A good place to raise your children? The diversity of parents' neighbourhood perceptions and parenting practices in a low-income, multi-ethnic neighbourhood
A case study in Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

A considerable number of researchers have now recognised the importance of parental strategies in mediating or moderating neighbourhood effects on children. Their studies, however, provide little insight into the diversity of the neighbourhood perceptions, the role of the involvement or non-involvement of both parents and children in local social networks, and how these result in different local parenting cultures. To provide insight into these issues, we conducted in-depth interviews with 21 parents and 26 youths (13–18 years) living in a low-income, multi-ethnic district of Rotterdam. We found that parents living under similar neighbourhood conditions had diverse views about their neighbourhoods as places for their children to grow up in, ranging from negative to mostly positive. This is mostly related to their involvement in neighbourhood social networks and the extent to which these networks form a source of social capital. We distinguished three local parenting cultures: (1) protective parenting, which was characterised by little local involvement, higher levels of fear and more restrictions on children's independent mobility; (2) similarity seeking, which was based on high levels of local involvement, informal social control in the community and relatively high levels of autonomy of the children; and (3) selective parenting, which was based on mixed opinions about the neighbourhood, which resulted in being selective about local involvement, relying on social capital resources partly inside and partly outside the neighbourhood.

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1. Introduction

Several decades of research have shown that the neighbourhood a young person grows up in has an effect on his or her social outcomes. Studies have found that growing up in a deprived neighbourhood leads to a higher risk of victimisation, more behavioural problems, low levels of education and low aspirations (Kauppinen, 2007; Kintrea et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2014; Sykes and Musterd, 2010; White and Green, 2011). In this line of research, parenting has emerged as a critical mediating or moderating agent: the social outcomes of youths are a result of successful or less successful parenting styles and strategies. It is important to realise in this context that parents, like their children, are embedded in different neighbourhood settings. Parents who raise children in deprived, high-risk neighbourhoods can face numerous challenges and obstacles that parents who live in less deprived neighbourhoods do not have to deal with, such as crime, a lack of safety, negative peer pressure and a lack of good quality institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that a large number of studies have shown that neighbourhood deprivation affects many aspects of family functioning, including parents' approaches to parenting (Roosa et al., 2003; Simons et al., 1996).

This existing work, however, has an important shortcoming. Many researchers focused on objective neighbourhood indicators such as income, ethnic composition or crime rates to explain parenting strategies in deprived neighbourhoods (Brody et al., 2001; Dahl et al., 2010). However, as Roosa et al. (2003) noted, 'by relying solely on objective indicators of neighbourhood quality, most research may have eliminated an important source of individual and family differences in responses to neighbourhood conditions' (p. 60). Little attention has been paid to subjective neighbourhood perceptions, and the diversity of these perceptions, even though they are likely to play an important role in determining how neighbourhoods influence parents and children (Dahl et al., 2010; Silk et al., 2004). Most researchers assume that definitions of risk

and safety are shared among parents in a certain deprived neighbourhood and that they are unanimously negative about their neighbourhood as a place for their children to grow up in (Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004). Some have described moral panic in Western society about stranger danger in both disadvantaged and more advantaged neighbourhoods, which has led to 'paranoid parenting' (Furedi, 2001; Pain, 2006). Parents are described as increasingly restricting their children's movement through and activities in public space, which reduces their autonomy and opportunities for social interaction (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Pain, 2006). These accounts, however, generally do not consider possibly divergent subjective perceptions of the same neighbourhood and differences in parents' involvement in the neighbourhood, and how these can result in a diverse range of parenting practices. Although several studies on parenting in deprived neighbourhoods have been conducted (Burton and Jarrett, 2000; Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004; Galster and Santiago, 2006), little attention has been paid to the complexity of the relationship between parenting, the neighbourhood and youth outcomes. Therefore, the present study focused on using qualitative interviews with both parents and youths to answer the following question: *How do parents' perceptions of risks in their neighbourhood and their involvement in local parenting cultures influence their parenting practices?*.

2. Parenting in a deprived neighbourhood

Studies have found that parenting behaviours, such as parental coping skills, aspirations and sense of efficacy, are influenced by structural neighbourhood conditions, for example poverty, as well as by locally-based social networks (Rankin and Quane, 2002; Beyers et al., 2003). A number of mechanisms that explain the relationship between the neighbourhood and parenting practices can be distinguished. Firstly, children in deprived neighbourhoods are assumed to have a higher likelihood of coming into contact with negative adult and peer role models. This might result in parents being more worried that their children will develop deviant norms and values and engage in antisocial behaviour, which influences their parenting practices, such as the amount of autonomy they give their children (Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). Secondly, parents in deprived neighbourhoods might also worry that high levels of crime and violence in the neighbourhood could lead to their children being victimised, which again influences their parenting practices (Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). Thirdly, the low levels of social control in the neighbourhood might make it more difficult for parents to monitor their children and reinforce desirable social norms (Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Finally, because the institutional resources in the neighbourhood are less available and of a lower quality, parents in deprived neighbourhoods might have fewer opportunities to find developmentally enriching experiences for their children (Galster, 2012).

Parents can play an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on their children's social outcomes, as they can adopt certain parenting strategies in response to perceived neighbourhood threats and opportunities (Furstenberg, 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). Galster and Santiago (2006), for example, found that a majority of parents in deprived neighbourhoods felt that the neighbourhood had a negative influence on the social outcomes of their children, and that a large share of this group tried to protect their children from these negative influences. One way for parents to deal with a 'risky' neighbourhood is to adopt protective strategies. These strategies include monitoring, cautionary warnings, danger management, chaperonage, and keeping children at home to protect them from physical dangers and negative role

models and peers (Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). Parents can also adopt promotive strategies to deal with neighbourhood dangers. These strategies are aimed at promoting the educational, cultural and social skills of youths (Furstenberg, 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). This can be done through in-home learning activities, actively searching for resources or placing children in settings where they come into contact with positive role models. Many parental management strategies include both promotive and protective components.

Studies on the changes in children's use of space in recent decades found that parents have increasingly restricted children's opportunities to play in the street, because streets are seen as unsafe (Karsten, 2005; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Pain, 2006). At the same time, the acquisition of cultural capital through formal leisure activities is a promotive strategy that is being adopted by more and more parents (Karsten, 2005; Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). There are on-going debates in both academic and popular publications about 'paranoid parenting'. It is argued that parents worry about an ever-increasing number of dangers that in reality are unlikely to materialise. This culture of anxiety is driven by rapid technological development and global insecurity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Pain, 2006). The present study investigated whether the parental strategies of parents in Feijenoord can indeed be seen as 'paranoid'.

3. Local parenting cultures

The parenting strategies that parents adopt are partly dependent on their social networks, in which ideas about what entails 'risk' and 'good parenting' are produced and reproduced. Parents' identities and practices can be strongly influenced by the socio-spatial context in which they find themselves. First of all, parents' ideas about 'risk' can be influenced by their social networks. Stanko (1993), for example, showed how experiences as well as rumours communicated through social networks can play an important role in shaping geographies of fear. Accounts of fearful places are often based on both personal experience and stories reproduced through the social networks of both parents and children. This also means that areas that are regarded as fearful by some are not experienced as such by others, depending on the networks the parents and youths are part of. It is therefore crucial to take into account the possible differential perceptions of parents about risks in the neighbourhood, since these perceptions influence parental behaviour (Roosa et al., 2003; O'Neil et al., 2001).

Moreover, ideas of what 'good parenting' entails are influenced by a parent's socio-spatial context (Perrier, 2010; Vincent et al., 2010). In recent decades, 'good parenting' has been widely recognised as being produced through the normative constructions of white, middle-class, two-parent families (Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans, 2011). Fortunately, some scholars have criticised this notion by arguing that the production of parenting cultures is more complex. Holloway (1998), for example, stated that different neighbourhoods can have different 'moral geographies of mothering', which can be defined as a 'localized discourse concerned with what is considered right and wrong in the raising of children' (p. 31). Holloway further argued that this 'moral geography of mothering' is important because, as Philo (1991, p. 16) wrote:

> It would appear that moral assumptions are crucially bound up with the 'social construction' of different human groupings, with deciding the character of these groups; with laying down the codes that groups live by, particularly in their dealings with others, and this means that spatial variations in everyday moralities will inevitably be closely entangled with spatial variations in the 'structure' and 'functioning' of human groupings.

Similarly, Edwards and Gillies (2004) found that distinctive parenting cultures developed among middle-class mothers who used friendship networks that were anchored in local neighbourhoods. Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans (2011) further showed that the parenting cultures of parents who had lived in a rural area for years were different from those who had newly arrived from a city. In this paper, we specifically look at two factors that play an important role in the formation of the local parenting cultures in Rotterdam, namely ethnicity and social capital.

The first factor that influences the nature of local parenting cultures in the context of our study is the ethnic networks parents are part of. Local networks of parents can have a more collectivistic or individualistic culture, often depending on the ethnic background of their members. More collectivistic cultures (e.g. Turkish and Moroccan cultures) emphasise interdependence and inhibit the expression of the individual's own wants and needs. As a result, parents are generally more authoritarian: they exert more restraint on children and expect more obedience. In more individualistic cultures (e.g. Dutch culture), self-interest, autonomy and self-reliance are more valued (Yaman et al., 2010).

The second factor that plays an important role in the production and reproduction of local parenting cultures is that these cultures are formed through social networks comprising people who have similar ideas about raising children. These networks and shared ideas about parenting lead to the parents helping each other to raise and monitor their children. The concept of social capital provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between local parenting cultures and youths' spatial freedom. Social capital refers to actual or potential resources inherent in social networks. The social networks of families can provide access to social support (to cope with daily problems), social leverage (e.g. access information to about schools) and informal social control (collectively maintaining social order and keeping the neighbourhood safe from criminal or delinquent activity) (Carpiano and Kimbro, 2012). A strong sense of community, common values, shared trust and a willingness to intervene in the problem behaviour of youths are believed to be crucial in creating a positive environment that will promote the development of children and allow them to have independent mobility (Weller and Bruegel, 2009). Important in this context is what Coleman (1988) called 'intergenerational closure'. This closure exists when youths are related to two or more adults outside the household, such as neighbours or friends of the parents. These adults can observe the young person's behaviour in different settings, talk to each other about the young person and establish shared norms. In this way, the social networks of the parents might facilitate the monitoring and supervision of youth. Particularly in low-income neighbourhoods, this form of bonding capital is useful for parents to monitor their children's safety. The importance of bonding capital for parents is also confirmed by the study of Edwards and Gillies (2004) that shows that family, followed by friends, are considered as the people to turn to for instrumental as well as emotional support, particularly among parents from a non-western background.

Because the aim of the present study was to investigate locally produced interpretations of how children should be brought up, and their reproduction via parenting practices, instead of comparing middle-class and working-class parents (Lareau, 2003; Perrier, 2010) or parents in rich and poor neighbourhoods (Holloway, 1998), we studied the local parenting cultures in one low-income neighbourhood. The underlying idea is that youths and their parents have unique experiences in neighbourhood space, which results in different reactions to the neighbourhood and in different processes within the family (see also Chaskin et al., 2013). It is argued in this paper that social and cultural resources play an important role in the production and reproduction of these local parenting cultures.

4. Methods

The research was carried out in Feijenoord, a district in the southern part of Rotterdam. Feijenoord is characterised by low incomes, low levels of education and high levels of unemployment (compared to both Rotterdam and the national average), and most of its inhabitants are from non-western backgrounds. The area is faced with such problems as low levels of perceived safety and high levels of nuisance caused by youths and drugs use.

The sample comprised both youths and parents. The youths were recruited through community organisations, secondary schools and schools for secondary vocational education by means of a non-random, convenience sampling strategy. We aimed to achieve a sample that was as diverse as possible based on age, ethnic background and neighbourhood of residence. In total, 26 interviews with youths were conducted. The group consisted of 14 boys and 12 girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, eastern European, Dutch Antillean, Afghan and Pakistani). The age range was 13–18 years.

The interviews with the youths were conducted as part of another study (Visser et al., 2015). Directly after the interviews, the youths were asked if their parents wanted to participate in the study. The initial aim was to select only parent–child dyads for inclusion in the study; however, we were able to obtain only eight such dyads because most of the parents were unwilling or unable to participate. We therefore also recruited parents through secondary schools, community centres and snowball sampling, and by handing out flyers in the street. We postulated that even though the sample did not comprise only parent–child dyads, our research would generate some interesting findings about parents' and youths' perceptions of parenting and their neighbourhood.

Twenty-one parents (18 mothers, two fathers and one grandmother[1]) with at least one child or grandchild aged between 13 and 18 years (the target child/children) were interviewed. Of these parents, seven mothers and one father were in a parent–child dyad. Since the study was conducted in a relatively deprived area, most parents came from households with a socioeconomic status below the city average. Most parents had relatively low educational levels. The parents were from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese).[2] The majority had lived in Feijenoord for more than 10 years.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to better understand how youths and parents felt about parenting practices and their neighbourhood. Such a qualitative approach is particularly useful for understanding the complexities of people's perceptions, because they do not limit respondents to pre-established categories (Dahl et al., 2010). Most of the interviews with the youths were conducted individually, but at the youths' request, three interviews were conducted in groups of two or three friends. The topics that were explored were the youths' everyday socio-spatial behaviour, their social networks, their fears and concerns, their attitudes towards the boundaries set by parents, and their strategies for managing risks and negotiating parental boundaries.

The data from these interviews helped to shape the interviews with the parents. The latter interviews explored their residential histories, their perception of neighbourhood threats and resources,

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[1] Her grandchildren of 24 and 17 years spent most of their out-of-school time at her place, since both parents were working full time.

[2] We could not afford to use an interpreter, which means that only parents with at least some knowledge of Dutch were included in the study. Some interviews were conducted in very basic Dutch and on one occasion another participating mother was present to clarify/translate the questions that were asked. We are aware that this might have led to a slight bias in the results. We expect that among parents who have little knowledge of Dutch protective parenting or similarity seeking will be predominant.

their experiences of parenting in relation to the neighbourhood context, and how they made everyday decisions about safety and danger. The focus was on their relationship with the target child/children; questions about other children in the household were asked only in relation to siblinghood and negotiations within the family.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and then coded in NVivo. First, the interviews with the parents were analysed. In the first round, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds. Furthermore, text query and negative case analysis were used to strengthen or nuance the themes that emerged from the data. After analysing the interviews with the parents, a similar approach was used to analyse the interviews with the youths. We started the analysis of the youths' data with the coding that emerged from the interviews with the parents. During the process of coding, additional themes that emerged from the youths' interviews were added. The eight parent–child dyads were analysed together, with a specific focus on the differences and similarities between the parental and the child accounts. The participants were assigned pseudonyms and these are used throughout this chapter to protect their privacy.

During the fieldwork, we also made observations in the area, attended meetings at youth centres, and held informal conversations with residents, community workers and teachers. The notes we made during and after these activities were used to inform the theorising about the topic.

5. Results

5.1. Parenting in deprived neighbourhoods: definitions of risks and 'good parenting'

Before looking at how parents' perceptions of risks in their neighbourhood and their embeddedness in local parenting cultures influence their parenting practices, we needed to understand what the parents and youths perceive as 'risks' and what parents consider 'good parenting'. Even though parents had different perceptions of Feijenoord as a place for their children to grow up in, ranging from very negative to more positive (as elaborated in Section 5.2), both parents and youths agreed upon the most important risks in their neighbourhood. A distinction can be made between boys and girls, however. For boys, parental regulations were directed at risk behaviours – such as staying away from negative peers, not getting into fights or other trouble, and not using alcohol or drugs – whereas for girls they were more related to not going out after dark and avoiding dangerous places and people. In other words, boys were generally seen as 'youths *as* trouble' whereas girls were more passively stereotyped as 'youths *in* trouble' or at risk of becoming victimised (Green et al., 2000; Griffin, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2001). For example, Anny (grandmother of two grandsons aged 24 and 22 and two granddaughters aged 17 and 14, Dutch) told us:

As a mother you're always more worried about girls, because things happen to girls. The boys will do it. I'm not happy with that either, but the girls will become the victims whereas the boys are the offenders. That's the difference.

The distinction between 'girls in trouble' and 'boys as trouble' is also reflected in boys' and girls' differences in the use of public space (Skelton, 2001; Tucker and Matthews, 2001; Pain, 2006). Boys were generally allowed a wider spatial range than girls, and they felt more comfortable in and more in control of public places in their own neighbourhoods. The use of space by girls, on the other hand, was constrained by their own and their parents' fears

related to the presence of boys (Tucker and Matthews, 2001) and sexual violence (Pain, 2006). An important change in freedom of movement is marked by the change from primary to secondary school, which in the case of the Netherlands is at the age of 12. Another important factor that plays a role in our case study area is the Muslim background of the majority of the respondents. Some of the Muslim girls, for example, were not allowed to associate with non-related boys or to go to clubs, issues that are not usually considered problematic by non-Muslim parents. This is a reflection of the differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures of parenting (Yaman et al., 2010).

All the parents wanted to shield their children from the above-mentioned risks, but in different ways, as explained in Section 5.2. What the parents had in common was that they disassociated themselves from the parents who were 'not doing that well'. Parents indicated that many 'others' did not care properly for their children. These 'others' we can call the 'invisible parents' (see also Kleijwegt, 2005). From the perspective of the parents in our study these invisible parents were not strict enough, allowing their children to hang around on the street till very late and not disciplining them when they engaged in deviant behaviour. Bojana (mother of a 20-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son, eastern European), for example, said that letting children hang around on the street, like the Turkish and Moroccan parents did, has a negative influence on their behaviour:

. . . they should pay more attention to their children. I very often see that they are just hanging around outside; most of the time they are outside, outside, outside. Sometimes I wonder if these children are ever inside. Or do they only sleep inside? Even when they come home from school, I see them on the street right away. They go home and after 10 minutes they are on the street again.

Moreover, invisible parents were described as rarely being involved in school or leisure activities. Nico (father of a 16-year-old daughter, Dutch) compared his situation with that of some other families in the neighbourhood:

When I didn't want to go to school, they made me go . . . and I do the same with my oldest daughter. You just go to school . . . But what I see in other families, these kids just sit at home. Sometimes you see them go to school, and then they are home again for two weeks. What will become of them?

These narratives show that a process of 'othering' takes place. By contrasting themselves with real or imagined others, parents were able to reinforce their own sense of self as 'good parents' (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2014). This can be seen as establishing moral respectability by denigrating other parents (Perrier, 2010; Vincent et al., 2010). This assessment of other people's poor parenting clearly alludes to wider discourses within government policy that emphasise individual parental responsibility for social outcomes (Raco, 2009; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2014). These parents disassociated themselves from the invisible parents to show that they took this 'parental responsibility' seriously and used a number of strategies to shield their children from real and perceived risks.

5.2. Parents' perception of the neighbourhood and parenting strategies

Parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood as a source of risks and opportunities for their children were diverse and complex. They pointed to both negative and positive aspects, and parents in the same neighbourhood did not necessarily perceive their neighbourhoods in similar ways. The interviews showed that the most important factors that influenced the extent to which a certain approach to parenting was adopted was dependent on the

family's local involvement, local social networks and access to social capital, or the absence thereof. Based on these findings, we distinguished three parenting styles (see also Holloway, 1998; Foy-Phillips and Lloyd-Evans, 2011) (Table 1). This typology is mainly based on the interviews with parents, and partly on the perspectives of the youths. It has to be noted that these three styles of parenting should be seen as ideal types and that a significant number of parents adopt some aspects of two or three types.

5.2.1. Protective parenting

Protective parenting is generally adopted by parents that are mostly negative about the neighbourhood, which leads them to impose high levels of socio-spatial restrictions on their children. Their negative neighbourhood perception is primarily related to the feeling that the neighbourhood is unsafe because of the presence of crime, drugs, alcohol and negative peers. For example, Mina (single mother of three daughters aged 14, 12 and 7, Surinamese) said the following:

> This neighbourhood? Unsafe. Very dangerous, very unsafe. People are killed over here in broad daylight. Around the corner here, somebody was stabbed in broad daylight, in front of so many people. So yes, it's not a nice neighbourhood over here. People smoke weed on the street, and there are a lot of bars, men hanging around everywhere. Sometimes I'm even scared to buy some bread at the grocery store.

One component of the protective parenting style is that parents are strict with regard to which places their children may visit, primarily as a result of the negative neighbourhood perceptions. Children are often limited to the home, or to some other places where they are under the supervision of familiar adults, such as at the house of a friend or family member, or a mosque, youth club or sports club.

We identified two parenting strategies that buffered children from neighbourhood dangers: isolation and monitoring. Isolation is used to segregate children from negative adult and peer influences and activities. In the most extreme form, protective parenting takes the form of attempting to confine the children to the house. For example, Adiba (single mother of two daughters aged 14 and 12 and two sons aged 10 and 2, Moroccan) said that she does not let her children walk on the street on their own, unless it is absolutely necessary:

> My children can go outside, but not without their mother. My children are allowed to walk to school, but they are not allowed to just walk on the street with other children. They can bring home a friend from school. But not walk back and forth outside.

Confining children to the house can shield them from negative neighbourhood influences, but it can also reduce their chances of getting involved in activities and networks that might have a positive influence on them. It emerged from our interviews that this 'locking up' had primarily happened when the children were younger. At the time of the interviews, most of the youths were allowed to go out and visit places in the neighbourhood and other parts of the city.

The strategy of monitoring children when they leave the home had a less profound impact on their activities, social networks and social capital than isolation. We found two types of monitoring (Kerr et al., 2010): asking about the children's friends and their friends' parents ('solicitation') and about where and with whom the children are when they are away from home ('control'). Florence (mother of a 20-year-old son and an 18-year-old daughter, Surinamese) explained how and why she monitors her children:

> I always want to see what the children are doing ... who they hang around with, and who they don't hang around with. Which child is appropriate for my child and which one isn't. In the case of my son ... I saw his friends from school slowly changing. Changing their behaviour, hanging around outside, doing things they weren't allowed to ... so I told my child ... what are you doing?

We found that the extent to which parents adopt protective parenting is related to their local involvement and social networks in the neighbourhood. Those with a predominantly protective parenting style generally had limited involvement in the neighbourhood and very small local networks, mainly consisting of family members. If parents were fearful of the surrounding environment, they and their children were less likely to become immersed in local networks and familiar with local geographies, and having little local involvement could also increase the parents' fears of unknown places. In other words, being dependent on solely bonding capital within the family made that parents adopted a more protective parenting style. In contrast, the parents that could draw upon resources in their community networks were able to adopt more aspect of the similarity seeking parenting style (see Section 5.2.2). This is in line with the findings of Holloway (1998) in the Southey Green neighbourhood of Sheffield (UK), where the social networks of many mothers were organised around the family, and they had little contact with other mothers. Our study, too, shows that the limited networks of the parents influenced their ideas about 'good parenting', namely that it is 'good' to shield their children from possibly negative neighbourhood influences.

Of course, the extent to which parents can monitor their children is largely dependent on whether the latter adhere to the parental rules and tell their parents where they are. Protective parenting was mainly related to high levels of fear concerning the child's independent mobility but, interestingly, also to high levels of trust in the children. Parents with a predominantly protective parenting style believed that their children would adhere to the parental regulations and not get into trouble. Risks were primarily perceived as coming from others. As mentioned above, one of the reasons protective parenting is adopted is the lack of social networks beyond the family that could be a source of social support, social leverage and informal social control. To compensate for this, parents might strongly emphasised the children's own responsibility and sensibility. Several parents indicated that they talked with their children about the perceived threats in the neighbourhood, in order to increase the children's awareness of neighbourhood dangers. This happened in everyday conversations as well as in response to specific incidents (see also Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). During the interviews, many parents and youths related local stories or personal experiences of incidents that had led to cautionary warnings (see also Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004). The media played an important role in this. For example, Esmee (mother of three daughters aged 20, 17 and 10, Surinamese) would talk to her daughter Xandra (17) about incidents that she saw on the news. Xandra, however, sometimes perceived this as annoying:

> Some time ago, there was a stabbing close by. And my mother was like, you have to be careful, because it could also [happen to you]... then she is lecturing me, watch out, have you heard on the news what happened? And then she's going to explain the whole story to me, and she's, like, that could happen to you. I hear it rather often actually. Sometimes it drives me crazy.

Of the three local parenting cultures, protective parenting comes closest to the idea of 'paranoid parenting' (Furedi, 2001; Pain, 2006). It has to be noted, however, that given that most of these parents have to raise their children in a context of relatively

Table 1
Three parenting styles.

	Perception of neighbourhood	Level of neighbourhood involvement	Social networks	Socio-spatial parenting strategies
Protective parenting	Mainly negative	Low	Family (bonding)	High level of social–spatial restrictions
Similarity seeking	Mainly positive	High	Neighbourhood (bonding)	Focus on own social/ethnic/religious group (social support and informal social control)
Selective parenting	Mixed	Moderate	Inside and outside neighbourhood (bridging)	Selective reliance on neighbourhood networks, concerted cultivation

high levels of risk and low levels of social support, social leverage and informal social control, adopting an approach to parenting that is predominantly protective can be seen as a rational choice.

5.2.2. Similarity seeking

Although most parents were aware of the negative aspects of the neighbourhood, such as high levels of crime and lack of safety, quite some parents also mentioned positive characteristics of the neighbourhood such as the extensive, often ethnic or religious social networks. Being part of these social networks resulted in some parents adopting an approach to parenting that can be called 'similarity seeking'. This similarity seeking is characterised by less restrictive parenting practices, compared to protective parenting. Parents with a predominantly similarity seeking style are aware of the risks in the neighbourhood, but they feel that these are outweighed and buffered by tight social networks and social support and informal social control. These finding thus contradict the idea of paranoid parenting (Furedi, 2001; Pain, 2006).

Similarity seeking is mostly adopted by parents that feel comfortable in their neighbourhood because they know the place and the people who live there and that have a high level of involvement in neighbourhood social networks. Most of them have lived in the same neighbourhood for many years. The parents with a predominantly similarity seeking style characterised Feijenoord as a place where many people know each other, at least within their own micro-neighbourhood, and where they help each other when necessary. Parents noted that their children are able to make a lot of good friends and can hang around with neighbourhood children. For example, Berna (mother of three sons aged 20, 17 and 15, Turkish) said that her children have a lot of friends and participate in activities in the neighbourhood, and that therefore in her eyes the neighbourhood is a positive place:

> *They go swimming as a group, they go to the cinema as a group, they go for a picnic, and it's like you bring this, you bring that … Or they collect money mutually, and they go and have a barbecue, and they sit over here or somewhere over there. So they do a lot of things together. I know, as a group, that's safe.*

Although it is common in neighbourhood effect studies to explain problems in terms of a lack of social cohesion and social capital (Putnam, 2007; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999), the fact that quite some parents adopt aspects of similarity seeking in their parenting indicates that they do not feel that they lack relationships that can be a source of instrumental and emotional support. Most of the parents that adopt a predominantly similarity seeking parenting style feel they can go to other parents when they need help raising or monitoring their children. These findings confirm the outcomes of the study of Edwards and Gillies (2004) that shows that family, followed by friends, are an important sources of instrumental as well as emotional support, particularly among parents from a non-western background.

These intra-community ties, based on reciprocity, are useful for parents to monitor their child's safety, and as such can be seen as a form of bonding capital. Berna, for example, told us about how the

community watches over the neighbourhood children, in this case her son:

> *One time I got a phone call from a friend. He [the son] was hanging around with some kids who were doing some 'things', and then she told him 'I don't like to see you here, particularly such a nice boy like you, you don't belong to that group, so next time I don't want to see you here.' Well, that was the first and the last time [that he hung around with the 'wrong' kids]. She also called me, but my son also came to me and told me: 'That detective of yours.'*

These findings can be related to what Coleman (1988) calls 'intergenerational closure'. This concept refers to the interconnection of the social networks of parents and their children: parents whose children are friends are also strongly connected. Crucial to this intergenerational closure are shared behavioural norms, higher levels of social control and shared consequences in the event of misbehaviour.

Our study further shows that similarity seeking can be primarily found among parents that have a more collectivistic approach to parenting. In the case of Feijenoord these are predominantly parents with a Turkish or Moroccan background. Particularly the interdependence of parents and children is emphasised (Yaman et al., 2010). The ideas about 'good parenting' are produced and reproduced through the local social and cultural networks the parents are in.

Whereas one of the characteristics of protective parenting is to keep the children away from 'inappropriate' people and places, similarity seeking is characterised by finding the 'appropriate' people and places for the children through social networks. Intergenerational closure and high levels of social control could make parents more positive about the neighbourhood and less strict in their parental monitoring. The parents with a predominantly similarity seeking approach showed relatively low levels of fear and high levels of trust that their children would not get into trouble. However, in contrast to protective parenting and selective parenting, it is a matter not so much of trusting the children as trusting the local community to act when the children do not behave appropriately.

5.2.3. Selective parenting

The last approach to parenting we found in Feijenoord was parents selectively drawing upon resources inside and outside the neighbourhood. Parents with this predominantly selective parenting style noted both positive and negative neighbourhood characteristics. They generally feel they have to cope with the negative aspects of the neighbourhood, such as ethnic diversity and a lack of safety, which results in them seeking opportunities outside the neighbourhood. However, selective parenting also meant selectively drawing upon some resources in their neighbourhood.

Selective parenting is influenced by concerns about neighbourhood risk, such as violence and negative peer groups, but also by worries about ethnic composition of the neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, selective parenting was mainly found among native Dutch parents. In their narratives, these parents were negative

about the neighbourhood's ethnic composition, as they felt excluded and subject to discrimination. For example, Babs (mother of a 16-year-old son, Dutch) referred to many activities that are organised for their non-western neighbours, for example at the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr), whereas there is little for Dutch people to do. The perception of social exclusion also emerges from the story told by Linda (mother of a 16-year-old daughter, Dutch), who said that her daughter was bullied by non-Dutch children in the neighbourhood: 'She once told me: "When I come from school and meet a group of girls, I feel threatened. I get dirty looks, and they call me names like 'cheese head'".'

Selective parenting is thus, on the one hand, based on the feeling of exclusion of native Dutch people from the multi-ethnic community that Feijenoord is. On the other hand, the parents that adopted a predominantly selective parenting style also saw some strengths of their neighbourhood and its diverse ethnic composition. Some of the parents with a predominantly selective parenting style, for example, said it was good for their children to learn to live together with different ethnic groups, as illustrated by the words of Janet (mother of two daughters aged 21 and 16, Dutch):

> Multiculturalism is of course very positive, because you also learn from that, and it's fun as well. We have very good contact with a lot of our neighbours – even though I just said some negative things. We have a neighbour from Chile; she [one of her daughters] sometime speaks Spanish with him.

The most important factor that distinguishes selective parenting from protective parenting is the extent to which parents could be selective regarding their involvement in the neighbourhood and their involvement in social networks both within and outside the neighbourhood. A characteristic of selective parenting is also the more instrumental focus on the personal benefits of social networks. We can link this to aspects of Lareau's (2003) 'concerted cultivation' – a strategy in which parents invest significant interest and energy in their children's leisure activities, especially adult-guided activities (e.g. at a youth club or sports club), and by doing so provide access to human, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Whereas protective parenting and similarity seeking were mainly dictated by the bonding capital present within respectively the family and the community, selective parenting was characterised by parents being able to also draw upon opportunities for social support and social leverage from outside the neighbourhood. This might be explained by the fact that selective parenting often went together with a more individualistic approach to parenting in which self-interest, autonomy and self-reliance were more valued (Yaman et al., 2010). For example, Peter (father of a 16-year-old daughter, Dutch) said that he sent his daughter to horse riding classes outside the neighbourhood so that she would come into contact with other, presumably better peers: 'Here [in the neighbourhood] she had very few friends. And there at the horse riding classes she comes into contact with other people . . . so that's what we did.'

Another strategy of selective parenting was sending the children to schools outside the neighbourhood. Linda (mother of a 16-year-old daughter, Dutch), for example, said that the ethnic composition at one of the neighbourhood schools is one of the reasons she does not send her daughter there:

> Well, you hear a lot of bad stories about that school. I think when you're the only Dutch person in such a school with only immigrants; you'll have a hard time. I don't want to do that to my child.

Both parents and children talked about a certain hierarchy of schools within Feijenoord. Some neighbourhood schools were called 'ghetto schools' by the respondents. They were known

for their bad reputation, fights and perceived low quality of education. For some of the parents, however, a school outside Feijenoord was not considered an option, especially because the long journeys to school are through unfamiliar territory and are considered unsafe, sometimes even more so than their own neighbourhood.

Like similarity seeking, selective parenting was characterised by relatively low levels of fear and high levels of trust that the children would not get into trouble. However, whereas similarity seeking mainly relied on the high levels of social control in the community, selective parenting was primarily based on the individual responsibility and agency of the children, which reflects the differences between a collectivistic and individualistic approach to parenting. Trust is seen as being dependent on the individual characteristics and behaviour of the child. Parents with a predominantly selective parenting style indicated that their children were 'able to make the right decisions' concerning hanging out with peers and engaging in anti-social behaviour, and 'do not get into trouble that easily'.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This study used interviews with parents and youths to examine how parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood and their involvement in local parenting cultures influenced their parenting practices. It adds to previous studies by showing that ideas about 'good parenting' are defined differently in different social groups and places (Holloway, 1998; Gillies, 2010). Whereas most studies have focused on differences in parenting cultures between middle-class and working-class parents, or between rich and poor neighbourhoods, we found that different local parenting cultures exist within the same neighbourhood. We also found that in each of these parenting cultures, parents had different ideas about the risks in their neighbourhood and how to react to them. The differences in neighbourhood perceptions and parenting practices were related to the parents' involvement in neighbourhood social and cultural networks and the extent to which they could draw upon these social networks for social support, social leverage and informal social control. We distinguished three local parenting cultures: (1) protective parenting, which was characterised by little local involvement, higher levels of fear and more restrictions on children's independent mobility; (2) similarity seeking, which was based on high levels of local involvement, informal social control in the community and relatively high levels of autonomy of the children; and (3) selective parenting, which was based on mixed opinions about the neighbourhood, which resulted in being selective about local involvement, relying on social capital resources partly inside and partly outside the neighbourhood.

The study showed that the trusting relationships that exist within a family or community – or in other words, the bonding capital – are important in the formation of local parenting cultures. Bonding capital, based on reciprocity, is often found in areas of deprivation, and although sometimes viewed as less valuable than bridging capital, our study shows it is useful for parents to monitor their children's safety. Involvement in social networks within and beyond the neighbourhood differed between parents, which resulted in diverse access to social support and informal social control, and consequently diverse parenting styles. That residents of the same neighbourhood hold very diverse views about the quality of their communities and the most appropriate parenting strategies, might be related to the fact that social life in Feijenoord is fragmented: although it is characterised by close-knit networks between people from similar ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds, there is anonymity and distrust between residents from different backgrounds (see Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn (2009) for a description of a similar neighbourhood in The

Hague). This fragmented nature also makes that in the same neighbourhood individualistic and collectivistic parenting cultures coexist.

Our research further illustrates that diverse understandings of what constitutes a good parent, or a good childhood, can coexist (Valentine, 1997). Although parents differed in their ideas about what exactly 'good parenting' entails, they all saw themselves as capable parents. However, many governments, including the Dutch government, see middle-class practices as the embodiment of the 'good parenting' the poor have to adhere to, and the resourceful actions of poor parents in the context of material deprivation as the cause of their disadvantage. Based on our research, and in line with Gillies (2008), we argue that policymakers should take into account the situated nature of parenting, rather than grounding their policy on middle-class norms and values.

Finally, our findings provide a nuanced view of the discourse on paranoid parenting and moral panic about stranger danger in western societies. Our investigation in one of the most deprived areas of the Netherlands revealed that several local parenting cultures coexist and that quite a few parents find ways to allow their children to have independent mobility. The paranoid parenting described by Furedi (2001) seems to exist only among those that strongly adopt protective parenting, and might perhaps better be termed 'realistic parenting', considering the context in which these parents have to raise their children, namely one of relatively high levels of risk and low levels of social support.

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