After-School Time and the
Social Construction of Childhood

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The after-school period of older primary school-aged children was used to examine how the social construct of childhood is being shaped and how it changes over time. With studies on childhood still relatively new academic terrain, this research makes a contribution by identifying some key structural and social forces impacting upon childhood. This research investigated firstly how children spend their time in the after-school period, secondly the reasons why they do so, and thirdly parental and child understandings and opinions on this subject. Childhood was found to be differentially constructed by socioeconomic backgrounds, and mediated by employment status. Results suggest that increasing parental employment accompanied concerns over safety for children and the need to protect them. This meant that there was a tendency for families to mediate between the child and wider society through increased surveillance of children. For one-parent families this took the form of supervision of children through after-school programmes. Two-parent families, who were more able to organise their work arrangements so that one parent was home after-school, monitored their children’s activities within localised areas based around the home. Parental ‘risk anxiety’ was seen to be shaping the lives of children in terms of defining safe places and spaces for them. Children themselves tended to prefer informal, unstructured activities within these contexts, and did not seem too concerned about safety issues.

**Keywords:** Childhood, Children, Time, After-School, Employment, Safety
To my son Samuel,

whose childhood years and experiences
gave me the ideas for this thesis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to show how the social construction of childhood is evolving and changing by examining and placing in a structural and social context the after-school experiences of older Christchurch primary school aged children. In other words, the after-school experiences of children shall be used to illustrate how childhood is being constructed during one particular time period.

1.2 Childhood as a Social Construct

The sociological premise that this research starts from is that childhood is a social construction, the meaning of which varies over time. This means that childhood is both constructed and reconstructed to reflect wider societal change. A second subsequent meaning is that despite what may be commonly held or aspired to views on childhood, it will have varied meanings for children according to their social circumstances.

In acknowledging that childhood is a changing social and historical construction, social science theorists (Prout and James, 1997; James et. al., 1998) emphasise that accounts of childhood must be placed in a temporal context. As James and Prout put it, rather than being timeless or universal, concepts of childhood are “...rooted in the past and reshaped in the present” (1997, p.232). James et. al. (1998) make the point that the social constructionist view of childhood holds that time is a critical element which allows the understanding of childhood to be historically contingent. For
example, in recent times childhood has reflected concerns and fears over the lives of children (Prout and James, 1997; James and James, 2001; Valentine, 1997).

One consistent theme that emerges from the work of geographers and sociologists on modern day childhood emphasises the need to protect children from an environment which is seen as increasingly unsafe. James and James (2001a) describe childhood in the United Kingdom at the start of the twenty first century as characterised by the innocent child becoming more subjected to surveillance and social control, which they claim “...threatens increasingly to restrict children's everyday lives and activities” (2001a, p. 33). With this in mind, it is argued in this research that the concept of risk anxiety, i.e. the social state brought about by an increasing lack of trust in modern society (Scott et. al., 1998), may be useful in explaining how childhood is being constructed in the context of the structural changes impacting on the lives of children.

1.3 Research Rationale

As a subject of study, children's after-school activities and supervision highlight some of the structural and social changes impacting on children's lives. One key structural factor is parental employment levels, particularly of mothers. Related social factors are heightened concerns over child safety, for example children’s use of public space and the real or imagined threats posed by strangers. The social construction of childhood is becoming more formally organised and institutional in nature as a response to these recent social and economic changes (Valentine, 1997). Information gathered from the research on the after-school period will be assessed in this light.

As well as broader societal change, this research also aims to look at the extent and
understandings of after-school activities from parent and child viewpoints. For example, although the after-school period may be seen as an opportunity for learning and development activities by parents, children may see it differently, since children are, indeed, social actors. This research will therefore also seek children's own views and experiences of how they spend their time, including what if anything else they would like to be doing, organised activity or otherwise.

1.4 Research Questions

For many parents, after-school care is an issue to resolve in terms of where their children go, what they do, and who if anyone looks after them. A focus in recent years by central and local government in New Zealand has been the after-school care of children of working parents, with attention given to the funding of after-school care (e.g. increased funding to after school care in the 2004 Budget, 2005 Budget). The aim of this research was to identify what children were doing after-school and put it in a social context to explain how childhood was being experienced.

To determine the range of activities that older primary school-aged children took part in during their after-school time, a time-use method of inquiry was undertaken as a way of gathering information. The types of activities undertaken by children were thought to include after-school programmes, home-based leisure activities, various sporting, cultural and musical activities, and the extent of independent or unsupervised activities, including unstructured play. Measures of parental employment and income, along with family structure, were taken in order to assess factors affecting children's after-school activities. For example, as well as household income, it was thought that the number of parents in a family working versus the time
parents had available to be at home after-school would impact on what children did after-school and the type of after-school care arrangements that may be made.

The key research questions were:

- What are children doing in the after-school time period?
- What is influencing how children are spending their after-school time?
- How are these influences shaping the social construction of childhood?

1.5 Research Definitions

Several theoretical and conceptual definitions were used in this thesis. The concept of *Childhood* refers to the sociological idea that time spent as a child is a social construct whose meaning varies across time according to changes in social structure and cultural norms. Another concept, *Risk Anxiety* is a social state engendered by an increasing lack of trust in modern society, resulting in attempts to manage actions and outcomes at an individualised level.

In terms of operational definitions, *primary school-aged children* are children from the ages of five to thirteen who attend primary school, which also includes intermediate school-aged children aged eleven to thirteen. *Older primary school aged children* are primary and intermediate school children aged nine to twelve years. *After-school* is the time from 3.00pm to 6.00pm during school days, i.e. that portion of time in between school ending and evening commencing.

Several types of care or supervision are used. *Formal care* is organised and
supervised after-school care, usually in the form of paid after-school programmes, e.g. OSCAR (Outside School Care And Recreation), but excluding organised activities such as sport or music. *Informal care* means non-parental care provided by relatives, siblings, friends or neighbours, either at or away from children’s homes. *Self-care* refers to a child looking after themselves, usually at home, but also away from home, e.g. on their own in the local neighbourhood.

1.6 Research Context

This research aims to contribute to understandings of the meaning of childhood by studying the after-school time period. Apart from studies describing and evaluating the amounts and types of after-school care children receive, across the academic literature there is little detail on how children spend their time or little analysis on why they may be doing particular activities. For example, one review of children's time-use studies concluded that, for American elementary school children (i.e. ages 6-11), "...we really do not know how children use their time or what their daily activities are" (Ben-Arieh and Ofir, 2002, p. 233). The review also noted that many studies they reviewed focused on particular activities, e.g. leisure, resulting in an incomplete picture on how children spend their time.

Likewise there is little New Zealand information available on how and why children spend their time generally, let alone the after-school time specifically. Most of that which is available tends to be on specific activity areas and doesn't particularly focus on times of the week or day. Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) data, for example, broadly indicate the percentage of children participating in sports activities outside school (SPARC, 2001). Even regional sports organisations seldom have
information publicly available on junior participation levels, especially that which could be translated to a primary school level.

Some idea of the level of after-school care can be found from a Department of Labour childcare survey conducted in 1998 which found that twenty percent of children experienced at least one form of after-school care arrangement, with twenty percent of this figure (i.e. four percent of all school-aged children) having formal after-school care (Department of Labour, 1999). The other eighty percent were described as having no formal or informal care arrangements after school, which in terms of the childcare survey meant they had parental care at home (self-care was not mentioned in the survey's definitions of care). Although, anecdotally, levels of parental after-school care are known to be the commonest form of care in New Zealand, the Department of Labour survey would seem to be the best estimate available. Other sources of information only give approximations for parental care, e.g. the Time Use Survey of those twelve years and older gave estimated figures of the minutes per day spent by parents caring for children (Department of Statistics, 1999b).

It is hard to tell from records of after-school care providers the actual number of children attending after-school programmes. Due to funding criteria, it is generally only the total number of attendances that are reported upon. It is also difficult to know how many after-school care organisations are operating as not all are linked to the Outside School Care And Recreation (OSCAR) network, which is the main after-school care umbrella grouping. Some idea can be gained from an evaluation of after-school programmes commissioned by the Christchurch City Council in 2003 which noted that, during the 2002-2003 council financial year, 44 identified after-school
programmes had 188,840 attendances (MacGibbon, 2003). In Christchurch, fifty-one after-school care programmes, OSCAR and otherwise, were noted from OSCAR Network records in 2004 (OSCAR Network, personal communication, August 16 2004).

1.7 Summary

Childhood as a time of life is recognised by most social scientists as neither natural or universal, but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of society. Childhood is engaged with the rest of society through sets of social relationships that change over time, with children's lives being mediated along socioeconomic lines of class, gender and ethnicity. This research seeks to explain some ways in which childhood is socially constructed by looking at the after-school period in the context of structural and social change, and how this may impact on the experiences and perceptions of childhood. Some of these changes relate to employment and notions of safety, and are held to impact on the meaning of childhood as a social construction. Although there are many agencies of socialisation that clearly contribute to the social construction of childhood (e.g. school, church and the media), this research focuses on examining what other influences are specifically shaping the experience of childhood in the after-school period.

The research was carried out by investigating firstly how children they spend their time in the after-school period, secondly the reasons why they do so, and thirdly by identifying parental and child understandings and opinions on this subject. Findings will then be discussed in the light of how they are contributing to current social constructions of childhood.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the relevant literature related to the research topic questions. As noted in Chapter One and expanded upon below, the research topic draws upon understandings of childhood being a social construction. The literature review also seeks to specifically examine the issues surrounding how children spend their after-school time, including types of activities undertaken by children, where they are happening, and the types of supervision or otherwise that are occurring. A range of sociological, geographical and psychological literature are reviewed to identify what factors are affecting or contributing to how children spend this period of their lives and the impacts these might have on children and on the nature of childhood.

The research considered comes from other Western countries, mainly being the United States and the United Kingdom, with some from Western Europe. New Zealand information and data is described where possible, bearing in mind the small amount of material available.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Sociologists Prout and James (1997) broadly identify four themes in what they describe as the emerging paradigm for the study of childhood. Firstly, childhood is seen as a social construction in that it is an institution for understanding the early years of human life. This means that childhood will have different meanings and
understandings across different cultures, as well as having different historical meanings over time. James et. al. have summarised this in the following way:

Although clearly childhood can be seen as a permanent feature of any social structure, the particular social and cultural parameters which define and regulate that conceptual space of ‘childhood’, and the efficacy with which they are shored up, are all temporally – that is generationally – situated. Any account of the unfolding of ‘childhood’ in children’s lives must therefore acknowledge the effects of such historical, temporal structuring. (1998, p. 64)

A second theme highlighted by Prout and James is that there is not a universal childhood in that the institution of childhood is not separate from but is mediated by social variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. This means that childhood becomes another dimension of social analysis.

Thirdly, childhood is deserving of study in its own right as children are social actors involved in the construction of their own lives and the lives of others around them. Greater understandings of social phenomena are thereby gained if children are no longer seen as merely passive subjects waiting to become adults.

These themes lead on to a fourth theme of the study of childhood, which implicitly recognises the process of reconstructing childhood in society given that it is partly the result of the interaction between children and adults over periods of time. As Matthews et. al. note, the construction of childhood “…promotes a dynamic and
relational view of children and society that shifts attention away from age as a cultural determinant" (Matthews et. al., 1998, p. 313).

The socially constructed nature of childhood is also recognised by James & James (2001a) as an important factor in shaping children's everyday experiences. Describing earlier historical research on childhood, they note that the broad framework of the social construction of childhood firstly holds that childhood is a particular cultural experience of the early part of the life course, with particular historical and political contexts which are subject to change. Childhood is therefore characterised as a changing social construction rather than a timeless universal experience. The second point was that children's experiences of childhood are shaped by their responses to and engagement with the adult world. This means that whilst childhood is common to all children, it is the variation between cultures and generations as well as across time which gives childhood its diverse character and experience for children: "The ways in which childhood is interpreted, understood, and socially institutionalised by adults through their engagement with children and childhood varies considerably across and between cultures and generations" (James and James, 2001a, p. 27).

Some questions that James and James pose include what role children play as social actors in shaping how childhood is understood. Two common research perspectives James and James (2001a) note on the study of childhood focus firstly on children as social actors, and secondly on examining how childhood is structured as social space for children. Common to these research perspectives is that children are not only shaped by culture but also help shape it. In other words, childhood not only shapes children's experiences, but children also help shape the nature of the childhood that
they experience. James and James see the challenge as lying in demonstrating and explaining the links between such structure and agency perspectives. A consequence for this research was that as well as locating childhood in a wider social context of social change, the role of parents and children as social actors in this construction was examined by talking to members of each group.

McDonald (1978) provides an early New Zealand application of a social constructionist position by describing how children have been viewed since European settlement in terms of their changing social status over four periods of time. From 1840-1899, children were seen and treated as chattels with little legal recognition, often being labour commodities for settler families. The period 1900-1944 was characterised by the child as social capital, with the state recognising the importance, and taking an active role, in investing in children's education and welfare. The years 1945-1969 saw the child as a psychological being, with the development in the public sphere of psychological and guidance services for children, and a focus in the private sphere of the state encouraging ways of appropriately bringing up children in the nuclear family. The last period noted describes the 1970s onward as “the child as a citizen”, signalling the start of an era recognising the rights of children in society in terms of social justice. This period has continued on to the present in terms of a child centred outcome focus in many areas of society, e.g. health and justice.

More recent New Zealand research into children has been carried out which includes a sociological perspective of childhood being socially constructed. Smith and Taylor (2000) describe social constructions as being located in specific times and places. They also acknowledge the recent emphasis of the study of childhood by noting that
little is known about how children experience childhood within their own cultural and historical settings. Smith and Taylor recommend a sociocultural approach so as to place social, cultural, and historical frameworks of childhood at the centre of inquiry.

In summary, childhood is a social institution that changes over time, or as Prout and James put it, "...childhood is both constructed and reconstructed both for children and by children" (1997, p.7). For Prout and James, it is important to recognise both agency and structure in children's lives, as well as childhood being a social institution that exists beyond children (or adults) themselves. Accounting for children in this way, then, leads to "authentic" accounts of children, which "...represent childhood as it is constituted at a particular moment in time and point in space" (ibid, p.28). Other writers have expressed similar sentiments when locating the study of childhood on the academic research agenda (James and James, 2001a; James et. al., 1998). It is the (re)constructed meaning of childhood that the current research seeks to examine and explore in the context of the after-school lives of primary school-aged children.

2.3 Risk Anxiety

Some writers (Jackson and Scott, 1999; Scott et. al., 1998) have employed the concept of risk, and risk anxiety especially, as impacting on the construction of childhood. Utilising work by social theorists such as Beck and Giddens, Scott et. al. (1998) conceptualise risk anxiety as a social state brought about by an increasing lack of trust in modern society. Starting from the premise that childhood is socially constructed, they argue that the concept of risk anxiety provides a way of analysing concerns about child safety. With innocence and vulnerability of children being key components of the construction of childhood, risk anxiety is conceptualized as helping to construct
childhood and maintain its boundaries.

With regard to children's lives, risk anxiety can be seen as a reaction to a more unpredictable and changing world, manifesting itself in childhood through a perceived need to protect children from the harms and dangers of society. Parental fears of strangers, the environment (e.g. road safety) and the internet would be three current examples. Other risks include pressures towards early maturity, consumer society, and sexual promiscuity (Scott et. al., 1998). From a similar theoretical position of risk anxiety as being a product of the social consequences and reactions to the technological change occurring in modernity, Jackson and Scott suggest "...that the anxieties specific to childhood are part of a general sense that the social world is becoming less stable and less predictable" (1999, p. 88). Others have argued that risk anxiety has its roots in structural and cultural changes in society, e.g. increasing levels of employment by parents, leading to concerns over what is happening to children (Belle, 1999). Along with the breakdown of previous or traditional bonds in society and the less stable family arrangements, individualised responses are the risk management solutions to the risks posed by modern society.

Risk anxiety and the concerns of parents to keep children safe may have negative consequences by placing limitations on children's activities and experiences. Keeping them safe from harm may mean making them subject to increased surveillance and control, e.g. restricting their access to public space without a supervising adult being present. The social world of children becomes divided into safe and dangerous places, which has consequences for children's use of space and where they are allowed to go (Scott, et. al., 1998).
2.4 Childhood Time and Space

Holloway and Valentine (2000) write of childhood being a social construction the meaning of which varies over time. They describe the common view of childhood in advanced capitalist societies being characterised as one of innocence, with children’s behaviour needing to be shaped and controlled by adults. Their innocence is reflected in what Holloway and Valentine call an Apollonian (‘angelic’) construction of childhood, with its accompanying understanding the Dionysian (‘little devils’) construct, where so-called unruly children are blamed for their actions in an adult controlled world. Within this framework, children are seen as vulnerable, naïve and innocent, needing protecting from adult knowledge and the adult world, and from those children who are allowed to misbehave beyond adult control. This dual construction of childhood leads to an ideology “...that children’s place is in the home, and in straying outside this they either place themselves at risk in adult controlled space, or their unruly behaviour threatens adult hegemony of public space” (2000, p. 14). As noted elsewhere by Valentine (1997), these constructions lead to parents favouring more home-based activities or formally organised activities outside the home. Holloway and Valentine conclude that the current contemporary construction of childhood sees children as less able and less competent than previous generations. As a result, they see children as having been increasingly ‘domesticated’ over time, with the home, school and the local neighbourhood acting to control and regulate children’s minds and bodies.

Jones (2000) also notes the developments in modern society of constricting children’s access to free time and space, due to safety concerns and the commodification of childhood. For Jones, this results in the erosion of childhood by its spatial and
temporal confinement, with opportunities for self-expression and development being aspects of childhood that are under threat. This runs counter to what Jones describes as the recent Western ideal conception of a universal childhood in which children have the opportunity and innocent experiences to develop into adults in an unimpeded way.

Further to the theme of circumscription of children, Valentine (1997) notes research showing that children’s upbringings are more spatially restricted compared to those of their parents. She points to the role of parental fears in restructuring children’s time and space to minimise children’s free play without adult supervision. As a result, children are being squeezed out of public space, which is being reproduced more as adult space. As Valentine suggests, ‘stranger danger’ can act to mask the changes in public space that have made it a less safe place for children, such as increasing traffic speeds and volumes. Her point is that parental competencies and children’s competencies change over time, and are paradoxical to each other in that parents overestimate their own competencies while underestimating those of their children. Accordingly, for Valentine there is a danger of underestimating children’s abilities to manage their own personal safety.

2.5 Public Space

A measure of the changing nature of childhood from increased adult supervision of children’s lives can be seen in changes in children’s play. Based on research conducted in North-West England, Valentine and McKendrick (1997) note that fewer children are playing outdoors, with the location of outdoor play now closely centred on the home and on structured activities rather than the street. The authors also found
that the most significant influence on children's access to independent play was not the level of play facility provision, but parental anxieties about children's safety. Contributing factors they note are the loss of children's independence and mobility through road safety concerns, fears of 'stranger danger', and moral panics associated with the changing nature of childhood, e.g. incidents of violence or drug taking. This research therefore provides an example of risk anxiety having the consequences of children's time and space being increasingly structured around adult lives and institutionalised spaces.

Valentine and McKendrick (1997) also discovered that children's play experiences were related to socioeconomic factors, with children of single parents spending more time outdoors in the local neighbourhood compared to children in two parent families. As well as no second parent to share the child care responsibilities with, this finding was mainly attributed to a lack of resources to provide home-based activities and entertainment or to access organised activities. It was concluded that such an outcome meant that these children were missing out on the 'cultural capital' children from two parent, middle class families received when taking part in institutional activities.

The need for supervising and monitoring children's activities does not end once children are in the home. As Valentine and Holloway (2001) note, moral panics abound on the perceived risk of children using the internet being contacted by strangers. It can be seen that anxieties about children in cyberspace replicate concerns about outdoor space, reinforcing the notion of innocent children needing protecting from the adult world. Valentine and Holloway (2001) describe ways in which parents...
place temporal and spatial restrictions on children's internet usage, e.g. time limits and locating the computer in living areas, often for reasons of safety from unknown people or from objectionable content. In this way, children's home-centred play became a further reflection of more time under adult supervision.

These ideas on modern childhood are picked up by Aitken (2001), who notes the problematic way in which children engage with public space. The focus on 'stranger danger' and what he calls the 'corrupting public' suggest for Aitken that the supposed safe havens of home, school and commercially secure environments are seen as the only seemingly proper places for children. He also notes how the privatisation of public space and the commercialisation of childcare can impact on children by segregating urban space and reducing children's presence in, and exposure to, unstructured contexts and spaces.

Aitken (2001) also picks up on issues not covered in quite so much detail by Valentine and her associates. These are to do with structural changes in employment and education which impact upon children. For Aitken, these are located in globalisation processes, particularly with regard to expanding both the pool of exploitable labour and the markets for products and services. The significance is how these processes ultimately impact on social reproduction and children's lives. Some explicitly worry that the outcomes of these global employment changes are leading to more after-school care facilities, which in turn is leading to a greater institutionalisation of childhood along with a reduced child presence in public space (Karsten, 2002). A Dutch researcher, Karsten puts this down to a combination of contemporary discourses on children's safety, personal achievement and working
mothers.

2.6 Contested Space

The foregoing should not be taken as implying that adult control over children's lives, especially through children's local spheres of activity, is uncontested. Several researchers make the point that these spaces are not so much rigidly bound as porous, and that children's agency and resistance to adult restrictions on their movements needs to be taken into account (Holloway and Valentine, 2000; James and Prout, 1997; Kelley et al., 1999).

Children may, of course, have a different view of after-school time compared to some parents' perception of it as an opportunity for children's learning and development. United Kingdom research with eight and nine year old children on their play location preferences has found that children can prefer, if not want to create for themselves, spaces and places for casual socializing (Thomson and Philo, 2004). These desires were placed ahead of formal organized activities or locations such as organised programmes or purpose-built playgrounds. Children placed an emphasis on 'being', or hanging out, rather than subscribing to adult notions of having to be 'doing' something (ibid, p. 126). Danish research with children five to twelve years of age has also noted that children utilise and identify with informal, unstructured places often unnoticed by adults as well as formal play areas provided by adults (Rasmussen, 2004). The findings from these two pieces of research make the point that "When 'free time' is spent in an institutional context, it is not experienced as quite free" (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 169).
2.7 Self-Care and After School Care

One of the research issues to consider in the light of the monitoring or supervision of children is what is commonly described in the literature as 'self-care', or when children are at home looking after themselves. Although attempts have been made to study the prevalence of self-care along with identifying family characteristics associated with it, the academic literature of its effects on children is mixed. Using data on five to thirteen year old children collected by the US Census Bureau, Casper and Smith (2004) noted that self-care was the primary childcare arrangement for sixteen percent of children, with its use being related to the age of children. Older children were noted by them as being more likely to be using this option as parents considered them to be responsible and mature enough to do so. Lack of affordability for other types of care was not found to be an issue, with self-care not being related to the ability of families to pay for childcare. Like other studies (e.g. Cain & Hofferth, 1989), the researchers found that self-care was directly related to parental employment, meaning parents had less time to look after children. Cain and Hofferth (1989) also note from their analysis of a United States census survey that self-care was used by middle and upper income earning mothers for their children, and only for what the authors considered to be short periods of time (i.e. less than two hour periods).

Maternal participation in the workforce also increased the likelihood of self-care in a study analysing an American longitudinal data set containing children aged six to thirteen years, although family income itself had no predictive effect (Brandon, 1999). The author of the study found these results hard to interpret, other than noting that a series of other factors needed to be met (i.e. a lack of alternatives), that self-care was
not for long periods, that it was often not the only care option used, and tended to occur with older children.

Some studies perceive self-care to be undesirable. An American study of childcare arrangements for five to ten year olds noted that behavioural problems were associated with self-care (Laird et al., 1998). A further analysis of a longitudinal data set study found that children aged ten to fourteen years old who had adult supervision were less likely to be absent from school, use drugs or commit crime than children who were not under adult supervision, with family income having no bearing on this relationship (Aizer, 2004).

Other researchers say that the problems usually associated with self-care are overstated. In a review of empirical research, Belle (1999) noted that there were mixed findings on the behavioural and educational effects on children who experienced a lack of after-school supervision. She makes the point that causal relationships are unclear, i.e. negative outcomes associated with little after-school supervision may be a function of other factors that contribute to little supervision in the first instance. In this light, it should also be borne in mind that self-care probably needs to be set in its context of widespread use in the first place, with national American statistics indicating that thirty-five percent of twelve year olds take care of themselves regularly after school (Polatnick, 2002).

In another review of research into self-care, Riley and Steinberg (2004) note that definitions on this type of care can vary, that self-care is often not for long periods of time and is often not as solitary as implied. They state that self-care even has some
developmental value for children if matched to their capabilities and to a safe
neighbourhood context. For Riley and Steinberg, self-care becomes part of family
adaptation to its environment, and reflects children's needs for autonomy.

A recent New Zealand study in Christchurch states a lack of supervision to be
undesirable, quoting overseas research stating that without access to quality after
school care, children of working parents are at risk (MacGibbon, 2003). Through
interviews with parents and after-school programme administrators, the study
concluded that participating children benefited socially, recreationally, and
educationally. The study describes the term self-care as a euphemism for lack of
supervision, ascribing judgemental connotations to children who are by themselves
after school by using the term unsupervised instead.

Types of after-school care are often compared. A review of four longitudinal
American studies on different types of after-school care found that supervised after-
school activities can reduce the incidence of problem behaviours, although no direct
links were found between after-school care arrangements and academic performance
(Munton et al., 2001). A further longitudinal American study on types of after-school
care found that young children's participation in after-school activities such as sport
or music was higher in higher income families, with these children performing better
in academic tests (NICHD, 2004). This additional study also noted that attending
after-school programmes was not related to academic outcomes. The conclusion to be
drawn is that it is not the type of after-school care that is linked with beneficial
outcomes or participation in other activities but rather a range of possible
socioeconomic factors in the first place.
Research commenting on the negative effects of self-care often notes, or complements research on, the benefits of after-school programmes. An American study of different types of after-school care for children from low income families found that when demographic variables were controlled for, attending after-school programmes was associated with better academic achievement and social adjustment in children compared to other types of after-school care (Posner and Vandell, 1994). Also discovered was that the amount of time children had as self-care was correlated with antisocial behaviour. The authors concluded that after-school programmes were one way to ameliorate some of the negative effects of poverty on children.

Another review of after-school programmes in America found that they can positively contribute to children's social development, additionally emphasising that programmes should be low key with self-directed learning experiences rather than structured or academically focused (Halpern, 2000). In terms of what the users themselves prefer, middle primary school-aged children interviewed in a United States study preferred after-school activities and programmes that were inclusive and participation orientated rather than competitive and performance orientated (Polatnick, 2002).

2.8 Parental Employment and After School Care

Although commonplace in Western countries, after-school programmes are still used less than other forms of care or supervision. Allowing for varying research definitions of types of care, one study noted that after-school programmes in the United States are used by four percent of families with children aged five to fourteen.
years (NICHD, 2004). In New Zealand, after-school programmes were included in a category defined as formal care arrangements which was also used by four percent of primary school-aged children according to research carried out in 1998 (Department of Labour, 1999). The use of formal after-school care arrangements in New Zealand was higher in families where single parents or both parents worked full-time. As in America (e.g. Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001), maternal employment is a key predictor of time in childcare for New Zealand children.

In terms of comparing other types of care, a figure of nine percent of primary school-aged children receiving care from a relative was noted in the Department of Labour survey. This contrasts to a figure of nineteen percent for relative care as a primary care arrangement in the United States (Casper and Smith, 2002). No comparisons can be made between the two countries for self-care, as there are no reliable figures available for New Zealand.

In the American context, the low uptake of after-school programmes has been partly attributed to the programmes not matching up with the hours needed by working parents, e.g. not starting early enough or finishing late enough to match parental work times (Brandon and Hofferth, 2003). Affordability of programmes is also a factor for low income families, with low income mothers found to prefer informal care arrangements such as care by relatives to formal after-school care, which may be more restricted due to cost and hours of operation (Henly and Lyons, 2000). Issues of availability and affordability have often meant that childcare in general is more easily accessed by higher income working mothers in many Western societies including the United Kingdom, as noted by Scott (1998). Access and availability of childcare
generally has also been noted as an issue in New Zealand. A Department of Labour report (2004), based on submissions from individuals and organizations, found childcare to be the commonly cited work-life balance issue for parents. The report noted that cost was the main issue for parents, along with limited hours of opening for childcare centres.

Notwithstanding issues of suitability or affordability, the last decade has seen a large increase in numbers of children using after-school care in New Zealand. A late 1990s survey involving children aged six to thirteen years at twenty-four Christchurch primary and intermediate schools found that thirty-two percent of children had at some stage attended an after-school programme (Kirk & Daley, 1997). The survey found that eight percent of parents had their children attending after-school programmes, although frequency of attendance was not noted. Affordability was the largest barrier noted to further use of after-school care, with forty-nine percent of parents saying this was an issue. Recent research carried out for the Christchurch City Council noted that in the financial year 2002-2003, forty-four after school programmes had 188,840 attendances, or an average of 4292 attendances per programme (MacGibbon, 2003). However, the actual number of children attending these programmes was not noted.

The issue of economic necessity along with career choice has led to more women in the workforce in New Zealand. Real incomes have been falling in recent decades for many income earners, with Larner (1996) noting that the bottom eighty percent of earners have suffered a decrease in the period 1982 to 1992. The fall in real income in the first half of this period was particularly marked for the second to bottom and
middle quintile groups (Department of Statistics, 1999a). The median personal income of all New Zealand adults continued to fall, declining by 13.4 percent between 1986 and 1996 (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). Although median household income has risen recently, real disposable household equivalised income (i.e. controlling for household size) for 2004 for the bottom sixty percent of households had only just returned to 1988 levels (Ministry of Social Development, 2005).

Pressures on real family incomes have been identified as a contributing factor in the rise in women’s employment levels (Perkins & Gidlow, 1996). The percentage of women in the full time workforce increased dramatically in the period 1975 to 1995 from thirty percent to forty-four percent (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997). Furthermore, as shown in Table One, the percentage of women in either part-time or full-time work in (heterosexual) two parent families with children has more recently increased from fifty-seven percent in 1991 to sixty-seven percent in 2001 (Department of Statistics 1991 & 2001). The numbers of those working full- or part-time in one parent families has also risen, from thirty-one percent in 1991 to forty-nine percent in 2001 (Department of Statistics, 1991 & 2001). This increase in maternal employment contributes in New Zealand, as in other Western countries, to an increasing demand for after-school programmes that outstrips supply (MacGibbon, 2003).

Table One: Increasing Employment Patterns in New Zealand Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those in Part- or Full-Time Work</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers in Two Parent Families (%)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parents (%)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent findings also show that New Zealand women are returning to work earlier when children are still young. For mothers born between 1972 and 1981, fifty-two
percent had returned to employment or study by the time their youngest child had turned two years of age (Sceats, 2003). This suggests that an earlier onset of after-school care may be one factor resulting in greater numbers of children in after-school care during their primary school years.

This trend may continue if the government acts on its analysis of ways to increase maternal employment. The Prime Minister's opening address to parliament for 2005 mentioned Treasury estimates of a boost to GDP per capita of 5.1 percent if New Zealand participation rates for women aged 25 to 34 matched those of the top five OECD countries (Prime Minister's Statement, 2005). In highlighting the need to assist female entry into the workforce through the provision of parental leave, childcare, after-school care, and home-based care, the Prime Minister noted United Kingdom plans for 'dawn to dusk' out of school care as worth considering. Of the 787 programmes registered with the National Association for Out of School Care and Recreation in 2004, twelve percent offer before school as well as after school care (Middlebrook, 2004a). It can be concluded that changing family employment patterns and the employment goals of the government will no doubt have implications for how families structure their time, what activities children undertake, and the way in which they are supervised.

2.9 The Time Squeeze?

Some writers worry that increasing levels of parental, and especially maternal, employment is leading to children being in childcare for longer periods, children increasingly caring for themselves, and less child interaction with the rest of the family (e.g. Rizzini, 2000). Assumptions could be made that parents now spend less
time with their children. Research points to a different conclusion. An analysis of time data from four American surveys from the mid 1960s to the late 1990s found that both mothers and fathers reported spending more time in childcare activities in 1998 than they did in 1965 (Sayer, Bianchi and Robinson, 2004). This finding was also true of single mothers. The authors conclude that parents have changed behaviours over time to counter pressures that would have reduced time with their children. However, the study notes that this time may have more to do with taking and accompanying children to after-school activities due to safety concerns. Further, smaller family sizes mean that more time can be spent with each child than before.

Time-use data was also used to examine trends in parental time invested in children in 16 industrialised countries (Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg, 2004). Despite time pressures confronting today's families, the consistent result across the countries studied was that parents appear to be devoting more time to children than before. Paid work did not seem to have a negative impact on time spent with children. Noted in the study was that activities involving a high degree of parent-child interaction, such as playing, were responsible for this increase. Like Sayer, Bianchi and Robinson (2004), Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg (2004) also postulate that lower fertility levels have led to a greater willingness and choice for parents to spend time with children. However, the analysis of data in the research was restricted to two parent families.

Despite these findings of greater parental time being spent with children, parents may still feel they are not giving enough time to their children, for whatever reason they want to be with them. An analysis of data from two national American surveys found
that 40 percent of parents in one survey and 43 percent of parents in the second survey reported spending what they saw as insufficient time with their children (Milkie, et al., 2004). The study notes that although parents who worked more hours spent less time with their children, the feeling of the ‘time strain’ of not spending enough time with children was not related to employment. It can be reasoned that cultural expectations arising from the Apollonian view of childhood come together with concepts of risk anxiety, along with impacts of increased parental employment levels, to create a tension of how much time should be spent with children.

2.10 Children's Health

There are a number of health and safety concerns expressed in relation to the lives of children. These include environmental issues such as traffic safety, personal safety from others (from those known to children or in particular from ‘stranger danger’), and physical health concerns over child obesity. Some of these concerns are borne out in research in children's health. New Zealand studies have found that 31 percent of five to fifteen year olds were considered to be inactive (Ross, 2000), and that fitness levels were decreasing for five to seventeen year olds (Hamlin, et al., 2003). Hillary Commission data point to 30 percent of five to twelve year olds being inactive (Hillary Commission, 1999), a similar conclusion reached by a Ministry of Health child nutrition survey carried out in 2002 (Parnell et al., 2004).

2.11 Children’s Safety

Safety concerns about children – or ‘risk anxiety’ – are a large factor that has been noted as contributing to the ongoing social construction of childhood (Scott et al., 1998; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). These concerns are seen by some as leading
to greater social control of children through increasing adult control of children's space and agency (Collins & Kearns, 2001; James & James, 2001b). Smith and Barker (2000) give the example of after-school programmes as defined spaces controlled by adults which are legitimised through ideologies of child safety.

A United Kingdom study comparing parents and children's views on the risks of childhood noted that parents considered their own childhoods to be less restricted than their children's, with fewer dangers meaning fewer constraints on their time and space when they were children (Kelley et al., 1999). The research was theoretically grounded in the context of examining responses to the 'risk society' we live in, or ways of managing the unpredictability of global and social change, e.g. economic restructuring leading to demands for flexibility but at the same time leading to uncertainty in the structuring of family lives. Parental solutions that were noted in the study were described as individualised measures to solve the uncertainty of events and situations in their children's lives. These included having children undertake organised adult-led activities as a way of reducing risks or threats to them.

2.12 Independence

Responses to adult anxieties over childhood in general and childcare in particular have been to supervise and monitor children's activities, resulting in restrictions in children's time and space. A readily documented example of the loss in children's independence and mobility has been noted in the journey to school, with Australasian (Tranter, 1994) and United Kingdom (Hillman, 1993) studies noting a decrease in the numbers of children traveling independently to school from the 1970s to the 1990s. Over half of all primary school children travel to school by car in New Zealand.
(Ministry of Transport, 1999), a figure that also holds true for Christchurch (Cottam, 2001).

The journey to school also provides a generational example of the changing nature of childhood. A 1993 Australian study noted that 67 percent of parents believed that they had far more opportunities for independent travel (e.g. to school, in their neighbourhood) than their own children now have (Tranter, 1994, p. 520). A New Zealand local authority child road safety survey in 1999 found that seventy-eight percent of parents reported that they walked or cycled to primary school when they were children, compared to thirty percent of their own primary school aged children (Cottam, 1999).

Independence and mobility also seems to be mediated across social class. United Kingdom research into primary school children's mobility in public environments involved child and parent surveys, and home-based case studies of children's significant places and spaces. Findings suggested that children's independent mobility was greatest in a newer, low density city environment rather than an established city (O'Brien et. al., 2000). The authors also made the observation that the modern urban home with all its physical and communications trappings was a source of 'enrichment' rather than 'entrapment' for many children, especially those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

2.13 Cultures of Parenting

How families operate to raise children in response to societal change also affects parenting cultures. As Scott et. al. (1998) note in their discussion on risk anxiety and
childhood, parents risk being seen as irresponsible if they do not take safety concerns seriously and act upon them. Making and taking what are seen to be the safe courses of action for children – e.g. taking them to school and/or after school activities by car – have been noted in some studies as what responsible parenting cultures mean (e.g. Valentine, 1997; Dowling, 2000). As Dowling notes, “Travel by car was both instigated by their desires for their children, and helped materialise, or enact, these desires” (2000, p. 352, original italics).

Cultures of parenting can be seen in other ways such as providing children with as many learning, artistic and sporting opportunities as possible. After-school programmes are often portrayed and recommended in ways that stress their social and academic benefits, including New Zealand (e.g. MacGibbon, 2003). Other researchers note the after-school period as being seen by some parents as an opportunity for recreational and learning activities, which can also act to make up for or replace parental care (e.g. Kelley et al., 1998). Reinforcing these beliefs on the benefits of structured activity is American research (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001) which analysed a national sample with a data set of time diary information for 0 to 12 year olds. Among its findings were that active leisure was associated with higher achievement test results compared to time spent on passive leisure.

Parenting cultures and the contribution they make to constructions of childhood are mediated along socioeconomic lines. An American ethnographic study (Lareau, 2000) of eighty-eight seven to ten year old children sought to relate family social class (categorised as either middle class, working class, or poor) to how children spend their time. It noted that middle class children tended to spend time in activities
stressing performance and skill development, e.g. organized sport, whereas the lives of working class children were more likely to feature informal play, visiting family, or ‘hanging out’. The study also noted how the organised activities of middle class children led to a ‘time crunch’ of busy family schedules.

Educational programme options for after-school care are also valued. In one American study, semi-structured interviews were used to examine the meanings that two after-school ‘enrichment’ programmes had for teachers, parents and children (Baker and Witt, 2000). Teachers considered academic achievement to be the best measure of programme success, and parents did not consider leisure activities to be important. Children, meanwhile, were found by the researchers to want activities that involved participating with others.

After-school educational options have also grown in New Zealand. As well as schools offering programmes such as ‘homework clubs’, more parents are choosing to send their children to private tutoring or after-school lessons despite their higher cost than after-school programmes. The two largest private tuition providers have been reported as showing increased growth in attendances, with Kip McGrath having 15,000 children attend in 2003, and NumberWorks now catering for more than 5,000 children in New Zealand (Middlebrook, 2004b).

2.14 Summary

There are several points that emerge from the aforementioned literature. These relate to structural changes in parental employment which are contributing to cultural changes to childhood. Social and economic change has meant that the after-school
period has become part of the reconstructing of children's lives and families' lives, and in terms of cultures of parenting, ultimately reconstructing what an appropriate childhood should consist of. These changes impact on understandings and practices of what it means to have children undertake certain types of care and activity. Keeping children supervised in both the home and local neighbourhood as well as in supervised structured ways such as after-school programmes and recreational activities is one outcome. Parenting cultures and the monitoring and supervising of children are often related to what are perceived to be the prevailing health and safety concerns.

Investigating the nature of after-school care and activities can illustrate not only the question of what children are doing after-school and the accompanying reasons why, but also how the actions and activities of children in this time are contributing to the ongoing (re)construction of childhood. Specifically, from the theoretical framework put forward and the literature review undertaken, it is an opportunity to look at the reasons why these choices are made and the impacts they are having on the experiences of children, and on the nature of childhood, in the context of structural employment patterns, safety issues, and parenting beliefs.
Chapter Three: Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used in the research and the reasons for them. The research design, survey and interview instruments, selection of subjects, sampling methods and the collecting of data are described. The use of response incentives and the ethical issues of working with children are also discussed.

3.2 Methods Approach

A range of methods is often adopted in social science research. In terms of describing and analysing information, given that most appraisals of research methods do not favour either quantitative or qualitative methods exclusively (e.g. Babbie, 2000; Neuman, 1999), it seems reasonable to gain the benefits of more than one method. Given the research questions, the current research topic lent itself to using more than one investigative approach. Raw data are necessary to describe patterns of behaviour and relationships between socioeconomic variables and social phenomena (e.g. family income and types of after-school activities). However, in order to more fully explain the data and place it within a social and structural context, the meanings that social actors (e.g. families) attached to their actions (e.g. arranging after-school care) need to be explored. If the social construction of childhood has several structural and cultural dimensions then a range of methods needs to be employed to understand this construct.

An advantage of using more than one research method was that the interview would
be more effective as it would be based on the information gained from the survey beforehand. Staging the survey first also meant there would be the benefit that the parents and children being interviewed already had some knowledge of what the research was about, thereby improving the quality of the interview. The interview in turn would enable the explanation of the survey findings to be grounded in qualitative information.

Reviews on research into children's lives note the importance of qualitative methods to complement quantitative methods in order to provide subjective meaning and understanding to the study of childhood. Interviewing, in particular, is seen as an important and valid way of collecting information from children (e.g. Munford and Sanders, 2001). Ben-Arieh & Ofir (2002) additionally note that direct interviews with children are necessary to reveal their experiences on time-use, which may vary from what adults think they know about children's time-use. This may especially be the case given that many parents spend much of their time out of the home and so may not always be at home after-school when their children are. Discussing the need for authentic research with children, Grover (2004) notes the benefits of combining experimental and phenomenological (e.g. recorded semi-structured or unstructured interviews) perspectives in research with children as leading to richer understandings of children's worlds and to better generalisability of research.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, both quantitative and qualitative methods, i.e., a survey of families and interviews with a portion of them, were adopted as a research approach.
3.3 Quantitative Survey

3.3.1 Survey Instrument

The aim of the survey was to identify and record how children spend their after-school time. The range of anticipated activities included types of childcare, time spent at home on various activities and tasks, whatever sporting, cultural and musical activities that were undertaken, and the extent of independent, i.e. unsupervised, time children experienced. The methodological task was to select the research tool to find out this information.

Starting from the premise that examining the changing social construction of childhood can be done through studying children's changing patterns of time-use and daily activities, Ben-Arieh & Ofir (2002) reviewed various time-use research methods utilised in children's studies. They categorised these as observation, self-report (e.g. time diaries, experience sampling), and recall self-reporting (e.g. recall diaries, questionnaires, and interviews). Overall, they concluded that no particular method is perfect, with the selection of research tools being dependent on the purpose of the research.

In an American study of children's time-use, Hofferth & Sandberg (2001) analysed information from a time diary survey supplement to an existing longitudinal research project. Time diaries were taken from one weekday and one weekend day periods, which asked parents questions about the primary activity that was happening for children over the twenty-four hour periods involved, and when each particular activity started and finished. Parents completed the diaries for children or with them. The
researchers chose self-reported time diaries over methods requiring recall. Reasons given for this preference included the social desirability bias of recall methods, with the risk of respondents reporting more on desirable activities. There are also validity issues, with the possibility of infrequent activities being under-reported with recall methods. Hofferth & Sandberg (2001) assert that methodological work has shown time diary data to be more valid and reliable than recall data.

A review of studies on time-use of children and adolescents around the world was carried out by Larson & Verma (1999). They gave more credence to studies using time diaries (typically recorded by participants for a twenty-four hour period), experience sampling (participants reporting on experiences at random times through an electronic pager) and spot sampling (where observations are made of participants' activities). Recall methods were considered to be less valid research tools as they were deemed to be less reliable and more susceptible to reporting biases.

Although reviews of time-use methods favour time diaries, it was thought that asking parents or children to keep a daily record of children's after school activities would be too onerous a task. This was partly due to the research not being linked to any classroom project, and so a daily recording requirement would probably lead to low response rates and/or incomplete data. A compromise position was therefore reached. Parents were asked, upon receiving the self-complete survey at the end of the week, to write down what their children did after school over the school week that had just finished or was about to finish. This approach was partly time diary for the day the survey was received, and mostly recall for the days prior.
The next issue was to determine how many days' data were to be collected. For a complete picture to be gained of what children were doing after school, a week long record was considered to be appropriate. To focus on a single weekday was ruled out because of the difficulty of trying to select a representative day to survey, which immediately negated choosing Friday, given that some activities are unlikely to occur on that day, e.g. homework, sports practice. Other days may suffer from the same problem, especially if a child was to undertake different activities on different days.

3.3.2 Survey Research Design

To recall from Chapter One, the following research questions shaped both the survey and interview research design:

- What children are doing in the after-school time period?
- What is influencing how children are spending their after-school time?
- How are these influences shaping the social construction of childhood?

The survey addressed the first research question by attempting to find out how children spend their time, the types of childcare they experienced, how much time was spent at home, how many sporting, cultural and musical activities were undertaken, and the extent of independent or unsupervised time. As one way of measuring children’s independence, their modes of travel (rather than time of trip) to and from school home were requested. To gain this information on children’s after school time the survey contained the following question areas that could readily be quantified:

- What activities children were doing after-school
• Where these activities were happening
• The types of care during after-school activities
• The length of time of after-school activities
• Parental reasons for these types of activities occurring
• Children's travel modes to and from school

For the second research question, the survey sought to identify the structural influences on after-school time. In terms of what data could realistically be expected from respondents, the focus on socioeconomic factors was limited to household income, parental employment status, and to the composition of families, i.e. numbers of children and adults in the household (extended families were covered by asking for the number of adults in the family). The demographic variables sought in the survey were:

• Age and sex of parent completing survey
• Number of adults and children in the household
• Employment status of each parent or adult caregiver in the household
• Household income

Information from the surveys was then collated according to the closed questions asked, and coded for key responses obtained for the open questions asked. This meant that basic cross-tabulations between data from the question areas noted above (or dependent variables) and demographic data (or independent variables) could then be performed. From the literature review the following patterns were to be looked for:
• Greater use of after-school programmes were anticipated by working parents and higher income families

• Self-care would be an option used by working parents rather than be linked to family income

• Children from higher income families would participate in more structured activities than children from lower income families

• Children’s independent use of public space would be limited

• There would be high levels of supervision of children across all family types

The after-school period was defined as the 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm timeframe, i.e. that portion of time between when school ends and when parental work has often ended by. The survey was piloted with five parents from the researcher’s place of employment, with some refinements to clarity and flow being made as a result. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

3.3.3 Subject Selection

Older primary school children, defined for this research as being from year five to year eight at school (aged approximately nine to twelve years), were chosen be the subjects of inquiry for several reasons. These years are often ones in which children take part in the highest number and frequency of activities, e.g. sports participation. It may also be the time when the greatest diversity of child-care arrangements is used. It is also a time when childcare issues reach perhaps their greatest concern, with children becoming aware of their ability to act independently and to be able to act with a measure of self-care, but usually being considered as too young to be left on their own for lengthy periods of time.
Furthermore, children of this age group were considered to be both responsive and reflective enough to be interviewed, a view supported by several researchers (e.g. Ben-Arie & Ofir, 2002; Munford & Sanders, 2001). Such qualitative methods are considered to be highly appropriate as they enable accounts to be gained of children's own views rather than those mediated through adult perceptions or language (Miers & Murphy, 2004). When it came to the interviews, there were also fewer ethical issues to consider for this age group compared to younger children in terms of informed consent.

3.3.4 Sample Selection

A sample size of 200 was sought to enable reasonable conclusions to be drawn from the survey data. The over-riding criteria was to select schools that would reflect a cross-section of schools in order to gain a broad range of children and families. Given that a small number of schools was going to be selected, the decision was made to exclude private, integrated or special schools from the sample framework. Also removed from consideration were schools that had primary school-aged children but which were predominantly high school orientated in nature. This left state primary and intermediate schools to choose from. To allow for the year seven and eight age group, at least one school each from the intermediate school and full primary school categories was required.

It was decided to approach primary schools with at least medium-sized school rolls, i.e. approximately 300 children or more. Sizeable primary schools were targeted in order to both minimise the number of schools needed for sampling and to allow for at
least one school that offered an after-school programme, which necessitated selecting schools of a sufficient size that would be more likely to offer one. In Christchurch in 2004, twenty one of the forty-five schools that had rolls of 300 children or more were linked to after-school care programmes, either directly (based at school) or indirectly (not based in schools) according to OSCAR Network records (OSCAR Network, personal communication, 16 August 2004). Given that there are only eleven intermediate schools in Christchurch, the main sample selection criteria for these schools was the overall requirement that a cross-section of schools were sampled.

As well as size and after-school programme considerations, for a cross-section of schools six were able to be selected that covered age group range, different geographic areas, and diverse decile ratings. The selected schools were Woolston School, South Hornby School, Manning Intermediate, Heaton Intermediate, St Albans School, and Merrin School.

These schools were written to in late August 2004 with a view to carrying out the research in October 2004, i.e. in the fourth school term (see Appendix A). Heaton Intermediate and St Albans School were also schools that the researcher's sons had attended, so it was hoped that this would elicit a more favourable response from these schools to carry out the research. These two schools, along with Manning Intermediate and Woolston Primary, accepted the invitation to participate in the research. Given that these four schools were reasonably diverse in nature and location in terms of the desired selection criteria, it was decided that, rather than approach further schools which would delay the research timetable, these schools would form the basis of the research. Table Two describes their key characteristics.
To maintain the sample size, the four participating schools were then asked if greater numbers of children could be surveyed than was originally requested. Three agreed to this request. To meet the proposed target of 200 surveys, and allowing for a response rate of sixty percent, a total of twelve classes were targeted for sampling (i.e. three classes from each class year being sampled). Although three times higher than what is usually expected from survey research (Babbie, 2000; Neuman, 1999), a sixty percent response rate was based on previous Christchurch City Council survey work with schools (e.g. Cottam, 1999) and therefore considered a reasonable if nonetheless optimistic target. Note was also taken of a United Kingdom study on primary school children's mobility in public environments which elicited a response rate of 65% for a parental questionnaire distributed to children, who were asked to return it to school the next day (O'Brien, 2000). Given that the invitations and correspondence were completed using Christchurch City Council stationery, with the invitations noting that the Council as the researcher's employer was supportive of the research, it was hoped that a high response rate would be achieved.

**Table Two:** Characteristics of selected schools for sampling (by decile rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Roll (March 2004)</th>
<th>Decile Rating&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>After School Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woolston</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Woolston</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manning</td>
<td>Primary&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hoon Hay</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaton</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Merivale</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> All schools are classified according to a decile system from one to ten to reflect their socioeconomic character. A school with a decile rating of one reflects the lowest socioeconomic area, with a rating of ten being the highest.

<sup>2</sup> Contributing Primary = Years 1 to 6
3.3.5 Ethics and Response Incentives

Successful survey work the Christchurch City Council has previously carried out with schools had used response incentives, so it was thought that response incentives would assist in the completion and return of the surveys. Before using them, consideration was also given to ethical issues of coercion surrounding the use of incentives. Incentive issues of bias and coercion may place vulnerable respondents such as children at greater risk than necessary, as noted by Rice and Broome (2004). They list as appropriate non-monetary incentives for 8-12 year olds items such as gift certificates, admission tickets to games, and movie passes. They recommend that the type of incentive used should depend on the research setting and established local practice related to research with children, e.g. what accepted incentives have been used in the past.

Previous Council survey work with schools has used response incentives for surveys or reward for attending focus groups. It therefore seemed appropriate in this research context to use swimming pool admission tickets. This meant that those children that returned their surveys would be eligible for a draw of three family pack swim passes to Council swimming pools (consisting of two adult and two child passes). Three family pack passes per class were supplied. In addition, to encourage people to make themselves available for interviewing, it was stated on the survey that those who were interviewed (i.e. one parent and one child from families being surveyed) would receive a Council swimming pool pass.

3.3.6 Survey Data Collection

Although children were the subjects for the time-use survey, parents were asked to
complete it rather than the children themselves. Firstly, it was felt that a self-report survey could pose difficulties for children given that there would be no opportunity to introduce or explain the survey first hand. Parents, therefore, were asked to complete the survey. Secondly, as Miers and Murphy (2004) note, the skills required to work through a question and answer process that a survey entails are generally still being developed in the older primary school age group. Thus children in the selected classes were provided with a take-home survey to be completed by parents, which included a covering letter (see Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the survey. Ethical considerations noted in the covering letter included stating that all information obtained would be treated confidentially, that co-operation was voluntary, that respondents did not have to answer every question if they did not want to, and that they could stop answering the survey at any stage.

The surveys were delivered to schools on a Thursday with instructions to return them on the Monday. The idea was that parents would complete the survey on the Thursday and Friday, so as to be able to more readily recall what had occurred during the week rather than have to recall any days that may be prior to the previous weekend (e.g. if the survey was received on a Tuesday). Thursday rather than Friday was chosen as it is not common practice for notices or information to come home from schools on Fridays. There was also the obvious disadvantage of families starting to focus on the weekend on Fridays, whereas Thursday is still a weekday when homework or other school information is usually attended to.
3.4 Qualitative Interviews

3.4.1 Interview Research Design

Munford and Sanders (2001) describe several key points for carrying out effective research interviews with children and parents. These emphasise, among other things, the importance of building rapport to a successful interview and commencing with easy, ice-breaker style concrete questions before abstract ones – the same process usually recommended for all research interviews. This research sought to take account of these points.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, with the survey questions of what activities children do after-school used as a starting point in the interviews before probing for more detail. Rather than follow a set format, the question areas served as a guide to eliciting information from respondents and stimulating discussion points. Given that the interviews were not formally structured, they were not piloted beforehand. As Opie notes, the primary purpose of interviews is to “...facilitate respondents’ descriptions and reflections on their experiences” (Opie, 2003, p. 245), so using a detailed interview guide could end up detracting from obtaining information from respondents. A copy of the interview questions is contained in Appendix C.

To access respondents for interviewing, the surveys asked for parent and child volunteers from families to be interviewed on how children spend their after-school time. For those families agreeing, a parent and child from the same family was sought. As well as common understandings from parents and children, it was hoped
to allow for any contrasting information from each point of view.

Questions for parents focused on the following points:

- What their child does after-school, i.e. types of activities and how they are supervised
- Who decides on what after-school activities are undertaken
- What, if any, other after-school options were considered
- How does what happens now after-school compare with the past and how will it compare to the future
- Health and safety issues

The interviews with children were based around the following question areas:

- How children traveled to and from school
- Where children go after-school
- What children do after-school
- How after school activities are decided upon
- What children would like to do more of, and less of, after-school

The interviews were conducted at the homes of the families, mostly for their convenience, but to also have the effect of having the respondents comfortable in their own surroundings (as noted by Gollop, 2000). Most of the interviews took place on after school weekdays, with some occurring on weekday evenings. The interviews lasted thirty minutes in total for both adults and children, which was thought to be
intrusive enough on families. This was borne out in the telephone calls to confirm the interviews, with parents often commenting that thirty minutes would be an acceptable amount of time to be taken up.

Parents were interviewed first, with the anticipation that children would feel more comfortable by observing or noticing what was going on first with their parent's interview. Children were able to choose whether they wanted to be in the room when parents were being interviewed.

For the children's interviews, it was not insisted that these be held without parental presence, as asking parents not to be present during their children's interviews in their own homes was not considered to be a realistic proposition. The benefits of parents making their children feel more comfortable and so encourage them to talk, were thought to outweigh the risks of children being subtly coerced into giving desired answers.

Originally ten pairs of parents and children were sought for interviews. However, given the low survey response (see Chapter Four), the number of interviews was increased to twenty pairs. A modest response incentive of swimming pool passes to all parents and children participating in interviews was offered to encourage participation and to recognise the time that they had given up to be interviewed.

3.4.2 Interview Ethical Considerations

Most of the reviews of ethical issues surrounding social science research with children that were considered for this research came to the conclusion that these issues are
little different to those employed when working with adults. The key point to consider was that of adult coercion of children into taking part in research. For example Harden et. al. (2000) do not think that such research carries a greater ethical burden than research with any other group, suggesting that to have a separate set of ethical standards for children would be to subscribe to notions of children as being pre-adult and separate from the rest of society. These researchers note that the main ethical consideration is to do with power relations between adults and children. However, they also acknowledge that power relations between researchers and participants are part of all research as the very nature and structure of it prevents complete equality.

Matthews et. al. (1998) consider that the ethical issues that need considering when researching with children arise mostly from the point of view of power relationships, in that children are in a subordinate position to adults. They also note that the ethical and practical requirements for working with children (e.g. selection, consent, confidentiality, safety issues) are similar to those recognised for adult research. To mitigate against the power relationships between children and adults (with adults being defined as researchers, gatekeepers, and parents) some researchers (Miers & Murphy, 2001) also recommend that a child's consent is gained on more than one occasion.

The appropriate research ethics to consider when working with children as noted by New Zealand researchers Munford and Sanders (2001) include those of informed consent, children being able to choose freely if they will become involved or not, protection from harm, and confidentiality. They state that unless children are very
young, the same principles that apply to adults (e.g. informed consent) should also be used with children.

In this research, children’s initial consent was sought through asking them to write their own names on the survey form. For those families agreeing to be interviewed, most of the children concerned had appeared to write their names down as requested. When it came to the interviews, children were told the purpose of the study. Like their parent’s interviews, they were informed that they did not have to answer all questions put to them, and that they could stop the interview at any time, an occurrence which children were told would be considered perfectly acceptable. Given that there are two levels of gatekeepers in this research, asking for consent again before the start of the interview may also have the benefit of mitigating against adult gatekeepers who may not consult children about their involvement in the research process (Harden et. al., 2000).

3.4.3 Ethics Application Process

Before any research could begin, an application was successfully made to the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. After some clarification of the use of response incentives and how interviews were to be carried out, ethical approval to conduct the research was given in August 2004. The ethical guidelines that had to be met are noted in the application form in Appendix D.

3.5 Summary

Following the administering of the survey research component, the interviews were carried out. The interviews were taped, transcribed, and analysed for their emerging
key themes. The intention was to use the interview data to reflect meaning back on information gathered from the surveys, and so interpret survey findings against theories of the social construction of childhood. From the literature review, it was expected that parents would comment on child health and safety in relation to the need for care and supervision after-school, whether parents worked or not. From children it was expected that they may note the importance and enjoyment of informal play, and of informal play spaces away from direct adult supervision.
Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by describing the results obtained from the survey as a means of answering the first research question of what children are doing during their after-school time, and to contribute to answering the second research question of what is influencing how children are spending this time. The interviews with parents and children are reported on in relation to the second research question. Both sets of results are then used in Chapter Five to address the third research question of how the influences on children’s time are shaping the social construction of childhood.

4.2 Quantitative Survey

4.2.1 Response Rates

There was a considerably lower survey response rate than the figure of 60 percent that was hoped for, with just 17 percent of surveys being returned. To allow for absences from class, this figure also assumes slightly less (i.e. twenty-eight children) than the commonplace assumption of thirty children per class for these age groups. The highest response rate of 27% was achieved for Manning Intermediate, with the lowest response rate of 8% coming from St Albans School. The response rates for each school are shown in Table Three.

The intermediate schools had the higher response rates. This is possibly due to these schools having greater expectations in terms of completion of homework style tasks, and higher expectations of children in terms of efficient administrative functioning.
Children from intermediates may also be more likely to be more familiar with routines of taking information to and from school compared to children from primary schools.

**Table Three: Survey Response Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of classes surveyed</th>
<th>Number of children surveyed</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Response rate (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woolston</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.2.2 Survey Sample Characteristics**

The characteristics of the families surveyed are shown in Tables Four to Eight. Children’s school level, sex and class year are given in Table Four. Table Five shows that the number of children per family is a little higher than that for New Zealand. The proportion of one parent families as noted in Table Six was a little higher than that for Christchurch. The overall median family incomes for one-parent and two-parent families are given in Table Seven. In terms of employment, from Table Eight and Table Nine it can be deduced that a higher percentage (80%) of two parent families had both parents working compared to single parents who worked (57%).

**Table Four: Children Surveyed by School, Sex and Class Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 5*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete data</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Years 5 and 6 are primary schools
** Years 7 and 8 are intermediate schools
Table Five: Average Number of Children per Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Parent</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Survey Families</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ Families with Children*</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Census 2001

Table Six: One Parent and Two Parent Family Split

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Christchurch*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Parent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage (Census 2001)

Table Seven: Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (dollars)</th>
<th>One Parent Family</th>
<th>Two Parent Family</th>
<th>All Survey Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-20,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001-30,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,001-40,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,001-50,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001-60,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60,001-70,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70,001-80,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80,001-90,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90,001-100,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101,000 plus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median ($)</td>
<td>23,750</td>
<td>63,333</td>
<td>41,670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Eight: Employment Status of One-Parent Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Seeking Work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Nine: Employment Status of Two-Parent Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Full-Time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Full-Time, One Part-Time</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Part-Time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Full-Time, One Not Seeking Work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3 Survey Information Received

Variable amounts of information were received from the surveys. Some were fully completed with a lot of detail, whereas others noted details for the first few days and then briefly stated that the information was the same for the rest of the week. Despite this, only seven replies had less than five days worth of information (with an average incomplete number of days from these returns of 1.6 days).

The best answered questions related to information on times of activities, location of activities, type of activities, and who was supervising activities. All surveys contained at least one type of leisure activity performed in the home. Most surveys listed either one or two leisure activities for children, described in the surveys as TV, internet, computer, play-station, play, playing with pets, and casual sport. Reasons given for particular activities were less well completed, and when answered simply tended to focus on stating that a parent was home as the activity reason.

For the types of activity undertaken, especially those occurring at home, many of the surveys (42) listed several activities within the same time period. For example, it was not unusual to have ‘TV/Homework’, or ‘Homework/Internet’, or three groupings listed such as ‘TV/Homework/Internet’. These groupings had variable time ranges.
shown on them, anywhere from half an hour to two hours. It was not known if multiple listed activities were occurring separately or simultaneously. Nevertheless, the fact that activities were at least being listed enabled some analysis to be made.

Demographic information was answered variably, with the numbers of adults and children in the household answered by all. Work status was the next best answered at 56 responses. Income details were the least well answered with 43 responses given.

4.2.4 Survey Results

Following the time-use chart that parents were asked to complete in the survey, the responses were collated under headings of activity location, activity type, and activity supervision to answer the first research question of how children are spending their after-school time. Given the recording of more than one activity in a stated time period, lengths of time for activities was not noted for further consideration. However, asking respondents for times of activities seemed to help provide a framework for identifying activities and the types of supervision attached to them.

The locations of children's activities are shown in Table Ten. These are for all locations noted, with most respondents mentioning more than one location. After the home, the most common locations of activities were organised sport, after-school programmes, friends' places (either parent's friends or children's friends), the local neighbourhood generally, and shops or malls.
Location was then further described in terms of two groupings as listed in Table Eleven, which sought to identify the number of children involved in both independent and supervised activities. The first grouping was neighbourhood/park/mall, to identify the numbers of children acting independently outside the home (excluding structured activities such as sport), which included those surveys noting any or several of these locations. The second grouping was home only, to identify the numbers of children acting under supervision at home, determined on the basis of a maximum of one day that showed an after-school location other than the home. The groupings were similar in size, and were found to be mutually exclusive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Week Days</th>
<th>Location (contd)</th>
<th>Music Lesson</th>
<th>Relative Dance Lesson</th>
<th>Other Club Activity</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Parent's Work</th>
<th>Neighbour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (n)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood/Park/Mall</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Only</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Ten: Location of Activities

Table Eleven: Location Groupings
Listed in Table Twelve are the range of activities undertaken by children, who in most cases undertook more than one activity. Homework, watching television, and general play were the most highly recorded. Other activities noted by at least twenty percent of replies were organised sport, internet or computer usage, and doing chores. Organised sport was played by 28 percent of children. Basic tasks and personal care functions such as emptying school bag or having afternoon tea were omitted from the analysis (these were simply described as ‘domestic’ at the data entry stage).

**Table Twelve: Types of Activities Undertaken by Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Week Days</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Internet/Computer</th>
<th>Organised Sport</th>
<th>Chores</th>
<th>After School Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organised Sport</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (n)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (%)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity (contd)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Lesson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (n)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity (contd)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid Work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sibling Activity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dance Lesson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Club</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (n)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (%)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activities were able to be further described as shown in Table Thirteen. Firstly grouped were internet/computer/playstation, which represented home entertainment activities (excluding watching television due to its universality), and included those surveys mentioning any of these activities. Home entertainment activities were carried out by 53 percent of children. The second grouping was that of sport/music/dance/other club, which represented those children carrying out any or several of these organised activities (excluding after school care programmes). Organised activities (sport, music, dance and other club activities) were undertaken by thirty-six percent of children. A third grouping was after-school programmes, in which nineteen percent of children took part in. These groupings did not turn out to be mutually exclusive.

Table Thirteen: Activity Groupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet/Computer/Playstation</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Music/Dance/Other club</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-School Programme</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Fourteen shows the types of supervision experienced by children, of which there was usually more than one variety. The most common form was that provided by mothers at 84 percent. Supervision through organised activities (excluding after school care) was noted by 36 percent of replies. It is suspected that parents were often present as well at the organised activities given that they tended to take children there by motor vehicle. Children being unsupervised during an activity were found in 28 percent of responses. Being supervised by fathers accounted for 26 percent of the children surveyed.

Types of supervision were further described according to three groupings. These
were those that were formal in nature (i.e. after-school care programmes and organised sport, music, dance or other club activities), those defined as informal (i.e. care provided by friends, neighbours, relatives, siblings), and the category of unsupervised. Table Fifteen shows that just under half of children (48 percent) experience some kind of formal supervision, 22 percent of children received informal supervision, and 28 percent of children experienced some unsupervised time. Like the activity groupings, these groupings were not noted to be mutually exclusive.

Table Fourteen: Types of Supervision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Week Days</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Coach/Tutor</td>
<td>Unsupervised</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>After School Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (n)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (%)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Supervision (contd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Week Days (contd)</th>
<th>Supervision (contd)</th>
<th>Mother and Father</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Sibling</th>
<th>Neighbour</th>
<th>Childminder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (n)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses (%)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Fifteen: Supervision Groupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervision</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Supervision</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Supervision</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupervised</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.5 Survey Results Analysis

To address the second research question some attempt was made to analyse the survey results. This took the form of two sets of cross-tabulations, firstly between the
activity factors (activity location, activity type, and activity supervision) and parent characteristics (number of parents, parental employment status, and family income). The second set of cross-tabulations was between activity factors and child characteristics of sex and class year. Given the low number of survey replies, each factor had no more than two levels assigned to them. These results should be considered as conjectural, and are made to provide an indication of possible influences on activities that children are engaged in after school.

The location, activity and supervision groupings noted above formed the basis of analysis. For the activity groupings, the category of the number of leisure activities was also examined to include as many of the activities stated in the survey to help identify how busy or active children were after school. Leisure activities were defined as those taking place in the home, and from Table Twelve included watching television, play, internet/computer, playstation, pets, leisure, casual sport, casual music, and talking on the telephone.

As stated in Chapter Three, the parent characteristics used from the survey were the number of parents in a family (either one or two), family income, and levels of parental employment. Family income was split into two levels, either being below or above the Census 2001 median family income for Christchurch of $44,900 (Census 2001). For the purposes of analysis the median cut off point was taken as $40,000. Low survey returns meant that no further definition of income could reasonably be used. The two levels of parental employment status used were those being if all parents in the family worked (whether one or two parent families), or if at least one parent did not work.
It will be noted that twelve out of thirty-five two parent families did not complete income details along with three out of twenty-three one parent families. However a comparison of the average number of children for the two parent and one parent families who did not complete income details showed similarity to the overall survey, so it was concluded that the missing income data would not unduly influence the activity and supervision grouping analysis.

The levels for child characteristics of sex were clearly male and female, while class year was accorded the two levels of either year five and year six, or year seven and year eight.

The cross-tabulated results for parent characteristics are listed in Table Sixteen, with the largest grouping variations from the total survey highlighted in bold, both vertically down and horizontally across the tabled figures. For the location groupings, there did not seem to be too much variation between either of the location groupings and the total survey according to the demographic factors. Given that these two groupings of home only activities did not have any children in common, the only conjectural suggestion would be that children in two parent families were more concentrated in the home only activity location rather than in the local and wider neighbourhood setting.

Two points are apparent from the activity groupings. Firstly, children engaging in home entertainment were more represented in families whose parent or parents are working. The second point is that children attending after-school programmes were more likely to come from single parent families.
For the supervision groupings three indications arise. One is that children in two parent families tend to experience fewer types of supervision than children in one parent families. Secondly, children who walk or cycle to and/or from school five days a week show up more in families whose parent or parents are working compared to families where at least one parent is not working. Thirdly, children from families where not all parents were working were more likely to be unsupervised at some stage after school than children from families where all parents were working. Lastly, it can also be seen from Table Sixteen that some family income effects are apparent in that families with above median incomes tend to have more children in formal supervision (i.e. after-school programmes and club activities).

Table Sixteen: Location, Activity, and Supervision Cross-Tabulations by Parent Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Parents Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One Parent</td>
<td>Two Parents</td>
<td>Below Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Location Grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood/Park/Mall</td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Only</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Activity Grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/Computer/Playstation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Music/Dance/Other club</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School Programme (n=11)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Leisure Activities</td>
<td>1-2 (n=26)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5 (n=29)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supervision Grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal (n=28)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal (n=22)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupervised (n=16)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of types of Supervision</td>
<td>1-2 (n=35)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-4 (n=23)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Days Walking or Cycling To or From School</td>
<td>0-4 (n=18)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (n=34)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Survey</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cross-tabulated results for child characteristics are listed in Table Seventeen, with the larger variations from the total survey again highlighted in bold. For sex, these show that boys were more likely than girls to experience home-only after-school locations, and that boys were also more likely to experience unsupervised time after school. For class year, three pointers emerge, all to do with children from years seven to eight year having higher proportions in some groupings compared to the survey sample. These were in the location grouping of neighbourhood/park/mall, the activity grouping of internet/computer/playstation, and another activity grouping of experiencing three to five leisure activities.

Table Seventeen: Location, Activity, and Supervision Cross-Tabulations for Child Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Class Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Location Grouping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood/Park/Mall</td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Only</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Activity Grouping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/Computer/Playstation</td>
<td>(n=31)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Music/Dance/Other club</td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School Programme</td>
<td>(n=11)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Leisure Activities</td>
<td>1-2 (n=26)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5 (n=29)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Supervision Grouping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>(n=28)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>(n=22)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupervised</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of types of Supervision</td>
<td>1-2 (n=35)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-4 (n=23)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Days Walking or</td>
<td>0-4 (n=18)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling To or From School</td>
<td>5 (n=34)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.6 Survey Summary

From the survey of children's after-school time, children were found to experience a range of after-school activities, locations where they occur, and types of supervision associated with them. Organised activities such as sport were undertaken by less than half of all children surveyed. After-school programmes were more used by single parents, who also tended to use more varied forms of supervision for their children. Working parents in two parent families were more likely to be able to organise one parent to be at home after-school, and also had a wider range of home entertainment available for their children. Older children were more likely to be located in local neighbourhood, and tended to take part in a higher number of leisure activities, particularly those at home. Boys were more likely than girls to experience home-only activities, and to have unsupervised time.

4.3 Interviews

4.3.1 Interview Response

Nineteen out of the twenty scheduled interviews were able to be completed by the end of term four, 2004. Although children were given the option of being present for their parent's interview, most were content to continue with their own activities within the house until required for the interview. During the children's interviews, most parents elected to remain in the room and listen quietly with interest to their children's interviews. Parents of intermediate aged children tended to occupy themselves around the house with domestic tasks.
Table Eighteen: Families Interviewed by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Families Interviewed*</th>
<th>Total Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woolston</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 13 two parent families and 6 one parent families were interviewed

The numbers of those interviewed from each school are shown in Table Eighteen. Although the primary schools had the lower survey response rates than intermediates, of the returns a higher proportion of primary school families (41%) said they were willing to be interviewed compared to intermediate families (24%).

4.3.2 Interview Results

A range of issues was noted from interviews with parents and children. The key points that emerged from each interview are summarised in Table Nineteen, along with a description of the characteristics of each family. These points form the basis of the description of the interviews.
**Table Nineteen:** Summary of discussion for each interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Number</th>
<th>Family Characteristics</th>
<th>Interview Discussion Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single parent, not in work, below median income, three children. Child: Year 6 girl.</td>
<td>Parent (father): Importance of personal safety of children, protection from strangers and large parks or malls. Sees future value in after school care and after school activities. Child: Has a focus on playing in the local neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Single parent, full time night shift work, one child. Child: Year 6 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: Structures employment around childcare, sees daughter as trustworthy, is allowed to go to parks and mall. Child: Seeks further independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Single parent, full time work, below median income, one child. Child: Year 5 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: Sees health and safety benefits of ASP, and a good environment for playing with friends. Would like more structure for ASP. Child: Enjoys ASP, plays with friends there, lists activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Single parent, part time work, below median income, one child. Child: Year 8 boy.</td>
<td>Parent: Some work after school means child on own home, so monitors child from work. Thinks too much time spent on internet and computer. Child: Has at times chosen sport over after school work, does not mind self-care. Has sport and music activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Two parents, mother working part time, three children. Child: Year 5 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: At home after school, almost glad that children not wanting to go to parks, does allow them to walk home after school. Finds cost of after school activities an issue. Child: Content with playing at home after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Two parents, mother not working, three children, above median income. Child: Year 5 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: At home after school, aware of children doing too many after school activities, encourages children walking independently to school. Child: Proud of independent travel to school, enjoys after school music activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Two parents, mother working, two children. Child: Year 7 boy.</td>
<td>Parent: Finishes work soon after school so can be at home after school. Not wanting child to do too many sports. Child: Plays several sports, travels independently in neighbourhood to do so. Walks to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two parents, mother working part time, two children. Child: Year 7 boy.</td>
<td>Parent: Works around child care so is at home after school. Prefers children to be active rather than watching TV. Child: Plays sport, would like to do more sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number</td>
<td>Family Characteristics</td>
<td>Interview Discussion Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Two parent, mother working full time, above median income, three children. Child: Year 8 boy.</td>
<td>Parent: Work hours so can be home after school. Family and friends options more important than ASP. Sees son as mature and responsible. Child: Plays in local neighbourhood with some independence. Has an after school job, plays sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Two parent, mother working full time, above median income, three children. Child: Year 7 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: Work hours so can be home after school. Organised routines for after school activities, also time for relaxing. Children have chores. Sees children as responsible. Child: Does sport and music, used to do more activities. Notes variety of home-based after school activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Two parent, both working part time, below median income, three children. Child: Year 7 boy.</td>
<td>Parent: Encourages home based care and informal activities. Little self-care, parents arranging work so one can be home after school. Child: Range of home and local area after school activities, mostly self-directed. No organised after school activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Two parent, mother working full time, above median income, three children. Child: Year 7 girl.</td>
<td>Parent: Organising work around being at home after school. Sees personal safety issues as important, but sees travel to school independently as good. Wants to see her daughter play with more friends after school, and do her homework. Child: Considers herself too young for self-care. Has chores to do before relaxing at home. Limited internet use (cost). Communicates and plays with friends, plays sport.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ASP = After-School Programme

Of the seventeen families where all parents were working, eleven noted structuring their employment around childcare so they could be at home with children. Nine of these families were two parent families. There were four families (three with two
parents and one with a single parent) where parents organised their full time work in this way. The other seven families were two parent families, with one parent working part time who, in all cases, did not want to work extra hours.

From a two parent family, one of the parents who worked part-time and was home after-school emphasised the need to monitor her children’s behaviour:

“I’ve organised it that way. It’s good to be home for them after-school. If they have too much spare time they tend to get into trouble! I did have them in after-school care when they were younger, but it was very spasmodic and wasn’t regular at all. I just found I wanted to keep an eye on them when they were older, keep them on task. It’s important to look after the kids after-school.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 17)

A working full time parent in a two parent family organised her work in the following way:

“My children come first, so I need to work within school hours, so regardless of where I am and what I’m doing I finish at 2.55pm and I’m off to get them. I wouldn’t have it any other way. I basically work an eight hour day from 7.30am, I don’t have lunch or morning tea breaks, so I work straight through. I eat lunch in the car! I just think it’s really important that one parent anyway should be home with the children.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 14)
A single parent went as far as changing her working hours from a day shift to a night shift in order to be at home for her child after school:

"I’m on night shift so I’m awake when she gets home from school. I talked to the bosses to get me on to night shift; because it was the only shift I could have where I could be home in the morning before school and be home in the afternoon. My older daughter gets up to go to work; they [older daughter and daughter at school] lock the house and set the alarm. I sleep while she’s [daughter at school] at school."

(One-parent family, Year 6 girl, Interview 2)

A further three further parents stated that they were at home not working through choice. For two of these families income was not an issue with their husbands’ income being enough to support the family. As one noted:

"I’m always home after-school, by choice. I don’t work; I’ve stayed home since having the children. I haven’t needed to consider other options. I’d like some part time employment but I’d still want to be at home when school ends. It’s just what I believe, to be at home for them when they’re young; my husband supports me in that."

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 18)

One-parent families that worked had fewer opportunities to be at home after-school, and tended to use other forms of childcare. After-school programmes were used by four of these families. Convenience and location of after-school programmes that
were either in the school grounds or adjacent to it were seen as advantages by four of the single parent families. Affordability was also a factor, with one of the after-school programmes costing just two dollars per child per day. Having few family or friends available was noted by two single parents.

Parents in one parent families talked of the benefits of after-school programmes for their children. All of these families mentioned the importance of socialisation given that their children were not really able to have friends over after school. Personal safety of children was also emphasised, with parents satisfied in the knowledge that their children were being safely and regularly looked after and supervised. This was seen as preferable to less structured child care arrangements such as using friends which may be less reliable. One parent noted the following socialisation and health features of her child’s after school care:

"And the fact that some of the children from her class, some of her friends, were going, was another good reason for her to go, because we're so busy we don't often have the chance for her to have friends over or for her to go there, so at least she's having the interaction with them at the after-school programme.... That's one of the things I've noticed, and it's a comment I've made to people over time. The kids that go to that after-school programme generally aren't over-weight, because they're so active once they get there. Whereas you look at the children that don't go there so often, they're coming home and eating, watching TV, playing playstation."

(One-parent family, Year 5 girl, Interview 4)
There were two two-parent families using after-school care due to work commitments. They also spoke of positive outcomes of after-school care, with one focussing on their child’s personal development:

“She has developed a lot of maturity. There are expectations [at the after-school programme] that are different from at school. I find that her attitudes to peoples’ different needs and her socialisation skills are much better. I feel she’s looking outside herself more, as kids there are pushed into leadership roles within the group.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 girl, Interview 15)

Although parents from the five families using after-school programmes all saw worthwhile benefits in them, some thought that they could be more structured, especially when it came to homework:

“The only thing is they don’t do their homework! I’d like it if they started their homework there, but they tend to get mixed up with playing, which is really good for them, so I’ve just let that slide.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 girl, Interview 11)

Of the five children interviewed that attended after-school care, most of them were able to describe what they did during after-school programmes. For the most part, they also felt that the programmes were satisfying, as described by one boy:

“At OSCAR I play with my friends, we play tag and some other things.
Sometimes I play on the computer there. Normally the person who’s running the day chooses what you can do. There’s a board on the wall and they put up everything that’s going to happen on the day. You can choose to do those things or you can just play with your friends.”

(One-parent family, Year 5 boy, Interview 5)

Eleven of the families interviewed had their children experiencing some form of independent travel to and/or from school at least once a week, usually more, although most children experienced transport to school by car at least once a week. Most of these eleven families were all parents who were working either full- or part-time. Independent school travel was not considered unusual, although parents insisted that their children came straight home from school before doing anything else. One parent did raise the issue of what she saw as a contradiction in how children were not supposed to be left alone at home, yet were able to travel around by themselves:

“Their road safety is something they’ve gradually acquired through me walking them to school and on the walking school bus. Walking to school independently is the first opportunity they’ve had to be alone in the public domain. [Yet] children aren’t allowed to be left at home alone until they’re twelve years old3. My husband and I have often talked about how unclear it is for them walking to school as to whether it’s OK in legal terms.”

(Two-parent family, Year 5 girl, Interview 8)

Twelve children reported in their interviews having organised activities to go to

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3 In New Zealand it is against the law to leave children under 14 without making what is termed
(excluding after-school programmes), which were mostly sport and music related. Ten of these children had a parent who organised their working hours so that they would be available for transporting children to activities if need be. For eight of these families who gave income details in the survey, seven were two parent families that had a household income above the family median.

Parents were generally supportive of their children’s interests, and considered that taking part in things like organised sport was important. However, most thought that encouraging too many activities was not beneficial:

“...She’s been playing sport since she was about eight or so. Tennis and netball. She was going to do swimming, but they do it through school, so I thought we didn’t need to add extra things in. I prefer them to have a couple of activities a week, but I wouldn’t want them to be too pressured to do activities or to be at places at certain times being rushed around.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 girl, Interview 11)

Five parents of children who took part in organised after-school activities noted the need for balance in children’s lives. This came from the concern that children might end up taking part in too much structured activity which could have negative consequences such as tired, disinterested children. One parent had taken steps to reduce the number of activities her son was taking part in:

“Last year he was doing swimming lessons and going to cubs, he was just finding that he was getting tired and saying ‘I don’t want to go to swimming

reasonable provision for their care and supervision.
lessons today’. So we decided to give it a break for a year and then maybe he’ll get back into it.”

(One-parent family, Year 5 boy, Interview 5)

This experience, however, hasn’t put her son off, who is still keen to pursue new interests:

“I used to go to keas and swimming. Now I want to do ice hockey and swimming.”

(One-parent family, Year 5 boy, Interview 5)

One child was previously limited in the number of sports by his parents when he was younger, but now takes every opportunity to play sport, to the point where he acknowledges time trade-offs have to be enforced:

“I play sport on all days after school. I play cricket and tennis for clubs. Other days I’ll play tennis at the club. I also go down with my friends on Tuesday and Wednesday to cricket. I try to do my homework; Mum has to force me a bit though. There might be one day that Mum keeps me home after school, for homework.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 9)

Playing with friends was mentioned in ten of the interviews as an after school activity. In nine of these ten interviews, children were not attending after-school programmes. In seven of the interviews where children were noted as playing with friends, the play
arrangements were casually made on the day. In the other three interviews parents described their children’s play with friends as having to be organised in advance, giving an insight into how structured some children’s lives are:

"Her older sister does an extra dance class as well on a Tuesday; her younger sister has swimming lessons on a Tuesday. Wednesdays is jazz dancing day, so we’re busy transporting all of them. Often they might have a friend after-school to play. It’s all pre-arranged. I have three children so I have room for one [extra] child in the car, so it has to be organised and they have to take turn about."

(Two-parent family, Year 7 girl, Interview 14)

Another parent made the following comment on how busy their child was when it came to the prospect of fitting in playing with friends:

"The only other concern I think of sometimes is that they might be doing too much with after-school activities. It’s been guided by their interests so for the most part they’ve been child-led. What has changed is that in previous years I’ve made more of an effort with play-dates, but now it seems that if we were to have play-dates too often the homework wouldn’t get done, the piano practice wouldn’t get done, and it blows the routine. And swimming starts soon."

(Two-parent family, Year 5 girl, Interview 8)

A focus on the merits of children playing or moving within their local park and neighbourhood area was mentioned by eight parents, who tended to be those working
parents that did not have work commitments in the after-school period. This was often related to safety issues:

"She only goes down to the local park, not Linwood Park – there's too much happening down there. I'm very protective; she doesn't go to the malls, that'll come in year or two."

(One-parent family, Year 6 girl, Interview 1)

Another parent made a similar point on the personal safety of their child:

"To me at the moment there's so many unknowns out on the streets you just can't trust anybody. I'm more protective of my kids than what I used to be like. She used to catch the bus when she was at primary school, now I take her and pick her up from school. The majority of the time I pick them up. I've structured my hours so I'm home after school. I'm quite happy with it all, you know where they are, and you're not sitting there wondering."

(Two-parent family, Year 7 girl, Interview 19)

Those parents emphasising public safety issues (e.g. road safety) were a largely separate group from those parents who mentioned personal health and safety issues (e.g. safety in the home). This latter group emphasised the positive aspects of parental supervision in terms of home-based nature of their children's after-school activities. They tended to note the benefits of a relaxed home environment or that children had a range of things to do at home. These were often parents of children who took part in no or few organised after-school activities, and commented on the need for children to
have relaxing time at home:

"He has his own space, his own room to read. He’s busy at school, so I don’t want to make it too stressful, they need time to unwind. They blob out for an hour after school, computer, TV, reading."

(Two-parent family, Year 8 boy, Interview 12)

Those children who spent most of their time at home also seemed to be contented with their home-based activities, as stated by one boy:

"Sometimes I do homework in my room. I like to blob out and read, especially now in my own room. I like reading; I don’t play a lot of sport. Mostly I’m on the playstation. Mum sets the rules for the playstation times."

(Two-parent family, Year 8 boy, Interview 12)

Another boy described his activities in the following way:

"Today I read a book – I like reading. Sometimes I play on the computer, other days I do a little bit of homework. Sometimes they [parents] decide what I do; otherwise I'll go and do what I want around the place. I'm allowed to spend one hour on the computer, then its someone else's turn for an hour. I enjoy what I'm doing right now, there's not really anything else I'd like to be doing. Sometimes I create things."

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 16)
Children were near unanimously seen as not being capable of looking after themselves at home and as being at risk to themselves in the home, particularly by two parent families who are able to have a parent (usually the mother) at home after-school to look after their children. This was despite several parents commenting that their children were mature for their age. Further, although some children were able to play and travel independently in their local neighbourhood, few children spent any significant time (i.e. more than ten to fifteen minutes) alone at home, and none were able to entertain friends at home without an adult presence. It seemed that there were elements of parent’s under-estimating their children’s capacity to look after themselves. However several children, especially boys, stressed self-choice about what they did and said that they would be quite capable of looking after themselves:

“Sometimes I bike around to the park next door. I’ve looked after myself a little bit after school when my sister is taken to dancing. I could if I had to.”

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 16)

When it came to children being unsupervised, most parents readily acknowledged that there might be brief five or ten minute periods when their children were by themselves. Typically this situation arose if a parent was running late to get home after-school, or if they had an errand to run or take another sibling somewhere. The two instances where significant amounts of unsupervised time occurred (excluding such things as cycling to sports practice) was where one child had an after-school job delivering pamphlets and newspapers in his local neighbourhood, and for a child whose parent was working and no other care options were available.
The parent of the child with the after-school job was supportive to the extent of helping her son fold pamphlets on preparation for their delivery. Her main concerns were road safety issues in winter when some deliveries took place in near darkness. Her son decided to do it for the following reasons, although he did find it taxing at times:

"I decided to do it, for the money. And it's quite fun when I meet other people on the deliveries, usually another boy who does deliveries, so it's not too boring. Probably to save for when I'm a student and to pay off student loans. I quit the pamphlets last week, because I had to, we might be moving house. I'll have to quit the papers as well. They're actually quite fun, not the folding, which Mum does now. I might do those jobs again when we move house if I get the chance, but it wouldn't have to be too big. Living in the hills it's quite hard to walk up and down, it wears you out."

(Two-parent family, Year 7 boy, Interview 18)

The mother of the child who spent time on his own was a little unhappy about the arrangement, but sought to put safeguards in place:

"I'm always here when he gets home, even when I'm working after school on those two days, so I always see him before I go to work. I really would prefer not to do it, and I try to work it in between 9 and three. I don't like him being by himself, although he is old enough to be by himself for those two hours, and its daylight. If it was night time I wouldn't. Things have been good, and he's very good, I say there's to be no-one here, and he's got immediate contact with me by
cell phone which he does do occasionally to see if he can get something to eat.”

(One-parent family, Year 8 boy, Interview 6)

4.3.3 Interview Summary

The interviews with parents and children reinforced a pattern of parental employment being shaped around after-school care, with families attempting to have one parent at home after school. For other working parents the benefits of after-school care were seen to be beneficial for children. For most there was an awareness of balancing out of home organised activities with at home rest and recreation. Children’s public and personal safety issues were also noted as needing parental monitoring. Children themselves talked about the range of activities they undertook and what they enjoyed about them. They did not seem too concerned with safety issues even when by themselves, and some were able to negotiate a degree of autonomy within their local neighbourhood.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This study, entitled 'After-School Time and the Social Construction of Childhood', sheds light on the construction of childhood by looking at how it is shaped and affected by structural and social issues, using the after-school period as its focus. The three main research questions were:

- What are children doing in the after-school time period?
- What is influencing how children are spending their after-school time?
- How are these influences shaping the social construction of childhood?

A time-use survey of children's after-school time was carried out, followed by interviews with parents and children. This chapter will provide a summary of this study's findings. Children were found to experience a range of after-school activities, locations where they occur, and types of supervision associated with them. It is argued from this research on older primary school children that two ways in which childhood is being constructed are via the working status of their parents (i.e. levels of parental employment) and on perceived risk of modern society (or risk anxiety). Also addressed are the study's limitations and recommendations for further study.

5.2 Childhood and Parental Employment Impacts

Employment is one key influence on childhood, with Aitken (2001) noting that structural changes in employment may be strongly impacting on children’s lives. Some effects he describes are access to public space and the commercialisation of
childcare, which reduce children’s presence in unstructured contexts outside the home, e.g. informal play. This means that increasing parental employment results in both fewer informal play opportunities along with lower access to public space, and increased use of after-school programmes for children. In terms of this study, low access to public space can be interpreted as being linked to both one-parent and two-parent families, with no difference between the two noted from the survey. The ‘commercialisation’ of childcare in terms of after-school programmes was more closely aligned with one-parent families.

The link between parental employment leading to children spending time in after-school programmes was one outcome noted in this research, in line with overseas findings (Aitken, 2001; Karsten, 2002; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Overall, after-school programmes are just as significant as friends’ houses as locations for children to play with friends (19 percent for each of these locations from the survey, although the children involved were not mutually exclusive groups). However, this research found higher usage of after-school programmes from single parent families compared to higher income families, in contrast to overseas studies (e.g. Henly & Lyons, 2000; Scott, 1998). One reason for the current research finding could be the low cost charged at one of the programmes (of $2 per child per day). Another could be the lack of alternatives available, particularly if no other family members are around to help (as noted by two single parents interviewed).

Increasing employment levels of parents, especially mothers, in both one parent and two parent families were found to impact on what childhood means and are influencing its shape and direction although in different ways for different types of
families. For two-parent families, after-school programmes were not used by nine of the eleven families where both parents worked, despite parents often saying that other options were available. Parental cultural beliefs associated with two parent families included the perceived desirability of a parent being at home after-school, and being able to supervise and monitor children.

Two-parent families were also more likely to have a parent home after-school. This was the case when one parent was not working, or if both parents worked, when one parent structured their working hours so as to be at home for most or all of the after school period. At times full-time work schedules were arranged around being home after school. Common reasons given in interviews with working parents to be home after-school related to safety of children, with some parents noting it was appropriate, in terms of what it means to be a parent, that a parent was present at home to look after children. Affordability of after-school care was not mentioned by these parents as a reason for electing to be at home after-school. Most of these parents interviewed were not seeking increased working hours in the year ahead, and considered providing care and supervision for their own children after-school to be the main priority.

For one-parent families, the interviews showed that these parents saw after-school programmes as desirable not only for childcare itself, but also in terms of having their children safely looked after in a structured context. The socialisation benefits such programmes were thought to provide were also emphasised. Socialisation benefits were noted by all five parents interviewed who sent their children to after-school programmes due to work commitments. The positive social outcomes noted by parents are consistent with reviews of after-school programmes elsewhere finding that
Single parent families who have children in after-school care also saw such care as providing recreational benefits, which have also been noted in other studies (e.g. Kelley et. al., 1998).

As well as more use of after-school programmes, single parents also tended to use more varying forms of supervision (e.g. friends and family) for their children than did two-parent families, a finding also noted by others (Henly & Lyons, 2000; Brandon & Hofferth, 2003). Working parents in two-parent families were more likely to be able to organise one parent to be at home after-school. They also had a wider range of home entertainment available for their children with which to amuse themselves. Valentine (1997) interprets this as facilitating home-based activities.

Although some overseas research shows that after-school programmes have not conclusively been linked to academic success as measured by aptitude tests (e.g. Munton, et. al., 2001; and NICHD, 2004), three of the five parents interviewed who had children at after-school programmes desired a more structured element of homework. The implication is that parents would like to see the benefit of homework attached to after-school programmes, thereby providing another feature valued by parents and fulfilling another task for working parents. For these families using after-school programmes, childhood is increasingly taking a particular institutionalised form, constructed along organised, structured lines with formal adult supervision.

Children, however, are more interested in unstructured, informal activities, with those children interviewed who attended after-school programmes describing what they did there in these terms. None mentioned doing homework there. Whilst being located in
a controlled environment, children seemed to have the freedom to be able to choose what to do within it. The preferences of children are also more closely aligned with recommendations that after school programmes should be low key with self-directed learning experiences rather than structured or academically focused (Halpern, 2000). Children were also more likely to comment on and talk about informal activities in other settings. At home this meant playing on the computer or playstation, or using the internet. Outside the home it often referred to playing with friends either at their houses or at the local park.

In contrast to the perceived benefits of after-school programmes by parents of children who use them, self-care was viewed negatively by all parents interviewed. All but one stated that their children were not home on their own for more than about ten minutes at a time when parents may have been running late getting home after-school. This perception is in some contrast to the literature on self-care which did not conclusively demonstrate that self-care had negative outcomes for children. One conclusion is that self-care falls outside the construction of childhood relating to the need to protect and monitor children.

Fears of children being unsupervised or in self-care while parents are working (e.g. Rizzini, 2000) may be unfounded for the age group studied. Given the contrasts noted in some of the parental interviews of how children spend less time than their parents did roaming their environment, parents may be spending more time on childcare than before, a time use pattern noted overseas (Sayer, et. al., 2004). However, apart from childcare responsibilities and taking children to and from organised activities such as sport, there was little indication from the interviews (except for one case) that parents
were spending any more or less time on activities with children, unlike findings from the study by Gauthier et. al. (2004) which showed that parents were devoting more time to children’s activities.

5.3 Childhood and Safety

Holloway and Valentine (2000) characterise the modern construction of childhood as being dominated by understandings of children’s innocence and the need to protect them from harmful societal influences. In the face of the dangers posed by society, children are viewed as less competent than before. Societal responses to common understandings of what it means to be a child include an increasing focus on home-based and/or formally organised activities. Holloway and Valentine (2000) see these responses to the construct of children’s innocence as reinforcing adult control of public space.

The domestication and regulation of children described by Holloway and Valentine (2000) and by others (Valentine, 1997; and Valentine and McKendrick, 1997) has some traction with findings from this research. From the survey, just twenty-five percent of children spent time in a neighbourhood, park or mall location. This represents the number of children engaging in unstructured, informal activities outside the home (the corollary is that seventy-five percent do not). A further twenty-eight percent of children had predominantly home-only activities. The orientation around home is also underlined with half of those children surveyed doing at least three home-based leisure activities.

In terms of a focus on the home, Valentine (1997) sees parents using home entertainment to encourage their children to be at home. Fifty-three percent of
children accessed the home entertainment options of the internet, computer or
playstation. The interviews also point to home-based activities being encouraged by
parental presence, with eleven of the seventeen families where all parents in the
household were working organising their work hours so that one parent would be
home after-school. The home-based nature of after-school time is also borne out with
over half of children (60%) having just two types of supervision, with one of them
being parents at home. This pattern was especially so for two-parent families (67%).

The view of children being less competent to manage themselves, as noted by
Valentine (1997), comes through with eighteen out of nineteen of the parents
interviewed not leaving their children to look after themselves at home. The main
issue for parents was children's safety from themselves. Some parents thought that
children were either not capable or trustworthy of doing so. Others thought that their
children could injure themselves if left alone for too long. Parental underestimation
of children's abilities was matched by two of their children's interviews stating that
they were capable of managing by themselves.

Minimising risk and harm was a concern evident in nearly all families spoken to. For
two-parent families this usually meant having one parent at home. For the working
parent in a one-parent family the option of after-school care alleviated these concerns.
Several parents stated that in their opinion the city environment their children were
growing up in was different, i.e. less safe, than their experiences as children in a rural
context, suggesting socially constructed meanings of 'urban' (less safe) and 'rural'
(more safe) impacting on children's use of space (Jones, 2000).
Risk anxiety, i.e. the social state brought about by an increasing lack of trust in modern society, has the potential to limit children's activities and restrict their autonomy by dividing the social world of children into safe and dangerous places (Scott et. al., 1998). There was some indication in this research of a withdrawal of children, or their absence, from public space without a parental or other adult presence. For older children, especially boys, there was a limited autonomy within the immediate home neighbourhood.

5.4 Children’s Activities and Their Locations

Most children did not lead what might be termed overly structured lives. For example, only four children undertook more than two organised activities per week, and were from families where two parents worked. The parents interviewed who had children involved in organised activities did not seem to want their children to be too busy or over-scheduled, and wanted balance in their children’s lives with the opportunity for them to relax at home. While being aware of ‘time squeeze’ pressures affecting families, and considering that too many activities and timetables had negative consequences, these parents did not consider their children to be leading lives that were too structured. Neither, for that matter, did their children, with one wanting to try new activities.

Three or more home-based leisure activities were undertaken by half of those children surveyed, particularly in families where parents were working. Only one quarter of children took part in informal activities outside the home, which tended to be in the immediate local neighbourhood. Characteristics of family income or family structure did not appear to be related to informal activities. Catering for activities at home,
along with few non-structured activities outside the home, can be seen as contributing to children's limited independence especially in public space, as noted by Valentine and McKendrick (1997).

Twenty-eight percent of children were able to carry out activities either in the home or in the local neighbourhood or park without adult supervision, mostly for short periods of time rather than the whole of the after-school period. Self-care at home has been linked in overseas research to a range of family types. There were no real indications of any pattern in this research either.

Organised activities such as sport were undertaken by forty percent of children. In contrast to other findings (e.g. NICHD, 2004), there was little correlation between organised activity and family income. However, those children involved in more than one organised activity, i.e. had their time more structured, tended to come from higher income families, a result consistent with the work of Lareau (2000). Childhood at this point becomes mediated along socioeconomic lines, with children from more affluent families being able to access and experience greater cultural capital (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997).

For two-parent families, who tended to have higher levels of parental employment and household incomes, it appeared children's activities were organised along the lines of home-based care with a generally limited sphere of mobility around the immediate neighbourhood. This suggests that childhood is a more managed experience. Boys, however, were able to negotiate a wider license of independent mobility after school, so long as they met certain requirements of informing parents where they were going and what time they would be home by. Although there were small numbers involved,
most of the children who were able to travel around their neighbourhood were in newer, more affluent suburban areas. A similar finding was also made by O'Brien et al. (2000) who noted from United Kingdom research that children's independent mobility was greatest in a newer, low density city environment rather than an established city.

5.5 Conclusions

These findings of how childhood is experienced by children in the year five to eight age group, especially year six to seven age group, have several implications. Firstly, they suggest how childhood is constructed across different socioeconomic backgrounds, and how it is also mediated by employment status. Secondly, the concept of risk anxiety as applied to the construction of childhood (as described by Scott et al., 1998) can be seen to shape the lives of children in terms of defining safe places and spaces for them.

In addition to the wider institutions generally shaping childhood but not considered here (such as schooling, the law, the church and the mass media), this research provides further insights of the impacts of structural and social forces. It is argued that this results in an increasing tendency for families to go beyond instilling values and social rules and to further mediate between the child and wider society via increased surveillance in the public as well as the private arenas.

Increasing employment levels of parents, especially mothers, in both one parent and two parent families were found to impact on what childhood means and are influencing its shape and direction although in different ways for different types of
families. Cultures of parenting around child safety, as noted by others (e.g. Valentine, 1997; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997) can be seen to accompany the impacts of structural changes in employment on how childhood is constructed and experienced. This is both in terms of supervision of children, and through monitoring of their activities within localised areas. Only one child, for example, was allowed to go independently to a large park or shopping mall.

The greater institutionalisation of children into formal after-school care, also noted by Karsten (2000), contributes to a construction of childhood that is becoming more shaped by employment patterns and concerns for children's safety. Such an outcome appears to be particularly so for children of single parents. Given that the proportion of this type of family arrangement has increased in recent years, and that higher numbers of single parents are entering the workforce, this after-school experience for these children appears set to continue. This is further underlined with recent government initiatives to increase maternal employment generally, and to specifically encourage single parents into employment.

This research needs to be considered in the light of recent government announcements to increase funding to child care and OSCAR programmes (e.g. Budget 2005). This may make little difference to two parent families for whom extra income of having both parents working is not an over-riding imperative, given that these families have already made choices of having one parent work part time. For two-parent families with both parents working, there may not be a high level of uptake on the extra funding, for example for nine out of eleven two-parent families interviewed where both parents worked, one parent had arranged their work hours so as to be home in the
after-school period.

What higher levels of government funding may lead to is a continued rise in one parent families using after-school care, with their children undergoing a more institutional, supervised experience. This outcome would also tend to sit alongside recent government aims of encouraging single parents into the workforce, as well as seeking to boost economic growth (Prime Minister's Parliamentary Statement, 2005). What this may mean is furthering the difference in childhoods being constructed for and experienced by children from different family structures. For example, there appeared to be a divergent grouping between those children who experienced after-school care and those who were involved in organised after school activities such as sport.

5.6 Methodological Limitations and Recommendations

A low response rate was received for the survey research instrument, despite the schools in this research appearing to be supportive and interested in its aims. Although schools have the advantage of being ready made gatekeepers to a child population, there can be the disadvantage of not really knowing how the research is being promoted by schools to the children being surveyed. Unless the research information is directly or urgently needed by schools, or is related or pertinent to the classroom topic work at the time, there is the danger that research could be accorded a low priority in the busy school environment. A high priority to the research may not have been given at any of the stages of data collection, e.g. of school management, teaching staff, parents or children.
The survey itself could well have been seen by parents and children as too demanding in terms of its length and what recall information was required to complete it, despite pilot testing not showing this to be an issue. Given the nature of the research and how schools operate, it may be more prudent in future time-use surveys using schools as gatekeepers to restrict the data collection to a one day time period. Although reducing the information collected, this lesser request of participants may lead to higher responses, and could also be promoted during the school week as a short, single homework task. It would also subscribe more closely to some academic preferences for time diaries as opposed to recall methods (e.g. Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; & Larson & Verma, 1999).

The only other remedy would probably be the more time consuming one of going to classes to administer the survey directly to children. This would of course require schools to agree, which would be problematic given their time commitments and priorities, and would also raise ethical issues of informed consent, with there being an element of coercion given that children would be in a classroom context and so expected or obliged to follow the direction of their teacher who would be seen to be endorsing the survey.

The use of response incentives was of limited success if the low response rate was anything to go by. However, assuming that ethical issues are addressed, they should be used in research with children as a gesture of thanks to participants for their involvement. Different types of incentives may need to be considered for children of a late-primary school and intermediate age bracket that this research sought to investigate.
When it came to understanding the reasons why children undertook particular activities and spent their time in certain ways, the interviews with parents and their children were of vital importance. Although not a participant-observation style ethnographic approach as recommended by some childhood researchers (e.g. James and Prout and James, 1997; Lareau, 2000), considerable contextual information was able to be gained from the interviews. Within the time limitations of post-graduate research, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviewing was efficient and effective. One limitation or bias of the interviews could have been the requirement of families to volunteer rather than be randomly selected. However, given that the interviews represented one third of the survey returns, some satisfaction can be taken that a ‘snowball’ effect was achieved.

5.7 Further Research

This research has concentrated on the childhood of older primary school aged children. Given the impacts that levels of parental employment and the role of risk anxiety are having on how these children's lives are being constructed, including how and where children are spending their time, several research options may be worth considering. One is to further refine and document children's time, as noted above. A second line of research to further examine childhood would be to investigate how children are spending other parts of their lives and what is impacting on it, e.g. weekends, and how it relates to after school time.
Bibliography


Holloway, S. (1998). Local childcare cultures: Moral geographies of mothering and
the social organisations of pre-school education. *Gender, Place and Culture, 5* (1), 29-53.


Lareau, A. (2000). Social class and the daily lives of children: A study from the
United States. *Childhood, 7 (2), 155-171*


Appendices
Dear Deputy Principal,

After School Care Research

I am writing to you to request the opportunity to carry out a social research project involving your school in the area of after school care. This research is part of the course requirements for a Masters in Social Science that I am studying for at Lincoln University. I am interested in this area as it covers a range of social and health issues that are of interest and concern in the community.

My employer, the Christchurch City Council, is supportive of the research I am undertaking, believing it will help provide a greater understanding of the issues surrounding after school care generally and children’s health specifically.

What I would like from your school is to able to supply a take-home questionnaire, for two classes in the year seven to year eight range, for children to give to their caregivers to answer. This will ask questions such as what after school arrangements are made for their children and why these are undertaken. The questionnaire will also ask if one caregiver and one of their children would like to be interviewed on the subject.

There will of course be no obligation for caregivers to answer the questionnaire. All information from questionnaires and interviews will be treated confidentially, and those taking part will be able to withdraw at any stage. The parent interviews and child interviews could each take place at their homes, or for children at school in a 'public' setting such as the school library if this more suitable for families and if the school is agreeable to this.

All those answering the questionnaire will be eligible for a prize draw to receive swimming pool passes for all the family for a visit to one of the Council’s leisure centres. All those adults and children who agree to take part in the interview will receive one swimming pool pass each as a way of thanking them for their participation in the research.

Information from the research will be made available to participating schools via a summary report, naturally in a non-identifying manner, for those who take part. I hope your school finds this research proposal of interest and to be of minimal disruption to the school routine.

Your co-operation is entirely voluntary, though I hope the nature of the research will be of interest to your school. If your school would be willing to take part, please reply by 27 August via the contact details below or by the attached return slip. Please call if you would like further clarification of what is being proposed.

A copy of the questionnaire and the accompanying letter to parents/caregivers is attached.

Sincerely

Paul Cottam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Contact Details</th>
<th>Home Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Policy Unit</td>
<td>25 Archer Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Offices</td>
<td>St Albans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph. 941-6326/ Fax 941-8337</td>
<td>Ph. 980-6326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:paul.cottam@ccc.govt.nz">paul.cottam@ccc.govt.nz</a></td>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:thecottams@paradise.net.nz">thecottams@paradise.net.nz</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Your school has agreed to allow me to send this questionnaire home to you. This is part of a research project I am undertaking for my university studies on children’s after school time and care.

My employer, the Christchurch City Council, is supportive of the research I am undertaking, believing it will help provide a greater understanding of the issues surrounding the after school period generally and children’s health specifically.

All information obtained will be treated confidentially, and will not be used to identify anyone answering the questionnaire.

This questionnaire relates only to the child who brought this home to you. It should take most people about 15 minutes to complete.

Your co-operation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not wish to do so. You do not have to answer every question if you do not want to, and you can also stop answering at any stage.

If you decide to answer, please return by ________ All those answering and returning the questionnaire are eligible for a prize draw to receive swimming pool passes for all the family to visit one of the Council’s leisure centres.

You will also see there is also the opportunity for yourself and your child to take part in separate interviews with me to further explore the issues surrounding after school care.

Those adults and children who agree to take part in the interviews (randomly selected to take part if a large number volunteer) will receive one swimming pool pass each as a way of thanking you for your participation in the research.

Thanks for your assistance,

Paul Cottam
(Lincoln University Post Graduate Research Student)
Contact details: Ph. 941-6385 (W)/ 980-6326 (H)
Lincoln University Post-Graduate Research: After School Questionnaire

1. School your child attends ________________  
2. School year of your child ______  
3. My child is a boy ____  girl ____

4. During the last school week, how did your child spend the after school period, i.e., from the end of school until 6.00pm? Please list all types of care and activities that your child experienced on each day during this time period, including how long they lasted, what happened during them, who if anyone organised or oversaw them, and the reasons for the type of care or activity. Types of care or activity or arrangement could include being at home, going to after school care, playing sport, going to a club, having music lessons, going to the mall, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Day</th>
<th>Types of care or activity or arrangement on each day</th>
<th>Time period for each type of care or activity?</th>
<th>What does your child do during each type of care or activity? List all activities and estimate times if possible</th>
<th>What person or organisation supervises or oversees the type of care or activity?</th>
<th>Please state reasons for this type of care or activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example Day:</td>
<td>1. Straight from school to home</td>
<td>From 3.20pm - 4.30pm</td>
<td>Made afternoon tea, watched TV, played outside with dog</td>
<td>By himself until 4.30pm</td>
<td>Can look after himself until Mum gets home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. At home</td>
<td>From 4.30pm - 6.00pm</td>
<td>On internet, did homework, went to dairy to get milk</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Mum home from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Day</td>
<td>Types of care or activity or arrangement on each day</td>
<td>Time period for each type of care or activity?</td>
<td>What does your child do during each type of care or activity?</td>
<td>What person or organisation supervises or oversees the type of care or activity?</td>
<td>Please state reasons for this type of care or activity</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Day</td>
<td>Types of care or activity or arrangement on each day</td>
<td>Time period for each type of care or activity?</td>
<td>What does your child do during each type of care or activity? List all activities and estimate times if possible</td>
<td>What person or organisation supervises or oversees the type of care or activity?</td>
<td>Please state reasons for this type of care or activity</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. During the last week, how did your child mainly travel to and from school? Tick **one option** for each journey on each day. If ‘Other’, please state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>To School</th>
<th>From School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Car</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Are there any comments you would like to make on how your child spends their after school time?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Demographic information (non-identifying, used to describe the set of replies)

7. People usually resident in the family household:

   Number of parents/caregivers
   Number of non-parental adults
   Number of dependent children
   Number of independent children

8. Sex of person completing this questionnaire (circle): Male / Female
9. Which age group applies to you?

20 – 29 yrs  ____  50 – 59 yrs  ____
30 – 39 yrs  ____  60 + yrs  ____
40 – 49 yrs  ____

10. Please tick one box in each column for yourself and for any other parents/caregivers in the family that best describes your employment situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Situation</th>
<th>Parent/Caregiver 1 (yourself)</th>
<th>Parent/Caregiver 2 (anyone else)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time (30 hours or more per week)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time (less than 30 hours per week)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in paid work, but actively seeking work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in paid work, and not seeking work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What is your household income from all sources, before tax?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Parent/Caregiver 1 (yourself)</th>
<th>Parent/Caregiver 2 (anyone else)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>$60,001 - $70,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001 - $20,000</td>
<td>$70,001 - $80,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001 - $30,000</td>
<td>$80,001 - $90,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$30,001 - $40,000</td>
<td>$90,001 - $100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,001 - $50,000</td>
<td>$100,001 or more</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$50,001 - $60,000</td>
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</table>

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. To be eligible for the swim pass draw, please return to school by __________

I would be interested to talk to parents and children about after school time. If you and your child would like to interviewed about what your child does after school, please write your name, and ask your child to write their name (for informed consent purposes), in the space below, along with your telephone number.

If you and your child agree to take part, either of you can stop at any time. All your answers to the questions asked will treated privately and not shown to anyone in anyway that will identify you. Each of you will be interviewed separately so as to gain your own viewpoints, either at home, or at school for your child if this is more convenient.

We agree to be interviewed about after school care and activities.

Parent/Caregiver’s name: __________________________
Child’s name: __________________________
Telephone number: __________________________
Appendix C - Interview Questions

A. Parent/Caregiver
1. Tell me how (child) usually spends their after school time
2. Who does she spend this time with?
3. Who decides/how was it decided what (child) does?
4. What other options were considered?
5. Does (child) spend any time looking after herself?
6. How happy are you with these arrangements?
7. How does it compare with how (child) used to spend her after school time?
8. How do you think (child) will spend her time after school in the future?
9. What issues or problems have you had to deal with regarding after school time?
10. Have there been any health or safety issues that you have concerning after school time?
11. Any comments you’d like to make about (child) after school time and care?

B. Children’s Questions
1. What things do you do after school?
2. Where do you do them?
3. Who do you do them with?
4. Who decides what you do after school?
5. What things would you like to do more of after school?
6. What things would you like to do less of after school?
7. Are there any things you do after school that you would rather not have to do?
8. Anything you’d like to say about after school time?