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School-Age Care Programs:
An Identification of Factors Related
to Nine-to Twelve-Year-Olds' Desire to Drop Out and Their Satisfaction.

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ABSTRACT

School-Age Care Programs:
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The present study was designed to identify factors related to nine-to twelve-year-olds' desire to drop out of after-school programs, as well as to examine the factors related to their satisfaction. While some researchers have demonstrated that older school-age children may prefer to go home alone after school (Cloutier, 1990; Fink, 1986), others have clearly indicated the potential negative consequences associated with self-care (Vandell & Ramanan, 1991; Posner & Vandell, 1994; Long & Long, 1982; Steinberg, 1986). One hundred and eleven children participated in the present study, from thirteen participating school-based child care programs. Children's desire to drop out and their satisfaction was assessed via a questionnaire designed using a compilation approach. Parental satisfaction was also assessed via questionnaires and information on directors and educators was collected. The quality of the school-age care programs was measured using the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (Harms, Vineberg-Jacobs & Romano-White, 1996). Data pertaining to the children's desire to drop out, the actual drop out rate during the course of the study, as well as the returning rate for the following year were obtained through parental phone interviews. Results indicated that the most important factors related to children's desire to drop out were age and the presence of friends. Gender, materials used at the centre, the reasons why children attended the centre and children's satisfaction were also important factors when examining children's

desire to drop out. Quality was a significant factor, but not in the original direction stated in the hypothesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Participation in the workforce by mothers increases as their children get older and

statistics indicate that many mothers make the deliberate choice of delaying their

entrance into the workforce until their children are of elementary school age. In fact,

76% of mothers with children between six-and twelve-years-of-age were employed in

1992, compared to 68% of working mothers with children between three-and five-years-

of-age and 61% of working mothers with children between birth-and three-years-of-age

(Friendly, 1994). Therefore, it would appear that a proportion of mothers believed that

by delaying their entrance into the workforce, they would be able to rely on the school

system to take care of their children during their work day. However, parents soon

realized that six hours in elementary school, covered only part of their working day. As a

consequence, families needed supervision of their children during out-of-school hours;

before and after school, at lunch, during school holidays and pedagogical days.

With the absence of a variety of services during out-of-school hours, children who

go home alone after school and are unsupervised until a parent returns home, have been a

growing concern. In fact, the latchkey phenomenon has become increasingly present in

our society (Zigler & Lang, 1991). Many researchers have examined the consequences of

this type of after-school arrangement (Cain & Hofferth, 1989; Galambos & Garbarino,

1983; Galambos & Maggs, 1991; Rodman, Pratto, & Nelson, 1985; Vandell &

Corasaniti, 1988; Vandell & Ramanan, 1991). As a result, a wide variety of after-school

programs were developed, including recreation programs (e.g., YMCA), academic

programs, scientific programs, sports programs and many others. It was thought that an

interesting tool to alter such a phenomenon might be the establishment of school-based

child care programs that correspond to children's and parents' needs. In Quebec, one of the most common form of after-school programs is school-based child care. In fact, researchers have stated that the best option for after-school arrangements is school-based child care programs, since it offers families many advantages (Jacobs, White, Baillargeon, & Betsalel-Presser, 1991; Lalonde-Graton, 1995c). For example, the available facilities of the school (e.g., library, gymnasium, computer room) and the absence of the need for transportation to another physical space (e.g., to the local rink for skating lessons). However, even though the presence of school-based child care programs appear to offer many advantages as an alternative to self-care, it has been noted by several researchers that older children registered in these programs have expressed a desire to drop out of these supervised settings.

While a variety of studies have examined the relationships between attending preschool programs and children's development (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Clarke-Stewart, 1987a; Clarke-Stewart, 1987b; Vandell & Powers, 1983) and others have examined the relationships between the quality of preschool programs and children's development (Howes & Phillips, 1989; Pence, 1989; McCartney, 1984; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990; Zaslow, 1991), very few studies have investigated the relationships between the quality of school-age care and children's development. More specifically, very little research has focused on the needs of older children (i.e., nine-to twelve-year-olds) and why these children tend to prefer to stay home alone rather than attend school-based child care programs. In fact, Lalonde-Graton (1992) stated that children around eight-or nine-years-of-age preferred to be home alone after school.

Surprisingly, despite the importance of the question, no studies have examined the reasons for children's dissatisfaction with school-based child care, and more specifically, the reasons why they want to drop out of these programs around nine years-of-age. Furthermore, few researchers have investigated the current situation of nine-to twelve-year-olds in school-based child care programs and what is offered. Therefore, the aim of the current project was to address these gaps by examining the children's reasons for dropping out of school-based child care programs as a function of their age, the curriculum offered, the appropriateness of the activities, the satisfaction of the children, as well as the quality of the settings. One of the primary objectives of this thesis was to attempt to answer the question : « What are the factors that lead nine-to twelve-year-olds to want to drop out of school-based child care programs ? ». Secondly, the study attempted to identify factors related to the children's satisfaction with this type of after-school arrangement, while examining the age of the children, the family's socioeconomic status, the quality of the school-based child care programs and finally, the element of choice for nine-to twelve-year-olds in such a program. The third objective of this thesis was to examine parental satisfaction with their children's school-based child care program, while examining the different aspects of the program (e.g., curriculum, environment, teacher/child relationship). Finally, the presence of a relationship between children's and parents' satisfaction was conducted.

The following section will review the literature pertinent to this study. To begin with, the literature review will include studies regarding after-school programs. The second section will consist of an introduction to the consequences of self-care (i.e., latchkey children). Since many studies have looked at the differences between self-care

arrangements and adult-supervised environments (e.g., after-school programs, centre care, family day care, sitter care), such findings will be important to examine. The third section will address the issue of developmentally appropriate programs and quality. Since a limited number of studies have examined school-based child care, most of the research that will be reviewed concerning quality is based on centre care at the preschool level. Finally, the last section will focus on the satisfaction of both children and parents with school-age care arrangements. Again, although the current study will investigate school-age care, most of the studies related to satisfaction have been conducted at the preschool level.

School-Age Care

Parents need school-age care programs that can offer care during the school year, but also during pedagogical days, spring break, holidays and summer vacations (Lalonde-Graton, 1995c). Since children are out of school for an average of 167 days and parents are not working for an average of 120 days a year, school-age care programs need to respond to the demands of both parents and children (Lalonde-Graton, 1995c).

In terms of after-school care, some families rely on a « shift arrangement » for their school-age children. For example, after school the children go to the Scouts and Guides' meetings, so they are home alone only one or two nights a week (Michel, 1993). Other parents enroll their children in different after-school activities (e.g., sports, arts), where children go to a different activity every night of the week. Those children have to travel to different locations, as well as organize and bring the necessary materials for each activity. This type of arrangement involved much organization on the part of parents who worry about their children in the transitional period, leaving from school and

arriving at another destination (Powell, 1987). As a result, school-age child care

programs were developed to respond to the increasing demand of after-school care for

children of dual earner families and single parents (Jacobs, White, Baillargeon, &

Betsalel-Presser, 1991). Currently, different types of after-school programs are available

for parents: sitter care, family day care, center care within the community (e.g., YMCA),

school-based child care and extracurricular activities.

The most common after-school programs in the province of Québec are the

school-based child care centres. These centres are located within the schools and are

usually open from 7h00 to 18h00. In the morning, children can attend these child care

facilities before class. Also, supervised lunch and activities after school are offered.

There are many benefits to this type of provision of care. As children do not have to

travel to another location, transportation is not required and can reduce the parental stress

commonly associated with the time period between their children's departure from

school and their arrival at the activity off-site from the school. Furthermore, the absence

of organizational problems and coordination of days with activities so that equipment and

supplies brought from home correspond to the scheduled activities, is another advantage

to school-based child care (Jacobs et al., 1991). Moreover, the environment of the

school, that is, the available empty classrooms, the gymnasium, the library, the computer

room, the outdoor space, the available materials (e.g., sports materials, art materials), the

adapted furniture and environment, are strong advantages to such programs. The

«Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec » also outlined the

importance of the mission of school-based child care, which is to implement continuity

with the schools, while assuring that each school-age child receives extracurricular

activities in a safe environment (Lalonde-Graton, 1995c; Lalonde-Graton, 1995a).

However, Baillargeon and Betsalel-Presser (1988) have outlined the absence of

cooperation between the school and the school-based child care program, which may

sometimes create problems such as access to certain rooms and resources in the school.

Even though a large proportion of parents prefer school-based child care

programs for their school-age children (i.e., 46.1% for five-to nine-year-olds and 42.9%

for nine-to twelve-year-olds) (Fullum, 1995), very little research has been done to address

the quality and effects of group experience associated with school-based child care. A

few studies, however, have examined after-school care. For example, Posner and

Vandell (1994) attempted to determine whether formal school-age care programs were

associated with low-income children's social and academic functioning. In this

particular study, third-graders and their parents were interviewed to collect information

about their school-age care arrangements and the teachers were asked to rate the

behaviors of each participating child (i.e., teachers had to rate emotional adjustment,

relations with peers and relations with adults during the last quarter of the school years

using a 32-item questionnaire with a 5- point rating scale). Four types of regular after-

school arrangements were included in the study: maternal care, informal adult

supervision, self-care, and formal after-school program. Unlike Vandell and Ramanan

(1991), the authors found that family income was lower for children who attended formal

school-age care programs. Moreover, mother care after school, was more common when

mothers were not employed. The results also indicated that children participating in

school-age care programs had better grades in reading, math, and other academic subjects

as well as better ratings for conduct, than children did in the other types of care.

Moreover, children in school-age care programs were rated as having better work habits and peer relations than children informally supervised after school. Children in formal school-age care arrangements were more social, as opposed to unsupervised children or informally supervised. Interestingly, the young adolescents who participated in after-school care, spent more time in academic activities and enrichment lessons, and spent less time watching television. The children spending more time watching television were those in self-care arrangements. These results differed from those obtained by Vandell and Corasaniti (1990), where middle-class children in formal school-age care programs showed more problematic social, emotional and academic functioning than those in mother care or self-care. However, the contradictory results regarding « problem behavior » of children in after-school programs may be explained by the fact that parents may consciously decide to place their « problem children » in formal care because they know their children should not stay home alone. However, it is essential to note that the quality of the programs, the family economic resources and the safety of the neighborhood might also explain these differences, but these factors were not investigated in this study.

Howes, Olenick, and Der-Kiureghian (1987) have reported positive effects of high quality after-school programs. The authors compared the sociometric status of kindergarten- aged children who attended a school-based child care program designed to promote social and emotional development, with peers returning home after school. The results revealed that the after-school care children were more advanced in their social development as measured by their ability to form friendships and to select friends. Finally, Howes et al. (1987) reported that the after-school care children had earlier and

more consistent experience with peers than the children who did not attend the after-school care program, and concluded that the after-school care children entered elementary school with more friendship formation skills.

White, Marchessault, Bouchard, and Lacroix (1995) examined the relationship between after-school care and peer interactions. Teacher ratings to examine peer relations were used with 686 children (i.e., from kindergarten to grade 2) with a sample in which 254 children were enrolled in the school-based child care program. The results showed that teachers rated boys as significantly more aggressive and rejected than girls. Moreover, girls were rated as more well-liked by peers, regardless of type of after-school arrangement. Finally, children in the school-based child care programs were considered more aggressive and less withdrawn.

Two other important studies regarding after-school care have been conducted in Quebec. Proulx (1990) conducted semi-structured interviews with young adolescents to identify their perceptions and needs in school-based child care programs. The results of this study revealed that children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age appeared to be dissatisfied with the school-based child care programs in which they were enrolled. Moreover, the interviews permitted the identification of factors that would lead to an increased satisfaction for nine-to twelve-year-olds. The young adolescents asked for more consultation from the educators in the choice of activities, more responsibilities in the program (e.g., organizing activities for the younger children), their own space (i.e., a special room for that age group) and games, more gross motor activities and finally, activities adapted to their cognitive level.

Lalonde-Graton (1992) also studied school-based child care programs in Quebec, focusing on the needs of nine-to twelve-year-old children. This study demonstrated that the nine-to twelve-year-old age group is somehow difficult to work with, probably because they have different needs than the younger children. While some of the participating centres excluded this age group completely, others offered no particular programs for them. However, the educators interviewed revealed that the nine-to twelve-year-olds have specific needs and they were concerned that these needs were not met in the school-based child care programs. Furthermore, it has been reported that young adolescents often refuse to participate in school-based child care if it has not been suited to their cognitive level. As Fink (1986) mentioned, all children over the age of eight tend to shun anything that sounds like child care or day care as they consider it to be babyish. The study conducted by Fink (1986) also revealed that the drop-out rate was higher in centres where less than a critical mass of 10 nine-to twelve-year-olds were enrolled. This may indicate the importance of the presence of same-aged peers for this age group. When children were asked to state their preferences for after-school arrangements the results revealed that by the age of eight or nine, children preferred to be home alone.

While 42.9% of parents of children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age prefer to use school-based child care services (Fullum, 1995), there are a number of parents who are faced with the constant pressure from their children who wish to drop out of the program to be home alone and consequently unsupervised. Many parents are unhappy and dissatisfied with self-care arrangements, and often suffer from the three o'clock syndrome, which is a time when their productivity at work decreases because they worry

about their children in the transitional period, between leaving school and arriving home unsupervised (Powell, 1987).

Self-Care

Child care professionals have been concerned about the effects of self-care and as a result, a variety of researchers have investigated the different consequences associated with this phenomenon. In fact, problems associated with self-care, such as juvenile delinquency, increased exposure to obesity, and peer pressure have been explored (Alexander, 1986; Nieting, 1983; Zigler & Turner, 1982; Zigler & Lang, 1991). Furthermore, a variety of research studies have compared school-age children going home alone (i.e., latchkey children) with those in various form of adult care (i.e., after-school care, centre care, family day care, sitter care).

Self-care and adult-supervised environments. One of the first studies to examine the consequences of self-care was conducted by Woods (1972). The study attempted to determine whether or not maternal absence due to employment, and the consequent substitute supervision arrangements of mothers, was significant in the lives of lower-class black American children. The author observed fifth grade children during specific periods of the school day; before school, at lunch time and after school and whether they were in adult-supervised (i.e., whether the children were supervised by mature individuals) or unsupervised environments. Mothers also participated in the study by completing a questionnaire and an interview about their children's care arrangements. The children, who reported a lack of supervision during the critical periods outlined earlier, exhibited differences compared to children in supervised environments. For example, the results demonstrated that unsupervised girls exhibited deficits in school

environment (i.e., measured by the California Test of Personality School Relations and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) and intelligence quotients, as well as some difficulties in school relations (Woods, 1972). Moreover, more girls than boys reported a lack of supervision, which might be explained by the fact that most parents believed that their female children were more mature and responsible. However, unsupervised children did not have more absences, psychological referrals, nor did they exhibit more non-conforming behaviors than supervised children. The results also indicated that children who were reported to be less supervised, were more self-reliant and had a greater sense of personal freedom. These results do not point to a need for school-age care programs. However, that study was conducted in 1972 and there have been many societal changes in the past 26 years.

One study conducted eleven years later, in 1983, compared children in adult-supervised situations in contrast to self-care environments. Galambos and Garbino (1983) compared latchkey children of employed mothers, school-age children of working mothers in adult-care settings and children of non-working mothers. No statistically significant differences were observed between these groups on measures of teacher-rated school adjustment, academic achievement, classroom orientation, and fear of going outdoors alone (Galambos & Garbarino, 1983).

Others, on the other hand, have investigated levels of fear in latchkey children. In fact, Long and Long (1982) interviewed children in self-care, children in adult-care and children in a parochial school. Contradictory to Galambos and Garbarino (1983), the researchers stated that 30% of the self-care children had unusual high levels of recurring

fear, where loneliness and boredom were the chief complaints of these children. Their conclusions about the consequences of self-care were decidedly negative.

On the other hand, Rodman, Pratto, and Nelson (1985) found no statistically significant differences between fourth and seventh graders in self-care (i.e., home alone or with a younger sibling) and in adult-care (i.e., home with their mother, father or grandparent). The children answered a questionnaire concerning their after-school care. The investigators examined the effects of self-care on self-esteem, locus of control, teachers' ratings on social adjustment and interpersonal relations. It is important to note that the children were not matched on whether their mothers were employed or not, which might have produced significant differences between children in self-care and adult-care children. In fact, this would have allowed the authors to control for another important variable; whether the self-care arrangement was selected voluntarily or not. On measures of social and psychological functioning, no statistically significant differences were observed between children in self-care and those in adult-care (Rodman et al., 1985). However, it is essential to point out the various limitations of the study. First, neither the questionnaire nor the interview asked about the amount of time the children spent in their child care arrangements. Moreover, only measures of social and psychological functioning were used, while Long and Long (1982) demonstrated that fear might be an important characteristic of latchkey children. Finally, the school-age care arrangements may not be the only influence on children's development and adjustment; parents' attitudes and the parent-child relationship may also be important.

Self-care, adult-supervised and friend's homes. In response to the study by Rodman et al. (1985), which included only those children who usually go home after

school, Steinberg (1986) developed another well-known study on self-care children. In this particular study, the author raised the issue that not all self-care situations are the same and as a result, all children are affected in different ways by their self-care experiences. The subjects who participated in the experiment were young adolescents in grades six, eight, and nine (i.e., aged between ten- to sixteen-years). Also, seven categories of children were included: children home with a parent, an adult or an older sibling, children supervised at a neighbor's home, children supervised at a friend's home, children supervised at school, children unsupervised at home, children unsupervised at a friend's home and children unsupervised or « hanging out ». The variations in after-school experiences were examined, where susceptibility to peer pressure in hypothetical antisocial situations was addressed. It was noted that young adolescents' self-reported susceptibility to peer pressure to engage in antisocial activity is a significant predictor of their actual antisocial behavior (Steinberg, 1986). Surprisingly, the results demonstrated that older adolescents were less likely to be in adult-care and more likely to participate in school-sponsored after-school activities. Moreover, adolescents whose mothers were working full-time were more likely to be supervised, either at a friend's house or at home, than adolescents whose mothers were employed part-time or not at all. Furthermore, a first comparison of self-care children and children cared for by an adult at home or an older sibling was not significant in terms of susceptibility to peer pressure. However, when comparing young adolescents supervised by adults with adolescents on their own, girls in self-care arrangements were more susceptible to peer pressure and to engaged in antisocial activities than adult-supervised peers. Another set of comparisons was performed between adolescents who were home alone, those unsupervised at a

friend's house and those unsupervised while « hanging out ». The results demonstrated that adolescents on their own and not at home (e.g., at a friend's house), were more susceptible to peer pressure. Therefore, the more removed the young adolescent was from an adult after school, the more susceptible he was to peer pressure. The authors pursued their investigation by hypothesizing that young adolescents spending time in school-age care arrangements in which susceptibility to peer pressure was high, were less susceptible to peer pressure if they had been raised in authoritative families. Finally, Steinberg (1986) concluded that variations in setting within a latchkey population - variations in setting in which self-care takes place, variations in the extent to which absent parents maintain distal supervision and variations in child-rearing - might be more important than variations between adult-care and self-care.

On the other hand, Galambos and Maggs (1991) demonstrated that no marked differences were evident between self-care children and adult-care children on measures of peer involvement, problem behaviors, impulse control, mastery and coping as well as emotional tone. Sixth graders and their parents participated in the study by responding to a questionnaire. Four categories of school-age care arrangements were included in the study: adult care (i.e., parental supervision or presence of an adult at home and school-based child care), self-care at home, self-care at a friend's home, and self-care « hanging out ». Among girls, greater distance from adult supervision was linked to more contact with friends who got into trouble. Moreover, boys and girls away from adult supervision were more likely to report engaging in peer activities as opposed to the children under closer adult supervision. Also, early adolescent girls more distant from adult supervision and particularly those « hanging out », were more at risk for problem behavior, contacted

more deviant peers, and developed poorer self-image. Further analyses demonstrated that self-care adolescents staying at home were not different on any variable measured as compared to those in adult care. Therefore, support was given to Steinberg's (1986) insistence on the importance of assessing where unsupervised young adolescents spend their time. From these results, it appears that latchkey children are not at risk and that placing a child in self-care is not associated with negative consequences. However, a child spending unsupervised time away from home, might be more at-risk for problem behaviors, at least among girls. Therefore, parents should consider providing authoritative control (Steinberg, 1986) and assess the child's age, responsibility, previous relations with peers and knowledge about alternatives, such as school-age care programs (Galambos & Maggs, 1991).

Mother care, sitter-care, sibling care and centre care. Rather than examining levels of adult supervision and peer pressure, other research has examined the various forms of school-age care arrangements. In particular, one study contrasted self-care children with children in other forms of school-age care arrangements (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1988). Moreover, the authors were particularly interested in examining the diversity of after-school arrangements: mother care, sitter-care, centre care, or off-site child care. The authors pursued their discussion by outlining the importance of quality. Therefore, the authors mentioned that if the quality of the sitter or after-school programs was poor, or if adult supervision was differentially preferred by parents of difficult children, then children in sitter-care or centre care may not perform as well as latchkey children. The study compared third grade latchkey children to adult-care children and examined grades, children's feelings about themselves, discipline problems, peer

relations, teacher-child and parent-child relationships. The first analyses demonstrated that third grade children who attended formal school-age care programs or who were in sitter-care, received more negative peer nominations. The children in center care had lower math scores than children in mother-care, self-care, or sitter-care. Also, children attending formal school-age care programs had poorer GPA's than the other children. Moreover, an investigation conducted with the parents revealed that centre care children had poorer peer relationships than the mother-care children. It is interesting to note that the children who were enrolled in after-school programs, had more problems than latchkey children (i.e., they received more negative peer nominations, had lower academic grades, lower scores on standardized tests and had poorer conduct grades). Therefore, there was no evidence to conclude that self-care children did more poorly than the children returning home to their mothers. In fact, the latchkey children in the present study were not considered as at-risk. These results are consistent with Rodman et al. (1985) and with Steinberg (1986). However, it is important to note that these results have been questioned since the quality of the programs the children were enrolled in was very poor, which may have affected the school-age children in a negative way, the same way poor quality day care may affect preschool children (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1988).

Quality of the Programs

Although some studies showed no differences between children in self-care arrangements and adult-supervised care, others have indicated that the consequences of self-care vary in results, ranging from increased peer pressure (Steinberg, 1986; Galambos & Maggs, 1991), being more fearful (Long & Long, 1982) and experiencing more behavior problems (Vandell & Ramanan, 1991) to more television watching for

school-age children who are home alone (Posner & Vandell, 1994). On the other hand, studies have shown the positive consequences of attending a formal after-school program for certain children (e.g., better grades, work habits and peer relations, more advanced social skills). Therefore, school-based child care programs can offer a positive alternative to latchkey care as it could help school-age children do better academically and socially (e.g., learn social skills, form peer relationships), while presenting them with a range of activities to support their development of interests. However, it is essential to consider the importance of developmentally appropriate programs, as well as the quality aspect of the programs offered to the school-age population.

Developmentally appropriate programs. Many after-school programs address school-age children as one developmental group (Cloutier, 1990; Coleman et al., 1993). In fact, many of these programs have low enrollment for children between nine-and twelve-years of age. Fink (1986) postulated that it is because school-age children present strong resistance to what they perceive as baby-sitting. The nine-to twelve-year-olds are in fact, considered the drop-out group of school-based child care and often have more difficulties functioning in such services (Cloutier, 1990). However, one may question the developmental appropriateness of these programs, since the older school-age children demonstrate a certain resistance to participating in these programs. Therefore, it is interesting to raise this question: do school-based child care programs offer a developmentally appropriate curriculum for the population of nine-to twelve-year-olds? According to a survey conducted by Lalonde-Graton (1992), it appears that most school-based child care centres offer multi-age groups, where nine-to twelve-year-old children are a distinct group. However, it is interesting to note that 60 % of the school-based child

care programs in Quebec, did not offer any special curriculum for the nine-to twelve-year-olds that differs from what is offered to the six-to eight-year-olds (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Furthermore, in the centres where fewer than ten children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age were enrolled, 75% had no specific plans for this population (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Consequently, this should affect the satisfaction of the children and the likelihood that these children will want to drop out, especially in centres where there are no specific programs for this age group.

While developmentally appropriate practice for preschool children has been long established by the « National Association for the Education of Young Children », much more needs to be done for school-age care children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Efforts have been made to outline the importance of developmentally appropriate practice for after-school programs. In fact, the « Project Home Safe » published a second edition of the document entitled: « Developmentally appropriate practice in school-age child care programs » (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). However, the authors mentioned that research on school-age care programs is limited and therefore, directions and guidelines had to be extrapolated from theoretical thinking, from developmental research on school-age children and from practice. The same has been done in the present study.

Researchers, such as Baillargeon and Binette (1991) have reported that 63% of educators in school-based child care, stated that nine-to twelve-year-old children have specific needs and interests, which should be identified for the implementation of school-age care programs. Accordingly, the principles of the developmentally appropriate practice in school-age care programs outlined the importance of offering age-appropriate programs (i.e., activities congruent with the characteristics and dynamics of the child's

developmental stages) that will respond to the specific needs of that population (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). Furthermore, research has demonstrated the importance of offering individual programming, to denote responsiveness to each child's unique pattern and timing of growth. After-school programs should address several domains of the child's development: physical, cognitive, social, and emotional.

The developmentally appropriate practices in school-age care outlined seven important principles. To begin with, the program should provide resourceful, caring educators who understand the children. Secondly, programs should recognize the importance of peers for school-age children. In fact, when young children enter their middle childhood and early adolescence, their need to develop close relationships with their peers, becomes increasingly important (Click, 1994). Therefore, if the majority of their friends do not attend the school-based child care programs, it appears that the children may express a strong resistance to continue attending the program. Also, mixed-age grouping and same-aged grouping should be used to facilitate the children's social skills. In fact, older children may benefit from opportunities to exercise leadership skills in mixed-aged grouping (Stright & French, 1988), as well as practicing social skills (Katz, Evangelou, & Hartman, 1990). Another important principle stressed in the developmentally appropriate practice for school-age children is the importance of self-selection. In fact, children between nine-to twelve-years-of-age need flexibility in choosing their own activities. Moreover, they demand suggestion boxes, as a way to increase their decision-making power in their after-school program (Proulx, 1990). After-school programs should use positive guidance and discipline techniques to help the young adolescents develop self-control. The environment in which the children will

develop self-control is also very important. Proulx (1990) found that children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age wanted to have access to a room that was separated from the younger children. They wanted space to accommodate them individually, in small groups, or large groups, to help them facilitate activities and experiences. Elements such as private spaces, which include soft elements (e.g., pillows, beanbags), should be provided for the children. Finally, the school-age care program should contribute to all aspects of the school-age child's development, so that a positive self-concept and sense of independence may be reinforced. Children should be encouraged to participate in activities that encourage them to think, reason, question, and experiment.

School-age children in the upper end of the eight-to twelve-year-old range have different developmental needs than their younger peers. In fact, children entering middle childhood (i.e., children between 8- to 10-years-of-age) and pre-adolescence (i.e., children between 11- and 12-years-of-age) have very different needs. Since society tends to emphasize that adolescence is the most critical period of changes for children, the importance of middle childhood and pre-adolescence is often overlooked (Cloutier, 1990). Therefore, it is essential for after-school programs to consider the developmental needs of the older school-age children. While school-age children demand more independence and have a much greater capacity and desire for self-sufficiency, programs that focus on preschoolers will certainly be unable to respond to such demands (Coleman et al., 1989). Simply adding a room in a preschool child care centre for the school-age children will not meet the demands of this special population and if the different programs fail to design curricula that respond to these children's developmental needs, more and more children will continue to want to drop out (Zigler & Turner, 1982).

However, implementing developmentally appropriate programs for the specific needs of school-age children may increase the satisfaction of the children, as well as the quality of the programs offered.

Quality. The past decade has been characterized by the emergence of different studies examining the need for child care and the specific standards of quality associated with it, where the term quality 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 is also composed of important factors, such as the structural factors, global factors and human factors (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990). Structural factors include group size, centre size, caregiver training, and caregiver/child ratios. Such factors are important since it has been demonstrated that educators with an undergraduate training in early childhood education are an essential element of quality child care (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990). Kontos and Fiene (1987) have stated that capacity, group size, and ratios are structural characteristics that are most consistently related to any aspect of quality. Global factors, on the other hand, include the total child care environment such as the equipment, activities, atmosphere, routines, provision of adult needs, health and safety practices, and policies (Scarr et al., 1990). These factors are more difficult to measure, however, instruments such as the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (Harms et al., 1996) have been designed to accomplish this task. Finally, human factors are referred to as the warmth and attachment between the

caregiver and the children, and the director's support for the educators (Whitebook et al., 1990).

Much attention in the past research on quality has been directed to the care of pre-school children, and the school-age children have been neglected (Zigler & Turner, 1982). At first, the effects of child care on children's development were of interest in research, discussions, and debates. The first attempts to examine the developmental effects of child care, compared group child care versus maternal care, where researchers attempted to identify any detrimental effects on children's development (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978). Then, a variety of studies identified important variations in terms of quality in the different settings studied. As a result, another wave of research emerged, where researchers began to be interested in determining how differences in quality were related to different child outcomes (Clarke-Stewart, 1987; Pence, 1989; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990). The most recent studies have examined the impact of child care outcomes while including different important variables, such as family and child characteristics.

For many years, efforts and energies have been spent on preschool education. The results of such efforts at the preschool level have created better standards, especially in terms of quality, in that particular field. As a result, there is general agreement about the kinds of experiences and basic types of materials (e.g., sand and water) that should be provided in preschools (Zigler & Turner, 1982). However, there really is no general shared understanding of what makes a good quality school-age care program, especially for the older children. In fact, school-age care programs are limited and when available,

are often undifferentiated from preschool programs (Nieting, 1983; Lalonde-Graton, 1985).

Very little research on quality has been done in the area of school-age child care. Most research that has focused on the effects of infant, toddler and preschool child care on children's growth and development, has demonstrated that when children participate in good quality child care, there are no negative outcomes (Young, 1994). On the other hand, poor quality child care has been shown to have negative consequences for young children's development (Doherty, 1991). A variety of studies have demonstrated that high quality programs have a positive influence on children's development, while the lower quality centers have negative consequences (Phillips, McCartney, & Scarr, 1987; Phillips & Howes, 1987; Howes & Phillips, 1989; Zaslow, 1991). It may be assumed that this will be the same for children in school-age care.

Previous studies on child care quality have outlined the importance of high quality settings. For example, McCartney (1984) stated that preschool children attending programs with poorer physical facilities and fewer language experiences, exhibited poorer language development than children from programs that were better on these dimensions. In fact, various positive correlations between attending quality child care centres and children's language performance have been outlined. Children appeared to profit from a verbally stimulating environment in which the caregivers and children frequently engaged in conversation (Phillips et al., 1987). Moreover, the most consistent finding in the area of language development suggests that high quality day care centres facilitated children's language development (McCartney, 1984; Phillips et al., 1987; Howe & Jacobs, 1991). Knowledge of the quality of child care provided significantly

improved predictions of vocabulary comprehension in four-year-old children (Schliecker, White, & Jacobs, 1991).

Other researchers have also examined different aspects of quality affecting the social development of preschoolers. For example, Phillips, et al. (1987) found that children from better quality programs were more considerate, sociable, task-oriented and less anxious than children from poorer quality programs. Moreover, Vandell and Powers (1983) examined four-year-old children in different quality settings. The results showed that children in better quality programs had more positive interactions with their teachers, while children in poorer quality centres spent more time in unoccupied behaviors. Moreover, McCartney et al. (1982) mentioned that higher quality child care environments predicted higher levels of social behaviors, while Phillips et al. (1987) noted that social development was enhanced by higher quality care. Furthermore, it was found that children who attended high quality child care programs demonstrated more interest and participation than the children with no day care experience (Jacobs et al., 1991). Therefore, it is clear from these previous examinations that quality of care plays a crucial role in the development of children. These results obtained in other areas of child care have guided professionals and researchers to determine the quality criteria and the relationship between the quality of school-age care and children's outcome measures. While such findings on quality have been demonstrated to have an important impact on children's development, it is assumed that similar findings would be obtained for school-age children.

Child development experts and child care professionals have long agreed about the basic aspects of good caregiving. In fact, dimensions of quality have been

extensively documented to include: health and safety, positive adult-child interactions, developmentally appropriate curriculum, limited group size, age-appropriate caregiver-child ratios, indoor and outdoor facilities (i.e., space and furnishings) and staff training (Harms et al., 1996; Caldwell, 1984; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994; Gagné, 1993; Lalonde-Graton, 1995b; Lalonde-Graton, 1995c; Zigler & Lang, 1991). More specifically, Phillips and Howes (1987) stated that staff-child ratios were important predictors of quality. In addition, Vandell and Powers (1983) have mentioned that quality of care was associated with levels of teacher training, amount of space per child and staff-child ratios. Others have also reached similar conclusions (Phillips et al., 1987; Whitebook et al., 1989).

Instruments of quality evaluating preschool child care centers, such as Le Kaléidoscope de la Qualité, also outlined similar criteria related to quality programs (Gagné, 1993). This instrument was designed after studying different documents concerning the evaluation of quality child care (Harms & Clifford, 1980; Whitebook, et al., 1990; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). In fact, documents such as the Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) have outlined the specific quality criteria to produce developmentally appropriate programs for children from birth-to eight-years-of-age. Furthermore, instruments such as the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms & Clifford, 1980) have been widely used, to evaluate quality in child care settings. Again, similar quality criteria are outlined in this document (Harms & Clifford, 1980).

While most quality instruments focus on preschool child care settings and not specifically on school-age care programs, it is essential to mention La Qualité en Dix

Dimensions (Baillargeon & Binette, 1994), a quality instrument designed to help school-based child care programs assess the quality of the services they offered. In this document, quality criteria are identified for school-age care programs, which include: staff training, curriculum, administration of the program, relationships between educators and children, relationships between educators and parents, relationships between educators, relationships between the school-based child care program, the community and the school board, health and security, physical environment and nutrition (Baillargeon & Binette, 1994). Furthermore, Harms et al. (1996) developed an adaptation of the ECERS, the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS), to assess the quality of after-school settings. The SACERS is the newest scale in the series of program assessment instruments that originated with the Early Childhood Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms et al., 1996, p.1). The instrument was developed using resources such as the Quality Criteria For School-Age Child Care Programs (Albrecht, 1991) and two other important quality instruments, Assessing School-Age Child Care Quality (ASQ) (O'Connor, 1991) and Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs (Abbot-Shim & Sibley, 1987). The SACERS is composed of 43 items under six different subscales: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure and staff development (Harms et al., 1996). A training manual is also included to train observers who will be using this quality instrument. Furthermore, the after-school centres are rated for each element and are given a score ranging from inadequate (1) lack of care that compromise children's development, minimal (3) indicating custodial care, good (5) describing the basic dimensions of developmentally appropriate practice, and excellent (7) referring to high quality (Harms et al., 1996).

The point of these efforts to define quality child care is to insure a safe and healthy place where children can continue their course of development while away from home. In fact, among the many institutions that affect children's development, next to the family, are school and day care, which are crucial in the various aspects of the developing child (Bornstein & Lamb, 1992). Such institutions have the responsibility of providing for children's emotional, social, language, cognitive, and physical development. In fact, professional child care must address all aspects of development, with the overall goal of creating a growth-fostering environment for children (Caldwell, 1984). Since school-age children spend up to 30 hours per week in care arrangements, the importance of quality should not be overlooked (Young, 1994; Schindler et al., 1987). Moreover, quality child care services should be provided by trained staff, who are aware of the different developmental needs of school-age children, in an environment that will foster the child's development. Thus this question arises: does such a definition of quality criteria necessarily lead to parents' and children's satisfaction?

Satisfaction

Parental satisfaction. Previous research in preschool settings has shown that no matter what category of dissatisfaction parents experienced with previous child care arrangements, they subsequently chose higher quality centres than those who did not experience dissatisfaction (Bradbard, Brown, Endsley, & Readdick, 1994). Moreover, it is essential to note that the characteristics of care that lead to parental satisfaction remain largely unknown (Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991). However, one recent study conducted by Phillips et al. (1990) examined the relationship between independently obtained ratings of quality of care in centres and mothers' perceived satisfaction with care. They

demonstrated that low staff turnover was strongly associated with satisfaction. Others have also pointed out specific characteristics, which appear to be associated with either positive or negative aspects of child care arrangements (Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994). In fact, parents mentioned characteristics such as convenience of location, flexibility of hours and a loving environment to be highly associated with their satisfaction. Communication, availability, and attentiveness have also been identified as factors related to satisfaction (Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994). Furthermore, Roche and Camasso (1993) stated that according to the choice model, the satisfaction that parents derive from a before and after-school arrangement is considered as a function of a family's structure and resources, the price of the arrangement, the perceived quality of the arrangement and the consumer preferences and tastes.

Erdwins and Buffardi (1994) examined maternal satisfaction using three types of day care arrangements for their preschoolers: home day care providers, day care centres, and au pairs. They examined how satisfied the mothers reported being with different aspects of the type of child care arrangement they were using. In their experiment, Erdwins and Buffardi (1994) designed a questionnaire to measure parental satisfaction with child care. A twenty-item questionnaire was constructed based on a review of previous literature, focusing on a variety of aspects of the day care arrangement including: qualities of the caregiver (i.e., disciplinary style, dependability, responsiveness to suggestion), the setting (i.e., location, safety, cleanliness, number of children present), fees charged and the policies about a sick child, parental visit and flexibility about drop-off and pick-up times. Since the scale used contained items focusing on satisfaction with flexibility of drop-off and pick-up schedules, willingness to care for a sick child, and

dependability of the caregiver, it seemed likely that these dissatisfied mothers were reacting to what are inherent characteristics of most day care centres (i.e., greater structuring of policies about what is and is not allowed and frequent staff turnover) (Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994). Finally, mothers using au pairs, expressed significantly greater satisfaction with their caregiver's attentiveness than the mothers using other types of care.

Previous research has consistently found that the majority of parents of preschoolers reported being satisfied with their child care arrangements (Erdwins & Buffardi,1994). For example, Sonenstein and Wolf (1991) have stated that the general population of parents (i.e., 90% to 96%), usually report being highly satisfied with their child care arrangements. Most of the studies either assessed overall satisfaction or a single rating of general satisfaction. Even though measures of parental satisfaction with child care arrangements might be greatly improved by asking parents to assess more aspects of the arrangements, it is not known how their ratings may correlate, if at all, with independent measures of child care quality (Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994). In fact, parents may not necessarily know what quality means to professional and may have difficulty rating their satisfaction according to well-established criteria.

Endsley and Bradbard (1987) have identified the need to assess what parents perceive as the specific advantages and disadvantages of the different types of child care arrangements, to identify parental satisfaction more clearly. Therefore, the current study also assesses parental level of satisfaction, by asking them to describe the main advantages and disadvantages of their children's after-school arrangement. Endsley and Bradbard (1987) studied parental dissatisfaction with previous child care arrangements,

where they examined categories such as lack of educational stimulation, lack of peer stimulation, lack of caregiver dependability, caregiver neglect, and discrepant caregiver/parental values (Endsley & Bradbard, 1987). The results demonstrated that parents were most dissatisfied with home day care providers on these specific categories. Since most studies on parental satisfaction were conducted with parents of preschoolers, it would be important to examine whether such results would be similar with parents of children attending school-based child care. In fact, no studies have been found in the literature that addressed parental satisfaction of school-age children.

Children's satisfaction. The absence of studies examining children's satisfaction motivated the present study. It is important to mention, that two Quebec investigators have looked at children's needs and have identified what school-age children desire in a school-based child care program (Proulx, 1990 ; Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Therefore, even though no specific studies have been conducted examining children's satisfaction, their research may shed light on what children's satisfaction would be, as well as what factors would lead these children to want to drop out of the program.

Lalonde-Graton (1992) conducted a large study in Quebec to examine the current situation of older children enrolled in school-based child care programs. Coordinators were interviewed and questionnaires were sent to educators, parents and children in a number of school-based child care centres in Quebec. The main goal of the study was to identify what children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age want, where they were after school, what their parents wanted and what Quebec society had to offer them (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). The first part of the survey revealed that nine-to twelve-year-olds were a concern in school-based child care. However, most of the educators in this study,

mentioned that very few efforts were made to meet the needs of the older school-age children.

In this study, it was reported that in 60% of school-based child care programs, the nine-to twelve-year-olds had their own room (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Although this appears to be positive, it is important to note that 40% of the nine-to twelve-year-olds shared a classroom with the younger children even though their needs and interests were very different. In 94% of the programs, the children were allowed to use the gymnasium, 52% had access to the library and 49% had a polyvalent room. Only 37% of the programs had a reserved quiet place, 26% had an art room, and 21% had a music room. Finally, 5% of school-based child care had no room other than the one they occupied .

It is interesting to note that only 44% of the educators revealed that working with nine-to twelve-year-olds was their own choice (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). This may indicate a lack of understanding and training from the educators, concerning the school-age children's specific needs. However, as a result of the low rate of response to this question (i.e., 26% did not answer), it was not possible to get an accurate picture of the situation (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Therefore, according to this survey, it is difficult to establish if educators working with nine-to twelve-year-olds had a choice of working with this age group or not.

The second part of the study conducted by Lalonde-Graton (1992) consisted of interviews, which took place in different school-based child care programs. These interviews revealed that educators believed it was difficult to have nine-to twelve-year-olds in the centre, because the nine-to twelve-year-olds found the program « babyish » or « boring » (Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Some coordinators indicated that they had modified

their programs to better meet the demands of the older school-age children. However, it was noted that most nine-to twelve-year-old children attended the programs because their parents gave them no choice. In some instances, the program coordinators mentioned that the nine-to twelve-year-olds were not made welcome because they caused more problems than younger children. Some school-based child care programs even refused access to nine-to twelve-year-old children, except for those who had been enrolled since kindergarten (Lalonde-Graton, 1992).

Another interesting study, which was conducted by Proulx (1990), attempted to identify the perceptions and needs of children between nine-to twelve-years-of-age about their situation in school-based child care centres. Proulx (1990) conducted semi-structured interviews with the children attending school-based child care programs in Quebec. A total of seventy-one children (i.e., 29 boys and 42 girls) participated in the study from a total of nine schools. The interviews with the children revealed interesting points.

At first, the nine-to twelve-year-olds mentioned that most of the activities in school-based child care were below their cognitive level. In fact, they specified that they often had to perform the same activities as the younger children. As a result, the young adolescents mentioned that the educators should be more responsive to their needs, and indicated that they were not consulted enough when it was time to decide what activities they would be performing with the group. As a solution, the nine-to twelve-year-olds recommended implementing a suggestion system, where a suggestion box would be available in the centre. Also, the children mentioned that they needed activities to let their energy out after school, but also wanted some time to do their homework. This

would allow them to go home without worrying about having to finish their assignments and as a result, the children would be less fearful about getting into discussions with their teachers as to why they did not have the time to finish their homework.

Concerning their relationship with their educators, the nine-to twelve-year-old children interviewed specified that they wished to have a relationship based on confidence in which they asked for respect and responsibilities. The term, responsibilities, was frequently mentioned by the young adolescents, where they explained they would be capable of taking care of the younger children on some occasions (e.g., organized activities, supervised play periods). Moreover, the children mentioned that they needed a more distant type of supervision, where some of their activities did not required as close supervision as the younger children usually required. As a result, the nine-to twelve-year-olds felt that their educators did not respect their needs and opinions, and they thought that the children between six-and eight-years-of-age were preferred and favored over them.

In terms of space, the children wanted their own room, which they could organize as they wished. They also wanted to be separated from the younger children. Some of the reasons for this were that they felt the younger children did not take care of the materials and they wished they could play their own games (e.g., Monopoly, Destin) with their same-aged peers. Furthermore, it appeared that the children interviewed were dissatisfied with the activities presented to them.

Even though the studies conducted by Lalonde-Graton (1992) and Proulx (1990), did not directly examine children's satisfaction with their after-school program, such findings can be used as a guide to identify the factors that will increase children's

satisfaction. Moreover, if children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age are not able to attend programs that respond to their needs, they are more likely to be dissatisfied, and to want to drop out of these programs. Therefore, identifying those factors that cause these children to want to drop out of the school-based child care programs would shed light on what type of programs the nine-to twelve-year-olds require in order to be satisfied.

Statement of Purpose

Researchers such as Coleman, et al. (1989) have addressed the issue of the lack of research on the correlates of school-age care. Therefore, the present study will attempt to examine children's desire to drop out of school-age care programs as well as children's and parents' satisfaction with school-age care. More specifically, it will examine the factors related to children's desire to drop out of, and their satisfaction with school-based child care programs. Theorizing about the influences of such factors is a complex process where one must consider studying the larger picture, including family factors (i.e., Hollingshead Factor Index Socioeconomic Status), and environmental factors. In fact, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that development takes place within a multi-layered context, where external factors, such as other institutions influence the way families interact, which in turn, influences the children. Figure 1 illustrates the ecological model of the variables under investigation. This conceptual framework underlying the current research relies on the ecological model emphasizing the importance of a set of environmental structures, each distinguished from the others and all interacting to provide the overall developmental context. The structure most directly involved with the developing child, and the center of the current study is the after-school program in which the influence of the director, educators and the children attending is crucial. Next to the

after-school program, is the family, another important social system to be examined. The family system is composed of parents, siblings and relatives, who also play a role in the child's development. Finally, more distant from the child, but influential, is the community, including the economic and cultural institutions. Therein, since all these factors are influential (some more directly then others) in the children's environment these elements emerged as central to the examination of the children's desire to drop out and their satisfaction with after-school care programs.

Figure 1. Variables under investigation based on the ecological model
(Levels of influence on nine-to twelve-year-olds' desire to drop out)
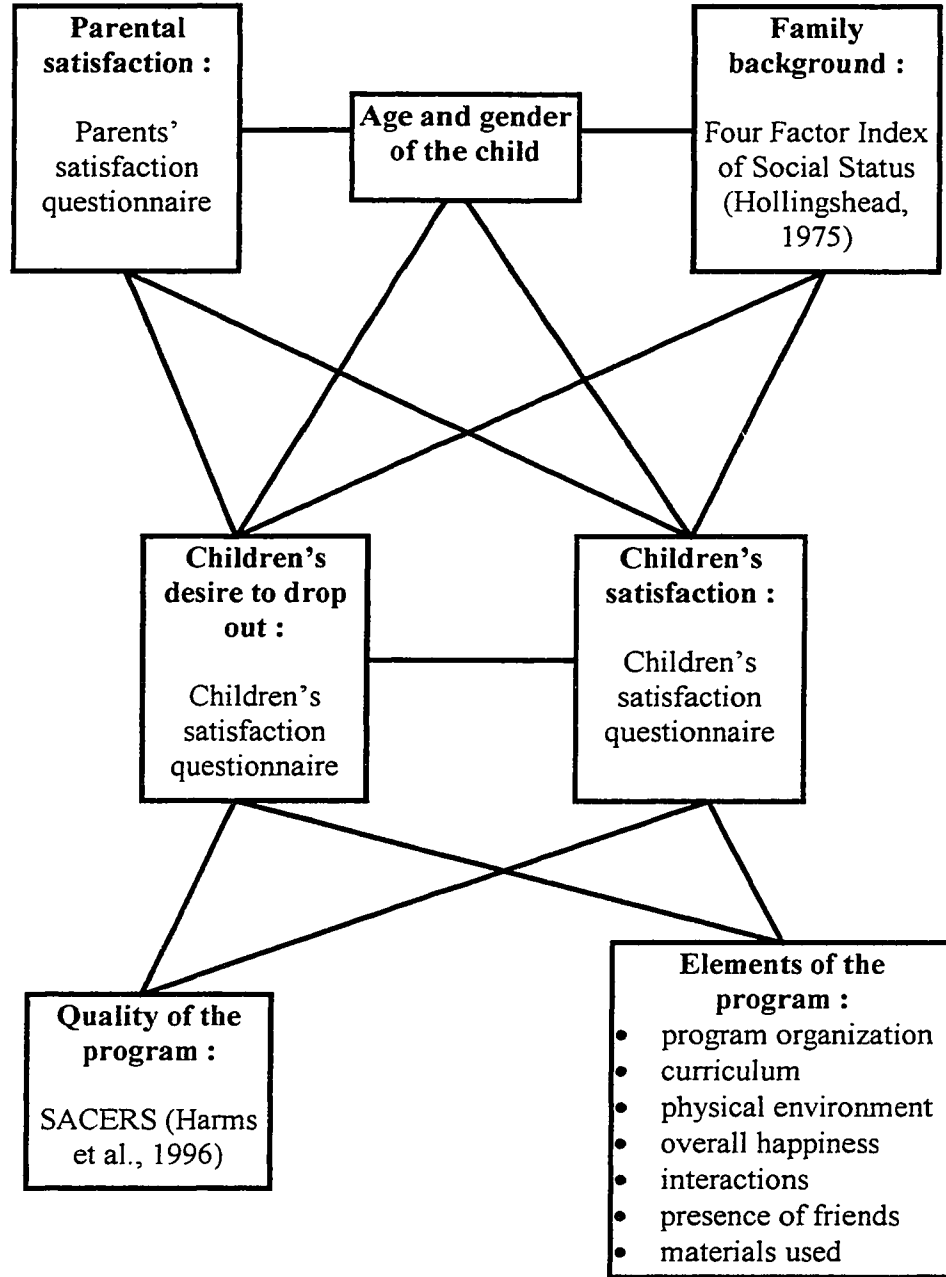
The Present Study

The present study has three main objectives. The first is to describe the nine-to twelve-year-olds' situation in school-based child care programs, as well as to assess the quality of these settings. The second is to identify the factors related to the children's desire to drop out of after-school programs, by closely examining children's satisfaction, as a function of their age and gender, the elements of choice, the reasons why they attend the centre, the quality of the setting, and their satisfaction. The third objective of the study is identify factors related to children's and parents' satisfaction with school-based child care programs.

In particular, the study is focusing on the nine-to twelve-year-old children's desire to drop out of after-school programs, as well as their satisfaction with school-based child care programs. In fact, a number of studies have outlined the lack of appropriate programs and the desire of these children to drop out of the after-school programs (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990). Since no definite factors have been identified in the literature as to why these children wish to drop out of after-school programs at this age, the present study attempts to identify such factors.

The value of this research is the identification of the different factors motivating the children to want to drop out of after-school programs in order to be able to stay home alone unsupervised (i.e., latchkey children). Since a variety of studies (Vandell & Ramanan, 1991; Long & Long, 1982; Steinberg, 1986; Galambos & Maggs, 1991) have identified the problematic behaviors associated with self-care arrangements, the identification of the drop-out factors may help in the prevention of the latchkey phenomenon. Moreover, the identification of these factors may contribute to the

development of programs better adapted to the needs of the nine-to twelve-year-olds, which may decrease the likelihood of these children wanting to drop out of the programs. Therefore, the analysis of this data set will lead to the creation of recommendations regarding after-school programming for this age group.

Research Questions

Since the first objective of this study is to describe the nine-to twelve-year-olds' situation in school-based child care programs, the first question to be answered is: What is the current situation in school-based child care programs for the nine-to twelve-year-old population? More specifically: What activities are they doing? Is there a specific program for this age group? Are activities age-appropriate? What are the favorite activities of the nine-to twelve-year-olds?

With respect to the current situation in school-based child care programs and their quality, it is predicted that higher quality programs will have higher enrollment for the nine-to twelve-year-old group, as they might offer activities that are better suited to the needs of this age group.

The second question to be answered is why nine-to twelve-year-old children are dropping out of school-based child care programs and opting for being home alone (i.e., latchkey status). Based on a review of literature examining the needs of children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age, this particular age group has been considered the « drop-out group » of the school-based child care programs (Cloutier, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990). Therefore, it would be essential to examine which factors are related to an increased desire to drop out of these programs. While research has clearly determined the demands of that specific population (Proulx, 1990; Lalonde-

Graton, 1992), the identification of such needs is used as a guide to better determine the children's desire to drop out. It is predicted that children will be less likely to want to drop out of the after-school programs if their needs are met in the school-based child care programs, if the quality is higher, and if they are more satisfied. The study will also examine elements of choice, since researchers have demonstrated the importance of this factor for this particular age group (Proulx, 1990; Lalonde-Graton, 1992). Also, examination of demographic factors, as related to the desire to drop out of the programs will be conducted. Further investigation with the use of parental phone interviews will allow the verification of the number of children who dropped out during the year, the number of children planning to return to the centre the following year (i.e., according to the parents) and the number of children who will not return the following year.

With respect to the desire to drop out, it is predicted that children will want to drop out of the program if the quality is lower. Therefore, centres rated as inadequate or of minimal quality will have children with a higher desire to drop out of these programs than program in good quality centres. Moreover, it is hypothesized that the older the children (i.e., in the nine-to twelve-year-old range) the more they would want to leave the program. The predicted reasons for young adolescents to want to drop out of school-based child care programs will be closely related to what Proulx (1990) and Lalonde-Graton (1992) have identified in their studies (e.g., lack of self-choice, lack of programs adapted to the cognitive level of pre-adolescents, lack of flexibility from the educators, addressing the population of nine-to twelve-year-olds in the same manner as the younger children).

Thirdly, the study will attempt to investigate the factors related to children's and parents' satisfaction. The work of Lalonde-Graton (1992) and Proulx (1990) will be useful in predicting the children's satisfaction. Analyses will be conducted to identify the factors related to children's satisfaction. While a limited number of researchers have investigated children's satisfaction, the current study will attempt to identify the potential effect of factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status and materials used at the centre. With respect to children's satisfaction, it is predicted that it will be high if the quality of the setting is high.

In addition, factors related to parental satisfaction will also be examined. While previous studies have examined parental satisfaction with their preschool arrangements (Bradbard, Brown, Endsley, & Readdick, 1994; Endsley & Bradbard 1987; Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994; Phillips, Howes, Galinsky, & Whitebook, 1990; Roche & Camasso 1993; Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991; Winkelstein, 1981), no such research has been conducted in the area of after-school care. Moreover, since previous research consistently found that the majority of parents of preschoolers always reported being satisfied with their child care arrangements (Erdwins & Buffardi,1994; Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991), it is assumed that parents will have similar opinions regarding their children's current after-school arrangement. Also, the present study will examine several variables that may be correlated with parental satisfaction (e.g., curriculum offered, relationship between parent and caregiver, relationship between caregiver and children).

With respect to parental satisfaction, it is predicted that their satisfaction should be high, since research with preschool parents has demonstrated a clear tendency for parents to be highly satisfied (i.e., 90% to 96%) (Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991). On the

other hand, it will be interesting to examine the relationship between children's and parents' satisfaction. Finally, it is assumed that parental satisfaction will be high if the quality of the setting is high.

Finally, one of the global objectives of the study is to examine the univariate and multivariate relationships between the individual variables in the study as a prelude to testing the model related to them. First, the relationship of the age of the child, quality of the setting (i.e., as measured by the SACERS), program organization, curriculum, physical organization, elements of choice (i.e., all measured by the children's satisfaction questionnaire), socioeconomic status of the family (i.e., as measured by the Hollingshead) in the prediction of the desire to drop out will be examined. Therefore, analyses will be conducted to attempt to identify the overriding factors related to children's desire to drop out and children's satisfaction.

METHOD

Procedure

A total of 33 school-based child care directors (i.e., 9 English centres, 24 French centres) were contacted by phone to explain the purpose of the present study and to request their participation. As an incentive, the directors who agreed to participate were promised a list of the results and some recommendations regarding programming for nine to twelve-year-olds in school-age care programs. In total, 16 centres agreed to participate. However, 3 centres were not included since the return rate of the consent forms was very low (i.e., less than 4 responses returned per centre). After recruiting all the centres, the experimenter called the directors who agreed to participate in order to set up a meeting to answer any questions, as well as to distribute the letters of information

and the consent forms. Parental permission was obtained to allow the experimenter to:

(1) give the children a questionnaire concerning their satisfaction with their after-school program, (2) give the parents a questionnaire concerning their satisfaction with their child's school-based child care program and, (3) conduct a short phone interview (i.e., 5 minutes long) with one of the parents to examine the drop-out rate of the participating children. The experimenter invited the directors of the school-based child care programs to distribute the information letters and the consent forms to the parents and to ask them to return the forms to the centre the following week (Appendix A). An envelope was distributed to each of the centres, and parents were invited to drop in their consent forms into this envelope. One week later, the researcher phoned the directors to verify whether most of the consent forms were returned, and when the majority of the consent forms were returned, the experimenter set up another meeting to collect the consent forms.

During the December vacation, the experimenter send a thank-you letter to all the centres as well as a reminder note mentioning that they would be contacted again in January to begin the distribution of the questionnaires. Due to special circumstances (i.e., Ice storm January 1998), it was only possible to contact the schools again in February, and again an appointment was made with each director to distribute the children's questionnaires.

During the distribution of the children's questionnaires the experimenter met with the children. All the children whose parents had signed the consent forms were escorted to one room by the educators, who then left to take care of the non-participating children. After having been introduced by the educator to the children, the experimenter explained to the children she was attempting to collect information on their school-age care

program from them. The children were invited to ask questions, all of which were answered. Then, the researcher distributed a pencil to every child along with the questionnaire. While doing this, the experimenter ensured that each child received the correctly identified questionnaire, using a special attendance list with all the identification numbers. The experimenter read the questions one by one to the children and invited the children to answer on the sheets provided. The experimenter also answered any questions the children had during the completion of the questionnaire, and made herself accessible to the children by circulating throughout the room. After the completion of the questionnaires, the children were given the pencil as a thank-you gift. Also, the children were given a self-addressed envelope with the same identification number and a questionnaire to be filled in by their parents. The children were asked to inform their parents that the questionnaire was to be returned through the mail the following week. During this visit to the centre, the experimenter also gave the director and the main educators of the nine-to twelve-year-olds the questionnaires in a self-addressed envelope to be returned to the university in care of the researcher.

After all the schools were visited to distribute the children's questionnaires, the directors were contacted again to set up an appointment to assess the quality of the centre. Again, all school-age care programs were visited. This visit consisted of a 30-minute interview with the director and a visit to the centre. During this visit, the experimenter used the SACERS (Harms et al., 1996) to assess the quality of the setting. On average, each visit lasted about 3 hours. It is important to mention that the experimenter received intensive training on how to use the SACERS. Finally, in one-

quarter of the centres, the researcher was accompanied by her thesis supervisor, who rated the centres independently. This procedure was used to insure interrater reliability.

During the month of May, all parents who had agreed to participate were contacted to conduct a phone interview. In this phone interview the researcher attempted to identify whether the child would be returning or not, the reasons why the child or the parents expressed a desire to drop out of the school-based child care programs. During the phone interview the parents were asked if their children were still attending the after-school program and if they were going to re-enroll their children for the following year, and to explain the reasons that motivated their decision.

Finally, the school-based child care programs were send another thank-you letter, reminding them that they were going to receive the results of the study shortly. In fact, sending the results of the study to the centres for the parents, caregivers, and directors who participated insured debriefing at the end of the study. A short letter was distributed outlining the most important results and recommendations as to how the quality of the programs for the nine-to twelve-year-olds could be improved. Therefore, one thank you letter and one letter containing the most important results and recommendations were sent to the director of each centre, who was given the responsibility of distributing the information to the participating educators and families.

Participants

A total of 117 families agreed to participate in the present study, where 111 children completed the questionnaire (N= 111, boys n= 52, girls n= 59, M age = 9.88, SD age = .80). A total of 92 parent questionnaires were returned to the experimenter and

a total of 114 parents were contacted to conduct phone interview. The return rate was estimated at 79.49%.

The participants were selected from school-based child care programs on the South Shore of Montreal. The different programs were selected from the booklet « Où faire garder nos enfants? », and 32 centres were called to request their participation in the present study. Also, centres were welcomed to participate via the magazine Gardavue of « L'Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec ». However, only one school-based child care program responded to the ad and was included in the study. A total of 16 school-based child care programs responded positively to the phone calls made by the researcher.

In order to be accepted in the current study, the school-based child care programs selected were required to meet the following criteria: (1) a program offered for nine-to twelve-year-olds, (2) a minimum of ten children aged between nine-and twelve-years-of-age attending the after-school program, (3) a school-based child care program located on the South Shore of Montreal and, (4) a minimum of at least 4 positive consent forms. Finally, an effort was made to include programs with parents from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and from both the Anglophone and Francophone sectors. However, even though Anglophone schools were contacted, all of them declined the invitation to participate in the study and as a result, all the participating schools were Francophone, with the exception of one bilingual school.

Measures

Two different questionnaires were used to measure children's and parents' satisfaction (Appendix B and Appendix C). Parents were also contacted by phone to

determine the drop-out rate (i.e., parental phone interview) (Appendix D). Information was also collected with the use of questionnaires, from the educators and directors of the school-based child care programs, to better complete the quality assessment of the centres (Appendix E and Appendix F). Quality assessments were conducted with a reliable measure, the SACERS (Harms et al., 1996) (Appendix G).

School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). The school-age care programs were rated in terms of global quality. The SACERS (Appendix G), which was developed by Harms et al. (1996) was used to assess the overall quality of the programs. This quality assessment instrument is composed of 43 items grouped under six subscales: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure and staff development. These items were judged by experts in the education field and were rated as important elements for quality assessment. The scores attributed to each item range from: 1 to 7, 1 being (inadequate), 3 (minimal), 5 (good), and 7 (excellent). The scores on each dimension are summed and the total score is obtained to represent the overall measure of quality. The authors of the scale consider a total score that is in the inadequate range to be indicative of dangerous care, a score in the minimal range to represent custodial care, a score within the good range to meet children's developmental needs and finally, a score in the excellent range to provide high quality care.

Internal consistency of the SACERS was assessed as .95, indicating good to excellent internal consistency, except for program structure. Moreover, interrater reliability was good to excellent with a total score of .83. Content validity was described as excellent. Interrater reliability for the current study was assessed and was calculated as to be .91. To calculate the interrater reliability for this study, one fourth of the centres

were rated by the experimenter with her supervisor ($\underline{n}$ = 4). These reliability ratings were conducted sporadically throughout the study in order to maintain the focus and to avoid observer drift.

Children's satisfaction questionnaire. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the children to assess their satisfaction with their after-school program (Appendix B). Since no children's satisfaction questionnaire was found in the literature, the present questionnaire was designed based on findings from different articles and research regarding children's needs in school-based child care programs (Lalonde-Graton, 1992; Proulx, 1990; Baillargeon & Binette, 1991).

The first section of the questionnaire asked children to provide demographic information. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions, concerning the children and their participation in the school-based child care program (e.g., elements of choice in the program, materials and equipment used at the centre, desire to re-enroll the centre the next year). Finally, the last section was composed of a five-point rating Likert-type scale, in which the children were asked to rate their satisfaction on different elements of the programs (e.g., Are you happy with the number of things you are learning at your centre?). That is, to examine the differences in children's satisfaction by investigating their satisfaction concerning: (1) the program organization, (2) curriculum, (3) physical environment, (4) relationship with educators, and (5) overall satisfaction. The children were required to rate their satisfaction by coloring the corresponding square on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = very unhappy to 5 = very happy, or 0 = not able to answer (see Appendix B).

Parental satisfaction questionnaire. The parents were also invited to complete a questionnaire, which they received via their children (Appendix C). This questionnaire was based on a compilation approach, where different research articles examining parental satisfaction with child care were used (Bradbard et al., 1994; Endsley & Bradbard, 1987; Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994; Roche & Camasso 1993; Sonenstein & Wolf, 1991; Winkelstein, 1981). Each participating parent was asked to answer the satisfaction questionnaire concerning their children's after-school arrangement. The first section of the questionnaire asked parents to provide demographic information. In the second section of the questionnaire, the parents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied or 0 = not able to answer.

Parental phone interview. Parents ($\underline{N}$= 114) were contacted by phone and the researcher introduced herself and reminded the parents that they had signed a consent form to participate in the current study. Parents were asked if their child was still attending the school-age care program and if they were re-enrolling their child for the following year. Also, the parents were asked about the main reasons that motivated their decision. Finally, parents were asked if they believed their children would be more likely to want to attend the centre if the activities were more age-appropriate in the eyes of their child. The phone interview lasted approximately five minutes (Appendix H).

Educator and director questionnaire. In order to complete the quality assessment of the centres, the directors were interviewed and given a questionnaire to be completed (Appendix E) and the educators were also given a short questionnaire regarding their experience with nine-to twelve-year-old children, their training and their

thoughts about the drop-out rate of these children from the school-based child care programs. The educators completed a short questionnaire (Appendix F), designed to complete the quality assessment of the SACERS. As suggested in the SACERS, the questionnaire gathered information on structural factors, such as adult/child ratios and educator's training. Also, the educators were asked about their previous experience while working with children between nine-and twelve-years of age. Finally, some questions were asked regarding their work with the children of that particular age group. For example, the educators were asked to determine the needs of children between nine-to twelve-years-of-age and whether or not these needs were met in their program. Also, questions were included to discuss the drop-out rate of that population.

In order to better complete the quality assessment of the center, the directors were interviewed to learn more about the centre and its functioning. They were also given a short questionnaire, which enabled the experimenter to verify the training of the educators for the nine-to twelve-year-olds as well as the adult/child ratios of the center.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in three sections. First, descriptive data for the whole sample are presented, including descriptive data for family characteristics, as well as participating after-school programs (i.e., quality of the program, training of directors and educators). In addition, this section includes a description of the current situation of nine-to twelve-year-olds in school-based child care programs (e.g., their favorite activities, the materials they can use in the centres). Secondly, since the main focus of the current research was to examine children's desire to drop out of after-school programs, preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if group differences existed

in the return and the drop-out group, according to different variables (e.g., age, gender, quality of the setting). Therefore, the second section addresses the identification of factors related to the children's desire to drop out of school-age care programs. Finally, in the last section, the results of the identification of factors related to the satisfaction of children and parents are presented.

Descriptive Data

The total sample consisted of 111 children, from eight-to twelve-years-of-age (M = 9.88 yr., SD = .89), where 53% of the children were females (n = 59) and 47% were males (n = 52). The children involved in the study spent an average of 14.21 hours in the school-based child care program (M = 14.21, SD = 4.68) with a range of 4 hours to 25 hours per week. In addition, ninety-two parents completed the questionnaire, 80.6% were mothers (n = 73) and almost all were married (79.3% of the total sample). The families participating in the study had an average of 1.89 children (M = 1.89, SD = .58) with a range of one to three children per family. The vast majority of mothers and fathers worked between 26 to 50 hours per week. A frequency table of the parents' education and occupation is presented in Table 1. The Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Socioeconomic Status scores for the parents ranged from a low of 12 to the maximum of 66, (M = 50.71, SD = 9.88). According to Hollingshead (1975), a score of 12 represents unskilled laborers, menial service workers and at the opposite end of the social strata, the maximum score of 66 is composed of major business people and professionals. The mean score obtained for this sample was 50.71, which falls within the social strata composed of medium business people, minor professionals and technical workers.

Table 1

Frequency table of family demographics information

Variable	Level	f	%
Mother's education	High school	13	14.1
	CEGEP	26	28.3
	Undergraduate University	41	44.6
	Graduate University	12	13.0
Father's education	High school	17	18.9
	CEGEP	20	22.2
	Undergraduate University	40	44.4
	Graduate University	13	14.4
Mother's occupation	Unskilled workers	1	1.1
	Semiskilled workers	3	3.3
	Skilled workers	10	11.1
	Clerical, sales workers	8	8.9
	Technicians, semiprofessionals	14	15.6
	Minor professionals	17	18.9
	Lesser professionals	26	28.9
	Professionals, higher executives	11	12.2
Father's occupation	Semiskilled workers	2	2.2
	Skilled workers	13	14.4
	Clerical, sales workers	3	3.3
	Technicians, semiprofessionals	11	12.2
	Minor professionals	16	17.8
	Lesser professionals	22	24.4
	Professionals, higher executives	23	25.6

In total, 13 centres participated in the study. The total number of children

enrolled in the centres ranged from 90 to 208 ($\underline{M}$ = 136.56, $\underline{SD}$ = 32.20) and the number

of children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age attending each centre ranged from 15

to 75 ($\underline{M}$ = 45.23, $\underline{SD}$ = 13.69). Based on the scores from the SACERS, the quality

ratings ranged from 2.77 to 5.58 ($\underline{M}$ = 3.76 $\underline{SD}$ = .99). No centre received a quality rating

in the range of inadequate (i.e., 1), defined by Harms et al. (1996) as a rating representing

a level of care that compromises children's development (Harms et al., 1996). This is

assumed to be a reflection of the fact that guidelines, even though minimal for school-

based child care programs in Quebec, make it unlikely for inadequate centres to operate.

It is interesting to note that 3 centres received ratings indicative of a custodial level of

care (i.e., 3), whereas 3 other centres were classified in the good range (i.e., 5), which

indicates basic dimensions of developmentally appropriate care. No centre received

ratings in the excellent range (i.e., 7). Table 2 provides more information concerning the

quality ratings for each after-school programs, as well as the number of participants in

each of the participating centres.

When examining quality, analyses demonstrated that there were significant

differences in quality between centres that had a special room reserved exclusively for

nine-to twelve-year-olds compared to those that did not have such a room. A special

room for the older school-age children is a separated room in the program, to which only

the older children have access. Usually, such rooms have a variety of activity centres

(e.g., music corner, relaxed corner with sofas, book corner) and provide a home-like and

relaxed atmosphere where the older children are free to decide what activity they want to

do. The results of the one-way ANOVA were significant, $\underline{F}$ (1, 109) = 64.32, $\underline{p}$ = .001,

Table 2
Quality ratings and the number of participants in each centres

Participating centres	SACERS score	Children		Parents	
		females	males	females	males
	M	n	n	n	n
Centre 1	5.07	6	7	10	1
Centre 2	3.19	4	1	3	1
Centre 3	2.56	5	3	6	1
Centre 4	4.02	3	4	5	2
Centre 5	5.23	4	2	5	0
Centre 6	4.35	4	7	8	2
Centre 7	4.28	2	2	2	1
Centre 8	2.77	4	5	6	1
Centre 9	5.58	5	2	5	1
Centre 10	2.81	11	6	11	2
Centre 11	2.95	7	5	4	4
Centre 12	3.56	2	0	2	0
Centre 13	3.63	2	8	8	1

indicating that quality was higher for centres having a special room for nine-to twelve-year-olds. Further analyses were conducted to examine if the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds enrolled in the program was related to the quality of the program, however, the Pearson correlation was not significant, $r = -.10$, $p > .05$.

Ten school-based child care directors and 12 educators participated in the study. All directors who participated in the study were females and many of them had completed an attestation in Early Childhood Education (44.4%). Seventy percent of the educators were female and many had completed their CEGEP degree in Early Childhood Education (40%). Finally, 76.7% of the educators stated that it was their own choice to work with nine-to twelve-year-old children.

Current situation of nine-to twelve-year-olds in school-based child care programs. The children were asked to identify the activities they participated in at the school-based child care programs. The results shown in Table 3, identify the frequencies of the various activities children engaged in at the school-age care programs. The most frequently occurring activities were: sports (33.3%), homework (12.6%), arts (9.0%), and outside play (9.0%). Table 3 also illustrates the activities the nine-to twelve-year-olds would like to do in the school-age care programs after school. The results demonstrate that the children would like to have more opportunity to do sports activities (48.5%) and go on field trips (21.2%). The frequencies of the materials used as well as the materials the children would like to have in the after-school programs are presented in Table 4. The most frequently mentioned materials that they would like to have were sports supplies and equipment (22.6%), video games (28.3%), and computer materials (18.9%).

Table 3

Frequency table of activities stated by the nine-to-twelve-year-olds in school-based child care programs

Variable	Level	f	%
Activities done after school	Sports	37	33.3
	Homework	14	12.6
	Arts	10	9.0
	Outside play	10	9.0
	Other	14	7.2
	Music / Movement	7	6.3
	Drama	6	5.4
	Television	4	3.6
	Video games	4	3.6
	Computer	4	3.6
	Free play	3	2.7
	Board games	2	1.8
	Field trips	2	1.8
			100%
Activities the children would like to do after school	Sports	48	48.5
	Field trips	21	21.2
	Computers	5	5.1
	Video games	5	5.1
	Sciences	5	5.1
	Arts	3	3.0
	Drama	3	3.0
	Journal / radio	3	3.0
	Free play	2	2.0
	Television	2	2.0
	Cooking	1	1.0
	Outside play	1	1.0
			100%

Table 4
Frequency table of materials in school-based child care programs

Variable	Level	f	%
Materials used after-school	Board games	109	93.2
	Art	105	89.7
	Sports	102	87.2
	Books	99	84.6
	Gymnasium	98	83.8
	Computer	83	70.9
	Music	77	65.8
Materials they would like to have	Video games	30	28.3
	Sports	24	22.6
	Computers	20	18.9
	Reading	8	7.5
	Music / movement	7	6.6
	Sciences	6	5.7
	Other	6	5.7
	Television	2	1.9
	Board games	1	.9
	Arts	1	.9
	Age appropriate games	1	.9

It is important to mention that according to the directors, 12 of 13 school-based child care programs (92%) had a specific curriculum for the nine-to twelve-year-olds, and only 2 of the 13 programs (15%) had a special room exclusively reserved for the older children. The two rooms visited for the present study were divided into different sections. Both had a lounge, with comfortable sofas, a television, video games and a radio. Also, the rooms had different interest corners for the different activities that could be chosen by the older children (e.g., art tables, construction table, science table, reading corner). The atmosphere in the rooms was very home-like, relaxed, and welcoming. Also, 88% of the children stated they had access to the gymnasium, 78% said they had access to music materials, and 93% mentioned having access to art materials. Finally, it is essential to note that 71% of the children mentioned having access to the school's computer room.

Factors Related to Children's Desire to Drop Out

It is interesting to note that when the children were asked if they wanted to return to the program (i.e., as measured by the children's questionnaire), only 39.3% of the children stated they wanted to re-enroll the next year as opposed to 60.7% who did not wish to go back. After compiling the results on the children's questionnaire, two groups were formed to conduct the different analyses related to children's desire to drop out. The first group, the return group, was the category for all the children who, in completing the questionnaire, indicated they wanted to return to the school-age care program the next year. The second category was the drop-out group, which was composed of the children who wanted to leave the program the next year. Table 5 compares demographic information of the drop-out and the return group. The table indicates that both the drop-

Table 5
Comparing demographic information with the drop-out and return groups

Variable	Return group	Drop-out group	f
Age of the child	9.57	10.08	8.68 *
Socioeconomic status	50.46	50.76	.02
Quality of after-school program	3.46	3.95	6.39*

*   p = .004
**   p = .01

out and the return group had a similar socioeconomic status. However, the two groups were significantly different while examining the age of the child and the quality of the after-school programs.

Qualitative information was gathered in the children's questionnaire to identify the reasons for the children's desire to return to the program or not the following year. Table 6 is a frequency table that illustrates the main reasons indicated by the children for returning or not to the school-age care program the next year. The most frequently mentioned reason for children to return was that the activities were fun (25.5%). On the other hand, the results indicated that the main reason the children did not wish to return to the program was that they found the program boring (17.0%).

Parental phone interviews were conducted with a total of 114 parents (i.e., all parents who originally agreed to participate in the study were contacted) to determine the number of children who had dropped out of the program over the course of the year, the number of children who would be returning to the program the next year and the number of children not returning. The phone interviews revealed that only 10.5% of the children had dropped out of the program during the year. When asked about these plans for their children next year, 67.3% of the parents stated that their child would be going to the school-age program. Of those who would not be returning, 40.5% of the parents reported that their children were not returning because they were going to high school the next year and 29.7% were not returning because they were going to be in grade 6. According to the interviews, it appeared that being a sixth-grade student was associated with going home alone after school. Parents explained that the children needed to acquire the skills

Table 6

Frequency table children's reasons to return or not to the program next year

Variable	Level	f	%
Reasons to return	Activities are fun	27	25.5
	Friends are going to the program	6	5.7
	My parents are working	5	4.7
	I will go back just to eat lunch at school	2	1.9
	Other	9	8.5
Reasons not to return	Find the program boring	18	17.0
	To stay home alone	14	13.2
	I will be in high school so I am not going back to the program	9	8.5
	My friends go home, I want to go home after school	8	7.5
	To stay home with a friend	3	2.8
	People make fun of me, I do not want to go back	3	2.8
	Activities are not age appropriate	2	1.9

related to being home alone so they could be ready for this when they reached high school.

A chi-square was also conducted to further examine whether or not the parents wanted their child to go back to the centre and the child's desire to return or not the following year. The use of the chi-square statistics was chosen since the two variables under investigation were dichotomous. Therefore, the chi-square appeared as the best statistical approach for this analysis. The results were significant, $\chi2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = .20, $\underline{p}$ = .04. The analysis showed that the level of disagreement between parents and children regarding the next year's after-school arrangement was higher for the drop-out group than the return group. On the other hand, the level of agreement regarding next year's after-school arrangement was higher for the return group than the drop-out group.

The statistical tests chosen in the current study were the one-way ANOVA, the chi-square, the Pearson correlation as well as the standard multiple regression. The one-way ANOVA was chosen when comparing two groups on a variable that was continuous. The chi-square was used when the two variables under investigation were dichotomous. The Pearson correlation was used when attempting to find a relationship between two variables that were continuous. Finally, the standard multiple regression was used when attempting to identify the overriding factors. To do this, all the significant factors were entered together.

Age and gender differences. To examine age differences in the children's desire to go back to the school-age care program the following year, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. According to the findings, the children who stated they wanted to drop out of the program were significantly older than the children who wanted to return, $\underline{F}$ (1, 105) =

8.68, p = .004. The mean age for the children in the drop-out group was 10.08 years and the mean for the children in the return group was 9.57 years.

According to the Pearson chi-square statistic, $\chi 2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 3.71, p = .05, there were significant results according to gender when comparing the drop-out and the return groups of the school-based child care programs. In total, 52.5% of the girls did not want to return to the centre, while 70.8% of the boys did not want to return.

Quality. To examine children's desire to go back to the centre the following year and the overall quality of the centre (i.e., as measured by the SACERS), a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The mean differences were significant, $\underline{F}$ (1, 105) = 6.39, p = .01. The mean quality score for the drop-out group was 3.95 and the mean quality score for the return group was 3.46. The results are in the opposite direction than was originally stated in the hypothesis. The number of children who stated they wanted to drop out of the program was significantly higher when the quality of the program was higher.

Materials used at the centre. A Pearson chi-square was conducted to examine whether or not materials used at the centre were factors related to children's desire to drop out of the school-age care program. Interestingly, the first analyses demonstrated that more children were interested in dropping out than returning if they had access to art materials, $\chi 2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 4.10, p = .04. Further analyses were conducted and demonstrated that more children were interested in dropping out than returning if they had access to music materials, $\chi 2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 3.89, p = .05.

The analyses were not significant for sports materials, gymnasium, board games, books and computers, $\chi 2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107), p > .05.

The reasons why children attend the program. Analyses were performed in order to explore further whether significant differences could be observed in the return and the drop-out groups, in terms of the reasons why children attend the after-school program. Pearson chi square analyses comparing whether or not the children in either group indicated the particular reason for attending the centre were conducted.

As can be seen in Table 7, the number of children who were going to the centre because their friends were attending, was significantly higher in the return group than in the drop-out group. Furthermore, a significantly greater number of children in the drop-out group than in the return group, did not indicate that they attended the school-age program because their friends were attending. This may indicate that these children do not seem to be going where their friends were after school. The chi-square examining whether children attended the program because their friends were going, was statistically significant when comparing the return and drop-out groups, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 20.74, $\underline{p}$ = .001.

As well, the number of children who appeared to go to the centre because they found the activities exciting was significantly higher in the return group than in the drop-out group. The chi-square was statistically significant, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 14.02, $\underline{p}$ = .001. Children who said they were going to the centre because they heard good things about the program were greater in number in the return group than those in the drop-out group, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 6.99, $\underline{p}$ = .008. It is also interesting to note that again, the children who did not mention going to the centre because they heard good things about the program were significantly greater in number in the drop-out group than in the return group.

Table 7

Percentage of children wanting to return or not to the centre examining each reasons to attend the centre

Reasons to attend the SAC program		Return Group	Drop-out group	χ^2 (2, N = 107)
		Percentages		
a. My parents work	Yes	41.8	58.2	3.26
	No	11.1	88.9	
b. My friends go to the SAC				20.74 *
	Yes	69.4	30.6	
	No	23.9	76.1	
c. The activities are exciting	Yes	60.0	40.0	14.02 **
	No	24.2	75.8	
d. I heard good things about the program	Yes	71.4	28.6	6.99 ***
	No	34.4	65.6	
e. I do not want to be home alone	Yes	57.6	42.4	6.72 ****
	No	31.1	68.9	
f. My siblings attend the SAC program	Yes	62.5	37.5	4.26 *****
	No	35.2	64.8	
g. My parents think it is good for me	Yes	44.9	55.1	1.20
	No	34.5	65.5	

*	$p < .05$
**	$p < .05$
***	$p < .05$
****	$p < .05$
*****	$p < .05$

However, it is important to note that only 13.1% of the children stated this as the reason why they attended the centre.

Another interesting finding concerns children attending the program because they did not wanted to be home alone. The results indicated that a significantly higher number of children, who did not want to be home alone, were in the return group than in the drop-out group. Again, the chi-square was statistically significant χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 6.72, $\underline{p}$ = .009.

The number of children stating that they attended the after-school program because their siblings were going to the program was significantly higher in the return group than in the drop-out group. Again, the children who answered negatively as to whether they were attending because their siblings were going to the program was higher in the drop-out group than in the return group. The chi-square was statistically significant, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 4.24, $\underline{p}$ = .039, however, only 15% of the children stated that they were attending the program because their siblings were attending as well.

Finally, the Pearson chi-square conducted to examine differences in the drop-out group and return group with regard to attending the program because their parents thought it was good for them was not statistically significant, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) 1.21, $\underline{p}$ > .05. Neither was the chi-square conducted for attending the program because their parents were working, χ^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 107) = 3.26, $\underline{p}$ > .05. However, it is essential to note that in total, 96% of the children indicated that they attended the program because their parents worked.

Children's satisfaction. Not surprisingly, the children who wanted to return the next year were more satisfied than those who wanted to drop out the following year,

F (1, 105) = 8.68, p = .004. In fact, the mean satisfaction score was 3.18 for children in

the return group and the mean satisfaction score was 2.89 for the children who did not

wanted to return the following year.

One-way ANOVAs were also conducted to examine mean differences between

the satisfaction subscores as measured by the children's questionnaire. There were no

significant mean differences between children's desire to drop out of the program based

on satisfaction with program structure, nor with curriculum, $p > .05$. However,

significant mean differences were found for the subscores of physical environment,

F (1, 105) = 8.18, p = .005, relationship with the educators, F (1, 105) = 14.63 , p = .001,

and overall happiness, F (1, 105) = 24.49, p = .001. Therefore, children were more likely

to stay in the school-age care programs if they were satisfied with the physical

environment, had a good relationship with the educators and if they were happy with the

program in general.

Identifying the overriding factors related to children's desire to drop out. To

identify the overriding factors related to children's desire to drop out, a standard multiple

regression was conducted. To proceed to the analysis, all the significant factors related

to children's desire to drop out were entered together; children's gender and age, reasons

why children attend (i.e., my friends go, I heard good things about the program, my

siblings attend the program, I do not want to be home alone and the activities are

exciting), materials used at the centre (i.e., arts and music materials), quality and

children's satisfaction. The results showed that these factors accounted for 28% of the

total variance, F (11, 95) = 4.76, p = 0.001, R^2 adjusted = .28. Further analyses indicated

that the age of the child and whether or not the child attended because his/her friends

were going accounted for 24% of the unique variance, F (2, 104) = 16.39, p = 0.001, R^2 adjusted = 0.24. These results indicate that the age of the child and the presence of friends at the school-age care programs contribute to children's desire to drop out.

Factors Unrelated to Children's Desire to Drop Out

A variety of analyses were conducted to identify other factors which could have contributed to the children's desire to drop out, but were not found to be significant. At first, an examination of whether or not socioeconomic status was related to children's desire to drop out was conducted. The one-way ANOVA was not significant, F (1, 88) = .02, p > .05.

Analyses were also run to examine whether the presence of a special room for nine-to twelve-year-olds would be a factor in determining children's desire to stay in the program. The Pearson chi-square was not significant, $\chi2$ (2, N = 107) = .30, p > .05.

Furthermore, since Fink (1986) had demonstrated a negative relationship between drop-out rate and the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds enrolled, these analyses were conducted to examine if there were mean differences in the return and drop-out group. The results of the one-way ANOVA were not significant p > .05, indicating that the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds attending the program was not higher in the return group, compared to the drop-out group.

The analysis run in order to examine mean differences looking at the number of hours spent at the school-based child care program and children's desire to drop out was not significant, p > .05. Similarly, the number of hours worked by the parents (i.e., the mother and the father) was also examined. Again, the one-way ANOVAs were not significant for hours worked by the mother and the father, p > .05.

Since the literature has shown the importance of the element of choice for older

children involved in after-school programs, this factor was examined (Lalonde-Graton,

1992; Proulx, 1990). In the questionnaire, the children were asked to rate the element of

choice they had in the program. To proceed to the analysis, the choice factor was

weighted in terms of the amount of choice available in the school-age care programs, so

that the more the children had choice in the program, the higher the score he/she

received. Therefore, to examine if there were significant mean differences between

children's desire to drop out of the program and the amount of choice they had in the

school-based child care program, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results were

not statistically significant, $p > .05$.

To examine if there were significant differences between children's desire to drop

out and whether or not children's and parents' needs were met in the program (i.e., as

measured by the parents' questionnaire), Pearson chi-squares were conducted. The

results were not significant for children's needs, $\chi2$ (2, N = 90) = 3.04, p > .05, nor for

parental needs, $\chi2$ (2, N = 90) = 3.20, p > .05. Therefore, it does not appear that this

factor (i.e., meeting parents and/or children's needs) influenced the children's desire to

drop out.

To examine mean differences for children's desire to drop out or not and overall

parental satisfaction, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results were not

significant, $p > .05$. It does not appear that a parent's satisfaction influences whether or

not the child wants to return to the program.

The analyses were pursued with all the subscores of the parents' satisfaction

questionnaire, to examine mean differences with children's desire to drop out. The one-

way ANOVAs were not significant for the subscores of basic operating features, curriculum, caregiver/child relationship, caregiver/parent relationship, and philosophy of the program, $p > .05$. Interestingly, the one-way ANOVA identified statistically significant mean differences with children's desire to drop out and the subscore of environment, $F(1, 105) = 4.56$, $p = .04$. The mean quality score for the environment in the drop-out group was 4.30 and 4.01 for the return group. This indicates that children wanting to re-enroll had parents who rated the environment as less satisfying, compared to those children who did not want to go back to the centre. The parents' and children's evaluation of the environmental quality may not be the same.

Finally, in the children's questionnaire, the participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with each activity they had mentioned doing at the school-based child care program. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine mean differences comparing the children's desire to drop out or re-enroll, and the degree to which the children liked the activities available at the centre. The results were not significant, $p > .05$.

Factors Related to Children and Parents' Satisfaction

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between children's and parents' satisfaction with the program, a Pearson correlation was run and the results were statistically significant, $r = .24$, $p = .02$. There was a positive relationship between the parental satisfaction and the children's satisfaction scores. Consequently, as the parental satisfaction increased, the satisfaction of children increased too.

Children' satisfaction. Children's overall satisfaction scores ranged from 1.94 to 4.06 ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .52$). Since the questionnaire used a five-point rating scale,

ranging from 1 (i.e., being less satisfied) to 5 (i.e., always satisfied) it appears that overall, the children were relatively satisfied.

Demographic factors. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine gender differences and children's satisfaction. Overall, the girls were significantly more satisfied than boys, F (1,109) = 11.04, p = .001. The one-way ANOVA examining the effect of age was not significant, p > .05. Therefore, children who were older were not necessarily less satisfied with the program.

The Pearson correlation examining if socioeconomic status was related to children's satisfaction was not significant, p > .05.

Presence of a special room for nine-to twelve-year-olds. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to further investigate if the presence of a special room reserved exclusively for nine-to twelve-year-olds was related to their satisfaction. While only 15% had such a room in their centre, the results were significant, F (1, 109) = 11.17, p = .001. In fact, nine-to twelve-year-old children were more satisfied if they had access to their own room.

Quality. The Pearson correlation examining the relationship between children's satisfaction and the quality of the setting was significant, r = .17, p = .04. However, even though the results were significant, the relationship that exists between the two variables is not statistically strong.

Materials used at the centre. To examine children's satisfaction and the materials used at the centre, one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The results showed statistically significant mean differences between children's satisfaction and the use of music materials, F (1, 109) = 8.09, p = .005. In fact, children who mentioned having

access to music materials were statistically more satisfied than those not using this type

of material. However, the results were not significant for the use of arts and crafts

materials, sports materials, gymnasium equipment, board games, and books, $p > .05$.

Reasons why children attend the program. While the analyses comparing the

main reasons why the children attended the centre demonstrated significant results with

children's desire to drop out, further analyses were conducted in order to compare this

factor with children's satisfaction. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine if

mean differences existed between the two groups (e.g., yes I attend because my parents

are working, yes I attend but not because my parents are working).

The most interesting findings confirmed the importance of friends for children of

that particular age group. In fact, the one-way ANOVA revealed that children who

attended because their friends did as well, had a significantly higher satisfaction score

than the group who did not state they were enrolled because their friends were attending,

$F(1, 106) = 5.54$, $p = .02$. Children who stated that they were attending the centre

because they thought the activities were exciting, were significantly more satisfied than

those who did not indicate that the activities were exciting, $F(1, 109) = 20.62$, $p = .001$.

As opposed to the findings concerning desire to drop out, the one-way ANOVAs

were not significant for children attending because they heard good things about the

program, because they did not wanted to be home alone, or because their siblings

attended the program, $p > .05$. However, as was found for children's desire to drop out,

there were no significant results for reason a (i.e., my parents work), or for reason g (i.e.,

my parents think it is good for me), $p > .05$.

Identifying the overriding factors related to children's satisfaction. A

standard multiple regression was conducted to determine the overriding factors related to

children's satisfaction. To proceed to the analysis, all the significant factors related to

children's satisfaction were put together. The results showed that the child's gender and

age, the reasons why the children attend the program (i.e., my friends are going, the

activities are exciting), the materials used (i.e., music materials), the quality and parental

satisfaction accounted for 25% of the unique variance, F (7, 85) = 5.34, p = .001,

R^2 adjusted = 0.25. Gender and the fact that the children found the activities exciting

were the most important factors contributing to children's satisfaction.

Parental satisfaction The parental satisfaction scores ranged from to .60 to 5.00

(M = 3.86, SD = .82). The parental satisfaction questionnaire used a five-point rating

scale, where 1 was equal to very dissatisfied and 5, very satisfied. Therefore, it appears

that overall, the parents were relatively satisfied with their children's after-school

program.

Socioeconomic status. To examine whether or not socioeconomic status was

related to parental satisfaction, Pearson correlation analyses were run. The results were

not significant, p > .05.

Quality. To examine if the quality of the environment, as measured by the

SACERS was related to parent's satisfaction, a Pearson correlation was run between the

two variables. The result were not significant, r = .14, p > .05. These findings may be

explained by the parents' lack of knowledge regarding elements of quality outlined by

professionals. Again, these results will be discussed further in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors related to nine-to twelve-year-olds' desire to drop out of school-based child care programs. The analyses were based on the theory of social ecology, which states that development takes place within a multi-layered context, where external forces influence the way in which after-school programs and families, may affect children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The present study had three main objectives: (1) to identify the current situation of nine-to twelve-year-olds in school-based child care programs, (2) to identify factors related to children's desire to drop out of these programs, and (3) to examine factors related to children's and parents' satisfaction. Overall, the present study found that age, gender, materials used at the centre, the reasons why children attended the program and children's satisfaction were significant factors related to children's desire to drop out. Furthermore, the analysis examining children's desire to drop out and the quality of the settings was significant, but not in the direction originally stated in the hypothesis. As for children's satisfaction, the significant factors were gender, the presence of a special room for nine-to twelve-year-olds, materials used at the centre, the reasons why they attended the centre, parental satisfaction and quality of the centre. Only one significant factor was found to be related to parents' satisfaction and that was children's overall satisfaction.

This section will first summarize the findings of the present study. The second section will discuss the limitations of the current study. Then, the implications for educators and directors of after-school programs, as well as parents will be presented. Finally, directions for future research will be outlined.

Summary of the Findings

While researchers such as Coleman et al. (1989) have indicated that many after-school programs have low attendance rates for the nine-to twelve-year-olds, this was not found in the present study. In fact, the current study showed that the centres had an average attendance rate for nine-to twelve-year-olds of about 45 children per centre. This may be the result of programs that are located in the schools and that most parents do not have a variety of alternatives (e.g., YMCA). In fact, in the different towns visited, the parents had limited choices in terms of after-school care: family day care, school-based child care program or sitter care. Since school-based child care programs offer many advantages (e.g., lack of traveling for the children after school), parents may prefer to enroll their children in this type of care.

On the other hand, another important factor to consider when examining the substantial enrollment rate of older children in the participating centres, was the presence of a special curriculum for this age group. In a study of the situation of nine-to twelve-year-old children in school-age care, Lalonde-Graton (1992) found that 60% of the school-based child care in Quebec did not offer a special curriculum for the nine-to twelve-year-old children. However, it is important to note that in the current study conducted six years later, 92% of the programs did have special programming for this age group. School-age care programs that offer a special curriculum for the nine-to twelve-year-old children may contribute to keeping the children in after-school care. Therefore, the presence of a curriculum for the older school-age children may be an important factor contributing to the relatively good enrollment of nine-to twelve-year-olds in the participating centres.

Further analysis demonstrated the importance of providing a special room for the older children in after-school care. When doing so, the centres were rated as being of higher quality. Furthermore, Proulx (1990) mentioned that the older children desired a special room in their school-age programs, so they could engage in age-appropriate activities, have their own games and so that distal supervision could be provided. In the current study, 47% of the children stated that the provision of a special room was always important to them. In fact, the provision of such a room may allow educators to better respond to the needs of the older children in school-age care programs. For example, the children's sense of belonging is greatly enhanced, which has been shown to be an important factor for children of that age (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). In the centres visited, the children's sense of belonging was enhanced by inviting them to decorate the room with their favorite posters, take care of a pet, create their music corner (e.g., bring their own compact disks) and bring in their own games. Also, such a room may create a sense that the children are not in day care but are instead attending a « Club », in a relaxed and home-like environment, where they can develop new interests. Therefore, the provision of a special room for older children in school-age care programs may be an important factor for the quality of the setting, since it may better correspond to the children's needs and better address the special needs of that population (e.g., sense of belonging, distal supervision, age-appropriate activities, close contact with friends).

Unexpectedly, the hypothesis stating that the higher the quality of the school-age care program, the higher the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds enrolled, was not supported. In fact, the analysis showed no relationship between the number of older children attending the program and the quality as measured by the SACERS. Moreover,

while Fink (1986) had outlined the relationship between the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds enrolled in the program and the drop out rate, no significant differences were observed when comparing the return and the drop-out group to the number of older children attending the program in the current study. However, Fink (1986) had mentioned that when fewer than ten children of that age group were enrolled, the drop-out rate was higher. It is important to mention that no such results could have been found in the current study, since one of the criteria for centres to participate was to have a minimum of ten children between nine-and twelve-years-of-age. Even though one would believe that a better adapted curriculum would be offered when more children of that age group are present, it does not appear that the number of nine-to twelve-year-olds who participated in the current study contributed to the quality or to children's desire to return the next year.

The first of the interesting findings related to drop out that are essential to discuss are the return rates as indicated by the parents and the children. While the majority of parents stated that their children would return the next year (67.3%), the majority of children (60.7%) on the other hand, appeared to prefer to drop out of the program and to stay home alone because they found the program boring. This may be explained by the fact that parents prefer to have their children in a supervised environment after school and that children may not be involved in the decision concerning their after-school care. However, as the responses in the phone interviews have revealed, it appears that when children reach grade 6, parents may prefer to allow them to stay home alone to become more mature and to prepare them for high school. Also, it is important to mention that only a small percentage of children dropped out of the program during the year. This

may be explained by the fact that parents have limited choices in after-school care on the South Shore (e.g., no YMCA available), but also because parents and children appear to be relatively satisfied with school-age care in the present study.

The hypothesis stating that nine-to twelve-year-olds would want to drop out of the program if they were attending low quality programs, was not supported. In fact, the results were significant but in the opposite direction as was originally stated. Therefore, it appears that the number of children in the drop-out group was higher when the quality of the program was high. This brings into question the appropriateness of the ratings of quality, as evaluated by the SACERS for nine-to twelve-year-olds in school-age care settings. It is possible that the SACERS does a better job assessing the quality of the environment for the younger children, where certain elements of care such as close supervision are more appropriate for younger children, but less appropriate for older children. So it may be possible that the older children's impressions of environmental quality does not correspond to the professionals' assessments of quality. Furthermore, it is possible that the quality of the program does not contribute to children's desire to drop out, but that the appropriateness of the program might be a more important element to consider. In fact, nine-to twelve-year-olds have salient features that should be considered when implementing developmentally appropriate programs. Compared to the younger children, the older children need a more distal type of supervision, as well as being with their friends. Therefore, when evaluating the developmentally appropriateness of school-age programs, it might be important to assess such aspects of the quality using two subscales; one for the younger children and another one for the older children. For example, the subscore of activities included in the SACERS could have one specifically

designed for activities preferred by the younger children and another one could be used when evaluating programs for older children. The provision of two different subscores for elements where the needs of the younger and the older children differ (e.g., activities, interactions, supervision) may better evaluate the developmentally appropriateness of the programs offered. In fact, if the school-age care program does not offer a curriculum that responds to the older children's needs, more of the children may express a desire to drop out of the program.

The analyses also permitted the identification of factors related to children's desire to drop out of school-based child care programs. First, analyses demonstrated that more of the older children had a desire to leave the program. As has been outlined in the literature, the nine-to twelve-year-olds are often treated as one developmental group, but in fact, the needs of the older children in that particular age group are different than the younger ones (Cloutier, 1990). Therefore, it is possible that the older children are more likely to want to drop out because their specific needs are not met in the after-school programs. In fact, Fink (1986) reported that young adolescents often refuse to participate in programs that are below their cognitive level and since children in the present study have stated that they found the program boring, this may be a reflection of the current situation.

Further analyses showed significant differences between the desire of boys and girls to drop out of the program. More boys indicated a desire to want to drop out than did the girls. It is also interesting to note that the results showed that girls were more satisfied with the program than the boys. It might be possible that the activities are more oriented toward the girls' interests or that the girls may prefer a more supervised

environment, like the school-based child care programs offer. Furthermore, if the present study has shown that more boys than girls want to drop out and since Howes et al. (1987) have shown that boys tend to prefer to engage in sensorimotor activities compared to girls, it is possible that the programs visited were more arts-oriented and did not satisfy the needs of the boys. Also, the results showed that not surprisingly, the more the children were satisfied, the less likely they were to want to drop out of the program. Unfortunately, the present study did not identify the reasons why more boys wanted to drop out than the girls.

Unexpected findings were the significant analyses examining the children's desire to drop out and the materials used at the centre. It is not known why children would be more likely to drop out if they have access to art and music materials. However, it might be possible that such activities are more controlled in after-school settings. In fact, while visiting the centres, the researcher observed that music was offered as a free choice activity only in the settings offering a special room for the older children. Therefore, it might be the case that music and art activities are more structured and controlled by the educators, which might take time away from the children's favorite activities, such as sports and video games. Such control may make these activities less interesting for the children, particularly where creativity is concerned (e.g., art). Also, further observations would have made it possible to assess the nature of the art and music activities offered (e.g., controlled by the educators or not), as well as to identify the frequency of these activities to verify if this corresponded to the children's interests.

Another important factor related to the children's desire to drop out was the presence of friends. Again, this supports what has been found in the literature, that as

children get older, the presence of friends is increasingly important (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993; Click, 1994). In fact, the number of children who stated that they were attending the program because their friends were going, was greater in number in the return group than in the drop-out group. The same results were evident when examining children's satisfaction. Again, this confirms what has been found in the literature, that as children enter middle and late childhood, the presence of friends is increasingly important (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). Further research should certainly explore the role of friendship in after-school settings.

On the other hand, children who said that they were attending because they heard good things about the program were also greater in number in the return group. Moreover, the older children who stated that they found the activities exciting were naturally less likely to want to drop out of the program. Children who stated that they were attending the program because their siblings were attending were greater in number in the return group. So were the children who stated that they did not wanted to be home alone.

Another interesting finding related to the children's desire to drop out was that children who wanted to drop out of the school-age care programs were less satisfied than the children in the return group. Furthermore, the analysis of the subscore of satisfaction revealed that physical environment, relationship with the educators, and overall happiness were significant factors related to children's desire to drop out. While researchers such as Albrecht and Plantz (1993) have outline the importance of the relationship with educators for this age group, the present study supported such results. Furthermore, the importance of the role of the educators with nine-to twelve-year-old

children may indicate that it would have been wise to closely examine the quality of the educators, particularly their interactions with the children. In fact, most educators working in school-age care programs have training in early childhood education, which spans the birth-to eight-years-of-age range, while the needs of the older school-age children are very different (Yeates, Davidson, Mitchel, & McIvor, 1991). Therefore, it might be possible that the educators working with this age group were not adequately prepared to respond to the nine-to twelve-year-olds' needs.

While Proulx (1990) found that the children were dissatisfied in school-based child care programs, the present findings revealed that nine-to twelve-year-olds were relatively satisfied. The hypothesis stating that children would be more satisfied if the quality of the setting was high was supported. A positive relationship was identified between the children's satisfaction and the quality of the setting. Therefore, the higher the quality of the setting, the more satisfied the children were. It is also interesting to note that even though the children's satisfaction was related to the desire to drop out, and the satisfaction was related to the quality, quality was a factor in the children's desire to drop out of the program but not in the expected direction. As mention before, the higher the quality of the centre as measured by the SACERS, the more likely the older children were to want to drop out. These results may be explained by the fact that the children's satisfaction questionnaire was designed containing elements that are assessed by the SACERS (e.g., program structure, relationship with the educators, physical environment, curriculum), which might have contributed to find a positive relationship between children's satisfaction and the SACERS score. On the other hand, even though the analysis examining desire to drop out and quality were significant, the unexpected

direction obtained may be explained by the fact that the question examining children's desire to drop out was dichotomous. The provision of a question using a Likert-type five-point rating scale (i.e., I want to drop out a lot to I do not want to drop out) might have allowed for more precise analysis.

In order to examine the factors related to children's satisfaction more closely, a variety of analyses were conducted. One of the significant factors was gender. Overall, the girls were more satisfied and less likely to drop out than the boys. Again, this brings into question whether the current after-school programs better address the needs of the young females.

Other factors related to children's satisfaction were the reasons why children attended the program and the materials used in the school-based child care programs. Again, the results confirmed the importance of friends for nine-to twelve-year-olds, who were more satisfied when their friends attended the program as well. Also, children were more satisfied if they were attending the program because they found the activities exciting. On the other hand, children having access to music materials were more satisfied than children not using this type of material. This may indicate that music is one of the important interests of children between the age of nine-and twelve-years-old.

Proulx (1990) indicated the importance of the element of choice as related to children's satisfaction, consequently, analyses were conducted to examine this factor. The results did not support the hypothesis that children would be more satisfied if they had more choice (e.g., consultation with educators) in the program. However, only four questions addressed this issue in the questionnaire, and observations might have addressed this factor more effectively. Also, Proulx (1990) indicated that young

adolescents wanted their own space in school-based child care programs and the results of the present study showed that only 2 of 13 centres (15%) had a special room for this age group. The analyses showed that the nine-to twelve-years-old children were more satisfied if they had access to a room especially reserved for them. The presence of a special room may, in fact, contribute to keeping the children happier in the program. Since the sense of belonging is very important for children of this age, the provision of such a room may respond to children's needs.

In the present study, parents were relatively satisfied. This reflects the findings of research conducted with parents of preschoolers, who reported being highly satisfied most of the time (Erdwins & Buffardi, 1994). Only one significant factor related to parental satisfaction was identified in the present study. In fact, parental satisfaction was positively related to children's satisfaction. While analyses were run with a variety of possible factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, quality of the setting), no other factors were found to be significant. As stated by Sonenstein and Wolf (1991), the characteristics of care that lead to parental satisfaction remain unknown.

The hypothesis indicating that parents would be more satisfied if the quality of the centre was high was not supported. Finally, since no relationship was found by examining parental satisfaction and quality, it appears that parental ratings of quality may not be correlated with professional ratings. In fact, parents' ratings may be subjective; for instance, parents may attribute a lot of importance to the physical appearance of the centre, while this may not be indicative of the quality of the school-age care program.

Limitations of the Current Study

The current study has five important limitations. To begin with, only school-based child care programs located on the South Shore of Montreal participated in the study. Secondly, the small sample size for certain school-based child care programs may have affected the results. The third limitation was that even though the children and the parents' questionnaires were piloted before the study, it is not known whether or not these questionnaires were reliable. The fourth limitation was that the question examining children's desire to drop out was dichotomous. Finally, the population used was mostly from French speaking centres.

The first limitation is that these results may only be applicable to school-based child care programs, more specifically to the population of the South Shore of Montreal or to suburban areas. The cultural diversity in the centres located on the South Shore is somewhat less present than the general population in the city of Montreal. In fact, the range for the score on the ratings of cultural diversity item of the SACERS was 1 to 5, and 78% of the centres received a 1 for that particular item. A score of 1 indicates no ethnic, linguistic, gender role, cultural or racial variety visible in the materials in the program. Moreover, when the researcher visited the centres, only one or two children per centre were identified as belonging to a minority group. Since cultural diversity is a crucial reality in other regions (e.g., Montreal Island), the results cannot be generalized to other populations.

Another limitation related to the participation of centres located on the South Shore of Montreal is the limited choice parents have in terms of after-school care. In fact, in most of the towns visited, parents had only a few alternatives: school-based child

care, family day care or sitter care. Other cities may have more alternatives in terms of after-school care and this should be considered when looking at the results of the present study. It is important to mention, however, that the present results are valuable to the field of school-age care since only a limited number of studies have examined this type of care arrangement, more specifically why the nine-to twelve-years-old children drop out of these programs. Finally, it is important to consider that the reality that occurs in other types of after-school programs (e.g., YMCA), might be different than what happens in the school-based child care programs.

The second limitation concerns the limited sample size for certain participating centres. While some centres had a reasonable participation rate (e.g., 7 to 10 children), others had lower participation rate (e.g., 4). Therefore, even though an effort was made to include all individuals representing a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and different quality programs, the small cell size might have affected the results. In order to obtain an adequate size per centre, an increased sample size would have allowed for more adequate comparisons and analyses.

The third limitation was the use of the children's and the parents' questionnaires. The design of the questionnaires was based on a compilation approach. Even though the questionnaires were pilot-tested with children and parents who did not participate in the present study, and while the measures appeared to be user-friendly and understood by the participants, the reliability of the measures is not known. This might have affected the results. Further research should attempt to verify the reliability of such measures.

Another limitation was one specific question in the children's questionnaire, which assessed children's desire to drop out of school-age care programs. The question

used allowed for only two answers (i.e., yes, I want to return to the program next year, No, I do not want to return to the program next year). The provision of a question using a five-point rating scale (i.e., Likert-type) might have created more opportunities to perform more adequate comparisons and analyses.

Finally, the population used was mostly French speaking. It would be important to have information about the English speaking population, since bilingualism is a reality in the province of Quebec. However, it is assumed that the results would be similar with the Anglophone population.

Implications for Education.

First, the current research demonstrated that the two overriding factors that contributed to motivating the children to drop out of school-age care programs, were age and the presence of friends. It was demonstrated that as children get older, more children want to drop out of the after-school programs. Therefore, administrators of programs should consider whether or not the program they offer responds to the needs of the older children in the nine-to twelve-year-old range. Furthermore, the importance of implementing developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate programs, as well as considering that different age groups have different activity preferences should also be explored. It is important to mention that researchers such as Park (1992), have indicated that the most preferred activities were arts, sports, outside play time and food, and the present study has confirmed that older children do, in fact, prefer sports activities. Dividing children in this age range into two groups (i.e., middle childhood; eight-to ten-years-old and pre-adolescence; ten-to twelve-years-old) might allow for the creation of programming that is more appropriate for the cognitive level of the children and might

decrease the likelihood that the older children would want to drop out. Finally, the provision of a variety of activities may result in children being more satisfied with the program. Furthermore, such provisions have also demonstrated that children tend to view themselves as more competent because they have more opportunities to make decisions and function independently (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996).

The second overriding factor to consider is the presence of friends in the school-age program. In fact, the analyses examining children's desire to drop out and children's satisfaction indicated that the presence of friends was a significant factor. Therefore, it seems that children are more satisfied and more likely to remain in the program if they attend the program because their friends are enrolled as well. Moreover, the literature has demonstrated that the opportunity to play with peers in an after-school program, may not only enhance the children's social skills, but may also afford the children's experiences necessary to reduce anxiety and other internalizing problems (Marshall, Coll, Marx, McCartney, Keefe, & Ruh, 1997). Therefore, while educators cannot control the presence of friends in the school-age care programs, activities can be planned so that friendships can be developed. Furthermore, parents can consult their children to determine the kind of after-school programs their children's friends are attending.

Thirdly, the results have demonstrated that children's satisfaction was higher when they had access to music materials. While this seems important to the children in that age group, administrators and educators should consider implementing musical activities, as well as making music-related materials accessible to the children. However, since the results examining children's desire to drop out of the school-age care programs demonstrated that children using music material were more likely to drop out,

administrators and educators should be cautious. In fact, these mixed results may indicate that although children enjoy this type of activity, they may prefer this to be a free choice activity, where less control from the educators is exercised.

Administrators of school-age care programs should consider providing developmentally appropriate curriculum that is high in quality. In fact, while the literature has demonstrated the positive effects of high quality programs on children's development (Philips et al., 1987; Philips & Howes, 1987; Howes & Philips, 1989; Zaslow, 1991), the present study has revealed that the provision of high quality programs is associated with children's level of satisfaction. In general, a high quality school-age program is one that supports children in accomplishing the developmental tasks of middle childhood. This can be done by allowing older children to take risks, leading to the development pursuit of their own interests. Therefore, program administrators should consider the five important criteria for implementing good quality school-age programs: (1) positive interactions with peers and adults, (2) meaningful participation in an environment that meets the needs of the children (i.e., both indoor and outdoor), (3) competence, achievement and self-exploration where children can choose from a variety of activities, (4) program staff who try to provide an environment that protects and enhances the health of the children, and (5) a program that has staff/child ratios to permit the staff to meet the needs of the children (Roman, 1998).

Another important element that seems to contribute to the quality of the setting as well as children's satisfaction was the presence of a special room for the older children. Therefore, school-age programs should provide a room exclusively reserved for nine-to twelve-year-old children. Such an environment should look more like a home than a

school (Coolsen, Seligson, & Garbarino, 1985) and developmentally appropriate activities should be available for older children. In fact, the provision of a program that is more like a « Club », where children can relax and perform activities where distal supervision is provided, might be more appropriate for the older children. In fact, as Fink (1986) indicated, children tend to shun anything that sounds like day care, so the provision of such « Club » may better correspond to the older children's needs.

Finally, it is essential to note that the mixed results obtained while examining the children's desire to drop out and the children's satisfaction with the quality of the program may indicate that the quality is important, but that the appropriateness of the programs might be even more important, especially when looking at children's desire to drop out. Therefore, the provision of developmentally appropriate activities should be made up of two important components : (1) age appropriateness (i.e., activities and experiences that are appropriate for the age and the maturity of the children), (2) individual appropriateness (i.e., activities and experiences that are appropriate to each individual child involved) (Musson & Embury, 1993).

Suggestions for Future Research

The aim of the present study was to examine the factors related to the nine-to twelve-year-olds' desire to drop out of after-school programs. While important factors related to the desire to drop out were identified, it would be important to further investigate these findings. More specifically, the fact that more boys than girls want to drop out requires further investigation, particularly because boys tend to get into more trouble than girls after school. Also, other studies have shown that children in self-care are more influenced by peer pressure than those in adult supervision (Steinberg, 1986).

In the present study, the children were asked the reasons why they wanted to drop out of the program, however, future observational research could more closely examine these reasons. Furthermore, it would be important to closely examine why girls are more satisfied than the boys. Again, it might be possible that the after-school programs better correspond to the females' interests. In fact, Howes et al. (1987) indicated that boys engaged in more sensorimotor activities than girls and that girls engaged in more art and music than did the boys. Therefore, a program that is sports-oriented will probably better satisfy the boys as opposed to an arts and crafts after-school program that would be more satisfying for the girls. Finally, such further investigations would help administrators and educators design programs that could be better adapted to both sexes, more specifically the boys.

The importance of the presence of friends has been demonstrated in the current study. Children appeared to be more satisfied and have a less of a desire to drop out if their reason for attending the program was because their friends were there. Howes et al. (1987) have indicated that children in after-school programs appeared to be more advanced in social development as measured by the ability to form friendships, compared to the children who only attended the elementary school program. Future research should examine the role of friendship in after-school programs more closely. An exploration of the kind of impact friendship may have on children's development, adjustment, and satisfaction would be interesting to examine.

Another direction for future research would be to examine whether the environmental quality ratings are the same for the whole group of school-age children ranging from five-to twelve-years-of-age. While older children have very different needs

than the younger children, it might be important to design an instrument specific to this age group.

While the literature has demonstrated that the element of choice appeared to be an important factor for children attending school-based child care program (Proulx, 1990), the present study did not show this to be associated with children's satisfaction and their desire to drop out. However, the present study was limited to asking four satisfaction questions on the children' satisfaction questionnaire. The addition of questions that addressed the element of choice might have provide information about the element of choice for the older children in the after-school program. Future research examining this factor with the use of observations might also demonstrate significant results.

Another avenue for future research is the exploration of parental satisfaction. Since the present study was not able to identify components related to parental satisfaction, future research should attempt to identify these factors.

Finally, it would be interesting to explore how parents make the decision as to whether or not their child is ready for self-care or not. Also, researchers could raise this question: is there something wrong with leaving a twelve-year-old child in self-care ?

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APPENDIX A

Letters of consent

Letter of information

Dear director,

Members of the Education Department of Concordia University are conducting a research project on school-age care. We are attempting to identify the reasons why nine to twelve-year-old children are dropping out of school-based child care. We also wish to look at the satisfaction of both parents and nine to twelve-years-old with their school-based child care programs. Finally, the project will examine the quality of the school-age care programs available to families.

For this study, the parents will be required to « voluntarily » fill in a questionnaire concerning their satisfaction with the school-based child care program, their child is attending. Also, the children between the age of nine to twelve-years-old will be required to fill in a satisfaction questionnaire. Finally, the director will be interviewed and the caregivers of children between nine to twelve-years old will received a short questionnaire to be completed, concerning the school-based child care program and the nine to twelve-years-old population.

The investigator will have to visit the center on a few occasions. First, to conduct a short interview with the director and to distribute the questionnaires to the caregivers. Also, the researcher will meet with the nine to twelve-years-old children to explain the purpose of the study and to invite them to participate. Finally, the researcher will come in at the center to assess the quality with a quality instrument. This procedure may be completed in one day and the researcher may be accompanied with a research assistant.

Your involvement in the research would be greatly appreciated as it will contribute to the understanding of the population of nine to twelve-years-old attending school-based child care. Furthermore, it will help you identify the various points on which parents and children are satisfied within your program, and will also point out the specific things to do to improve your services offered to families. In appreciation of their participation, parents and children will be eligible to draw of gift certificate at a music store.

Should you have any questions concerning this project, do not hesitate to contact Isabelle Maheux at 848-7999 or Professor Ellen Jacobs at 848-2016. Thank you very much for you cooperation.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Maheux   Ellen Jacobs

Research coordinator   Professor

                                          Department of Education

Lettre d'information aux parents

Chers parents,

Des membres du département d'éducation de l'Université Concordia dirigent présentement une étude sur les services de garde en milieu scolaire. L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner la satisfaction des parents et des enfants de neuf à douze ans dans les garderies en milieu scolaire. Nous désirons également examiner la nature des services de garde en milieu scolaire offert aux familles (par exemple, certains services de garde sont axés vers les sports, tandis que d'autres sont axés vers la continuité académique avec l'école).

Pour cette étude, nous vous demandons de compléter un questionnaire concernant votre niveau de satisfaction avec le service de garde scolaire de votre enfant. Ce questionnaire sera apporté à la maison par votre enfant et vous permettra de le compléter dans le confort de votre foyer. Compléter le questionnaire ne prendra pas plus de 15 minutes de votre temps. Les questions posées sont simples et faciles à répondre (exemple d'une question : « Quel est votre niveau de satisfaction concernant le matériel disponible, tel crayons, papier, carton, ballons, etc., disponible au service de garde scolaire ? »). Une enveloppe affranchie sera inclue pour que vous puissiez expédier votre questionnaire dûment rempli, **directement** à la principale investigatrice du projet. De plus, votre enfant sera invité à remplir un questionnaire à son service de garde (exemple d'une question : « S.V.P. Écris-moi les activités que tu fais à la garderie et dis-moi comment tu aimes chaque activité». Finalement, un court appel téléphonique de 5 minutes sera organisé avec vous au printemps, à un temps qui vous conviendra le mieux.

Votre participation et celle de votre enfant serait grandement appréciée. Les résultats de cette recherche permettront aux services de garde d'améliorer les services offerts aux jeunes de neuf à douze ans.

Si vous avez des questions concernant ce projet de recherche, veuillez contacter Isabelle Maheux au 848-7999 ou encore le Professeur Ellen Jacobs au 848-2016.

Merci de votre collaboration,

Sincèrement,

Isabelle Maheux   Ellen Jacobs

Coordinatrice de recherche   Professeur

                                   Département D'Éducation

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I have read the letter of information and agree that my child and I will participate in the research being conducted by the Education Department at Concordia University. I understand that the study involves the completion of two questionnaires (i.e., one to be completed by my child and another one by the parent) and a possible follow-up phone call. I am also aware that my child and I can withdraw our participation at any time and that all information obtained will remain strictly confidential.

Child's name:

_____

Parents' names:

_____

Address:

_____

_____

Postal Code:

_____

Phone number: Home: _____

                Work (specify which parent):

                _____

No, my child and I will not participate in the present study__

Yes, my child and I will participate in the present study _____

_____   _____

Signature of parent   Date

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

APPENDIX B

Children's satisfaction questionnaire
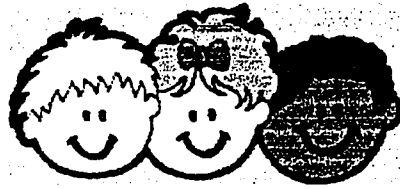
Questionnaire

ID : _____

Hello!

I need your help for this special project. I would like to find out what you like and dislike about your activities after school. Please answer the questions by following the instructions.

Thank you for your help!

Section1.

Background information:

1) **How old are you ?** _____ years _____ months

2) **Are you a boy or a girl ? (Please circle)**

a) girl

b) boy

3) **What do your 3 best friends do after school ? (please write their name and what they do)**

Name of my friends   Where my friends go after school   What my friends do after school

EX. : Kathy	Home	Watch television
1.		
2.		
3.		

Activities:

4) Please write down the activities you do in the after-school program and tell me how much you like each one: (Please fill in the correct square)

	I love it	I like it	I like it a little bit	I don't like it	I hate it
EX. scientific experiments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5) **What materials and equipment can you use in your after-school program ?**

   (fill in all the squares that show me what you can use)

   □   a) art and craft materials (crayons, paint, paper)

   □   b) music (tape recorder, tapes, instruments)

   □   c) sports (balls, hockey sticks)

   □   d) gymnasium equipment

   □   e) board games

   □   f) books

   □   g) computers

6) **What kind of material and equipment would you like to have in your program?**

   1. _____

   2. _____

   3. _____

   4. _____

7) **What activities would you like to do after school ?**

   1. _____

   2. _____

   3. _____

   4. _____

8) **Tell me how often your educator plans the activities and tells you which one you**

   must do ? (Please fill in the correct square)

All the time	Often	Sometimes	A little	Never
□	□	□	□	□

9) **Tell me how often your educator plans the activities and allows you to choose what**

   you want to do ? (Please fill in the correct square)

All the time	Often	Sometimes	A little	Never
□	□	□	□	□

10) **Tell me how often your educator plans the activities with you and allows you to**

   choose what you want to do ? (Please fill in the correct square)

All the time	Often	Sometimes	A little	Never
□	□	□	□	□

11) **Tell me how often your educator lets you plan the activities and lets you choose**

   what you want to do ? (Please fill in the correct square)

All the time	Often	Sometimes	A little	Never
□	□	□	□	□

12) Why are you enrolled in the after-school program ? _(Please fill in the square(s) to give me all the reasons)_

- ☐   a) my parents work
- ☐   b) my friends attend the program
- ☐   c) the activities are exciting
- ☐   d) I heard good things about the program
- ☐   e) because I do not want to stay home alone
- ☐   f) my brother and/or sister attend the program
- ☐   g) my parents think it is good for me
- ☐   h) other _(please tell me more about this)_ :

_____

13) Would you like to come back to the after-school program next year?

a) Yes; why? _____

b) No; why not_____

Please turn to the next page ☞ ☞ ☞

Section 2. : Fill in the appropriate square to tell me more about your after-school program :

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Are you able to have private time alone ?	□	□	□	□	□
2. Is it important to you, to have private time alone ?	□	□	□	□	□
3. Are you able to have some time with a small group of people of your age ?	□	□	□	□	□
4. Is this important to you ?	□	□	□	□	□
5. Can your age group organize activities on their own ?	□	□	□	□	□
6. Can you do different activities at your after-school program, that you cannot do at home?	□	□	□	□	□
7. Do you think the activities at your center are interesting?	□	□	□	□	□
8. Are you happy with the number of things you are learning at your center ?	□	□	□	□	□

9. In your program, is there enough time for :

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
• doing your homework	□	□	□	□	□
• do you have to finish your homework before you can do other things	□	□	□	□	□
• art activities	□	□	□	□	□
• music activities	□	□	□	□	□
• drama activities	□	□	□	□	□
• sports activities	□	□	□	□	□
• scientific activities	□	□	□	□	□
• reading	□	□	□	□	□
• relaxing	□	□	□	□	□
• computers	□	□	□	□	□

	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
10. Do you play outside at your after school program ?	□	□	□	□	□
11. Do you think there is enough space to play outside at your after-school program ?	□	□	□	□	□
12. Is there enough material for outside play ?	□	□	□	□	□
13. Do you and your friends between 9 and 12 years old have a special room you can use?	□	□	□	□	□
14. Is this important for you to have a special room with people of your age ?	□	□	□	□	□
15. Is indoor space comfortable ?	□	□	□	□	□
16. Are you happy with the different supplies and equipment you can use in your center ?	□	□	□	□	□
17. Do you think your educators listen to your ideas?	□	□	□	□	□
18. Do you get along well with your educator?	□	□	□	□	□
19. Do you think your educators give you encouragement?	□	□	□	□	□
20. When you wake up in the morning, do you think about what you will be doing in your after-school program?	□	□	□	□	□
21. Do you bring special things to your after-school program (games, scientific experiments, music...) ?	□	□	□	□	□
22. Are you happy with your after-school program ?	□	□	□	□	□

Thank you ! ! !

APPENDIX C

Parental satisfaction questionnaire

Parental satisfaction questionnaire   ID :_____

Dear parents,

       This questionnaire was designed to identify your level of satisfaction with your child's after-school program. The first section will give us some background information about you and your family, and will help us identify the after-school arrangements your family is using.

       Please fill out the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope in the following week.

       Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Section 1. : General information

Please circle the appropriate letter corresponding to your answer or write your answer in the appropriate space.

1) Gender :

    a) female

    b) male

2) What is your marital status ?

    a) single

    b) married/common law

    c) single parent

    d) never married

    e) widowed

3) What are the languages spoken at home ?

    a) French

    b) English

    c) Spanish

    d) Italian

    e) other : _____

4) What is the mother's highest degree completed ?

    a) high school

    b) CEGEP

    c) undergraduate degree (University)

    d) graduate degree (University)

    e) none

    f) other : _____

5) **What is the mother's occupation ?** _____

6) **How many hours does the mother work per week?** _____

7) **What is the father's highest degree completed ?**

    a) high school

    b) CEGEP

    c) undergraduate degree (University)

    d) graduate degree (University)

    e) none

    f) other : _____

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

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

10) *Besides currently using the after-school program offered at your child' school,* **are there other after-school arrangements used for your school-age child participating in the study ?**

    a) after-school program located outside the school

    b) other after-school program (e.g., extracurricular activities)

    c) returns home with a parent and stays home with a parent

    d) sitter care at our home

    e) sitter care at sitter's home

    f) family day care

    g) returns and stays home alone

    h) returns and stays home with a younger sibling

    i) returns and stays home with an older sibling

    j) other (please specify) _____

    k) none

11) **What were the previous child care arrangements used for the participating child ?**

    a) day care

    b) other after-school program (e.g., extracurricular activities)

    c) returns home with a parent and stays home with a parent

    d) sitter care at our home

    e) sitter care at sitter's home

    f) family day care

    g) returns and stays home alone

    h) returns and stays home with a younger sibling

    i) returns and stays home with an older sibling

12) Are there other children in your family?

    a) yes ; please specify the age of all the children _____

    b) no ; please indicate the age of your child _____

13) What were all the previous child care arrangements used by the other children of your family ?

    a) day care

    b) other after-school program (e.g., extracurricular activities)

    c) returns home with a parent and stays home with a parent

    d) sitter care at our home

    e) sitter care at sitter's home

    f) family day care

    g) returns and stays home alone

    h) returns and stays home with a younger sibling

    i) returns and stays home with an older sibling

    j) other (please specify) _____

    k) none

    l) not applicable

14) What are the needs of your child, participating in the study, in terms of after-school arrangements ? (Please list as many as you want)

_____

_____

_____

_____

15) Do you believe that your child's needs are met at his/her school-based child care program ?

    a) always

    b) often

    c) sometimes

    d) seldom

    e) never

Why?_____

_____

16) What do you expect from your child's after-school arrangement?

_____

_____

17) Are your parental expectations met with this after-school arrangement ?

      a) always

      b) often

      c) sometimes

      d) seldom

      e) never

Why?_____

_____

_____

18) How many hours per week does your child attend the after-school program located in school ? _____

Section 2. :

In this second part of the questionnaire, please circle the appropriate number (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied or 0= not able to answer) to express how you feel about each particular question.

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
1) Basic operating features						
1.1 Schedule	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.2 Fees	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.3 Board membership	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.4 Policies and procedures	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.5 Parental access	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.6 Flexibility of hours	1	2	3	4	5	0
1.7 Level of adult supervision	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
2) Curriculum						
2.1 Developmentally appropriate activities (age-appropriate)	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.2 Diversity of activities	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.3 Activities aimed at all aspects of child's development	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.4 Opportunities for children to select activities	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.5 Children involved in decisions concerning activities	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.6 Parents involved in decisions concerning activities	1	2	3	4	5	0
2.7 Implementation of daily routines	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
3) Physical environment (Setting)						
3.1. Indoor space (e.g., special room reserved for 9-12 years old)	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.2 Outdoor space	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.3 Supplies and equipment available	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.4 Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.5 Safety	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.6 Convenient location	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.7 Adult/child ratios	1	2	3	4	5	0
3.8 Atmosphere (tone of the center)	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
4) Child-caregiver relationship						
4.1 Amount of attention	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.2 Quality of verbal communication	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.3 Availability of the caregiver	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.4 Willingness to address the needs of the child	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.5 Ability to answer the needs of the child	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.6 Attentiveness to the specific needs of the child	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.7 Children's participation encouraged	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.8 Disciplinary style	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.9 Responsive to child's suggestions	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.10 Warmth of caregiver	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.11 Supportive and guiding caregiver	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
5) Parent-caregiver relationship						
5.1. Availability	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.2. Genuineness	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.3. Openness	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.4. Resourcefulness	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.5. Respectfulness	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.6. Day to day communication	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.7. Regular information	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.8. Parent meetings	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.9. Encouragement of parental involvement (participation)	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.10 Responsiveness to parental suggestions	1	2	3	4	5	0
5.11 Responsiveness to parental needs	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not able to answer (0)
6) Philosophy						
6.1 Approach/pedagogy used	1	2	3	4	5	0
6.2 Methods of implementation	1	2	3	4	5	0
6.3 Continuity between school and after-school program	1	2	3	4	5	0
6.4 Continuity between home and after-school program	1	2	3	4	5	0

Comments :_____

_____

_____

7) Please indicate the advantages and disadvantages of your child's after-school program :

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and cooperation

APPENDIX D

Parental phone interview

Parent interview

As we explained to you a few months earlier, this is a follow up
interview conducted for the study. I will not take too much of your time.

ID# :_____
Interview date (d/m/y) : _____
Name of the child : _____
Male / female
Age of the child : _____
Name of the parent interviewed : _____
Male / female

1. Is your child still attending the after-school program ?
a) Yes
b) No
Comments :_____

_____

_____

**2. Are you re-enrolling your child in the after-school program next
year ?**
a) Yes : Why ?

_____

_____

b) No
If yes : Thank you very much for your time
If no : Go to question 3.

3. What is the main reason <u>not to re-enroll</u> your child next year ?
a) my child was not satisfied
Why wasn't the child satisfied ? _____
a) my child wanted to stay home alone
Why the child wanted to stay home alone ?_____
c) I was not satisfied
Why were you not satisfied ? _____
c) cost
Why ? Was it too expensive ? _____
e) hours of operation
Why were the hours not convenient ? _____
e) other reasons : _____

Comments :_____

_____

_____

4. Do you think that if the program was more age-appropriate in your child's eyes he/she would want to stay in the after school program ?

a) Yes

b) No

Comments :_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

APPENDIX E

Director questionnaire

Director questionnaire   ID : _____

1. **Are you a :** a) female   b) male

2. **How old are you ?** _____

3. **How long have you been the director of this program?** _____ years

4. **Have you been director of other school-age care programs?**

a) No

b) Yes ; how many ? ___

5. **What is the highest degree you have completed?**

a) High school

b) CEGEP

c) Bachelor

d) Masters

e) Ph.D.

f) other (please specify)_____

6. **What type of training do you have?**

a) Diploma of early childhood education

b) CEGEP diploma (general)

c) CEGEP diploma : specialization in early childhood education

d) CEGEP diploma : other (please specify) _____

e) University : major in education

f) University : major in (please specify) _____

g) University : masters degree in education

h) University : masters degree in (please specify) _____

i) University : Ph.D. in education

j) University : Ph.D. in (please specify) _____

k) Others : _____

7. **How many children between 9-12 years of age attend the program?**

_____

8. **How many children in total attend the center?** _____

9. **What are the adult/child ratios for the group of 9-12-year-old?**

_____

10. **What do you think are the needs of children aged between 9-12 years?**

(List as many needs as you wish)

_____

_____

11. **Do you think that these needs are met in your program?**

a) yes

b) no

Why ? _____

_____

12. **Do you think the 9-12-year-old children are satisfied in your program?**

a) yes

b) no

Why ?_____

_____

13. **Do you think the children between 9-12 years of age are more likely to drop out of the after-school program, than the younger children?**

a) yes

b) no

Why ?_____

_____

14. **How do you perceive the quality of your program offered to children aged between 9-12 years of age?**

a) excellent   b) very good   c) good   d)   needs improvement

Comments : _____

_____

15. **Is there a specific program, different than the program for the children from 6-8 years of age, for children 9-12 years of age at your center ?**

a) yes

b) no

Why? _____

_____

Thank you ! ! !

APPENDIX F

Educator questionnaire

Educator questionnaire

1. **Gender :**   a) female   b) male

2. **Age :**   _____

3. **What is the highest degree you have completed?**

   a) High school

   b) CEGEP / College

   c) Bachelor

   d) Master

   e) Ph.D.

   f) other (please specify)_____

4. **What type of training do you have (please circle) ?**

   a) Diploma of early childhood education

   b) CEGEP diploma (general)

   c) CEGEP diploma : specialization in early childhood education

   d) CEGEP diploma : other (please specify) _____

   e) University : major in education

   f) University : major in (please specify) _____

   g) University : masters degree in education

   h) University : masters degree in (please specify) _____

   i) University : Ph.D. in education

   j) University : Ph.D. in (please specify) _____

   k) Other:_____

5. **How many years of experience do you have working with 9-12- year-old children ?**   _____ years

6. **Was it your first choice to work with 9-12-year-olds ?**

   a) yes

   b) no

7. **How many years have you been working in school-age care programs ?**

   _____ years

8. Have you worked as an educator in a daycare, nursery or preschool (i.e., with children between 0 and 4 years old) before working with 9-12-year-old children ?

a) yes ; how many years ? _____

b) no

9. What are the adult/child ratios at your center for children aged between 9-12 years? _____

10. What do you think are the needs of children aged between 9-12 years?

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you think that these needs are met in your program ?

a) yes

b) sometimes

c) no

Why?_____

12. Is there a specific program for children between the age of 9-12 years in your center, that is different than the program offered to the 6-8 -year-olds?

a) yes

b) no

Why? _____

13. Do you think the children 9-12 years of age are satisfied in your program ?

a) yes

b) no

Why?_____

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX G

School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale

Name of Program

Name of Teacher

Most children
attending at
one time

Number of children
present today

Number of staff present

Ages of children
enrolled

Date

Name of Rater

Position of Rater

1. Indoor space

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Space for gross
motor activities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Space for privacy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Room arrangement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4a. For homework

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Furnishings for
routine care

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Furnishings for
learning/recreational
activities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Furnishings for
relaxation and
comfort

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Furnishings for gross
motor activities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Access to host
facilities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Space to meet
personal needs of
staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. Space to meet
professional needs
of staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Health policy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL
Space & Furnishings
Items 1-11

SCHOOL-AGE CARE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE
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13. Health practices
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. Emergency and safety policy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. Safety practice
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. Attendance
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. Departure
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. Meals/snacks
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. Personal hygiene
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL
Health and Safety
Items 12-19

20. Arts and crafts
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. Music and movement
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

22. Blocks and construction
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. Drama/theater
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24. Language/ reading activities
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25. Math/reasoning activities
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26. Science/nature activities
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27. Cultural awareness
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL Activities Items 20-27

28. Greeting/departing
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29. Staff-child interactions
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30. Staff-child communication
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31. Staff supervision of children
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32. Discipline
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33. Peer interactions
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34. Interactions between staff and parents
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35. Staff interaction
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36. Relationship between program staff and classroom teachers
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL Interactions Items 28-36

37. Schedule

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

38. Free Choice

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

39. Relationship between program staff and program host

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

40. Use of community resources

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL
Program Structure
Items 37-40

41. Opportunities for professional growth

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

42. Staff meetings

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

43. Supervision and evaluation of staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL
Staff Development
Items 41-43

44. Provisions for exceptional children

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

45. Individualization

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

46. Multiple opportunities for learning and practicing skills

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

47. Engagement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

48. Peer interactions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

49. Promoting communication

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TOTAL
Special Needs
Supplementary Items
Items 44-49

Total SACERS Score
(Items 1-43) _____

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APPENDIX H

Hollingshead Four Factor Index Factor of Social Status (1975)

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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 = (OCUPP x 5) + (EDUC x 3)

If double income family :

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