INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI®

An Exploratory Investigation of Middle Childhood Friendships, Quality

of Care and Children's Satisfaction with School-Age Care Programs

Holly M. Gage

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 2000

© Holly Gage, 2000

0-612-47748-7

Canada

ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Investigation of Middle Childhood Friendships, Quality

of Care and Children's Satisfaction with School-Age Care Programs

Holly M. Gage

This exploratory investigation was conducted to address the issue of middle childhood friendships in relation to 8-to-12-year-old children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age programs the following year. Various aspects of middle childhood friendships were explored in this study: 1) number of friendships, 2) types of friendships, and 3) children's perceptions of the extent to which school-age program's accommodated their friendship needs. Quality of care as assessed by trained observers using the School-Age Care Environment Scale (SACERS) was also measured in relation to older school-age children's satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs using the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire. In addition, three particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) believed to be important to older children were also examined in relation to children's satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs. Fifty-four children from five different school-based child care programs participated in the present study. The information was gathered from children via questionnaires that were administered individually in a group setting. Results indicated that quality as assessed by trained observers (i.e., SACERS) was negatively related to children's levels of satisfaction with these programs. Programs that were perceived by children to accommodate their friendship needs were related to increased levels of satisfaction, as well as a greater willingness to return to these programs. The nomination of more best friends attending the programs was associated with increased willingness to return to the programs. Children expressed higher levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs when they perceived their programs as providing them with more free choice. However, in relation to the SACERS quality scores, free choice and leadership opportunities were negatively associated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Appendices

An Exploratory Investigation of Middle Childhood Friendships, Quality

of Care and Children's Satisfaction with School-Age Care Programs

OVERVIEW

This investigation explored middle childhood friendships in school-age care

programs to determine how friendships influence older children's satisfaction and

willingness to attend school-age care programs. The extent to which older children

perceived their school-age care programs as providing friendship opportunities that would

in turn facilitate friendship formation and maintenance within the school-age care context

was also examined. Friendships have been extensively explored across the developmental

span (Asher & Gottman, 1981; Berndt & Ladd, 1989; Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994;

Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996; Hartup, 1992b; Hartup & Moore, 1990). The

importance of friendships has been highlighted as an essential element to ensure positive

advancements in all areas of development (i.e., social, emotional, cognitive, and physical)

(Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996).

The literature on middle childhood friendships is based mainly on studies conducted

primarily in elementary school settings (Hallinan, 1981; Rizzo, 1989). However, as family

dynamics have changed dramatically over time, our society has witnessed the entrance into

the workforce of more and more mothers with school-age children (Friendly, 1994). This

trend has resulted in the emergence of child care arrangements that provide after-school care

for children during the hours while their parents are still at work. The children who attend

school-age care programs are in a group setting for an extended period of time each day and

the quality of their social experiences in these settings may have an influence on their

friendships (Jacobs, Selig, Roberts, Gabriel, & Hellstrom, 1995). It is presumed that

attending school-age care programs provides children with different social opportunities as

well as a context other than the classroom in which to form friendships.

Very few studies have explored the social context (i.e., friendships) surrounding school-age care and as a result there is a definite lack of research on the impact these programs may have on older children's satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age care programs. In fact, there is a virtual absence of studies addressing the issue of middle childhood friendships in other types of social contexts besides the elementary school setting (Epstein, 1989; Hallinan, 1981; Zaslow, 1991). The body of literature that has investigated social issues in preschool day care has demonstrated that quality of care is an important factor for children's social development (Hagekull & Bohlin, 1995; Howes & Smith, 1995; McCartney, 1984; Phillips, McCartney, & Scarr, 1987; Vandell, Henderson, & Wilson, 1988; Zaslow, 1991). One may wonder whether this is true for the school-age care context and more importantly what role quality of care plays for the older age group (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds).

Currently, there are very few 8-to-12-year-olds in the majority of school-age programs (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990). The limited number of children in this age group enrolled in these programs may be the result of a circuitous situation. When there are few children of a particular age group registered in a program the curriculum tends to be designed for the age group in which there is the largest number of children. If numbers of a particular age group decline, and the curriculum is not designed for the needs of this small group, then a further decline in enrollment can be expected (Betsalel-Presser, White, Baillargeon, & Jacobs, 1995; Proulx, 1990). It was the goal of this study to provide further insight into the factors that (i.e., presence of friends in school-age programs and three particular dimensions of quality for older children) may decrease the high drop-out rates which various researchers (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Maheux, 1998; Proulx, 1990) have reported for this age group in the majority of school-age programs. This trend has created a major dilemma for those interested in encouraging children in middle childhood to attend school-age care programs rather than going home alone (i.e., latchkey/self-care) or hanging-out in unsupervised arrangements.

As the drop out rates for older children have escalated, efforts to explore the reasons that are associated with older children's increased desire to drop out of these programs have become increasingly more important. Within the past decade, only a few experts in the field (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990) have attempted to explore older children's experiences and impressions with school-age care programs. These studies and reports have provided some insight into the situation that exists in these programs for older children. Recently, Maheux (1998) attempted to obtain an accurate picture of the current situation in school-based child care programs for the 9-12-year-old population. This investigation was conducted to identify the factors related to older children's desire to drop out, as well as to determine what increases their levels of satisfaction with the school-age care programs. This exploratory study revealed that quality of care as assessed by the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) was important for the group of children who expressed an interest in wanting to return to the programs, as these children were more satisfied overall with the programs than those children who expressed the desire to drop out of the programs. It was surprising to learn that as the quality of the programs significantly increased, more children expressed a desire to drop out of the programs. These findings seem to be contradictory to what one would expect and they fail to provide further insight into what factors might make all children in this age group more satisfied with the programs, and in turn, more likely to want to continue attending the programs.

Some interesting findings were generated by this study (Maheux, 1998) that may shed light on the factors that may be associated with this age group's satisfaction with school-age care programs. It was revealed that children who expressed an interest in returning to the programs attributed the presence of friends as being the reason for wanting to do so. Therefore, Maheux (1998) suggested that friendships might play a critical role in keeping this age group in school-age care programs. In addition, as the quality of the programs did not seem to be an important criteria for the children in the drop-out group, Maheux (1998) speculated that perhaps the appropriateness of the programs might be a

more important factor to be considered when assessing this age group's level of satisfaction with these programs.

Thus, it was expected that the findings from the current investigation would demonstrate that the high drop-out rate may be attributed to the absence of friends in these programs. It was also predicted that considering particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities), which various experts in the field (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1990; Doherty, 1991; Ryan & Anderson, 1991; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989) have perceived as being especially important to this age group, would be an initial examination to demonstrate the point that these three particular dimensions of quality may provide justification for adding these types of items to the SACERS to better represent older children's quality needs. It was anticipated that quality factors such as intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities might enable the 8-to-12-year-olds to engage in positive social interactions with their peers (Jacobs, Mill, Gage, Maheux, & Beaumont, 1998). Failing to meet these quality factors for older children may also result in greater numbers of 8-to-12-year-olds dropping out of the school-age care programs to assert their autonomy and independence (Maheux, 1998).

This study attempted to fill the gap that exists in the literature on school-age care and friendships by demonstrating that school-age care programs that recognize the importance of friendships, would result in more satisfied 8-to-12-year-olds who would be more willing to return to these programs. Thus, the importance of having friendships in school-age care programs was the central issue of investigation in this study. This involved examining certain aspects of friendships using Bukowski and Hoza's (1989) hierarchical friendship model. This model adequately assesses children's friendships by considering three different aspects of friendships: 1) presence or absence of a friendship (i.e., whether a child is a participant in a mutually reciprocated friendship with a peer or not; 2) number of friendships (i.e., extent of social network); 3) quality of friendship (i.e., features of best

4

friendship, such as level of support, companionship, or conflicts). In the present study, an emphasis was placed on whether or not children had friends, the number of friends, and types of friendships present in the programs, as well as the children's perceptions and levels of satisfaction with the extent to which the school-age programs facilitated friendship opportunities. It was believed that children who perceived the programs to be more accommodating of their friendship needs would be more satisfied with their school-age care programs. It was also expected that older children might be more content and satisfied with the programming as a result of having a friend(s) with whom they could share the day care experiences.

A secondary goal of the present investigation was to explore the role that particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) play in increasing older children's overall satisfaction and increased willingness to continue attending these programs. It was anticipated that older children who attended school-age care programs that incorporated these three dimensions of quality into the curriculum design would be more satisfied and more likely to express a willingness to continue attending these programs.

A few researchers (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Alexander, 1986; Jacobs et al., 1995) have suggested that a social context, such as school-age care programs may serve to build closer friendships beyond the school context. As spending time together in close proximity is important to the establishment of a close friendship (Bukowski et al., 1994), a final investigation was conducted to determine whether or not the quality of children's best friendships would be enhanced as a result of spending time together on a daily basis in these programs. It was also expected that if the program accommodated children's friendship needs, the quality of the best friendship would, in turn, be enhanced.

The literature will be reviewed in the following manner: since school-age friendships form the basis of this study, a detailed description of the importance and development of friendships in middle childhood will be presented. The quality of children's friendships

5

will also be considered in relation to social settings. As relatively little is known about school-age care as a context for friendship formation, it will be necessary to turn to the extensive preschool day care literature that has explored social development in preschool day care settings and has linked social factors to the quality of care arrangements. Since there are many different types of school-age care arrangements and the quality of care can vary considerably from one type of setting to another and within the same type of setting, it will be necessary to present the various school-age care options and the quality factors for the wide age range of children attending school-age care programs. However, it should be noted that for the purpose of this study, an emphasis will be placed on school-age care in the school setting for the older school-age care population (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds). A description of the effects that the environmental context has on friendship formation opportunities will then be presented. Following this, an explanation will be given for the role that school-age care can play in the formation and maintenance of friendships. Finally, quality of care will be presented with reference to older children by specifically examining three dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) that are believed to be closely related to friendship opportunities and which will be tested in relation to older children's satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age programs.

The overall objective of this study was to illustrate how school-age care programs could serve a facilitating role in establishing and maintaining high quality friendships, while maintaining children's interest in staying in a safe age-appropriate environment until the end of their parents' work day. This study attempted to show that the children's satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age care programs would be related to the number of friendships (i.e., more friends and at least one friend) and types of friendships (i.e., best friends and good friends) that were formed in the school-age care context, as well as the extent to which 8-to-12-year-olds perceived their programs as accommodating their friendship needs. Particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice

in programming, and leadership opportunities) were also examined in relation to 8-to-12-year-olds levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs. Since this study was examining friendships in a context that is less structured than the traditional elementary school setting, it was predicted that this study would most likely produce insightful findings that would help us to better understand the role that these child care arrangements could play in providing friendship opportunities for children in their middle childhood years. As well as how friendships could play a role in increasing older children's satisfaction and their willingness to return to these programs the following year. Furthermore, a preliminary examination was also conducted to determine if the quality of friendships would be enhanced as a result of spending valuable time with one's best friend in a social setting, such as school-age programs.

Exploring Friendships In Middle Childhood

Friendships Emerge As Being Important In Middle Childhood

Friendships are considered to be the basis of social interactions within our society and important sources of support and companionship for individuals. As children grow and develop, they begin to explore their surrounding environment, which encourages the exploration and establishment of peer interactions and relationships. This period is often marked by children shifting away from their parental ties to form friendships with peers (Hartup, 1987). At a very young age, children strive to be accepted by their peers so that they may form mutually respectful relationships that continue to grow and develop over time (Hartup & Sancilio, 1986). In particular, friendships that are present during the middle childhood years are considered to be especially important, since they serve as the foundation for social relationships and interactions during adolescence (Bukowski et al., 1994). Moreover, school-age children live in their own distinct social world that involves having different companions, facing many demands and issues, as well as interacting in a variety of social settings (Hartup & Moore, 1990; Hartup, 1992). Thus, it may be concluded that friendships are a central ingredient in the lives of elementary school-age children, and it is

7

essential that children attempt to form healthy peer relationships during this middle childhood period (Sheiman & Slonim, 1988).

The Ever-changing Social World of School-Age Children

When exploring friendships in middle childhood, it is important to highlight and consider the differences that set this age group apart from any other peer group. This period is marked by children acquiring more independence that allows them to seek and form meaningful relationships without relying on their parents for guidance and support (Fiering & Lewis, 1989). In particular, children's social networks change as they create their own identity and existence in the school environment (Fiering & Lewis, 1989). In fact, as children mature they tend to master the social skills that enable them to form relationships with various individuals in many different settings (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980). As a result, the composition of their social networks changes substantially in terms of the number and type of contacts with individuals from particular settings (Fiering & Lewis, 1989). As well, the transition from early to middle childhood is marked by a steady increase in the presence of more non-kin (i.e., non-family relatives) in comparison to kin (i.e., family relatives) in children's networks (Fiering & Lewis, 1989). Thus, the middle childhood period is characterized by a substantial increase in peer contact (Hartup, 1983) with greater importance being placed on these peer relationships (Goodnow & Burns, 1988; Youniss & Smollar, 1986).

School-age children tend to spend the majority of their free time with their friends as opposed to being with their family or other adult figures (Howes, 1983; Medrich, Rosen, Rubin, & Buckley, 1982). The peer relationships that occur during middle childhood involve egalitarian social exchanges in which each party is viewed as being an equal partner in the friendship. This in turn, serves to distinguish children's peer relationships from adult-child relationships that are characterized by the adult figure playing the dominant role, creating a vertical relationship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Hartup, 1989; Hartup, 1992; Hartup & Moore, 1990).

8

Children's friendships are marked as being cooperative relationships (Charlesworth & LaFreniere, 1983; Hartup, 1987). Peer interactions enable children to learn how to cooperate with their peers by forming a mutual agreement as a group rather than complying with adult orders (Hartup & Moore, 1990). Friendships provide children with a sense that they belong to a peer group; they also provide children with the opportunity to evaluate themselves in relation to their peers; this, in turn, enhances their social skills and sense of self-worth (Allen, 1995). Peer relationships provide children with the opportunity to gain further insight into their own traits, values, and attitudes so that they may then compare their prevailing views with their peers (Hartup, 1992a). Friends also serve as role models helping one another to be empathetic and understanding towards others (Allen, 1995). Thus, friendships have an impact on children's socioemotional development (Hartup, 1987). In addition, being accepted into a peer group provides children with a sense of belonging and the assurance that they are desired as companions and valuable friends (Allen, 1995; Hartup, 1992).

A Portrait of Middle School-Age Children's Social World

The art of making friends. During middle childhood, children tend to choose peers who have similar attributes and interests (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Hartup, 1992a). More specifically, the similarity/attraction hypothesis advocates that friends often become attracted to one another based on their similarities and this leads to the development of a mutual friendship bond (Hartup, 1982; Sheiman & Slonim, 1988). That is, concordant attitudes, personality traits, abilities, physical characteristics, and behaviors are believed to furnish a basis for mutual friendships (Hartup, 1982). Similar demographic characteristics are considered to be strong determinants of children's selection of friends (Berndt, 1981). In fact, similarities result from the environmental contexts that bring children together to share common social experiences; that is, similarity and proximity are confounded with one another (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). Therefore, school-age programs may serve as an ideal social context in which to provide children with opportunities to encounter peers who

have similar qualities and interests. In particular, children who attend school-age programs have many things in common, which include being reared in families with working mothers; and being in a school-age care program that increases the likelihood that they will engage in similar activities on a daily basis.

Similarity in activity preferences is an important criteria for the formation of friendships across the developmental span (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). In fact, the quality of the children's interactions with their peers is dependent on establishing a common activity of interest (Gottman, 1983). Since school-age programs provide children with many opportunities to engage in various types of activities during the after school hours with same-age peers, these programs could serve as an ideal social context for children to form friendships, as well as increase the quality of their friendships. The manner in which the activities are organized as part of the daily program curriculum and the frequency of interactive activities may also serve to promote or discourage peer interactions based on the children's interests or ability levels (Epstein, 1989; Jacobs et al., 1995). That is, of course, if a critical mass representing the older age group is enrolled in these child care arrangements. Unfortunately, when parents select a school-age program they may not necessarily always consider their children's interests, as practical reasons often outweigh their children's desires to be with their friends (Bradbard, Brown, Endsley, & Readdick, 1994). Thus, older children may often find themselves in a program that does not fully meet their needs and interests. In fact, at times children may express their feelings of being confined to a program that does not respect their growing needs and desires to be with friends.

The type and variety of equipment and supplies that are available in the program may also help to facilitate or hinder interactions amongst friends (Epstein, 1989). Equipment and materials that encourage group participation, such as team sports, provide children with opportunities to interact with their peers in their efforts to reach a similar goal (e.g., winning the game) (Hartup, 1982). On the other hand, certain types of materials can

restrict interactions amongst peers and focus more on individual tasks. It is important to incorporate solitary types of activities into the program's structure, although it is also imperative that children are given as many opportunities to interact with their peers as possible (Doherty, 1991; Jacobs et al., 1998). Thus, all of these environmental conditions can either place children in close proximity with their same-age friends or the environmental condition may serve to separate them from their friends.

The closer the proximity, the closer the friendship. In today's society, children are exposed to many different types of social contexts at earlier ages than what was once common practice; however, it is important to highlight the fact that not all of these environments may facilitate the formation and maintenance of friendships. The more opportunities children have to interact with their friends in different settings (e.g., school, after-school program, extracurricular activities), the greater the chance the quality of their friendships is enhanced (Bukowski et al., 1994). It is also true that the quality of other friendships may be greatly reduced if the opportunities to interact with one another are limited (Epstein, 1989). Therefore, particular social contexts, such as school-age care programs, may provide children with the opportunity to form site-specific friendships by creating an environment that promotes and supports interactions among friends.

An exploration of school-age friendships amongst children who attend school-age care programs would likely demonstrate that different conditions may be found with respect to the number, types (i.e., best and good friendships), and quality of friendships that exist in these programs. The primary factor that may create the different conditions is whether or not children's friends attend the program, since proximity may have a major impact on the quality and characteristics of the friendships. An ideal condition would be that a best friend(s) and/or good friend(s) would attend the school-age program; however, given the high drop-out rate for this age group, it is very likely that children may be attending a program without their friends. Therefore, it is important to explore whether these conditions would ultimately affect the quality of the children's friendships, and have an impact on the

children's satisfaction levels with school-age programs and their willingness to return to the program.

Children's views of their friendships. During middle childhood, children begin to conceptualize friendships as being mutually exclusive relationships in which peers collaborate with one another to attain a mutual goal or a particular interest (Hartup, 1982). At nine years of age, children are often possessive regarding their friendships and they see their friendships as being exclusive relationships. However, as children mature and reach twelve years of age, they become more independent and begin to realize that it is virtually impossible for one individual to provide all of the personal and psychological support needed (Hartup, 1982). Thus, older school-age children begin to learn that their group of friends serves as a social entity that provides them with valuable resources and support (Sheiman & Slonim, 1988). In middle childhood children often describe their friends as being individuals whom they respect and can rely on for help. They also state that their friends understand them and that they are individuals whom they can truly trust (Bukowski et al., 1994). Thus, this makes them feel comfortable confiding their inner most secrets, intimate feelings, and personal thoughts with these individuals (Yawkey & Johnson, 1988). Therefore, this age group values friendships that provide loyalty, intimacy, acceptance, and genuineness (Rizzo, 1989). As such, it would be very beneficial if school-age programs could help facilitate the formation and maintenance of friendships to enable children to share their child care experiences with their friends. One of the goals of this study was to demonstrate that children who perceive their programs to be accommodating of their friendship needs by providing them with many opportunities to interact freely with their friends, may increase the likelihood that children would establish close relationships with their peers in the school-age care context. This may satisfy the children's needs to interact with their best friends and/or good friends, and as a result these children may be more satisfied, as well as more willing to attend these programs because they would have the opportunity to engage in social activities with their same-age peers who are their friends.

Considering The Role of Quality

It is also important to consider the role that quality of care plays in older children's satisfaction levels with school-age programs. In Maheux's (1998) study, quality of care was considered to be one aspect of the multi-layered contexts surrounding the children's levels of satisfaction with school-age care programs. The study conducted by Maheux (1998) found that quality as defined by experts and outlined in the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) (Harms et al., 1996) was not an important criteria influencing all of the older children's levels of satisfaction with school-age programs. For the purpose of analysis, Maheux (1998) separated the children into two groups: those who wished to return to the program the following year and those who did not. She then performed separate analyses for each of the groups. Maheux's (1998) findings indicated that as expected, those children in the return group were more satisfied overall with the program than those who did not want to return to the program.

As very little research has addressed quality issues with respect to older children's satisfaction with school-age care, and since Maheux (1998) examined the issue of quality of care in relation to satisfaction separately for the two groups of children (i.e., return group vs. drop-out group), there is still a need to examine this issue without separating the children into these two distinct groups. There is also a need to treat the question regarding willingness to return in another format than the yes/no manner. Therefore, the current investigation attempted to explore Maheux's (1998) hypothesis regarding quality of care as playing a role in determining older school-age children's satisfaction with these programs from a different perspective. The analysis in the present study was performed by examining the children's satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale as opposed to the yes/no format that Maheux (1998) used in her study to examine willingness to return.

Before examining quality of care in the school-age care context it is necessary to review the quality factors for preschool, as there are very few studies that have explored quality of care for school-age children (Zigler & Turner, 1982). In addition, the preschool

quality factors are an outcome of the various waves of day care research that have evolved over the past three decades. Therefore, research findings for quality of care in the preschool daycare setting will be highlighted to direct our attention towards the assessment of quality of care in the school-age care context, as the issue of quality has been extensively studied in this child care setting.

An Overview of Day Care Research

Before exploring quality and friendships in the school-age care context it is essential to look at the existing preschool research to summarize the relevant studies that have examined quality issues and social interactions. The following section of the literature review will provide a historical overview of the day care research and its association with quality.

Three Waves of Day Care Research

Much of what we know about quality in school-age programs has been extrapolated from the preschool research. The first wave of research on the preschool setting attempted to examine the detrimental effects of child care on the children's development by comparing group child care to maternal care, which revealed that there were no differences between the two child care arrangements (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Zaslow, 1991). The second wave of research emerged when the researchers explored how different levels of quality of care may effect the children's development (Clarke-Stewart, 1987; Pence, 1989; Scarr et al., 1990). Linking child outcomes to quality of care issues provided some insightful findings; that is, it was found that the higher the quality of care the better children's development and lower quality programs tended to be associated with negative outcomes (Phillips et al., 1987; Phillips & Howes, 1987; Zaslow, 1991). These interesting findings compelled researchers to examine quality of care dimensions further, by adopting different perspectives and approaches to the study of day care quality. The following section will highlight the dimensions of quality in preschool research.

14

Dimensions of Quality in Preschool Research

Quality of care refers to "the extent to which the care environment supports and promotes age-appropriate social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development and at the same time provides the family with a sense of security regarding the child's out-of-home care" (Jacobs, White, Baillargeon, & Betsalel-Presser, 1995, p. 222). Quality of care can be examined in terms of global variables, structural factors, and human factors (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990). Global factors provide a picture of the overall climate of the environment that includes the equipment, activities, atmosphere, routines, provision of adult needs, policies and health and safety practices (Scarr et al., 1990). Structural variables, on the other hand, measure factors that can be regulated such as adult:child ratios, group size, centre size, and caregiver training and experience. It is also important to examine dynamic aspects of child care that reflect the children's experiences within the child care setting, as well as contextual aspects that specifically address the nature of the setting and staff turnover (Phillips, 1987). Human factors examine the relationships between the various parties in the school-age care context; that is, they measure the warmth and attachment that exist between the caregiver and the children, as well as the extent of support that is given by the director to the educators (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990). In particular, the establishment of positive relationships between the caregiver and the children serves as a foundation upon which relationships may be formed between the children and their peers (Anderson, Nagle, Roberts, & Smith, 1981; Vandell et al., 1988; Zaslow, 1991). It has been revealed that children who attend high quality day care centres tend to be more popular and socially competent in interactions with their peers (Vandell et al., 1988, Zaslow, 1991).

There is also some evidence in the literature to indicate that the benefits associated with high quality care continue to have positive effects on children during their elementary school years (Zaslow, 1991). In fact, a study by Vandell et al. (1988) revealed that the benefits associated with high quality preschool child care were still evident in the children's behaviour four years later when they were eight years of age. That is, the children were

15

characterized as being more competent, empathetic, and cooperative with their peers in grade school than others who did not attend a high quality child care arrangement (Vandell et al., 1988).

These are factors that have been identified as being important dimensions of quality in the preschool setting; however, these factors may not be appropriate quality indicators for the school-age context, as there are significant differences that set these two forms of child care apart from one another (Jacobs et al., 1998). Therefore, we may not be able to apply the preschool findings directly to the school-age care context. The following section will discuss whether the quality dimensions that are appropriate for the preschool day care settings may also be applied to the school-age care context.

School-Age Care

School-age care first emerged as a response to the steady increase in demand for after-school care for children of dual income families as well as single parent families (Howes, Olenick, & Der-Kiureghian, 1987; Jacobs, White, Baillargeon, & Betsalel-Presser, 1991). School-age care refers to the type of formal care arrangement that provides supervision and care for school-age children between five and thirteen years of age during the hours before and after school, as well as during vacations and holidays when the children's parents are working outside of the home (Seligson, Genser, Gannett, & Gray, 1983).

Types of School-Age Care Programs

There are many different types of school-age child care arrangements that are available to care for children during the remaining hours of the school day while their parents are working. In Canada, there is great variance across the provinces with respect to different types of school-age child care arrangements (Jacobs, et al., 1998). These include: on-site school-age programs that are located on the school premises, family day cares that are situated in the homes of caretakers, sitter care arrangements, "latchkey" self-care arrangements, day care centres that are affiliated with preschools, and community-based

16

centres that are located at the YMCA, or at recreational centres (Travis & Rhodes, 1984). However, for the purpose of this study only on-site group child care arrangements were explored because of the belief that group care arrangements were more likely to have a larger number of same-age peers than the other types of school-age care arrangements. This type of child care arrangement also provides a greater possibility of finding a friend among same-age peers or having a friend who also attends the same school-age program.

In Quebec, school-based child care centres are the most commonly used types of care (Fullum, 1995). These arrangements are often referred to as on-site programs that are located within the schools and usually operate between the hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., which covers the hours of a typical working day. There are many advantages associated with this type of care. First, parents often indicate that they feel more at ease when their children remain on the school site for the care program since they do not have to worry about their children traveling between the school and an off-site child care centre (Jacobs et al., 1998; Maheux, 1998). In addition, school-based child care arrangements eliminate organizational problems for parents and children and ease the transition between the school and the after school environment (Jacobs, et al., 1998). Having the after-school program housed in the school environment provides a variety of age-appropriate resources that are readily accessible and available on either an exclusive or shared basis (Jacobs, et al., 1998). Thus, school-based child care can provide continuity between the school and the after-school program. Having a program located on the school premises provides additional benefits for the functioning of the program, such as having access to a variety of host facilities and allowing the children to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities (ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1990). The setting in which the school-age program is housed may have an impact on the children's social opportunities. In fact, Howes et al. (1987) demonstrated that school-based school-age programs might be complementary to the school, as this type of social setting increases the children's opportunities for social interactions with their school-age friends. The next section will address this issue further

by examining how different environmental contexts may affect children's opportunities to form friendships.

Effects of Environmental Context on Friendship Formation

Children may encounter different social experiences depending on the characteristics of the environmental settings in which they are interacting; that is, some environments may promote friendship formation, while others may restrict social interactions from occurring amongst peers (Jacobs et al., 1995). The majority of research studies that have explored school-age childhood friendships have focused their attention on highlighting the importance of developing sound friendships during the elementary school years. However, close examination of the social atmosphere in the school environment reveals that there are constraints imposed on the amount of time that children can spend interacting freely with one another (Hallinan, 1981). In addition, there are many disruptions and abrupt changes (e.g., impersonal setting, teacher control) that occur during the school day to interfere with the children's friendship bonding moments (Rizzo, 1989). Therefore, it is important to consider the fact that different settings impose different physical and social barriers to the establishment of peer friendships (Ray, Cohen, & Secrist, 1995). As most of the school-age care programs in Quebec are school-based, it can be suggested that these programs might offer children a context that is more socially stimulating than the traditional elementary school classroom. In fact, school-age care programs are characterized as being less academically focused than the school setting and are in turn, more recreationally based since they operate to provide care for school-age children during the hours before- and after-school when parents are still working (Jacobs et al., 1998). As a result, the majority of these programs are likely to be less structured than the typical elementary school classroom, and as such they may be considered to be a perfect place for children to interact with their school friends (Jacobs et al., 1995). That is of course, if the school-age programs accommodate the children's needs to be with their friends. A study conducted by Howes et al. (1987) revealed that kindergarten children who attended school-based school-age

18

programs that accommodated the children's friendships resulted in children being more advanced in their social development as measured by their abilities to form friendships in comparison to those children who did not attend these programs. For the present study it was thought that it would be best to investigate the children's impressions of the extent to which their school-age programs fostered friendships by providing the children with many opportunities to interact freely with their friends.

The Role School-Age Care Can Play In the Formation of Friendships

Attending school-age care programs may provide children with opportunities to be with many same-age peers at the same time for a set period of time on a daily basis during, before and/or after school hours. This may allow the formation of friendships and may enhance the quality of these friendships. In fact, research has shown that being in close proximity on a frequent basis should produce stronger friendships over time (Asher & Gottman, 1981).

Alexander (1986) suggested that children be given the opportunity to spend time with their friends after an intense school day so that they could have some down time; thus, a group setting, such as a school-age program (i.e., after-school program) can provide the valuable time needed for children to engage in enriching social interactions with their peers. In fact, the after-school period represents 20% of the school-age children's waking hours; thus, an after-school program would be the perfect social context in which to foster peer friendships (Alexander, 1986). Alexander (1986) states that there is a need to explore peer relationships in the realm of school-age care programs because there is a definite absence of studies addressing friendships in this context. It was expected that the present study would reveal that school-age programs provide children with greater opportunities to form meaningful relationships with their peers (Mills & Cooke, 1983).

The school-age care setting may also enable children to "learn about one another's feelings, share ideas and materials, negotiate their way through social problems, learn how to communicate effectively and behave in a socially competent manner so that

19

they are able to develop friendships" (Jacobs et al., 1995, p. 11). The extended period of time to interact with peers may, in turn, have a positive effect on the children's social skills, as well as their peer relations. The goal of this study was to demonstrate that school-age care contexts that promote peer interactions by accommodating children's friendship needs would be more likely to produce happier children who would be more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction and a greater willingness to return to these programs.

As friends play an increasingly more important role in the lives of preadolescent children, it is necessary for children to have opportunities to interact freely with their peers to establish high quality friendships (Price & Ladd, 1986). Attending a school-age care program that places a high value on friendships is expected to provide children with the opportunity to form closer friendships with their peers than friendships that exist outside of the school-age care context. These school-age friendships function as cooperative social relationships that help the children reach a mutual goal or engage in activities that are of a particular interest to them (Hartup, 1982). Essentially, the friendships serve as a supportive system during the period of development that is so vital to making a healthy transition into adolescence (Bukowski et al., 1994). Furthermore, school-age programs that recognize the importance of friendships by allowing children to socialize with their friends will most likely serve to enhance the children's satisfaction and willingness to attend the programs.

Thus, even though children may form friendships in a variety of different settings, it is the environments that are structured to promote and support peer interactions that are more likely to foster better quality friendships (Jacobs et al., 1995). It was therefore predicted that the quality of children's best friendships would also be enhanced as a result of spending time together in school-age care programs.

School-age programs can promote a social context that serves many purposes. First, it might increase the children's satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs the following year; second, it might enable the friendship to flourish without any interference in a more relaxed setting than the school setting; and finally, it might enhance

20

the quality of the children's best friendships, while ensuring that the children are cared for during the remaining hours of the day when their parents are still working (Jacobs et al., 1995).

Since very few studies (Maheux, 1998; Proulx, 1990) have explored older children's experiences and perceptions of school-age care, it was also deemed necessary to investigate the older children's perspective of the quality of care they received. This necessitated conducting preliminary tests to examine the relationship between three particular dimensions of quality of care (i.e., age-appropriate supervision practices, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities), perceived as being important to older children, with children's satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs the following year. The next section will explore the relationship that exists between quality of care and older children's satisfaction with these school-age programs and their willingness to return to these programs.

Quality of School-Age Care

Although, it is acceptable to use preschool findings to direct the future of studies conducted in the school-age care domain, it is vitally important to acknowledge that school-age care is not merely an extension of preschool child care (Kuiken, 1985). Recently, efforts have been made to examine quality issues in school-age care. In fact, Jacobs et al. (1998) recommended that the developmental issues of the two age groups served by preschool child care and school-age care need to be studied further in order to better understand the potentially different needs of both populations.

Very little is known about the role that school-age care plays in children's development (Jacobs et al., 1998). The varying developmental and maturity levels of children enrolled in school-age care programs creates a need to design child care that is appropriate for each of the age groups (Alexander, 1986; Kuiken, 1985). Consequently, the quality of the school-age care program should be assessed according to the different age groups of users. Some researchers (Albrecht & Plantz, 1991; Musson, 1994) have

advocated that there are three distinct age groupings that should be considered by school-age care programs. The respective age groupings are as follows: 1) 5- to 7-year-olds, 2) 8- to 10- year-olds and 3) 11- to 13-year-olds. It has been recommended that children attending these programs should be separated into their respective age groupings to be sure that the program is developmentally-appropriate and fully meets the needs and interests of the children. However, the difficulties that have been associated with designing developmentally appropriate school-age programs has lead many programs to treat school-age children as one developmental group (Cloutier, 1990; Coleman, Robinson, & Rowland, 1993). Based on the research that exists in the literature it seems that the younger school-age children tend to represent the largest proportion of the school-age population in these child care programs. Thus, it is quite common to find school-age care programs that are geared towards the care of the younger age group (ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1990; Betsalel-Presser et al., 1995; Park, 1992). This is despite the fact that as children get older, their games become more sophisticated, their need for autonomy increases and their desire to be with their friends becomes increasingly more important (Jacobs et al., 1998; Maheux, 1998). As the great majority of school-age children in these programs attend kindergarten to third grade, it would seem logical to separate this group from the remaining school-age population, as it seems to be a natural division due to the varying developmental levels of the children (Jacobs et al., 1998). Some programs opt for "natural groupings" which allow the children to choose their own groupings (Click, 1994). In these natural grouping arrangements children can move freely from one activity to the next, while interacting with children from different age groups. The advantage of this arrangement is that the children are free to choose who they would like to interact with, as well as participate in activities that are of interest to them (Jacobs et al., 1998). On the other hand, the disadvantage of this type of grouping is that the older and younger age groups are usually housed in the same environment, which is often recognized as being a common complaint by the older school-age children (Yeates, et al., 1991).

Previous research (Harms et al., 1996; Jacobs et al., 1995; Phillips, 1987; Scarr et al., 1990; Vandell and Corasaniti, 1988; Whitebook et al., 1990; Zaslow, 1991) has shown that it is important to consider the role that quality of care plays in children's development. However, the quality factors may be different for the various age groups served by these child care programs. Maheux's (1998) study was the first study to highlight the fact that older children (i.e., 9-to-12-year-olds) have special quality needs that may not be entirely assessed by the SACERS quality measure (Harms et al., 1996). Thus, Maheux (1998) suggested that other aspects of quality that are equated with the developmental appropriateness of the programs and that are believed by experts in the field (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Doherty, 1991; Jacobs et al., 1998; Kuiken, 1985; Musson and Embury, 1997; Ryan and Anderson, 1991; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989; Yeates et al., 1991; Young, 1994) to be important to this older school-age group should also be examined in relation to older school-age children's levels of satisfaction. The following section will discuss these three quality dimensions in relation to older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs.

Quality Dimensions For Older School-Age Children

Previous studies (Betsalel-Presser et al., 1995; Cloutier, 1990; Fink, 1986; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990) have found that older children may resist attending school-age care because they do not like to be treated like their younger school-age mates. Therefore, it would be reasonable to question the extent to which these programs are practicing developmental appropriateness in designing the curriculum (Maheux, 1998). It is especially important that the programs attempt to address the unique needs and interests of the older children so that they feel that the care is appropriate.

Several authors (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Doherty, 1991; Musson & Embury, 1997; Ryan Anderson, 1991; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989) have proposed that certain dimensions of quality should be met in order to enhance the quality of care that is provided for older children in these school-age care programs. Researchers in the field, specifically

23

Baillargeon and Binette (1991), revealed that 63% of educators working in school-based child care stated that children in this older school-age group (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds) have specific needs and interests that need to be identified and further addressed by these school-age care programs.

Consequently, the quality factors (i.e., age-appropriate - intermittent supervision practices, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) that were investigated in the present study were chosen on the basis of guidelines that were presented in a document that addresses developmentally appropriate practices (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). In this document it was recommended that school-age programs should recognize the importance of peer relationships for school-age children. The principles of developmentally appropriate practices have also recognized the importance of providing age-appropriate programs that offer activities which are in accordance with the children's developmental stages (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). Accordingly, other experts in the field (Musson & Embury, 1993; Ryan & Anderson, 1991; Young, 1994) have suggested that the program should also be age-appropriate and take into consideration the children's growing need to assume more responsibility and autonomy. This may be achieved by allowing children to choose their own activities and peers to interact with in this social setting. They also recommended that older children should be required to abide by different rules than the younger children, in terms of adopting intermittent supervision practices. As well, opportunities to exercise leadership skills may also be provided within same-age peer groups, as well as in mixed-age groupings (Stright & French, 1988). Thus, it was the goal of this study to substantiate what various experts in the field (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Doherty, 1991; Jacobs et al., 1998; Ryan & Anderson, 1991; Yeates et al., 1991; Young, 1994) have been speculating for the past few years with respect to dimensions of quality that are of special importance to children in this older school-age group (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds).

It was the intent of this exploratory study to show that conducting these preliminary tests may reveal that older children may be more satisfied overall and more willing to return to these programs when their quality needs and interests are fully met by considering the following particular dimensions of quality: a) provision of age-appropriate – intermittent supervision practices, b) ensuring that there is free-choice in the activities, and c) allowing older children to assume leadership opportunities. A justification will follow for each of these three dimensions of quality.

Supervision. As highlighted in a book by Doherty (1991), which emphasized the point that quality matters in child care, it was stated that as the children in school-age care mature they begin to demand more privacy, they ask to be separated from younger school-age mates, and they often express the wish to have more responsibility over their own lives. Under these circumstances, school-age care staff may often find themselves in a difficult situation because meeting the older children's developmental needs may conflict with provincial regulations that require programs to provide close supervision when caring for the children (The Ten Plus Committee, 1989). However, it is important to highlight the fact that the majority of supervisors who were surveyed by the ARA Consulting Group Inc. (1990) suggested that children over nine years of age should be allowed to do certain on-site activities without being under constant supervision. It is presumed on the basis of suggestions and recommendations that have been made by several experts in the field, that if the program adopts age-appropriate supervision practices, then many positive outcomes will result (ARA Consulting Group Inc, 1990; Doherty, 1991, The Ten Plus Committee, 1989). Therefore, in the present study it was hypothesized that older children who attended programs that used more age-appropriate supervision practices would be more satisfied and willing to return to these programs the following year.

There are many variations of supervision practices (e.g., distal and intermittent supervision) that may be utilized by school-age programs that enable the children to gradually assume responsibility for the care of their own well-being (Doherty, 1991).

25

Although, for the purpose of this study intermittent supervision was examined, as it was believed that this would be a more common type of supervision practice in Quebec for older children than distal supervision (i.e., children are able to leave the site to participate in community-based programs) practices that are used in other provinces (e.g., Alberta) (Jacobs et al., 1998). Intermittent supervision practices, whereby the educators give the older children more freedom and privacy than younger children, allow children to assume responsibility over their actions (Yeates et al., 1991). Essentially, intermittent supervision permits older children to be unsupervised for specific periods of time, as children can go with a few peers to other locations in the school beyond the supervisory range with the educator's permission (ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1990). The educators can periodically check on the children to make sure that the children are well. This type of supervision practice may provide older children with the opportunity to choose who they want to interact with and thereby enable them to spend more time with their friends. Adopting this type of supervision practice would most likely increase children's satisfaction with these programs because they would no longer feel like they are being babied, and it would also make them feel like they belong to a special group that is separate from the younger children who attend school-age care. In addition to intermittent supervision, it has been suggested that older children also appreciate having free choice provisions in their programs.

Free choice. Authors have suggested that as children approach the preadolescent period they often want the freedom and flexibility to select their own activities that they can participate in during program hours. Free choice is a very important program component, as it provides older children with independence and freedom within the context of a school-age program (Jacobs et al., 1998). Numerous researchers (Albrecht & Plantz, 1991; Alexander, 1986; Kuiken, 1985; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989) have advocated that school-age children should be given developmentally appropriate opportunities to choose the activities that they would like to engage in seeing that they have already spent the majority of their school day in a structured, controlling environment. In fact, Jacobs et al.

(1998) suggested that providing children with the freedom to self-select activities and peer groups will prove to be very beneficial in terms of enhancing the children's initiatives in terms of decision-making skills. This recommendation may also increase the children's levels of satisfaction with school-age care and willingness to return to these programs, as older children desire a curriculum that is appealing to their changing interests (Park, 1993). It was hypothesized in the present study that simply creating a flexible environment can make a subtle difference in attracting the older children to continue attending the program.

Older children also want to play an integral part in the decision-making process that is involved in designing the program curriculum. That is, they prefer that adults step aside and let them make the primary decisions in the program and only request adult input when it is really necessary (Yeates et al., 1991). When children are given the opportunity to assume control over their activities they may feel that they are asserting their autonomy, while at the same time exhibiting their leadership and team work skills. As well, being given the opportunity to make major decisions in terms of programming allows the children to feel like they are being treated differently than the younger children and that their wishes are being respected at the same time (Jacobs, et al., 1998). In fact, it can be quite beneficial for the older children to assume the leadership role while interacting with the younger children who attend the school-age program. The next section will address the last aspect of quality that will be explored in the present study; that is, leadership opportunities for older children in school-age care programs.

Leadership opportunities. Mixed-age groupings in after-school programs, where children from the different age groups interact with one another, can provide the older children with the opportunity to practice their leadership skills and assume responsibility for others (Albrecht & Plantz, 1991; Alexander, 1986; Stright & French, 1988; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989). Mixed-age groupings can be equally beneficial for the younger age groups with the older children serving as models for the younger children to imitate (Albrecht & Plantz, 1991; Alexander, 1986; Jacobs et al., 1998; Kuiken, 1985). Although,

27

there are some benefits associated with mixed-age groupings, various experts in the field believe it is advisable for older children to be separated from the younger children seeing as both groups have unique needs and interests (ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1990; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989). When the older children are separated from their younger school-age mates, they may have more opportunities to interact with their age mates, which might likely satisfy their need to be with same-age peers. However, it is still important that efforts be made for older children to assume the leadership role with the younger school-age children so that they feel a greater degree of responsibility.

Current Situation for Older Children In School-Age Care Programs

As mentioned throughout this literature review, there are few studies that have examined various issues surrounding the older school-age population, especially with respect to middle childhood friendships. Maheux (1998) however, was the first to conduct an empirical study examining and identifying factors related to older school-age children's desire to drop-out of school-age programs, as well as their levels of satisfaction with these programs. Her study attempted to describe the current situation for 9-to-12-year-olds in these programs, as well as assess the quality of care in these settings for the older children. This study has finally provided some insight into the factors that are related to this age group's desire to drop-out of these school-age programs. This examination involved using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) multi-layered context to closely examine older school-age children's satisfaction as a function of various other variables. These variables included: age, gender, elements of choice, reasons why children attend the centre, quality of setting, and children's satisfaction. This study also aimed to identify factors related to older children's satisfaction with these school-age care programs. It was the intent of this study to help decrease the amount of self-care arrangements that existed by providing recommendations to professionals in the child care field on how to create programs that are better adapted to the needs and interests of children in this age group.

A total of 111 children (52 boys, 59 girls) with a mean age of 9.9 years from 13 centres in the South Shore of Montreal participated in this study. An analysis of the factors related to older children's desire to drop-out of these programs revealed that 60.7% of the children stated that they wanted to drop-out of these programs because the programs were boring, while 39.3% of children indicated that they wanted to return because of the fun activities that were offered at their programs. Seeing that there was a limitation in the structure of the question regarding older children's desire to return to the program the following year (i.e., yes/no format), Maheux (1998) decided that for the purposes of analyses the children would have to be separated into two separate groups: those who wanted to return and those who did not.

In Maheux's (1998) study it was hypothesized that the higher the quality of the programs, the lower the drop-out rate. However, it was found that as the quality of the programs increased, the children were more likely to express an interest in wanting to drop-out of these programs. It was also found that as the children became older they were more likely to want to drop-out of these programs. In terms of gender, it was demonstrated that boys were more likely to want to drop-out of these programs; thus, girls were more satisfied overall. An analysis into the reasoning that children gave for attending these programs revealed that the return group indicated that they were attending these programs because their friends were also attending the programs. In terms of satisfaction, it was hypothesized that the children in the return group would be more satisfied with the program than those children who did not want to return and the findings were found to be in accordance with what was expected.

Thus, according to Maheux's (1998) findings, we have obtained a better understanding of what makes children in the return group more satisfied with these programs, but we are still unsure, as to what makes all children satisfied and more willing to return to these programs. The present exploratory study was primarily conducted as an extension to Maheux's (1998) findings, by overcoming the limitations from Maheux's

(1998) study and by focusing on two factors (i.e., friendships and three particular dimensions of quality) that were suggested by Maheux (1998) as being related to older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these school-age programs. A consideration of the quality of children's best friendships was also examined in the current study.

Summary Statement

There is a definite lack of studies that have examined quality issues for older school-age children in school-age care programs, and there are no research studies to date that have explored the role that friendships play in determining older school-age children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs. Consequently, the current exploratory study attempted to provide some answers into the uncertainty that is associated with the high drop-out rate that is commonly reported for this age group (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990) by focusing on determining which factors may lead to higher levels of satisfaction for this age group. Therefore, the present exploratory study examined quality of care as assessed by the SACERS (Harms et al., 1996), various aspects of middle childhood friendships (i.e., number and types of friends in school-age programs, the extent to which the programs accommodated friendship needs), and three particular dimensions of quality that are believed to be important for children in this age group (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice, and leadership opportunities) in relation to older school-age children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs. The quality of older children's best friendships were also assessed, as it was believed that as children spend more time with their best friends in school-age care programs, the quality of their best friendships would most likely increase as a result of being in close proximity to one another on a regular basis.

Statement of Problem

A common finding in school-age care programs is that the older children (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds) are very likely to drop out of these programs (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-

30

Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990). Recently, researchers have begun to explore why children at this age are unwilling to attend these programs and have attempted to identify the factors that may lead to this age group's desire to drop out of these programs. Until recently, very few studies (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990) have attempted to obtain an accurate picture of older children's experiences in and impressions of their school-age care programs. Maheux (1998) attempted to do so for the 9-to-12-year-olds and the findings that were generated from her study revealed that children who wanted to return to the school-age programs the following year were more satisfied overall with their school-age care programs in comparison to those children who wanted to drop-out of these programs. However, it was surprising to learn that as the quality of the programs, as rated by trained observers increased, the number of children who stated that they wanted to drop-out of the programs also increased (Maheux, 1998). Thus, if quality as experts see it does not relate to older children's satisfaction, then the question still remains as to what factors are considered to be important to children in this age group which would, in turn, increase the children's levels of satisfaction, as well as inspire older children to want to return to these programs.

There was some indication from Maheux's (1998) findings that friendships may play a role in the satisfaction equation, as children seemed to be more satisfied and willing to attend the programs when their friends were also attending. In addition, Maheux (1998) postulated that the quality of the program as assessed by the SACERS may not contribute to children's desire to drop out, but that the appropriateness of the programs (i.e., programming tailored to meet the needs and interests of this age group) might be a more important factor to be considered in future studies examining this issue.

The present study was primarily conducted to try and replicate some of Maheux's (1998) findings with respect to older children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending school-age care programs, and to explore this issue in greater depth. Thus, the central focus of this study was slightly different than that of Maheux (1998), as the present

31

investigation was designed to determine which factors best reflected older children's levels of satisfaction with school-age care programs, with an emphasis being placed on the existence of friendships in these programs. It was hypothesized on the basis of Maheux's (1998) findings, that the presence of friends might play a major role in affecting older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to continue attending these programs. It was also anticipated that children would be more satisfied and willing to return to the program when their friendship needs were accommodated. A secondary goal of this study was to conduct preliminary tests to investigate whether aspects of quality that are considered to be important to older children (i.e., age-appropriate supervision practices, greater free choice, opportunity to assume leadership role) might reflect the positive role that quality plays in the satisfaction equation. As this was only a preliminary test, it was anticipated that the results may provide some justification for revising the SACERS to include additional items that would be suited to the needs and interests of older school-age children. The quality of children's best friendships were also assessed in this study to determine if a social setting, such as a school-age care program would serve to enhance the quality of best friendships that exist in these programs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to conduct an in depth exploration of the following issues:

1. To verify Maheux's (1998) findings regarding older children's levels of satisfaction in relation to quality of care as assessed by the SACERS (Harms et al., 1996). The analyses that were performed for the present study were slightly different than Maheux's (1998) because the children were analyzed as a group of individuals instead of dividing them into two specific groups (i.e., return group vs. drop-out group). As a result, the hypotheses for the present investigation were different than Maheux's (1998). In the present investigation, it was predicted that there would be a relationship between older children's desire to drop-out of the program and the level of satisfaction with the program. On the basis of Maheux's (1998) findings, it was also predicted that older school-age

32

children would be less willing to return to these programs if the quality of the program was higher.

In addition, Maheux (1998) found some interesting findings with respect to quality of care and drop-out rates for older children. Her findings revealed that the higher the quality of the programs, the greater the number of children in the older age group who wanted to drop out of these programs. Therefore, an investigation was conducted in the present study to determine if similar results would be found. It was expected that the higher the quality of the program, the larger the number of older children who would want to drop-out of the program.

Seeing that we presume that the latter hypotheses will support Maheux's (1998) findings, then the question still remains as to what makes older children more satisfied with these programs and in turn more willing to continue attending these programs. According to postulations inferred by Maheux (1998), it may very well be the presence of friends that will be the deciding factor as to whether or not children would be willing to stay in these programs. Therefore, the next hypothesis addresses the role that friendships may play in increasing older children's satisfaction with school-age care programs and their willingness to continue attending these programs.

2.   As the central component of this study was whether the presence of friends in school-age care best reflects older children's satisfaction and continued willingness to return to these programs, it was decided that an in-depth investigation was needed to explore various issues surrounding friendships that exist in school-age care programs. Bukowski and Hoza's (1989) hierarchical friendship model was used to assess three aspects of children's friendships: 1) the presence or absence of a friendship; 2) the number of friendships; and 3) the quality of best friendships. The quality of children's best friendships will be addressed separately as the last goal of this study. Other aspects of friendships were also examined in this study. These included the types of friendships present in these programs and the extent to which school-age care programs accommodated

children's friendship needs. The investigation of the extent to which friendships are related to children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending these programs the following year was of utmost importance to this study.

To date, there are no studies that have explored the impact that friendships have on older children's impressions with these programs, besides what Maheux (1998) found concerning older children's declarations of wanting to attend these programs because their friends were also attending these programs. Therefore, the following issues were investigated in an attempt to explore the role that friendships play in the satisfaction equation, as well as study the impact that friendships have on older children's willingness to continue attending these programs.

a) An exploration was undertaken to determine whether children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending these programs would be significantly changed on the basis of the number of friendships that children had in these programs. It was presumed that children who had more friends in the programs would be more likely to be satisfied overall and would, in turn, be willing to continue attending the program. Also, having at least one friend (i.e., best friend or good friend) present in the program was examined in relation to older children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending the programs. It was anticipated that having at least one friend in the program may have some impact on children's satisfaction; however, it would not have a significant impact on the children's willingness to continue attending the programs.

b) An examination was conducted to determine whether the type of friendships (i.e., best friendship or good friendship) would have an impact on children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending the program. It was predicted that the presence of best friends in these programs would serve to significantly increase children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending the programs. However, it was hypothesized that good friendships would not produce such promising results. It was expected that good

34

friendships may increase children's satisfaction somewhat, while the children's desire to return to the programs the following year would be unaffected.

c) In order to test the assertion that it is crucial for programs to recognize the importance of middle childhood friendships by taking steps to accommodate the children's need to interact with their friends (Jacobs et al., 1995), the study examined older children's experiences and impressions with their school-age care programs in terms of their levels of satisfaction and willingness to continue attending these programs. It was thought that older children's perceptions and levels of satisfaction with the extent to which these programs accommodate friendship needs should be examined. It was expected that children would be more satisfied overall with attending these programs if they gave higher ratings on their perceptions of the extent to which these programs supported older children's friendship opportunities, and as a result the children would be willing to return to these programs.

3. The third objective of this study was to verify the accuracy of Maheux's statement, which questioned whether the SACERS was the best measure to use when assessing older children's willingness to return to the programs, as Maheux (1998) suggested that the appropriateness of these programs may be a better element to be considered with respect to older children's satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age care programs. In addition, various experts in the field (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Doherty, 1991; Musson & Embury, 1997; Ryan & Anderson, 1991; Ten Plus Committee, 1989) have suggested that particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free-choice in activities, and leadership opportunities) may be important to older children who attend school-age care programs. It was the goal of this exploratory study to show that older children may be more satisfied overall and in turn be more willing to continue attending these programs if their quality needs are met by these programs.

Therefore, one of the goals of this study was to demonstrate that these three dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) might positively reflect older children's satisfaction with these

programs, as well as their willingness to return to the program than other aspects of quality deemed to be important for the general population attending school-age care programs (i.e., SACERS-Harms et al., 1996). Since it has been speculated that the SACERS may primarily address the needs and interests of the younger children, assessing aspects of quality that are important to older children that are currently not included in the SACERS may add support to Maheux's (1998) idea of creating two subscales on the SACERS that will address the uniqueness of the younger and older school-age children's needs and interests. Perhaps the findings from the present investigation will point to the need to create two subscales on the SACERS in order to assess the quality of the school-age care environment separately for the younger and older children enrolled in these programs.

4.   Another goal of the present study was to examine whether the quality of best friendships would be enhanced as a result of spending time together in school-age care programs. A few researchers (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Alexander, 1986; Jacobs et al., 1995) have suggested that children who attend a social setting with a group of peers, such as a school-age care program, will have another social context in which to build a closer relationship with their peers rather than just attending the school context. As the amount of time spent together is crucial to the quality of the friendships, it was hypothesized that spending more time with one's closest friend (i.e., #1 best friend) in a school-age care program, would most likely result in a higher quality best friendship. That is, of course if one's best friend was also attending the school-age care program and if the program accommodated children's friendship needs. Thus, it was hypothesized that if one's best friend was also attending the program, and if the program accommodated children's friendship needs then the quality of one's best friendship would be significantly higher than a best friendship that existed elsewhere.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 54 children (28 boys, 26 girls) were recruited to participate in the study from various school-age care programs located in the West Island of Montreal. The centres were randomly selected from a listing of school-age care programs that were outlined in the booklet entitled "Où faire garder nos enfants?" and were part of the Lester B. Pearson School Board. Only the older age group was observed in each of the centres. Thus, in the recruitment letter there was an age stipulation that only children between 8-to-12-years of age (i.e., grades 3 to 6) who attended the after-school program would be eligible to participate in this study. The return rate was calculated to be 46%, as 131 consent forms and basic demographic questionnaires were distributed to the parents of the older children in the programs to request permission for their children to participate in the study. After receiving parental permission (Appendix A) from 60 parents, a total of 60 children were eligible to participate in this study. However, upon returning to the centres to complete the questionnaires with the children, six children were unavailable due to illness or withdrawal from the program. Consequently, these six children were excluded from the study resulting in a total of 54 children participating in the study. It is also important to mention that one of the participants did not finish completing the last questionnaire because of scheduling conflicts (i.e., he had to leave in the middle of the study to attend a tutoring session).

The mean age of the children was 9.8 years with the youngest child being 8 years of age and the oldest being 12 years old. Eighty-seven percent of the children attended the day care on a full-time basis (i.e., five days per week) and 68% of the children attended the program between 2.5 to 3.5 hours per day. Eighty-three percent of children were reared in a two-parent family, that was predominantly English speaking (i.e., 96%).

Materials

A demographic questionnaire was used to obtain pertinent information from the parents regarding the children's previous experience with school-age care as well as

parental background information. Two different measures were used to assess the children's satisfaction and willingness to return to their school-age care programs and examine the quality of their best friendships. An evaluation of the global environment of the school-age care program was conducted using the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS, Harms et al., 1996). Interviews were also conducted with the directors and educators in all of the centres in order to obtain additional information that would help in the quality assessments of the school-age care programs.

Parental Demographic Questionnaire. A modified version of the Background Information Questionnaire developed by White, Jacobs, and Schliecker (1988) was used (Appendix B). The modified questionnaire consists of 17 items that address relevant information concerning the children's essential demographics (i.e., age, sex), as well as reasons for attending school-age care, and duration of attendance (i.e., years, days per week, and hours per day). Relevant parental demographic information was also obtained using this measure (i.e., marital status, languages spoken at home, highest degree completed, current occupations, and paid hours of work per week). Parents were also asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the after-school program and to provide their perceptions of their children's levels of satisfaction with the program. In addition, they were asked to indicate whether or not their children would be returning to the after-school program the following year, as well as the reasons for the decision.

Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status. This measure was developed by Hollingshead (1975) as an index of a family's socioeconomic status. It takes into account the parents' educational attainment and occupational status in order to calculate a family's social status. The computational formula for this index of social status is presented in Appendix C.

Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire. This questionnaire (Gage, 1999) was developed specifically for the purpose of this study, primarily to

38

determine the older children's levels of satisfaction and to further reveal which factors have the greatest impact on the older children's satisfaction with school-age programs (Appendix D). Some of the items were selected from the Children's Satisfaction Questionnaire designed by Maheux (1998) (e.g., relationship with educators, elements of quality, overall satisfaction) that was developed to identify the factors that are indicative of the older children's (9-to-12-year-olds) levels of satisfaction with school-age care programs. The present questionnaire was different from that of Maheux's (1998), as it incorporated aspects of friendships, such as how the program accommodated children's friendship needs. It also used a 5-point Likert scale to address the issue of children's willingness to return to the programs the following year. This questionnaire was designed because there was no other children's satisfaction questionnaire found in the literature besides that of Maheux (1998).

The first section of the questionnaire examines children's friendships (i.e., best friends and good friends) by exploring various aspects of the relationships (i.e., place where first met, duration of friendship, place of interaction) and the impact that friendships have on satisfaction with attending school-age care programs. The second section entitled Children's Views of School-Age Care examined 19 items using a five-point Likert-type scale to fully investigate various aspects of the programming in order to determine how satisfied the participating children were with the structure of the program. Various aspects of the program were included in the questionnaire in order to truly reflect the children's levels of satisfaction with their after-school program, which include: 1) the program organization, 2) activities, 3) supervision practices, 4) elements of choice in the program, 5) value placed on friendships, 6) facilitation of friendships, 7) relationship with educators, and 8) overall satisfaction. The children were required to fill in the appropriate circle that corresponded to the rating that was indicative of their level of satisfaction. The ratings were based on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= never to 5 = always.

The Children's Views of School-Age Care subscale was further divided to represent the three dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, leadership opportunities), the accommodation of friendship needs, and children's overall satisfaction. The children's overall satisfaction was represented by a single item which asked "Do you like your after-school program?". The free choice subscale consisted of items 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, which assessed privacy, freedom to select playmates, free choice in activities, and opportunity to be with friends. The leadership subscale was composed of items 4 and 17, which measured opportunities to plan activities and make decisions regarding activities. Finally, the supervision subscale was represented by items 5 and 6, which examined whether educators constantly watched over the children and whether there were times when children were not supervised. The accommodation of friendship needs was represented by items 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13, which examined whether the programs allowed children to choose which peers to interact with, their opportunities to be with friends, the amount of time to be with friends, and their social activities.

The third section required the children to indicate the extent to which they liked the activities that were provided in their after-school program as well as indicating which types of activities they would have liked to have had at their centre. The fourth section required the children to highlight the reasons why they liked or disliked the particular activities that were offered at their after-school program by colouring in the circles that truly represented their reasoning. Finally, the last section involved open-ended questions that asked the children to provide further explanations as to what they liked best about their program, as well as what changes they would have liked to see in their program. In addition, the children were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= no way and 5= for sure) how much they would like to return to the program the following year, and they were asked to provide a justification for their decision.

Friendship Qualities Scale. This scale which was developed by Bukowski et al., (1994), examines five features of friendships: a) companionship (amount of time friends

spent together), b) help (examining both aid and protection from victimization), c) security (explores trust and the notion that the relationship will transcend specific problems), d) closeness (measures feelings of acceptance, validation, and attachment that children held towards the friendship), and e) conflict (reflected children's confrontational arguments) (Appendix E). These friendship features were carefully selected by the investigators after thoroughly reviewing the literature to identify variables that would be considered to be central components of friendships by both theorists and children. Assessments of reliability revealed that the internal consistency within each dimension was quite high. The scale is considered to be an appropriate measure for assessing school-age childhood friendships.

The scale consisted of 40 items. A few of the items were modified slightly to make sure that they were more suitable for the school-age care setting as opposed to the elementary classroom setting. For example, the item on the original measure, which stated "When we have free time at school, such as at lunchtime or recess, my friend and I usually do something together or spend time with each other" was changed to read "When we have free time, my friend and I usually do something together or spend time with each other". The scale requires the children to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (1= not true to 5= really true) how true the statements were with respect to their relationships with their best friend. There were approximately four or five items to address each of the features of the friendships.

School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). This is a reliable and valid observational tool that was used to assess the global quality of the school-age care environment. The SACERS (Harms et al., 1996) provides an overall rating of the quality of a school-age program by evaluating one of the groups in a particular school-age care program (Appendix F). The SACERS is a quality instrument that consists of 49 items that are categorized into seven subscales: Space and Furnishings, Health and Safety, Activities, Interactions, Program Structure, Staff Development, and Special Needs. The items were

selected by a team of experts in the education field who carefully identified these items as being important dimensions of quality. The quality assessments were made by using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = inadequate score, 3 = minimal, 5 = good, and 7 = excellent). In order to obtain a total quality score each item is calculated for each subscale and then all are summed to yield an overall measure of quality. Total scores were calculated by averaging across all the items and subscale scores were also calculated. Standard guidelines were provided by the authors to serve as a comparison to determine the exact quality of the centre. An inadequate score is interpreted as dangerous care, a minimal score is considered to be custodial care, a good score is associated with meeting the children's basic developmental needs, and an excellent score is equated with high quality care. As there were no children with special needs present in the classes that were being observed for each of the centres in the present study, it was decided that the Special Needs subscale would not be included in the global quality assessment, resulting in a total of 43 items across six subscales.

The SACERS (Harms et al., 1996) has been deemed to be a reliable and valid quality instrument that is quite frequently used to obtain overall ratings of the quality of school-age programs. In particular, internal consistency was found to be .95, which is indicative of good to excellent internal consistency; however, program structure did not fair as well (i.e., .67). Interrater reliability also yielded similar good to excellent ratings (i.e., .83). Finally, the content validity was excellent (i.e., .91). Interrater reliability for the present study was assessed for two of the five centres and it was calculated as being .93. The interrater reliability was conducted by qualified researchers who were thoroughly trained to assess quality using this measure for the National School-Age Care Project (Jacobs, White, Baillargeon, & Mill, 1998). Reliability ratings were conducted at the beginning and at the end of the study to be sure that the raters were assessing the quality consistently throughout the duration of the study.

<u>Interviews.</u> Semi-formal interviews were adopted from The National School-Age

Care Project (1998) in which the directors and educators were asked questions regarding

their training (i.e., highest level of formal education; child care experience working with

school-age children; working conditions/benefits (e.g., paid planning time, paid sick leave,

annual paid vacation); information about the functioning of the centre (e.g., number of staff

working at the centre, total number of children enrolled on a full-time and part-time basis,

type of auspice, information regarding monitoring and licensing); and demographic

information (e.g., age, sex, marital status) (Appendix G). This information was obtained to

help with the quality assessments, as some of the items required additional information.

Procedure

Various school-based after-school programs were randomly selected from listings

of school-age programs that were located in the West Island of Montreal. The directors of

the selected programs were contacted by phone and the purpose of the study was explained

and they were asked if they would be interested in participating in this study. The directors

were also asked how many children were registered in the older age group (8-to-12-years-

of-age) to ensure that only centres with an adequate representation of this age group were

invited to participate in the study. Each participating centre was visited and semi-formal

interviews were then conducted with the directors and educators in order to obtain pertinent

information about training and experience in the child care field, as well as information

about the particular school-age program. During that same visit a global quality assessment

of the environment was conducted using the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale

(SACERS) (Harms et al., 1996). A letter of information was distributed to the parents of

the older children (i.e., 8-to-12-year-olds) who were attending the centre. They were asked

to complete the Background Information Questionnaire (BIQ). Upon receiving the consent

forms and demographic questionnaires from the majority of the parents from the respective

centres, arrangements were made with the directors of each centre to schedule a convenient

43

time and date to return to the centre for the children to complete two questionnaires individually in a group setting with the guidance of the researcher.

On the day that the questionnaires were administered, the researcher gathered the children and escorted the group of participants to a designated room. Once the children were all seated, the researcher informed the children that they were required to complete two questionnaires concerning their friendships and the types of activities that they did in their after-school program (see appended questionnaires). The children were also told that this activity would take approximately 30 minutes. The researcher reminded the children that all of the information they provided would remain strictly confidential and that they were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue their participation in the study at anytime. The researcher then told the children that the activity would be completed individually, but in a group setting with the guidance of the researcher and she also emphasized the importance that the children did not consult with one another during the course of the study. Pencils and envelopes were given to all of the children and each child was given the questionnaires that corresponded to his/her identification number that had been assigned to him/her on the consent form. The researcher then proceeded to read the instructions to the children. They were informed that the questionnaire would be read to them out loud during the course of the activity. The children were also instructed to raise their hands whenever they had a question they would like answered by the researcher. This procedure was used to ensure that any questions the children may have had would be addressed immediately. As well, this procedure was adopted to minimize the likelihood of the children consulting with one another about their answers.

The researcher then proceeded to read the questions from the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire (Gage, 1999). Each question was read out loud and then the children were given time to write their responses and the researcher addressed any questions the children had. Once the first questionnaire was completed, the children were instructed to place the questionnaire at the corner of their desks. They then

proceeded to complete the Friendship Qualities Scale (Bukowski et al.,1994). Once again, the researcher read each individual item to the children and allowed enough time for them to respond to the questions or ask pertinent questions about the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire was completed the children were asked to place both questionnaires in the envelope that was distributed to them. The researcher then collected all of the envelopes and the children were told that they could keep the pencils as a souvenir. Finally, the children were all thanked for their time and participation in the activity and then they were debriefed as to the purpose of the study. Every child was given a thank-you gift package that included stickers, markers, and pencils. The researcher then escorted all of the children as a group back to their classroom and she thanked the educator for permitting her to conduct the activity with the children. Thank-you cards were also given to the directors and educators from each of the centres to show appreciation for their time and cooperation. Summary reports of the results were sent to the directors, educators, and parents who expressed an interest in receiving copies of the findings.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in six sections. The first section describes data preparation. The second section presents the descriptive data for the characteristics of the centres, directors, educators, and families participating in the study. The third section addresses the relationship between quality of care, children's satisfaction with the programs, and their willingness to continue attending these programs. Section four focuses on the main issue of this study, that being the relationship between the importance of the presence of friendships in school-age care and children's satisfaction and continued willingness to return to these programs. The fifth section examines elements of quality of care that were considered to be important to older children (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities) in relation to the children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to continue attending school-age programs. Finally, the last

45

section examines the quality of best friendships that exist in school-age care programs in comparison to those best friendships that exist outside of this social context.

Data Preparation

To be sure that the data were accurately inputted into the computer, the data were entered twice and then compared in order to identify any discrepancies between the two data sets. All discrepancies were corrected after thoroughly re-examining the raw data. The data were then screened to be sure that there were no outliers that would alter the analyses.

After reviewing the data for the Children's Views of School-Age Care subscale of the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire, it was decided that four items should be excluded from the scale. Items 5 and 6, which address the issue of supervision, were excluded because of the uncertainty of whether *constant* supervision should be considered a good practice with the older children. In addition, a ceiling effect was apparent, as all children reported that they were constantly supervised. Items 3 ("educator plans activities") and 9 ("importance of having a special room") were also excluded, as these items compromised the internal consistency of the scale. The chronbach alpha was .76 when all of the items were included; the internal consistency improved to .85 when these four items (i.e., 3, 5, 6, & 9) were removed from the scale.

Sample Demographics

Centre characteristics. Five centres located on the West Island of Montreal were included in the study. The characteristics of the centres are presented in Table 1. The average centre size was 57 children on a full-time basis and 7 children on a part-time basis. The mean group size for the older children in these five centres was 26 children. The overall mean SACERS scores and subscale mean scores for each centre are presented in Table 2. The mean quality rating obtained using the SACERS was 3.6, which represents a rating of just above "minimal" care. It should be noted that this rating is somewhat lower than that found in other studies, for instance the National School-Age Care study conducted in 1998 (Jacobs, Baillargeon, Mill, Beaumont, Gage, & Roy, 1999), revealed that the mean overall

46

quality score was 4.4 for all of Canada, while the mean global quality score was 4.0 for Quebec.

Director characteristics. Director characteristics including age, years of experience, years working in current centre, number of hours worked per week, and salary bracket per year are presented in Table 3. All five directors were females who were either married or living in a common law arrangement. The mean age of the directors was 45.7 years. An examination of the directors' educational background revealed that four of the directors had partially completed or obtained an undergraduate degree. Four of the directors had relevant training in the child care field (e.g., early childhood education, special education, teaching, psychology) and one had training that was not specific to the child care field (e.g., business). On average, the directors had 7.6 years of experience working as a director, and had been working at their current centre for an average of 6.6 years.

Educator characteristics. Four females and two male educators participated in the study. Information regarding each educator's age, gender, years working in current position, years in child care field, number of hours worked per week, and hourly salary are presented in Table 4. The mean age of the educators was 35.6 years. An examination of the educators' educational background revealed that four of the educators had partially completed or obtained their undergraduate degree. Only one of the educators had training that was relevant to the child care field (e.g., child studies) and the remaining five educators' training varied (i.e., science, business administration, social work, and a high school diploma). Four of the educators were in charge of caring for a group of children; the other two educators held an assistant educator's position. They had been working in their current position for an average of 3.0 years and in the child care field for an average of 9.4 years. Educators worked an average of 17.5 hours per week at their centres. When asked if they planned to stay in the school-age care field, four of the educators said that they did. The other two educators planned to go into the teaching field.

Family characteristics. Eighty-three percent of the parents reported being married or living in common law. Ninety-three percent were dual income families. The frequencies for parents' education and occupations are presented in Table 5. In terms of the parents' weekly working schedules, it was found that, on average, mothers worked 35.0 hours per week (SD=10.3) and fathers worked 39.2 hours per week (SD=7.2). The Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status scores for the parents ranged between 27.0 to 64.5 points (M=51.1, SD=8.3). According to Hollingshead (1975), a score of 27.0 points represents machine operators, and semi-skilled workers; a score of 64.5 reflects people working in major businesses or as professionals. The mean score for this sample of families fell within the social strata of medium business people, minor professionals, and technical workers.

Satisfaction and Quality of Care

Most parents (77%) reported that they believed their children were satisfied with their school-age care program. Similarly, 85% of parents reported that they were also very satisfied with the program, with 87% indicating that their children would be returning to the program the following year. Of those who reported their children would not be returning, the primary reason given was because the children were starting high school.

When children were asked if they wanted to return to the program next year, 60.4% stated that they would not want to return to the program, while 26.4% reported they would be willing to return (13.2% were undecided). This high drop-out rate is consistent with those found in Maheux's study (1998).

An analysis of the qualitative responses revealed that 38% of children indicated that they were willing to return to the program the following year because the program was accommodating their needs to be with their friends (e.g., "I get to be with my friends"; "I like being with my friends"); 20% of children mentioned other positive aspects about the quality of the program as a reason for wanting to return (e.g., "I get to do my homework";"It's really, really fun"); 29% of children attributed their desire to drop-out of

48

Table 1

Centre Size, Group Size, and Number of Participating Children for Each Centre

Centres	Centre Size F/T	Centre Size P/T	Group Size Ages 8-12	Ratios (Adult to child)	Participating Children Males	Participating Children Females
1	65	10	25	1:25	8	4
2	53	7	17	1:17	2	3
3	65	4	30	2:30	5	9
4	40	4	19	1:19	7	3
5	64	12	40	2:40	6	7

Table 2

Overall SACERS Ratings and Subscale SACERS Ratings for Each Centre

Centres	Overall score	Interactions	Program Structure	Space/ Furnishings	Health/ Safety	Activities	Staff Dev.
1	3.2	2.9	3.3	4.0	2.8	3.4	1.0
2	3.6	5.3	4.8	4.5	2.6	1.0	3.0
3	3.0	4.0	4.0	2.7	2.0	3.0	2.7
4	3.5	4.4	3.8	4.2	3.4	2.3	1.7
5	4.7	6.4	5.0	5.1	3.5	3.3	4.0

Table 3

Director Characteristics

Director	Age	Yrs of Experience	Yrs. in current centre	# Hours worked/ (Per week)	Salary Bracket (per year)
1	>50	9.5	3	30.0	$14,000-19,999
2	40	3.0	3	27.0	$14,000-19,999
3	---	12.0	12	40.0	$26,000-31,999
4	47	9.0	9	32.5	$20,000-25,999
5	46	6.0	6	40.0	$26,000-31,999

Note. Dash indicates data was not obtained.

Table 4

Educator Characteristics

Educators	Gender	Age	Years in current position	Years in child care	# Hrs worked	Hourly Salary
1	female	41	2.0	2.0	20	$13.48
2	male	24	0.3	7.0	10	$14.00
3	female	46	4.5	4.5	25	$14.01
4	male	43	4.0	29.0	10	$14.01
5	female	---	4.5	7.5	20	$14.01
6	female	24	2.0	6.0	20	$14.01

Note. Dash indicates data was not obtained.

Table 5

Frequency Table of Family Demographics

Variable	Level	f	%
Mother's Education	High School	11	21.2
	CEGEP	17	32.7
	Undergraduate University	17	32.7
	Graduate University	7	13.5
Father's Education	High School	13	25.5
	CEGEP	9	17.6
	Undergraduate University	17	33.3
	Graduate University	12	23.5
Mother's Occupation	Semiskilled workers	2	3.8
	Skilled workers	3	5.8
	Clerical, sales worker	5	9.6
	Semiprofessionals	6	11.5
	Minor professionals	19	36.5
	Administrators, Lesser professionals	8	15.4
	Higher executives, Major professionals	9	17.3
Father's Occupation	Semiskilled workers	3	5.8
	Skilled workers	4	7.7
	Semiprofessionals	7	13.5
	Minor professionals	19	36.5
	Administrators, Lesser professionals	6	11.5
	Higher executives, Major professionals	12	23.1

the program as being the result of the school-age program not meeting their needs to be with their friends (e.g., "I rather be with my closest friends and best friends than be here", "I don't get to be with my friends!!"); 45% of children stated something negative with reference to the quality of the program (e.g., "Too many rules!"; "We don't get enough freedom and it's babyish"; "I would rather be somewhere else") as a reason for not wanting to return.

As expected, as children's satisfaction with the program increased, so did their desire to return to the program, $r = .50, p = .0001$. To better understand what factors are related to children's satisfaction with these programs, an exploration was conducted to determine whether quality of care, as measured by the SACERS, was related to older children's levels of satisfaction. On the basis of Maheux's (1998) counter-intuitive finding that as quality increased, so did the drop-out rates, it was hypothesized that higher quality programs would be associated with less satisfied children. Correlations were performed between children's satisfaction scores using the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire and overall quality ratings as assessed by the SACERS. As predicted, older children's satisfaction decreased as the quality of the programs increased, $r = -.44$, $p = .001$. A negative though non-significant correlation was found between quality of care and children's desire to drop-out, $p > .05$.

In summary, it seems that the majority of these older children want to drop-out of these programs, as has often been reported in other studies (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Maheux, 1998; Proulx, 1990). As trained observers' scores of quality corresponded negatively to children's satisfaction levels with school-age care, and did not correspond to the children's willingness to return to these programs, these findings further reinforced the need to explore the role that friendships play in influencing older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to continue attending school-age care.

Role Friendships Play in Children's Satisfaction and Willingness to Return

The frequencies for children who reported having best friend(s) and/or good friend(s) in their school-age care programs are presented in Appendix H. Bivariate correlations revealed that the presence of friends did not correlate with the older children's satisfaction with the programs ($p > .05$), whether it be the number of friends, presence of at least one best friend or good friend, total number of best friends, or total number of good friends.

Though these findings were not consistent with expectations, it was found that as the number of friends present in the centre increased, the children's stated desire to return to the program also increased, $r = .31$, $p = .02$. A closer examination of this finding revealed that willingness to return was related to the presence of more *best* friends in the programs, $r = .36$, $p = .008$ and not by the presence of *good* friends, $r = .11$, $p = .41$.

Furthermore, children with more friends in the program were more likely to report having a good time with their friends in their school-age care program, $r = .28$, $p = .05$. The more children reported having a good time with their friends in the program, the more likely they were to want to continue attending the program the following year, $r = .45$, $p = .001$.

In summary, the presence of an increased number of *best* friends in the programs was significantly related to a greater willingness to return to the program the following year, though the mere presence of friends does not have an impact on older children's overall satisfaction with these programs. Thus, it was expected that examining the program's accommodation of children's friendship needs would show that programs that were more accommodating of friendships would be related to higher levels of children's satisfaction and a greater willingness to return to the programs the following year.

Children's perceptions regarding friendship opportunities in school-age programs. It was hypothesized that children who perceived their program to be more accommodating of their friendships by providing the necessary social opportunities would be more satisfied with the program than children attending a program that did not accommodate children's

friendship needs. Subscale scores of Children's Views of School-Age Care that reflected the extent to which the program accommodated friendship needs were correlated with the single item that asked "Do you like your after-school program?". Children's overall satisfaction with the program increased as their satisfaction with the program's ability to accommodate friendships increased, $r = .40$, $p = .002$. In addition, as perceived satisfaction with the program's ability to accommodate friendship needs increased, so did the children's reported desire to return to these programs, $r = .30$, $p = .03$. In summary, children are more satisfied with their program and want to return to their program when the program accommodates their friendship needs.

According to the principles of developmentally appropriate practices, it is advisable for school-age care programs to ensure that older children have more age-appropriate supervision practices, more free choice, and opportunities to exercise their leadership skills (Roman,1998). Further analyses were conducted to determine whether these aspects of the program may also lead to higher levels of satisfaction and a greater willingness to return the following year.

Relationship between Particular Dimensions of Quality and Children's Satisfaction and Willingness to Return

Table 6 presents correlations between scales reflecting free choice, leadership, and supervision dimensions of quality with the children's overall satisfaction, willingness to return, and SACERS scores. A significant relationship was found between the amount of free choice children were given in their programs, their overall satisfaction with their programs, and their willingness to return. Interestingly, a significant negative correlation between free choice and SACERS scores emerged. A similar negative correlation was observed between leadership opportunities subscale scores and the SACERS scores. No other significant correlations were present.

Another goal of this study was to examine whether the school-age context would enhance the quality of children's best friendships. A presentation of these findings follows.

Table 6

Correlations Between Subscales for Free Choice, Leadership, and Supervision with

Children's Overall Satisfaction, Willingness to Return, and SACERS scores

	Free Choice	Leadership	Supervision
Overall satisfaction with program	.39*	.19	.09
Willingness to return	.36*	.23	.04
SACERS score	-.47**	-.38*	.10

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .0001$

Quality of Middle Childhood Friendships

To determine whether the quality of middle childhood friendships, as measured by the Friendship Qualities Scale (Bukowski et al., 1994), varies as a function of whether or not a child's best friend was also attending the school-age care program, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine if a group difference existed. It was hypothesized that having at least one best friend in the school-age care program would produce a higher quality best friendship compared to a best friendship that existed outside the context of the school-age care program. It was also predicted that the quality of the best friendship would be higher if the program accommodated children's friendship needs. The findings indicated that having a best friend in the school-age program did not increase the quality of the best friendship, even after covarying out the quality of the program, accommodation of friendship needs, time spent with one's best friend in another context, as well as the duration of the best friendship, $p > .05$.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to determine which factors lead to older children's increased levels of satisfaction and greater willingness to return to these programs. A study by Maheux (1998) found that children who were willing to return to the programs the following year were more satisfied than those who did not want to return. It was also shown, contrary to what was expected, that higher quality programs were associated with higher drop-out rates. Therefore, for the present study it was hypothesized that quality would not have a positive relationship with children's satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs and an emphasis was placed on middle childhood friendships being the main factor that would influence children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs. Examinations were conducted to investigate various issues of friendships: number of friends present in these programs, types of friendships (i.e., best and good friendships), and older children's perceptions of whether or not their programs accommodated their friendship needs. On the basis of Maheux's

58

(1998) findings, it was predicted that the presence of friends in school-age programs would make the programs more attractive to children in this age group and, in turn, would increase their willingness to re-enrol in school-age care.

An investigation was also conducted to determine whether particular quality dimensions (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, and leadership opportunities), which have been suggested by various researchers (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Doherty, 1991; Jacobs et al., 1998; Kuiken, 1985; Musson & Embury, 1997; Ryan & Anderson, 1991; The Ten Plus Committee, 1989; Yeates et al., 1991; Young, 1994) to be important for this age group, were related to older children's satisfaction and willingness to continue attending these programs. Another goal of this study was to examine whether the presence of best friendships in the school-age care program influenced the quality of the friendships.

In the remaining section of this discussion, principal findings of the current investigation will be elaborated. The limitations of the present study will also be discussed. Following this, implications will be given for professionals working in this child care field, as well as parents who have school-age children in this age group. Finally, some recommendations regarding directions for future research will be highlighted.

Interpretations of Principal Findings

Overall, the findings from this study revealed that quality, as defined by experts, (Harms et al., 1996-SACERS) does not increase older children's satisfaction with school-age care, as it was shown that the higher the quality of the program, the less satisfied the older children were with the program. These findings may be attributed to the developmental characteristics that set this age group apart from the younger age groups. As indicated in the literature (Doherty, 1991; Park, 1993; Yeates et al., 1991), children who are in this age group become more independent and expressive regarding their interests and needs than those in the younger school-age group. In addition, higher quality programs may represent increments in quality ratings for aspects of quality that are appropriate for

younger children, such as supervision practices that involve educators watching closely over the children. These are the very factors that older children dislike and that cause them to be dissatisfied with the programs.

Another explanation for these findings may be that the higher quality ratings reflect more interactions occurring between the children and the educators, especially seeing that the centres that participated in the present study performed well on the Interactions subscale ($\underline{M}$ = 4.6). Higher scores on the Interactions subscale of the SACERS represent more frequent interactions between children and educators rather than interactions occurring between peers (see Appendix F). As friendship interactions seem to be very important to older children, it is most likely that the interactions that occurred between educators and children reduced the opportunities that children had to be with their friends in the school-age care context. These are important differences that set adult-child relationships apart from children's peer relationships. It has been shown that the adult figure plays a dominant role in these adult-child interactions, thereby creating a vertical relationship. However, peer relationships involve egalitarian social exchanges in which each party is viewed as an equal partner in the friendship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Hartup, 1989; Hartup, 1992; Hartup & Moore, 1990). Thus, when educators assume the dominant role in these interactions they may be more directing and controlling of the children's interactions. This, in turn, may significantly decrease the number and quality of interactions that children have with their peers.

In this study, the children had a legitimate reason to be dissatisfied with these programs, as the mean quality rating ($\underline{M}$ = 3.6) was extremely low for this sample of centres. In fact, it was slightly lower than the mean quality rating reported in Maheux's (1998) study ($\underline{M}$ = 3.8, with a range of 2.8 to 5.6). Also, the present study did not represent a wide variation in quality, as the quality ranged from a quality score of 3.0 to a score of 4.7. This indicates that the mere presence of a friend(s) does not alter older children's satisfaction with these school-age programs, but it is related to their willingness to return.

This is remarkable to see, as it illustrates the point that older children viewed the programs the way trained observers did. Thus, even though the children may have had friends present in the programs they were still not impressed with the quality of the programs, which is congruent with the "portraits of quality" that trained observers reported for the centres that participated in this study. In fact, the Activities subscale obtained a disappointingly low mean quality rating of 2.58, which demonstrates that the programs provided activities that were below "minimal" standards. Under these circumstances, the friendships that existed in these programs may have compensated for the low levels of quality of care.

The presence of friends in school-age care programs is important, although it has been demonstrated in the current study that the mere presence of friends alone is not related to children's satisfaction with these programs. This study attempted to demonstrate the necessity for these programs to recognize the importance of friendships and, in turn, structure the program in a manner that accommodates children's friendship needs. The current investigation revealed that when children perceived their school-age care program to accommodate their friendship needs by providing opportunities for friendship formation and maintenance, they were more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with these programs and were also more willing to return to these programs the following year.

There are many ways that school-age care programs can accommodate friendships needs. First of all, the manner in which the activities are organized as part of the daily curriculum will have an effect on children's opportunities to participate in interactive activities with their peers (Epstein, 1989; Jacobs et al., 1995). Thus, to accommodate children's friendship needs the school-age care program must provide children with ample time to interact with their friends by allotting a specific period of time each day for free choice activities, as well as organizing small and large group activities that are of interest to the children. For instance, team sports would be an ideal activity, as team sports encourage a group of peers to cooperate with one another in reaching a mutual goal, such as winning a particular game (Charlesworth & LaFreniere, 1983; Hartup, 1982, Hartup, 1987). It is also

61

important to structure the physical environment in a manner that promotes and supports friendship opportunities (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). This can be accomplished by ensuring that there is a variety of materials and equipment always accessible to the children to encourage dyadic or group interactions. Making sure that the materials and equipment are easily accessible to children will allow them to choose the types of activities they would like to engage in with their peers. As friends usually have similar preferences in activities this type of provision would promote and support friendship opportunities to occur in the school-age care context (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Gottman, 1983).

Finally, it is also important that the educators step aside and let the children take charge of the development of their own activities, as children in middle childhood prefer to rely on their friends for guidance and support than on adults (Fiering & Lewis, 1989). Therefore, it is not surprising that under these circumstances these children would be more willing to return to the program the following year. It may be concluded that these types of programs may be an ideal social context for children to encounter and share social experiences with peers who have similar qualities and interests as they do. Thus, overall these findings seem to support the premise that if school-age care programs begin to place a higher value on friendships, older children will be happier in the long-term and will be more willing to stay in the programs in order to be with their friends.

It is important to note that having *more* friends present in these school-age care programs was associated with an increased willingness to return to the program the following year. One may be confused as to why older children may be more willing to return to the program, even though their levels of overall satisfaction are unrelated to the presence of more friends. This finding may be attributed to the examination of whether or not the program accommodates children's friendship needs, as it seems that the programs need to place a high value on friendships by providing plenty of friendship opportunities. Another reason may be that having more friends who attend these programs provides children with a larger group of peers from which they can select playmates or rely on when

they need help or support (Allen, 1995; Sheiman & Slonim, 1988). This may, in turn, make the children feel like they belong to a peer group (Allen, 1995). Consequently, the children's attitudes towards these school-age care programs may not necessarily change dramatically as a result of having friends present in these programs, but having the opportunity to spend time with friends in this type of a social context seems to be important enough to draw these children back to the programs. Thus, once again it seems evident that the friendships may be compensating for the quality of the programs by making children sufficiently content as a result of having opportunities to spend time with their friends in these programs. In fact, the children may have even communicated to their friends that they would be willing to return to the program the following year if their friends also decided to do so.

A closer examination of the latter finding indicated that it was the presence of *more best* friends in these programs that was related to an increased willingness to return to the programs the following year. This finding may be explained by the fact that children would rather spend valuable time with their closest friends and share intimate moments and secrets with one another than with peers who are considered to be just good friends. These findings may also be attributed to the mean age of the children who participated in this study ($M = 9.8$), as children around nine years of age are often possessive regarding their friendships, and they view their friendships as being exclusive relationships. Whereas, children who are closer to twelve years of age realize that they need to rely on many types of friends to obtain support (Hartup, 1982). Perhaps if the mean age of the sample was slightly higher the results may have found that the presence of good friends in these programs would have also played a significant role in increasing children's willingness to return to these programs the following year.

As school-age children choose to spend the majority of their free time with their friends rather than with adults (Howes, 1983; Medrich et al., 1982), it is essential for a quality assessment tool, such as the SACERS to evaluate the friendship opportunities that

are provided in these programs. However, a review of the SACERS revealed that this global assessment tool does not adequately assess friendship opportunities provided in school-age care programs. In fact, there is only one item in the entire SACERS that specifically addresses peer interactions. Thus, on the basis of the present findings it is advised that revisions be made to the SACERS to incorporate the importance of friendships into this global assessment of quality. This would involve the addition of items that address peer interactions, friendship opportunities, as well as how the program supports the formation and maintenance of friendships.

The findings from the present study have supported the results that were also found in Maheux's (1998) study regarding the issue of the SACERS not adequately measuring aspects of quality that are considered to be important for older children. It was inferred by Maheux (1998) that this assessment tool may be more appropriate for evaluating aspects of quality that are important for younger school-age children. It was the intention of the present study to conduct preliminary examinations to demonstrate that considering other aspects of quality that are more reflective of dimensions of quality for older children may be related to increased levels of satisfaction and a greater willingness to return to the programs.

Three particular dimensions of quality (i.e., intermittent supervision, free choice in programming, leadership opportunities), believed to be important for children in this age group, were examined in relation to older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these school-age care programs. It was anticipated that an examination of these three dimensions of quality may demonstrate the need to revise the SACERS to better reflect age-appropriateness in the quality of care for older children.

As it currently stands, it seems that the older children are dissatisfied with their school-age care programs. According to various researchers (Betsalel-Presser et al., 1995; Cloutier, 1990; Coleman et al.,1993) this situation may be attributed to the fact that school-age programs are all too often designed around the needs and interests of the younger children, who tend to represent the largest population in these programs. This situation may

very well be true for the population that was represented in this study, as 50% of the centres used mixed-age groupings, whereby older children and younger children were placed in the same group. Mixed-age groupings may make the older children feel deprived of their needs and interests because the programs are most likely geared towards caring for the younger children. If the centres continually strive to develop programming for their largest population, then interests of the older children will be neglected. If older children drop out and the numbers decrease, there is usually less of an incentive to plan for the limited number of older children attending these programs.

Examining children's satisfaction with the leadership opportunities in the programs revealed a dissatisfaction with the leadership opportunities. Therefore, it may be speculated that the programs failed to accommodate the children's need to assume leadership roles, even though school-age care programs with a full age range of children were provided with a perfect opportunity for older children to practice their leadership skills with the younger school-age children (Albrecht & Plantz, 1991; Alexander, 1986; Kuiken, 1985).

Similarly, an examination of aspects of free choice in these programs revealed that as the quality of the programs increased, children were less satisfied with the free choice opportunities that were provided in these programs. Although, it is important to highlight once again that this sample represents little variation in quality and that the mean quality rating was quite low for this sample. This may be a reason for the negative relationship that emerged between SACERS scores and aspects of free choice. It is very likely that if the programs were higher in quality and if they attempted to provide greater free choice opportunities for older children, the children might have been more satisfied with this quality aspect of the program. However, when assessing the free choice dimension of quality in relation to satisfaction and willingness to return to the program using the Children's Views of School-Age Care subscale, significant relations emerged indicating that children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs increased when older children perceived the programs to be providing more free choice opportunities. As

mentioned earlier in this discussion, the SACERS may not adequately reflect aspects of quality that are considered to be important to older children. Therefore, it is not surprising that a measure, such as the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire (Gage, 1999), which was designed with this age group's quality needs in mind, was found to better reflect older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to these programs than the SACERS. Therefore, it is suggested that revisions be made to the SACERS to incorporate the dimensions of quality that are considered to be important for children in this age group.

Another goal of this thesis was to examine whether or not the quality of older children's best friendships would be enhanced as a result of having a best friend in close proximity on a daily basis, such as in a school-age care program. However, the findings were not consistent with expectations, as the quality of the older children's best friendships in school-age care programs were not significantly different than the quality of those best friendships that existed outside of these programs. As mentioned earlier in this discussion a possible reason for these findings may that the programs do not give the children enough private time to be with their best friends, given that they are constantly being supervised. This may further support the notion that for older children intermittent supervision may have a facilitating effect on friendship formation and maintenance.

Another possible explanation for these non-significant findings may be that the best friendships that existed in these programs may not have been site-specific friendships seeing that the children attended the same school. Therefore, it was thought that the children may have been interacting with their friends in other contexts besides the school-age care program. However, further examinations revealed that covarying out the time children spent with their best friends outside of the school-age program, the length of the friendships, the extent to which the programs accommodated children's friendship needs, as well as the quality of the program did not change the findings. Thus, it may be concluded that a more

thorough examination needs to be conducted to determine what factors serve to enhance the quality of children's best friendships.

Limitations

The present investigation has six main limitations. First of all, it is important to highlight the fact that the sample size was fairly small for this exploratory investigation. Secondly, the sample was fairly homogenous as it consisted of predominantly suburban English school-based school-age care programs. The third limitation is the fact that there was not a wide variation in the quality of the centres in this sample. The fourth limitation is the appropriateness of using the SACERS to assess quality with respect to this older age group. The fifth limitation is the uncertainty of the reliability of the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire that was developed for the purpose of this study. Finally, in hindsight it was thought that more items should have been included in the Satisfaction Questionnaire to assess the dimensions of quality that address supervision and leadership.

Although, the sample size for the children was quite high, it would have been a more representative sample if the children had been randomly selected from a larger number of different centres. It would have been statistically more sound to have had a larger number of centres so that the centre characteristics were not repeated for each of the subjects who attended the same centre (e.g., SACERS scores). By following this procedure, our sample would have been more likely to represent a wide spectrum in terms of the quality of the centres. Thus, one must be cautious when drawing conclusions from the current study, for these findings cannot be generalized. However, even though the sample size for the centres in the present study was quite small, it still supported Maheux's (1998) findings. Future studies should try to replicate this study by recruiting more centres to verify the extent to which the current study is representative of the population.

Secondly, the sample was quite homogenous, as it consisted of suburban English school-based programs in a West Island of Montreal. Thus, the results may only apply to

67

programs that are located in this region. However, despite the fact that the sample for this study was drawn from a suburb, which is predominantly English speaking, and Maheux's (1998) sample was recruited from the South Shore of Montreal that is predominantly French speaking, the results are similar in terms of quality of care and older children's level of satisfaction with these programs. The findings are similar even though the composition of the samples are somewhat different, which suggests that older children are expressing similar sentiments despite slight differences in their demographic backgrounds.

The third limitation was that the sample of school-age care programs that participated in this study did not represent a wide range in quality of care. In fact, the quality was extremely low for this sample, as none of the subscales obtained a mean quality rating higher than 4.62 (Interactions subscale), which represents less than a "good level of quality care". Future studies should control for the quality of centres to make sure that the programs represent a wide range of quality that truly represents the population.

Fourthly, the appropriateness of the SACERS for assessing the quality of care for older children should be considered. Maheux (1998) questioned the developmental-appropriateness of this measure for the care of older children and the same is true for this study. Perhaps other options should be added to the existing subscales to address the quality of care needs and interests of older school-age children as differentiated from those of younger school-age children. Thus, using a revised SACERS that focuses on the older children's quality needs may produce findings that are different from the current results regarding quality of care for older children and their satisfaction with these child care arrangements.

Another limitation concerned the reliability of the Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire as it was developed specifically for the purpose of this study. The design of the questionnaire was significantly altered from the Satisfaction Questionnaire that was used in Maheux's (1998) study and other material was added on the basis of criteria known to be important to the satisfaction of older children. Even though the

questionnaires were pilot-tested on children who did not participate in the present study, and were designed to be user-friendly and comprehensible, especially for children in this age group, the reliability of this measure is still questionable because only the internal consistency of the Children's Views of School-Age Care subscale was tested and found to be .85. Before this measure can be deemed to be reliable and valid, tests of construct and content validity would have to be conducted. Thus, the results that were drawn from this research study may have been affected in the process. Although, attempts were made to overcome the limitations that were highlighted in Maheux's (1998) study, it is still recommended that future research verify the reliability of this measure.

Finally, in hindsight, it was thought that additional items should have been included in the Satisfaction Questionnaire in a separate subscale to specifically assess the particular dimensions of quality that are believed to be important for older children. The power of these findings might have been increased by including more items for each of the dimensions of quality, especially for the items that address supervision and leadership, as there were fewer of these items on the scale. It is recommended that this subscale be devised so that future studies can test its content validity, as well as its relationship to older children's satisfaction and willingness to return to the programs the following year.

Implications For Education

The findings from the present study have shown that middle childhood friendships are considered to be an incentive to keep older children interested in attending school-age programs. Thus, it is recommended that school-age programs strive to provide many opportunities for children to socialize and interact with their friends in this type of a social setting. In spite of the fact that educators do not have control over whether or not children's friends are attending these programs, they can still exercise some control by making changes to the program's structure to accommodate the children's needs to be with their friends. This can be accomplished by planning and structuring activities that promote and support the establishment and maintenance of friendships, such as small group activities or

larger group activities that encourage group participation and camaraderie (e.g., team sports). In addition, providing children with the freedom to choose which peers and what activities they would like to participate in could also show children that the programs are attempting to fulfill their needs and desires to spend time with their friends. Ideally, these efforts may result in the formation of new friendships and the enhancement of the quality of friendships that already exist in these programs.

As illustrated in this study, the quality of school-age programs seems to be an important issue that needs to be significantly improved. Professionals working in school-age programs need to take initiatives to make some positive changes to improve the overall quality of their programs. They can also consult with various professional resources to get additional assistance in determining which areas they need to improve the most and then they can develop a plan of action to make sure that the changes are made. In addition, to these resources they can attend different types of workshops to learn new strategies and techniques that can help them make positive changes to the program. They can also collaborate with other school-age programs to see how they function and learn what strategies they found effective in overcoming some of their problems. They should also consult with the older children to determine what they would like to see changed in their programs.

Considering the older children's interests would most likely increase children's overall satisfaction and willingness to return to the program the following year. For example, seeing that half of the centres in the current study consisted of mixed-age groupings, it would be ideal if educators could allow older children to assume a leadership role with their younger school-age mates in these types of group arrangements. Perhaps a useful approach would be to pair older children with younger children so that they can model appropriate behaviours and be tutors for the younger children. In addition, the older children could also be separated into different groups and designate team captains to be in charge of each of the respective groups. This may, in turn, make the older children feel

70

important and it may diminish the negativity that is often expressed by older children when they are placed in the same group as their younger peers.

Free choice is also an important quality dimension that keeps older children more content overall and, in turn, interested in attending these programs. It is suggested that educators consult with older children on a regular basis to get their in put into the types of activities and materials that they would like to be doing in these programs. Taking older children's suggestions into consideration will make them feel like they are having some say in the functioning of the programs.

Efforts should also be made to establish a network with the school and the community, so that the programs will have access to various facilities and resources and have their support for the functioning of their program. Finally, the directors and educators should consult with parents regarding the functioning of the program and all three parties should collaborate with one another to make sure that the children are receiving the best quality of care.

Parents should also take an active interest in learning more about the quality of care that their children are receiving. This may be accomplished by first learning what constitutes good quality care and then they can determine which areas need to be changed in their children's school-age program. Parents can become advocates for making positive changes to these programs. They can also consult with other parents to get their impressions of the quality of care that they believe their children are receiving and as a group they may request that certain changes be made to the centre's functioning to be sure that the quality standards are significantly improved. Parents may feel so overwhelmed with their work schedules that they cannot even consider becoming involved in such a process; however, they must remember that it is in the best interests of their children. It is important that parents show their support and interest in the functioning of the program by helping in any way they can.

It is also important that parents respect and try to take into consideration their children's desire to be with their friends by making efforts to consult with their children about the types of programs that their friends are attending (Bradbard et al., 1994; Maheux, 1998). If parents satisfy their children's wishes to be in a school-age program with their friends, the parents' stress levels will most likely be reduced in the long-term, as they will not have to worry about their children wanting to drop-out of the programs in the near future. In fact, the best situation would be if children could attend a program with as many of their friends as they could seeing that children express a greater interest in wanting to return to these programs when they have more than just one friend attending these programs.

Directions for Future Research

The primary goal of this study was to investigate which factors increased older school-age children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to the programs the following year. While some interesting findings were discovered, it would be important to investigate these findings further. As the variation in overall quality scores was significantly low for this sample of centres, it is suggested that future studies examine this issue with a sample of centres that represents a wide range of quality to determine if the present findings are representative of higher quality programs. Efforts should also be made to recruit centres from different regions to represent a more heterogeneous sample.

It is also recommended that future studies examine the differences between younger and older children's satisfaction with these programs in relation to the SACERS to determine if this quality assessment measure is indeed better suited for the younger children's needs and interests.

A more thorough examination of the particular dimensions of quality should also be studied in relation to older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return. Interviews with older children could also be conducted to determine which aspects of quality older children deem as being important to them. A comparative study could then be

72

undertaken to examine these dimensions of quality in relation to older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to the programs, as well as with the SACERS.

As accommodating friendship needs seems to be an important criteria for increasing older children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return, it is advised that future studies should attempt to create a peer interaction subscale that addresses friendship needs in a similar manner as the SACERS. Examinations of children's levels of satisfaction and willingness to return to school-age programs could then be assessed in relation to the SACERS with the addition of this peer interaction (i.e., friendship) subscale.

Another direction for future research would be to conduct observations to record the social dynamics that transpire in these programs between educators and children, as well as between peers. This may provide some further insight into the social opportunities that children are given in these types of settings.

REFERENCES

Aboud, F. E., & Mendelson, M. J. (1996). In W. M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb, & W. W. Hartup (Eds.), The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence. (pp. 87-112). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Albrecht, K. M., & Plantz, M. C. (1991). Developmentally appropriate school-age child care programs. Alexandria, VA: American Home Economics Association.

Albrecht, K. M., & Plantz, M. C. (1993). Developmentally appropriate practice in school-age care programs. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Alexander, N. (1986). School-age child care: Concerns and challenges. Young Children, 42 (1), 3-12.

Allen, P. (1995). Working with parents: Do children need friends? Day Care & Early Education, 22 (3), 43-44.

Anderson, C., Nagle, R. J., Roberts, W. A., & Smith, J. W. (1981). Attachment substitute caregivers as a function of centre quality and caregiver involvement. Child Development, 52, 53-61.

ARA Consulting Group (1990). A survey of licensed school-age programs in Ontario, 1989. Prepared by the ARA Consulting Group Inc. for Child Care Branch Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Asher, S. R., & Gottman, J. M. (1981). The development of children's friendships. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Baillargeon, L., & Binette, D. (1991). Vivre en harmonie avec les 9-12. Longueuil, Qué.: EditiQue SM.

Belsky, J., & Steinberg, L. (1978). The effects of day care: A critical review. Child Development, 49, 929-949.

Berndt, T. J. (1981). Age changes and changes over time in prosocial intentions and behavior between friends. Developmental Psychology, 17, 408-416.

Berndt, T. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1989). Peer relationships in child development. Toronto: Wiley.

Betsalel-Presser, R, White, D.R., Baillargeon, M., & Jacobs, E.V. (1995). Services de garde et maternelle: Selection, qualité et continuité. Rapport soumis à la Caisse d'aide aux projets en matière de gardes des enfants. Montréal: Université de Montréal.

Bukowski, W. M., Hoza, B. (1989). Popularity and friendship: Issues in theory, measurement and outcome. In T. J. Berndt and G. W. Ladd (Eds.), Peer relationships in child development. New York: Wiley.

Bukowski, W. M., Hoza, B., & Boivin, M. (1994). Measuring friendship quality during pre- and early adolescence: The development and psychometric properties of the friendship qualities scale. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 11, 471-484.

Bukowski, W. M., Newcomb, A. F., & Hartup, W. W. (1996). The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bradbard, M. R., Brown, E. G., Endsley, R. C., & Readdick, C. A. (1994). Parents' selections of proprietary day care centres for their school-age children: A study of three southeastern university communities. Child and Youth Care Forum, 23(1), 55-72.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press.

Charlesworth, W. R., & Lafreniere, P. (1983). Dominance, friendship, and resource utilization in preschool children's groups. Ethology and Sociobiology, 4, 175-186.

Clarke-Stewart, K. A. (1987). Predicting child development from child care form and features: The Chicago Study. In D. Phillips (Ed.), Quality in child care: What does research tell us?, 21-42. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Clarke-Stewart, K. A. (1989). Infant day care: Malignant or malinged? American Psychologist, 44, 266-273.

Click, P. (1994). Caring for school-age children. Albany, NY: Delmar.

Cloutier, R. (1990). Exposé sur la problématique de la garde des enfants de 9 à 12 ans, Grandir avec toi. Les actes du 4e Congrès sur les services de garde en milieu scolaire. Longueuil: Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec.

Coleman, M., Robinson, B. E., & Rowland, B. H. (1993). A typology of families with children in self-care: Implications for school-age child care programming. Child and Youth Care Forum, 22 (1), 43-53.

Doherty, G. (1991). Quality matters in child care. Huntsville, ON: Jesmond Publishing.

Epstein, J. L. (1989). The selection of friends: Changes across the grades and in different school environments. In T. J. Berndt & G. W. Ladd (Eds.), Peer relationships in child development (pp. 158-187). Toronto: Wiley.

Fiering, C., & Lewis, M. (1989). The transition from home to school in children's social networks. Paper presented at the Symposium Social Network Transitions: Changing Structures and Functions From Childhood to Adolescence.

Fink, D. E. (1986). Latchkey children and school-age child care: A background briefing. School-Age Child Care Project, Wellsley College Center for Research on Women.

Friendly, M. (1994). Child care policy in Canada: Putting the pieces together. Don Mills, ON: Addison-Wesley Publishers Limited.

Fullum, H. (1995). Estimation régionale des besoins en services de garde régis par la loi. Gouvernement du Québec: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec.

Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children's perceptions of the personal relationships in their social networks. Developmental Psychology, 21, 1016-1024.

Garbarino, J., & Gilliam, G. (1980). Understanding abusive families. Lexington, MA: Addison Wesley.

Gottman, J. M. (1983). How children become friends. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 48. (3, Serial No. 201).

Goodnow, J. J., & Burns, A. (1988). Home and school: Child's eye view. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Hagekull, B., & Bohlin, G. (1995). Day care quality, family and child characteristics and socioemotional development. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 10, 505-526.

Hallinan, M. T. (1981). Recent advances in sociometry. In S. R. Asher & J. M. Gottman (Eds.), The Development of Children's Friendships (pp. 91-115). New York, Cambridge University Press.

Harms, T., Jacobs, E. V., & White, D. (1996). School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hartup, W. W. (1982). Peer relations. In C. Kopp & K. Krakow (Eds.), The child. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Hartup, W. W. (1983). Peer relations. In P. H. Mussen & E. M. Hetherington (Eds.), Handbook of child psychology Vol. 4, Socialization, personality, and social development (pp. 103-196). New York, Wiley.

Hartup, W. W. (1987). Social relationships and their developmental significance. American Psychologist, 44 (2), 120-126.

Hartup, W. W. (1989). Behavioral manifestations of children's friendships. In T. J. Berndt & G. W. Ladd (Eds.), Peer relationships in child development (pp. 46-70). New York: Wiley.

Hartup, W. W. (1992a). Peer relations in early and middle childhood. In Van Hasselt, V. B. & Hersen, M. (Eds.), Handbook of social development: A lifespan perspective. Perspectives in developmental psychology, 257-281. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Hartup, W. W. (1992b). Friendships and their developmental significance. In H. McGurk (Ed), Childhood social development: Contemporary Perspectives (pp. 175-205). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hartup, W. W., & Moore, S. G. (1990). Early peer relations: Developmental significance and prognostic implications. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 5, 1-17.

Hartup, W. W., & Sancilio, M. F. (1986). Children's friendships. In E. Schopler & G. B. Mesibov (Eds.), Social behavior in autism. (pp. 61-79). New York: Plenum Press.

Hollingshead, A. B. (1975). The Four Factor Index of Social Position. (Manuscript available from the Department of Sociology, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520).

Howes, C. (1983). Patterns of friendship. Child Development, 54, 1041-1053.

Howes, C., Olenick, M., & Der-Kiureghian, T. (1987). After-school child care in the elementary school: Social development and continuity and complementarity of programs. The Elementary School Journal, 88 (1), 93-103.

Howes, C., & Smith, E. W. (1995). Relations among child care quality, teacher behavior, children's play activities, emotional security, and cognitive activity in child care. Early Childhood Quarterly, 10, 381-404.

Jacobs, E., Baillargeon, M., Mill, D., Beaumont, J., Gage, H., & Roy, C. (1999, Dec). The National School-Age Child Care Project: Provincial regulations and parents' and children's satisfaction with school-age programs. Linking Research to Practice: Second Canadian Forum.

Jacobs, E., Mill, D., Gage, H., Maheux, I., & Beaumont, J. (1998). Directions for future research in Canadian school-age child care. A study commissioned by Child Care Visions and Human Resources Canada.

Jacobs, E., Selig, G., Roberts, R., Gabriel, S., & Hellstrom, L. (1995). Friendship in school-age care programs. Unpublished manuscript.

78

Jacobs, E. V., White, D.R., Baillargeon, M. & Betsalel-Presser, R. (1991). School-age child care: A preliminary report. Proceedings of the child care policy and research symposium. Occasional paper # 2, Toronto, ON: Child care research and research unit.

Jacobs, E. V., White, D.R., Baillargeon, M. & Betsalel-Presser, R. (1995). Peer relations among children attending school-age care programs. In K. Covell (Ed.), Reading in child development: A Canadian perspective, 209-234. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Jacobs, E. V., White, D.R., Baillargeon, M., & Mill, D. (1998). The National School-Age Care Project.

Kuiken, J. (1985). School-age child care. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed. 291 459).

Ladd, G. W. (1988). Friendship patterns and peer status during early and middle childhood. Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, 9, 229-238.

Ladd, G. W. (1990). Having friends, keeping friends, making friends, and being liked by peers in the classroom: Predictors of children's early school adjustment? Child Development, 61, 1081-1100.

Lalonde-Graton, M. (1992). La réalité des jeunes de 9 à 12 ans dans les services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec. Rapport de recherche commandé par le ministère de l'éducation en relation avec l'office des services de garde à l'enfance, pour l'Association des Services de garde en Milieu Scolaire. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Maheux, I. (1998). School-age care programs: An identification of factors related to nine-to-twelve-year-olds' desire to drop out and their satisfaction. Unpublished master's thesis, Concordia University, Montréal, Québec, Canada.

McCartney, K. (1984). The effect of quality of day care environments of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Developmental Psychology, 29, 611-621.

Medrich, E. A., Rosen, J., Rubin, V., & Buckley, S. (1982). The serious business of growing up. Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press.

Mills, B. C., & Cooke, E. (1983). Extended day program - a place for the latchkey child. Early Child Development and Care, 12 (2), 143-151.

Musson, S. (1994). Key issues in school-age care. Interaction, 8(1), 21-23.

Musson, S., & Embury, B. (1993). Voices: 9 to 12 year olds in school-age child care. British Colombia, Canada: The City of Vancouver, Social Planning Development.

Newcomb, A. F., & Bagwell, C. L. (1995). Children's friendship relations: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 117, 306-347.

Park, N. (1992). A comparative study of school-aged child care programs. Ontario: Ministry of Education.

Park, N. (1993). Policy research on children, youth and families school-aged child care workshop. Paper presented for the Ontario School-Age Child Care Committee.

Pence, A. R. (1989). In the shadow of mother-care: Contexts for an understanding of child day care in North America. Canadian Psychology, 30, 140-147.

Phillips, D. (Ed.) (1987). Quality in child care: What does the research tell us? Washington, DC: National Associations for the Education of Young Children.

Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (1987). Indicators of quality child care: Review of research. In D. Phillips (Ed.), Quality in Child Care: What Does The Research Tell Us? Washington, DC: National Associations for the Education of Young Children, 1-19.

Phillips, D., McCartney, K., & Scarr, S. (1987). Child care quality and children's social development. Developmental Psychology, 23 (4), 537-543.

Proulx, M. (1990). Perceptions et attentes des 9-12 ans. Unpublished master's thesis, Université de Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Price, J. M., & Ladd, G. W. (1986). Assessment of children's friendships: Implications for social competence and social adjustment. Advances in Behavioral Assessment of Children and Families, 2, 121-149.

Ray, G.E., Cohen, R., Secrist, M. E. (1995). Best friend networks of children across settings. Child Study Journal, 25 (3), 169-187.

Rizzo, T. A. (1989). Friendship development among children in school. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Roman, J. (1998). The NSACA standard for quality school-age care. Nashville, TN: School-Age Care Alliance.

Ryan, J., & Anderson, M. (1991). School-age child care study. Toronto, Ontario: The Child Care Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.

Scarr, S., Phillips, D., & McCartney, K. (1990). Facts, fantasies and the future of child care in the United States. Psychological Science, 1, 26-35.

Seligson, M., Genser, A., Gannett, E., & Gray, E. (1983). School-age care: A policy report. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 242 433).

Sheinam, D. L., & Slonim, M. (1988). Resources for middle childhood: A source book. New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc.

Stright, A. L., & French, D. C. (1988). Leadership in mixed-age children's groups. International Journal of Behavioral Development, 11, 507-515.

The Ten Plus Committee. (1989). A report on ten plus programs in Toronto. Prepared for the Toronto Area Office, Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Travis, N., & Rhodes, J. (1984). School-age care: A guide for working parents.

Vandell, D. L., & Corasaniti, M. A. (1988). The relation between third graders' after-school care and social, academic, and emotional functioning. Child Development, 59, 868-875.

Vandell, D. L., Henderson, V., & Wilson, K. S. (1988). A longitudinal study of children with day care experiences of varying quality. Child Development, 59 9(5), 1286-1292.

White, D. R., Jacobs, E. V., & Schliecker, E. (1988). Relationship of day care environmental quality and children's social behavior. Canadian Psychology, 29, Abstract # 668.

Whitebook, M., Howes, C., & Phillips, D. (1990). Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America. Final report of the National Child Care Staffing Study. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project.

Yawkey, T.D., & Johnson, J. E. (1988). Integrative processes and socialization: Early to middle childhood. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Inc.

Young, N. (1994). Caring for play: The school and child care connection. Toronto: Exploring Environments.

Yeates, M., Davidson, B., Mitchel, W., & McIvor, W. (1991). A consultation on school-age training. Kingston, Ontario: St-Lawrence College.

Youniss, J., & Smollar, J. (1986). Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers and friends. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zaslow, M. (1991). Variation in child care quality and its implications for children. Journal of Social Issues, 47(2), 125-138.

Zigler, E. F., & Turner, D. (1982). School-age child care (School-age child care project). In E. F. Zigler & D. Turner, (Eds.), Day care: Scientific and social policy issues (pp. 457-475). Boston, MA: Auburn House.

APPENDIX A

Letters of Consent
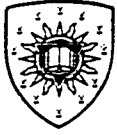
Concordia
U N I V E R S I T Y

Dear Parents,

We want to know how to make after school programming interesting for your child and find out whether after school programs are giving children what they really want. In the past we've asked parents to tell us what they want for their children. Now we think it's time to hear from the children themselves. Research is currently underway at Concordia University to examine this issue. In order to get started we need to ask you to do two things:

1) to complete the short questionnaire that is attached to this letter; and
2) to allow your child to answer some questions about school-age programs.

Children between grades three to six will be asked to complete short questionnaires that will tell us what they like and/or dislike in after school care, and what they might like to change. It should take them less than a half an hour to answer the questions, and this will be done during after-school program time. Only children whose parents have sent in the consent form will be allowed to participate. If at any time your child no longer wishes to participate he/she is free to stop and we will give all of the children this information.

As with all research, all information will be kept strictly confidential. No one will have access to either your responses nor those of your child, with the exception of the researchers who will assign you and your child a number to keep your identities anonymous. Results will be reported in terms of overall findings.

In order to allow your child to participate, please complete the consent form and the questionnaire and return it to the director of your center as soon as possible (before June 8th). If you have any questions please call me at (514) 848-7999. Just ask for Holly.

If you want a copy of the results from the study include your address at the bottom of the consent form.

Thanking you in advance,

Holly Marie Gage   Professor Ellen Jacobs
M.A. Candidate – Child Studies   Department of Education
Concordia University   Concordia University

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Director / Educator

This is to state that I have read the letter of information and agree to participate in the **School-Age Care: Friendship Study** being conducted by Holly Gage, graduate student of Concordia University. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw participation in the study at anytime and that all information obtained from my participation will be kept strictly confidential.

NAME (please print)_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Telephone number where you can be contacted and mailing address:

Telephone Number: _____

Street   _____   apt.   _____

City   _____

Province   _____

Postal Code   _____

N.B. This sheet will be detached and kept separately from any other information you provide to us. For all other information, you will be assigned a participant number and all references will be made according to this number, in order to ensure confidentiality.

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I have read the letter of information and agree to permit my child to participate in the **School-Age Care: Friendship Study** being conducted by Holly Gage, graduate students of Concordia University. I am also aware that both my child and I are free to withdraw participation in the study at anytime and that all information obtained from our participation will be kept strictly confidential.

PARENT'S NAME (please print)_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

CHILD'S NAME (please print)_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

N.B. This sheet will be detached and kept separately from any other information you provide to us. For all other information, you will be assigned a participant number and all references will be made according to this number, in order to ensure confidentiality.

I would also like to obtain a copy of the research results once the study is completed _____

No, I would not like a copy of the results _____

Name   _____

Street   _____

City   _____

Province   _____

Postal Code   _____

APPENDIX B

Parental Demographic Questionnaire

Parental Demographic Questionnaire

ID: _____

Dear Parent,

In order for your child to participate in the School-Age Care: Friendship Study, we require some background information.

We wish to thank you and your child for agreeing to participate in the present study.

Background Information:

1) How old is your child? _____ years _____ months

2) Is your child who is participating a female ___ or male ___?

3) Why is your child enrolled in the after school program?

_____

_____

_____

4) How many years has your child been attending the after school program?
   _____ years

5) Please indicate the number of **days per week** and the number of **hours per day** that your child is present in the after school program.

   _____ days per week

   _____ hours per day

6) In your opinion, do you feel that your child is satisfied with the after school program that he/she is attending?

   a) Yes; why? _____

   b) No; why not? _____

7) Are you satisfied with the after school program that your child is attending?

   a) Yes; why? _____

   b) No; why not? _____

8) Will your child be returning to the after school program next year?

   a) Yes; why? _____

   b) No; why not? _____

Please complete the following questions that provide pertinent parental background information:

1) Parent completing form is: mother ___ father ___

2) What is your marital status? **(please circle)**
   a) Single/never married
   b) Married/common law
   c) Separated
   d) Divorced
   e) Widowed

3) What are the languages spoken at home? **(please circle)**
   a) English
   b) French
   c) Spanish
   d) Italian
   e) Other **(please specify)** _____

4) What is **mother's** highest degree completed?
   a) high school
   b) college
   c) undergraduate degree
   d) graduate degree
   e) none

5) What is **father's** highest degree completed?
   a) high school
   b) college
   c) undergraduate degree
   d) graduate degree
   e) none

6) What is **mother's** current occupation? _____

7) How many paid hours does **mother** work per week? _____

8) What is **father's** current occupation? _____

9) How many paid hours does **father** work per week? _____

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation

APPENDIX C

Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (1975)

Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (1975)

SES Computation:

Level of education completed	Score
Less than seventh grade	1
Junior high school (secondary I - II)	2
Partial high school (secondary III - IV)	3
High school graduate	4
Partial college (at least one year of university,	
CEGEP (1 or 2 years)	5
Standard university graduation (B.A.)	6
Graduate professional training (graduate degree)	7

FOCCUP = Father's occupation

MOCCUP = Mother's occupation

FEDUC = Father's education

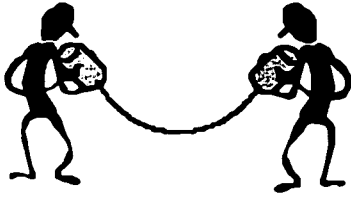MEDUC = Mother's education

If single income family:

SES = (OCCUP x 5) + (EDUC x 3)

If double income family:

SES = [(FOCCUP x 5) + (FEDUC x 3) + (MOCCUP x 5) + (MEDUC x 3)] / 2

APPENDIX D

Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire

Children's Perspectives of School-Age Care Questionnaire

ID: _____

Hello!

I need your help for this special project. I would like to know what your experience is like at your after school program. Please answer the questions by following the instructions.

Thank you for your help!

Please fill in the chart by writing the first name of your best friends and good friends in the correct spaces. Then place a check mark in each of the columns to tell me whether your answer is yes or no. Finally, you can tell me how long you have been friends by writing the number of years in the last column.

Types of Friends:	Goes to after school program:		Did you meet in your after School program?		See at school		See on weekends		How long have you been friends?
NAMES	Yes (√)	No (√)	Yes (√)	No (√)	Yes (√)	No (√)	Yes (√)	No (√)	YEARS
Best Friends:									
1.									
2.									
3.									
Good Friends:									
1.									
2.									
3.									

93

A) If your best friends and/or good friends who are in the program with you now stopped going,would you still want to go to this after school program?

    a) Yes _____

    b) No _____

    c) My best friends and/or good friends are not in the program _____

B) If you were not in the after school program what would you like to be doing with your best friends and/or good friends after school?

_____

_____

Children's Views of School-Age Care

Fill in the circle that best tells me how you feel about your after school program:

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
1) Do you like your after school program?	O	O	O	O	O
2) Are there enough fun activities at your after school program?	O	O	O	O	O
3) Does the educator plan the activities for your group?	O	O	O	O	O
4) Do the kids in your group plan the activities as well?	O	O	O	O	O
5) Do the educators always watch over your group when you are participating in activities?	O	O	O	O	O
6) Are there times when you can be in the program and not be supervised?	O	O	O	O	O

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
7) When you are in your after school program can you go off and find a place to be alone?	O	O	O	O	O
8) Are you allowed to choose who you want to do things with?	O	O	O	O	O
9) Is it important for you to have a special room for kids your age?	O	O	O	O	O
10) Do you have a chance to be with your friends in your after school program?	O	O	O	O	O
11) Do you feel that you are given enough time to be with your friends in your after school program?	O	O	O	O	O
12) Do you feel that you are given an opportunity to do activities with your friends?	O	O	O	O	O
13) Are you allowed to do the activities that you want to do with your friends in your after school program?	O	O	O	O	O

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
14) Do you have a good time with your friends at this after school program?	O	O	O	O	O
15) Do you ever wish that you could be spending your after school hours somewhere else with your friends?	O	O	O	O	O
16) Do you think that your educators listen to your ideas?	O	O	O	O	O
17) Do your educators allow your group to decide what you want to do?	O	O	O	O	O
18) Do you get along well with your educators?	O	O	O	O	O
19) Do you think your educators give you encouragement?	O	O	O	O	O

Fill in the circle that best tells me how much you like the activities in your after school program:

	I love it	I like it	I like it a little bit	I don't like it	I hate it	We don't have it
a) arts and crafts	O	O	O	O	O	O
b) music	O	O	O	O	O	O
c) sports & recreation	O	O	O	O	O	O
d) reading books	O	O	O	O	O	O
e) playing board games	O	O	O	O	O	O
f) cooking	O	O	O	O	O	O
g) computers	O	O	O	O	O	O

h) What activities would you like to do that they don't have here?

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Fill in as many circles that tell me why you like or dislike these types of activities that are available to you in your after school program. If these activities are not available in your program please circle N/A.

1) Why do you like or dislike **arts and crafts**?

Like

O It is fun & exciting
O We get to be alone as a group
O Great materials & equipment
O I get to learn something new
O I get a chance to be with my friend(s)
O I am good at this type of activity
O I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else
O Other (please tell me more)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Dislike   N/A

O It is boring
O It is babyish
O We do not get any freedom
O Not enough materials or equipment
O It is not challenging me
O I can't be with my friend(s)
O I am not good at this type of activity
O Other (please tell me more)

_____
_____
_____
_____

2) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **music?**

<table>
<tr><td>**Like**</td><td>**Dislike**   **N/A**</td></tr>
<tr><td>

O *It is fun & exciting*
O *We get to be alone as a group*
O *Great materials & equipment*
O *I get to learn something new*
O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
O *I am good at this type of activity*
O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

</td><td>

O *It is boring*
O *It is babyish*
O *We do not get any freedom*
O *Not enough materials or equipment*
O *It is not challenging me*
O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
O *I am not good at this type of activity*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

</td></tr>
</table>

_____
_____
_____
_____

3) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **sports & recreation?**

<table>
<tr><td>**Like**</td><td>**Dislike**   **N/A**</td></tr>
<tr><td>

O *It is fun & exciting*
O *We get to be alone as a group*
O *Great materials & equipment*
O *I get to learn something new*
O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
O *I am good at this type of activity*
O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

</td><td>

O *It is boring*
O *It is babyish*
O *We do not get any freedom*
O *Not enough materials or equipment*
O *It is not challenging me*
O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
O *I am not good at this type of activity*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

</td></tr>
</table>

_____
_____
_____
_____

4) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **reading books?**

Like

O *It is fun & exciting*
O *We get to be alone as a group*
O *Great materials & equipment*
O *I get to learn something new*
O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
O *I am good at this type of activity*
O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

Dislike   **N/A**

O *It is boring*
O *It is babyish*
O *We do not get any freedom*
O *Not enough materials or equipment*
O *It is not challenging me*
O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
O *I am not good at this type of activity*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **playing board games?**

Like

O *It is fun & exciting*
O *We get to be alone as a group*
O *Great materials & equipment*
O *I get to learn something new*
O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
O *I am good at this type of activity*
O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

Dislike   **N/A**

O *It is boring*
O *It is babyish*
O *We do not get any freedom*
O *Not enough materials or equipment*
O *It is not challenging me*
O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
O *I am not good at this type of activity*
O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

6) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **cooking**?

Like

- O *It is fun & exciting*
- O *We get to be alone as a group*
- O *Great materials & equipment*
- O *I get to learn something new*
- O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
- O *I am good at this type of activity*
- O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
- O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

Dislike   **N/A**

- O *It is boring*
- O *It is babyish*
- O *We do not get any freedom*
- O *Not enough materials or equipment*
- O *It is not challenging me*
- O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
- O *I am not good at this type of activity*
- O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

7) Why do you <u>like</u> or <u>dislike</u> **computers**?

Like

- O *It is fun & exciting*
- O *We get to be alone as a group*
- O *Great materials & equipment*
- O *I get to learn something new*
- O *I get a chance to be with my friend(s)*
- O *I am good at this type of activity*
- O *I get a chance to do something that I would not anywhere else*
- O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

Dislike   **N/A**

- O *It is boring*
- O *It is babyish*
- O *We do not get any freedom*
- O *Not enough materials or equipment*
- O *It is not challenging me*
- O *I can't be with my friend(s)*
- O *I am not good at this type of activity*
- O *Other (please tell me more)*

_____
_____
_____
_____

A) Tell me what you like the best about your program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

B) Tell me what you would like to change the most about your program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

C) If it was your choice, would you like to come back to the after school program next year?

| *No way* | *Maybe* | *Don't know* | *Think so* | *For sure* |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D) In a sentence or two could you tell me the main reason(s) for this decision.

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!!!

APPENDIX E

Friendship Qualities Scale

FRIENDSHIP QUALITIES SCALE

Put the name of your closest friend here _____

Is your closest friend in your after school program? Yes _____   No _____

We want to ask some questions just about you and the person you think of as your closest friend so we can know what your closest friend is like. We have some sentences that we would like you to read. Please tell us whether this sentence describes your friendship or not. Some of the sentences might be really true for your friendship while other sentences might be not very true for your friendship. We simply want you to read the sentence and tell us how true the sentence is for your friendship. Remember, there are no right or wrong ways to answer these questions, and you can use any of the numbers on the scale.

After each sentence there is a scale that goes from 1 to 5.

"1" means the sentence is probably **not true** for your friendship,

"2" means that it **might be true,**

"3" means that it is **usually true,**

"4" means that it is **very true,**

"5" means that it is **really true** for your friendship.

Circle the number on the scale that is best for you. Be sure to read carefully and answer as honestly as possible.

Example

X1. My friend and I play games and other activities with each other.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

a) My friend and I spend a lot of our free time together.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

2. My friend gives me advice when I need it.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

3. My friend and I do things together.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

4. My friend and I help each other.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

5. Even if my friend and I have an argument we would still be able to be friends with each other.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

6. My friend and I play together whenever we can.
Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

7. If other kids were bothering me, my
   friend would help me.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

8. I can trust and rely upon my friend.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

9. My friend helps me when I am having
   trouble with something.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

10. If my friend had to move away I would miss
    him/her.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

11. If I can't figure out how to do something,
    my friend shows me how.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

12. When I do a good job at something my
    friend is happy for me.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

13. There is nothing that would stop my friend
    and me from being friends.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

14. Sometimes my friend does things for me or
    makes me feel special.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

15. When my friend and I have an argument,
    he/she can hurt my feelings.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

16. When I have not been with my friend for
    a while I really miss being with him/her.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

17. If somebody tried to push me around, my
    friend would help me.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

18. I can get into fights with my friend.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

19. My friend would stick up for me if another
    kid was causing me trouble.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

20. When we have free time,
    my friend and I usually
    do something together or
    spend time with each other.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

21. If I have a problem at school or at home
    I can talk to my friend about it.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

22. My friend can bug me or annoy me even
    though I ask him/her not to.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

23. If I forget my lunch or needed a little
    money my friend would loan it to me.

   Not True   Really True
   1--------2--------3--------4--------5

24. If I said I was sorry after I had a fight with my friend he/she would still stay mad at me.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

25. My friend helps me with things that I find difficult to do alone.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

26. My friend and I go to each other's houses on weekends.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

27. Sometimes my friend and I just sit around and talk about things like school, sports, and other things we like.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

28. If I have questions about something my friend would help me get some answers.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

29. Even if other people stopped liking me, my friend would still be my friend.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

30. I know that I am important to my friend.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

31. My friend would help me if I needed it.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

32. If there is something bothering me I can tell my friend about it even if it is something I can not tell to other people.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

33. My friend puts our friendship ahead of other things.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

34. When I have to do something that is hard I can count on my friend for help.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

35. If my friend or I do something that bothers the other one of us we can make up easily.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

36. My friend and I can argue a lot.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

37. My friend and I disagree about many things.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

38. If my friend and I have a fight or argument we can say "I'm sorry" and everything will be alright.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

39. I feel happy when I am with my friend.

Not True   Really True
1--------2--------3--------4--------5

40. I think about my friend even when my
friend is not around.

Not True   Really True

1--------2--------3-------4--------5

APPENDIX F

School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)

	Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7
32. Discipline	• Program does not have guidelines for discipline practices. • Expectations for behavior are inappropriate for age and developmental level of children. • Discipline is either too strict or too lax. • Harsh discipline techniques are used (Ex: physical punishment, shouting, withholding food, confining children for long periods).		• Program has policy that harsh discipline is never used. • Expectations for behavior are appropriate for each age group. • Staff never use harsh discipline. • Staff usually maintain enough control to prevent children from hurting one another.		• Staff use non-punitive discipline methods effectively (Ex: giving attention for positive rather than negative behaviors; redirecting child from unacceptable to acceptable activity).		• Parents are notified of program's discipline policy in writing. • Staff seek advice from consultant concerning behavior problems.
33. Peer interactions	• Little or no positive peer interaction (Ex: teasing, bickering, fighting are common). • Little or no staff guidance for positive peer interaction. • Peer interaction not encouraged (Ex: talking with peers discouraged).		• Staff deal with negative peer interactions (Ex: stop teasing, bickering, fighting). • Peer interactions encouraged (Ex: children allowed to move freely so natural groupings and interactions can occur).		• Peer interactions usually positive (Ex: cooperation, sharing; children generally play well together). • Staff model good social skills (Ex: are calm, listen, and empathize). • Staff help children develop appropriate social behavior with peers (Ex: staff help children talk through social conflicts).		• Children demonstrate good social problem-solving skills and positive social behavior (Ex: can negotiate solutions, make compromises, work together toward a common goal, empathize with others' feelings). • Staff serve as sounding board and extend children's problem solving skills.
34. Interactions between staff and parents*	• No sharing of information between parents and staff.		• Parent and staff share minimal information (Ex: information limited to rules, fees, attendance schedule). • Parent conferences occur upon staff or parent request. • Some attempt to welcome parents into the program.		• Parents made fully aware of program policies and practices (Ex: handbook, information sheets about activities, parent meetings). • Regularly scheduled parent conferences. • Parents welcomed as part of program (Ex: parents share a family custom with child's group).		• Information provided on parenting, health care, sports, and cultural activities for families. • Parents involved in decision making roles (Ex: parent representatives on board, yearly evaluation of program, input from parents sought regarding program content).

108

APPENDIX G

Director and Educator Interviews

School-Age Care Project: Director's Questionnaire

Centre ID: _____   **Director ID:** _____

a) Have you read the letter of information? Give director a copy. Any questions?
b) Review confidentiality, volunteer (ethical issues)

What is the highest grade you have completed? (check only the highest)

High School   *University*

		Undergraduate	Master's
___No high school		___Less than one year	___Less than one year
___Some high school		___Some courses	___Some courses
___High school diploma		___Obtained degree	___Obtained degree

What was your field of study in your highest degree obtained? (e.g., Early Childhood
Education, Special Education, Recreation, Training) _____

Are you currently enrolled in a college/CEGEP or university program? Yes___   No___

If yes, specify program

_____

Describe: scholastic training you received, if any, in the field of school-age care.

_____

_____

What are your experiences working with after school care?

a) as a director at this school   _____years
b) as a director in another centre   _____years
c) as an educator at this school   _____years
d) as an educator in another centre   _____years
e) other (specify) _____   _____years

Are you exclusively a Director, or do you also take responsibility for a class? That is, are
your responsibilities specifically administrative or are you also in charge of a specific group
of children?

_____

_____

Is your school-age care program affiliated with some other program (e.g., on the school
premises, part of a preschool daycare, part of a community centre)?

Yes_____ No___   If yes, please specify_____

Is your centre:

non-profit_____   or   commercial/ for-profit_____? (check one)

How many children are enrolled at your centre?

full-time   _____
part-time   _____
other   _____

What is the monthly fee that parents pay (if parents pay on a different basis, e.g., per hour/per day, or just for the lunch program, please specify)?

_____

_____

_____

How many educators are working in your centre?

____Educators   ____Assistant educators   ____Volunteers
(in charge of a   (under supervision of an   (unpaid position)
group of children)   educator)

Do you have replacement staff when a staff member calls in sick?___Yes   ___No

How many staff members (volunteers, assistant educators, educators) have left in the past 12 months?   _____

Reason for leaving: _____ Maternity leave
(Indicate the number of staff who   _____ Sick leave
left for each of the following reasons)   _____ Promotion
                                               _____ Low enrollment/laid off
                                               _____ Left for personal reasons
                                               _____ Left for professional reasons
                                               _____ Fired
                                               _____ Don't know
                                               _____ Other_____

Directors at school-age care centres can work early morning before school hours, mornings during school hours (around (9:00 - noon), lunchtimes, early afternoons (around 1:00 - 3:00), late afternoons (around 3:00 - 6:00), and evenings.

What are your working hours?

Monday   _____
Tuesday   _____
Wednesday   _____
Thursday   _____
Friday   _____
Saturday   _____

How many months of the year are you employed in your position?
_____ year around (12 months)
_____ school year only (9-10 months)
_____ other (specify) _____

111

Indicate the salary range for your job this year (before taxes)

_____ 7,999 or less   _____ 26,000-31,999
_____ 8,000-13,999   _____ 32,000-37,999
_____ 14,000-19,999   _____ 38,000-43,999
_____ 20,000-25,999   _____ 44,000 and over

How would you define your relationship with the administrator of your centre? (e.g., principal/ administrator of a community centre)

_____I am not in a school setting
_____excellent
_____good
_____neutral
_____indifferent, distant
_____rather tense
Any additional comments?

_____

_____

(a) What agency is responsible for licensing your centre?

_____

(b) How often is your centre visited for monitoring purposes by the licensing/ regulator agency?_____

(c) Are you notified about the visit in advance? _____Yes   _____No

What is your age: _____ (years)

What is your marital status?
_____ single/never married   _____ divorced/separated
_____ married/common-law   _____ widowed

- ethics
-purpose of project (letter)

Enter demographic questionnaire

Categories/Questions	Yes	No	Comments
Administration & Staffing			
Who makes the majority of the administrative decisions regarding the after-school program? **(39)**			
Are new staff members given training or orientation? What does the training consist of and how often is it provided? **(41)**			
Are staff provided with funding for professional development? (e.g., courses, conferences, workshops) **(41)**			
How often are staff supervised? Are they given feedback regarding their work performance? Are staff given opportunities to evaluate themselves? **(43)**			
If staff need help, can they request this of their supervisors? **(43)**			
Policies & Procedures			
Does the centre have a written health policy **(12)** (includes:, health & safety, first aid kit, sick children **(12)**, emergencies **(14)**, administration of medication **(12)** allergies**(18)**, food storage **(18)**, and are parents given a copy of this policy and other policies such as emergency, discipline, etc... Could we see a copy? Are staff given health training? **(12)** **CPR** **TB Shot** **First Aid**	── ── ── ──		
How many staff members are certified? How long is the certification valid? **(14)** Is there always one certified staff member present? **(14)**			

113

Categories/Questions	Yes	No	Comments
If the children appear to be having difficulties at school, what is the procedure to follow to deal with this situation? **(13)** What about at home?			
Are the parents responsible for informing the centre of their child's absence? If no notification is given, what procedure is followed? What is done if a child is often late? **(15)**			
Support staff and such			
Does the centre have support staff? (e.g., janitorial service **(19)**, e.g.,who is responsible for cleaning the bathrooms)			
Is there a staff washroom, storage space, lounge?			
What facilities are available to the program?: library gym, playground, pool			
How frequently are they available? What facilities are available on a daily basis?			
Are the grounds and facilities inspected to ensure they are hazard free? If so, who is responsible? **(14)**			
Are emergency procedures practiced?, How often? **(14)** (e.g., fire drill)			
Where is the food stored?			
How are children's allergies taken into consideration?			
What is the procedure that is followed for giving children medication?			
Communication			
How is communication between parents and staff set up? (e.g., communication board, answering machine, newsletters) **(15)**			
How are the children brought to the centre?			

Categories/Questions	Yes	No	Comments
Do you hold parent/staff meetings to discuss various child-related issues? **(34,35)** (discipline**(32)**, accidents **(14)**, program content, child's irregular attendance or lateness **(15)** Do you get a chance to communicate with the parents on a daily basis during arrival and departure times? **(28)**			
Are parents notified if an accident occurs?			
Where do the children go when they are sick?			
Categories/Questions	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
Can parents volunteer to help on class activities/ fieldtrips?			
If a child is causing problems in the class, what is the procedure that is followed?			
If you suspect that a child is having problems at home, what is the procedure that is followed?			
Do you communicate with the classroom teachers? **(36)**			
Is there a nurse a doctor or **(12)** other professional available?			
How do you deal with more serious child-related problems? Who do you communicate these problems with? **(13)**			
Do you hold staff meetings? How often? Where?			
Are staff given feedback on their work performance?			
Equipment and supplies			
Do you have a special location to store the equipment and materials? (2) Can it be moved around?			

EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

Centre ID: _____   Educator ID: _____

a) Have you read letter of info? Give educator a copy. Any questions?
b) Review confidentiality, volunteer (ethical issues).

What is your current job position in the school-age care program?

_____ Volunteer (unpaid position, specify job)
(e.g., sports coach, music instructor, teacher's aid)

_____ Assistant educator: under the supervision of an educator

_____ Educator: in charge of a group of children, (perhaps with some staff supervisory responsibilities)

_____ Educator / Director : in charge of a group of children plus full administrative duties

_____ Director: full administrative duties exclusively

How long have you been working in your current centre?   _____yrs

How long have you been working in the child care field?   _____yrs

Do you plan on staying in the field, specifically working with after school-age care?

If no, do you have any other career interests?

_____

What is the highest grade of formal education you have completed? (check only the highest)

High School	*College or CEGEP*	*University*
___No high school	___Less than one year	Undergraduate
___Some high school	___One year	___Less than one year
___High school diploma	___Two years	___Some courses
	___Three years	___Obtained degree
		Master's
		___Less than one year
		___Some courses
		___Obtained degree

What was your field of study in your highest degree obtained? (e.g., Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Recreation) _____

In terms of school-age care, what type of academic training have you received? (e.g., completed courses)

_____

Are you currently or have you previously been enrolled in any courses or workshops to further your education in school-age care? (e.g., college or university, workshops, in-service training..., please specify)

a) Yes _____

b) No _____

What are your working hours with school-age children?

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Saturday _____

Do you have another job? _____

Is it paid? _____

What is the size of the group you typically care for:
    In the morning_____   At lunch_____   In the afternoon_____

What is the number of staff working with your group?
    In the morning_____   At lunch_____   In the afternoon_____

What is the age range of the children you care for?   ____-____

How are school-age children in your centre grouped into classes?

    a) grouped by age   ___Yes ___No
    b) grouped by grade   ___Yes ___No

    c) mixed groupings   ___Yes ___No
       explain_____

    d) other_____
       (e.g., delayed children in lower class)

What is your annual salary **before taxes**? _____
    (Use the following salary ranges if they are unwilling to give us their exact salary)
    ____ 7,999 or less   ____ 26,000-31,999
    ____ 8,000-13,999   ____ 32,000-37,999
    ____ 14,000-19,999   ____ 38,000-43,999
    ____ 20,000-25,999   ____ 44,000 and over

What is your gross hourly wage? _____

Are you unionized? Yes _____   No _____

How many months of the year are you employed in your position?

_____ year round (12 months)

_____ school year only (9-10 months)

_____ other (specify) _____

What working conditions and benefits do you have?

___Paid preparation and planning time

___Paid sick leave

___Annual paid vacation

___Retirement/ pension plan

___Dental plan

___Paid release time for training(e.g., courses, workshops)

___Compensation for overtime

___On-site training

What is your age: _____(years)

What is your marital status?

___single/ never married

___married/ common-law

___divorced/separated

___widowed

(Gender   Male_____   Female_____)

Would you say that today is a typical day to be observing the program?

Let's get into aspects about your centre now...

EDUCATOR INTERVIEW			
Space & Available Facilities equipment & materials			
Are the classrooms used by others throughout the day or is it exclusive to the after-school program? **(9)**			
What other facilities are you allowed to use in the school or community? **(9, 40)** (e.g., pool, gym, library)			
How often are you allowed to use these facilities? **(9)** Which can be used on a daily basis? **(9)** _____ _____ _____ _____			
When you use these facilities, are other children not in the program also allowed to use the facilities? **(9)**			
Do you go on field trips?(37) How are the trips organized?**(40)**			
Are materials for gross motor activities available on a regular basis? Gross motor scheduled every day **(37)** Stationary or portable? **(8)**			
Do you have: TB shot? ____ first aid?____ CPR?____			
Do you have children with special needs in your class?			
Are you given help with these children?			
Do have access to extra resources to help these children?			

If a staff member must leave due to an emergency, who takes over? **(14)**			
(only ask if the educator works with the older children) What are the supervision "rules" for older and younger children? Are they different?			
Is there some way a child can be "alone" in the after school class if they want? **(3)** If yes, can they select the materials they bring into this space? **(3)**			
Staff			
Do you have scheduled times to plan with co-workers? As well, as the school teachers? and the director? How would you describe the quality of support from your director?			

	Yes	No	Comments
Are you free to make changes to the schedule?			
In general, how are the interactions amongst the staff members? **(35)**			
How are your interactions with your director?			
Do you receive feedback with regards to your work performance? **(43)**			
Do you have the opportunity to evaluate yourself? **(43)**			
Are staff responsibilities evenly distributed among staff? (35) Do you each have specific duties?			
What is the departure procedure?			
Parent Communication			

Do you communicate with the parents on a regular basis?
 	
 Type? : Newsletter _____ frequency_____
          Parent board_____ frequency_____
          Meetings _____ frequency_____
          Notes sent through the children freq _____
          Other _____
 	
 Do you discuss with the parents:
  the program content : Y_____ N_____
  child issues: Y_____ N_____
  parent board Y_____ N_____			

Are parents required to come into centre to pick up their children?			
Are they obliged to notify you of their children's absence?			
If a child is absent without and explanation from the parent, do you call the parents to inform them?			
Is attendance taken on a regular basis? (15)			
Are you able to help the children do their own creative activities? (e.g., write their own stories, poems , newsletters)			
Do you have qualified instructors? (e.g., sports experts, arts and crafts etc...)			

APPENDIX H

Table of Frequencies for Children Who Reported

Having Best and/or Good Friend(s) in School-Age Care Programs

Type of Friendship	Number of friends in school-age care	f	%
Best Friend(s)	First Best Friend	22	41.5
	Second Best Friend	16	30.8
	Third Best Friend	9	17.3
Good Friend(s)	First Best Friend	27	50.9
	Second Best Friend	14	26.9
	Third Best Friend	6	11.1