

Laird, Robert D., Pettit, Gregory S., Dodge, Kenneth A., & Bates, John E. (1998). The social ecology of school-age care. Journal of Applied Development Psychology, 19 (3), 341-360.

Purpose:

- Examine variations in school-age childcare across the elementary school years as a function of child, family, and contextual factors.
- Tested whether differing types of care are used to a greater or lesser extent depending on the child's age.
- Tested whether participation in different types of care is associated with earlier or later participation in the same types of care.

Literature Review: Lovko & Ullman (1989) study on characteristics of the broader social ecology, which looked at family socioeconomic status and family structure. "The National Child Care Survey (Hofferthm, Brayfield, Deich, & Holocomb, 1991) used a normative, cross-sectional sample, showed on developmental changes in the percentage of families using relative and parent care, but did show changes across the primary school years in the use of self care, center-based programs, and activities such as lessons or sports (Laird, 1998)."

Methods:

- Sample: 466 primary caregivers, all were mothers except for three. Five hundred and eighty-five participating families (52% male children, 19% minority ethnic background, and 26% children lived with a single mother).
- Variables: types of care settings, children's involvement in differing care arrangements; and child, parent, and family background variables including work status, marital status, child sex, child ethnicity, proactive parenting, behavior problems, and family socioeconomic status.
- Procedure: Researchers did in-home interviews and gave out questionnaires to mothers who agreed to participate in the study to find out information on child characteristics, parenting philosophy, and the child's family background.

Results/Conclusions:

- "Current study reports that there was stability in the use of relative care, increases in the use of self care and activity-oriented care, and decreases in the use of daycare across the elementary school years (Laird, 1998)."
- Children whose mothers worked full-time were found to spend more time in childcare centers.
- The family's SES and child sex showed evidence of children having to go to different child care centers over a period of time.