SD) than those in public schools. Possibly, parents who enroll their child in private schools are generally more active in their child's schooling and therefore, cross more into their child's school. Another possibility is that private schools, in their ability to select students, can request and require more of parents, such as mandating parental support in fundraising or volunteering. In addition, the environment of private schools, most notably, Catholic schools have been found to promote a stronger community bond (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1995) which may encourage parent entries and engagement with schools.

Being a new principal (less than 2 years' experience) is also associated with more crossings (.11 SD). Perhaps, new principals make greater efforts to develop relationships with families, which may lead to increased communication, meetings, and contact with parents, and thus more parent crossings (e.g., Villa, 2003). Conversely, parents may enter

more when the school receives a new principal to establish ties with the principal or evaluate the principal's abilities.

Two school practices are related to parent crossings. School efficacy in helping parents support his/her child (1.19 SD) and frequency of school events (1.10 SD) represent the largest coefficients in the model. Schools may engage with families in numerous ways to establish home-school partnerships, including contact through various types of school events and increased communication with families (Epstein, 2001). Possibly, these schools envision parents and their presence as integral to the child's schooling and subsequently, act on this vision by creating more school events for families and helping parents learn how to become active in their child's schooling. In other words, in these schools, parents as partners is something acted upon through increased invitations to the school. Because this study cannot eliminate the possibility of bidirectional causality, another possible interpretation is not that school practice leads to more crossings, but high parent crossings promote more school engagement efforts. In this scenario, active parents enter the school and request more school events and support on how to help their child. Other studies provide examples of both school programming to increase contact with families (e.g., Sanders et. al, 2005; Sanders, 2008) and families making requests of schools (e.g., Furomoto, 2003; Landeros, 2011).

Findings also suggest differential effects of school characteristics and practice related to crossings. Namely, school poverty had differential effects on crossings by the amount of school contact about student learning and the degree of praise of the school by children. These results begin to suggest the importance of context in understanding crossings. Further discussion and interpretation of these results occur in the next section.

In summary, findings illustrate that differences exist in the number of crossings by certain individual and school level characteristics. Crossings vary by family education, race/ethnicity, parents' English fluency, degree of barriers to entry, child complaints, and congruence in parent/teacher reports of crossings. School level characteristics and practice also are associated with crossings. Private schools, schools with new principals, and mid-low FARMS schools are associated with more crossings. Schools that have more events for families and are successful in helping parents support their child also are associated with more parent crossings. A couple of differential effects exist for parent crossings by school FARMS enrollment and frequency of contact around student learning and average child praise at the school level.

### **Investigating the Relationship between Crossings and Reading Achievement**

The final research question focuses on a potential outcome of crossings – the relationship of crossings to reading achievement. Research question three asks:

RQ3: Are the number of crossings reported by parents' associated with student learning in reading in kindergarten? Do the children of parents who report more crossings do better in this subject than the children of parents who report fewer crossings, regardless of family characteristics and the school setting?

Results indicate that parent crossings into school and average parent crossings at a school do not have any relationship to reading achievement in kindergarten. This study, though, does not look at the long-term effects of crossings. A cumulative effect may exist, where high parent crossings over several school years may be associated with higher reading achievement. Another interpretation of this finding is that not all contact between home and school may result in improved student achievement. Improved student

outcomes has been found to be associated with programs that help parents support their child academically (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). A parent may cross often to volunteer, be active in their child's PTA, or attend school performances. These activities may increase a parent's engagement with their child's schooling, but not necessarily in a manner which improves his/her child's achievement. Calls for parents to engage more with schools then should be thoughtful about the goal of the activity held for parents.

The results, though, indicate that crossings may have different associations to reading achievement by individual characteristics. Specifically, the frequency of crossings has a different association to reading achievement by a child's entering kindergarten reading skills and parent education level (i.e., high school vs. no high school diploma). These results are further discussed in the next section.

The largest predictor in the model was the child's entering reading skills (.85 SD). In contrast, the next largest coefficient, associated with being Asian, was .22 SD. This finding suggests that what occurs prior to a child beginning school may have the largest impact on reading achievement in kindergarten. The early home life for a child and the number of words a parent speaks to a child has been shown to impact the child's literacy development and academic success (Hart & Risley, 1995). Potentially aligning the spheres of influence between home and school prior to a child beginning school may be a method to increase reading achievement at the end of kindergarten.

In summary, while crossings are not associated with reading achievement, differential effects of crossings by individual characteristics exist.

### **Revealing the Complexity in Home-School Relationships**

My study attempts to capture the complexity of home-school relationships by presenting a model which focuses on the development of these relationships. The focus on the encounter between families and schools, and specifically crossings into schools by parents, removes the notion that these relationships are inevitable and normative. This model reveals how iterative and ever-changing these relationships are. The concept of crossings can represent a spectrum of interactions, feelings, beliefs, and understandings which can include moments of collaboration, conflict, and/or mutual disinterest between home and school. This concept also can capture a continuum of experiences and feelings between these moments. The concept of crossing recognizes the ability for this spectrum to exist; a spectrum that reinforces the ambiguous nature of home-school relationships. The analyses indicate the importance of context and reject any normative assumptions of the inevitability of one group or another crossing or not crossing into a school. Similarly, the analyses indicate that crossings by parents into schools do not, for example, necessarily increase student achievement.

While the idea of crossings, as used in this study, does not capture all aspects of the relationship between home and school, they do suggest the diverse purposes and outcomes of parent entries into schools. My analyses hint at the necessity to spotlight the multiple microcosm moments that come to frame and form these relationships. The crossings that this study focuses on, for example, imply the varied ways and outcomes of parents' entries into schools. The discourse on parent involvement often promotes a standardized way of parent engagement while ignoring or minimizing the outcomes of these engagements. Studies on home-school conflict also illustrate the tensions between

these two groups, with less emphasis on the possibility for these relationships not to reflect only discord. This study attempts to capture both of these possibilities by illustrating how even one important component in the development of home-school relationships – in this case, parent crossings—can be so diverse and heavily context dependent. The remainder of this section illustrates how findings from this study reinforce the idea that context matters and critiques normative assumptions about parent entries into schools.

### **Context Matters**

A common discourse around home-school relationships focuses on the idea of parent involvement. Generally, this concept limits parent and teacher relations to a prescriptive set of behaviors parents do or do not do and in doing so, ignores the diverse ways families choose to engage with schools (deCarvalho, 2001, p. 47). Not only does parent involvement generally ignore the diverse ways families engage with schools, it also minimizes the rich and context dependent nature of these relationships. Teacher personality, class size, school location, parent commute times, availability of technology, these contextual factors and many more can impact the actual development of home-school relationships. Yet, this range of contextual factors less often is focused on in discussions of home-school relationships.

Findings at both the individual and school level support the importance of context in understanding this phenomenon. One way in which the analyses confirm the context-dependent nature of crossings is through analyses of barriers reported by parents. Having high barriers to entry is associated with fewer crossings into schools (-.24 SD). Disaggregated information about these barriers reveals that different populations of

parents report higher levels of barriers. I found statistically significant differences in parents' reporting high barriers to crossing by education level, race/ethnicity and school FARMS. Twenty nine percent of parents with less than a high school diploma report high barriers to entry versus 11% of parents with a college degree. When looking at race/ethnicity, White parents who had the most crossings, also had the lowest reports of high barriers (14%) to entry compared with African American (22%), Native American (26%), Latino (26%) and Asian (29%) parents. Similarly, parents in schools that served predominantly low income students (high FARMS schools) reported more barriers (23%) than schools serving mid-high income students (mid-low FARMS schools) (15%). These results suggest that some of the difference in crossings by education level, race/ethnicity, and school FARMS may be a result of higher barriers to entry for parents who have fewer crossings. Families' life circumstances then may impact parents' abilities to enter schools.

Disaggregation of the types of barriers by families and communities further reveal that families and communities experience specific barriers at varying rates. While only 3% of the entire population noted that having school meetings in English was a barrier to entry, about eight times as many Asian and three times as many Latino families reported this as a barrier. This result supports findings from other studies that detail language barriers experienced by Latino and Asian families (Hones, 1999; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Valdés, 1996) when entering schools. Another example involves the percentage of parents who said they found nothing interesting at school. Only 9% of families with a college degree reported not finding anything interesting occurring at the school versus 18% of families with no high school diploma. Finally,



about twice as many families attending schools that serve low income students report not feeling welcomed at the school compared with families attending schools that serve mid-high income students. While ECLS-K only collected information on eight barriers, parents may have a multitude of reasons that hinder their entrance into schools. The context in which families find themselves then can help explain parent contact with schools.

Besides understanding context at the individual level, results also reveal the importance of understanding context at the school level. For example, the findings indicate that some school factors have differential impacts on crossings as a function of school poverty. In other words, the relationship between school policy and crossings may vary by the school community. Specifically, in high FARMS schools high amounts of school contact about student learning are associated with a 108% of a standard deviation fewer crossings compared with high FARMS schools with low amounts of contact. However, for schools that are mid-low FARMS, the degree of contact around student learning is not associated with crossings. School contact about student learning is associated with crossings in high FARMS schools, but not mid-low FARMS schools.

The average amount of child praise at the school level also has differential effects on crossings. For high FARMS schools, high amounts of child praise are associated with fewer crossings (-.77 SD) while low amounts of praise by students are associated with more crossings (.69 SD). In mid-low FARMS schools the reverse relationship exists. In mid-low FARMS schools, high average praise of the school by children is associated with 48% of a standard deviation increase in crossings compared with mid-low FARMS schools with low child praise.

School engagement efforts have been found to have differential effects on schools by average school SES (González & Jackson, 2012). One interpretation of these results is that the school practice has different functions for each type of school. Perhaps, in mid-low FARMS schools more or less contact about student learning might reflect school preference about these contacts, while in high FARMS schools more contact about student learning may be reactionary. That is, high FARMS schools send more information about student learning in response to a lack of parent entries into schools, which is often understood as a measure of perceived engagement.

Another interpretation is that the community response is different. These two differential effects, while seemingly different, may speak to the same reaction by parents in high FARMS schools. Possibly, in high FARMS schools when parents receive more information about the child's experience, either through school's increased contact about student learning or in the community, through children's frequent praise of the school, parents have less of a need to enter the school. Other studies have found that low SES parents often view the school as a distinct, separate domain in which they have little control or influence (Lareau, 2003). Possibly then, when low SES parents have enough information about the school they might react by not entering that domain. Low SES parents may feel greater urgency to enter the school when they have less information about the school space.

While parents at mid-low FARMS schools are not impacted by the amount of contact received about student learning, high amounts of praise are associated with more crossings. If this praise reflects a caring school environment it may encourage greater

crossings in mid-low FARMS schools. A caring school environment is associated with a school welcoming and seeking more parent engagement (Bauch & Goldring, 2000).

Overall, results predicting parent crossings into school confirm that context matters. Not all crossings are the same, not all parents have the same barriers, and not all school practice has the same effect on crossings. These findings imply that crossings, an important component in the development of home-school relationships, are context dependent. If crossings are context-dependent, then we may presume that other aspects of home-school relationships are similarly context dependent.

### **Critique of Normative Assumptions**

This study rejects the normative assumption that crossings result in positive outcomes. Parent involvement studies often make this assumption, where greater degree of involvement is assumed to lead to positive outcomes for the child (deCarvalho, 2001). Still, studies describe tensions that arise in home-school relationships (e.g., Landeros, 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) contradicting discourses in parent involvement that imply encounters as neutral. Results from the analysis further dispute normative assumptions about home-school engagement. These results indicate that not all crossings are associated with increased reading achievement, in fact, for some parents increased crossings are associated with decreased student reading achievement. These results challenge the notion that having more parent engagement, in and of itself, as reflected through greater entries into schools, will automatically improve achievement.

Two interactions emphasize the differential impact of crossings on reading achievement – that is, crossings were associated with achievement for specific groups of students and parents. Crossings appear to have a differential effect on reading

achievement when comparing parents with no high school diploma to parents with a high school diploma. While additional crossings are associated with higher student reading achievement for both parents with no high school diploma and those with a diploma, the rate of the predicted reading achievement is greater for families without a high school diploma. The difference in reading achievement for families with no high school diploma between high versus low crossers is 15% of a standard deviation. On the other hand, the difference is only 2% of a standard deviation for families with a high school diploma for high versus low crossers. Perhaps, for high crossers without a high school diploma the impact of engaging with their child's schooling has a greater effect on their child than for someone with a high school diploma. This effect may indicate that the spheres of home and school align better for parents with no high school diploma when they interact with schools. As noted earlier, home, school, and the community share spheres of influence over the child (Epstein, 2001). Better alignment of these spheres of influence may impact student outcomes (Epstein, 2001).

Another interpretation is that parents with no high school diploma who cross often view the necessity of high engagement with their child's schooling. For these families, more crossings do not necessarily lead to receiving additional resources which leads to higher achievement. Rather families with no high school diploma who cross more already align the spheres of influence between home and school, especially compared to other families in which no parent has graduated from high school. Conversely, school action might be different. Schools that encourage more crossings by parents, especially for those serving families with little education, may be better able to leverage these entries into improved reading achievement.

Crossings also appear to have a differential effect on reading achievement when comparing between children's entering reading skills in kindergarten. While a child's entering skills in reading was the greatest predictor of their reading scores at the end of the year (.85 SD), parent crossing had a differential effect on reading achievement by students' entering skills in kindergarten. When comparing students with high entering skills with each other, more parent crossings are associated with higher reading achievement. In other words, if two children begin the year with high entering skills, and child A's parent enters the school frequently, while child B's parent rarely enters the schools, the results from the analysis suggest child A will have higher reading achievement (.96 SD) at the end of the year than child B (.88 SD), controlling for other factors in the model. For students with average entering scores, the degree of parent crossing does not appear to be associated with reading achievement. For students with low entering skills, high parent crossings are associated with lower reading achievement (-.81 SD) than for students with low entering skills whose parents rarely cross into the school (-.75 SD).

All parents, regardless of their child's entering skills may cross into schools to request additional support for or information about their child. For the child with high entering skills, the parents may seek information about their child so that they can provide supplemental support or advocate for more challenging educational opportunities for their child. For the child with low entering skills, the request may be the same but the challenge to raise achievement may be greater. Parent crossing for students with lower entering levels of achievement may signal more serious academic problems. Students who receive Individualized Education Program (IEP), for example, may have high parent

crossings as parents enter the school to participate in the development of the IEP.

Although these parent crossings may not necessarily be associated with higher reading achievement, the end result may still be increased support for the child.

Another possibility is that a parent with a child with low entering skills who crosses often into the school may represent parental oversight of the classroom due to a poor school environment or be a reactionary response to the child's continual low achievement. Parents have been shown to increase oversight of the classroom and school when they feel their child's needs are not being met (Landeros, 2011; Furomoto, 2003; Stoner et. al, 2005). Parent empowerment programs that attempt to increase parent crossings and engagement, often focus on empowering parents to advocate on behalf of their child (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Furomoto, 2003).

While these interpretations are hypothetical, the varied nature and impact of crossings does reflect both the potential for these crossings to represent confrontation and collaboration between home and school or the spectrum in-between. As presented in Chapter 1, the literature on home-school relationships often represent two major discourses, which reflect dichotomous themes. Parent involvement literature often promote parent engagement and entries into schools as the preferred standard for home-school relationships while minimizing or ignoring the potential for conflict to arise due to parent's involvement. In contrast, studies that describe the discord between home and school rarely focus on the potential for positive relations.

In exploring the relationship between crossings and reading achievement, the analysis further supports the varied nature of these crossings and critiques the normative assumption that more parent entries into schools will necessarily lead to improved

outcomes as advocates of parent involvement suggest. For some families, specifically, those of students with low entering skills more crossings are associated with lower reading achievement. In contrast, for families of students with high entering skills more crossings are associated with higher reading achievement. Do these results indicate that more parent contact with schools, as exemplified by crossings, leads to poorer results in some cases but not others? While this may be an interpretation, I promote a different explanation.

More contact may not create poorer results for some families; rather, I propose the reason for the crossing is different for varying families. In some instances, these contacts may lead to easy encounters that promote increased achievement. For example, a parent with no high school diploma enters the school often and is provided with information on how to support his/her child. In other instances, these contacts may reflect sources of tension or difficulties. Indeed, collaboration and tension may co-exist. A mother who enters often into the school to request additional support for her child with low entering skills may receive guidance from the teacher, but the need for these crossings may reflect developmental issues for the child. In this scenario, the collaboration between mother and teacher is still rife with tension and difficulties for both the mother and teacher struggling to support the child.

The varied relationship between crossing and achievement further reveal the potentially ambiguous nature of home-school relationships. In thinking about home-school relationships, efforts to encourage parents to enter schools, as parent involvement often does, then presents an incomplete solution to improved home-school relationships.

Understanding the context of these crossings and the potential for a range of experiences allows a more sensitive approach and engagement to home-school relationships.

### **Expanding Ideas of Home-School Relationships in Future Research**

This study suggests the need for a better understanding of the processes around home-school relations, provides a conceptual model describing the development of these relationships, and in the analysis, provides context around a critical point or element in these relationships, parent crossings into schools. The conceptual model guiding this study attempts to capture both the potential for conflict and collaboration inherent in these relationships. This study explores different aspects of these relationships by exploring the context around these crossings and the potential impact of these crossings on reading achievement. This lens facilitates the creation of an alternative conceptual model of these relations, development of different questions, and identification of other important factors in these relations.

This study confirms what many qualitative studies suggest, parents come into schools for different reasons, at different rates, and different actions encourage them to enter the school with varying results. Other school and home factors not used in this study could be further explored. For example, a study could explore the association between charter schools, school resources, and family structure and crossings. Family structure could include the number of children in the home, the number of hours worked by parents, and whether one or two parents live in the home. This dissertation challenged the notion of average profiles of families and schools, and future research could continue to do so.



This study built on qualitative data to explore large scale patterns, and describe a specific set of events and practice. Future research, using qualitative methods, could further explore the concept of crossings to further unmask the complexities of home-school relationships. Many studies look at either the conflict or collaboration that occurs through these crossings, but future research could map out a series of crossings that captures moments of conflict, cooperation, and perhaps even ambiguity. Such a study would focus on the teachers' or parents' experiences over a series of encounters (see Lawrence Lightfoot, 2003) and could help us learn about how parents engage with the school, teachers engage with the home, and the various messages conveyed through these engagements. This dissertation illustrates how qualitative and quantitative studies can inform each other and the potential for increased reciprocity between qualitative and quantitative research.

Future studies can further develop the model presented in this study and explore different components in home-school relations highlighted by the model. Studies evaluating parent involvement programs rarely provide a theoretical framework for why changes in parent behavior would be expected as a result of the intervention. The model provided in this study would suggest, for example, that in the crossings and subsequent interactions, home-school relationships may be altered. That is, parent's behavior and understanding of their engagement with their child's schooling would change as a result of home and school crossings and interactions. Having this model where different steps are suggested allows for the researcher to determine the efficacy of various crossings and interactions on changing behavior. From the model proposed in this study, theories of

actions could be developed for both parents and schools, which could illuminate actions and beliefs that are expected to alter as a result of the intervention.

Similarly, a taxonomy could be created to explain various components of the model presented in this study. This taxonomy could be created to be a diagnostic tool for educators to use in assessing the school's relationship to home. For example, such a tool may ask a teacher to keep track of all encounters with parents, an estimate of the length of each encounter, etc. Then she/he could begin to classify what these encounters were about and the results of these encounters. She/he also can explore her/his own crossings into the home, such as materials sent home, requests for specific school materials, etc. Through this introspection, the teacher could begin to see patterns, question her/his routines, and the outcomes of them. For example, if requests made home for parents to complete a parent log rarely is completed, instead of assuming parents are uninvolved or unmotivated to engage, the teacher could imagine the impact of that document within the home space. What are other time constraints on parents? How might parents interpret these logs (e.g., unsure of its purpose, an effective way to communicate with the teacher, a time consuming request)? This tool could provide teachers with a critical self-reflection. Other studies could use such a taxonomy to determine indicators for a large-scale survey to further explore patterns around these relationships.

A need exists for further research on the ways in which schools enter the home space and the ways in which parents and teachers negotiate this border crossing. While this study and many focus on the crossing into the school space, few focus on the crossings into the home space. We understand better the border crossings that occur into the school and the ways in which these crossings are limited, but have little

understanding of the crossings that occur into the home space and the ways parents interpret and manage these crossings.

These crossings occur when teachers do not consult with parents, but assume parents will be involved in the completion of homework (Bennett, 2007). In these instances, teachers expect parents to change home routines in order to work with the child, yet we do not know how parents negotiate this request. When parents do not help their children with homework is it because the parents are unable to support the child with the assignment or because parents are resisting intrusion into the home space by schools? Other crossings into the home occur when teachers ask parents about home routines during parent teacher conferences, or when schools seek parental follow through on disciplinary action at home. A critical discourse study on materials sent home, for example, would provide some insight into how parents engage with these materials and what messages these materials send.

This lens also recognizes different spaces parents and teachers travel. How are the spaces of home and school envisioned and understood? How do teachers' and parents' understanding of home and school space affect the ways in which the borders are crossed and negotiated? To determine the actual relationships between teachers and parents, we can examine the border crossings and negotiations. How do parents and teachers cross and negotiate the home and school border? What impacts the negotiations? How is the child impacted by the nature of these crossings and negotiations? How can policymakers make sense of these borders and construct programs and policies that positively influence home-school relationships? Describing these relationships as arising from crossings opens up numerous facets of these relationships for examination.

Lastly, an assumption I have made is parents and teachers form relationships, and do not merely exist as two actors interacting over time. This assumption leads me to suggest that crossings are a critical first step in the development of these relationships. However, not all crossings or interactions may lead to the development of a relationship. Just as examining crossings can inform the larger process by which relationships explore, exploring when crossings do not create relationships could also be meaningful.

### **Revisiting the Quantitative Criticalist Lens**

For this study, I sought to engage with and utilize a quantitative criticalist lens. As this is an emerging lens, no one definitive handbook or specific set of scholars provide authoritative guidance about what it means to use a quantitative criticalist lens. As such, I reviewed various works that guided my thinking (Bowleg, 2008; Carter & Hurtado, 2007; Elliott, 2005; Holland, 2008; James, 2008; Mills, 1997; Ryan & Golden, 2006; Stage, 2007; Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008). Because I had not used this lens before, at least not consciously or systematically, I also was unsure how to measure or critique my use of this approach.

Throughout this study, I was in constant dialogue with myself. Initially, I described the parent crossings as border crossings across cultural spaces. However, my study and analysis could only capture or suggest aspects of parents' border crossings. In using this term did I risk oversimplifying complex cultural processes? How could I be informed by and reference this concept appropriately? When I made changes to the study and chose not to split the sample by race/ethnicity, how could I then engage with critiques made about using race/ethnicity as only a control in the models? While I did not

always have perfect solutions for my own internal critique, I at least considered them, weighed the options, and tried to expand the possible ways to address them.

Another series of reflections came with the ideas of reflexivity in quantitative work and the search for alternative models and exploration of varying processes for different populations. In my reflexivity, I questioned how I named the variables. What did they suggest? What did I include (or not) in the analysis? How did I interpret the findings? What other interpretations might I suggest? In offering an alternative model, I became more attuned to the possibilities of difference. As a result, I created a more complex model that included a series of interactions, and thus could explain the phenomenon better. The reflexivity and my own internal critique made me a more thoughtful researcher.

Ultimately, having a quantitative criticalist lens strengthened this study. This lens challenged my methodological thinking and allowed me to interrogate both the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research. I became a more aware researcher, through the constant reflexivity. By naming and discussing the use of a quantitative criticalist lens, I expect other researchers can engage with this idea, critique it, and further expand on this emerging lens.

### **Conclusion**

Viewing home-school relationships as arising from crossings across space recognizes the difficulties inherent in these crossings, including the vagueness and changing nature of the crossing. In home-school relations, the attributes of the crossing and relationships with teachers and the school alters yearly, if not more often, when children are assigned new teachers, the child develops, or begins a new school. The lens

of crossings recognizes the context-dependent and distinctive nature of these relationships and the challenges associated with the development of any relationship.

Findings further support this understanding. Parents cross at varying rates; some, but not all school practices have impacts on crossings. Crossings also had differential effects on reading achievement. Not one narrative arises from these analyses, but the analyses indicate that different processes might be occurring for different populations of student and parents at different schools within different communities.

The varied nature of the crossings illustrate that relationships between home and school are not monolithic. While it may seem intuitive to describe home-school relations as complex and varied, the current discourses on these relationships often are limited in revealing this complexity. Often, studies that use a parent involvement lens so narrowly focuses on the need to change parent behavior that the dynamics between parent and school staff is overlooked. This focus on prescribing solutions to the lack of “parent involvement” may be overshadowing the need for descriptive research. This study reveals the importance of research that describes the intricate nature of various factors surrounding these relationships and gives scholars and practitioners glimpses of the assumptions inherent on both sides of the borders between home and school. Other studies that begin to describe the conflict found within schools do not always adequately connect to a larger narrative of home-school relationships. These relationships encompass both collaboration and conflict and a spectrum of experiences in-between; through this study I capture the possibility of both occurring. The context around these crossings matter then to our understanding of home-school relations.

## Appendix A: Additional Tables

Table A.1

*Percent of time and number of days per week kindergarten teachers focus on various subjects, as reported in ECLS-K*

	Reading	Mathematics	Social Studies	Science	Music	Art
<i>Percent of time</i>	(n=2,991)	(n=2,981)	(n=2,912)	(n=2,914)	(n=2,897)	(n=2,909)
> 90 minutes a day	20.19	2.91	.72	.56	.41	.41
61-90 minutes a day	30.38	11.07	2.00	2.05	1.09	3.41
31-60 minutes a day	36.69	51.52	25.13	25.61	18.01	33.86
1-30 minutes a day	12.74	34.5	72.15	71.78	80.48	62.32
<i>Number of days per week</i>	(n=3,066)	(n=3,054)	(n=3,011)	(n=3,021)	(n=3,033)	(n=3,031)
Daily	94.82	81.73	23.22	17.53	31.43	26.15
3-4 times a wk	3.95	15.3	28.71	26.64	16.91	26
1-2 times a wk	.76	2.23	40.77	47.21	45.57	43.32
Less than once a wk	.04	.18	6.42	7.75	5.34	4.14
Never	.42	.56	.88	.86	.75	.38

*Note.* Percentages are weighted; n is unweighted.

Table A.2

*Mean and Reliability of All Variables Included in Analysis, by Level*

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Model Variables <sup>a</sup>
<b>Dependent Variables</b>				
Parent Crossings	.00	1.00	.59	Crossing
End of Kindergarten Reading Achievement	.00	1.00	-	Reading
<b>Level One Variables</b>				
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
No High School Diploma	.08	-	-	
Some College <sup>b</sup>	.33	-	-	
Bachelor's Degree <sup>b</sup>	.19	-	-	
Graduate Schooling <sup>b</sup>	.15	-	-	
African American/Black <sup>c</sup>	.12	-	-	
Latino/a <sup>c</sup>	.15	-	-	
Asian/Asian American <sup>c</sup>	.05	-	-	
Native American/American Indian <sup>c</sup>	.03	-	-	
Multi-racial <sup>c</sup>	.03	-	-	

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Model Variables <sup>a</sup>
<i>Challenges in Crossings</i>				
English Speaker	.91	-	-	Crossing
High Barriers to Entry	.17	-	.39	Crossing
High Distance to School	.37	-	-	Crossing
<i>Perceptions</i>				
100% Par/Tchr Agrmt	.51	-	-	Crossing
Par/Tchr Agrmt Missing Variable	.11	-	-	Crossing
High Child Complain about School	.11	-	.75	Crossing
High Child Praise School	.25	-	.63	Crossing
<i>Reading Ability</i>				
Entering Reading Skills	.00	1.00	-	Reading
<i>Interaction Terms</i>				
Crossing X Entering Rdg	.20	.93	-	Reading
Crossing X No HS diploma <sup>b</sup>	-.06	.34	-	Reading
Crossing X Some College <sup>b</sup>	.01	.54	-	Reading
Crossing X Bachelor's Degree <sup>b</sup>	.07	.41	-	Reading
Crossing X Grad Degree <sup>b</sup>	.07	.38	-	Reading
<b>Level Two Variables</b>				
<i>School Characteristics</i>				
Full-Day K	.46	-	-	
High Minority	.25	-	-	
Public	.72	-	-	
New Principal	.31	-	-	
High FARMS	.23	-	-	
<i>School Practice</i>				
Frequency of Events	.00	1.00	.63	
Frequency of Contact about Student Learning	.00	1.00	.36	
School Efficacy in Helping Parents Support Child	.00	1.00	.70	
<i>Child Experience</i>				
Average Child Complain about School	.00	1.00	.75	
Average Child Praise School	.00	1.00	.63	
<i>Crossings</i>				
Average School Crossing	.00	1.00	.59	Reading
<i>Interaction Terms</i>				
High FARMS X Freq of Contact Stud Learning	.01	.06	-	Crossing
High FARMS X Child Praise	-.01	.04	-	Crossing
High FARMS X Child Complain	.00	.05	-	Crossing

Note. Means and standard deviations are weighted.

<sup>a</sup> Unless otherwise noted variables listed are included in both models. Those labeled "Crossing" are in the model predicting parent crossings. Those labeled "Reading" are in the model predicting student reading achievement in kindergarten.

<sup>b</sup> The referent group is High School Diploma.

<sup>c</sup> The referent group is White parent.



Table A.3

*Analysis of Variance by Type of Parent Crossing and Parent Education Level, Race/Ethnicity, and School FARMS*

	Parent Education Level		Race/Ethnicity		School FARMS	
	df	F	df	F	df	F
Total Crossings	4	344.67***	5	97.43***	1	296.09***
Volunteering	4	233.16***	5	74.96***	1	235.78***
School Event/ Performance	4	138.71***	5	69.31***	1	169.56***
Par/Tchr Conference	4	2.5*	5	11.42***	1	3.2 <sup>†</sup>
Fundraising	4	152.29***	5	69.67***	1	179.06***
Open House	4	71.48***	5	14.15***	1	26.69***
PTA meetings	4	61.47***	5	6.23***	1	10.16**
Advisory Board	4	49.54***	5	2.13 <sup>†</sup>	1	4.75*

<sup>†</sup> p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table A.4

*Analysis of Variance by Type of Parent Barrier and Parent Education Level, Race/Ethnicity, and School FARMS*

	Parent Education Level		Race/Ethnicity		School FARMS	
	Df	F	df	F	df	F
High (>=3) Barriers	4	53.59***	5	46.32***	1	104.26***
No time off from work	4	25.74***	5	1.47	1	6.1*
Inconvenient meeting time	4	44.01***	5	57.24***	1	73.09***
No child care	4	3.82**	5	8.87***	1	3.71 <sup>†</sup>
Nothing interesting	4	19.76***	5	12.87***	1	37.67***
Don't feel welcomed	4	23.78***	5	38.12***	1	126.54***
Transportation problems	4	84.34***	5	44.06***	1	101.55***
Meetings only in English	4	50.95***	5	156.18***	1	47.71***
Safety going to school	4	10.45***	5	10.64***	1	23.62***

<sup>†</sup> p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

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