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'I didn't listen. I continued hanging out with them; they are my friends.' The negotiation of independent socio-spatial behaviour between young people and parents living in a low-income neighbourhood

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ABSTRACT

Several studies show that parents can play an important role in buffering the effects of neighbourhood risks on their children, but pay limited attention to the processes of negotiation that take place within the family. To provide insight into these processes, interviews with young people and parents were conducted in the Feijenoord district in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Young people were often more familiar with and positive about the neighbourhood than parents, which resulted in different ideas about the places young people could or could not visit independently. This paper shows that young people's and parents' perceptions and practices should be seen as relational rather than independent. Young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour is the outcome of active negotiation between parents and child, in which parents want to achieve a balance between trust and fear and the young people seek a balance between autonomy and authority.

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Introduction

Parents who raise children in deprived neighbourhoods often face a multitude of challenges – such as high crime rates, actual or perceived unsafety, and the potential for negative peer influences – that influence their concerns about their children's independent socio-spatial behaviours and consequently their parenting practices. It is therefore not surprising that a large number of studies have shown that neighbourhood deprivation affects many aspects of family functioning, including approaches to parenting (Simons et al. 2002; Roosa et al. 2003). Parents can adopt certain strategies in response to perceived neighbourhood threats and opportunities and thus buffer their children against negative neighbourhood influences (Furstenberg et al. 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson 2003; Galster and Santiago 2006). These include protective strategies, for example solicitation and control, and promotive strategies, such as seeking opportunities outside the neighbourhood.

At the same time, geographers increasingly focus on young people's independent negotiation of public space. A considerable number of studies have focused on young people's perceptions and strategies of risk and safety; in other words, on children's risk landscapes and risk management (Nayak 2003; Backett-Milburn and Harden 2004; Bromley and Stacey 2012). An important point made in many of these studies is that young people are not passive victims of risk: rather, they deal with everyday risks in an active way and this active risk management might include taking

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risks (Christensen and Mikkelsen 2008; Talbot 2013). Although it is valid to pay attention to young people's active risk management, it has to be acknowledged that young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour and the risks they take are still to some extent influenced by parental rules and regulations. At the same time, young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour can impact on parents' trust in or worries about their whereabouts. Thus far, limited attention has been paid to how perceptions of neighbourhood risk and safety and young people's socio-spatial behaviour are negotiated within the family and how young people's and parents' perceptions and practices mutually reinforce each other.

The relation between neighbourhood factors and parenting practices is usually conceptualized as being rather static. Researchers have focused on how objective neighbourhood indicators, such as neighbourhood socioeconomic status, ethnic composition or crime rates, influence parenting practices (Galster and Santiago 2006; Dahl, Ceballo, and Huerta 2010). However, little attention has been paid either to individual and family differences in responses to neighbourhood conditions or to neighbourhood perceptions, even though they are likely to play an important role in determining how neighbourhoods influence children and families (Roosa et al. 2003; Dahl, Ceballo, and Huerta 2010). Moreover, several studies assume that definitions of risk and safety are shared not only between adults but also between adults and their children. These studies hardly recognize that parents and children may use and perceive neighbourhoods differently and that therefore parents' perceptions may not capture their children's neighbourhood experiences. It is important to realize that children might be exposed to age-specific risks that adults are not aware of, and might differ from adults in terms of their 'ways of seeing' and experiencing these risks (Matthews and Limb 1999; James and Prout 1990). Even when children and adults find themselves in the same environment, their interpretation and evaluation of that environment are not likely to be the same.

Parental strategies might thus conflict with young people's perceptions of how skilful they are at navigating the neighbourhood. The result is that young people will negotiate parental rules and regulations and find ways to influence decision making. Young people often resist and find gaps in parental regulations, and thus should be seen as active agents within the context of the family. For a full understanding of the effects of neighbourhood risks on young people, it is crucial to take into account the complex relationship between parenting, the neighbourhood and young people and to approach this issue from the perspective of both the parents and the young people.

To close the abovementioned gaps, the following question will be answered in this paper: *How is young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour negotiated between young people and their parents in the low-income Feijenoord district in Rotterdam?* The answer will be based on in-depth interviews with both young people and parents. The idea underlying this study is that both young people and their parents have unique experiences in neighbourhood space, which results in different responses to neighbourhood risks and the negotiation of rules within the family. I will argue that to fully understand the relationship between parenting and the neighbourhood it is crucial to take into account the iterative processes between parents and their children.

Parenting in deprived neighbourhoods

Parents can play an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on their children by adopting certain parenting strategies in response to neighbourhood threats and opportunities (Furstenberg et al. 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson 2003; Lee et al. 2014). One way parents can deal with actual or perceived neighbourhood risks is to adopt protective strategies, such as monitoring, cautionary warnings, danger management, chaperonage and keeping children at home (Jarrett and Jefferson 2003). Existing research generally concludes that living in a more deprived neighbourhood results in parents adopting more protective parenting strategies as they try to shield their children from negative neighbourhood influences (Furstenberg et al. 1999; Mitchell, Kearns, and Collins 2007). Second, parents can adopt promotive strategies to deal with neighbourhood dangers. These strategies are aimed at promoting the educational and social skills of young people, through actively

placing young people in places or activities where they can encounter both human and social capital (Furstenberg et al. 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson 2003; Karsten 2005). Although most parents adopt a combination of protective and promotive strategies, studies show that parents in deprived neighbourhoods often have low levels of parental knowledge and monitoring, as various emotional, social and financial stressors may interfere with effective parenting behaviours (Byrnes and Miller 2012). On the other hand, many deprived neighbourhoods are also characterized by high levels of bonding capital, which might offer an opportunity to monitor each other's children, to 'get by' in difficult circumstances and to feel safe in the neighbourhood (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015). Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge the diversity of parenting practices in deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods: young people and parents may have varied capacity to insulate against risks, depending on individual or family-level resources. In other words, not all families in deprived neighbourhoods are deprived or struggling to protect their children from risks, and in less deprived neighbourhoods there might be parents who are struggling to adopt effective parenting behaviours.

Studies that have focused on the impact of parental monitoring on children's social outcomes show rather diverse results (for a review, see Racz and McMahon 2011). Some studies found significant relations between lack of parental monitoring and, for example, substance use (Kiesner, Poulin, and Dishion 2010; Tobler and Komro 2010), antisocial behaviour (Bacchini, Concetta Miranda, and Affuso 2011; Fosco et al. 2012) or perpetration and victimization (Low and Espelage 2014). Other studies found no relations between monitoring and delinquency (Keijsers et al. 2010) or children's aggressive behaviour (Skinner et al. 2014). Studies also show that perceived controlling parenting can hamper young people's need for autonomy and can lead to oppositional defiance (Soenens, Deci, and Vansteenkiste 2017).

There is no universal answer to what 'good parenting' entails. Jupp and Gallagher (2013) point to the complexity of parenting in relation to parents' and children's everyday spaces. Moreover, Smetana (2017) indicates that we should be more sensitive to contextual and cultural variations, as certain parenting styles might have different meanings in different ethnic or socioeconomic groups or environments (see also Lee et al. 2014). Moreover, opportunities for parents to monitor and to insulate their children from adversity might depend on family socioeconomic status and the bonding capital of the community of which a family is a part (Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015). Karsten (2005), for example, shows how parental resources in terms of money and time allow parents to escort their children to adult-organized children's activities, where they are supervised but might lack independence, while the children of parents who lack resources are more dependent on neighbourhood spaces for their activities. In recent years, studies have therefore moved away from a focus on global, consistent and stable parenting styles to new models that are more flexible and situational (Smetana 2017). Parents are seen as deploying different practices or strategies in various situations depending on the issue that is at stake.

A study by the author (Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015) on a diverse sample of parents from Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese backgrounds in the Netherlands, shows that parents can adopt different strategies in reaction to their perceptions of neighbourhood risk, and that different parenting styles exist within the same neighbourhood. The differences in neighbourhood perceptions and parenting styles were related to the parents' involvement in neighbourhood social and cultural networks, and the extent to which they could draw upon these networks for social support and informal social control. Three local parenting styles were distinguished.

- (1) Protective parenting: characterized by little local involvement and therefore low levels of neighbourhood social support and informal social control. This resulted in negative perceptions of neighbourhood risks, higher levels of fear and more restrictions on children's independent mobility.
- (2) Similarity seeking: characterized by high levels of local involvement and informal social control in the community. This resulted in a generally positive view of the neighbourhood, low levels of fear and high levels of trust in the community. Parents allowed their children quite a lot of

autonomy within the neighbourhood as they could rely on high levels of social control from the community.

- (3) Selective parenting: 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.

Parents who believed that their neighbourhood had a negative effect on their children were more likely to rely on extensive monitoring and keeping their children inside, or tended to seek opportunities for their children outside the neighbourhood. Those who were more positive about the neighbourhood drew more upon neighbourhood resources, including social networks, and allowed their children more freedom to roam the neighbourhood.

It has to be noted that these three types of parenting should be seen as ideal types. In practice, parental strategies were often a mixture that included the three types to different extents. Protective parenting and similarity-seeking styles were primarily adopted by parents with diverse migration backgrounds and a low socioeconomic status, whereas selective parenting was mainly adopted by parents with native Dutch and slightly higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015). This might be related to differences between more collectivistic and more individualistic cultures (Yaman et al. 2010). In more collectivistic cultures (e.g. Turkish, Moroccan), parents have been reported to be more authoritarian, using more restraining behaviours and expecting more obedience. For protective parents the restraining was done by the parents, whereas for similarity seeking parenting the parents relied on 'restraining' through social control by the local community. In more individualistic cultures (e.g. Dutch), parents tend to be more authoritative, promoting independence and exploration of the environment.

Negotiation with the family

Despite the wealth of research on parental monitoring, it is often approached from the viewpoint of parents and focusses on the strategies they adopt in response to perceived risks. We know little about how the perception of neighbourhood risks and resources differs between young people and their parents, or how, because of this, parental rules and regulations are negotiated between parents and their children. Only a few studies have looked at both young people's and adults' perceptions of the same neighbourhood. These studies generally show that young people are more aware of their neighbourhood, due to it being the locus of their everyday activities (James and Prout 1990; Tomanović and Petrović 2010; Visser and Tersteeg 2019) and that their perceptions are better indicators of youth behaviour (Byrnes et al. 2007).

Several studies in the field of human geography have focused on young people's management of risk and safety in public spaces in the neighbourhood. Van der Burgt (2015), for example, distinguishes between three categories of risk management: avoidance strategies, risk-confronting strategies, and empowerment or boldness strategies. Moreover, Adekunle (2016) shows how young men avoided risky places and practices but also balanced this with different forms of belonging, which led to encounters with the unknown, fear and marginalization. This shows that young people's risk strategies are not merely a matter of avoiding or ignoring risks; rather, they make a trade-off between the risks and the benefits of hanging out in the neighbourhood and thus find a balance between different needs. Risk can also be a fun and desirable aspect of leisure activities (Green and Singleton 2006).

In this context it is important to pay attention to how ideas about risk, safety and independent socio-spatial behaviour are negotiated in families through everyday interaction. Adolescence is an interesting phase in which to study this negotiation, as adolescents are moving from a period in which their socio-spatial behaviour was mostly controlled by their parents to one in which autonomy and independent behaviour become more central (Furlong and Cartmel 2006). In general, studies suggest that in Western cultures, parents and children tend to agree with parents maintaining authority until late childhood or early adolescence, when adolescents expect to have some control over

personal issues (Smetana 2017). Parents generally begin to relinquish control during adolescence but tend to retain control over situations related to the young person's safety or security for a relatively long time (Smetana 2017). Several studies emphasize the key importance of young people's experiences of autonomy – and of parents' support of autonomy – for young people's psychosocial adjustment (Ryan, Deci, and Vansteenkiste 2016; Soenens, Deci, and Vansteenkiste 2017).

Important to note in this context is that it is not solely a matter of parents relinquishing control over their children when the latter get older; rather, young people and their parents together construct and reconstruct the family's rules and regulations, such as which places to visit, when and with whom. Backett-Milburn and Harden (2004), for example, illustrate how families renegotiate risk on a daily basis. In this process, parents and children draw on both personal experiences and knowledge of local stories. Moreover, Valentine (1997) shows how young people resist, oppose and find gaps in adult restrictions, for example by demonstrating their competence to parents before asking for permission to change their spatial boundaries. Moreover, several studies in the field of parental monitoring focus on the agency of young people in this context, such as their agency in the disclosure of information (Stattin and Kerr 2000; Darling et al. 2006; Racz and McMahan 2011; Tilton-Weaver 2014; Smetana 2017). This research strongly suggests that young people are the gatekeepers of their parents' knowledge about their free-time activities and associations (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005; Keijsers et al. 2010). Characteristics of good relationships, such as parent–child trust and communication, are associated with more disclosure and less secrecy, whereas feeling alienated from parents is associated with less disclosure and more secretiveness (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006; Tilton-Weaver 2014).

The aim of the present research was thus to shift away from a focus on parental monitoring as something that is imposed upon young people, and to inquire into the ways young people actively participate in the process of negotiating their everyday independent socio-spatial behaviour, which is defined as the places that are visited during everyday out-of-school activities and the people they encounter there. Our approach recognizes that both children and parents possess agency, and that exercising this agency is a complex negotiation between young people balancing autonomy against adherence to authority and parents balancing trust against fear.

Methods

The present research was part of a larger research project on young people's experiences with growing up in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. We therefore selected one of the most disadvantaged urban areas in the Netherlands – namely Rotterdam's Feijenoord district – as our research area. The district is located south of the Meuse river in Rotterdam-South, an area that has traditionally been the poorer part of the city. The district is characterized by a low socio-economic status – defined by the percentage of people with a low educational level, the percentage of people with a low income, and high unemployment rates¹ – compared to the city and the national average. Moreover, the area is beset with social problems, such as high crime rates and low levels of perceived safety (Municipality of Rotterdam 2018), and is therefore considered a deprived area by the municipality and in national policy documents. The area has a high percentage (58% in 2018) of inhabitants with migrant backgrounds, most of whom identify as Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Dutch Antillean.

The respondents can be divided into two groups: young people and parents. The former were recruited through community organizations and secondary and MBO (secondary vocational education and training) schools. We used a non-random convenience sampling strategy. In total, 26 interviews with young people aged 13–18 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 parents were recruited through the young people, secondary schools and community centres, by handing out flyers on the street and through snowball sampling. The group consisted of 18 mothers, two fathers and one grandmother with diverse ethnic

and socioeconomic backgrounds, all of whom had at least one child (or grandchild) aged between 13 and 18 years. In eight cases the child and parents were from the same family; the other children and parents were recruited independently from each other, as not in all families were both young people and parents willing or able to participate. All young people and parents were informed about the aim of the research before agreeing to participate and again at the start of the actual interview. They were also informed that the interview would be audiotaped and used for academic research, but that their privacy would be protected. Moreover, they were informed that they could refuse to answer questions they were uncomfortable with and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were assigned pseudonyms, and these are used throughout this paper to protect their privacy.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to better understand how the young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour was negotiated between young people and their parents. The aim was to provide insight into young people's and parents' experiences and perceptions of neighbourhood risks and the difference between the two groups, how these differences were negotiated within the family and how this impacted upon young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour. The interviews with the young people were carried out first. Most of these interviews were conducted individually, but some were conducted in groups of two or three friends as requested by the young people. The topics explored that are relevant for this paper were young people's everyday socio-spatial behaviour, social networks, their fears and concerns in relation to the neighbourhood, their attitudes to the boundaries set by their parents, and their strategies for managing risks and negotiating parental boundaries. The data from the interviews with young people helped to shape the interviews with parents, which focused on their perceptions of neighbourhood threats and resources, experiences of parenting in relation to the neighbourhood context, and how they made everyday decisions about safety and danger. In the interviews with parents, the focus was on their relationship with the target child or children (who were aged between 13 and 18); questions about other children in the family were only asked when sibling-hood was relevant.

One of the drawbacks of this study is that not all respondents were in a parent-child dyad. This means that many of the findings on parental styles and strategies and young people's negotiation were dependent on the respondents' one-sided experiences, which could not be verified by the other person in the potential dyad. For the respondents who were in a dyad, however, we found that the parent and young person generally had similar perceptions of the adopted parenting style. Moreover, both the young people's ideas about how they can negotiate independent socio-spatial behaviour and their parents' strategies were primarily influenced by the perceptions they have of each other and their behaviour. It is therefore relevant to provide insight into these perceptions and their impact on socio-spatial behaviour.

The interviews were transcribed and then coded in NVivo. First, the interviews with the parents were analysed. A grounded theory approach consisting of several rounds of coding was adopted. In the first round, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds. After analysing the interviews with the parents, a similar approach was used to analyse the interviews with the young people. The analysis of the young people's data started with the coding that emerged from the interviews with the parents. During the process of coding, additional themes that emerged from the interviews with young people were added.

Young people's and parents' neighbourhood perceptions

The perceptions of neighbourhood risks and resources differed between parents and their children (as well as between parents), and these different perceptions might influence parents' and young people's ideas about young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour and have an impact on the negotiation of parental rules and regulations within the family.

For both parents and young people, 'risk' was defined primarily in terms of the prospect of getting hurt – for example through stranger danger or groups of young people hanging around on the streets – as well as in terms of the risk of encountering 'bad' peers. For boys, 'bad' peers were mostly associated with delinquency and drug use, whereas for girls such peers were generally associated with inappropriate modes of conduct, such as going to clubs, associating with boys and early sexual initiation.

Young people were generally more positive than their parents about their neighbourhood. Whereas several of the parents, primarily those with protective and selective parenting styles, were rather critical about the risks and safety in the neighbourhood (see Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015), the young people tended to emphasize more positive aspects of the neighbourhood, even though they were aware of issues related to crime and unsafety. For example, Deniz (aged 17, Moroccan) said the following:

Yes, I like this neighbourhood, it's just quiet. Sometimes it's a bit 'messy' with police and such, but only every now and then. It's just fun. Everybody knows each other, everybody is respectful towards each other, just always fun. Neighbours help each other.

The majority of the young people reported high levels of social belonging to the neighbourhood. They referred to the many people they knew in the neighbourhood and several references were made to Feijenoord – or the larger Rotterdam-South area – as being part of their personal identity. Moreover, most of the young people in Feijenoord had high levels of environmental competence or street literacy (Cahill 2000): they were familiar with the different places in the neighbourhood, knew which places were safe and unsafe, and were able to navigate their neighbourhood in a skilful way. Mitchell (aged 18, Dutch/Surinamese), for example, stated the following:

I: So you're rather positive about the neighbourhood?

R: Well, positive, positive ... It's more like I'm used to it, because I'm part of it. [...]. Often you see crime, drugs violence on the news. I can't deny that's happening here. It's not a very nice neighbourhood for some people, but I have lived here my entire life. I've got used to it.

Parents' daily activities, such as work and leisure, however, mostly took place outside the neighbourhood (see Visser and Tersteeg 2019). This meant they had fewer daily encounters with neighbourhood spaces and people. Parents were generally less familiar with the neighbourhood, which might partly explain the differences in neighbourhood perceptions. These findings support the literature on this topic. First, they confirm the point made by Matthews and Limb (1999) and James and Prout (1990) that the perceptions held by children often differ from those held by adults, and that it is important to keep these differences in mind. Second, the findings confirm the importance of socio-spatial activities in influencing neighbourhood perceptions and the role of familiarity in influencing feelings of being comfortable in public spaces (James and Prout 1990; Tomanović and Petrović 2010).

Negotiation of independent socio-spatial behaviour between parents and young people

The fact that young people and parents perceived their neighbourhood differently contributed to the negotiation of the young person's independent socio-spatial behaviour within the family. In this paper, young people's socio-spatial behaviour is regarded as the outcome of a bidirectional process, something that is negotiated between parents and children (Crouter and Booth 2003). I will use the concept of 'balancing acts' here, which is defined as attempts to cope with several, often conflicting factors or situations at the same time. This concept was something that emerged clearly from the interviews with both the parents and the young people, showing that independent socio-spatial behaviour was indeed a matter of negotiation from both sides. Although the concept of balancing

acts has been used in other contexts (such as time management or the integration of migrants into a host society), it has so far not been used in the literature on parenting.

Parents: balancing between trust and fear

All parents in our study set certain rules for the independent socio-spatial behaviour of their children, such as restricting their use of certain places or prohibiting them from hanging out with certain peers. They used several monitoring strategies to find out where their children were in their out-of-school time, for example insisting that they call and tell their parents where they are. When setting rules for independent socio-spatial behaviour, the parents aimed at finding a balance between trusting the young person and fearing that he or she would encounter external risk factors, such as deviant peers, unsafe situations or strangers. For example, Nesrin (mother of five girls – including one aged 16 and one aged 17 – and a 12-year-old boy, Turkish) said the following:

Well, they can decide themselves who they hang around with. I don't really worry about that (...) I see they can make the distinction between the people to hang around with and the people not to hang around with. I monitor them from a distance, like the people they hang around with, who comes home with them, where they go. And when they go to a party. I monitor them, but I do trust them.

Although most of the parents indicated that the neighbourhood was not a very safe space for their children to spend their free time, many of them also felt that telling their children not to go to certain places or not to hang around with certain people had little or even an opposite effect. The young people would do what they want and simply not tell their parents. Forbidding them from doing something would also erode the trust relationship between parent and child. This is in line with studies that show that perceived controlling parenting can lead to young people not being able to develop their autonomy and can lead to oppositional defiance (Soenens, Deci, and Vansteenkiste 2017). Nesrin, for example, said the following about a boy her daughter was hanging out with: *'I didn't forbid her to hang out with this guy, but I tried to let her see what the influence of this boy was on her. Because if I forbid it, it will work counterproductively.'*

In addition, for the parents with a predominantly similarity-seeking style, which is characterized by high levels of local involvement and informal social control in the community (Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015), the trust was largely related to the high levels of social control in the neighbourhood. It was a matter of trusting not so much the child, but rather the local community to act if the child did not behave appropriately, which can be linked to literature on the importance of bonding capital in deprived neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns 2001). Anny (grandmother of two boys aged 24 and 22 and two girls aged 17 and 14, Dutch) explained: *'You can't know with 100 per cent certainty where your child is hanging out ... but in this neighbourhood it's like, when your child is seen somewhere [where he/she isn't supposed to be], you'll receive a phone call.'*

The interviews revealed the expected influences of such demographic factors as age, gender and ethnic/religious background (Backett-Milburn and Harden 2004; Smetana et al. 2006), as parents (particularly those with a Muslim background) were generally more protective towards younger children and girls, and thus these groups were allowed less independent socio-spatial behaviour and it was also more difficult for them to negotiate this. As noted by Berna (mother of two girls aged 26 and 22 and one boy aged 18, Moroccan):

I'm much more afraid when my daughter does not come home. When my son does not come home, I'm not that worried. (...) With girls, you don't know what they do with boys (...) In our culture, when a girl comes home late, that's not good for anybody. When a boy comes home late, nobody says anything.

In addition, perceptions of the child's personality and competence turned out to be important in influencing parental rules and regulations. This illustrates the relational way in which young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour is formed. Some children were seen as more vulnerable and others were seen as responsible. This was often informed by earlier experiences with the child's

behaviour: children who had demonstrated maturity and competence were likely to be rewarded by being granted more independence, whilst those who broke rules or behaved irresponsibly were likely to have their independent socio-spatial mobility restricted. Moreover, the information the young person shared with the parent played a role in this, as parents' trust was often rooted in a child's disclosure of information (Solberg 1990; Kerr, Stattin, and Trost 1999; Borawski et al. 2003). This confirms findings reported in the literature that children are important gatekeepers of parents' knowledge about their free-time activities and associations (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005; Keijsers et al. 2010). For example, Adiba (single mother of two daughters aged 14 and 12 and two sons aged 10 and 2, Moroccan) talked about how her daughter is very open to her about who she hangs around with, which increases Adiba's level of trust:

I know my daughter, she is able to make her own choices, which girl is good for her and which girls isn't. I'm not getting involved with that. She used to have this friend and one day this friend got involved in bad behaviour. And my daughter says: 'Listen girl, I go to school to study; I'm too young for this stuff. As of today, I won't hang around with you anymore.' And my daughter, she came home straight away and told me everything. My children tell me everything ...

These findings are in line with Solberg's study (1990), in which she states that '*children may grow or shrink in age as negotiations take place*' (128). Furthermore, the negotiation of socio-spatial behaviour had often already been done by older siblings, which resulted in parents being less protective towards younger siblings compared to older siblings when they were the same age. For example, Jenna (aged 17, Moroccan) recounted the following:

I'm the youngest, and I'm the apple of my mother's eye. I'm allowed way more than the rest. The way my brothers and sisters were raised was very different from the way I'm being raised. I'm allowed to do so many things. When I tell my mother, we're going to the cinema at 8, then I am allowed to go, and they [her siblings] absolutely weren't allowed to go when they were my age.

Young people: balancing between autonomy and authority

Parents thus set rules regarding the independent socio-spatial behaviour of their children – rules that were partly influenced by previous experiences and information provided by the child. It emerged from the narratives of the young people that they were engaging in a balancing act between understanding that some of these rules make sense, and feeling that some of them are too strict and wanting to maintain their own autonomy. Young people generally felt more competent in independently navigating urban space than their parents believed they were. As a result, they adopted strategies to negotiate their independent socio-spatial behaviour. These can be divided into three categories: secretive strategies, boldness strategies and competence strategies.

Secretive strategies

The strategies in this first category include young people being secretive and selective about the information they provided to their parents about their activities and whereabouts, and confirm their active role in strategically managing their parents' access to information as identified in previous studies (Stattin and Kerr 2000; Keijsers and Laird 2010). Parents had to largely rely on what the child told them about his or her activities away from home. The young people in our study were aware of this. For example, Patrick (aged 18, Dutch) explained the following:

I wasn't allowed to go there, and I wasn't allowed to go there and there. But at some point I just ignored these rules. I went to school over there, so why shouldn't I be allowed to go there? And if I went there, it was just bad luck for them, because they simply didn't know.

In general, however, the narratives of the young people were more nuanced than Patrick's. As shown by Finkenauer and colleagues (2002), although keeping secrets from parents can lead to more emotional autonomy (and in this case study, also to more spatial autonomy), keeping secrets also has disadvantages, such as feelings of guilt and a worsened relationship with the parents. The

interviews with the young people showed that they often weighed the benefits and costs of telling or not telling their parents about their whereabouts, and as such were balancing between authority and autonomy. On the one hand, telling parents would increase their sense of safety, as the parents would know their whereabouts, and the idea of being honest with their parents also contributed to a good relationship with them. On the other hand, telling parents about their behaviour had its costs, as it could result in parents forbidding them from hanging out at certain places or with certain people, and could thus lead to conflict between the parents and young people. Moreover, some of the young people said that they thought it would lead to their parents worrying about them unnecessarily. Arousing parental concern was viewed as unnecessary, particularly when the young people themselves felt they were safe in particular situations. Young people assessed when to withhold or reveal information in their own interest, as well as in what they perceived as their parents' interest. Mitchell (aged 18, Dutch/Surinamese), for example, said that he gave his father wrong information when he asked where he hung out:

It's more like, I'm at places where I'm not supposed to be: 'arranging some things', so to say. Of course, he wants to know where I am, and then I tell him I'm at a friend's house or something. If I tell him the truth [about the whereabouts], he will become very angry

Moreover, the young people challenged the influence of their parents on the places they could visit and when they could visit them, by only selectively providing information, such as telling the parents that they were sleeping over at a friend's house, but from there undertaking activities that their parents did not allow them to do, such as going out.

When we link young people's secretive strategies to the parents' balancing act between trust and fear, we see that this strategy is mainly aimed at reducing the parents' fears by not disclosing information that might lead the parents to worry and possibly restrict the independent socio-spatial behaviour of the young person. It seemed that it was primarily older boys whose parents were not embedded in strong ethnic social networks who adopted the less nuanced forms of these secretive strategies, which might be related to their need for autonomy; that they felt they could safely navigate the neighbourhood due to their age and gender; and that there was limited social control exerted by other community members. Moreover, the literature shows that boys tend to disclose less to parents and are more secretive than girls (Finkenauer, Engels, and Meeus 2002). For young people whose parents had adopted predominantly protective and similarity seeking parenting styles, it was more difficult to adopt secretive strategies due to the high levels of control, either from the parents themselves or from the community. As Tarik (aged 13, eastern European, with parents with a predominantly similarity seeking style) put it: *'when she [mother] says I can't go somewhere, I don't do it, even if I want to. I know she always finds out. I don't know how, but she always finds out'*. Moreover, such a secretive strategy is likely to have a limited impact on increasing the trust and reducing the fear of parents, or perhaps have even negative effects. The fact that parents have little information means that they have little on which to base their evaluation of the young person's competence. Moreover, not knowing the children's whereabouts can lead to higher levels of fear.

Boldness strategies

The strategies in this second category include the ways in which young people challenge parental authority by disobeying the socio-spatial and temporal restrictions set by their parents. In her paper on young people's use of public space, Van der Burgt (2015) writes that some young people adopt 'boldness strategies' to claim public space as their own space, for example by insisting on their right to the city. This concept of boldness can also be applied to the way in which young people claim their right to independent socio-spatial behaviour. Whereas secretive strategies focus on the non-disclosure of certain information about the young person's activities, boldness strategies focus on the disclosure of this information – or at least running the risk of this – and as such challenge the authority of the parents. For example, Nick (aged 18, Dutch) said that he usually came home much later

than his parents allowed. Sometimes his parents got angry, but the next time he simply tried it again, and was thus able to stretch the time he could stay out:

Every evening we have a discussion about what time I should be home. I usually say I will be a bit later – the normal time is midnight, but I have different thoughts about that (...) And then I come home at 3 am, and my parents are like 'don't do that again' (...) but next time I just try again.

Many of the young people also said that their parents had forbidden them from hanging out with certain people, but if they did not agree with this decision, they simply continued to hang out with those people. For example, Selami (aged 16, Turkish) said that his father forbids him from spending time with certain 'bad guys' in the neighbourhood, but then noted the following:

We grew up together, for ten years or so. And suddenly you see them being arrested, things like that. And then they [his parents] said: 'You shouldn't hang around with these guys.' But I didn't listen. I continued hanging out with them; they are my friends.

Similar to the secretive strategies, these strategies were often a reaction to the young persons' beliefs regarding the legitimacy of parental restrictions: they were often regarded as too strict and not in line with the young person's own beliefs about safe, independent socio-spatial behaviour. Linking this to young people's balancing acts, we could say that young people who adopted these strategies generally felt that their need for autonomy weighed more than their parents' authority. This supports existing studies (Smetana et al. 2006; Darling, Cumsille, and Martinez 2007) that show that young people's beliefs regarding their obligation to comply with their parents' rules were related to their beliefs regarding the legitimacy of their parents' authority.

These boldness strategies can also be approached in relation to parents' balancing acts between trust and fear. These strategies are generally a reaction to young people perceiving their parents as too restrictive, or in other words, to a situation in which the parents' fear outweighs their trust in their child. Like secretive strategies, these boldness strategies seemed to be adopted more often by boys than by girls and by young people who were slightly older. Given that parental concerns and regulations were to a large extent disregarded by adopting boldness strategies, the extent to which these strategies could be adopted did not differ strongly between the three parenting styles. However, the chance that the parents would discover the young person's whereabouts and that this would lead to conflict in the family, was greater if the parents adopted protective or similarity seeking styles rather than predominantly selective styles. These boldness strategies are not very likely to increase trust and reduce fear among parents, as they are not based on showing the competence of the child and do not foster a dialog about the rules and regulations that are set within the family.

Competence strategies

The strategies in this final category include those that involve the young person showing his or her competence in independent socio-spatial behaviour and in making the right decisions regarding the peers to hang around with. Contrary to the strategies discussed above, which describe a rather one-sided reaction to parental restrictions, the competence strategies are primarily aimed at opening the dialogue between parent and child and allowing the negotiation of the rules to actually take place. In other words, young people and their parents collaborated in trying to find the balance between the former's autonomy and the latter's authority.

Most respondents felt that they were competent in negotiating their own safety in the neighbourhood, and several of them also indicated that they were more familiar with the neighbourhood than their parents were (see also Tomanović and Petrović 2010). Some of the young people therefore tried to show their parents that they were capable of navigating the neighbourhood on their own. For example, Boris (aged 17, eastern European) discussed how he talks with his mother about his competence in choosing the people to hang out with:

Well, my mother ... she didn't forbid it, but she said, "You'd better not hang out with your old friends, because you will end up in the same situation." And I said to her: "I know what I'm doing, and she trusted me with that,"

This strategy, however, was not always successful. Younes (aged 18, Moroccan), for example, tried to convince his father that he was competent enough to deal with delinquent peers he sometimes encountered in the neighbourhood, but his father continued to monitor him:

You know what's the case. Sometimes we just walk here, and then this person just comes by to say hi. Perhaps just at that moment my father comes around the corner, and he thinks I am hanging around with him [the delinquent peer], while that isn't the case. I try to explain this to him, but he keeps insisting on it. (...) I never feel tempted to [engage in delinquent behaviour]

Competence was demonstrated not only through conversations between parents and the young people, but also through practical actions. For example, Janey (aged 16, female, Dutch) talked about how she generally adheres to her parents' rules about coming home on time, and said that when she is unable to do so, she lets her parents know her whereabouts:

When I go out, to the cinema or something, I ask if I can be home at 1 am. And if they say, 'Be home at 12.30', I do that. (...) If I come home a bit later, I send them a text. (...) The last three times, they [the parents] were already asleep when I came home. They are a bit worried, but they trust me that I will come home.

Moreover, some young people were allowed to stay out later if they agreed to walk or cycle home with a group of friends. In such cases, the companionship of the group of friends served as an alternative to parental monitoring (see also Mikkelsen and Christensen 2009).

When we link young people's competence strategies to the parents' balancing acts between trust and fear, we see that this strategy is mainly aimed at increasing parental trust, by showing that the young person is capable of dealing in a competent way with situations that are perceived to be risky. Whereas the secretive and boldness strategies are not likely to be very successful in increasing the level of trust in the young person, the competence strategies are more likely to do so, without increasing the level of fear experienced by the parents. Competence strategies were adopted by a diverse group of young people: age, gender, and socioeconomic and ethnic background did not seem to have an important impact. However, a young person is not able to demonstrate his or her competence unless the parents already allow a certain amount of independent socio-spatial mobility. For young people with protective parents, it was therefore more difficult to show these competence strategies than it was for young people with parents who primarily adopted the two other parenting styles.

Conclusion

The ways in which parents and young people experience their neighbourhood and the extent to which this neighbourhood can be navigated safely by young people differ. Their different experiences and perceptions lead to several forms of negotiation of young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour in the neighbourhood. Using the concept of 'balancing acts', this paper shows that parents generally balance between trust in the child and fear that the child will be exposed to neighbourhood risks, such as deviant peers, unsafe situations or strangers. For young people, the balancing act is between respecting legitimate authority – acknowledging that some of the parental rules make sense, and not wanting to hurt their parents unnecessarily – and challenging illegitimate authority, because they feel that some of these rules are too strict and they want to maintain their autonomy.

This paper shows that the outcomes of these balancing acts are relational rather than independent of each other. To fully understand young people's independent socio-spatial behaviour in deprived neighbourhoods, it is crucial to take into account the iterative processes between parents' and children's perceptions and practices. On the one hand, parental practices are influenced by the parents' perceptions of their children's competence or lack thereof. Some of the young people were considered responsible and were therefore granted a large measure of independence, whereas others of the same age were seen as more vulnerable and therefore had to be monitored more. This was often informed by earlier experiences with the young person's behaviour, the information the child shared with the parent (Borawski et al. 2003) and the extent to which the child was able to

demonstrate his or her competence in independent socio-spatial behaviour. On the other hand, the young people were also able to negotiate rules and regulations, and to question and even resist their parents' authority and power. This took the form of three strategies: being secretive regarding the information provided to the parents (secretive strategies), disobeying the socio-spatial and temporal restrictions set by the parents (boldness strategies) and showing the parents competence in independent socio-spatial behaviour and in making the right decision regarding peers (competence strategies). Negotiating independent socio-spatial behaviour turned out to be mostly a matter of increasing the parents' trust that the young person was able to deal with neighbourhood risks in a responsible way. In particular, competence strategies were the strategies most likely to contribute to this increased trust, but parents also had to allow their children some space to be able to demonstrate this competence.

When we connect parenting styles and young people's strategies, we can say that the young people who perceived their parents as having predominantly protective or similarity-seeking parenting styles felt that it was harder to challenge their parental regulations due to the high levels of control, either from the parents themselves or from the community. Young people who perceived that their parents adopted a more selective parenting style found it easier to challenge parental regulations because there was less monitoring. Since young people who perceived their parents as having mostly selective parenting styles were likely to spend their time at school or on activities outside the neighbourhood, they felt that it was harder for their parents to monitor them. For this group, secretive or boldness strategies could more easily be used.

In sum, this study shows that research that focuses on the relation between young people and neighbourhood space should pay more attention to the complexity of the processes that take place within the family. Parents play an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on their children, but parenting is more than just a reaction to the neighbourhood context: it is the outcome of the interaction between the parent-child relationship, the child's actions and the neighbourhood context. Future research could benefit from providing an even more in-depth insight into the interaction between parents and young people by further focusing on parent-child dyads and being more sensitive to contextual and cultural variations (Smetana 2017), as the negotiation of parental monitoring might work differently in different ethnic or socioeconomic groups or in other neighbourhood environments.

Note

1. Based on the commonly used status scores developed by the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP).

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