
Introduction

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This volume presents the main findings from the Families and Neighbourhoods Study, which took place in four neighbourhoods in England. It was designed to explore issues surrounding the relevance of neighbourhoods for children and their parents, to inform the development or refinement of interventions for families. The introduction that follows does not attempt to present all the relevant literature on this topic. There are several comprehensive sources of information available about the research linking neighbourhood characteristics with child or parent outcomes, and about existing community interventions (Barnes, Katz, Korbin & O'Brien, 2006a; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000, 2001; Sampson, Morenoff & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). Instead it highlights some of the most work that was the most influential in developing the study.

Why was it thought necessary to study the neighbourhoods that families occupy? In the UK, there are geographic disparities in a range of economic, health, social and academic outcomes, evident for many years. Where you live appears to have relevance to the services that are available, and to how well children do. Media reports of geographical inequity ('post-code lotteries') are common in relation to accessing certain types of medical treatment (Hall, 2006; Lister, 2006), and parents will pay over the odds for houses in neighbourhoods that place their children within the catchment areas of schools with good academic achievement records, in an effort to increase the likelihood that their child will gain the best qualifications (Cheshire & Shepherd, 2004; Gibbons & Machin, 2003). But, some have challenged the idea that neighbourhoods affect children's development, proposing instead that the family factors that may have led them to be living in a disadvantaged or an affluent area in the first place are more relevant to child outcomes (Gibbons, Green, Gregg & Machin, 2005). Thus, an important question is 'does where you live make a difference to the quality of life and to one's life chances?' Is it the people who make the neighbourhood, or

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vice versa? Beyond some specific circumstances (e.g. increasing the chance of attaining experimental treatment for cancer; moving higher on the waiting list for a hip replacement; enhancing the likelihood of one's child attending a school with higher GCSE successes) how true is it that your location matters? And if it does make a difference, how does that happen? If this question can be answered then it might be possible to develop interventions to change neighbourhoods, and thus improve life chances for their residents.

There is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that very disadvantaged neighbourhoods carry with them profiles of high crime and disorder, drug trafficking, low social cohesion, over-representation of single mothers, and concentrated disadvantage. These factors are, in turn, associated with a range of adverse outcomes for children, including low birth weight, child maltreatment, and a greater chance of emotional or behavioural problems, juvenile delinquency arrests, teen pregnancy, school dropout and unemployment. Neighbourhood effects appear to be important from early in life and were highlighted in a US report focusing on ways to enhance early development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). For example the IHDP intervention study for low birth weight infants in the USA found that having fewer managerial and professional workers in the neighbourhood was associated with more behaviour problems during the preschool years and at the start of school, over and above the influence of family characteristics (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1997). Neighbourhood effects are also found in different countries including Canada (Boyle & Lipman, 1998; Curtis, Dooley & Phipps, 2004), the UK (Caspi, Taylor, Moffitt & Plomin, 2000) and the Netherlands (Kalf et al., 2001). Nevertheless, these associations between structural factors and child or family outcomes are sometimes mixed or inconsistent across studies. In addition, the processes by which neighbourhood structural conditions operate in relation to adverse outcomes for children and families remain less well understood than the associations (Small & Supple, 2001).

Many (though not all) families in severely disadvantaged neighbourhoods are poor, and poverty, danger and inadequate public resources undermine positive parenting practices (Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, Jones & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2001). Bradley and Corwyn (2002) cite research that links the stresses associated with poverty to parents' experiences of powerlessness, low self-esteem, learned helplessness as well as reduced mastery and efficacy, which, with time, can result in depression, anxiety and hostility. This supports McLoyd's (1990) assertion that poverty places demands on parents' mental health, while diminishing their ability to parent supportively. Parents cope with disorder in the neighbourhood in a number of ways. Some respond by using harsh restrictive parenting to keep their children safe, allowing little freedom to move about locally unsupervised. Osofsky and Thompson (2000) propose

that overprotective and authoritarian parenting may result from community violence accompanied by a breakdown in protection traditionally offered by other resources such as schools, churches and community centres.

In an attempt to ensure the safety of their children, parents may adopt strategies ranging from increased monitoring and restriction of freedom to the use of punishment. Specifically, it has long been suggested that parents within dangerous urban neighbourhoods in the USA may use physical control to ensure their children's safety, to a level that others may define as excessive or abusive (Ogbu, 1985). Others may react by trying to remove their child from the neighbourhood as much as possible. Nevertheless, this strategy can have negative consequences for children's emotional health as observed by O'Neil, Parke and McDowell (2001). They examined a cross-cultural sample of third grade children (about nine years old) born to middle income and working-class families in California and found that children whose activities were restricted due to perceived neighbourhood danger described themselves as lonely. Thus it would seem that curtailing freedom interferes with social development.

There is a fine line between being strict enough to protect a child and becoming overly punitive or isolating them from important experiences. Certainly a great deal of evidence has been amassed (particularly from the USA) to demonstrate that rates of child abuse are higher in deprived neighbourhoods, after taking into account family level poverty. Deccio, Horner and Wilson (1994) in Spokane, Washington found that variability between areas in child abuse was related to rates of vacant housing, the extent to which many families moved in and out of the area and to social isolation of families. An examination of child abuse cases in Chicago to children born from 1982 to 1988 found conclusive evidence that the extent of community poverty was significantly associated with child sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect (Lee & Goerge, 1999). Using a regression model that took into account maternal age, child sex, birth order, race, birth year and region, the extent of community poverty could explain a substantial amount of the variation in abuse rates. For example, neglect and sexual abuse quadrupled in those communities with 40% or more families living in poverty, compared with areas where the rate was lower than 10%, and physical abuse was more than three times as likely to occur in those communities.

Community poverty was also identified as the most important factor in predicting variability in rates of child maltreatment in neighbourhoods in Cleveland, Ohio (Coulton, Korbin & Su, 1996). The importance of community resources to parenting behaviour was demonstrated in this study, which found lower levels of child maltreatment in communities with better facilities for children (day care centres, playgrounds, parks) and services (laundrettes, supermarkets, banks) compared to those communities lacking these resources. The Cleveland study of neighbourhoods also demonstrated the importance

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of considering cultural factors. They noted that community poverty had a significantly weaker effect on maltreatment rates in African American than in European American neighbourhoods (Korbin, Coulton, Chard, Platt-Houston & Su, 1998). Most recently, patterns of child abuse have been examined in a cohort of children in Britain, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) including more than 14,000 children born in three health districts of Avon. Results from the ALSPAC study indicate a strong, significant association between maltreatment and poverty, and the greater the level of deprivation, the higher the risk of maltreatment. Children living in council homes compared to those in owner occupied homes were seven times more likely to suffer abuse. The researchers suggest this finding may be due to direct effects arising from the stress of living in poor standard housing as well as an indirect effect of neighbourhood quality (Sidebotham, Heron, Golding & the ALSPAC Study Team, 2002).

THEORIES

For an intervention to be successful, it should be firmly based in theoretical explanations of how neighbourhoods influence children and families. A number of theoretical approaches are relevant. While much of the earlier research (and many interventions) focus on the relevance of community poverty, there are two other influential approaches to understanding the impact of neighbourhoods on parents and children, the theories of social capital and social disorganisation. The ecological theory of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is also outlined since this brings together the roles of individual, family and neighbourhood factors.

POVERTY

The level and uniformity of deprivation in an area has been linked to many poor outcomes for children and parents, notably poor health, poor academic achievement, and parenting difficulties such as abuse and neglect. In the UK, the rising proportion of the population below the poverty line has led to a sharp rise in health and developmental inequality (Jack, 2000) reflected in higher rates of ill health and mortality among the poor. McCulloch and Joshi (2001) also highlight the increasing polarisation of wealth at the local level in Britain.

Jencks and Mayer (1990) presented the most influential summary of the potential impact of neighbourhood deprivation on child and family functioning, outlining five major theoretical models. Some focus more on the behaviour of neighbours and others on the financial capital within families and locally in the neighbourhood. The *Epidemic or Contagion model* assumes that behaviours are learned or copied. The presence of antisocial neighbours or youth can

spread problem behaviours such as substance abuse or delinquency. Positive behaviours can spread in a similar manner. *Collective socialization* highlights the importance of adult role models in the community, such as other parents, relatives or neighbours who may socialise towards acceptable success, rather than antisocial behaviour, depending on the local social norms and the extent of anomie. Additionally, these other adults can adopt a supervisory or monitoring function to control negative behaviour.

The *Institutional model* predicts that adults from outside the community working in schools, the police force and other institutions can influence child outcomes depending on how skilled they are, their interaction with the children and the resources they provide, for example, quality of education and policing. *Competition theory* is most closely linked with poverty and emphasises the importance of resources and the potential impact if neighbours have to challenge each other for scarce resources. This would increase the likelihood of an 'underclass' emerging, composed of residents with the fewest resources (Wilson, 1987). Finally, *Relative Deprivation* theory proposes that individuals judge their position in society in relation to neighbours. Those with fewer resources are likely to be demoralised if neighbours appear to be more affluent. Bradley & Whiteside-Mansell note that:

Being poor when all around you are poor and when living in a culture where material goods are given only moderate value means one thing. Being poor when many around you are not poor and when material possessions are highly valued means quite another. (1997, p.15)

In fact families experiencing personal poverty in relatively affluent communities may be at particular disadvantage if they are subject to negative labelling by their more affluent peers. However, in uniformly deprived communities residents may gain strength from each other if there is social cohesion. Nevertheless, the current UK government has put its faith in transforming poor neighbourhoods into mixed communities in order to provide 'support for parents and the best start for children' stating that:

Overcoming 'area effects' will require the transformation of very deprived neighbourhoods from mono-tenure social housing estates into communities containing a much broader socio-economic mix of households. (HM Treasury & DfES, 2005, p. 35)

They have some theoretical support for this plan since the contagion, collective socialisation and institutional models lead to the prediction that a mixed community with some affluent neighbours would enhance child development through direct and indirect benefits of socialisation and resources. The

competition and relative deprivation theories suggest that competition from, or comparing oneself to, more advantaged neighbours would be detrimental to impoverished families and children due to feelings of anomie, rejection and failure. Some studies are now trying to clarify this but it remains open to debate. The relative balance of families who are poor or affluent could be relevant to child outcomes but, as yet, has not received sufficient attention to draw any conclusions.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital refers to the values that people hold, the resources that they can access through relationships and reflects a shared sense of identity, common values, trust and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988; Edwards, Franklin & Holland, 2003). One US writer in particular has shared with governments in the USA and the UK his warnings of what will become of a society that lacks this attribute (Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). The essence of community social capital is in its *potential* for support, which is generated through local relationships and participation in local groups. Coleman (1993) has suggested that the norms and expectations that a community has about the behaviour of children and parents rely on social capital developing from dense local social networks that have continuity over time, concluding that there will be poor outcomes for families and children if community social capital is lacking. In this kind of 'disconnected' area local residents will not be able to reinforce social norms, resulting in an increase in socially unacceptable behaviour, sometimes referred to as 'social disorganisation'.

Two types of social capital have been identified: 'bonding social capital', which exists in relationships/networks where there are commonalities, for instance between family members, close friends, ethnic groups and *within* communities; and 'bridging social capital', which serves to create links with organisations and institutions and between individuals or communities who do not necessarily have anything in common. An exploration of families and social capital (Edwards et al., 2003) suggested that bonding social capital is more relevant to the family, bringing together individuals who already have some commonalities. From this perspective, changes in family structure, for example single parenthood, would decrease social capital available to the family with poorer child outcomes. In contrast bridging social capital may be more relevant when thinking about strategies for neighbourhood or community development.

Furstenberg (1993) found that skilled parents are likely, in optimal circumstances, to develop links both within (bonding) and beyond (bridging) the community. However, whether skilled or not, those living in poor,

unstable and socially disorganised neighbourhoods (North Philadelphia) tended to adopt an individualistic style of parent management, disconnected from the community and low in social capital. Families in the poor but socially cohesive South Philadelphia neighbourhoods were more likely to form local friendships, share responsibilities with other families and support each other. Cattell (2001) developed a typology of social networks based on two impoverished neighbourhoods and derived from qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews. She found that a sense of control, higher self-esteem, hopefulness, health and enjoyment were associated with, what she termed 'Networks of solidarity' (p. 1506), characterised by strong personal ties as well as participation in community organisations. In contrast individuals from 'Socially excluded' networks tended to be marginalised and were more likely to display feelings of anxiety, depression, hopelessness and fatalism as well as physical symptoms. High levels of social capital were available to those in networks of solidarity due to a density and variety of relationships and resources. Socially excluded networks were low in social capital due to a paucity of relationships and resources. In line with Jencks and Mayer's (1990) theories of community influence, individuals with a narrow range of reference groups felt themselves to be in competition with those perceived as somehow different and were critical of those receiving greater benefits.

SOCIAL DISORGANISATION

Closely associated with lack of social capital in an area, social disorganisation refers to conditions where community members do not share a set of common goals or values and, in consequence, the behaviour of local residents (children or adults) is not effectively controlled. Without social cohesion (close networks and frequent interaction) within a community and a set of common values it is predicted that there will be a range of parenting problems (such as child abuse) and more delinquent and criminal behaviour (Sampson, 1997). The theory of social organisation has been very effective in explaining delinquency. Informal social control is a central dimension for measurement of structural social organisation and a key component of informal social control is the collective supervision a community exerts over local antisocial behaviour (Furstenberg, 1993) – especially monitoring and surveillance of youth, peer groups, and gangs. Examples of informal controls include supervision of leisure-time youth activities, intervention in street-corner congregations, and challenging youths who seem to be up to no good (Coulton et al., 1996). Variations in the supervision of youth have been related to rates of delinquency (Sampson, 1992).

It has been established in a number of studies that community social disorganisation is a more important predictor of poor outcomes than the extent of poverty or the occupational status of residents. Sampson and Groves (1989) in their analysis of the British Crime Survey found that communities with fewer friendship networks, less unofficial supervision of children and lower community involvement had higher rates of delinquency and crime. While neighbourhood socio-economic status (SES) had an effect on delinquency rates, this was greatly reduced when the effect of low supervision of youth was taken into account. Based on their research in New York neighbourhoods, Simcha-Fagan and Schwartz (1986) similarly concluded that the level of social disorganisation mediated the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics of the neighbourhood and the development of delinquency.

Informal control is only one aspect of the social organisation/disorganisation continuum. Other elements include: social cohesion (neighbours helping one another); the involvement of community members in neighbourhood organisations; social control (the actions of local institutions, such as schools and the police or courts); the capacity and actions of political and institutional structure (e.g. their willingness to maintain facilities); public incivilities that may signal decline (e.g. broken windows, graffiti); and shared community values, which may be positive or negative (such as shared agreement that illegal activities are acceptable). If residents consider that their own area is disorganised this is likely to lead to feelings of powerlessness and what is referred to as 'anomie', a state of alienation, isolation and anxiety resulting from a perceived lack of standards, social control and regulation.

Social disorganisation theorists emphasise community activism and organisation being determined by characteristics such as the prevalence and inter-dependence of *social networks* in that community to a greater extent than theorists who focus on poverty and inequality (e.g. Wilson, 1987). A well functioning local community is expected to have a complex system of reciprocal friendship and kinship networks, and informal ties rooted in family life and inter-generational socialisation processes. The community's sense of collective efficacy is likely to decline as residents come to believe that they no longer share common values and norms and are unable to enforce sanctions or effect change. This often leads to residents feeling alienated and powerless, which can lead to anxiety and depression, exacerbated in areas with a highly mobile and heterogeneous population. Nevertheless, it is a theoretical approach that can be related to community development intervention strategies. While there is a focus on ways that communities shape individual development, there is equal, or even more, emphasis placed on the values of community residents, their behaviour both within the home and in the wider community, and the community is very much the sum of these parts and thus subject to modification.

ECOLOGICAL THEORY

The concept of focusing on areas rather than (as well as) people is conceptually in line with the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). He proposed that a child's development should be examined as an evolving interaction between the person and the environment. His concept of the environment was of a 'set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls' (p.3). Some of these would be actual settings in which the child moved (microsystems; e.g. the home, the classroom), others would be the interaction between different microsystems (mesosystems; e.g. between home and school), and yet other layers would be settings in which the child did not move, but which were occupied by key figures in their world (exosystems; e.g. their parents' workplaces). Finally, the complex interrelationship between nested levels will be influenced by the prevailing culture or subculture (macrosystems).

This model predicts multiple interacting influences at the level of the individual, the family, the neighbourhood and the wider community, highlighting the need to understand not just people's environment but how they interface with it. Bronfenbrenner was as interested in the interactions between the individual, their immediate environment, and the wider surroundings as he was in the relevance of each level of his model. If the elements of the neighbourhood that give support to parents or create problems for them can be identified, and linked with family factors, the possibility of accurate and positive interventions for parents and children increases.

Clearly one can imagine how the type of housing and where it happens to be located may have an impact on family life – coping with three young children in a tower block is very different to living in a three-bedroom semi-detached house with a garden. Living in the middle of a large city will lead to different experiences for the family than living in an isolated rural location. These structural differences have been the subject of debate for some time, but the impact for any family will depend not just on the physical environment but on the characteristics of the family, factors such as parents' own childhood experiences, reasons for living in a particular place, their personality, the age and behaviour of their children, and the behaviour and attitudes of neighbours. Tower block life may be a positive experience for a family that has its first proper home, rather than lodging with relatives. A rural existence, a house with a large garden, may be challenging to a single mother prone to depression and who knows no one locally, but may be more rewarding if many family members live locally. How, then should neighbourhoods be changed so that they are more supportive to families?

There is a complex interplay between characteristics of the neighbourhood and the family, and in particular to parental discipline and control. Simons and colleagues (2002), reporting on a sample of African-American children drawn

from the Family and Community Health Study located in Georgia and Iowa, noted that 55% of children had been exposed to violent arguments, 35% to fights with weapons, 39% to drug use/selling and 17% to murders in their neighbourhoods. Further, more than two-thirds of the children were also exposed to corporal punishment in the home. Parental use of physical discipline was higher for children with conduct problems living in neighbourhoods where the use of physical control was rare, but there was no association between discipline and child behaviour in areas where the use of corporal punishment was prevalent. Thus, the authors conclude that, although parental control in the form of monitoring, consistent discipline, reasoning and positive reinforcement did reduce the likelihood of conduct problems such as theft or fighting, this effect waned as the level of community deviance rose, suggesting that the influence of neighbourhood social disorganisation may often outweigh parental efforts at socialisation.

The characteristics of parents are also important when one is trying to determine what the importance of the local area is for child and family functioning, and how it could be enhanced. Some studies have found links between parental mental health and negative parental management strategies, for example maternal depression has been identified as a reason for lower levels of monitoring (Jones, Forehand, Brody & Armistead, 2003). The researchers suggest that inadequate parental monitoring is associated with higher child behaviour problems leading to increased maternal depression. Hill and Herman-Stahl (2002), however, suggest that it is social disorganisation that leads to maternal depression as a result of perceptions of lack of safety. Feeling that the neighbourhood is unsafe, mothers may vacillate between control and permissiveness resulting in inconsistent discipline and further, due to stress, mothers may react unpredictably, hostilely or by withdrawing from the child.

INTERVENTIONS

A number of community interventions' for families have now been developed in the UK, the USA and more recently in Australia and Canada (Barnes et al., 2006b). The present UK government has paid particular attention to enhancing disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and has provided some services and funding for geographical areas (as opposed to individuals) several of which were focused explicitly on improving children's development and/or parenting, such as Sure Start Local Programmes, the Children's Fund, and Education Action Zones. Others have been more broadly directed at area regeneration such as Neighbourhood Renewal or New Deal for Communities (Regional Coordination Unit, 2002). The current Labour government has also actively

supported neighbourliness, most recently establishing the Active Citizenship Centre as part of its Civil Renewal effort, designed to increase the extent to which residents become involved in their local communities (HM Government, 2006). Two national surveys have been conducted by the Home Office to investigate perceptions of neighbourhoods and neighbours and community participation (Attwood, Singh, Prime & Creasy, 2003; Munton & Zurawan, 2004). More than two-thirds of the respondents said they enjoyed living in their neighbourhood (Attwood et al., 2003) and almost half reported some civic participation – quite broadly defined (Munton & Zurawan, 2004). In 2001 it was estimated at 48% and in 2003 at 51%. In particular an increase in informal volunteering – giving unpaid help to an individual or others who are not family members – was noted.

However, these 'Area Based Initiatives' have met with mixed success and in particular the UK initiative designed to make the most difference to young children's development – Sure Start Local Programmes – has yet to show any substantial impact on individuals in the areas (Belsky et al., 2006; National Evaluation of Sure Start 2005; Rutter, 2006) although some aspects of the neighbourhoods themselves and services within them have changed significantly over four years (Barnes et al., 2006b). There appears to be some loss of faith in the relevance of neighbourhood influences (or in the possibility that changing the neighbourhood can lead to changes in child and parent behaviour) since the programmes directed at locally defined small neighbourhoods (Sure Start Local Programmes) are in 2006 and 2007 being phased out and replaced with Children's Centres, less clearly related to specific small areas, while the initiative for older children (the Children's Fund) has been discontinued.

In the USA, there have also been attempts to manipulate experimentally neighbourhood. The 'Moving to Opportunity' study (Kling, Ludwig & Katz, 2005; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003) randomly selecting some families living on benefits and in social housing in areas of concentrated disadvantage to receive housing vouchers that would enable them to move to other locations. Other families continued to receive payment for their housing but stayed in their current homes. The development and progress of the children in the families was followed, indicating mixed results, with girls having better outcomes (academic and behavioural), while boys who moved to more affluent neighbourhoods had more behaviour problems and more arrests for property crime as young adults. However, effecting this kind of change for families will never be the norm. For most, they adapt and cope with their current circumstances and possibly develop ways to move on, or make the neighbourhood more acceptable. The study described in this book has attempted to find out about the various ways that parents do cope with challenging (and pleasant) surroundings, and the extent to which the neighbourhood influences their lives.

THE STUDY DESIGN

All the theoretical approaches described were taken into account when designing the Families and Neighbourhoods Study, but it was not only about area deprivation. Although three of the four neighbourhoods selected for investigation are amongst the 10% most deprived in England, one represents a moderately wealthy suburb. While other reports have looked at parents living in disadvantage (e.g. Ghate & Hazel, 2002), examined one particular neighbourhood in detail (e.g. Mumford & Power, 2003), parents of one age group of children (e.g. teenagers, infants), or used surveys to look more broadly at parents from around the country (Attwood et al., 2003; Munton & Zurawan, 2004), this project attempted to take a slightly different approach. Rather than attempting to find out about disadvantaged neighbourhoods in general, the study was of three deprived areas that were as different as possible from each other. In addition, some of the parents interviewed in the deprived areas (and one in particular) had a range of educational qualifications, middle-class occupations and were reasonably affluent. Thus it has been possible to examine the role of the difference between the majority locally and the specific family. The inclusion of respondents from an affluent area provides a means of looking at similarities across the social spectrum, not always possible with so much research focused only on disadvantaged families.

The Families and Neighbourhoods Study was designed to look broadly at the relevance of community/neighbourhood for families, with information from the parents who live there integrated with some background information from administrative sources such as the Census and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Recalling the ecological model, information was sought from families about *individual level* factors (such as parental personality, mental health, ethnic group and child age); *family factors* (such as economic circumstances, adverse life events and parent–child relationships); and *neighbourhood factors* (such as the extent of local crime and disorder, local deprivation or the type of neighbourhood) to determine how they interact to influence parenting, both in the home (such as the use of aggressive discipline) and in the community (such as the establishment of social networks and informal social control).

The parents who were interviewed in each area are not representative of all parents. Instead they were selected to represent three important transition times for families, times when the neighbourhood might be of particular relevance for them. Some had an infant of less than one year old – not necessarily their first child but each additional child has important implications for the use of services and family dynamics; some had a child of four or five years old, just about to start all-day schooling, called in the UK reception class; and others a pre-teenager (11 to 12 years) who has just started in secondary school (the equivalent in the

UK of starting in junior high school in the USA), a change that usually places more pressure on families as they allow more independence for their child to move about unaccompanied in the local area. A multi-method strategy was used; a survey was conducted with a large sample (781), rich qualitative material was then collected from tape-recorded interviews with 142 parents, enabling a more complex understanding of how the fabric of a neighbourhood influences parents and their children.

The format of the book is such that in each chapter some quantitative information is used to set the backdrop for relevant issues, which are then examined in more depth based on quotations from the qualitative interviews. The book does not contain the results of statistical comparisons between the areas, though these are available from the author on request. However, if it is stated that one value is larger than another, then the reader can conclude that this is based on a statistical test with a significant result (at $p \leq 0.05$). In addition, any correlation coefficient that is given is significant at that level. The quotes that are given to illustrate the open-ended remarks are all identified with a name (not real names of course) with questions and prompts from the interviewer indicated in italics. Additional information about each of the mothers who took part in the second phase of the study is given in Appendix 2, Table A2.4, with vignettes of some of the families who took part provided in Chapter 3, representing mothers who are typical or not typical of their areas. While a number of theories, and findings from previous research, were important in planning the study, the thoughts and ideas of the parents (predominantly mothers) who took part have been highlighted, so that readers can gain a sense of what issues face families in the United Kingdom, and how their neighbourhoods might help or hinder them.

