DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 410 UD 021 105

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TITLE Urban Environments and Urban Children.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Aug 80
CONTRACT 400-77-0071
NOTE 54p.; Published in a slightly different version as ERIC/CUE Urban Diversity Series, Number 69, August 1980.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027 ($5.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Development; *Children; Elementary Secondary Education; *Environmental Influences; *Family Role; *Neighborhoods; School Community Relationship; School Role; Socialization; Urban Areas; *Urban Environment; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Bronfenbrenner (Urie)

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the distinctive characteristics of urban environments, the ways these environmental features affect city children, and the roles that schools can play in modifying these effects. Bronfenbrenner's multilevel framework for studying the ecology of human development is described. Recognizing the central role that families play in the lives of children, neighborhoods are examined as important environments for both families and their children. Unique characteristics of urban environments and the special ways in which their multiple levels and interacting systems pose risks and opportunities for child development are then discussed. New York, NY 10027 Data from a study on people's perceptions of "high risk" versus "low risk" urban neighborhoods are reviewed, showing that despite demographic similarities, the high and low risk neighborhoods varied significantly in terms of social stresses and supports, adequacy of child care, and residents' attitudes toward the neighborhood. Finally, the school is hailed as an institution that, with proper moral, political, and economic resources can protect environmentally-at-risk children, increase their opportunities, compensate for weaknesses in families and neighborhoods, and influence public policy related to children. (Author/GC)

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS AND URBAN CHILDREN

A Paper Prepared for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education

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This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number 400-77-0071. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.

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Urban Environments and Urban Children

Abstract

What are the distinctive characteristics of urban environments, and what effects do they or could they have on the children who live in them? In this paper the authors address these questions from the standpoint of an ecological perspective on human development. This perspective highlights the role of social and economic forces outside the immediate experience of children in shaping what goes on between children and their parents, teachers, neighbors, and peers. The concept of "environmental press" is employed to describe the processes involved. Understanding the degree to which urban environments are "neighborhood-oriented" is a critical task in assessing quality of life for urban children. Such an analysis can contribute to effective planning, instruction, and advocacy by urban educators.

"Children are in the city to stay. uestion then is not whether children should live in cities, but how to make cities habitable for children." (Bremmer, 1979:27)

What are the distinctive characteristics of urban environments, what effects do they have or could they have on the children who live within them, and what roles can schools play in strengthening or modifying those effects? In this paper our goal is to address these questions by exploring the forces in urban environments that "press" children in distinctive ways. We are interested in the characteristics of urban environments that may facilitate or impede the urban child's development. What every day facts of urban life generate social momentum that works either for or against children?

I. Environmental Press and the Developing Individual

"Environmental press" is a term used by ecological psychologists in referring to the combined influence of forces working in a setting to shape the behavior and development of people in that setting. Environmental press arises from the circumstances confronting and surrounding an individual that generate psychosocial momentum tending to guide that individual in a particular direction. As we shall see, the child's environment is multifaceted and multileveled--a complex network of forces.

As in all fields using an ecological framework, ecological psychology looks beyond the individual organism to the organism's environment for questions and explanations about the organism's behavior and development. A set of researchers in this area observed that, "behavior settings are coercive of behavior. People who enter settings are pressed to help enact its program

(while at the same time using the setting for their own purposes)" (Gump & Adelberg 1978:174). Over time, individual behavior tends to become congruent with the situational demands of the environment. This "principle of progressive conformity" is implemented by environmental press (Moos 1976).

Environmental press is not a single or unitary force, but the resultant influence of all forces interacting within an environment. Various elements of a setting generate behavior-modifying forces that contribute to environmental press. Physical characteristics, for instance, may facilitate or impede access to desired destinations or alternate uses of existing space. Social patterns also may encourage or discourage various actions, or reward or punish certain values or attitudes. Further, these various influences interact with and modify each other, so that physical attributes affect social variables and vice versa.

The presence, strength, and dynamic balance among environmental forces is different, of course, in different settings. Contrasting environments therefore press toward different forms of behavior or directions for development. Small social environments (towns, groups, institutions) are associated with patterns of behavior different from large ones (Barker & Gump 1964). Large secondary schools tend to discourage participation by students while small schools tend to encourage it (Barker & Gump 1964; Garbarino 1980). Environments in which residential concentrations of children are separated from recreational settings by busy streets lined on both sides by parked cars have been found to press toward both injuries to children and pressure on parents to provide regulation (Aldrich 1979; Michelson & Roberts 1979).

Within an ecological framework, the balance of environmental forces is not the sole determinant of outcomes for an organism. The individual organism figures significantly, also. Those who study people from an ecological perspec-

tive view individuals and their environments as transactive, mutually-shaping systems, each changing over time, each adapting over time in response to changes in the other. For ecological psychologists, therefore, while environmental press is the environment's contribution to individual-environment transactions, the individual brings to the situation a unique arrangement of personal resources, a particular level of development, and other attributes. Different people thus may react differently to the same environment. The big school-little school findings cited above, for instance (Barker & Gump 1964; Garbarino 1980), applied most significantly to academically marginal students. Further, the same environment may interact differently with the same person at different times. For example, the same busy street that can be life-threatening to a child of four may be a developmentally appropriate challenge for a 9-year-old and a mild inconvenience for a teenager.

Interindividual differences and intraindividual change require that individual characteristics be considered if attempts are made to predict outcomes of individual-environment interactions. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to predict specific outcomes, but to analyze the environmental side of the interaction. Specifically, the focus is on environmental characteristics that are most important for the developing child. In all environments there are forces that support or undermine the processes of child development. These forces may work for or against assurance of the child's basic survival needs; for or against provision of emotional nurturance and continuity; for or against developmentally-appropriate attempts at self-determination--in short, for or against the creation of a positive environment for the growth and development of children. Forces that are supportive of children represent opportunities for adequate, or even enhanced, developmental experiences, while the absence of such characteristics or the presence of threatening forces

presents environmental risks to the developing child. Our analysis of the significance of urban environments for children focuses on the opportunities and risks that such environments represent.

An ecological perspective is quite useful for considering the implications of urban environments for children. Ecological psychologists typically focus on the local behavior setting immediately surrounding and directly affecting the individual (e.g., the home, the neighborhood, the classroom). Clearly, these settings are important. In considering the influence of urban environments on children, however, an analysis of immediate settings does not begin to exhaust the variety of sources--direct and indirect--of environmental effects on children. For our purposes it is necessary to move well beyond the child's proximate environment to consider the broader social, economic, and political forces that affect children and those primarily responsible for their care. To understand, and to intervene effectively in, the complex set of environmental forces acting on urban children, we must consider not only the size and activity of the classroom, for example, but also the history of the city's tax base and its relationship to school budgets and policies. Such forces are the social, political, and economic engines that drive behavioral settings.

This paper is based on the framework proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) for studying the ecology of human development. As do all ecological frameworks, Bronfenbrenner's encourages us to consider the organism--the child--as a developing and changing individual and to recognize that the developmental progress of the child is a significant influence on the workings and outcomes of behavior settings. An ecological framework further requires us to consider the many environmental forces and the ecological balance among those forces that interact over time with the developing child.

Bronfenbrenner's framework guides our attention to the central role of families in the child's social ecology. The family is the exclusive early environment for some children and a primary environment for most. As such, it is a major source of environmental press. We know also that children function not so much as individuals but as members of families when it comes to entering and being affected by environments beyond their immediate settings (Burgess, Garbarino & Gilstrap in press). The developing needs of families across their life course (cf. Aldous & Hill 1968) are thus essential considerations in an ecological analysis.

The framework we are using goes well beyond the family in identifying sources of environmental influences. The child's environment is depicted as having several levels, with environmental forces at each level interacting with and affecting the child differently. This special formulation of the child's multiple environments is perhaps the most valuable feature of this framework for our task. It will allow us to consider the qualities of urban environments systematically, and to discuss systematically the unique set of risks and opportunities presented to children by each level of their environment.

In the next section of this paper we describe Bronfenbrenner's multilevel framework and discuss environmental opportunities for and risks to a child's development that may originate at each level. Following that, and recognzing the central role that their families play in the lives of children, we look in some detail at neighborhoods as important environments for both children and families. The discussion then turns to the distinctive characteristics of urban environments and the special ways in which their multiple levels and interacting systems pose risks and opportunities for child development. In the final section, we outline some of the implications for educators of this ecological view of urban environments and urban children.

II. An Ecological Perspective on Children and Environments

To study the ecology of child development is to undertake the scientific study of how the child develops interactively with the immediate social and physical environment, and how aspects of the larger social context affect what goes on in the child's immediate settings. Within this framework the child is viewed as a developing person who plays an active role in an ever-widening world. The newborn shapes the feeding behavior of its mother but is confined largely to a crib or a lap and has limited means of communicating its needs and wants. The 10-year-old, on the other hand, influences many adults and other children located in many different settings, and has many ways of communicating. The world of adolescents is still larger and more diverse, as is their ability to influence it. The child and the environment negotiate their relationship over time through a process of reciprocity. Neither is constant; each depends on the other. One cannot predict the future of either without knowing something about the other. Does a handicapped child stand a greater risk of being abused? It depends. Some environments are "vulnerable" to the stresses of caring for such a child, while others are not (cf. Young & Kopp 1980). Does economic deprivation harm development? It depends on how old one is when it hits, what sex one is, what the future brings in the way of vocational opportunity, what the quality of family life was in the past, what one's economic expectations and assumptions are, and whether one looks at the short-term or the long-run (cf., Elder 1974; Elder & Rockwell 1977). In short--it depends.

In addition to recognizing the transactive nature of development, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework also considers the multiple levels at which environmental influences orginate. Bronfenbrenner has described the individual's environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set

of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:22). As we ask and answer questions about development at one level, this ecological framework reminds us to look at the next levels beyond and within the immediate setting to find the questions to ask and answer. For example, if we see husbands and wives in conflict over lost income we need to look outward to the economy that puts the husbands out of work and welcomes the wives into the labor force, and to the culture that defines a person's personal worth in monetary terms and blames the victims of economic dislocation for their own losses. In addition, we must look inward to the parent-child relationships that are affected by the changing roles and status of the parents and to temperamental characteristics of the individuals involved (c.f., Elder 1974). Further, we must look "across" to see how the several systems involved (family, workplace, and economy) adjust to new conditions over time. These swirling social forces are the stuff of which ecological analyses are made, namely interlocking social systems.

Bronfenbrenner's framework posits four general types of environmental systems, categorized by their proximity to and immediacy of effect on children. In the following paragraphs the four levels of environmental systems are described, their distinctive relationships to the developing child are outlined, and the crucial issue of the risks and opportunities these environments can represent for children is introduced (to be discussed in greater detail later).

Most immediate to the developing child are "microsystems." These are the joint product of physical settings and behavioral interactions in which individuals experience and create day-to-day reality. Microsystems for children are the places they inhabit, the people who are there with them, and the things they do together. At first, most children experience only one, quite small microsystem--the home--involving interaction with one person at a time in relatively simple activities such as feeding, bathing, and cuddling. As the

child develops, complexity normally increases; the child does more, with more people, in more places.

We know that the management of "survival needs" (eating, eliminating, etc.) is a critical task for the developing child's microsystem. Play also figures prominently in the process of the microsystem from the early months of life, and eventually is joined by work. Playing, working, and loving--what Freud called the essence of normal human existence--are the principal classes of activities that characterize the child's microsystem. However, the extent to which these activities take place, their quality, and their level of complexity are variables. An environmental microsystem presents a developmental risk to the child if it is characterized by a narrowly restricted range and level of activities; impoverished experience in playing, working and loving; or stunted reciprocity where genuine inter-action is lacking and either party seeks to avoid or be impervious to the other. Such neglect and rejection are developmentally dangerous (Polansky 1975; Rohner 1975). At the microsystem level, environmental opportunities for a child are provided by enduring, reciprocal, multi-faceted relationships that emphasize meeting survival needs, playing, working, and loving.

Mesosystems are the relationships between contexts, or microsystems, in which the developing person experiences reality. Important mesosystems for children include relationships between home and school, home and neighborhood, and school and neighborhood. The richness of mesosystems for the child is measured by the number of links, value consensus, and diversity between microsystems.

The school-home mesosystem is of great developmental significance to the child. In general, we would expect enhanced development where this mesosystem was "characterized by more frequent interaction between parents and school

personnel, a greater number of persons known in common by members of the two settings, and more frequent communications between home and school, more information in each setting about the other" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:218). However, we must add the proviso "that such interconnections not undermine the motivation and capacity of those persons who deal directly with the child to act on his behalf. This qualification gives negative weight to actions by school personnel that degrade parents or to parental demands that undermine the professional morale or effectiveness of the teacher" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:218). Those familiar with contemporary schooling know that both of these often are problems, particularly in the urban environment. In our diverse cities the quality of school-home mesosystems is variable. "Indigenous" paraprofessionals, home visits, and parent-teacher organizations all can contribute to enhancing the positive significance of school-home mesosystems.

The stronger, more positive, and more diverse the links between settings, the more powerful and beneficial the resulting mesosystem will be as an influence on the child's development. A rich range of mesosystems is a developmental opportunity, a poor set of mesosystems produces impaired development--particularly when home and school are involved. The quality of the child's mesosystems often is determined by events in systems where the child herself does not participate but where things happen that have a direct impact on her parents and other adults who do interact with her. Bronfenbrenner calls these settings "exosystems."

Exosystems are situations having a bearing on a child's development but in which the developing child does not herself actually play a direct role. The child's exosystems are those settings that have power over her life, yet in which she does not participate. They include the workplaces of parents (since most children do not have direct contact with them), and those centers

of power, such as school boards and planning commissions, that make decisions affecting the child's day-to-day life. These exosystems enhance development when they make life easier for parents and undermine development when they make life harder for parents. Thus, exosystem opportunity lies in situations when there are forces at work outside the family on behalf of children and their parents. When childrearing "has friends in high places" the opportunities for child development increase. The initiative taken by the politically powerful Kennedy family in advocating in the federal government on behalf of retarded children is an example, although institutions (offices and structures) in the exosystem are generally of greater importance.

One very important exosystem for urban children is the planning board. This group can play a large role in determining how well the interests of children are incorporated into decisions about land use. Given that a physical environment attractive to children may be unattractive by adult standards, this is vital (Michelson & Roberts 1979). For example, children may thrive on "empty lots," which they fill with games, and on the integration of commercial with residential properties, which adults see as economically disadvantageous. One student of children's physical needs notes that:

> ...planning has, over the years, stressed the separation of uses. I think that many planners, particularly those working in the city, realize the fallacy of that policy, and that diversity is, in fact, a strength rather than a weakness. (Barker 1979:118).

In exosystem terms, environmental risk comes about in two ways. The first is when parents or other significant adults in a child's life are affected in a way that impoverishes their behavior in the child's microsystem. For example, Kohn (1977) found that when parents work in settings that demand conformity rather than self-direction, they reflect this orientation in their

childrearing, thus stifling important aspects of the child's development. Other examples include elements of a parent's working experience that result in an impoverishment of family life, such as long or inflexible hours, traveling, or stress. The second way risk flows from the exosystem is when decisions are made in those settings that adversely affect the child or treat her unfairly. For example, when the school board suspends extra-curricular programs in the child's school or the planning commission runs a highway through the child's neighborhood, they jeopardize the child's development. Thus, exosystem risk comes when the child lacks effective advocates in decision-making bodies. Albee (1979) has gone so far as to identify powerlessness as the primary factor leading to impaired development and psychopathology. It certainly plays a large role in determining the fate of groups of children, and may even be very important when considering individual cases--such as whether or not a youth's parents have the "pull" to get her a "second chance" when she gets into trouble at school or with the police. Risk at the exosystem level is often a political matter.

Meso- and exosystems are embedded in the broad ideological and institutional patterns of a particular culture or subculture--how the ecological pieces fit together. These patterns are the macrosystem--the "blueprints" for that culture's ecology of human development. These blueprints reflect a people's shared assumptions about "how things should be done." A macrosystem is the norms about how development proceeds and the appropriate nature and structure of micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Conventional cultural and ethnic labels (e.g., Latin, Italian, Indian) suggest unique clusters of ideological and behavioral patterns. Beyond these labels, however, these ideologies and behaviors need to be operationalized and their implications for child development examined. In terms of their consequences for parents and children, we need to know, for

example, how similar are the processes of responding to economic crisis in two "different" cultures? How does the school-home mesosystem work in two "different" ethnic groups? Having different labels does not mean that we necessarily have different macrosystems. For example, there is relatively little difference among ethnic groups in America in how they define child abuse (Giovanonni & Becerra 1979).

Environmental opportunity in macrosystem terms is a pro-child ideology. For example, a society's assumption that families stricken by economic or medical tragedy have a right to public support represents macrosystem opportunity. A strong political base of support for child services is another manifestation of macrosystem opportunity.

What is environmental risk when it comes to macrosystems? It is an ideology or cultural alignment that threatens to impoverish children's microsystems and mesosystems, and sets exosystems against them. It can be a national economic policy that tolerates or even increases the chances of economic dislocations and poverty for families with young children. It can be institutionalized support for high levels of geographic mobility that disrupts neighborhood and school connections and the social network of parents. It can be a pattern of non-support for parents that tolerates or even aggravates intense conflicts between the roles of worker and parent. It can be patterns of racist, sexist, or other values that demean large numbers of parents, thereby undermining the psychological security of their children and threatening each child's self-esteem. In general, macrosystem risk is any social pattern or societal event that impoverishes the ability and willingness of adults to care for children and children to learn from adults.

To recapitulate, environmental influences on the child's development originate from systems at all four levels in the human ecology of the child.

Systems at each level have distinctive characteristics that are relevant to a child's development, and therefore different criteria are appropriate for assessing the impacts of each level on the child. Further, these effects may be either positive or negative--either opportunities or risks.

And, while the family microsystem is usually the most important system for a child, the overall impact of the environment emerges from the dynamic balance among all influences over time. The importance of and interactions among the various environmental systems is expressed well by deLone (1979:158-159).

> To the large developmental contexts of class and caste one must add more intimate ones of which school, neighborhood, and family are clearly among the most important. For young children, especially, it is through these intimate contexts that contact with the broader dimensions of class, race, and the social and economic order is made. Again, it is important to stress that all these smaller contexts and the larger ones surrounding them interact and affect each other. The nature of a society at a given time shapes the structure of social classes; social class influences the nature of family life and experience; racial membership influences likely occupation; through income, occupation helps determine neighborhood. Neighborhood determines where one goes to school, and not only is family background associated with how a child does in school, but it may influence how the school treats a child and the ability of the child and family to manipulate the institutional ropes of a school. Schooling in turn influences subsequent social class standing, and to some extent the skills that the population as a whole develops influence the contours of economic activity, and so on in a series of permutations, combinations, and feedback loops. In the midst of this complex, breathing organism called social structure is the child.

Much as we might like to have a set of universal and absolute criteria for evaluating social environments, we have very few that even approximate universality and absoluteness. Even the general processes of cognitive development described by Piaget, Kohlberg and others have very significant culture-specific overtones (cf., Cole & Scribner 1970). Those criteria that come close to being universal--e.g., rejection as a negative influence--are interpreted and expressed through local customs. Further, the specifics of environmental risk and opportunity are culturally and historically conditioned. The factors that jeopardize and enhance development shift (Baumrind 1980), and most evaluative criteria have a cultural and a historical component. Thus, in one time and context the predominant microsystem issue may be adequate family size because of widespread single parenthood without compensating involvement of adults outside the nuclear family. At other times and in other settings, the issue may be too many children, closely spaced, that overwhelm even two-parent families.

With this in mind we can attempt a brief cataloging of environmental risk and opportunity in the current American context. We do this by identifying important dimensions at each system level, with an eye toward how children can profit from or be harmed by these forces.

From the previous discussion, the following criteria by which to assess environmental risks and opportunities can be identified.

Microsystem:

- size - When there are too few participants to sustain necessary activities the risk for a "stunted" microsystem is real. Public concern for the well-being of children in isolated single-parent households reflects this (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). Extended families and augmented households are an opportunity for the child, but when there are too

many, closely spaced children caregivers may be overwhelmed (Lieberman 1970).

. balance of power - When the microsystem is deficient in genuinely reciprocal interaction (give and take that responds, and responds contingently to positive and negative behavior), the child's development is jeopardized. Parents and others must maintain a balance of power in which they are responsive to the child but are not dictated to by the child. Such a balanced family is an opportunity for enhancing development. Both authoritarian and permissive patterns are insufficient (Baumrind 1980).

. emotional climate - When the child is rejected in the microsystem, developmental risk increases. A negative emotional climate undermines self-esteem, makes the child vulnerable to being easily discouraged by everyday problems, and turns the child away from competent and satisfying participation in the world (Rohmer 1975). Acceptance is a positive influence on development and opportunity (Coopersmith 1967).

Mesosystem:

. social integration - When there are few links between the child's microsystems the power of each is diminished. When there are many, then power is increased and developmental opportunity abounds. However, when there is no diversity and no independent spheres of activity development is suppressed (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Pluralism--some conflict and diversity with consensus on basic ground rules--is healthy and stimulates development (Garbarino & Bronfenbrenner 1976). Consensus enhances development by providing an opportunity to make developmental use of inevitable contrasts and comparisons

between microsystems. Pluralism (diversity within basic consensus on ground rules) is psychologically healthy.

Exosystem

. support for the parental role - When a parent's ability to participate productively in the family as a microsystem is undermined by experiences outside the home (e.g., in the world of work), development is jeopardized. When the parent is bolstered the child benefits.

. political power for the interests of parents - When some parents are not represented in settings where people in institutional roles (e.g., government) make decisions that affect the well-being of their children, those children are at risk. When children have friends in positions of power, development prospers. Where some children have special access that deprives others of opportunity the conflict of individual and group interests is an issue.

Macrosystem:

. child centeredness - When a culture contains values that denigrate the importance and dignity of children and childrearing, it tends to produce behavioral settings that work against the child's development. When it values children highly it provides for them and children have more opportunities for development.

. cultural orientation - When values that dehumanize people permeate a society, children are harmed. When violence, racism, individualistic competition, and authoritarianism are dominant cultural themes they threaten the welfare of children. When cooperation and egalitarianism predominate, children benefit; they have better access to people and institutions that promote growth.

III. The Neighborhood: An Ecological Niche for Families

In an essay on "Space: An Ecological Variable in Social Work Practice," Germain (1978:522) concluded that:

> Where the environment is supportive, creative adaptation and growth occur. Where the environment is nonprotective or depriving, stress is created and growth and adaptive functioning may be impeded.

This emphasis on environmental quality is consonant with our understanding of human development as proceeding from the interaction of the personal and the social.

While environmental risk to child development is found in various forms originating from various levels in the child's social ecology, the fundamental threat to children is impoverishment: "to deprive of strength, richness or fertility by depleting or draining of something essential," according to Webster. The National Academy of Sciences reached this conclusion in its report Toward a National Policy for Children and Families (1976), pinpointing the stressfulness for families of struggling to make ends meet. The Carnegie Foundation report All Our Children echoes this theme (Kenniston, 1977), finding inadequate income as the root problem affecting families. Research linking social indicators to family survey data makes the same point (Kogan, Smith & Jenkins 1977), as does research showing a causal connection between cycles of unemployment and child abuse (Steinberg, Catalano, & Dooley in press).

Impoverishment--very much a social rather than simply a financial concept--places the child's development in jeopardy. Economic deprivation is a significant deleterious influence, of course, but it is the risk of social impoverishment that concerns us here. Social impoverishment is denuding the child's life of supportive relationships and protective behaviors. It stands in somber contrast to social enrichment, in which the child is enmeshed in an

elaborate web of caring that can compensate for individual failings. The social protection that is provided by supportive, reciprocal networks was described well by Howard when she said of her strong family:

> But we are numerous enough and connected enough not to let anyone's worst prevail for long. For any given poison, our pooled resources can come up with an antidote. (Howard.1978:60).

The level of material resources of a family affects the importance of its social resources. The well-off have financial resources with which to purchase access to formal, institutionalized social resources on behalf of themselves and their children (Seeley 1956). Poor families, lacking in material resources, rely more heavily on their informal social resources for encouragement, sustainment, and feedback.

Enriched or impoverished conditions of life for children and their families are reflected in the "ecological niches" in which families operate, and neighborhoods are one of the principal niches where one finds the conditions of life that either collaborate to bolster parents or conspire to compound their deficiencies and vulnerabilities. Students of urban life generally agree that the cutting edge of the quality issue in urban settings, at least for families with young children, is the social and physical character of the neighborhood as an environmental unit (cf. Jacobs 1961). This theme emerged in a series of discussions of "the child in the city" sponsored by the University of Toronto's project investigating the interface of urban environments and urban children. As one participant put it, "I believe we ought to be learning how neighborhoods, in a metropolitan context, can serve families and children" (Aldrich 1979:88). We agree, and believe that an increasingly important determinant of the success of urban schools will be their commitment to supporting and collaborating with strong and healthy neighborhoods.

Like many other important and intuitively appealing concepts, "neighborhood" is elusive (cf. Warren 1980), and the community studies field has not reached agreement on how to identify one. For urban dwellers, the notion of neighborhood generally includes the concept of "walking distance." Such a basis of neighborhood is used by Morris and Hess (1975:6).

> What is the neighborhood? It is place and it is people. It has no defined size or even scale, although common sense limits do appear throughout history. The homeliest tests for neighborhood would include the fact that a person can easily walk its boundaries. It is not so large that going from one side to another requires special effort. Its physical size means that it is or can be familiar turf for everyone in it.

The search for an acceptable definition of neighborhood will continue. Clearly, both geographical and social concerns must be reflected in whatever definition is used. Aside from the problem of a definition is the issue of neighborhood quality and the features that affect the quality of the neighborhood as an ecological niche for families. Kromkowski highlights some essential sources and indicators of neighborhood character. In so doing, he presents criteria with which to evaluate the quality of the neighborhood as a social environment.

> The organic life of a neighborhood, created by the persons who live in a particular geographic area, is always a fragile reality. A neighborhood's character is determined by a host of factors, but most significantly by the kinds of relationships that neighbors have with each other. A neighborhood is not a sovereign power--it can rarely write its own agenda. Although neighborhoods differ in a host of ways, a healthy neighborhood has pride in the neighborhood, care of homes, security for children, and respect for each other. (Kromkowski 1976:228).

The importance of the neighborhood to family life varies as a function of family economic resources (cf., Lewis 1978; Smith 1976). Rich people who are freer to inhabit a neighborhood of their own choosing can better "afford" a weak or disorganized neighborhood than can poor people, who are more dependent on informal social resources within their ecological niche. Economically impoverished families, of course, are more likely to live in neighborhoods consisting primarily of other impoverished and marginal families. In some of these neighborhoods, active social networks supplement family resources in crucial and creative ways. An excellent study of such social richness amidst economic impoverishment is Stack's observation (1974) of the resiliant support networks operating in a poverty-stricken neighborhood and the elaborate rules and protocols for network functioning. The severity of their economic impoverishment was such that, over the long term, few of the people in her study could have maintained living quarters and avoided periodic starvation if required to exist in social isolation. It was the strength and flexibility of their active social networks that provided those people with some reasonable assurance of survival. The extreme neediness of the participants often overtaxed the networks, but the alternative was social and personal disaster. And in this socially enriched setting, children were largely protected from the stresses of the environment and parental crises and insufficiencies.

In other poor neighborhoods, individuals and families exist in isolation from each other, and the deprivation of economic impoverishment is compounded by the desolation of social impoverishment. Personal vulnerability here usually is compounded by a lack of contact with potent family support systems, a disinclination to seek help in solving problems, a lack of involvement in reciprocal helping relationships, and the other accoutrements of social isolation (Garbarino 1977; Garbarino & Sherman 1980; Wolock & Horowitz 1978). Our

ecological perspective suggests that special concern is warranted for these economically impoverished families c[illegible]ed in socially impoverished places--high-risk families in high-risk neig[illegible]oods.

Among the many family issues [illegible]t can be considered from a neighborhood perspective is the broad problem of child maltreatment. Research findings on neighborhood correlates of child maltreatment lend credence to the proposition that neighborhood quality has important implications for the quality of life among financially distressed families. We report this research to illustrate one form of microsystem risk to child development.

When Garbarino and Crouter (1978) compared neighborhoods with high rates of reported child maltreatment to neighborhoods having low rates, they found that a substantial proportion (about 50%) of the variation in rates of child maltreatment among 93 neighborhoods could be accounted for by the proportion of families characterized by inadequate income, single parenthood, and at the same time, they noted that there were differences in rates of child maltreatment among areas with the same concentrations of low income, single parenthood, and transience. In some areas, termed "high-risk" areas, the actual rate of child maltreatment substantially exceeded the rate that would be predicted from their socioeconomic and demographic profiles. Other "low-risk" ones had rates substantially lower than socioeconomic and demographic characteristics would predict.

Garbarino and Sherman (1980) compared pairs of socioeconomically and demographically matched high- and low-risk neighborhoods. They found that high-risk areas were characterized by low levels of neighborly exchange, residential instability, restricted interaction among children, deteriorating housing, poor relations with institutions such as schools, and a pervasive pattern of social stress (Garbarino & Sherman 1980).

Garbarino and Sherman (1980) conducted interviews with matched samples of parents and with local "observers" in one high-risk and one low-risk area to discover how people perceive high- vs. low-risk neighborhoods. Although the areas were matched roughly on income, single parenthood, working mothers, and transience, the high-risk neighborhood was seen as a less supportive environment for family life both by "observers" (e.g., parish priests, visiting nurses, educators, and policemen), and by "participants" (parents living in the area). In well-matched samples of parents randomly selected from the two neighborhoods, those in the high-risk area had more stresses, less support, less adequate child care, and a less positive view of family and neighborhood life (Garbarino & Sherman 1980). Tables I-IV summarize these data.

Insert Tables I-IV About Here

Table 1 reports selected comments from the "observers." A test of the evaluations contained in a random sample of comments (using raters unaware of the purpose or identity of the neighborhoods) revealed a significantly more positive view of the low-risk area (Garbarino & Sherman 1980).

Table II presents selected items from an extensive interview with mothers in each area. Mothers in the low-risk area report significantly more people taking an interest in their child and are more likely to be home to greet children returning from school. In general, mothers in the low-risk area make fewer demands on the informal support system and see themselves as having more resources to call upon in that informal support system.

Table III shows significantly higher levels of social stress among the high-risk mothers, with more than twice as many being in the moderate or major crisis category.

Table IV reports ratings made by mothers of selected aspects of family life. Virtually all the comparisons present a more positive picture of life in the low-risk neighborhood. Significant differences favor the low-risk area in the availability of child care, in the neighborhood as a place to rear children, and in the child as being easy to raise.

Having explored the ecological niche for children in terms of the neighborhood we can assert that one of the basic dimensions along which to classify both cities and schools is the degree to which they are "neighborhood-oriented." We mean this in two senses. First, when we empirically assess the residential environments within a city do we find a preponderance of strong, family-oriented neighborhoods? Or, do we find weak and hostile residential districts? Second, when we look at institutional policies and practices, do we find a serious commitment to the interests of neighborhoods or a disregard for the needs of neighborhoods as ecological niches for families? In assessing opportunity and risk in urban environments we must attend to this two-fold meaning of neighborhood orientation, and we will do so as a way of setting the issues for urban educators.

IV. Opportunities and Risks for Children in Urban Environments

The criteria for assessing opportunity and risk in urban environments boil down to these:*

- The family setting: is it socially and economically enriched or impoverished?
- The neighborhood setting: is it strong and supportive or weak and unsupportive?
- The community context: is it economically strong, pro-neighborhood and pro-family or is it economically weak, anti-neighborhood and anti-family in its structure and day-to-day operations?

*These issues are presented schematically in Appendix A.

With these issues in mind we can look directly at the urban environment as a network of forces affecting children.

The traditional urban-rural dichotomy became obsolete in the period following World War II. The rise of the automotive society gave birth to new residential forms that have altered the foundations of both urban and rural life. The automobile and the cheap-energy economy it represented made possible new and attractive suburban, rural, and urban patterns that by their very existence undermined the older forms (cf. Kowinski 1980; Wynne 1977). However, the basic need of children and parents for enduring support systems has not diminished. If anything, the greater complexity and challenge of the contemporary socioeconomic order ("modern life") has increased the importance of these support system relationships. Moreover, whether an environment is urban, rural, or suburban, children need a geographic expression of the human microcosm. They must have some physical manifestation and their cognitive maps must be anchored in some physical reality (Milgram 1977). Thus, urban children and parents continue to need their neighborhoods, rural families their villages, and suburban children and adults their small towns.

"My own speculation, at this point, is that a complete community of around 5000 people allows a child to get a rather good idea of what community relations are all about" (Aldrich 1979:87). Most investigators are in agreement that wherever they live, children do best when they are set within a community microcosm that offers stable opportunities to observe and practice basic human roles (Aldrich 1979). "Properly put together, a neighborhood provides children ... some sense of familiarity and protection" (Schorr 1979:132).

These conclusions are buttressed by the limited available research. Investigators report that children in a small town have more knowledge of people and roles than do urban children living in a non-neighborhood, while

those in a strong urban neighborhood stand somewhere in between the town and city (Gump & Adelberg 1978). The small town tends to be "underpeopled" in that it has a low ratio of people to settings. As a community it has the full range of community activities to maintain. The urban neighborhood is not a community; it can rely on the larger city for many functions. People thus are drawn away from it and children see less of life's basic social functions. The strong urban neighborhood somewhat approximates the small town. The weak urban neighborhood has so little going on that it impoverishes the social experience and knowledge of children. In this the weak neighborhood parallels the large school--it discourages productive social experience, particularly for the child whose personal resources are marginal.

Just as the community context of the child's immediate setting is important in determining the richness of the child's social experience, so is the stability of that setting and context. We know from informal observation that neighborhoods are hard to transplant. Urban renewal projects must be wary of disturbing the "natural" social systems of the area. Indeed, when disaster strikes a community (e.g., flood or tornado) the biggest problem is how to recreate the social landscape (Nuttal 1980; cf., Erikson 1976). When the disaster results from social policy--e.g., highway or dam development requiring relocation--the same issues obtain. Warner (1968), for instance, reported that when a small town was relocated because of a dam project, only one quarter of the original behavior settings survived the move. As Devereaux (1977) has demonstrated in his critique of ecological psychology, community changes are probably the principal forces affecting the quantity and quality of behavioral settings. We must see the urban child's environment from the perspective of changing community structure--changes often wrought by technological developments working in conjunction with economic forces.

Life in small towns remains much as it was, except that some diluting of the small town experience probably has resulted from the greater mobility of the automotive era. The social isolation imposed by long distances between residences has been largely ameliorated. On the other hand, the economic and cultural integrity of villages has been weakened as people have shifted working and consuming patterns towards regional towns and cities. The net effect on rural children probably has been to broaden their social field while somewhat reducing its depth. Rural life is likely to add experiences and challenges to children's lives that go beyond the personal resources of families. The potential for intrinsically challenging and valuable activity (e.g., real work) is great. Overall, the many "free" things in rural life and the relatively unsophisticated demands it places on children and adults seem to reduce the social risk associated with economic impoverishment. Worldwide, rural settings are much less cash-intensive than are urban settings. They stand in stark contrast to suburban settings.

The automotive era has had its clearest and most profound effects on suburban living. Wynne (1977) distinguishes between "old" and "new" suburbs. The former are small towns on the periphery of a city having railroad stations (for commuting) as focal points. The latter are bedroom communities without a primary economy that are dependent upon automobile-based commuting. In 1956, about 80% of America's suburbs were of the old type. The figure for 1980 is about 45%. The new suburbs seem to add little to a family's personal resources for childrearing and may in fact detract, because they lack enough community activities (formal and informal) to offer children a socially rich and varied existence. These "post-industrial" suburbs are technology intensive and often socially deficient (Wynne, 1977). Rural and suburban communities are the "comparison groups" for looking at urban environments.

The automotive era's main effects on cities have been movement away from the core of old cities to newer cities and suburbs and increased noise and accident hazards (Michelson & Roberts 1979). This has worked against older neighborhoods, which function somewhat like small towns (Gump & Adelberg 1978). It has the effect of diminishing the social resources of children by undermining their support systems in the day-to-day functioning of the ecological niche. Furthermore, the erosion of the urban tax base and increasing concentration of high-risk populations have jeopardized schools, governments, businesses, and neighborhoods. Where this has happened, it has weakened the natural advantages of the city, namely the opportunity for intensive social diversity. We assume these problems affect some children more than others, and are of greatest concern for children otherwise at social risk.

With this brief look at changes in rural, suburban, and urban life as background we can proceed with a more formal listing of our concerns and hopes for the effects of urban environments on the development of children. These concerns derive from our belief that meso- and exosystems supporting children often are weak in urban settings. This weakness of the urban "infrastructure" places the urban child's microsystems under great pressure and the stress may be too much for some of these microsystems to bear. This imbalance of stress and support is the essence of the contemporary "urban crisis" as it affects children. For our special purposes here, the most relevant form of macrosystem risk for urban children is political insensitivity to the needs and interests of urban communities as environments for children and families. An "anti-city" ideology ultimately hurts children who live in urban environments. The significance of urban environments for children can be identified in the effects of urban trends on families, neighborhoods, and schools.

Families: Urban environments tend to make families less of an economic and social unit. There are few productive roles for families, and they serve mainly as consumption units and economic transfer units. Urban environments tend to decrease overlapping participation of family members outside the home because of specialization and diversity. A related phenomenon is weakening of the home-work relationship as distance (geographic and social) between workplace and home increases, certainly one of the most important costs of the mobile society.

The decline in the urban family as an economic and social unit threatens the competence of children. They have less direct experience with basic economic roles and probably have less overall contact with the world of work. We assume this undermines vocational socialization (Borow 1966).

Neighborhoods: Urban environments now are less likely to function as villages and small towns because of declining ethnic identification, urban renewal programs, and greater opportunities and pressures for mobility (Jacobs 1961). Political reform that undermines patronage-based ward organization probably has a similar effect.

Decline in the neighborhood orientation of cities deprives children of a powerful arena in which to develop and utilize social resources. The broad but shallow interaction patterns documented by Gump and Adelberg (1978) are testimony to this. Where neighborhoods are weakened, one of the greatest opportunities of urban life for children is jeopardized, namely the chance to know and be known in a personalistic way outside the home. This is a serious threat.

When urban environments are not neighborhood-oriented they pose the threat of alienation and depersonalization. The child's "ecological niche" is typically quite small geographically. It extends to the limits of the child's

walking distance. When this area represents a strong neighborhood it presses towards enduring and personalitic relationships with neighborhing children and adults in multiple contexts--commercial, religious, recreational, and political. This strengthens the child's development by providing social resources, challenging and rewarding experiences, and a strong identity. When the child's ecological niche is not neighborhood-oriented it presses toward transitory, impersonal, and narrow relationships that diminish rather than enhance the child's development. What is more, the strength and character of the neighborhood also press on the child's parents. This affects their ability to care for the child.

Schools: Urban environments tend to produce both specialization and bigness in schools. The large enrollments per building conspire with the trends toward academic marginality among students (because of historically new demands for school attendance) to produce ungovernable schools (a central problem for urban education) and contribute to the "urban crisis" (Garbarino 1980).

Educational specialization and bigness presents an opportunity for heightened academic development for some children, but is a threat to many others. Big schools threaten academically marginal students and contribute to the breakdown of civility. They thus are a threat to basic citizenship.

Urban environments contain the seeds of destruction for some children. For others they stimulate heightened creativity and social competence. For still others they are all but irrelevant in determining the child's developmental trajectory. The size of the urban community permits and even presses toward expanding one's primary social environment beyond the neighborhood, particularly for adolescents (Friendly, Levine & Hagarty 1979).

VI. Issues for Educators

> When our social life was simple and traditional moral agencies were effective, the school could be a place where children were trained to acquire and use the linguistic tools needed in the personal acquisition of knowledge. But with home, and church and neighborhood life weakening, the school has an additional business upon its back. It becomes one of the chief moral teachers of the nation. So from petty alphabetic business we come into a larger undertaking. There is then the need that the school shall train the total personality of a pupil for the total obligation of social life....The school of the future will perform an educational function as broad as human life itself....It is inevitably destined by force of surrounding circumstances to become the center of community life... (Suzzallo, "The School of Tomorrow":196)

Suzzallo wrote these words in 1911! The issues for educators are as clear now as they were then. And, they are just as difficult, if not more so.

Schools play complex roles in the lives of urban children. They function as microsystems, of course, but their actual and potential role goes beyond that of direct socializing and instructing in the classroom. They are part of the school-home mesosystem (not to mention the school-neighborhood and school-church mesosystems, to name but two of what potentially are many). They also can assume an active stance vis a vis the child's exosystems--especially work and government--if they adopt a child advocate role. Thus, the primary issue for educators is: "what responsibility do we assume for children beyond instructing them in the classroom?" This is the challenge Suzzallo described half a century ago. Figure 1 outlines this challenge.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 sets up the school as a center for multiple interventions, but calls for shift of moral, political and economic resources toward the school. Such a shift would require the support of local business, industry, government and the rest of the community infrastructure. The current problems faced by schools often seem overwhelming, and many balk at the idea of schools being asked to take on additional responsibilities. Many educators feel they are struggling (often in vain) to teach "the basics," let alone take on the job of community developers.

Nonetheless, the school has become the most nearly universal institution in the life of American children. This seems inescapable. We seem to be experiencing a culture lag, in which recognition of and support for the new role of the school as community center (in an active sense) lags behind the reality. The school is obviously a primary microsystem for children. It obviously is (or at least, should be) part of a home-school mesosystem. It can be part of a very important neighborhood-school mesosystem, as well as workplace-school and human service agency-school mesosystems. It depends upon exosystems of all sorts for support, and its ultimate efficacy is inextricably bound up in the macrosystem that defines the conditions of childhood.

Naturally, the specific content of these risks and opportunities varies from community to community and from school to school. However, the human ecology framework points us to five basic issues for urban educators: (1) In the microsystem of the home: what can a school do to protect children at-risk and encourage those "at-opportunity?" (2) In the home-neighborhood mesosystem and neighborhood exosystem: what can a school do to compensate for weaknesses in neighborhoods and capitalize on their strengths? (3) In the school-home mesosystem: what can a school do to bolster sagging families and positively reinforce the activities of exemplary families? (4) In the work exosystem:

what can schools do to help employers and public officials recognize and live up to their responsibility to "do no harm" with respect to neighborhoods and families, and even open themselves up to be used as a resource for facilitating the development of exceptional children? Finally, (5) In the educational microsystem: what can a school do to provide a model of responsible and nurturant caregiving?

The issues facing urban environments and their children sometimes break out into acute crises, as when schools close down in a budgetary dispute or when the streets become too dangerous to play in. The long-term, chronic problems are of equal or greater significance, however. The battle to create and maintain social quality for children in the urban environment is a perenial struggle.

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Appendix A

Outcome for Children in Contrasting Family and Neighborhood Environments

Family Resources		Neighborhood Characteristics (Changing partly as a function of community factors pro- or anti-neighborhood)	
		Strong-Supportive	Weak-Unsupportive
Social	Economic		
Rich	Adequate	excellent personal competence, social resources and citizenship	good personal competence, marginal social resources, adequate citizenship
	Impoverished	adequate personal competence, good social resources adequate citizenship	adequate personal competence, marginal social resources, marginal citizenship
Impoverished	Adequate	marginal personal competence, adequate social resources, marginal citizenship	marginal personal competence, inadequate social resources, inadequate citizenship
	Impoverished	inadequate personal competence, adequate social resources, marginal citizenship	inadequate personal competence, social resources and citizenship

Figure 1

The Challenge of Urban Environments for Urban Educators

	TARGETS:				
	Child	Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macro-System
ing	Schools can provide protective services for children at special risk for alienation	Schools can run parent support groups for those with special needs--e.g., single parents, reconstituted families, etc.	School can seek stronger ties with home to give educators access to information about children and their families that is context-specific and that draws upon indigenous value systems	School can intervene on behalf of children when policies and practices of employers and local government threaten families and neighborhoods	

Figure 1 Continued

	TARGETS:				
	Child	Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macro-System
g unities	Schools can identify children who can benefit from special cultural resources of the city and steer them to those resources e.g., music and art	Schools can recognize and encourage families that are particularly successful	School can seek allies for school in natural social environment of child if school is "neighborhood center"	School can seek support of local business, industry and government in supporting special programs for children--e.g., vocational placement	

TABLE I: Profiles of Social Life in Two Neighborhoods Based on Expert Informants: Selected Comments and Observations

1. Neighborhood Public Image

Low-risk "That's one of the most sedate areas." (Police officer)

"That's a good quick area." (Postman)

High-risk "That's a little less tranquil. The bars are just pits. The crowd is hoodlums, Hells Angels and cowboys." (Police officer)

"There's a lot of 'night activity' there." (Visiting nurse)

2. Neighborhood Appearances, Housing, Public Notices

Low-risk "The housing, mainly single family homes, is kept up well. Home-improvement activities apparent. Empty lots are usually mowed, cared for, and look as though they are used as play areas." (observation)

High-risk "There is a dichotomy in the neighborhood. There is a significant number of rather stable, well-put together families that live in their own homes. Then there is the other group of people (and they comprise about half of the students) who are living in apartments or who rent broken-down homes. They kind of move in and out of the neighborhood. There are a number of families where we'll have the kids for three or four months, they will leave and then we'll have them again." (Principal of an elementary school)

4. Neighborhood Change or Stability

Low-risk "I see it as a stable neighborhood. People have roots in the neighborhood. It's not a very mobile place." (Visiting nurse)

High-risk "The parents cling to this school as a sign of hope. The neighborhood is facing a lot of change and deterioration...

Table I (continued)

They probably felt threatened by the construction of the Interstate through the neighborhood... Just this year we've had several new cases of loiterers, and some families report burglaries where they have never happened before... The parish bought up a building opposite the school which had been recently turned into a rough place." (Principal of a parochial school)

5. Neighborhood Lifestyle and Quality

Low-risk "We have very few cases there, only six families with children." (Visiting nurse)

High-risk "That's an area that needs plenty of scrutiny as far as quality of life." (Director of a neighborhood community center)

"There's stealing from each other." (Visiting nurse)

"That's one of our heaviest caseloads, both as number of families and as problems within each family. Alcoholism is quite a big problem... There are mental health problems, a very high death rate, a high birth rate to unmarried mothers, poor nutrition... medical knowledge is only of emergency care... many of the girls are early school drop outs." (Visiting nurse)

6. Child Abuse and Neglect

Low-risk "There used to be a number of cases there, but now it will be real hard to find one." (Child protective services worker)

"I would say that child abuse and neglect is not as much a problem in the area as in others. Most of the referrals are for neglect--about 80%." (Visiting nurse)

High-risk "There are probably a significant number of 5-8 year olds at school who got themselves up this morning. They may or may not have been at their own homes, but they got themselves to school and took care of their needs." (Elementary school principal)

Table I (continued)

"There were probably about six to eight suspected cases of physical abuse last year. We see neglect cases maybe 25 to 30 times a year at X school, and as high as 50 times in Y school." (Elementary school principal)

7. Neighborhood Involvement of Families

Low-risk "Z school has an active, ongoing Girl Scout troop." (Girl Scout leader)

High-risk "X and Y schools are just beginning to be organized by our field workers." (Girl Scout leader)

"About 35% of the parents are active with the school. On a scale from +3 to -3 I'd rate the level of activism as 0." (Principal of parochial school)

"We have the least amount of input from them compared to other centers... we're not as close to that neighborhood. Nobody is." (Director of community center)

8. Social Relations-Informal Supports

Low-risk "These women often rely on the help available to them through their families. One client of mine lives next door to her mother-in-law whom she turns to for help." (Visiting nurse)

High-risk "The family unit is not real strong here." (Parochial school principal)

"The women sometimes form a buddy system, but there is not a lot of interlinking between them... they don't know very many people. They don't associate very much. They don't have a lot of family supports. They may be on bad terms with the family. This area is sometimes a hide-out place for them ... there are a lot of teenage girls with their babies who want to get away from their families downtown." (Visiting nurse)

TABLE II: The Child's Social Resources

	HIGH RISK	LOW RISK
"Latchkey" - Caregivers Present When Child Returns Home from School	n = 16	n = 21
No one	13%	0%
Parents	25%	86%
Other	62%	14%
Number of People in the Child's Social Network (People who take an interest in the child's welfare	4.1	5.3*

*p < .05

These data come from the parental interviews we conducted. Among many such items, they show that children in the low-risk area have both more caregiving by their parents (fewer latch-key and babysitting arrangements) and more people taking an interest in their welfare despite the fact that the two samples of families contained an equal number of working and single parents.

TABLE III: "Stresses": Demands for Social Readjustment (Holmes-Rahe Scale)

	NEIGHBORHOODS	
	HIGH RISK	LOW RISK
Mean Scores:	258.42	165.62*
Distribution of scores:		
0-149: no crisis	37%	74%
150-199: mild crisis	5%	5%
200-299: moderate crisis	21%	15%
300+: major crisis	37%	6%

*$p < .05$

These data are based on the Holmes-Rahe scale, a checklist of events requiring social readjustment. While subject to a number of limitations, the scale does provide a gross indication of the "uproar" and "stress" in a family's life. What is more, other investigators (Justice & Duncan 1976) found an association between this score and child abuse. Parents in the low-risk area neighborhood are two and a half times more likely to be in the "no crisis" range than are parents in the high-risk neighborhood.

TABLE IV: Maternal Ratings of Family Stresses and Supports

	NEIGHBORHOODS	
	HIGH RISK	LOW RISK
RATINGS: -5 = very negative to +5 = very positive		
Finances	.09	.21
Family Health	2.00	1.66
Work Situation	2.23	1.91
Chances to Enjoy Recreation	.96	1.66
Child-Care: Availability	2.19	3.04*
Child-Care: Quality	3.00	2.86
Neighbors-Friendliness	2.90	3.25
Neighborhood as Place to Raise Children	.09	1.66*
Help as Parent:		
Family	.89	1.83
Friends	1.55	1.47
Neighbors	.437	1.14*
Professionals	1.32	2.09
East/Difficulty Raising Child	2.43	1.29*
(note: +5 = difficult, -5 = easy)		
Self-Rating as Parent	1.45	1.83

*$p < .05$

These data come from the parental interview. Each rating concludes a section in which the parent has responded to several open-ended questions about family life. Note that the items with the biggest (and statistically significant) differences include two focusing directly on the neighborhood.