

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313 761-4700 800 521-0600

Order Number 9315448

**Parents' conceptions of urban dangers and their relationships to
children's access to their neighborhoods**

Blakely, Kim Susan, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

Copyright ©1993 by Blakely, Kim Susan. All rights reserved.

U·M·I

**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

PARENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF URBAN DANGERS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO CHILDREN'S
ACCESS TO THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

by

Kim Susan Blakely

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1993

© 1993

KIM SUSAN BLAKELY

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 22, 1993
Date

Maxine Wolfe
Chair of Examining Committee

January 27, 1993
Date

Robert D. Seitzman
Executive Officer

Leanne G. Rivlin

Dalton Miller-Jones

Maxine Wolfe
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

PARENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF URBAN DANGERS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO CHILDREN'S
ACCESS TO THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

by

Kim Susan Blakely

Advisor: Professor Maxine Wolfe

The purpose of the study was to explore parents' conceptions of danger in their changing neighborhoods in relationship to the activities of their 9 to 11-year-old children. It was specifically designed as exploratory research based on the tradition of grounded theory to discover the socio-physical qualities parents viewed as dangerous to their children; to investigate how parents from multi-ethnic and racial backgrounds cope with their concerns; and the impact of their beliefs impact on their children's access to their neighborhoods.

The intention of this study was not to draw conclusions, but to suggest directions for future inquiry into establishing safe environments for urban children. There were three phases to the research. The first phase involved focus group interviews with parents and children residing in distinctly different neighborhoods.

This information was used to generate questions for more in-depth interviews with 42 parents (21 Hispanic and 21 non-Hispanic) living in two other multi-ethnic communities. Phase III of the study consisted of interviewing community leaders to document public policies related to children and danger.

For parents living in multi-ethnic, urban communities, danger for their children is a multi-faceted concept. It involves their assessment of people and places, their children's ability to cope with potential threats, the children's gender, and the parents' ability to control socio-physical conditions.

In terms of future research, the findings of this study suggest a wide range of topics and questions to explore. For example, why were the Hispanic mothers more protective of their female children, fearing sexual molestation, than the non-Hispanic mothers? What factors, e.g., cultural and/or environmental, have generated these fears? Other questions suggested by the research include; how are rules and place-regulations communicated to children by parents, and does the knowledge of potential

danger affect children's play or attitudes toward their neighborhoods? These are only a few questions raised by this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this dissertation and all my years of research to the children born into a world of violence, neglect, hunger, and pain; to Carlos Chef, a 4-year-old boy who died needlessly on November 12, 1992 from a random bullet on his way to church; and to all those who have experienced their own private moments of "awakenings." Though their souls may feel scared, may their spirits one day find peace.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family for their unconditional love:

To my father who taught me wisdom and a sense of humor when the going got tough.

To my mother who taught me how to pursue my dream, even if I couldn't spell it.

To my brother who taught me the meaning of the words courage and perseverance.

To my sister, (ma vrai amie) whose perpetual strength held my hands firm in the tunnel of darkness. To her many talents and her endless capacity to love. Thank you for helping me to find the strength to persist and be here today. And thank you Steve for being so good to her.

To Kristen R. "the sister soul of my insight," who never left my side and never will.

To Judith M. for her love and laughter, and her omnipresence in my life.

To Judith K. who listened and cared, always provided a smile or a shoulder to cry on, and will forever be a part of all of us who have entered this program.

To all my dear friends and colleagues -- for the pep talks, the laughs, the criticisms, the good times and the bad. Each of them have so graciously given me a part of themselves for life -- to Joan K. (your belief in me was always there), Irene F., Selim I., Chrysoula F., Shelly P., Stephan K., Carol O., Matt K., and Jean F. for her patience and willingness to give of herself.

I feel I have had the good fortune of being taught by a faculty who is dedicated to scholarship, human understanding, and their students.

I wish to thank Professor Gary Winkle, as my advisor during the first two years, for the time and patience he gave to all of us, even when we didn't understand a single statistical theorem.

I wish to thank Professor Roger Hart for the many years of sharing his professional experience with me. For helping to develop confidence in myself and believing in me.

I wish to thank my committee and outside readers for the time they gave to my dissertation and all their many insights that will help to make it a document to be proud.

And finally, in all my years in this program I have been honored to meet two exceptional women, Professor Leanne Rivlin and Professor Maxine Wolfe.

I learned from Professor Leanne Rivlin that one can share one's heart as well ideas, and what comes forth from this is a form of compassion that transcends the written word, and effects everyone and everything that surrounds us.

As for Maxine Wolfe, there are no words to express my gratitude for all of her gifts. If everyone in life were to be given one star to help lead them through the darkness, I was given Maxine to guide the way -- and to learn the meaning of courage and the power of conviction. I will be forever indebted to her for giving me my voice in the world, along with the confidence and boldness to think, challenge, and act. I am honored to have found both a mentor and a friend, and again would like to thank her and Emma Goldman for continuing to teach me how to dance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER I	
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	1
Introduction	1
The Urban Neighborhood for Parents and Children	6
Children's Experience of the Urban Environment	9
Parents' Fear of Crime in Urban Neighborhoods: Children and the Social Environment	23
Conclusion and Research Goals	37
Original Research Design	41

CHAPTER II**METHODOLOGY 46****A Description of the Study 46****Phase I: Pilot Group Interviews with
Parents and Children Residing in New York City
Neighborhoods 46****Phase II: Interviews with Parents Residing
in Corona and Elmhurst 60****Phase III: Interviewing Community
Representatives of Community District 4 84****Research Issues of Relevance to the Study 86****CHAPTER III****FINDINGS 91****An Introduction to the Findings Section 91****Parents' Conceptions of Danger: Physical
Attributes of Their Neighborhoods 92****Parents' Conceptions of Danger Within
Their Neighborhoods: Physical Qualities 94****Conceptions of the Stranger and Unfamiliar
Others 146****Parents' Conceptions of Danger and Safety 220****Summary 226****CHAPTER IV****DISCUSSION SECTION 232****Conceptions of Danger in Urban Neighborhoods 232****Parents' Conceptions of Danger and the
Risk-Taking Process 251**

	xi
Urban Dangers and Consequences for Children	272
Urban Dangers and Consequences for Parents	276
Policy Implications	280
Conclusion	284
 LIST OF APPENDICES	 285
Appendix A-1 Parents' Focus Group Interview	286
Appendix A-2 Children's Focus Group Interview	291
Appendix B-1 Children's Interview	296
Appendix B-2 Parent's Flier in English	299
Appendix B-3 Parent's Flier in Spanish	300
Appendix B-4 Introductory Telephone Call	301
Appendix B-5 Parents' Background Survey	303
Appendix B-6 Parents' Interview	311
Table C-1 Household Arrangements	322
Table C-2 Age, Gender, and Ethnic Grouping of Children	323
Table C-3 Child-Care Arrangements	324
Table C-4 Parental Educational Background	325
Table C-5 Family Income	326
Table C-6 Housing Types	327
 REFERENCES	 328

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Ancestry Profile of Queens Community District 4
Table 2	Ancestry Profile of Parents in Phase II of the Research
Table A-1	Parents' Focus Group Interview
Table A-2	Children's Focus Group Interview
Table B-1	Children's Interview
Table B-2	Parent's Flier In English
Table B-3	Parent's Flier in Spanish
Table B-4	Telephone Introduction
Table B-5	Parent's Background Survey
Table B-6	Parent's Interview

Table C-1	Household Arrangements
Table C-2	Age, Gender, and Ethnic Groupings of Children
Table C-3	Childcare Arrangements
Table C-4	Parental Educational Background
Table C-5	Family Income
Table C-6	Housing Types

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Queens Community District 4

73

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Historically, children in urban settings have always been subject to various forms of danger generated by either the social or physical environment. Nasaw (1985) and Goodman (1979) described children in the early 1900's hurt, maimed, or dying from encounters with horse-drawn carriages and wagons, streetcars, collapsing buildings, etc. Babies often died from exposure to the cold, from spoiled milk, or tuberculosis. Garbarino, Kostlyn, and Dubow (1991), who have studied children and danger in poor communities, found that random street violence threatens children both physically and psychologically since the 1980's. The threat of danger to children is a realistic peril in urban neighborhoods as well as in some children's homes.

The phenomenon of physical or psychological abuse of children is not uncommon. Barkas (1978), in his book Victims, stated that each year more than one million parents in the United States punch, kick, bite, neglect, or inflict harm with guns or knives on their children each year. The National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) has documented over 60,000 cases of sexual abuse in which over 80% of the children knew the perpetrator, who was usually a member of the family (Barkas, 1978).

Unfortunately, the NCCAN does not believe these statistics reflect the magnitude of these crimes and might really involve anywhere from 100,000 to 400,000 children on a yearly basis.

It is apparent from statistics such as these that, for children, danger can take on many forms. This is just one example of society's reluctance to grant children a legitimate voice in terms of the right to choose the material conditions to support them, and the right to have laws designed to defend them. It must be accepted as the first premise of this paper that, for children, danger or the potential for harm or death is omnipresent both inside and outside the home. The purpose of this paper is to explore parents' conceptions of urban dangers, but it should be noted that for some children the home can be as dangerous as their neighborhoods. In either case, society assigns parents the responsibility of protecting and safeguarding their children's welfare in most settings.

According to Held (1974), parenting is a social construct based on roles and obligations ascribed by society to each gender. Among parents' primary roles are the socialization and protection of their children, which involves the obligation to instruct and control their children's interactions with people and physical settings.

This entails, among other things, the transmission of cultural values, moral principles, and the communication of conspicuous messages to children regarding their interactions with the socio-physical environment (Baumrind, 1980; Michelson & Roberts, 1979; Valsiner, 1987).

Stratton (1989) stated that parental child-rearing ideologies arise from a cultural body of knowledge that is malleable to unusual socio-environmental conditions. Intrinsic to the socialization process is the need to control children's exposure to and physical interactions with their social and material world, including the idiosyncratic features of the socio-physical environment that may be of danger inside and outside of the home (Valsiner, 1987). Implicit in assuming these countless obligations is parents' responsibility to protect their children from danger, specifically the possibility of physical harm, psychological maltreatment, and moral injury.

The objective of this thesis is to explore in depth parents' conceptions of what constitutes danger for their children. "Conception," according to Webster's Dictionary edited by McKechnie (1979), is defined as "to take in, conceive an idea, especially a generalized idea of a class of objects (p.376)." The concept of urban danger has been

studied extensively, but has primarily focused its attention on the attitudes and conceptions of adults (Balkin, 1979; Conklin, 1971; Merry, 1981; Riger, Gordon, & Le Bailly, 1982; Skogan, 1990, 1986). Merry (1981), for example, proposed that danger is a social construct with different meanings depending on the individual's cultural background and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. Merry goes on to say that conceptions of neighborhood dangers are embedded in a belief system, often shared by members of a cultural/social group, that is associated or triggered by the arrival of strangers or distinctly different cultural groups into the community. Best (1991) adds that the concept of danger is shaped by the media to become a part of the cultural consciousness. Ross (1974) states that "danger is an elusive quality - lying partly in the environment and partly in the individual (p.146)." Due to the abundance of factors influencing people's conceptions of danger its assessment is a subjective evaluation (Ross, 1974) that also have the potential of inflicting stressful demands upon parents and their decisions when assessing risks for their children.

Risk-assessment is defined as a judgement or evaluation of the probability of harm and the individual's ability to cope with a potential threat (Thygerson, 1986). Sweenson-Garling, Garling, and Valsiner (1989) believe that

society's expectations of parents' abilities to assess risks and potential dangers for their children under varying conditions may be unrealistic. They suggest that in order to identify and avoid danger or accidents, parents must be capable of gathering pertinent information, identifying the danger, understanding causal relationships, and correctly estimating their children's capabilities. Depending upon the parent, the child, and the neighborhood, this may not only be an unrealistic task, but an unreasonable responsibility. Despite being unrealistic demands, society still places the burden of children's safety on the parent.

It is apparent that the conception of danger and the assessment of risks for children in the urban setting is a complex process. Numerous factors influence this process, which could include the residential qualities of the neighborhood, its geography, ethnic composition and stability, as well as parents' attitudes toward their neighbors and others in the community, etc. How parents from different cultural backgrounds conceive risks and various dangers for their children in urban neighborhoods, e.g., traffic, strangers, "neighborhood bullies," how they cope with potential threats, and how their decisions affect their children's outdoor play is the subject of this research.

The Urban Neighborhood
For Parents and Children

One cannot speak of children's exposure to urban dangers without examining the characteristics of the places they live, namely their neighborhoods. Urban residents may hold different conceptions of their neighborhood depending upon its geographic location, its socio-economic status, social characteristics, and the material conditions of the neighborhood (Albrant, Churney, & Cunningham, 1977; O'Hanlon, 1982; Rainwater, 1966; Warren, 1977).

According to Warren (1977), the neighborhood, as a concept, contains three distinct theoretical dimensions. Firstly, a neighborhood can be defined by its spatial or geographical boundaries, and where institutional and community facilities are located which support social activities. This geographical unit has physical properties that either support activities, such as shopping or hinder daily transactions because of the distance from public transportation. Lee (1981) explained that urban residents view the geographic concept of the neighborhood differently depending upon their individual needs, which results in a personalized view of a spatial dimension or a cognitive map of unstandardized geographical units.

A second theory discussed by Warren (1977) suggested that the concept of a neighborhood is a social-psychological construct and, therefore, is a subjective experience of transactions with the phenomenological world. From this perspective, the neighborhood is a place of residence where intimate social relationships transpire bounded by customs, community beliefs, and values (Appleton, 1975; Appleyard & Lintell, 1978; Fisher, 1976). The individual's experience is defined within the parameters of his or her activities, values, and perceived norms, which can be affected by the presence of residents from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Fried & Gleicher, 1961; Schoenberg, 1979). The ethnic and racial composition of an area also has the potential to affect the individual's opportunities, e.g., housing, employment, etc. (Merry, 1981; Schoenberg, 1979).

The third view proposed by Warren is the interrelationship between the physical and social properties of a neighborhood. Some neighborhoods provide settings for intimate personal gatherings or places where social status and territories are defined. However, the level of social interaction within any particular neighborhood could vary greatly by virtue of a number of factors, such as the racial-ethnic composition, its socio-economic characteristics, the age of the residents, their

educational level, the availability of community resources, and the social cohesion of the residents: all of which could influence the residents and/or parents' conceptions of neighborhood stability and safety for their children (Baroni and Green, 1977; Jones, 1973; Merry, 1981; O'Hanlon 1982).

Finally, Riger and Gordon (1981) proposed a fourth consideration: the idea that an individual's conception of their neighborhood is incomplete without attention to the political institutions that police areas, enforce laws, control access to spaces, and generally monitor public behaviors.

All these constellations of factors can create a dynamic system which influences how individuals or families conceive and respond to their place of residence and the people surrounding them. However, there appears to be a serious oversight in the development of these theories because they did not explore the individual as a member of a family unit to discern, if or how this might influence their attitudes and responses. This study will examine how fear of crime affects parents and their responses to their children's play outdoors.

Children's Experience of the Urban Environment

The urban environment is a complex setting because of the social and physical elements that are governed by socio-political forces which affect all areas of a family's experience. This impact is magnified for children because of their lack of social or political control over where they live and the planning of their environments (Aldrich, 1979; Michelson & Roberts, 1979). As an example, Michelson, Levine & Spina (1979) suggested that the social and spatial organization of neighborhoods implicitly communicates environmental meaning directly to children about their potential for control, mastery, and access to specialized places through both their parents' and personal experience in the setting.

Urban children do not share a common phenomenological experience of city life. The city contains a tapestry of different neighborhoods comprised of familiar and unfamiliar individuals from a range of racial-ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic status and life styles (Michelson and Roberts, 1979). The constellation of various socio-physical factors throughout different neighborhoods are interrelated and influence parents' conceptions of their children's opportunities for play and exposure to potential danger (Aldrick, 1979).

Berg and Medrich (1980) suggested that neighborhoods are "artifacts" constructed to support adult transactions. The scope of their planning and organization has ignored children's needs, which makes children even more vulnerable to forces that they may have minimal control over or not understand. The presence of children in neighborhoods has also been viewed positively in that they act as a catalyst for street life, bringing people together, attracting energy and vitality, and consequently enhancing neighborly communication and cohesiveness (Jacobs, 1961; Suttles, 1968).

Depending upon the setting, the family and the child, urban neighborhoods have physical and/or social qualities that are either valuable or of potential danger to children's play. Naylor (1985) stated that children are attracted to neighborhood settings that are non-static in nature. Mead (1966) suggested that neighborhoods have value for children in that they are places that can be explored without adults "in tow," places that communicate human values outside of the familial unit, and places where children learn about "the familiar" and "the strange." Mead also believed that children's encounters with the familiar and the strange are integral experiences to understanding the urban setting and, therefore, provide children with opportunities to learn about social qualities

that make the strange either interesting or potentially dangerous. Noschis (1984) concurs with this proposition and adds that children's exploration of urban neighborhoods provides them with opportunities to interact with the novel and the strange and to assign their own meaning to their experiences. He stated that for children, novelty and strangeness can take on a variety of forms, such as environmental hazards or even encounters with cantankerous residents. For many urban parents, it is the presence of the strange that would most likely influence their perceptions of neighborhood safety and their children's permitted access to places outside of the home.

Perez and Hart (1980) found three sets of dynamic forces restricting children's use of outdoor space in an inner-city neighborhood; the physical environment, social forces, and parents. Children's access to their neighborhoods is ultimately dependent upon a system of child-environment-parent negotiations (Perez and Hart, 1980; Torrell and Biel, 1985). These negotiations are contingent upon parents' conceptions of environmental risks, conflicts with the caretakers' schedule, the age and gender of the child, and an assessment of the child's capabilities. Parkinson (1987) adds to this list consideration of a neighborhood's demographics, the social milieu of areas around the neighborhood, and the cultural

values of the parents. It is the child-environment-parent negotiations that must be explored more closely to understand how parents formulate their conceptions of potential threats or dangers and their subsequent responses.

In observational studies, the physical qualities of a neighborhood have been important determinants to children's play (Berg & Medrich, 1980; Hart, 1976; Moore, 1986). According to many observational studies, children were frequently found playing on streets and sidewalks which were often their play areas of preference (Moore, 1985; Newson & Newson, 1976; Sell, 1985). Hart (1978a) suggested that children want to be where "the action is" -- places that adults frequent the most, namely the streets. Carrick (1985) reported that a variety of factors influence how children use their neighborhoods, including the style and density of housing, traffic flow, the terrain, proximity to novel places, etc. Moore (1989) stated that constructed settings like playgrounds do not substitute for the appeal of the city streets. He explained that streets vary according to the physical characteristics that can enhance play potential, such as trees, hedges, door-wells, railings, fences, wires, drains, benches, and parked cars. But Moore cautions that streets can also be hazardous places for children's activities, depending upon the width

of the street and the speed and volume of the traffic. Despite these types of hazards he concluded that, among children, "street activity is a universal phenomenon which will be maintained even if traffic levels are high and spacial differentiation is low (p.232)." There could be any number of explanations for this phenomenon, specifically the absence of space to play with other children away from adult supervision (Nasaw, 1985), children's desire for autonomy (Ward, 1979), their desire to learn and be a part of the adult world (Jacobs, 1961), or the challenge and risk involved while playing in the streets.

Studies have shown that children raised in an urban setting will utilize streets for play, but also frequent a range of other settings when given the opportunity. Sell (1985) stated that children will seek out informal places like empty yards and vacant lots. Lynch (1979) referred to such places as "wastelands," or vacant places where children can play and exert control over their environment. Hart (1979) found that places with objects, materials, and other children were the types of settings that attracted children because of their ability to creatively use and manipulate materials, as well as socialize. It is possible that these places were also utilized by children for privacy or to be alone.

The extent to which children are permitted access to different areas in their neighborhoods is referred to as their spatial range of movement or "home range" (Tindal, 1971). As children grow older, their range of movement begins to move farther away from their parent or caretaker (Bowlby, 1982; Hart, 1986). Sell (1985) proposed that the proximity of friends not only influences play repertoires, but also children's spatial range of movement. As children begin to use bicycles this range of movement begins to expand to more unfamiliar areas of their neighborhoods (Parkinson, 1987).

A variety of factors influence children's range of movement including parental assessment of environmental hazards, the age and gender of the child, the location of various landmarks, such as a school, the family's culture, whether siblings or friends are present, the parent's visual access, and the ecology of the neighborhood (Hart, 1978a; Parkinson, 1987; Perez & Hart, 1980; Tindal, 1971). It has been documented that as male children grow older, their range of movement is greater than that of female children (Bjorklid, 1982; Perez & Hart, 1980; Tindal, 1971). Moreover, Hart (1978a) found in his study of rural children that even when limits were set mothers were more likely to "turn a blind eye" to their sons' spatial transgressions, explaining "boys will be boys." As female

children grow older, they are likely to spend more time inside, be chaperoned to places or under greater surveillance by adults (Block & Walsh, 1985; Moore, 1986; Newson & Newson, 1976; Parkinson, 1987; Saegert & Hart, 1978; Tindal, 1971).

Hart (1978a) suggested that the extension of children's spatial range exposes them to "novelty" through the discovery of and interaction with new objects, places, other children, and unfamiliar people. Saegert & Hart (1978) have suggested that future research should explore in greater depth the differences in the social, cognitive and visual/spatial development of male and female children to discern if any differences could be attributed to the access to lack of spatial range within their neighborhoods.

Moore's (1986) study of children in a British town found that playgrounds were among their favorite places to play. Most city districts have at least one playground for use by local residents. At the turn of the century, out of concern for children's safety in urban neighborhoods, the American Playground Movement under the direction of the Reformer's Movement was responsible for creating structured play settings across the country (Nasaw, 1985). These formal play settings, ranging from gymnastic clubs to local playgrounds, were designed for poor immigrant children

controlled by adults, and reflected the reformer's conceptions of healthy play experiences (Goodman, 1979; Sutton-Smith, 1987, Wortham, 1985). With this legacy, present day playground design has integrated qualities valued by adults, specifically attributes viewed as safe and aesthetically pleasing to the community (Cohen, 1972; Ellis, 1973; Wood, 1977).

It has been documented that playgrounds are under-utilized by children (Hart, 1986; Moore, 1978; Wood, 1977). The static, monotonous quality of most playground designs is one explanation for their lack of appeal to children (Cohen, 1972; Ellis, 1973; Moore, 1985; Wood, 1977). Mason, Forrester and Hermene (1975) suggested that playground usage is dependent, in part, on qualities that appeal to both parents and children. Specific qualities considered important include the type and condition of the play equipment, the location of the playground, and the socio-economic characteristics of the users.

Cooper (1970) proposed that the stagnant, unappealing design of many traditional outdoor playgrounds may inadvertently encourage children's risk-taking, giving rise to safety concerns. Children have a propensity toward exploring and experiencing novelty in the physical environment (Ellis, 1973; Hart, 1986). Risk-taking may be

one arena for expressing these needs. However, children's need for novelty is only one facet of the safety issue. Wood (1977) suggested that playgrounds are built and designed to minister to adult needs for control and supervision, and that the developmental play needs of children is a secondary consideration. If playgrounds do not adequately satisfy the needs of children, inappropriate settings for play would possibly lead to accidents. It might also be considered that, if play environments are structured to satisfy adult needs, children's risk-taking and playground accidents might be an unconscious challenge to parental control.

Playground accidents attributed to children's play activities or equipment use are considered a subset of potential threats to children's play safety within the neighborhood context. There is a large body of literature on playground safety, but much of the research is fraught with invalid and unreliable assumptions and conclusions (Wilkinson, 1986). A review of the epidemiological statistics revealed that on a yearly basis approximately 120,000 children in the United States are injured on playground equipment (Tinsworth & Kramer, 1990). Many of these injuries were attributed to poorly-designed equipment, poor equipment maintenance, or poor playground design (Root, 1983). Wilkinson and Lockhart (1980) and

Sweeney-Briggs (1980) elaborated on the problems with this data, namely that hospital records failed to record social or physical antecedents to accidents, and school records were often poorly kept, omitting minor injuries.

Wilkinson (1986) concluded that in light of the paucity of information on children's patterns of use of playground equipment and accidents, definitive statements cannot be made about children's play accidents. Furthermore, Wilkinson underscored the fact that danger for children in playground settings is systemic in nature and varies depending upon circumstances surrounding the child, the caretaker, and the environment, e.g., age, physical and intellectual abilities, interactions with other children, the responsiveness of caretakers, and environmental qualities. But, in addition, it cannot be ignored that children have accidents in any setting. In a playground where they are more likely to run, play large motor games, and challenge one another, some accidents are inevitable despite the most conscientious efforts made by adults.

The fixed and predictable quality of playgrounds is one explanation for their under-utilization by children (Cohen, 1972; Ellis, 1973; Moore, 1985). Also evident in public play areas is a social reality of behaviors considered unconventional, deviant, or illegal, such as

drug trafficking, vagrancy, robbery, sexual molestation, etc. (Brower, 1974; Gold, 1977; 1974). For example, a study of 852 New York City playgrounds revealed that 19% were occupied by drug pushers and derelicts (Thomas, 1987).

Parental fears of social deviance also applies to their conceptions of public parks. Although both parents and children wish to visit these public areas, they are under-utilized because they are viewed as undesirable or threatening places (Gold, 1979; Perez and Hart, 1980; Jacobs, 1961). Crantz (1980) reported that women in particular have been largely overlooked in the planning of urban parks with the occasional exception of spaces created for family use. Skogan (1990) suggested that parks are avoided by urban residents because they feel little or no control over who has access to them and powerless to control or avoid potential danger. If it is true that parents fear public parks or playgrounds because of the people that may frequent them, then their conceptions, to some degree, influence their children's access to these places. This will be explored further in this study.

There could be serious consequences to children as victims of crime in parks, playgrounds, and neighborhood

settings. Children are mugged, assaulted, sexually harassed, raped, murdered, and kidnapped by adults and other children in both urban and rural environments (Arenberg, Bartimole, & Bartimole, 1984; Finkelhor, 1984; Hechinger, 1984). In a survey examining the fears of children ages 7- to 11-years-old, Zill (1983) found that 28% of the children were afraid to go outside for fear of being hurt by another person. Fifty percent of the children reported having been harassed while outside by adults or children, and 12% reported having been physically assaulted by other children. Children's victimization by other children has not been studied in great depth, but a British study suggested that children as victims of "bullies" suffer physical and psychological abuse, isolation, insecurity, and anxiety (Tittum, 1989). Bullying was defined as conduct by other children that includes name-calling, teasing, intimidation, extortion, assault, maiming, or murder.

Sell (1985) found that for parents living in urban settings there existed three paramount dangers for children, namely harassment, molestation, and traffic. Whenever children ventured outside of their homes, they are confronted by a complex physical environment that challenges their judgement and decision-making skills. Some elements of the environment that signal the potential

of danger are easily recognizable. Other qualities are more ambiguous and require more sophisticated responses to guarantee safe transactions.

Most parents viewed urban traffic as being unpredictable and threatening to their children (Blakely, Focus Group Interviews, May 12, 1987). Traffic accidents are among the most life-threatening issues for children in the United States (Christoffel, K., Schofer, J., Lavign, I., Tanz, R., Wills, K., White, B., Bartel, M., McGuire, L., Donovan, M., Buergo, F., Shawver, N., Jenq J., 1991; Jackson, 1977; National Safety Council, 1990). In urban areas, 1,800 children between the ages of 3 and 12 years died in pedestrian accidents in 1989 (National Safety Council, 1990). Five- to nine-year-old children were the most vulnerable group with male children being twice as likely to be injured or killed (National Safety Council, 1990; Yeaton & Bailey, 1977). A majority of 5- to 14-years-olds were injured or killed by vehicles on one- or two-way streets in the middle of the street (not at a crosswalk) between 2:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon on weekdays (Knoblauch, 1977; National Safety Council, 1990).

The layout and volume of city traffic has far-reaching effects on children's experience of a neighborhood. Streets create natural boundaries that are used to limit

children's range of movement (Berg & Medrich, 1980; Parkinson, 1982). Sell (1985) pointed out that a negative consequence of such boundaries is that they can prohibit children from playing with friends who do not live on their own streets. Appleyard & Lintell (1978) found that on light-volume city streets (less than 2,000 cars a day), residents have twice as many acquaintances, and twice as many children play on the sidewalks and in the streets than on more heavily traveled thoroughfares. Moore's (1986) British study examined children and traffic from a more dynamic perspective. He found that the speed of the cars and the volume of traffic influenced the street's play potential, the number and age of children playing, and the types of play activities.

Compared to adults, children are even more vulnerable to hazardous encounters with vehicles because of their height, developmental abilities, and the spontaneous nature of their play activities (Bjorklid, 1987; Sandels, 1974). Sandels (1974) reported that under the age of 11, children are cognitively and physically incapable of taking precautions to defend themselves in city traffic. Bjorklid (1982) concluded that traffic is a complex environment designed to be negotiated by adults. Vehicular routes were designed for adult use and modeled on adult cognitive schemata. Bjorklid goes on to explain that children are

not capable of safe interactions with traffic because they perceive the setting differently from adults and expect adults in cars to follow the rules that they were taught for negotiating vehicular thoroughfares. None of these studies speak to parents' awareness of accident fatalities and their children's use of bicycles. It appears that despite the obvious dangers of traffic in urban, suburban, or rural environments, parents continue to purchase bicycles and teach their children to ride.

Parents' Fear of Crime in Urban Neighborhoods:
Children and the Social Environment

It is apparent that fear of crime generates psychological stress for many urban residents, and more serious restrictions on children's activities. Loo (1986) documented that parents experience high levels of fear of neighborhood crime and its possible effects on their children. Yancey (1971) discovered that parents who were not well integrated into community networks were cautious about letting their children out without supervision. Rainwater (1966) found that parents in public housing felt insecure about letting their children outdoors for two reasons; the absence of easy surveillance and the distrust of people in the projects. In addition, Zill (1983) found, in his national survey of parents' and children's fears,

that young African-American children residing in urban centers are more highly supervised than Caucasian children due to their parents' fear of crime and random violence. Parents' fear of crime most likely has a definite impact on children's experience of their immediate environments. If residents fear neighborhood areas and are more likely to stay home or avoid places (Conklin, 1971), parents with children will most likely follow the same pattern.

Fear of crime is not an irrational response. However, studies have found inconsistencies in the magnitude of residents' fears compared to statistical reports of crime in cities in the United States (Skogan, 1976). He explained that statistical measures do not necessarily reflect reality when other salient variables are not taken into account, e.g., the increase in urban populations, the definition of criminal acts, and changing societal attitudes toward the reporting of crimes such as rape. Implicit in the interpretation of these statistics by the media is the assumption that the probability of victimization will also increase (Erskine, 1974). Regardless of the validity of statistical reports, perceptions of crime have steadily escalated to varying degrees in both urban and suburban settings, motivating residents to take measures to protect themselves, e.g., the purchase of hand guns and restricting outdoor activities

(Franck & Paxson, 1989; Hindllang, 1974; Loo, 1986; Merry, 1981; Suro, 1992).

Merry (1981) concluded that danger in relationship to fear of crime is a cognitive analysis of a situation that involves the assessment of spatial dimensions, time, day, place, and human factors. Merry, in her research of a multi-ethnic housing complex, found that the fear of crime and potential danger takes on many forms with different meanings for various individuals, depending upon their cultural backgrounds. Endemic to the residents' conceptions of danger is the individual's perception of the socio-physical setting, which includes the attributes of the physical setting, the socio-economic status of community residents, and racial tensions.

Merry also reported that according to Dubow, McCabe, and Kaplan (1979), the data reporting fear of crime is plagued with inconsistencies. Frequently the surveys that have attempted to define danger have relied upon differing definitions of danger that draw upon a range of theoretical dimensions, such as perceptions of crime rates or evaluations of personal safety. Many of these dimensions are interrelated, but have not created a coherent picture of the concept. They go on to explain that the concept of danger has been viewed as a continuous variable that does

not take into account the multifarious factors influencing individual interpretations that may not be so easily measured on a scale.

Rohe & Burby (1988) described three explanatory models for urban residents' fear of crime. The first and most commonly referred to paradigm is the "social control model." With the influx of new residents or strangers, neighborhood residents experienced a loss of social control over community norms and behavioral expectations. This was also documented in the research of Loo (1986) and Merry (1981). Depending upon the community, strangers were viewed suspiciously and perceived as disorderly, unpredictable and/or uncivil, and thus posed a threat to the individuals' self-respect, cultural or community values, and the underpinnings of the community fabric (Conklin, 1971; Merry, 1981; Skogan, 1990; Yancey, 1971).

According to the social control theory, with the perceived threat of danger, older community residents withdraw to their homes as fortresses of safety and limit their excursions to public places. As a result, familiar community residents are no longer seen, available, or willing to assist in case of an emergency. Consequently, the confidence in community support and protection deteriorates (Skogan, 1986). Jacobs (1961) and Newman

(1972) suggested that with fewer people on the street, community surveillance is minimized, putting the individual at greater risk. The social withdrawal of residents hinders cooperation, discourages pro-social community actions, and results in higher community turnover (Skogan, 1990). Merry (1981) suggested that a cohesive community promotes a sense of social order in a neighborhood. However, the presence of people in any given setting is not sufficient to foster a sense of safety. Community residents must perceive themselves as belonging and able to react responsibly to the appearance of strangers or to people who reside in the community but are unfamiliar or viewed as threatening.

The social control theory is an acceptable theory under certain circumstances. Other factors should be considered in its application to the urban setting. A sense of belonging to a community may not be a strong enough bond to unite residents against the intrusion of people who are unfamiliar or potentially dangerous. For example, without strong support from community institutions, drug pushers and street gangs present the potential for random violence and thus, have the potential to alienate, if not destroy, community cohesion. Children may suffer the most serious consequences by being restricted to their homes or accidentally exposed to random

violence that could have serious ramifications.

Skogan and Maxfield (1981) propose the second theory regarding fear of crime discussed by Rohe & Burby (1988), known as the "vulnerability model." This theory states that under specific conditions, community residents feel vulnerable to attack and powerless to resist. This theory is especially applicable to particular individuals under specific conditions. For example, Rohe and Burby documented that urban residents in more affluent neighborhoods are more fearful for their safety compared to low-income residents residing in less affluent areas. Lower income individuals, particularly African-Americans and other minorities, are more likely to experience greater vulnerability to crime, particularly harassment and personal and property violation (Rohe & Burby, 1988; Loo, 1986; Merry, 1981). Rainwater (1966) stated that the world of the poor is characterized by any number of dangers requiring watchfulness and avoidance of strangers.

Wilson (1981) cited in Lee (1988), reported that members of society's "under classes," e.g., the elderly, women and minorities, reported a higher level of fear of neighborhood crime. Women and the elderly are vulnerable social groups because they feel powerless and defenseless against attack (Kennedy, and Silverman, 1985; Riger, and

Gorden, 1981b). Women express higher levels of fear of walking through their neighborhoods than men and are more likely to take precautionary measures (Eskine, 1974; Franck, & Paxson, 1989; Riger, Gordon, M., & Le Bailly, 1982). Other groups that also feel vulnerable to crime include single people, renters, and inner-city dwellers (reviewed in Lee, 1981).

The third theory explaining urban residents' fear of crime is the "victimization model" (Rohe & Burby, 1988). The underlying assumption behind this theory is that urban residents who hear about local crimes or incidents involving people they know inadvertently identify with the victims. Vicarious victimization is reinforced through channels, such as the media and hear-say in and around the neighborhoods. However, it should be noted that other studies have documented that high levels of fear among urban residents are not necessarily related to victimization (Conklin, 1971; Hartnegal, 1979). This would indicate that additional factors must be researched to account for this phenomenon.

Other social scientists have examined the fear of crime from a socio-political perspective. Suro (1992) proposed that the fear of crime has crossed urban boundaries and has affected the national consciousness. At

the crux of the problem is a distrust or suspicion of community institutions intended to support and protect local residents. This distrust or alienation from these political bodies has resulted in increased fear, community instability, and private actions on the part of individuals to protect themselves, such as the purchasing of guard dogs and hand guns and enrollment in self-defense classes. For example, Loo's study (1985) of Asian-American residents found that confidence in police protection and neighborly intervention was highly correlated to their sense of safety. But many inner-city communities are not as homogeneous as the one studied by Loo, and do not feel adequate support from or trust in the local police departments or other community institutions.

Furstenberg (1971) proposed that an urbanite's reaction to crime is a response to a series of rapid, socio-political changes which have affected every sphere of the individual's life. Neighborhood instability is not only an urban phenomenon, but a social reality that affects family life, employment, the mythos of familial harmony, and economic opportunity. This perspective brings to the forefront the social and economic conflicts that plague many urban communities which can result in prejudice, distrust and fear among community residents, particularly for their children.

In many respects all of the aforementioned theories are credible explanations for the urbanite's fear of crime and have elements that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Fear of crime is not one-dimensional, but dynamic in nature. Social disorganization not only erodes the community structure, but affects the effectiveness of local institutions. Trust and support that normally would have been available from neighbors or community establishments are either absent or ineffectual. Outreach programs and informal community gatherings designed to welcome residents begin to disappear. Consequently, the cycle of deterioration, fear and alienation reproduces itself, especially for the elderly, women, and minorities who are even more exposed to social stress, feelings of vulnerability and possible victimization. The affects of community deterioration must inevitably have an impact on children's lives. Children are and want to be active members of community life and have the potential to enjoy their interactions with their neighborhoods. If parents fear the social composition of their neighborhoods, be it strangers or people from alien ethnic or racial backgrounds, their role as gate-keepers of their children's safety becomes more pronounced, ultimately penalizing their children's freedom.

For some urban residents, the physical attributes of neighborhoods also function as important cues that denote the presence of potential dangers (Rohe & Burby, 1988). Regarding the design of residential tracts, Newman (1972) suggested that physical settings which provide optimal opportunities for surveillance and/or areas that create communal territories to reduce isolation and vulnerability of residents are more likely to be perceived as safer environments. Other neighborhood attributes that could signal danger to residents are more subtle, but nevertheless are potent in their message of community disorder and deterioration (Rohe & Burby, 1988; Taub, Taylor, & Dunham, 1981). Visible signs of change can take the form of broken street lights, trash accumulation in streets and vacant lots, graffiti, broken bottles in recreation areas, and vacant buildings (Lewis & Maxfield, 1980; Merry, 1981; Skogan, 1990). Urban residents generally feel more vulnerable at night (Warr, 1980), and on streets without heavy usage (Jacobs, 1961). Alcoves, bushes and dense shrubbery along streets are also viewed as potentially dangerous because they cut off pedestrian visibility and provide refuge for criminals (Fisher & Nasar, 1992). But the physical qualities of a neighborhood are only one of many factors that appear to influence parents' conceptions of danger for their children. Fear of crime and the presence of strangers in their neighborhoods

could also affect their decisions to permit their children to play outside.

For many parents, the notion of a social threat takes the form of the stranger. Parents' concern with the prospect of harassment or abuse of their children by strangers or unfamiliar people compels them to restrict children, especially female children, their access to places in the neighborhood (Berg and Medrich, 1980; Newson & Newson, 1976; Perez and Hart, 1980; Torrell and Biel, 1985). According to Torrell and Biel (1985), if parents feel that there are no social or physical threats in the neighborhood, they impose fewer regulations on their children's movement.

There are many forms of relationships that are common to a metropolis. Some interactions build alliances that become familiar and congenial, while others are transient in nature (Simmel, 1950). Lofland (1973) suggested that the stranger or presence of "distinctive others" is of greater significance to the urban resident. Merry (1981) found in her research in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial community that conceptions of danger take on many forms, depending upon the individual and their racial or ethnic origin. For many, danger and fear of crime are associated with perceptions of social disorder, which in turn are

associated with the presence of the stranger.

In some respects the definition of the stranger is amorphous (Schutz, 1964). The stranger has been defined as someone who is unknown, unfamiliar, culturally alien, different from the established group, or falling into the realm of some "anonymous social category" (Lofland, 1973; Merry, 1981; Schutz, 1964). Lee (1981) discussed the notion of "urban unease" or anxiety in relationship to strangers or unfamiliar others. This anxiety or discomfort could stem from a variety of sources. Schutz (1964) believes that in a community, strangers are viewed as threatening because they do not share the cultural patterns of community life which includes shared history, habits, laws, or customs. Visible differences in appearance, such as facial features, racial or ethnic background, dress, language or behaviors, are cues by which residents amass information on individual differences and the individual's role or function in the neighborhood (Greenbei, 1981). It should also be considered that since strangers are more frequently observed throughout urban settings compared to suburban or rural environments, urbanites might have a greater sense of distrust.

For many of the residents Merry (1981) interviewed, the presence of the stranger was equated with danger and

social change. For these residents, danger and its personification in the stranger caused feelings of helplessness, uncertainty, vulnerability, and disorder. The absence of predictability and its association with the potential for violence aroused many of their fears. McIntyre (1967) reported that these types of fears are, for the most part, unfounded because most acts of violence are committed by a person who is acquainted with the victim.

For many parents, the presence of a stranger in their neighborhood appears to provoke numerous fears for their children's safety. The media have provided ample information on the subject of the "child victim" (Best, 1991). The media, as well as urban legends, communicate anxieties to parents about the stranger causing harm to their children. For many parents, the stranger represents a fear of physical or psychological harm, specifically in the form of sexual abuse or kidnapping.

From the child's perspective, Zill (1983) studied children's conceptions of social safety in neighborhoods and found that they were frightened of harassment by other children, but the subject of the stranger aroused fear of physical abuse and abduction. The number of children abducted annually by strangers is highly debatable because of inconsistencies in police reports and the absence of

universal criteria to define the crime. A commonly reported statistic is that 1.8 million children disappear in the United States on an annual basis, and the vast majority are either runaways or abducted by a non-custodial parent (Best, 1991; Hechinger, 1984). Parents' and children's fear of strangers can be attributed partially to the media exploitation of statistics from child protection organizations, which draw from poorly kept police records that estimate 4,000 - 20,000 children are kidnapped every year by strangers (Cerra, 1986). An estimated 4,000 to 8,000 of these children are found dead according to Representative Simon in the U.S. House, cited in Best (1991). For both parents and children, fear of stranger kidnapping appears to exceed the parameters of its actual occurrence. But if the crime were to occur, the implications for the family are grave, which might explain the rationale behind the fear. Consequently, one area of this study will explore parents' attitudes toward kidnapping. If they do express fear of this form of crime, what do they communicate to their children and how do both parents and children respond to the circumstances emotionally or in terms of rules placed on children, etc.?

Conclusion and Research Goals

It is apparent that urban life is imbued with the potential to threaten, harm, or kill children depending upon the circumstances. City traffic is the most obviously menacing of all potential dangers to children, and research has indicated that children up to a certain age are not cognitively capable of comprehending the myriad of rules required to maintain their safety (Sandels, 1974). But it should be noted that statistical reports fail to contextualize children's accidents with the details required to understand the accident as part of a systemic process, e.g., if there were stop signs present, the speed limit of the street, if the driver was intoxicated, etc. There are multiple factors that can account for an automobile accident. As Bjorklid (1987) reminds us, children are powerless to protect themselves in an environment that was designed to provide movement and latitude for adults.

Another form of danger that occurs less frequently, but receives a great deal of attention, is related to playground equipment. Here, again, is another type of urban setting designed by adults to satisfy adult needs for control (Wood, 1977) over children's activities and use of space and materials. Serious playground accidents have

occurred and government specialists have gone to great lengths to create safety guidelines for prevention of future injuries (Moore, Goltsman, & Iacafono, 1987). But when children have no choice but to play in a static environment with limited play potential, they are likely to create games and activities that involve risk-taking, thus increasing the possibility of accidents. Although children's use of equipment is reported in accident statistics, their activities are usually omitted. Parents' conceptions of safety in neighborhood playgrounds will most likely be viewed from the perspective of the physical setting, the children's play needs, and the parents' comfort. How these factors are related to one another (if at all) will be explored in this research.

In examining the neighborhood from a social perspective, the most ominous fear for most urbanites involves the presence or fear of crime. As reported by Wilson (1981), minorities, women, and the elderly are the groups most vulnerable to criminal activity. If women are among these high-risk groups, then mothers are most likely to be aware of defensive measures and the responsibilities they have to protect their children. For example, if women are frightened to venture out of their homes for fear of crime, they will most likely restrict their children too. What mothers' fears are in terms of crime and its impact on

their children will be one of the many interesting issues to be explored in this study.

In the eyes of many urbanites, crime is most likely to be committed by a stranger. To date, many researchers and theoreticians have provided definitions of a stranger, but have failed to ask respondents for clarification of their definitions. Is a stranger solely defined as someone who is unfamiliar to the neighborhood? Could a stranger be a neighbor or a shopkeeper or a person from a different racial or ethnic background? In an urban setting, where the influx of immigrants is rapidly increasing, community profiles are changing. What was once familiar may now be different or foreign to some community residents. Could this be a possible explanation for parents' increased fears of kidnapping and child molesting? How are parents responding to rapid changes in their communities in terms of conceptions of danger to their children? How do they see their neighborhoods, neighbors, and strangers in terms of their children's safety and how does it affect their children's access to their neighborhoods? These will be some of the issues to be explored throughout this research.

The purpose of this research is to discover how parents from different cultural backgrounds and with different economic resources and family life styles

conceive of danger and safety for their children in urban outdoor play settings. Neighborhood play settings are defined as any space children utilize for spontaneous play, including playgrounds, parks, city streets, vacant lots, and home-front spaces. The goals of this research will be to inform social theory and generate questions for future research. The specific research aims are:

1. To discover parents' (and children's, if possible) conceptions of safe, unsafe, and dangerous environmental qualities.
2. To discover the most salient factors (the child's gender, racial or ethnic background, parental employment, environmental qualities, etc.) associated with parents' conceptions of their children's safety or danger in their neighborhoods.
3. To investigate parents' beliefs, as well as their sources for information on neighborhood play safety.
4. To discover whether and how neighborhood qualities viewed as safe or dangerous influence children's play activities and parents' monitoring strategies.
5. To explore whether parents have ideas about how to make their neighborhoods safer places to play.
6. To uncover policy implications relevant to creating safer places for children to play in their neighborhoods.

Original Research Design

In order to gather the quality and quantity of data required to create a valid and reliable picture of parents' conceptions of danger and the socio-physical forces influencing their beliefs and responses, a research design was developed utilizing multiple methods of inquiry. In addition, it was believed necessary to interview a range of individuals who could provide insight into the subject matter from the two communities chosen in Queens, New York, e.g., community representatives.

Five research phases were initiated. The first phase involved pilot focus group interviews of parents and children residing in East Harlem and Astoria, two distinctly different communities in New York City. This phase was devised to better understand parents' and children's conceptions of neighborhood dangers which would guide the questions for Phase II of the study. Phase II interviewed parents and children in the Corona and Elmhurst communities in Queens, New York. Further detail on these phases is provided in the methodology section.

It should be noted, however, that children's interviews in Phase II of the study were omitted from data analysis. Each parent in this phase of the study was provided with a description of the children's interview and

examples of questions that would be asked. Twenty-seven out of 37 parents denied permission to interview their children, explaining that they were either too busy to make another appointment or that their children were not available. Permission was granted for a 10- to 15-minute interview with 10 children (seven Hispanic and three non-Hispanic) from nine families. Male and female children were equally represented. All interviews took place at a time stipulated by the parents. All parents insisted on being present throughout the interviews.

The children's interview consisted of 10 questions which asked them to describe their play activities and the places where they enjoyed playing in their neighborhoods (see Appendix B-1 for Phase II Children's Interview). Only one question probed their experience or knowledge of danger in their neighborhoods. All 10 children were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw participation if they felt uncomfortable or wished to engage in other activities. Despite an attempt to develop a rapport with the children by having them draw pictures of their neighborhoods and talk generally about their friends and favorite play activities, most of them remained reserved and answered many of the open-ended questions with clipped responses, e.g., "yes," "no," "I don't know," etc.

The discomfort experienced by the children during the interviews could be attributed to any number of factors. For some children, the parent's presence during the interview inhibited spontaneous responses. For other children, the novelty of the interview and the fact that the interview took place in their home with an unfamiliar person might have generated tension or uneasiness. There also existed the possibility that, although the children were informed of their right to decline the interview, they consented for fear of disapproval from their parent or the interviewer. After attempting to analyze the children's interviews, it was decided that the circumstances surrounding the interviews invalidated the data. An in-depth understanding of children's activities in their neighborhoods and perceptions of urban dangers cannot be elicited in a short interview. A more comprehensive study would permit ample time for children to develop a trusting relationship with an interviewer. Interviews along with observational methodologies could create a more valid and reliable picture of their play activities, as well as their conceptions of danger.

Phase III of the research explored parents' conceptions of danger from the perspective of case studies. After each parent was interviewed, they were asked permission to interview other family members and to spend

time in their homes to observe their children's indoor and/or outdoor activities. The purpose of an in-depth examination of a small number of families was to explore different parental monitoring strategies, the relationship of these strategies to children's play activities, and parents' conceptions of danger and safety in their neighborhoods. Although four families permitted Phase II interviews of all family members, permission to spend any length of time in the households was denied due to family schedules. Consequently, this phase of the study was eliminated.

Phase IV of the research explored conceptions of danger to children from the perspective of the community representatives of Community District 4. Interviews were obtained from the police, school principals, and recreation leaders.

The goal of the final phase of the research program was for a voluntary sample of the parents from Phase II to critique the findings and describe their interpretations of the data in a focus group discussion. After data analysis was completed, letters in English and Spanish were sent to all parents who participated in the study, describing the purpose of the focus group interview and requesting their participation. The letter informed them that they would be

given a fee of \$15.00 for their participation in a one-hour interview to be held in Corona. Only one parent returned the consent form provided with the cover letter, confirming her interest. This phase of the study was also discontinued because of a lack of parental participation.

The following section on Methodologies will explain in greater depth the research instruments, the demographics of the participants, the procedure, and the analysis used for each phase of the study.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

A Description of the Study

The Corona and Elmhurst communities of Community District 4 were selected as research sites for a number of reasons: their proximity to a large, public park; their distinct residential qualities; and the district's ethnic and racial diversity. The combination of these qualities permitted an in-depth examination from a multi-cultural perspective of parents' conceptions of danger and safety for their children that ranged from public recreation spaces to their neighborhoods.

Phase I: Pilot Group Interviews with Parents and Children Residing in New York City Neighborhoods

Background

The first phase of the research identified the conceptions of danger held by parents from various racial and ethnic backgrounds residing in economically diverse areas of New York City. In the absence of research literature in this domain and on these specific issues, the

pilot investigation was used to construct the research questions for the subsequent phases of the study.

According to Alasdair (1982), mothers' reports of children's outdoor activities may not always be reliable. Therefore, during the pilot phase it was considered important to interview parents and children to ascertain their conceptions of danger in their neighborhoods, learn about places where children's play occurred, and about the places children were forbidden to play. Two data sources would create a more tenable picture of the participants' perceptions and would further the study by understanding the child's reality. The children's descriptions of neighborhood dangers were compared to the parent responses to explore the similarities and contradictions between their conceptions.

For the first phase, an ethnoscientific approach was utilized because of the explicit relationship between conceptions of specific phenomena and the individual's cultural experience (Geertz, 1983; Ogbu, 1982). Cultural knowledge can only be revealed by exploring the meanings ascribed by individuals to social events, behaviors, institutions, and the geographical context in which they live. The ethnoscientific approach does not presume to know in advance the relevant concepts or questions to be

explored, but permits this type of information to emerge from the discussion.

This phase of the study was structured in the tradition suggested by Spradley (1979). Use of this approach supported the examination of the individual's experiences in a number of ways that are different from traditional social science interviews. The key elements of the interview are as follows:

1. The interviewer runs the interview in such a way that the language and concepts relevant to the topic will spontaneously emerge from the respondent. Consequently, the interviewer avoids asking directly about meaning and instead, focuses on the concept as described and used by the respondent.
2. The interviewer stresses that it is the respondent who is the expert on the topic under discussion.
3. The goals of the research are shared fully with the respondent, which maximizes their understanding of the research agenda.

Since the primary purpose of this study was to investigate parents' conceptions of the socio-physical environment and its potential danger to their children, focus group interviews were conducted in order to stimulate interactive discussions of the issues and advance richer definitions of the issues and concepts.

During this phase of the research, parents' and children's ethnoscientific interviews were conducted using a focus group format. This was a slightly different approach from the ethnoscience tradition, but had its benefits for the purpose of this study. A focus group is comprised of six to twelve people led by a moderator who facilitates, in a non-directive manner, an in-depth discussion of specific topics. The focus group structure has a variety of advantages (Merton, 1956). The combination of the ethnoscientific approach, which permits the respondents to define the issues, and the focus group format was to permit respondents discussion among themselves of the issues and concerns. This ultimately helped to build the concepts and categories under discussion which would be used later in Phase II of the study.

Phase I: Procedure

Two parent focus groups were organized over a period of four months, from September to December, 1987. All participants resided in Astoria, Community District 1 in Queens, New York. These parents were solicited from advertisements circulated through local commercial establishments, e.g., laundromats and supermarkets.

Although eight parents agreed to participate in the focus group, only five parents attended the meeting. The focus group interview was held in a local residence on a Saturday afternoon. Child care was provided.

The second parent focus group took place in East Harlem, a community in upper Manhattan. Parents were solicited by sending flyers home with children in the 4th and 5th grades attending a small, experimental, public school in East Harlem. Three parents responded to the flyers, and two additional parents, who were school assistants, volunteered to participate on the day of the interview. The interview took place during the school day at the East Harlem Block School.

Phase I: A Demographic Profile of the Focus Group Participants

Parents' focus groups

A total of five parents participated in the focus group interview in Astoria, Queens. One of the five participants was a father. Parents were of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, e.g., Greek, Italian, and African-American. Three parents were married and two were divorced. Four participants lived in multiple-family

housing and one individual lived in a low-rise apartment building (under 4 stories). One individual owned a house and all other participants rented their dwellings. All their children attended local schools and were registered in after-school activities. This group of parents described their concerns about danger as they related to three female children and two male children enrolled in the 4th grade.

The second focus group consisted of four African-American mothers and one African-American grandmother, all with children attending the experimental school in East Harlem. Three mothers resided in low-rise apartment buildings and two participants lived in a the high-rise housing complex adjacent to the school. All parents rented their housing. Three participants were married and two were divorced. These parents discussed three male and two female children in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades, with only one child registered in after-school activities.

For both focus groups, the hour-long discussions were tape recorded. All participants were insured of their right to confidentiality and told that they could withdraw participation from the discussion group at any time. They were also informed that they would be given access to the research findings upon completion of the study.

Children's Focus Groups

Four groups of African-American children were interviewed in a focus group format at the East Harlem Block School. The first group consisted of five children, and the remaining groups contained only three children each. The children ranged in ages from 9- to 11-years-old and were registered in the 4th and 5th grades. The first focus group consisted of both male and female children, while the remaining groups were segregated by gender (one group of boys, two groups of girls).

The initial plan was to conduct focus group interviews with larger groups of children, but the school schedule interfered with this agenda. This happenstance ultimately worked to an advantage. Smaller groups of children created a more relaxed atmosphere and permitted experimentation with the focus group interview format. For example, with the children in Group One it was immediately apparent that the focus group interview was boring, cumbersome, and too long (it lasted 45 minutes). The length of the subsequent group interviews was significantly reduced to focus on only the most salient issues and took approximately 20-25 minutes to administer.

Phase I: Parent Focus Group Instrument

The goal of the first stage of the research was to discover the concepts relevant to parents' experiences of danger and safety for children's play in their urban neighborhoods (see Appendix A-1 for Parent Focus Group Interview). The topic areas covered in the sessions were:

Parents' descriptions of:

1. places their children go to play in their neighborhoods and their repertoire of play behaviors.
2. places in their neighborhoods they considered dangerous or safe for children's play.
3. places their children would go to play, if they had no restrictions.
4. places where they forbid their children to go in their neighborhoods.
5. places in their neighborhood where their children might be frightened, anxious, or afraid to play.
6. playgrounds and/or parks in their neighborhoods, and the qualities they considered dangerous or safe.

Phase I: Children's Focus Group Interviews

The focus group questions for children were similar to the parents' focus group interview in order to compare responses between groups (see Appendix A-2 for Children's Focus Group Interview). The themes discussed were:

Children's descriptions of:

1. places where they go to play in the neighborhoods and their repertoire of play activities.
2. the qualities or characteristics of their neighborhoods that they defined as dangerous or safe.
3. places in their neighborhoods where they might be frightened, anxious, or afraid to play.
4. their neighborhoods' parks and playgrounds.

Phase I: Data Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

The goal of the analysis of these data was to delineate the domains or categories of experience of danger for parents and children in their neighborhoods. The objective of this phase of the research process was not directed to the generalization of patterns of behaviors, but to establishing the themes to be explored in future research. As recommended by Glasser and Corbin (1990), group transcripts were analyzed according to themes, categories of responses, patterns of relationships, inconsistencies, and contradictions. These themes, categories, and contradictions became the issues to be addressed more systematically during Phase II of the research.

Phase I: Research Implications Emerging from the Parents'
Focus Groups

It was apparent throughout the discussions in both parent focus groups that their conceptions of urban dangers were used to justify their restricting children's outdoor activities. In both the parents' and the children's group discussions, two inter-related domains of danger were delineated; specifically, the conception of threats to children's safety generated by characteristics of both the physical and the social environment.

Although the two parent groups resided in different neighborhoods, they shared a number of similar concerns for their children. Both groups worried about the effects of city traffic. As one Greek mother stated:

"I can't let her walk to school alone [her 4th grade child] even though it's three blocks away. People speed down 31st Avenue, they don't care about the children."

The possibility of speeding drivers, compounded by their children's inability to negotiate busy streets, prompted parents to restrict their children's access to social and recreational sites in their neighborhoods. Parents from both groups also voiced complaints about the conditions of the local public playgrounds. Parents identified poor equipment conditions and the lack of

maintenance as problems that affect their children's play safety. The mothers from the East Harlem focus group appeared more angry over this issue due to the poor quality of equipment provided in their high-rise housing complexes and the lack of alternative play areas. One African-American mother remarked:

"I can take him outside but I won't let him go near that stuff. It's broken, has nails, and he could fall off of it. Why don't they give us some nice things for the kids to play on?"

Children's use of public settings was, in part, contingent upon permission to visit sites, the presence of an escort or peers, and the safety of the setting. Phase II of this research explored places where parents permitted or took their children to play, their perceptions of danger posed by qualities of the physical environment, and the effects of neighborhood resources on children's outdoor play safety.

It was also made apparent in parent focus group interviews that children's access to play areas was not solely contingent upon parents' assessments of the physical features. The social milieu of public settings also influenced their conceptions of danger and their children's freedom to visit places, such as parks and playgrounds. In both parent focus groups, the gravest fears for their children's outdoor play safety related to the possibility

of harm or injury inflicted by strangers. Focus Group One (Astoria parents) described their concerns about unfamiliar people. They viewed adolescents in the parks and playgrounds as potentially threatening. Some adolescents were considered capable of violence because of their involvement with drugs. This group of parents also referred to the strangers or homeless people observed around the subway terminal and the men seen loitering around or nearby the Off-Track Betting establishment. These people were regarded suspiciously because their public behaviors aroused the parents' fears of the possibility of kidnapping and/or sexual molestation.

Focus Group Two (East Harlem parents) described fears of neighborhood drug pushers, who frequented street corners, playgrounds and residential courtyards. They reported that the drug customers often came from outside the neighborhoods -- "white people" -- who also could not be trusted with their children because their transient nature raised fears of kidnapping. As reported by this African-American mother:

"Yeah, there's drugs everywhere. But we wouldn't have all of these problems if these white people from downtown and New Jersey didn't come here to buy them. Yeah, you can see it. All you have to do is read the license plate."

The parents' concerns for drug trafficking were also associated with their fears of random violence that could accidentally harm their children. They disapproved of their children's exposure to drug-related activities for fear that their children would be innocently assimilated into the trade, physically injured, sexually abused, or kidnapped by those using or selling drugs.

It could be surmised from these discussions with parents in both focus groups that the fear of strangers or unfamiliar persons played an important role in parental monitoring strategies rule setting and children's place use. Children were closely watched or only permitted outside in specific places, e.g., the front yard.

Information from parents in the focus groups was used to direct the next stage of research. Questions explored in greater depth parents' perceptions of strangers observed in the communities, parents' use of public spaces and perceptions of others, and how the presence of strangers or unfamiliar community residents influences children's access to these areas. Questions also inquired into how parents cope with their fears and how their coping mechanisms affect their children.

Phase I: Research Implications Emerging from the Children's
Focus Groups

The children's focus groups provided some insights into many of the issues described by parents. The children, like the parents, discussed the danger of city traffic. From their points of view, cars went too fast, ignored traffic signals, and were unpredictable in their movements. Neighborhood traffic influenced their freedom and mobility to visit friends and use local playgrounds.

According to children's discussions, playgrounds were the most popular places to play, along with courtyards of high-rise complexes where public recreation for people of all ages took place. Many of the children appeared to be aware of the menacing character of some of the individuals seen in neighborhoods, from courtyards to local convenience stores. They described acts of violence and juvenile crimes observed in various settings, e.g., knife, or gun fights, and muggings. Most of children were not permitted to go outside alone, but were accompanied by either adults, siblings or friends. When children were asked what they would change in their neighborhoods to create more places for fun, they came up with a variety of creative responses. Male children talked about water slides and amusement parks, while many of the female children described more

elaborate playground equipment. But one 4th grade boy became quite serious and withdrawn. When he was probed for a response, he answered, "I'd stop the killing."

From the children's group interviews, it became important that Phase II of the research project investigate parents' concerns for the specific issues brought up by the children. What do parents communicate to children about these types of urban dangers and to explore how they attempted to monitor children's safety under varying circumstances where fear of strangers is involved.

Phase II: Interviews with Parents
Residing in Corona and Elmhurst

Phase II: Procedure

Local school support was necessary to secure families for interviews. Meetings were arranged with principals and P.T.A. representatives from three public schools and one parochial school in Community District 4, along with one school outside of the district that bordered the district line and the public park. This particular school had an ethnic and racial composition similar to the other schools

used in the study. The school representatives were informed of the purpose of the study and that they would be given a written summary of the research findings. All five educational institutions approved of the study, thereby granting permission to announce the project at the monthly meetings of the Parent Associations, and to distribute flyers describing the study for 4th and 5th grade children to take home.

The fliers explained, in English and Spanish, the purpose of the study and included a permission waiver (See Appendix B-2 and B-3 for English and Spanish Fliers) to be returned in a stamped-addressed envelope. Although 73 permission waivers were returned in toto, over 50% of the parents declined participation because they were too busy to meet or were not fluent in either English or Spanish. (See Appendix B-4 for Introductory Telephone Call). Interviews were only given in English and Spanish because they were the two dominate languages of the communities. One PTA president expressed surprise that any parent was willing to give an interview because the community had a tendency to distrust psychologists, researchers, and outsiders in general who asked questions about their children.

During Phase II of the study, 32 mothers of 4th and 5th grade children were interviewed. Mothers were the focus of the study because of their specific knowledge of children's place-use (Newson & Newson 1968; 1970). Although fathers' participation was desired, discussions with mothers during the pilot phase of the study indicated that husbands would not be interested in participating or not be available due to conflicts with their work schedules. However, this was not found to be the case in all households. Upon completion of the data collection, 32 mothers and 10 fathers consented to be interviewed for a total of 42 participants. It should be noted that five mothers and fathers came from the same households. Consequently, a total of 37 households were represented.

Parents were interviewed at the time and location of their choice. All but one parent chose to be interviewed in their homes. The option to speak in Spanish or English was offered to all participants. For parents choosing to be interviewed in Spanish, an Hispanic interviewer conducted the interviews and acted as a liaison between the investigator and the Hispanic households. The Hispanic interviewer was also responsible for translating and transcribing the audiotapes.

As with Phase I, parents were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to confidentiality, and that they could withdraw their participation at any time. They were also informed that they would be given access to the research findings upon completion of the study.

Phase II: Instruments

All 42 parents were administered an identical two-part interview. The first part was comprised of 24 questions designed to obtain demographic information on family members and the child(ren) to be discussed (see Appendix B-5 for the Parents' Background Survey). The questionnaire was administered orally to minimize any feelings of discomfort among parents who might have difficulty reading either English or Spanish. The Parent Background Survey took 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The second section of the interview consisted of 50 open- and closed-ended questions in either Spanish or English (see Appendix B-6 for the Parents' Interview). The instrument was designed to explore different dimensions of danger as suggested by parents and children during the pilot phase of the study. In the interviews, parents were asked to describe:

1. the social and physical characteristics of their neighborhoods considered dangerous or safe for their children's play.
2. parental attitudes and beliefs about strangers in their neighborhoods and social crimes, e.g., kidnapping or sexual molestation.
3. personal experiences of danger or risk of injury to their children or other children in their neighborhoods.
4. what they would change or do to make their neighborhoods safer for their children.
5. where and how parents received their information regarding local dangers.

During the interviews, the investigator provided each parent with a map of their community (Corona or Elmhurst) to mark places where their children played and any significant environmental features considered dangerous. Most interviews lasted approximately 50-60 minutes. With permission, both Part 1 and Part 2 of the interviews were tape recorded. No one refused the request.

Phase II: Data Analysis of Parents' Interviews

All open- and closed-ended questions in parents' interviews were content-analyzed for themes, concepts and categories of experience as suggested by Anselm Strauss and

Juliet Corbin (1990) for the development of grounded theory. This approach involves the systematic breakdown, comparison, categorization, and conceptualization of the data from the early stages of research through to its final phase. Some of the steps utilized were:

1. mapping out salient themes throughout all stages of the research process, along with dimensions and qualities associated with these themes.
2. the creation of conceptual memos used to document hunches, hypotheses, explanations, etc. They are created through the coding of various dimensions of experience.
3. the creation of theories and hypothesis by the coding of themes that emerged in the conceptual memos.

After the completion of data analysis of parent interviews, categories were tested for inter-coder reliability by two independent judges and resulted in an agreement level of 92.2%

Descriptive statistics were performed on ordinal data to examine demographic variables, such as children's ages, length of residence, etc. Statistical procedures were also utilized with the data from parents' neighborhood maps to ascertain the average distance of children's range of movement in their neighborhoods.

For the purpose of analysis, even though there were intra-group differences due to the diversity of Hispanic backgrounds, Hispanic mothers (n=16) were analyzed separately from non-Hispanic mothers. Non-Hispanic mothers (n=16), although consisting of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, were also studied as one group as representative of the communities' diversity and to compare responses to those of the Hispanic mothers. If a pattern of responses emerged from a particular ethnic group within the non-Hispanic group of mothers, e.g., Asian-Americans, it was discussed even though the number of participants was small. Fathers (n=10) responses were grouped together for analysis and integrated throughout the findings section. If fathers' responses differed significantly from those of mothers', these differences were commented on. Finally, conceptions of danger were analyzed from the perspective of all parents as a single group to explore the similarities among responses related to issues and concerns that crossed gender, racial, and ethnic boundaries.

One of the most difficult tasks in this study was deciding how to go about describing the range of themes and categories of experiences expressed by parents. It was apparent that parents had numerous concerns specific to the socio-physical environment, its relationship to their familial circumstances and cultural values. Some themes

were reiterated throughout interviews by large numbers of parents, such as their fears of kidnapping or sexual molestation. However, themes also surfaced which appeared to be of equal importance, but were not voiced by as many parents. These themes could not be ignored, even though they were not necessarily representative of the larger group. Because of the small unrandomized sample, numerical representation did not necessarily validate the significance of group responses. It was therefore decided that throughout the Findings different themes and categories of experience would be expressed in a quasi-numeric/verbal form that would describe trends in verbal responses. Themes and categories of experience were expressed in terms of whether "many," "some," "a few," or "one" of the parents articulated a specific issue. Occasionally, a numeric value was introduced to highlight a point. This approach should yield a better understanding of the significance of particular concerns for groups of parents without disregarding the unique experience of an individual parent.

A brief statement must be made regarding issues of communication between the investigator and some of the parents. Eighty-one percent (n=34) of all parents were foreign-born. Many spoke English fluently, but there was difficulty in comprehending the language of others who

occasionally used idioms familiar only to their native language.

Interviewing these parents was not a simple task, but a necessary one if their voices and experiences were to be represented in this research study. To clarify points, the interviewer was required to repeat or rephrase questions, repeat responses, and rely on the body language of the parent for emphasis or meaning, e.g., pointing to an area of a street or turning the face away to avoid a response. The Hispanic interviewer of Puerto Rican descent was also required at times to investigate cultural idioms and probe for clarification of specific points. The translations of Spanish interviews, and thus the parents' quotes, reflect the culture's grammatical organization and syntax. All but four quotes in the Finding Section are written verbatim. The rationale for the use of verbatim dialogue was to maintain the integrity of the parents' emotional response and concerns. Brackets are used when necessary to clarify the meaning of the quote.

Phase II: Community District 4: Profile of the Community

A brief history of Community District 4

At the turn of the century, Corona and Elmhurst attracted Swedish immigrants aspiring to escape the tenements of the Lower East Side in New York City (Coghlan, 1980). For these early residents, the qualities considered most attractive were the area's easy access to New York City, the clean air, and spacious living conditions. In the 1920's Italian immigrants relocated to Corona from New York City and are still present today. During the 1940's and 1950's, Corona and Elmhurst were considered parochial communities with closed interactions with the outside world (Taltsch, 1988). This has changed dramatically over the past 20 years and the communities now share their resources with other ethnic groups (Community District Needs, 1988; Tomeo, 1977).

The Socio-Profile (1986) reports that the district presently attracts immigrants from around the world. Thirty-six languages are spoken by the district's inhabitants, and 64% of the residents speak a language other than English at home. Asian immigrants are the most recent group of residents in the area and reside primarily in the Elmhurst section. Forty-two percent of the

district's residents are of Hispanic descent, primarily immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Residents of non-Hispanic descent represent 65% of the population. (See Table 1, Ancestry Profile of Community District 4).

Table 1

Ancestry Profile of Queens Community District 4

Ancestry Profile	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
White Non-Hispanic	42,213	35.680
Black Non-Hispanic	12,138	10.260
Hispanic Origin	42,530	35.950
Asian American	18,618	15.730
American Indian	148	0.120
Other Non-Hispanic	2,658	2.240
Total Population	111,303	100.00

(Demographic Profile, 1983, p. 120)

Community District 4 (CD4), of Queens, New York, is considered one of the most congested districts of the city with a population of approximately 130,000 (Community District Needs, 1989). Even this figure is considered an underestimation. Because of the heavy influx of illegal

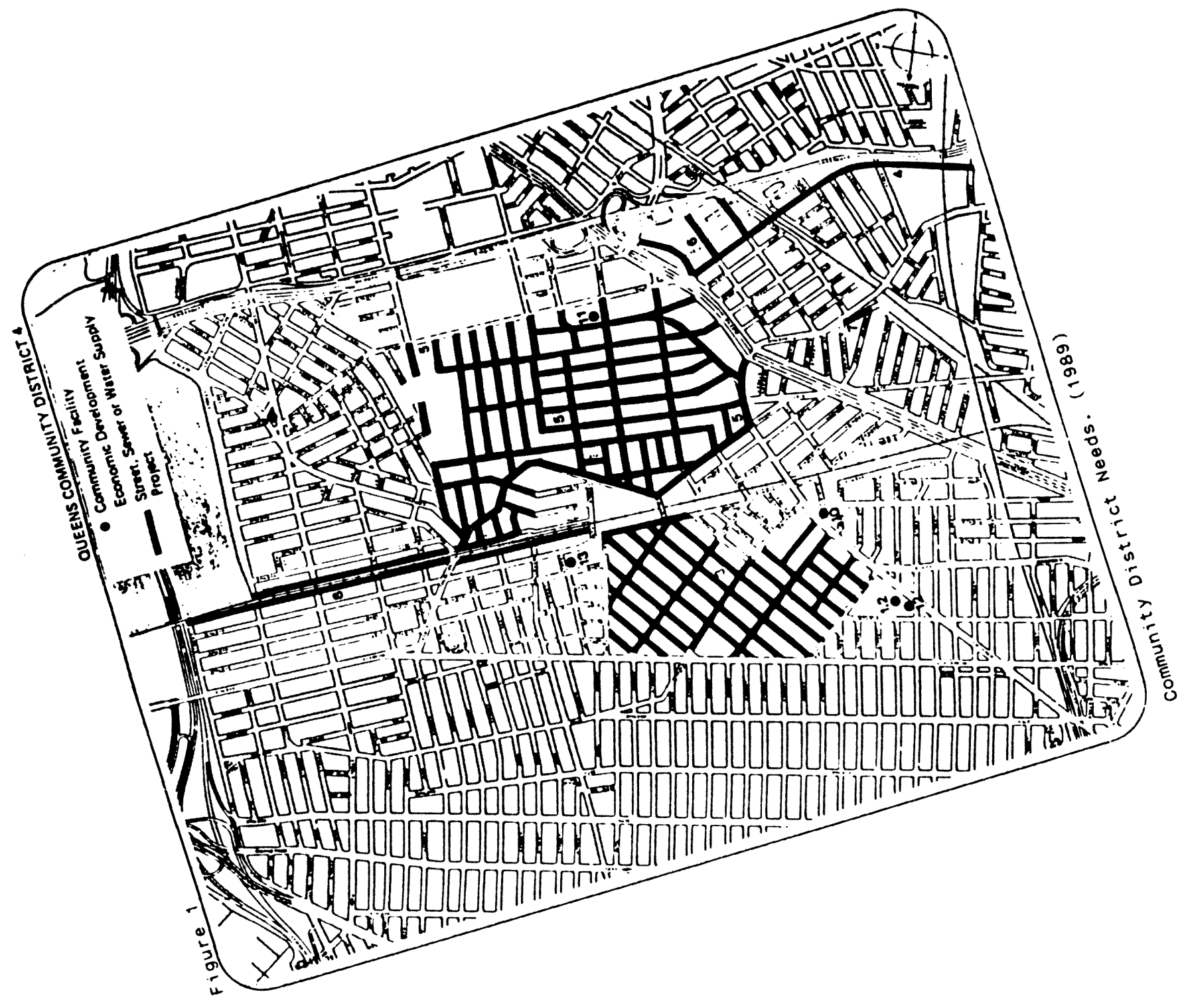
immigrants over the past decade, the district's population is presently estimated to be approximately 200,000 (R. Bearek, personal interview, July 12, 1987; Rothchild, 1989). Community District 4 is composed of both middle- and working-class neighborhoods with a mean income for a two-worker family of \$24,000, which does not take into consideration the earnings of illegal immigrants (Community District Needs, 1989).

The district is primarily a residential area with housing stock characteristic of New York City's urbanized residential areas. Over 85% of the land area is utilized by residences and 75% of all housing is rented (Socio-Profile, 1986). Sixty-eight percent of all rentable housing units are low-rise dwellings (under 4 stories), the most common of which are one-, two-, or three-family houses (Rothchild, 1987). Twenty-six percent of all occupied housing units are four to six stories high and 14% of all residences are taller than seven stories (Socio-Profile, 1986). The largest residential complex in the district is known as Lefrak City, consisting of taller buildings which accommodate approximately 25,000 people, most of whom are of minority descent (Community Board Needs, 1989).

A larger commercial area with department stores and franchise restaurants lies adjacent to the district's eastern border. Public transportation provides residents with easy access to New York City for employment and recreation. The Corona and Elmhurst communities contain multiple types of vehicular thoroughfares, including one-way, single-lane streets, two-way streets, and four-lane boulevards. (See Figure 1 for a Map of Community District 4 on page 73).

The Corona and Elmhurst communities bear their share of urban problems. According to the Community District's 1988 yearly report, these communities are confronting numerous obstacles involving population expansion compounded by indiscriminate zoning, which contributes to over-crowding and unstable neighborhood relations.

Bordering the western boundary of CD4 is a regional public park which was the site of the 1964 New York World's Fair. Flushing Meadows Park has a children's farm, the Hall of Science Museum, the "Playground for All Children," and 50 acres of green meadows (A. Abramowitz, personal interview, August 10, 1987). This makes it an extremely popular place for family recreation.



Phase II: Background Information on Parents and Their
Children

Ethnic Background (n=42)

One of the goals of the research was to explore the influence of ethnic or racial backgrounds on parents' conceptions of danger for children in urban neighborhoods. The ways in which different cultural groups cope with the demands of urban life can be communicated to their children through attitudes, rules, and behaviors. How and to what extent these perceptions might influence conceptions of danger and parental monitoring strategies were examined by selecting heterogeneous communities like Corona and Elmhurst. The parents who participated in this phase of the study (Table 2) were a relatively accurate reflection of the ethnic distribution in Community District 4 (Socio-Profile, 1986).

Table 2

Ancestry Profile of Parents in Phase II of the Research

Ancestry Profile	Mothers		Fathers	
	N	%	N	%
Non-Hispanic				
Italian	4	9.37		
West Indian	2	6.25	1	10.
East Indian	3	9.37	1	10.
Asian-American	3	9.37	2	20.
African-American	3	6.26		
Irish	1	3.13	1	10.
Hispanic				
Dominican Rep.	9	28.12	2	20.
El Salvadorian	2	6.25		
Columbian	2	6.25	1	10.
Ecuadorian	2	6.25	1	10.
Mexican			1	10.
Cuban	1	3.12		
Total	32	100	10	100

Parents' Age (n=42 households)

Sixty-eight percent (n=28) of all mothers and fathers were between the ages of 31 and 40. Fourteen percent (n=6) of all parents were below the age of 31, and 19% were over the age of 41. The eldest participants were two substitute parent substitute figures (Hispanic relatives) with legal custody of their children. Both of these individuals were in their sixties.

Marital Status (n=37 households)

Sixty-five percent (n=24) of the parents were married and living with their spouses. Thirty-five percent (n=13) of the parents were separated, divorced or single (see Appendix C for Table C-1 describing Household Arrangements). More Hispanic parents (24% or n=11) than non-Hispanic parents (19% or n=7) were living with relatives regardless of whether they were married or divorced. In many of these households there was the presence of other children as play companions, or relatives who could assume the responsibility of after-school child care.

Family Composition (n=37 households)

Interview requirements stipulated that each family had to have guardianship of at least one 9-, 10- or 11-year-old child in the 4th or 5th grade. In mothers' interviews, the neighborhood play experiences of 16 male and 16 female children were documented. Fathers described issues of danger for six male children and four female children (see Appendix C-2 for Table 2 describing the Age, Gender, and Ethnic Groupings of Children).

The average age of the children in the study was 9.5 years. The Hispanic group of mothers (n=16) had three 11-year-old children (1 female, 2 male), while there were no 11-year-old children among the non-Hispanic mothers. Younger children (9-years-old) were more heavily represented among the non-Hispanic mothers and fathers. It will be evident that non-Hispanic parents were speaking of a slightly younger group of children, e.g., 4th graders. Regardless of age, all children were in either the 4th or 5th grades. Out of the 10 fathers interviewed, two fathers had 11-year-old children.

Profile of Children's After-School Activities
(n=37) households.

Forty-three percent (n=16) of all children, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, participated in some form of after-school activity provided by the schools or private agencies. Thirty percent (n=11) of non-Hispanic children engaged in after-school activities compared to 38% (n=14) of the Hispanic children. Close to 50% of all of the male children participated in after-school activities, whereas 44% (n=7) of non-Hispanic females compared to 77% (n=4) Hispanic females were registered in some form of routine recreational activity. The most common activity was children's involvement in scouting or sports (mostly male children), which involved an average of three to four hours a week. Only female children were registered for private music, art, or dance lessons. Sixteen percent (n=6) were registered for a program sponsored by the school on an average of twice a week.

Seventy percent (n=26) of all parents stated that their children completed 1 1/2 to 2 hours of homework a night, which also included assignments from religious instruction and private English classes. The four Asian-American families were less inclined to permit their children outside to play during the school week or be

involved in after school activities. They reported that their children were required to do at least 3 to 4 hours of homework a night.

Fifty-nine percent (n=22) of all children, male and female, from Hispanic and non-Hispanic households spent one to two hours a day outside after school. Only one non-Hispanic male child played on average more than four hours outside on a school day. Forty percent (n=15) of Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents kept their children inside after school or refused to let them play outside without their direct presence. They stated outdoor play rarely occurred. Some parents reported that after school activities kept their children occupied. The children who did not play outside after school were almost equally distributed between Hispanic and non-Hispanic households. However, parents reported that five (20%) male Hispanic children did not play outside compared to two (12%) male non-Hispanic children.

The average number of children per household was 2.29. Forty-nine percent (n=18) of all children discussed in the study had siblings who were 1 to 3 years younger, and 40% (n=15) had siblings 1 to 3 years older. Many of these siblings were playmates and outdoor companions for the children under discussion. Four Hispanic families and two

non-Hispanic families had single-child households.

Family Child Care (n=37 households)

Forty-one percent of all mothers (n=15) were responsible for overseeing their children after school. This included full-time homemakers and those who worked part-time inside or outside of the home. Fourteen percent (n=5) of the Hispanic families had relatives care for their children after school, compared to 11% (n=4) of the non-Hispanic households. Four children were left unattended after school, and one child attended day care (see Appendix C-3 for Table 3 describing Child-Care Arrangements). According to two of the five fathers, their wives assumed responsibility for after school supervision.

Parental Education (n=32)

There were some notable differences in the educational backgrounds of parents depending upon their ethnic and racial origin, and gender. Thirty-one percent (n=13) of Hispanic parents did not complete high school, compared to 7% (n=3) of the non-Hispanic parents. The majority of non-Hispanic mothers (56%) (n=18) pursued advanced education, compared to 13% (n=4) of Hispanic mothers. (See Appendix

C-4 for Table 4 detailing Parental Educational Background). Non-Hispanic fathers appeared better educated compared to the Hispanic fathers. Four non-Hispanic fathers had advanced education with only one father not possessing a high school diploma. Among the Hispanic fathers, two held advanced degrees, two held high school diplomas, and one had not finished grade school. The apparent differences in the educational background of the parents could be attributed in part to cultural backgrounds and the availability of resources.

Family Income (n=37 households)

Four of the 42 parents declined to disclose their incomes. Forty-five percent (n=9) of Hispanic mothers made below \$20,000 per year, compared to 31% (n=5) of the non-Hispanic mothers. The median family income reported by parents (n=17) was between \$20,001 and \$40,000 (see Appendix C-5 for Table 5 Family Income). Sixty percent (n=3) of the five fathers interviewed and not married to the other interviewees made over \$20,001 a year, with only one individual earning between \$30,001 to \$40,000. In total, two families made over \$40,000 per year, and four families (11%) made below \$10,000.

Car ownership could have a number of implications for family recreation by providing access to places outside the community. More non-Hispanic parents (30%, n=11) owned cars, compared to Hispanic households (19%, n=7). This afforded non-Hispanic children greater opportunities for geographical movement throughout areas of the city and countryside, whereas Hispanic families may have had to rely more heavily on local resources like the borough park and the public recreation programs.

Employment Background (n=37)

Fifty percent (n=8) of the non-Hispanic mothers were employed full-time compared to sixty-three percent (n=10) of the Hispanic mothers. Fifth percent (n=8) of the non-Hispanic mothers and 38% (n=6) were either full-time homemakers or worked part-time during the day, but were home for their children after school. All ten fathers were engaged in full-time employment. The wives of the five fathers who were not interviewed (1 non-Hispanic wife worked full-time, and 3 Hispanic wives worked full-time). Out of 37 families interviewed, forty-three percent (n=16) of the mothers worked as full-time homemakers or part-time.

Housing Profiles (n= 37 families)

Sixty-eight percent (n=25) of all families in this study rented their housing. Almost equal numbers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic families owned their housing. Four non-Hispanic parents and one Hispanic parent lived in high-rise housing. Fifty-nine percent (n=22) of maternal and paternal interviewees resided in two-three family homes, many of which they shared with relatives (see Appendix C-1 for Table 1 describing Household Arrangements). Sixty percent of fathers interviewed, who were not married to mothers in the study (n=3 out of 5), owned their houses (see Appendix C-6 for Table 6 on Housing Types).

The length of residency in the neighborhoods should be noted. The length of residence of non-Hispanic parents averaged a mean of 8.7 years (n=17), compared to Hispanic parents with a mean of 5.4 years (n=20). Many of the Hispanic parents interviewed were newly-arrived immigrants. Parents from the Dominican Republic were heavily represented. The length of residence of some of these families may be one factor that affects their perceptions of danger in their neighborhoods.

Phase III: Interviewing Community Representatives
of Community District 4

Phase III: Procedure

This phase of the study documented the public policies of local leaders from institutions comprising the community's supra-structure. These interviews documented the extent to which public policies, as described by official representatives, support or contradict parents' perceptions of dangers to their children in their communities. Local officials have access to information and resources that might be unknown to community residents. In addition, public officials possess the power to provide or deny resources, depending upon the political importance of the issues.

Community interviews were obtained from the director of Flushing Meadows Park, the Community District 4's urban planner, three members of the CD4's Community Board, a youth recreation director, the sergeant from the juvenile division of the district's police department, and two elementary school principals.

Phase III: Instrument

Closed and open-ended questions were integrated throughout the interviews to address the background and expertise of each community official. Open-ended questions asked the officials to describe the forces they believed affected children's play safety in Corona and Elmhurst. The more focused questions probed the urban forces or political factors affecting their definitions of danger, and how their agencies or institutions responded to these threats. Most interviews lasted approximately 10-15 minutes, were tape recorded, and took place at either the individual's place of employment or by telephone.

Phase III: Data Analysis

Each interview was reviewed for issues and themes that related to parents' concerns documented in Phase I and Phase II of the research program. The information and points of view described throughout these interviews were integrated into the Findings Section, along with parent data, in an effort to explore the relationship between parents' conceptions of danger and safety and civic initiatives in their neighborhoods.

Research Issues of Relevance to the Study

Discussion of parents' concepts of urban dangers, specifically those of kidnapping and sexual abuse, cannot proceed without reference to an incident that occurred during data collection. In the early spring of 1988 the media announced the news of an Hispanic man molesting female children in Woodside, a community adjacent to Corona and Elmhurst. Reports stated that the perpetrator followed children home from school and molested them in building entrances or on the rooftops of apartment buildings (Newsday, 1988). Eight children were victimized over the course of nine months. As the crimes continued, parents began to refer to the "Queen's Rapist" in their interviews. Information about the crimes came from the media and neighbors. The local elementary schools took an active role in drawing attention to the danger by notifying parents and scheduling meetings for parents with the police precinct's chief of detectives.

Six parents were interviewed before the crimes began. To what extent this incident prejudiced parents' perceptions of danger in the neighborhood or influenced their monitoring strategies could not be determined from the later interviews. A review of the transcripts of the six parents interviewed prior to the incident revealed that

all but one parent spontaneously mentioned the threat of kidnapping and sexual abuse as potential dangers to their children in the neighborhood. Sixty-four percent (n=24) of the parents interviewed referred to the Queens rapist as an example of a local danger during the time the crimes were being committed.

It might be assumed that for some parents, the incident validated or even intensified some of their fears. The fact that the crimes were being perpetrated so close to their neighborhoods most likely affected parents in any number of ways. Some parents were inclined to discuss their fears of social crimes during the interviews, while other parents declined mentioning the subject, perhaps because of the anxiety it provoked. The following mother's comment illustrates the influence this event had on her:

"It could happen. We had an experience a couple of months ago that there was a man that was molesting girls in the neighborhood. And in reality that is like an alarm, so that we could be alert. And I thought about it, and I think it can happen anytime with anyone."

There was also a second incident which occurred two years prior to data collection in another nearby community. In 1986, a 12-year-old girl disappeared while walking a block from her home on a Sunday morning. Her physical remains were found in upstate New York in March 1988, during the data collection period. Three parents

interviewed referred to this incident as a rationale for their fears. One mother explained:

"...and the fact that it took place in the next neighborhood. You know, anytime something happens like that it always makes you a little more protective then you... Sometimes you tend to, like, slack off a little bit. But when something like that happens, you tend to, like, tighten the reins a little bit more. And you know its a tragedy of course. That fact that it was so close and the girl was 12-years-old. You figure at that age they are more or less safe, and look what happens."

Parents' Reactions to Specific Topic Areas

Child abduction and sexual abuse were difficult topics for some parents to discuss. A majority of the mothers assumed the primary responsibility for monitoring their children's outdoor play and implementing safety monitoring strategies, and most were willing to discuss their feelings on these subjects. But for some parents, the topics were laden with emotion, partially associated with their personal or cultural values or gender socialization. For example, a few Hispanic mothers appeared reluctant to answer some of the questions regarding sexual abuse. Some of these mothers dismissed the questions on kidnapping or child abuse by saying these were terrible crimes that could not happen to them and should not be talked about. Others were notably upset over the questions probing these subjects and walked away from the interview, cried, or answered with eclipsed responses such as "No, no,...we don't think about that now." A few fathers declined to speak in-depth on the subject, giving short, curt responses, such as "I talk with him" or "...that is for the mother to talk about." Two fathers felt that child abduction was not applicable to their situation, e.g., they

were too poor to pay ransom or the crime was foreign to their cultural experience. One Hispanic father remarked:

"In my country we don't tell [talk about it]. My father never told me, so we don't talk."

Future research will have to find ways to elicit data on these subjects in a way that puts the parent at ease to talk more openly.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

An Introduction to the Findings Section

The Findings Chapter is divided into four parts. These four sections will discuss how parental fears influenced their children's access to and use of neighborhood play settings. The first section addresses parents' conceptions of danger as they relate to the physical attributes of their neighborhoods. Parents responded to issues surrounding residential features, city traffic, and the design of local parks and playgrounds. The second section discusses parents' conceptions of social dangers in greater depth, touching upon topics, such as xenophobia and fear of kidnapping and child molestation. The third section describes how parents attempt to cope with their fears for their children's safety through the development and utilization of child monitoring strategies, such as rule-making as a means of controlling child/environment interactions. The fourth section describes some of the effects urban dangers have on parents and children living in these neighborhoods. According to parents, these effects were complex and generated grave concern for themselves and their children's well-being.

The Discussion Chapter that follows will summarize the seminal themes in the study and their implications for future research.

Parents' Conceptions of Danger:
Physical Attributes of Their Neighborhoods

How Parents Defined Their Neighborhoods

As described in earlier research (Lee, 1981), the concept of a neighborhood varies for urban residents, depending upon their personal history, social networks, and use of local resources. Parents of Corona and Elmhurst were asked to outline on a map the spatial range of their neighborhoods, in addition to marking areas that they regarded as safe or dangerous for their children's play.

According to the parents' maps, Corona and Elmhurst consisted of numerous neighborhoods with ambiguous borders containing physical and social elements important to individual parents, such as commercial and recreational resources, social affiliations, etc. It is important to note that most all parents (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) failed to include on their maps specific areas associated with drugs or criminal activities; areas they discussed

later in their interviews. These were apparently not a part of their definitions of a neighborhood and also were among the places that all parents prohibited their children to visit.

Compared to parents from other ethnic backgrounds, Hispanic and Asian-American parents were more likely to delineate neighborhood boundaries according to the locations of relatives and friends from similar backgrounds. Many of these parents remarked that these specific homes were safe havens where their children could play, and were important places in their neighborhood for private social functions.

Parents' maps varied in size from less than one block (an Hispanic mother) to 49 blocks (a non-Hispanic mother). Two of the six non-Hispanic parents who were raised in the communities outlined the largest spatial ranges for their neighborhoods. The remaining parents delineated smaller neighborhood territories. The neighborhoods of the Hispanic households were an average of one to two blocks smaller than non-Hispanic households. Three Hispanic parents drew neighborhood boundaries under two by two blocks, but had been living in the area less than two

years. One Hispanic mother went so far as to describe her neighborhood as:

"My neighborhood is from one corner of my house to the next, and the house in front."

However, the size of the neighborhood did not appear to correspond strongly to either the parents' length of residence or the gender of the child. There appeared to be no apparent pattern that indicated other relationships.

It was evident that, although these parents resided in the same community district, their definitions of their neighborhoods seem to vary according to their access to social supports, community resources, and proximity to places associated with illicit activities. Even though some of the parents' neighborhood boundaries overlapped, no two parents traced exactly the same neighborhood.

Conceptions of Danger Within Their Neighborhoods:

Physical Qualities

Dangers for Children in Urban Residential Neighborhoods

Many city neighborhoods possess physical and social resources for children to observe and explore (Jacobs, 1961). Some neighborhoods may provide children use of

interesting landscapes, designed spaces and unused areas as play spaces (Moore, 1986). The daily activities of local residents can also be fascinating to children (Jacobs, 1961). For most of the children residing in Corona and Elmhurst, opportunities for playing in or exploring their surrounding neighborhoods was restricted and/or closely monitored by parents. This was due to parents' beliefs that their neighborhoods were dangerous places for their children. The city streets contained unknown threats that could injure or even kill their children. Most parents restricted their children's range of movement to the areas immediately surrounding their homes, where they could closely monitor their children's outdoor activities and unfamiliar people.

Most parents, particularly mothers, felt strongly about keeping their children as close to home as possible. The home territory, whether it was a house or a low-rise apartment building, was associated with safety for a number of reasons. Mothers said they were available to monitor and to intervene in children's activities, as well as observe the activities of unfamiliar adults or children in the vicinity.

Most parents (particularly Hispanic mothers) felt strongly that the safest place for children to play was

inside the home, and many parents refused their children access to the outdoors unless an adult was present. As these Hispanic mothers explained:

"Where it is safe is here. Here inside the home is the safest place for her." (This mother wanted to keep her child away from strangers and men who could be a bad influence.)

"He never really goes outside, only in the summer ...you see, the safest place for him to play is inside the house, where I am checking up on him." (She feared the strangers in the neighborhood.)

"He's an outdoor child, but I don't let him go out. There are too many drugs. I don't trust anyone. There are too many drugs out there."

When parents were asked to describe the safest places for their children to play, for Hispanic mothers and fathers the theme of "home" kept repeating itself throughout the interviews. This applied to both their male and female children without regard to the employment status of the mothers. In Spanish, the word "safe" or "seguro" means to be sure of, certain, protected, and without risk according to Cassell's Spanish-English Dictionary (Dutton, Harvey & Walker, 1969). For these parents, the home appeared to have a deeper psychological meaning for the family unit. As one Hispanic mother stated:

"It doesn't matter where you live for you are always safe in your home."

Although non-Hispanic mothers and fathers also mention the home, the frontyard and backyard as the safest place to play, their most frequent description of a safe place to play was "with me there."

The children who were allowed outside without the direct presence of an adult were required to stay within close proximity to the home. It appeared that for most of the families interviewed, the home setting and the sidewalks (within 400 feet of the house) were the areas where most play activities took place.

Most children residing in houses were restricted to the front- or backyards or to adjacent sidewalks. A majority of parents either owned or rented private or 2- or 3-family residences, of which 51% (n=19) had front- or backyards. More Hispanic than non-Hispanic households had homes with front or backyards, and thus they permitted their children outdoors more often to play only in these areas. In most of the households, both parents worked. Parents considered their own backyards and the backyards of their children's friends as the safest places for children to play outside. Their reasoning was that these types of enclosed spaces discouraged interlopers, while simultaneously permitting parents the means to monitor the

surrounding neighborhood. This East Indian mother provided a reason:

"I like them to play in the back. It is better for them. They can run and play ball with their friends here. I can see everything that goes on. It is safe for them."

Parents with yards also preferred their children to play in these areas because it kept the children's activities contained and separated from traffic. According to this Hispanic mother:

"...I don't like him to go outside like that. I like him to play inside. It is better that he brings his friends inside the house. There is a backyard in the house. I prefer him to stay here because--in case of any danger in the street which I might not be aware of."

Three times as many Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents with a female child had homes with yards compared to parents with male children.

It should be noted that mothers worked full-time in 50% of the non-Hispanic families who owned or rented a house with a yard. Among the Hispanic families with yards, 81% of the mothers worked outside of the house. This would indicate that unless the Hispanic children had a baby sitter, or a live-in relative, they only used the yards after-school or on weekends or after their parents returned from work.

In a similar vain, the few parents residing in low-rise apartment housing limited their children's play activities to their buildings' courtyards which circumscribed their contact with the neighborhood, its typography and its social milieu.

Many of the community representatives shared similar views to the parents. Many of the Community Board members agreed that the safest place for children to play was in their homes. But they didn't elaborate on the subject nor offer any recommendations for change to the neighborhood to make it safe. (Community District 4, personal interviews, November 12, 1987). The police lieutenant also concurred that children at this age should stay close to home or play indoors (Police, personal interviews, February 27, 1987). The two school principals believed the streets were extremely dangerous to the children and if they couldn't play at home, they should participate in an after-school activity (Principal, personal interview, January 18, 1988).

The surveillance of children by parents was a key issue that determined children's use of any of the spaces outside their home environment. This appeared true for most parents, no matter what housing type or ethnic background. Most parents in houses reported having visual and auditory access to their children from a window or

door. This statement was often qualified by the condition that the children remained in specific locations when they played outdoors. With the exception of families living in high-rise residences, most parents stated that they could hear their children if they called for help or assistance. Yet one West Indian mother explained that visual or auditory access to her child in the event of an emergency depended upon specific conditions:

"This is very doubtful since one is constantly doing things. Maybe there is a TV or something, so you can't hear what is outside in."

There exists the possibility that some parents could not hear their children call for help, depending upon conflicting noise in the environment, parents' activities, the layout of the house, or their location within the home or apartment. It might be questioned to what degree parents' auditory or visual access to their children is an illusion. Hart (1986) stated that competing activities occur in all households which, to varying extents, can affect children's safe interactions with the physical world. Nevertheless, most parents believed that they had auditory access to their children from the residences and, therefore, could respond to them if they were in need.

Moore (1986) found that children's play activities on sidewalks were limited, depending upon the area's landscaping and the availability of play materials. According to Jacobs (1961) sidewalks serve an important function in children's play by demarcating acceptable play areas away from traffic. According to many of the parents from Corona and Elmhurst, children utilized sidewalks for sports, ball play, and movement activities, such as running, skipping, and skating. More traditional girls' games, like jump rope and hopscotch, and quiet play activities like board games, were played on sidewalks, in driveways, in front yards, or on door stoops. But, for some parents, sidewalk play generated concern because of their children's proximity to city streets. According to one Italian mother:

"Streets are the most dangerous places for children to be near. Day time, night time, anytime it's dangerous. The things that happen that one hears. That a little girl has been taken away. You see things happen to children in the street."

From casual observation, it was noted that few children were seen playing on the sidewalks, except on dead-end streets or smaller streets which were designed for two-way traffic and had stop signs or lights to control the speed of automobiles.

Parents' descriptions of children's play activities occurring in backyards were slightly different from those initiated by children in frontyards, or on sidewalks. Most of the houses with backyards had physical boundaries created by hedges and fences. In these enclosed spaces, some parents permitted children the use of a wider range of play materials. This Italian mother explained:

"He's a G.I. Joe fan, so that is out in the yard. You know. And the building things. He loves building things with his hands, so there are blocks and rocks and building things."

Only four parents with two boys and two girls resided in low-rise apartment buildings with courtyards. According to these parents, their children engaged in quiet play activities, such as board games and fantasy play in the courtyards. The design of the courtyards, i.e., the position of the entrances and the amount of space, often limited the range of the children's motor activities. In some instances, children's use of bicycles was the exception. Bicycle use was permitted in these specific areas in order to keep children away from the streets.

Parents' perceptions of danger in and around their residences apparently had implications for their children's access to the out-of-doors. But parents also reported fearing areas of their neighborhoods that were undergoing changes of social qualities that generated suspicion or

worry with regard to their children's safety. Interviews with parents residing in high-rise residences illustrate this point quite clearly.

In Corona and Elmhurst, high-rise residences comprise only 10% of the housing stock (Community District Needs: Queens, 1989). Only five of the 37 families interviewed resided in high-rise residences. These five families differed in family composition, racial or ethnic background and, to varying degrees, in socio-economic status. All five families lived above the 5th floor of their buildings.

Three of the five families interviewed resided in Lefrak City, a high-rise housing complex in Elmhurst. Two of the three mothers worked full-time. Their perceptions of urban dangers mirrored the feelings of the two families residing in the other two high-rise residences. Therefore, this section will concentrate on the conceptions of danger and safety as seen through the eyes of parents living in Lefrak City, but will make reference to the circumstances surrounding the other families when appropriate. The experiences described below demonstrate one Lefrak City mother's living environment and some of the issues she believes she must confront to keep her family together and safe.

Mrs. A was a single, African-American parent with two young daughters residing in Lefrak City, a low- to moderate-income residence. The housing complex contains over 2,400 families in six buildings. These buildings were constructed in the 1960's, and originally targeted for middle-income families as rental units or condominiums. Each building is 15 stories high with a security guard at the main entrance to screen visitors. A small play yard with stationary equipment was located adjacent to each of the six buildings. All six buildings shared a swimming pool and an athletic field. With the transition from middle-income housing to low- and moderate-income housing over the past 20 years, the play yards are the only recreational areas that are still maintained.

Mrs. A's greatest fear for her daughters' safety was associated with the presence of drug trafficking in the lobby, hallways and in front of the residences. She explained:

" Well, they're now evicting persons known to be using or selling drugs. You know they say they're doing things like that like locks on the doors [to the stairwells], but they break them.

They have cleaned it up a lot though 'cause there used to be glass and drugs and vandalism everywhere. They are really making an effort."

According to Mrs. A, then, building security paled against the persistence of the drug culture that was to be found both outside and inside the buildings. Consequently, she felt that the boundaries between indoor and outdoor safety were tenuous at best. Mrs. A not only prohibited outdoor play, but restricted her daughters' movements within the apartment building as well.

"I let them go to the library after school in the Continental Room in back of the building. They run a sort of tutorial program. I think a lot of parents send their kids there because they use it like a babysitting program, but I think others use it cause they know their kids are safe from the drugs."

Mrs. A stated that her older child was an "indoor child" who preferred to read and draw or play dolls with her younger sister in the apartment. Later discussions with Mrs. A revealed that she preferred her daughters to remain indoors for their own protection. The fact that she could not watch them in the play yard from the apartment window made the notion of outdoor play even more prohibitive.

"Well, I'll let them out if I can stand on the terrace watching them. But, I don't have a real good view of the play yard, so I don't let them go there so often."

Mrs. A was continuing her education while working part-time and could not spend a lot of time supervising her children outdoors. Family outings consisted of occasional visits to a local playground. She felt that visits to Flushing Meadows Park were not feasible without a car. Public transportation was not easily accessible. She relied primarily on community facilities, such as the library and the church program in the building to provide recreation and structure for her children. She considered these community institutions, e.g., a church-associated youth group and the children's library the "safest places" for her 9- and 7-year-old daughters to play.

"At the church there are always adults there and lots of things for them to do. Sometimes they take trips. They like it."

In Lefrak City, parents' conceptions of dangers were exacerbated by their observations of illegal activities surrounding the buildings and by the presence of strangers roaming through the premises. Simmel (1950) described one type of stranger in a metropolis to be the neighbor who is nameless, who lacks a personal history, and who remains aloof from social networks. In Lefrak City, parents experienced fear of the neighbor as stranger, in addition

to the unknown visitor in the halls. One African-American mother described her hallway:

"I know Mrs. ____ next door. She's a good woman. She's on the tenants' committee. She cares about this place. She watches everything. She would be watching if something was going on. But I don't know the others here. Some I don't want to know."

Families employed numerous strategies for coping with their fear of strangers. One strategy was to try to ignore the situation, but to restrict their children's access inside and outside the buildings. Consequently, some of the children spent much of their recreational time in their homes or at the homes of friends, with little time spent outside in the neighborhood. One West Indian mother reported:

"I didn't take my child out this summer. Some reason we got caught up with the [home] computer and other things. So they didn't bother to ask me to take them riding outside, 'cause they both have bikes."

For children living in high-rise residences, access to the neighborhood or friends within the buildings involved negotiating the infrastructure of the buildings. Suttles, who did his research in 1968 in Boston, found that in high-rise housing, children's play occurred within residential spaces, such as corridors and stairwells. This was not the case with the children who resided in Lefrak City or the two other high-rise residences under study. Most of the

parents living in high-rise residences declared public spaces, such as hallways, lobbies, stairwells, and utility areas off-limits to their children without direct supervision. One East Indian mother related an experience that happened to her 9-year-old daughter in the hallway of her high-rise residence:

"One time she ran next door to a friend for quarters. I sent her with a twenty dollar bill. I sent her to my friend's to get me quarters and my friend didn't have it. She's supposed to come back. In between, one guy meet her, same floor, and she ask him, "Do you have quarters?" He says, "Yes, you wait here, I come back...." He takes the twenty dollars from her. He went down by the stairs and never showed up. So from that she also got a lesson. So after that, she don't talk to anybody".

Since most of the children in these residences did not have friends living on the same floor, opportunities for socializing were contingent upon their utilizing the elevators or stairwells with parental supervision, companions, or siblings. Stairwells were restricted areas for children because of their frequent use by the general public. The public, in parents' eyes, could be an unfamiliar neighbor or an outsider with questionable intentions. Stairwells were places where illicit activities took place that were unacceptable for children's

viewing. An African-American mother described her experience of the stairwell in her building:

" We have problems with the stairwells, and I think that's one of the reasons why they started to lock the different exits...it's an inconvenience...but the reason they do it is that people do come over and take drugs and defecate in the hallways, and they urinate and they break things, and as fast as you get the door lock fixed, you have a key and they come in and they find different ways of breaking the lock."

Elevators were the most common means of transport for movement between the floors, and according to mothers the most likely places to encounter unfamiliar neighbors as well as strangers. Similar to stairwells, some of the parents viewed elevators as potentially dangerous spaces because they were enclosed areas with limited means of egress in case of an emergency. Parents were also concerned that once their children were in an elevator, they were out of range for supervision and could not be protected. Most parents insisted on escorting their female children in the elevator. One male child was permitted to use the elevator when accompanied by an older sibling. An African-American mother described an incident that happened to her child:

"Well, I sent my daughter upstairs to the baby sitter with some money in the envelope. I thought that just from taking the elevator from here where I can see her getting in and she staying on till she gets upstairs, but I didn't take into consideration that anything can happen in between there. And what happened was the

elevator didn't work and she had to get off and take the stairs, and she saw this girl who was a drug user. So the girl told her that she would go with her upstairs to the baby sitter. Well, to make a long story short, she took the money out of the envelope. I didn't know what was going on except for the fact that my daughter was gone for so long and then the money was gone. But that stopped me from sending her to the elevator. I think that incident frightened her so much, she wouldn't do that again. That's one thing I don't have to worry about."

Saegert and Hart (1978) in their review of environmental competence reported that male children were less restricted in their opportunities for outdoor play compared to female children. This was also true for two of the families interviewed for this study. For one family, the older sibling appeared to play an important role in promoting outdoor experiences for his younger brother by providing the supervision desired by his parents. The mother reported that the older sibling was responsible for accompanying his brother everywhere and often shared the same play activities and rules regarding place-use. As this African-American mother explained:

"They go everywhere together, even though Joseph is older [by 4 years]. They go to the same places, they play together, I even give them the same rules. There's really no difference between the two. I tell you about one and its the same for the other."

It should be noted that the presence of older siblings affected the play activities of both male and female children living in other types of housing as well. Female

children, even when accompanied by siblings, did not appear to have the same latitude of movement around the neighborhood as the male children.

The two male children residing in high-rise buildings owned bicycles which they used on and off their blocks to go to the local candy stores (on the same block as the residences) and to play-spaces on nearby streets accompanied by siblings or friends. Although parents of male children stated that they preferred that their children play inside their apartments, the boys were, nevertheless, permitted a wider range of movement around the neighborhood. They were permitted to go to parks (two blocks away), stores, and visit friends living either inside or outside of the residence, and thus, had a greater variety of outdoor play opportunities. Two of the three female children were not allowed outside at all to play without the presence of an adult. The girl who was permitted outside could not go to a store alone or to the local park without her mother, but walked to school by herself. The cultural background of the parents appeared to have no bearing on their decisions. Both boys had mothers who worked full-time and were without supervision after school. Only one of the female children's mother worked full-time, but all three girls were supervised after school. After-school supervision might be a salient factor

influencing the male children's access to their neighborhoods.

Suttles (1968) found that the absence of places for children to play in high-rise projects was, in part, due to the relationship between the design of the housing and the complexity of the social environment. The vacant play yards adjacent to the high-rise buildings of Lefrak City were examples of how children's use of outdoor space was influenced by physical design and social factors. Many of the play spaces appeared adequately maintained. Most of the play yards consisted of swings and stationary apparatus to climb on. However, parents reported that these play areas were rarely used by their children. Their locations at the sides of the buildings interfered with the parents' visual access to their children from most of the apartments. A West Indian parent commented:

"If I let her go down there, I have to stand here by the window and try to peek over the side of the building. It makes me nervous, so I don't let her go there."

Social dangers were omnipresent and contributed to parents' concerns for their children's safety in play yards and outside in the neighborhood. From some apartment windows, parents and children could witness illicit social transactions or hear police sirens and occasional gunshots signifying criminal activity. Limiting children's access

to the play yards was one way to shield them from contact with the world of illicit activities--a world of random violence and of suspicious people who might approach their children to take drugs, act as drug couriers, or abduct them. This African-American mother described her frustration:

"My oldest son was approached out front a couple of years ago [then age 12]. They wanted him to try some stuff. He just walked away like I told him to do. They'll do anything, even with kids."

According to the parents residing in Lefrak City, the close proximity of play yards to areas with drug trafficking made children vulnerable to the random violence associated with these activities. Bell (in press) found in his research on the South Side of Chicago that the act of witnessing a crime has the potential to traumatize children. In his study, over 25% of all children under the age of 17 had observed one murder. A few of the parents in Lefrak City voiced fear that their children might witness a crime or be subject to harm if a crime was being perpetrated. One mother complained of gunshots heard night and day and was afraid to let her little girls go to the store. An African-American mother reported:

"...there was a boy shot in the arm while in the play yard, here, two years ago. These things happen and there's nothing I can do."

Another safety issue for parents in regard to the play yards was related to the suspicious behaviors of other tenants in the building. Although parents praised some tenants for their participation on tenants' committees, other tenants were viewed as more elusive figures who exhibited suspicious or antisocial behaviors, some of which were associated with drug activities. Some parents reported that play yards attracted drug pushers anticipating a potential sale to local tenants. There was even one report of a tenant throwing garbage out of windows at children while they played. These types of behaviors provided these parents with adequate justification for restricting their children's use of these outdoor play areas.

Lefrak City also had a large athletic field which some parents believed was utilized, day and night, by undesirable people and, therefore, inappropriate for children's use. One West Indian mother described it:

"Well, they have all these types of people there, especially older teenagers hanging out back there. That's why I don't let her go there."

Only one African-American mother permitted her son to use his bike in the field with the stipulation that he be accompanied by his older brother. But his mother's comments on the physical condition of the setting is

important for understanding other parents' conceptions of the field:

"... it's all full of holes and it's dangerous to ride on, and even the tennis court is broken down. There's nothing to do there."

Rainwater (1966) documented that low-income, high-rise housing often has facilities that remain in a chronic state of disrepair. The lack of maintenance in play or recreation areas poses hazards which discourage the use of the facilities by local residents. As abandoned spaces, they subsequently end up territorialized by individuals the community views as fringe or marginal.

Along with feelings of frustration, the three mothers living in Lefrak City voiced resignation over the social conditions affecting their children's outdoor play. Neither the building management nor police were viewed as effective agents in controlling the criminal activity that permeated the neighborhood. As an African-American mother remarked:

"They come around, but they don't do nothing. They can't. Cause when they come around the dealers disappear inside the buildings."

It was ultimately the parents' responsibility to control their children's contact with the neighborhood and for developing strategies and rules to protect them from harm.

But children often pressure their parents not only to play at a friend's house, but to play outside.

All five families living in high-rise buildings shared similar concerns. They feared the social activities transpiring throughout their neighborhoods, as well as being suspicious of their neighbors. The three female children were more closely guarded compared to the two male children, who were permitted greater access to their neighborhoods and had more contact with their peers. All five parents stated that they preferred that their children remain indoors to play, because they felt impotent in controlling the social forces that threatened their children's safety.

There was a significant difference between parents' concerns who lived in high-rise buildings compared to low-rise or residential housing. For parents in high-rises, the dangers were omnipresent and they were reminded of the threats by looking out their windows, walking through their hallways, or going outside to work or shop. Gun shots, police arrests, and people acting suspiciously were observed on a daily basis. This was not the case for families in other types of residential settings.

Although many of these parents had fears of the drug culture subsuming their neighborhood and experienced incidents of crime, it was not on a daily basis or so observable.

The Community Board members and the police lieutenant agreed that the drug trafficking in and around Lefrak City was a danger to everyone. (Community Board 4, personal interview, November 12, 1987); Police, personal interview, February 27, 1988). The Community Board members were pushing for upgrading the police protection in the area in order to deter the drug pushing and associated crimes, such as muggings. Discussion with the police lieutenant revealed his frustration with the amount of crime and the fact that the police cars patrolled the area. His greatest concerns were muggings, and the random violence that accompanied drug trafficking (Police, personal interviews, February 27, 1987).

Parents' Concern for Neighborhood Traffic

Whether families lived in houses or high-rise residences, most all parents regarded street traffic as the most immediate threat to their children's outdoor play safety. Equal numbers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers

and fathers viewed traffic as the most threatening danger to their children. Unless parents were capable of vigilant supervision, even the most routine daily activities, such as walking to school or playing on sidewalks, required children to interact by themselves with vehicular movement.

Mothers and fathers discussions of street traffic and the danger it posed to their children revealed one consistent theme: its unpredictable nature. This was attributed to their perceptions of accidents caused by irresponsible drivers. Examples of irresponsible drivers were people who parents described as being "unaware," "unconscious," and "unresponsive;" conditions that made them indifferent to traffic regulations and the presence of pedestrians. Drivers who parents perceived as "drugged out," a state of mind which they associated with a loss of control over their mental and physical faculties, were also considered dangerous. According to parents, drivers in any of these conditions were more likely to break the speed limits, ignore traffic signs, and be generally unaware of the presence of children. Some parents (mostly Hispanic) also felt that individuals driving specific types of vehicles, e.g., gypsy cabs, trucks, etc., could not be

trusted to use good judgment. One Hispanic mother explained:

"It's [the streets] so dangerous cause of the special people driving. They're crazy, especially in trucks or taxicabs. My first husband was killed in a motorcycle accident and a cab."

A few parents feared one form of unique danger, which was the possibility of drivers losing control and veering onto sidewalks and front yards and killing their children. Although according to police interviews (February 27, 1988) this kind of accident occurred infrequently, a few parents stated that they had witnessed this type of accident in or around their neighborhoods, or had read about such events in the daily newspapers. Apparently, most of their fears had little relationship to what actually occurred in their neighborhoods. But freak accidents did occur. This West Indian parent, who resided in a high-rise residence, reported:

"I think it's dangerous in the front, in the front yard place [the courtyard]. There are always cars pulling in and out. I can remember an incident. A car ran up on the sidewalk. That was scary. So, I always watch out the window when she comes home cause you don't know around here."

The urban plan of neighborhood streets also appeared to influence parents' conceptions of the dangers associated with vehicular traffic. Speed regulations for neighborhood

streets were determined by the volume of traffic and zoning regulations for the area (Community District 4, personal interviews, November 12, 1987). Traffic was viewed as being more hazardous by parents who resided in homes adjacent to multi-laned thoroughfares because of the speed limits. For example, one African-American parent was asked if there was anything she forbade her child to do outside. She responded with the following statement:

"Yeah, to cross Northern Boulevard. He might be hit by a car. A boy down the street, he was hit, but he's OK now. I love my child too much to let him be hit by a car."

Two-way streets represented a threat to some parents because they required their children to focus their attention in two directions simultaneously before crossing. According to the same African-American mother:

"I was a traffic guard for a while over there by the school, and it was good for the kids. Now they don't have no one, no lights, nothing. They leave the kids to do it by themselves and they don't know any better. They don't know to look and there's a lot of cars."

Parents also restricted their children's use of bicycles on sidewalks to minimize their contact with traffic. Seventy-three percent (n=27) of all children owned bicycles. Equal numbers of male and female children of Hispanic and non-Hispanic origin owned bicycles. In most parents' opinion, their children's use of bicycles

made them even more vulnerable to contact with moving vehicles that could result in harm. Restricting their children's range of bicycle movement in the neighborhood and their bicycle usage to sidewalks or family outings in the park appeared to mitigate some of their worries. A majority of children rode their bicycles an average distance of 400 to 800 feet on the sidewalk directly in front of their residences. The average city block for these neighborhoods was 800 feet. Only five children, two females and three males, were permitted to ride off their blocks to visit the homes of other children or the nearby schoolyards. The greatest distance children were permitted to ride without adult escort was approximately four blocks to schoolyards and local playgrounds or, in a few cases, to Flushing Meadows Park when escorted by other children. A few of the parents residing in low-rise buildings encouraged their children to utilize courtyards for bicycling, which eliminated the children's contact with traffic and permitted optimal conditions for parental surveillance.

According to a few of the parents who lived on smaller residential streets, their fears of traffic accidents were compounded by the fact that these streets often lacked traffic signals, such as stop signs and stop lights. For these parents, traffic signals appeared to represent the

efforts of the local authority to exert some degree of control over the behaviors of drivers. However, a few of the other parents who lived on one-way streets reported contradictory impressions; namely, that although stop signs and traffic lights were present, they were, for the most part, disregarded by drivers. They stated that even when lower speed limits were posted, they were often ignored by "irresponsible" drivers, i.e., teenagers and gypsy cab drivers.

Some parents recognized that there were mitigating circumstances that influenced their children's safe interactions with street traffic. For example, their children's lack of experience with traffic, compounded by their immaturity and their small size, hindered their moving safely through the neighborhood. One East Indian mother commented:

"At the street corner he can't see over the car. He can't see what's coming because of the cars parked there."

The fear of traffic accidents was exacerbated by the knowledge that this specific type of incident occurred relatively frequently in their own and other communities. Although only one parent reported her child being injured by a car while playing outside, four other parents described incidents to other children in the neighborhood.

One parent actually hit a neighborhood child who had veered into her car accidentally. An Irish mother described her greatest fear come true:

"...Then a couple of months ago, he did get hit by a car. So all my life's fears came to be. But thank God the boy was lucky. He just got nicked. It really could have been bad. He chased a ball into the street and the girl driving saw the ball and started to break, so when he came into the street it barely touched him. I also saw that she had two good looking guys in the car. She was only 18, so her eyes were on the guys. I said it really could have been bad, so she was lucky too."

The time of day was an important consideration in parents' assessments and judgments of potential dangers imposed by city traffic. Most all of the parents agreed that vehicular traffic could be a danger to their children any time of the day or night. However, some of the parents living on one-way streets and smaller, residential two-way streets commented that rush hour was the worst time for traffic, so they monitored their children more conscientiously at this time.

It is unknown if or how the employment status of the mothers might have influenced children's use of bicycles in their neighborhoods. Almost equal numbers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic children owned bicycles. However, more non-Hispanic than Hispanic mothers of female children with bicycles did not work full-time. The type of after-school

care seemed to influence if and when children could ride their bicycles. If mothers are home, permission may be granted more frequently, therefore permitting children greater access to their neighborhoods.

Many members of the Community Board (personal interviews, November 12, 1987) and the district urban planner (R. Bearek, personal interview, October 25, 1987) commented that the streets were not only dangerous places for children to play, but also to ride bicycles. Two members of the Community Board commented that Flushing Meadows Park was the best place to ride bicycles, if accompanied by a parent. As a group, the Community Board was taking initiatives to have more traffic signals installed to better regulate congestion and eliminate dangerous street crossings. They also viewed illegal cabs as a problem that the police should rectify.

The school principals (personal interviews, January 6, 1988) reported that only three older boys rode their bikes to school and they felt this was a dangerous mode of transportation. But, the schoolyards were used to practice riding and they believed that this was helpful in training the children in balance and coordination.

Parents' Conceptions of Danger in Parks
and Other Public Recreational Settings

Public parks are complex social settings that serve a variety of functions. In the urban environment they promote a range of social interactions, provide outlets for recreational needs, and afford opportunities to relate to the natural environment (Crantz, 1980). In the borough of Queens, Flushing Meadows Park serves this purpose for many of its residents. The park, which lies on the western border of Corona, is the most highly utilized public park in any of the New York City's boroughs; on an annual basis an average of four million people visit the park, and 20-30% are children (A. Abramowitz, personal interview, August 10, 1987). The park's primary users come from its adjacent communities, like Corona and Elmhurst.

Many of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents residing in Corona and Elmhurst stated that if their children were given the freedom to go anywhere, they would be found in and around the local parks and playgrounds. These parents stated that parks were valued by children for their open spaces used to ride bicycles, the play equipment, and as

places to play games with friends. According to one Hispanic father:

"There [in Flushing Meadows Park], he can run, he can play, he can play ball. He doesn't have to think about the cars and he has a nice time with us."

Most parents referred to Flushing Meadows Park as the most popular place for family outings and children's play. The seven families that did not utilize the park had access to other recreational facilities, and felt the park was too far away from their homes or could not arrange visits due to their family schedules. Three Asian-American families made a point of staying away from the park. They felt that the people were too foreign to their cultural values and took their children to relatives or friends for outings.

Although many of the parents reported using the park at one time or another for family recreation, they expressed ambivalent feelings about the park's safety for themselves and their children. Their concerns for safety were ultimately translated into rules that restricted their children's access to the facility. Two boys (ages 10 and 11) and one 9-year-old girl had permission to ride their bicycles in the park only if they were escorted by their peers or siblings. All the other were forbidden to go to the park without the supervision of a responsible adult.

A few Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents voiced concern about the design of the park as related to their children's safety. Mothers and fathers had mixed opinions about the size of the borough park and its open spaces. Some parents felt that it was too big and that its size attracted too many people; many of whom they regarded as different from themselves. As one Asian-American father remarked:

"...it has so many people. So many races come together in one place."

The presence of cultural differences appeared to be a main influence on Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents' conceptions of danger in parks, as well as in their neighborhoods.

Some mothers and fathers felt that the large, open spaces in Flushing Meadows Park, along with the number of people using the facility, presented an obstacle to easy surveillance of their children. One Hispanic mother stated:

"... you can't watch everything and people can do anything."

An Italian mother commented:

"...there are too many people and you can't patrol it."

Yet other parents voiced positive opinions about the size of the borough park and its open spaces. For example, they liked the large, open meadows which allowed easy surveillance of public activities. An Hispanic mother associated large, open spaces with safety because of park patrols. She explained:

"(What makes Flushing Meadows Park safe?) Its amplitude. [What do you mean by amplitude? How does this make it safe?] Large, it is large, you see. Yes, because I imagine that being so big there is lots of security and if its small there wouldn't be security. The security is that there is police to supervise inside and out."

Hiding places were a key concern for a few parents.

One Hispanic mother remarked:

"Open spaces, I would say no bushes or trees, is the best in this park. A child could get lost or be taken away and raped, you can't see anything with bushes."

Parents' opinions about the amount or type of space and the number of people using the public park were not always consistent. Whether the park had too many people or too few people, parents viewed large open spaces as either safe or dangerous, depending upon the qualities they considered most important to their ability to monitor their families' well-being. These factors included the ethnic composition of the people surrounding the families, their ability to monitor their children's activities, and their capacity for adequate surveillance of the grounds.

With regard to the layout of recreational areas in the local parks, some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents felt that more enclosed spaces made surveillance of their children easier, promoting a greater sense of security. For example, the Playground for All Children, a smaller play facility in Flushing Meadows Park, had fences enclosing the grounds and only two entrances. This East Indian father described his opinion of this particular facility:

"I'd say that small park [is the safest place]. He'll be safe if he goes there. You will be able to watch your children from one place. You can watch what goes on in the entire park."

More Hispanic mothers and fathers than non-Hispanic parents voiced a preference for enclosed spaces for their male children.

The athletic field in Flushing Meadows Park was another type of enclosed space, with bleachers and organized activities to demarcate the area. One Irish parent remarked that fences were not required in this area because of the presence of parents, coaches, and other children inside the game field to keep the area safe from outsiders. This Italian mother remarked:

"They [the children] can't get into trouble."

Apparently large groups of people affiliated with an organized activity in a public space designated the area as safe for children, whether or not conditions for parental surveillance were optimal. This again illustrates the relationship between people's activities, their social affiliations, and parents' conceptualizations of danger and safety with regard to public spaces.

Flushing Meadows Park is designed to give maintenance staff and security vehicles easy access to all areas of the park. The roadways used by park vehicles are also used illegally by community residents.

A few Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents were concerned about the presence of maintenance trucks and private cars in the park because of the threat to children's play activities and movement on bicycles. Parents' concerns were three-fold. First, children would not be expecting to encounter a car within the park setting and were, therefore, unprepared to make defensive maneuvers to avoid the vehicles. Second, any vehicles observed speeding constituted a threat to every member of the family, especially if the vehicles were traveling adjacent to bicycle paths. Third, some parents were concerned about the presence of privately-owned vehicles inside the park because of their fear of kidnapping. For these reasons,

both mothers and fathers felt that cars should be banned.

A few parents voiced concerns about the lakes in the park. They were viewed as an attractive nuisance for children. The fact that the fences surrounding the lakes were inadequately maintained was viewed as potentially dangerous. This Irish mother commented:

"We ride our bikes in the path by the lake and, you know, the fence is broken over by the bridge, and I get frightened he'll fall down there."

Public parks are known to attract diverse users exhibiting a range of behaviors of which leisure activities are just a few (Browers & Williamson, 1972; Gold, 1974). As such, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents residing in Corona and Elmhurst equated danger in public parks with the presence of unfamiliar people, their antisocial behaviors, and the threat of physical or psychological harm they posed to their children. According to one West Indian mother and one Italian mother:

"How would I change the park? People! People are the environment. Change them to be more caring, kind. I'd feel safer. The park itself is fine."

"It's the people that are the most dangerous [in the park]. You can't tell about the people and sometimes their pushing drugs and stuff. They need more police."

The individuals thought to be the most dangerous were those associated with alcohol and drugs, which would make them prone to violent or unpredictable behaviors. Hispanic mothers and fathers appeared more concerned about the presence of drugs around their male children in both parks and playgrounds. It was believed by some of these parents that the use of illegal substances and exposure to violent or criminal activities were not mutually exclusive possibilities. An Hispanic mother described her feelings:

"I'm afraid of the parks in general. Certain people are not good. First of all, the mugging. Second, a person can influence a child to use drugs and then to steal and commit crimes."

The strangers or unfamiliar residents observed in parks were believed to be the most potentially violent and considered the most likely suspects for crimes, such as rape or abduction of children. One Hispanic mother saw it like this:

"...they are tigreres [crazies] in the park, and you have to watch them so they don't take my child and rape her."

Many Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers also voiced concerns about the presence of strangers in the park or people who might abduct or steal their children. For Hispanic parents (both mothers and fathers) their concern was especially strong for male children in terms of exposure to drugs and abductions. Hispanic fathers and mothers felt that their

female children would be exposed to "bad habits" which gave them a good rationale to forbid their children from going to the park alone, with peers, or even as a family outing.

Public parks, such as Flushing Meadows Park were settings where parents felt themselves to be powerless to exercise control over the social environment. "Other people," particularly unknown people or people from different ethnic or racial backgrounds, were considered the paramount threat to children's safety because of behaviors that challenged the parents' social or cultural norms. Examples of behaviors that appeared to upset some parents were teenagers or adults heard swearing, involved in substance abuse, or observed to be engaging in what was viewed as inappropriate displays of affection. This particularly upset many Hispanic mothers of female children. These types of public behaviors were opposed to their own social values and were considered unacceptable examples of public conduct--especially in front of their children.

The fact that the park attracted individuals from such diverse cultural backgrounds appeared to increase feelings of discomfort with specific forms of public conduct.

An Asian-American mother explained:

"I guess this area is mixed. A lot of nationalities living around here in the neighborhood. I don't like what they do in the park. Their loud music and the way they talk. I don't think when I look at them I am comfortable. I have my family here. That's not the way we brought up our children, you know. I don't like it. I just don't like the environment in the park."

Many of the Asian-American and Hispanic families appeared especially sensitive to public displays of behaviors they viewed as antisocial. The social conduct observed in the borough park symbolized values that were foreign to their cultural experience. Many parents voiced feelings of frustration over their inability to curb their children's contact with public displays of affection, profanity, and exposure to the use of illegal substances. Consequently, some parents dealt with these concerns by avoiding community parks or playgrounds where these behaviors were observed. As one East Indian mother described her local park:

"It is nice park, but we don't go. She ask me to go, but I don't go with her. The people from the factory, they come for lunch, they drink, they do things. They go into the house [the park station], they do the things. I don't like her to see this. This is bad for a little girl. We never go again."

Adults in the park who did not share a common social bond, e.g., child care, were regarded cautiously by some parents. These parents reported feeling attracted to areas in parks where other parents were present. One Italian mother explained:

"What makes the park safe [with reference to the Playground for All Children]? The fact that parents are there with the children. I don't see children alone. I see their parents too."

Franck and Paxson (1989) found that groups of women in public spaces appeared to strengthen each other's presence and designate the area as safer for similar individuals. In this case, it was women involved in child care.

The time of day played an important role in parents' conceptions of individuals' activities in community parks. Most parents believed that Flushing Meadows Park and the two other local community parks were safer during the day than during the evening hours or at night. At night, parks were regarded as "lonely places" (an expression used by Hispanic parents) and attracted strangers involved in criminal activities, such as drugs, vandalism, gambling, and sexual harassment. In addition, people who could offer assistance or provide help were absent. However, some people in the parks during the day were also perceived as threatening depending upon the area of the park and their behaviors. These individuals could be engaged in any

number of behaviors that, for parents, generated suspicion, including sitting, wandering through the park, talking casually with other unfamiliar adults, and observing children's play areas without the company of a child.

Parents' concerns over strangers or unfamiliar people in parks translated into various types of rules to safeguard their children. A majority of these rules focused on the theme of parental supervision in different public places. Some rules were designed to regulate the distance children could move from a designated home base, usually the area surrounding the parent. For example, children were required to stay close to or within the visual range of parents while playing games. Other rules for use of the park, aside from those few which regulated the use of playground equipment, involved talking to strangers (see section on Children's Safety and Parental Protection Strategies for a more in-depth discussion of these rules).

Aside from Flushing Meadows Park and two smaller community parks (that were rarely used because of drug trafficking), parents reported utilizing five local playgrounds for children's recreation. They described different reasons for using the local playgrounds as opposed to the local parks; the local parks were visited

more often for the purpose of family leisure which included adult recreation, while visits to playgrounds were arranged exclusively to satisfy children's needs.

All but five families required their children (four male and one female) to be chaperoned by a responsible adult to visit any of the local playgrounds. The parents of these children worked during the day. These children lived adjacent to the playgrounds, had peers to play with, or were accompanied by siblings. The playgrounds of choice for most parents were the facilities closest to the families' homes. The only exceptions were based on two considerations. First, a local playground was avoided if it was observed to be occupied by African-American or Hispanic men engaged in suspicious activities or if teenagers were present in groups. Second, if a playground was staffed, parents would make the effort to travel further away from their home to visit the facility.

Enclosed spaces, daily maintenance, and the presence of park staff were qualities most frequently associated with safe playgrounds. Most of the neighborhood playgrounds were located close to family residences (an average of 4 blocks). The qualities that parents found attractive about particular playgrounds were the size (small) and fences or walls that enclosed the settings.

Some parents believed that design features, like fences or walls, discouraged vandals and vagrants from using the premises at night. The presence of graffiti and vandalism appeared to represent signs of social disorder that made parents uncomfortable. The better playgrounds were clean of debris because evening usage by the public was prohibited and park employees were present to maintain the premises during the day.

The presence of authorized park personnel was the panacea for many parental fears of the various types of social dangers their children might encounter. As this Italian mother put it:

"I think the park on Alstyne is pretty safe because during the summer they usually have people from the parks department there supervising. I think its safe so that's the only place I send him."

And this Irish father commented on how a park's staff and playground design help to keep his child safe:

"...he loves that park [the Playground For All Children] so much and there's only one way in and one way out. So, if a child goes in, there's always somebody by the gate. If you walk in with that child, they [the staff] know that right away. That child didn't walk in with that other person, you know."

Only three playgrounds in the communities employed recreational staff. These facilities were also considered the safest and were, subsequently, the most popular playgrounds among parents. The presence of park staff legitimized the spaces for use by families and discouraged entry or use by people the parents considered undesirable, such as drug traffickers or people who were homeless. Staff also maintained the appearance of the premises, removing reminders of illicit activities, such as graffiti or broken glass. Some parents also valued park staff for their management of recreational activities that kept children occupied during the summer.

In terms of safety on these local playgrounds, one of the qualities most highly valued by many parents was the attendance by other parents. An assembly of other parents from the neighborhood afforded opportunities for socializing and constituted a collective presence of adults to protect the children. One Italian mother commented on the local playground opposite the grocery store:

"...All of the mothers know you there, and they know your children. They watch everything. You know, one day they saw this man walk out with this little girl and they told the mother and she got her back before he got out of the park. it makes me feel safer to go there. I like to have people around."

Adults accompanied by children coming together for a common purpose appeared to offer many parents a sense of security based on a mutual understanding of children's needs and parents' fears. Parents desired contact with other families not only for social stimulation, but to strengthen supports for mutual defense against competing socio-environmental influences. As one Hispanic mother put it:

"Families make it safe. ...they watch the whole place."

Children's experience of safety in the local playgrounds was defined, for the most part, by the presence of responsible adults or parents. Despite the current fiscal crisis affecting the New York City Parks Department, only a few parents complained about the conditions of playground equipment. These parents commented on the construction of pieces of equipment or the safety of the play surfaces. One of the more frequent complaints pertained to the design of specific playgrounds. Some parents felt strongly that play areas should be planned in such a way as to separate older and younger children. One Hispanic father's opinion was:

"How would I change it to make it safer? I would separate it into sections, you know, so the older kids they have their own section away from the younger ones. That way I don't have to watch so much for the older kids. I think that have more fun that way too."

Perhaps older children gravitated toward play areas for younger children because the design of the equipment was stimulating. This parent raised a good point in examining and retro-fitting play areas for all ages.

The play area of last resort for most children was their school's playground. According to most of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents in Corona and Elmhurst, schoolyards were infrequently used by their children for either after-school or weekend play. The combination of environmental hazards, adolescent use, and the absence of play opportunities rendered these play spaces either undesirable or off-limits by virtue of family rules for most children. Only five male children (two non-Hispanic, three Hispanic) were reported frequenting these play areas, but two of the five children were required to be accompanied by their parents. The three remaining male children had parents who worked during the day.

Most parents did not see these spaces as acceptable play areas. One mother stated that they serve the purpose of confining children as they congregate before school or during lunch. One Asian-American mother described her local schoolyard:

"It has nothing in it. I don't know what he wants to do there. His father go with him and he ride his bike."

All but one of the five schoolyards in the community were devoid of play equipment, with the exception of basketball hoops commonly dominated by adolescent boys in the afternoon. A few parents were particularly upset with the broken glass left by evening users. Unsupervised play and the possibility of harassment from other children in the neighborhood were also concerns for some parents. Schoolyards attracted all types of children, including "bad children," and the fear of harm or physical harassment weighed on some parents' minds. This Italian mother described her son's experience in the local school yard, an incident that occurred after her son broke her rule:

"He went off to the schoolyard without my permission one Saturday while I stayed at home cleaning the house, and he was supposed to be at his friend's house. And a bunch of boys went off to the PS-- schoolyard, and they were hanging around and he wasn't paying any attention and he turned and got hit in the head with a baseball bat and was knocked out for 4 days. So ever since then I'm pretty mad.., well, I do not let him go to many places alone."

This discussion of parks, playgrounds, and schoolyards must include a statement on security. For many parents living in Corona and Elmhurst, the issue of policing parks, playgrounds, schoolyards, and neighborhoods was a recurrent theme. Parents voiced a desire to see more police in public spaces, such as Flushing Meadows Park where large numbers of people congregate, as well as on the smaller neighborhood playgrounds. This theme came out stronger

from Hispanic parents. All parents desired staffing in playgrounds and security in schoolyards. In general, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic fathers felt strongly about the presence of security in all public spaces. This Hispanic father remarked:

"The parks are made safer by the police officers passing by, but usually when I go to the park I never see them."

Some parents felt the presence of police in public spaces provided security by discouraging illegal or antisocial activities and served as a resource for their children in the event of an emergency. They felt that generally their children were safer with police watching the premises. It should also be considered that since one of the primary rules parents taught most of their children was to contact the police if they were lost or harassed, the presence of police personnel was necessary to fulfill this directive.

It was apparent that there were a number of contradictions between parents' conceptions of local parks, and the park director (A. Abramowitz, personal interview, August 10, 1987) and members of Community Board 4 (personal interviews, November 12, 1987) and the urban planner for the district (R. Bearek, personal interview, January 12, 1988). Many parents and members of the Community Board

members believed Flushing Meadows Park was a dangerous place for children. They believed the design of the park was partially responsible. The Community Board Annual Report (1989) stated that the open spaces in the park presented a potential danger for children for reasons other than those stated by the parents who were interviewed. The park's low attendance and the number of open spaces made the management and policing of areas a problem. Two Community Board members commented that after dark, the park attracted undesirable people who engaged in drinking and gambling. They recommended that by installing better lighting in the parks and increasing police patrols that these places would be more accessible to families and other residents (Community District 4, 1988).

These individuals' conceptions were contradictory to some of the parents who refused to visit the park and Park Director Abramowitz (1988) who stated in his interview (August 10, 1987):

"Everywhere is safe--there are open fields without visual barriers or hiding places. It's a family park with people always around. There is adequate space for a range of family oriented activities, e.g., picnicking with relatives, ball playing and biking."

Some of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents and members of the Community Board agreed that children should not be visiting the park alone. Design was one of the

qualities of the setting that upset the community members. But the design of the park was not the sole feature that disturbed many parents. The social milieu caused them to be suspicious, fearful and, for some, to stay away. These parents preferred smaller play settings with staffing to perform daily maintenance and guard the grounds against undesirable people. Community Board members agreed that playground staffing was a successful ingredient to popular facilities.

One Community Board member (Community District 4, personal interview November 18, 1987), who supervised the playgrounds in the Corona and Elmhurst area stated that well-supervised playgrounds were the most successful because of the range of activities they offered. But, he stressed the need to develop other supervised playgrounds. He went on to say that although teenagers used them at night, there were no gangs and vandalism wasn't a major problem. He commented:

"There's no crime in a middle-class community."

From his last comment, it was apparent that he was not aware of the condition of the other community playgrounds nor the changing profile of the community.

It should be noted that throughout the interviews on the subject of the safety of the parks, playgrounds and, schoolyards, there were no patterns that emerged that related to the employment status of the mothers.

Conceptions of the Stranger and Unfamiliar Others

The Stranger

Many forms of social relations are common to a metropolitan setting. Some types of interactions create relationships that are familiar and more congenial, while others are transient in nature. Merry (1981), in her study of a low- to moderate-income neighborhood in Boston, found urban residents' conceptions of danger strongly related to a sense of continuity in social relations, which involved repeated exposure to people in a familiar context. Merry also found residents' perceptions of gender, ethnic origin, and age important determinants of group identity and a sense of belonging to a community. People who were unfamiliar or foreign to the residents' cultural experiences were regarded as strangers.

Jacobson (1971) and Merry (1981) proposed that neighborhood residents' perception of continuity was associated with their experience of social order. Many of the parents living in Corona and Elmhurst believed their communities were in a state of flux due, in part, to the transient nature of community residents and the recent influx of immigrants. Melinda Henneberger (1992, August) wrote an article in The New York Times describing the ethnic tensions emerging in the "sleepy" borough of Queens and used Corona as an example of how ethnic diversity was generating fear, distrust, and a disintegration of community networks. In the article, an Irish parent from Corona described her perception of her neighborhood:

"...Years ago when I was a kid, you knew more people in the neighborhood. The neighborhood was stabilized then. People didn't move every month. Today you don't know who your neighbors are any more 'cause people are constantly moving. You know? You know very few who are still there, like my family. Yes, I think that would be it. Years ago everybody knew each other. I think that would be the main thing, and you felt safer 'cause you knew everyone. (p.B1)"

According to the same New York Times article another Hispanic woman was quoted as saying:

"It's changed too much," said Mrs L. "Before it was nice and quiet. You could go outside anytime and nobody bothers you. Now, it's fights everywhere. (p.B1)"

Some parents interviewed also noted changes in the physical environment signifying evidence of social disorder. Broken glass found in playgrounds and schoolyards and the lack of maintenance symbolized the presence of undesirable persons engaged in potentially threatening activities. This Italian parent described her experience of the street she lived on:

"You know it used to be so different. I used to be able to walk on Alstyn Street, over here, and even that's changing. Every day now I got to go downstairs and clean because at night the cars, they park here, they take drugs, drink beer, and they throw everything out the windows. You know, in the morning I got to clean up after them. ...I have this collection of knives that I've found and one day I even found a gun. They don't have no respect for anyone--themselves, us, property, nothing. It's really bad."

Merry (1981) concluded from her research that cultural transitions within a community exacerbated feelings of danger among its residents. For some of the parents in Corona and Elmhurst, conceptions of strangers were formulated by the assessment of individual attributes, such as racial or ethnic background, gender, and the individual's public behavior and place-use. Fear of criminal activity in public places appeared to be one of the more instrumental reasons for their dislike of strangers.

One Asian-American mother described some of the people observed in her neighborhood:

"...I was scared about them because, like I said, the neighborhood is a mixed neighborhood. Here, a lot of people live and a lot of people come in. And all the drugs around here. I don't know if you know this. I'm not prejudice, but this is Lefrak City and is a lot of Blacks around there. My parents bought the house 10 years ago and for the past five years it's getting worse and worse--the drugs. Then at night time you hear the police cars chasing. That's why during the daytime I don't want them [her boy and girl] to go out to observe the bad habits of the neighborhood."

Discontinuity in the social order of the communities was made apparent in the parents' observations of changes in their community composition and the presence of strangers. Parents stated that daily encounters with new faces and antisocial behaviors associated with criminal activity made them uneasy. One Hispanic mother commented:

"The newspaper claims that this neighborhood has deteriorated. Before this used to be a good neighborhood. It was quiet. But now a lot of drugs are around here."

A few parents born outside of the United States expressed feelings of fear and reservation with regard to dealing with the presence of strangers in their neighborhoods and the potential for victimization. A common theme echoed throughout their discussions about their neighborhoods was that "anything can happen in this country," a belief that necessitated being cautious with

everyone. As these two Hispanic fathers explained:

"Here [in this country], you have to be more careful and the child has to be more mature."

"It was less dangerous in my country. Here, so many things happen all of the time, you know, raping little girls and boys. In my country that doesn't exist and that's the reason why we don't give them complete freedom."

Merry (1981) speculated that fear of crime in culturally diverse communities generated racial bigotry and distrust of foreign cultures. Many parents from Corona and Elmhurst voiced distrust, if not fear, of individuals from different cultures observed in their communities, particularly African-American or Hispanic men. This should be noted because it was a recurring theme throughout the parents' discussions of the various types of social dangers that threaten their children.

The unpredictable nature of the violence they observed on the streets or heard about from friends or in the news appeared to rouse fear and suspicion of any strangers. A few Asian-American parents commented that they came from societies where social deviance and crimes, such as child molestation did not exist because of the homogeneity of their culture and the stringent monitoring of public behaviors by authorities. They stated that these conditions did not exist in their present communities and

it made them wary of contact with people they did not know. A few Hispanic parents stressed the importance of neighbors in their homeland communities in maintaining order and watching outsiders' behaviors. They felt that these types of community networks helped to make their home environments more "tranquilo," or places viewed as calm, without stress, and safe. For many parents, with the exception of those families who lived close to relatives, neighborly supports were not available to assist in the monitoring of strangers on their blocks.

Throughout a few of the interviews with Hispanic parents, strangers were referred to as "maniacs" or "crazies." It was apparent that some of these parents believed that some strangers had the potential to commit acts of violence against children and adults. As stated by one Hispanic mother:

"...The most dangerous are the bandits in the street with the "vias" [bad habits]. They would take them away you see. They are crazies, they might hit them or they might rape them. Then you never see them."

It was possible that parents feared the mental instability of some of these individuals foreign to their communities. Mental instability suggests that parents might not be able to read the visual or behavioral cues

that would signal danger, or perhaps they could and this augmented their fears.

Research has documented that the individual's cognitive assessment of a stranger utilizes information based on observable characteristics, such as physical appearance and behavior (Greenbei, 1981). Individuals with observable psychiatric symptoms have a history of discrimination within communities and are often viewed as marginal members who threaten the status quo (Gold, 1974). Whether these Hispanic parents used these adjectives, e.g., "crazies," to describe people with psychiatric symptoms or with criminal intent was unclear. Dr. Javier, a clinical specialist on the Hispanic culture commented that these expressions are typically used to describe individuals with criminal intent (G. Javier, personal interview, November 11, 1992).

Many parents associated the presence of strangers with their fear of criminal activity. Some parents forbade their children to go near 99th Street, Lefrak City's location. They believed that the people who hung around this area were involved with drugs and were likely suspects for kidnapping their children. As these Italian and West Indian mothers explained:

"There's a lot of drug dealing going on there. That place is bad with crack. I won't let him go by himself down there. Not at his age."

"...these places where you see many ugly things. That is what makes it dangerous because they say that a lot of drugs are sold, so therefore, that place can't be good. There you see Blacks selling drugs there. It can't be good 'cause children are watching that. I try to have my children go around that area."

Both mothers and fathers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic origins associated strangers with drugs in places, such as the park, playgrounds and street corners. Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers expressed a greater fear of strangers and drugs affecting their female children than their male children. Some mothers spoke of people on drugs being out of control and thus capable of perpetrating greater harm on their female children. Only a few Hispanic and non-Hispanic fathers associated strangers with drugs. Mothers, in general, were far more concerned. There did not appear to be any obvious maternal employment pattern associated with crime, the stranger, and their children's safety.

Concordant with Merry's research, parents' conceptions of strangers included gender as a conspicuous characteristic. Parents frequently commented about the presence of strange men, specifically that they were observed "hanging around" places, or were associated with criminal activities. Their behaviors were described as mildly annoying, offensive or potentially dangerous,

depending on where they were located and what they were doing. The presence of unfamiliar females in public areas was generally not as threatening to parents as that of unfamiliar males. Strange females were perceived as potentially threatening when fraternizing with suspicious men or when they were observed exhibiting antisocial behaviors, such as sexual misconduct or using alcohol or drugs. However, many parents believed that either sex could pose a threat to children as potential kidnappers, and consequently instructed their children to avoid contact with all strangers. As one Hispanic mother remarked:

"You don't know who's who around here. So I tell my daughter don't talk to anyone."

Public settings, like streets, parks, store fronts and train stations, were examples parents cited as locations that permitted outsiders strong visibility and afforded them opportunities to interact with members of the community. Many parents, therefore, restricted their children's use of these places without supervision by a responsible adult. This supervision was usually provided by the parent. One mother explained:

"I don't let him walk to the train station after school, you know. He likes to meet me there after work and walk me home. He'll even bring his bike. But I don't like the people who hang around there, so I don't let him go. ...I don't know, but it looks like they're on drugs or something. I don't like him to see all that."

Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents often assessed a stranger's public behavior to ascertain their purpose in the community. For example, parents observed some strangers "hanging out" or "hanging around" public activities which included conduct, such as looking around, listening to music, smoking, talking to others, standing around, and drinking alcohol. These behaviors were viewed suspiciously insofar as they did not reflect community or cultural values. This East Indian mother described the behaviors she observed at the local convenience store:

"...across the street, there too. Some bad guys also there [at the store], they are selling whatever. I don't mind. That is their business. But at 12:00 [in the afternoon] they are drinking outside. They are shouting everything. It's no good that way. They [the children] are looking and learn from them."

Public behaviors that challenge the social standards, i.e., drunkenness and sexual exhibitionism, can be viewed as more threatening to the individual than the prospect of a more violent crime (Dubow, McCabe, and Kaplan, 1979; Merry, 1981). Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents believed that alcohol and drug-use had the potential to generate unpredictable or even violent behavior among

users. An Hispanic mother of a 9-year-old boy expressed her concern:

"They just hang around in front of the stores drinking beer. And there are people with drugs around, and you don't know what could happen. You don't know if they could get into fights."

According to some parents, there was a relationship between strangers' behaviors and their use of specific places within the neighborhoods. Both mothers and fathers noted that beer-drinking, smoking, people-watching, and playing music occurred more frequently in front of or adjacent to the small convenience stores (bodegas) selling products that supported these behaviors, or in parks where a variety of leisure activities were socially tolerated. Places where more transitory activities occurred, such as the subway stations, were associated with illegal activities, e.g., drug trafficking. More Hispanic children were forbidden to go to the store alone. Only three Hispanic male children were given the privilege and the females were denied the opportunity completely. More non-Hispanic children were allowed to visit their local stores alone, but only two females compared to five males. There did not appear to be a difference between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers' employment status.

For many of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents interviewed in Corona and Elmhurst, the time of day was an obvious concern with regard to scheduling their children's activities. This was partially due to their daily schedules which restricted outdoor play at certain hours. Most children were not permitted outside after dinner on school nights or after dusk during the summer. Parents felt wary about their children's safety at these times because of the possibility of strangers and/or criminals roaming the streets. When some of the Hispanic mothers mentioned specific day-time hours associated with danger, some referred to daylight hours and cited specific times when children were in transit between places, e.g., walking home from school or returning from a friend's house. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers feared that their children might encounter strangers, hostile groups of children, or rush-hour traffic en route to their destinations. These were periods of time when parents experienced minimal control over their children's socio-environmental interactions. One West Indian mother commented:

"I always wait at the window and watch her come around the corner from her school. I can watch her from here fine. The corner is busy with lots of cars, so I watch her every day."

The subject of strangers was not mentioned often by most community officials. The police, however, did discuss an incident when a "strange" man came into one of the neighborhoods and was taking pictures. The neighbors appeared to get upset and called police, but the man was never found. The "Queens Rapist" was never discussed by the police because the interview took place before the crimes occurred (Police, personal interviews, February 27, 1987).

A few members of Community Board 4 and the district's urban planner only mentioned drugs and illicit activities associated with strangers taking place near Lefrak City. (R. Bearek, personal interview, January 12, 1988; Community Board 4, personal interviews, November 12, 1987). There was also no mention of kidnapping or sexual molestation throughout other parts of the communities.

Other Unfamiliar Persons Within Neighborhoods

Not all strangers come from outside the community. An urban neighborhood could be a community of strangers depending upon its ethnic composition and the history of its social networks (Simmel, 1950). One father, who

resided on a homogeneous street of Asian-American families, remarked:

"A stranger is someone I haven't met. I know every family on this block. I wouldn't let her [his 9-year-old daughter] go into anyone's house unless I know the family."

His sentiments were similar to those of parents from other ethnic backgrounds who were suspicious of unfamiliar people in the community or families whom they did not know. Playing with unfamiliar children in the neighborhood was also restricted for some children, until a point in time when parents could meet the children's families to assess their backgrounds and values. Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers placed great emphasis on this rule, particularly mothers who worked. In the same vain, these parents refused their children permission to visit the homes of unknown children. As one Hispanic parent explained:

"I don't know what's going on there. I don't know these people. Anything can happen!"

Some of these parents were concerned about the prospect of their children's exposure to immoral or illicit activities. Other parents feared the possibility of sexual abuse by other children or family members, and their inability to monitor their children in a setting outside of their home.

This Irish father remarked:

"...you know, I don't know them. What do I know? The father could have had a bad day with his wife and decides to take advantage of my child, or any child for that matter."

Turner and Douglas (1971), cited in (Erskine, 1974), assert that persons experiencing transitions in the life-cycle assume a lower status in a community and are, therefore, subject to treatment as "marginal residents." Ladd (1970) suggests that the teenager is a "non-person" by virtue of their exclusion from socio-political structures of the community. Adolescents, along with the elderly and mentally ill, could be classified in this category.

Adolescents, particularly groups of young males, were observed by many parents using public and semi-public spaces for both legitimate and illicit activities. Parks and streets were the most common places where "hanging around" took place. This involved behaviors, such as loitering, socializing, or watching local activities.

Some parents observed adolescents involved in illicit activities in semi-public spaces, such as construction sites or under train trestles; places where they could obtain more privacy and avoid attention from authorities. Many non-Hispanic parents, who complained of adolescent behaviors, appeared disturbed by the unpredictable nature

of their actions in some of these settings, e.g., building fires, vandalism, and sexual misconduct. As one non-Hispanic father stated:

"Well, they go over there [to an empty lot], usually a group of them and they do stuff, you know, build fires, set off fire crackers, swear. Can be a little wild. Ah... I'm not sure I want my kids around them."

Non-Hispanic mothers appeared to be seriously concerned about their children's exposure to "bad" or "crazy" behaviors, such as hearing profanity (verbal disrespect of adults) or observing fights. Female Hispanic children were more protected from these behaviors than males.

Some parents associated the use of illegal substances with violent or unacceptable public behaviors by adolescents. This West Indian father explained:

"...stay away from the basketball--because that is where the teenagers, you know, go and hang out. ...I would say the most dangerous is the hangout of the people that play basketball. They hang out there, drugs and you usually hear a lot of guns and things going on. You don't want a little child to be there and listen."

Hyson and Bollin (1990) believe that inner city children have become the unwitting victims of drug wars on porches and sidewalks. The observation of drug trafficking in their neighborhoods was a major concern for almost all

of the parents. Some parents, especially Hispanic mothers with female children, took extreme measures to ensure that their children did not observe certain types of people, particularly adolescents in groups, for fear their children would learn "bad habits." Their definition of bad habits included using drugs, learning profanity, and observing or participating in illicit sexual behaviors.

Children's relationships with each other in a neighborhood naturally ranges from friendly to contact with unfamiliar children. Conflicts between children assume a variety of forms. Theft of personal property is one type of discordant encounter children experience in an urban environment. According to Police interviews (February 27, 1987), one of the most common crimes against children consisted of petty thefts initiated by other juveniles. The various types of thefts included stealing money, jewelry, and bicycles. Bicycle theft was the most frequently-reported crime, along with jumping turnstiles. Thefts involving children were also a concern for some of the parents in this study. Two families reported their children's bicycles stolen in the park or on the street, whereas another five families described incidents of neighborhood children having their bikes stolen.

One African-American mother, who resided in Lefrak City, described her child's experience with theft:

"I don't like the whole neighborhood for the children. You know. Like I sent them to school and the first day they were mugged. Both of them. They were waiting for a bus and they say this boy came up and asked them for a dollar, or something like that. They said they didn't have it. He said he had a gun in his pocket, and if they didn't have it he was gonna hurt them. So I think they had a dollar so they give it to him. I think they know the boy, a young guy, you know, from Sunday School. John was 13 and Robert was 8, you know. And that was an area [residential] I wouldn't consider too bad."

Some of the parents in Corona and Elmhurst also worried about their children being physically assaulted by unfamiliar children. Unfamiliar children considered "bigger," "older," "bad," "in groups," or from other ethnic or racial backgrounds, were perceived to be the most threatening. Some Hispanic parents feared their children being harassed, bullied, or assaulted by African-American children. Acts of violence or bullying were most likely to take place while the children were inside the school or schoolyards, or on the way home from school. This Hispanic father explained his rule:

"I don't let him play by Northern Boulevard because the area is a little more hot, dangerous. My son has had problems with kids over there. There are Black kids over there and sometimes they may see someone of a different color and bother them."

Some of the Hispanic mothers voiced concern over their children's safety in and out of school and occasionally mentioned some of the racial tensions their children encountered. As one Hispanic mother reported:

"When Steven started school, he used to get hit hard by some Blacks there. Before he used to study at the school there on 112th, and there is where he got robbed by two of them. They pulled his arms behind his back and stole his watch. He stood quiet about that. He did not want to let me know. So I asked him to tell me everything that happens to you because if you don't, I'm not going to be aware of things. They can even force you to have sex between the two."

The "bigger boy" (age unknown) in groups was also perceived as being potentially threatening, particularly to young male children whom they believed to be more vulnerable to acts of harassment and violence. According to some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents, these types of incidents took place frequently on playgrounds, in empty lots, in schoolyards, and while walking home from school. This Italian mother described an incident that occurred to her son:

"Well, you know, everything's happened to him. And he's come home with a black eye or two. You know, a couple of bigger boys following him home and beating up on him. That's what happens at this age, so my husband taught him how to defend himself."

Some of the parents' discomfort with older, unfamiliar children in groups was prompted by their fear of the

violence generated among themselves. This East Indian mother described an incident she saw in front of a school:

"The kids, they are fighting too much. They are fighting and fighting. They are telling bad words to each other. I say OK that is your language. But the fighting with fists, and the blood also comes out of the fists."

She reported that even female adolescents were not exempt from harassment by peers:

"...they are 6th, 8th graders. That is called teenagers. They are here one day, [in front of her house], here, next door. One girl fell down there. I say, "What happen?" She not say. She shaking and shaking. Then I ask please give phone number of mother. I call her at least. Suddenly two boys come and say, "She is my sister," and they take her. Then I went to the school and the teacher asking all the kids again, who hit her? Everyone said I don't know. That's why I scared for that outside."

Parents were not able to control every encounter their children had outside of the home. Because of this, some parents restricted their children's play areas to places around the homes, and forbade them to visit places, such as schoolyards. Other parents forbade their children to carry money in public places. However, these strategies did not necessarily reduce the risk of physical assault on their children as much as it might have minimized their financial loss, or possibly rendered their children undesirable victims to potential thieves.

Some parents considered safeguarding children against physical assault from other neighborhood children as a stressful task. The complexity of family schedules made it difficult for parents to monitor every social exchange while their children played outside. This might explain why working Hispanic mothers who worked or stayed at home had greater fears for their male children. Whereas, non-Hispanic mothers who worked or stayed at home felt more protective of their female children. A few Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers voiced concern for harm to both their male and female children. Consequently, some parental rules stressed the need for the social propinquity of siblings or friends both in and out of school to intercede in the event of an emergency. While fear of violence from other children was a parental concern, the fear of strangers, especially those capable of taking their children, was foremost on their minds.

An urban parent's fear of strangers or unfamiliar others is a complex phenomenon. Parents must cognitively assess the physical and behavioral characteristics of persons either foreign to their community or different from themselves, i.e., place, ethnic background, activity, age, or gender, in order to evaluate the probability of risk. It was clear that for many parents, their distrust of strangers and unfamiliar persons was strongly associated

with the possibility of life-threatening risks for their children. For most parents, the most significant fear associated with the presence of strangers was the threat of kidnapping or sexual assault.

Fear of Strangers as Potential Kidnappers

Fear of strangers and unfamiliar community residents as potential kidnappers dominated most Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers' thoughts and was reflected in their regulation of their children's play. Although concern for children's interactions with traffic was a critical issue, for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers the fear of child abduction was a seminal influence on parental rules regarding supervised or unsupervised use of neighborhood play spaces.

Child abduction by a stranger is a rare phenomenon (Arenberg, Bartimole, & Bartimole, 1984). Despite messages from public education campaigns and the media, child abduction occurs infrequently compared to other crimes of violence against children (Best, 1991). A majority of the mothers interviewed saw their children as potential victims of kidnapping and voiced worry and concern. It was spontaneously discussed by only a few fathers. From the

parents' perspectives, almost anyone outside of the family could be a potential kidnapper. One Hispanic father struggled to define the type of person who might harm his daughter:

"I try to teach her that not everyone is trustworthy. I don't reflect on the person's color or the nationality because there are so many around here. It's a question of what the person is like. Some people look scruffy, but are nice people. Some people look well-dressed, but yet they take advantage and could take her away. So we try to teach them that there is a limit to their approach to a person..."

According to some parents, even their neighbors were not necessarily safe people and they restricted informal contacts between their children and local residents. As one Italian mother commented:

"I don't like her to talk to anyone unless I know them. Even here in my neighborhood, I got to know them first before I let her go near anyone."

Most mothers were suspicious of the strangers around their neighborhoods who exhibited peculiar or anti-social behaviors, particularly related to drug activities. As reported earlier, parents believed individuals associated with drugs were highly suspect of a wide range of criminal

behaviors, including kidnapping. When asked to identify a potential kidnapper, one Hispanic mother responded:

"Well, most probably by different people who sell drugs and who abuse children and who send them with drugs. That is the reason why I don't let him out. It's best if they stay inside."

A few Hispanic mothers characterized a potential kidnapper as someone who manifested "crazy" behavior, or behavior which challenges social norms by drinking, swearing, dressing poorly, etc. But regardless of the ethnic or racial background of the parent, their appraisal of the stranger's public behavior determined the extent to which their children were permitted unsupervised access to places around the neighborhood. As one West Indian mother remarked:

"All places with strangers are off-limits to my child. And I mean all places."

A small number of mothers were not as concerned about strangers kidnapping their children as they were about the possibility of their ex-husbands perpetrating the crime. Depending upon the personal history of the family, the threat of abduction by a parent or ex-lover appeared, in some instances, to supersede the threat of kidnapping by a

stranger. An Italian mother of a 9-year-old boy expressed her concern:

"I'm worried 'cause, like I said, I'm a single mother. So I know he'd never do it, but you know fathers. You hear of mothers and fathers kidnapping their kids. You know, that's what I fear more than a stranger kidnapping him, you know. That's what I fear."

One Hispanic mother of a 9-year-old girl discussed her worry:

"...by her father. That's my fear. Jane is the daughter of another man with whom she does not keep in touch. And when she was a little girl, he threatened me by telling me that he would kidnap her and take her."

The fear expressed by these mothers was not unfounded. *Primo facto*, they had received threats by the ex-mates, and research indicates that some fathers do follow through on these types of threats (Arenberg, et. al, 1984).

Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents' conceptions of places around their neighborhoods where kidnapping might occur were critical factors influencing their rules governing their children's unsupervised use of play spaces. Almost all parents agreed that child abduction could occur anywhere in the community, but that it was most likely to happen in public settings where children were without parental supervision. Parents mentioned local streets or areas in front of their homes because of the volume of

traffic. They referred specifically to cars operated by strangers, which were considered an even greater threat to their children's safety because of their capability to quickly remove a child from "a safety zone" controlled by the parent.

The presence of unfamiliar adults took on different meanings in different settings. For example, certain streets attracted different types of people depending upon their commercial qualities, such as stores or urban features like parks and empty lots. According to some Hispanic mothers, the neighborhood (convenience stores, i.e., bodegas) attracted men (mostly Hispanic) who suspiciously milled around the premises. Almost all of the parents' homes had a convenience store located within a block of their residence. As these Hispanic and Italian mothers explained:

"...with the children you don't know. The boy might go to the store and disappear on you and that...you see, someone will grab him. It has happened to other children, so he doesn't go to the store alone."

"She really doesn't go anywhere by herself, so, you know, I don't allow her to go to the stores alone. But she knows that. ...I'm just afraid of somebody seeing this cute little 9-year-old in the store and grabs her and throws her in a car and I never see her again."

Populated street corners adjacent to large housing complexes or public transportation were other types of places that parents viewed suspiciously because of their association with drug-related activities. Many parents concerned with the possibility of kidnapping declared these places off-limits to their children. Children were attracted to these areas because of the candy and video stores. In the opinion of one parent, if adults were present on a street but engaged in illegal activities, their children were no safer than if they were playing in abandoned lots, meaning that the number of people in a specific area is not as critical as their activities.

According to Jacobs (1961), one of the reasons streets are important to a child's experience of a community is that they serve as a connecting link between the child and public institutions. Some parents believed their children were most vulnerable to advances by strangers (kidnappers) while going unsupervised to and from school. Consequently, almost 25% of all families arranged to have their children escorted to school by adults. The majority of children walked to school with older siblings or peers in order to ensure their safety. Five children took a bus. One Hispanic mother's concern resulted in this solution:

"I tell her that it is necessary that she rides the bus, even though she wants to walk to school with her friends. But I tell that "no" because it is dangerous. Someone can take her and ride her off with her in a car. So I pay a bus to come pick her up."

All the Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers who stayed home during the day escorted their children to school. Working parents often made arrangements with neighbors so that their children walked together or escorted by older siblings.

Fear of Kidnapping and Children's Freedom to Play

Throughout parents' discussions of child abduction, a central theme, was the importance of parental surveillance over children's outdoor play. Some parents believed that their children were vulnerable to this form of crime even while they played in front of their homes. They felt incapable of controlling their children's interactions with people in the neighborhood without being physically present. According to one Italian mother:

"It can happen in such a short amount of time. You just turn around and then she's gone. So I've got to watch her constantly."

Based on parents' assessments of the physical and social environments, children's play activity was limited to areas where they could be closely monitored by parents, responsible adults, or familiar neighbors. Knowing trustworthy neighbors were watching for suspicious people was an essential element for many parents' sense of security. An East Indian mother and an Hispanic father described their neighborhoods:

"It is safe in front of the house because it is close. We could be watching them most of the time and if any problem, they come in and scream or something, because the people know them over here. There are neighbors and if anything happens, the neighbors will come."

"The adults around here, they're always looking out for her. The neighbors are respectable people. I don't visit their homes, but I know them and they would not do her harm."

In some instances, relatives living in the same house or on the same street shared the responsibility of monitoring children's outdoor play activities. This Asian-American father described his street:

"...The only time I really let them go out to play is with other children, so then grandpa across the street would be watching them, or the corner house. They have children. They would be out at the same time. Their children are playing so they would be watching too. Sort of a shared responsibility."

On the other hand, a few parents commented that because of neighborhood changes, they didn't feel comfortable about letting their children out to play without being present. These parents didn't trust their neighbors to help monitor the street life and their children's interactions with unknown people. As this Italian mother explained:

"Things have changed so much around here. I really don't know anyone anymore. New people keep moving in. The only others I know are old people. It's not like when I was a kid and the neighbors were around and watched out for everybody."

Some parents felt frustrated by their inability to watch over or shield their children from exposure to strangers in all places at all times. A few parents even went so far as to say that the restrictions they imposed on their outdoor play kept the children virtual prisoners in their own homes. One West Indian mother commented:

"I don't know how she does it. It's like living in a cage."

The places considered the most dangerous were those where parental supervision was obstructed or absent. Only a few parents discussed parks and playgrounds as possible places where child abduction might occur. This might be

attributed to the fact that most parents escorted their children to these places or relied upon the presence of other parents or park personnel to bolster their sense of security. The few parents who feared abduction in the borough park believed their families were vulnerable to danger in crowded conditions or in public spaces with individuals from cultures unfamiliar to their own.

This Hispanic mother described her fears:

"Well, the danger is they can't be left alone over there [in Flushing Meadows Park]. And there are a lot of people there. People from ...from , you know, every race, you know, maniacs. My kids there alone can get lost and somebody can abduct them and that's the danger."

Many Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers considered that a child-abductor would go to any lengths to steal their children away from them. On city streets and in the large municipal park, cars were perceived as one means of kidnapping. Car interiors are enclosed spaces, where a range of anti-social activities might take place with minimal interference from local authorities. They were also regarded as spaces that could hold a child captive and capable of a quick departure to an unknown location, which limited the possibilities for parent or police intervention. According to one Italian mother:

"A car can come and take her away to any place in the park. I couldn't see her to help her. Anything can happen to her."

Parents created rules to regulate children's contact with unknown people inside vehicles. As one Hispanic mother explained:

"I tell her not to accept an invitation to ride in a car. I think that if she rides in a car, they might rape and kill her. They might be drugged or malicious people."

Some parents voiced concern about their children's inability to cope with the demands of a stranger alias "kid abductor." This Hispanic mother explained:

"Yeah, I talked with her about it. But if the situation arises, it's hard for a child to get away from an adult they don't want to be with. You can tell them so many things, but when the occasion arises, will they do that?"

Some parents believed that their children were too naive to recognize the subterfuge employed by an abductor. This included tricks or ploys, such as offering children candy or gifts, or convincing children that the stranger had to come to pick them up in lieu of a parent. Many Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers and fathers felt that their children had neither the social skills nor the physical capabilities to protect themselves. An Italian mother remarked:

"She's so little". There is nothing she can do."

Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers' and fathers' fear of kidnapping and strangers was reflected in their safety strategies. These required that their children avoid potentially dangerous places, be supervised and spatially restricted while playing outdoors, and follow rules to guide their interactions with people in public places.

Parents', particularly mothers', preoccupation with kidnapping was related to their fear of strangers and their behaviors that challenged the status quo. Even with the development of parental protection strategies, such as establishing rules and monitoring their children's play, most parents believed their children were still defenseless against social crimes that could physically or emotionally harm their children. Their children's safety in the public sphere was not guaranteed. Parents did not perceive themselves as being in control of the myriad of potential threats or their children's ability to protect themselves. Nor could they rely or trust others to intervene. Parents' distress over their perceived lack of control was compounded by the belief that an error in judgement by them or their children could result in serious consequences, namely abduction, sexual abuse, or death.

Neither the police nor Community Board members mentioned the crime of kidnapping in the interviews (Community Board 4, personal interview, November 12, 1987; Police, personal interview, February 27, 1987). Only one school principal discussed the importance of security around the school grounds (Principal, personal interview, January 6, 1988). She also mentioned that parents were extremely conscientious about picking up their children after-school and watching other children whose mothers were late.

The employment status of the mothers appeared to have no bearing on their degree of concern for their children with regard to kidnapping. Most working mothers had relatives or sitters care for their children after-school to alleviate their worry.

Fear of Strangers and Sexual Abuse

The threat of sexual molestation disturbed most parents. Some parents believed they were not alone in their concerns and that other parents shared similar fears.

This was made apparent in these types of statements made by an Hispanic father and an African-American mother:

"Yes, it's a worry on every parent's mind."

"Yes, I worry. I worry when I'm away from her. But I think that all mothers worry about this. It could happen."

The few Hispanic parents who stated they didn't worry about this type of danger believed that their children were too young to be exposed to such a crime and did not discuss the subject matter with either their male or female children. Some parents, particularly Hispanic mothers of female children entering puberty, believed that it was necessary to be extremely concerned, and discussed the possibility of this type of physical violation with their daughters. These mothers believed that the advent of puberty made their daughters more vulnerable to sexual abuse. However, a few parents (both fathers and mothers of different ethnic and racial backgrounds) were also worried about the possibility of their sons being abused. Apparently, this type of crime does not, in parents' minds, discriminate according to gender. Although a few more Hispanic parents voiced concern over their male children as well.

It was evident throughout many interviews that parents associated sexual molestation with child abduction. Many mothers and fathers believed that the physical and behavioral profiles of potential kidnappers and child molesters were similar. Individuals associated with illegal activities, such as drug-use or dealing, were viewed as unpredictable, potentially dangerous, and therefore suspect as possible kidnappers/child molesters. A statement made by one Hispanic mother made this point:

"A lot of people are in there [in the parks]. A lot of young people, older men, Blacks -- above all--them. They smoke their marijuana--drug addicts. Well, you can imagine all of a sudden the drugs--rape!"

Although many parents believed that child molesters or kidnappers could be anyone, strangers of different racial backgrounds and individuals associated with illicit activities were more highly suspect. A few parents concluded that this type of crime transcends socio-economic and racial boundaries and could be perpetrated by people familiar to their children. One Hispanic mother used this warning with her 10-year-old daughter:

"Well, I don't think that any one of my relatives will hurt her, but I don't trust people. So I warn her about this and I tell her that no one should caress her or get close in a negative way. She should not even allow this from a relative because people get crazy at times and they tend to do horrible things."

A few of the Hispanic mothers viewed local youths as a possible threat to either their male or female children.

One Hispanic mother explained:

"Well, not anyone you know. Maybe some boys. Yes, some adolescent and big adolescents of 13, 14, 15 years of age. At that age, they're sexually curious."

Another Hispanic mother stated:

"It could even be an older child because there are children who have a different way of thinking. It depends on the education they are given."

Although not all adolescents were suspect of this type of crime, some parents felt that their unpredictable behaviors warranted a watchful eye.

According to mothers, anywhere they were not immediately accessible were places where children are vulnerable to overtures by strangers or potential kidnappers and/or child molesters. Parents described nearby streets (both populated and desolate), local parks, and public rest rooms as places they regarded with caution and would not permit their children to go alone. This Italian mother explained her dilemma:

"...When my husband takes her to the movies, if she has to use the bathroom, obviously he can't take her to the ladies' room. And she's too big to go into the mens' room with him, which sometimes we get away with, with little babies.

...but a few times we disagreed, of course. He let her go to the bathroom the first time and he went into the mens' room and she went into the ladies' room. I got crazy because I said, 'How do you know that there's not somebody in there that's going to hurt her?' So now, the last time she told him, he stood right by the door calling 'Darliene..., Darliene'..., every few seconds."

An Italian mother who lived in a neighborhood she considered safe related her concerns about sexual molestation:

"I worry about that all the time. That's one of the main reasons I don't let him go places by himself, because you're reading too much about this. You never can say, "Oh, this is never going to happen in this neighborhood," no matter how good the neighborhood is. It can always happen."

Some parents considered desolate spaces adjacent to their homes and apartments, such as hallways, elevators, and entryways, as dangerous because they were places where children might come into contact with strangers. These were also the places used by the Queens Molester to commit the sexual violation of female children (Pienciack, 1988).

The monitoring strategies created by parents to prevent the possibility of sexual molestation were similar to those developed to cope with the potential stranger/kidnapper. However, with regard to sexual molestation, parents emphatically stressed the rules that required their children to be supervised or escorted.

Parents were not only the gatekeepers to their children's experience of their neighborhoods, but their sentinels as well.

Children's Safety and Parental Monitoring Strategies

Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents of Corona and Elmhurst developed an array of safety strategies which were flexible enough to address a range of social and physical conditions that could influence their children's physical or psychological safety. Spoken by an Hispanic father of his 10-year-old boy:

"I teach him the important things like to be defensive, to be offensive, and when not to be rude."

The most effective tactic parents employed to cope with many of the threats was avoidance. Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers with their children simply bypassed places in their neighborhoods they perceived as dangerous. Merry (1981) documented that adult residents in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods used this strategy to cope with their fear of crime and perceptions of social disorder. Likewise, many of the parents of Corona and Elmhurst avoided settings frequented by persons they viewed as socially deviant or involved in illegal activities.

Examples of such settings included desolate side streets, vacant lots, and closed off construction sites -- places removed from the protection of a trustworthy adult and where their children might be vulnerable to the overtures of strangers.

For some Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers, the time of day appeared to influence their use of this strategy. For example, most mothers and a few fathers stated that they avoided parks and specific neighborhood streets after dusk. These places were perceived as "more dangerous" at this time, due to the inhabitants, their activities, and the notable absence of responsible community residents. As this Asian-American father explained:

"I won't let them go there after dark. So many boys around and the drugs and you don't know. I won't go there. I won't let them go there."

For other parents, however, use of neighborhood areas during evening hours was a moot point because most of their children were occupied with indoor evening rituals, i.e., bathing, homework, etc. The strategy of avoidance was one of many techniques parents used to protect their children from danger. The most common strategy, however, and one most demanding on parents' time and energy, was to supervise their children's outdoor activities.

According to a majority of Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers and fathers, the most effective strategy to ensure their children's safety was to impose various degrees of supervision over their activities. Levels of supervision ranged from parents' direct presence to their reliance upon visual and auditory access from their homes and/or the presence of responsible parties, such as siblings or neighbors. The use of supervision strategy had the potential to influence the quality of life for both parents and children as illustrated in this statement by this Italian mother:

"She can only go out if I'm there to watch. It's not much fun for her because I've got to be free to go outside. You know, sometimes I'm free, sometimes I'm not. And I know she'd rather play with her friends than be around me, but I can't take her there [to her friends] all the time".

Seven parents stated that their children remain indoors (3 Hispanic females, two non-Hispanic females, and two Hispanic male children) were not permitted to play outdoors unless the parent was directly present. These children were occasionally taken to playgrounds or structured recreational activities by their parents. As this Hispanic mother reported:

"He never really goes outside. Only during the summer when we go to the beach."

These parents explained that they felt compelled to keep their children indoors because of their conceptions of social environmental hazards around their homes, e.g., busy streets, strangers, or time constraints due to their jobs. If they worked full-time, they did not want their children outdoors without proper supervision.

For many Corona and Elmhurst parents, the scope of parental monitoring was synonymous with their children's "home range." Home range, according to Gelwick's definition cited in (Tindel, 1971), consisted of the various routes and settings that children visit over the course of a normal day. With the exception of the children residing in high-rise residences, most of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic children were instructed to play in front of their homes, with a range of movement averaging from 200-400 feet up and down the block. Two 11-year-old boys were permitted to travel two or three blocks away from their homes. Most Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers and fathers considered this range a safe distance because it guaranteed sufficient visual or auditory access to their children from their windows, doors or porches. Hart (1986) refers to this as the "Zone of Supervision." If their children were not playing in their designated areas, they were monitored by siblings, neighbors, or relatives.

Parents' ability to monitor their children's activities was challenged by their children's use of bicycles. On bicycles, the girls' range of movement on sidewalks in front of their homes averaged 519 feet. Boys, on the other hand, were permitted a range averaging 1,306 feet which afforded them the latitude to move off the block. Hispanic and non-Hispanic children averaged approximately the same range. Some mothers had conflicting feelings about their children's use of bicycles because they could not control their children's interactions with traffic. As this Hispanic mother explained:

"I don't let her ride in the street. First of all like I said, she just got her 10-speed and she's very small and she's shakey this past summer. So, I told her until she was more secure on the bike, I didn't want her to ride in the street in case she was riding near a car and fell. ...it happened to me driving...a boy fell on the hood of my car. He didn't get hurt but I got scared. So that's about it, mainly for safety reasons."

Consequently, many mothers established rules that delineated place-use for bikes. This Italian mother described her rules:

"Like I said, he could take his bike up to 53rd Avenue to a friends 'cause he doesn't have to cross the street. It's on the same block just around the corner. My son will go up there and I know she [the other mother] really watches her son playing. So I know when he gets there, she knows he's there."

More Hispanic mothers had rules for bicycle use compared to non-Hispanic mothers. For example, "you can't cross the street," "you can't go around the corner," "you must stay on the sidewalk" were a few of the rules they mentioned. A majority of these mothers making these rules worked full-time. Fathers had no comment on the subject. Despite mothers' and fathers' concern about traffic, most parents purchased bicycles for their children and permitted biking on sidewalks or during family outings in the park. Only one male child was permitted to ride his bicycle to school two blocks away.

For most children the range of outdoor activities was limited to the resources available on their blocks. Sixty-two percent ($n=23$) of all children were permitted to visit a friend alone, but only if the friend resided on the same block. More Hispanic and non-Hispanic males were given permission to visit friends off the block than female children. There was no observable pattern for giving children permission to visit a friend according to the mother's employment status.

Along with utilizing supervision as a strategy for monitoring children's play safety, parents created sets of rules to control their interactions with the socio-physical environment. According to Krepp and Reiss cited in (Kantar

and Lehr, 1975), parental rules are sets of conditions to regulate children's boundaries of experience, to schedule their use of time and space, and to establish patterns of interactions. Sears, Maccoby, Eleanor, and Levin (1959) believed that rules are designed to help establish self-control, respect for authority and fear of punishment. Rules are one of the means by which children internalize community and cultural standards. Children obtain access to the outdoors by requesting permission from a parent or guardian. As one Hispanic father commented:

"The first rule I have is--ask my permission."

Granting permission involves the parent assessing the child's intentions, evaluating any conflicts of interest for the parent or child, and then granting or denying the child freedom to act upon their desires. It is implicit in the nature of the interaction that children cannot make certain decisions about play, place-use, or utilization of time without consulting with an authority figure for guidance and consent. The rite of requesting permission also allows parents to maintain varying degrees of control over their children's activities. All of the Corona and Elmhurst parents stated that their children were required

to ask their permission to go outside or, as one East Indian mother put it, "to go anywhere."

Most of the rules regarding urban dangers were designed by parents to regulate their children's outdoor behavior when they were not available to intervene in case of an emergency. The most common rule reported by almost all Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents came in the form of a warning to the child to be alert to the presence of strangers. This warning was most commonly expressed to the child in terms of "be careful." Warnings cautioned children to be alert to environmental qualities, especially people who may be dangerous, and to prepare them to take defensive actions in the event a danger was realized. Some of the Hispanic mothers emphasized the importance of not trusting anyone. These types of warnings alerted their children to be cautious around people in general, and ensured that their female children would be particularly cautious of male strangers. As one Hispanic mother explained:

"Of whom am I worried? I don't have anyone specific, but I don't trust anyone. I think any man can hurt her. I always tell her to be careful, that many men have bad habits. Even here at home, I don't let her go down where [on the street] there are men. Nothing."

Parents' judgment of their children's limited abilities to assess information, foresee the consequences of their actions, and comply with parental directives appeared explicit in the creation of safety rules. Therefore, many of the rules described by parents were in the form of scenarios providing children with a range of contextual cues specific to people, places, and behaviors to help them to evaluate a potential threat. This applied to most situations involving danger, e.g., traffic, harassment by other children, and contact with strangers. An example used by one West Indian mother was:

"I tell her when she comes home from school and a car stops to walk away. Even if they say your mother sent me or they try to give you something, you don't take it. You just walk away and find a policeman."

Rules regarding interactions with strangers are, by far, the most complicated, requiring children to evaluate a complex social situation with conditions that vary across place and time, e.g., a man in a car, a Black man who offers something, or a woman who refers to your mother. A few mothers mentioned the racial or ethnic background of the individual as a distinction to indicate danger. This Hispanic mother explained:

"Yes, I tell him for example, if I let him go to the park with his friends, I tell him to be careful because it is the majority of Blacks who smoke drugs. So he is aware of all those dangers."

Based on the children's appraisal of these socio-environmental conditions, they were instructed to pursue a course of action, e.g., run, scream, seek help, decline the gift, not get into the car, etc. This Hispanic father described the rules he had given his daughter:

"Yes, I tell her to run, not to stop and answer questions by people, but go. If she is approached by another person, they know not to hang around them too much. If the worst of the worst happens, to scream her head off."

The social complexity of these types of confrontations compelled most parents to provide as much information as possible in the content of the rules. Three parents of Hispanic descent and two of non-Hispanic descent did not feel it necessary to discuss these types of rules because their children were too young. In the case of the stranger scenarios, parents believed that the danger might be more easily recognized if their children were continually reminded of the possibility and because there were so many factors to consider. Since there is no prototypical profile of "a stranger" or a "modus operandi" for successful avoidance, many parents repeated these scenarios in order to prepare their children despite their inability to comprehend many of the possible antecedents or outcomes. Rules seemed to warn children of potential danger that could neither be predicted nor controlled by parent or child.

In the event parents were not present, some rules were established to provide buffers between the children and strangers, e.g., that children be accompanied by peers or siblings to and from places or while playing outside. One East Indian parent described her rule:

"I tell her that she only go there [to the park] with her sisters. She must play with them only. That's the only way she go."

Other children were instructed by their parents to walk to and from school with their siblings or neighborhood children. If their friends were unavailable at the end of the school day, these children were instructed to call their parents to pick them up. One Asian-American mother who worked felt strongly about her rules and the consequences of breaking them:

"I told him the only time you get kidnapped, if you walk by yourself, alone! Always walk with your sister. If not, follow one of your friends' mothers home because they live in the same area, going this way. This only time you avoid that happening."

Hispanic female children had more rules regarding talking with strangers compared to all of the other children. Most of their mothers worked full-time which might explain their need to be more protective of their children. It was also stated by Javier (personal communication, November 11, 1992) that according to

cultural norm, it was the Hispanic mothers' duty to protect their female children from all men.

Rules about place-use in the neighborhoods were designed to restrict children's use of outdoor settings to accommodate parental desire for supervision and control over threatening social or environmental conditions. Most parents limited children's use of play spaces in their neighborhoods to those areas with predictable environmental qualities, e.g., a neighbor's backyard or places where familiar people were known to frequent. Some rules prohibited children from exploring construction sites (mostly non-Hispanic male children) or walking by corners frequented by drug pushers en route to school. Certain types of spaces, such as apartment building entrances or the homes of unfamiliar families, were also covered by these rules. Other parents, particularly Hispanic mothers, felt that rules should also apply to stores as illustrated in this comment by an African-American mother:

"He can't go there cause I can't see him and who's there. He likes the video machines and there are always older boys around, so I don't let him go unless I can see who's there."

Other place-use rules delineated the parameters of children's movements through spaces, e.g., stay within the fence, stop at the street corner, come home after school, etc. Most all of these rules were the same for Hispanic

and non-Hispanic families, regardless of the working status of the mother.

The relationship between place, time, and activity was taken into consideration by most parents when creating rules to monitor their children's safety. Rules regarding units of time helped to prioritize children's activities and circumscribed the boundaries for activities both inside and outside the home. Most parents stated that children had to come straight home after school unless they were engaged in after-school activities. This rule limited to a certain extent children's opportunities to explore their neighborhoods and/or socialize with peers. After arriving home, many non-Hispanic children were assigned responsibilities like doing their homework or chores. More Hispanic and non-Hispanic males were assigned chores after school (average 1/2 hour) compared to females. The difference was slight between genders, but noteworthy. Once these assignments were completed, permission to play outdoors was often granted in some households. However, permission was never without some time limit which varied according to the season and the individual household. For most children, homework was a mandatory after-school activity that required an average of one hour to complete. Other children were not permitted to play outside after school on a weekday during the school year because of

conflicts with after-school activities. (See Methods section for description of Children's Home Schedules).

Many parents felt that rules governing their children's play activities around the house and use of play equipment in parks were vital to their safety. Depending upon the setting, some play behaviors are less appropriate and increase the likelihood of injury to children. Consequently, some parents developed rules to curb children's behaviors and environmental interactions. For example, "don't run in the street after the ball" or "don't climb too high on the jungle gym" were rules taught to both male and female Hispanic and non-Hispanic children.

A few of the Hispanic mothers discussed rules for in-school behavior. Some of these mothers believed that elements in the institutional setting, including the lack of rules and supervision, threaten their children with the possibility of violation or harassment or made them vulnerable to juvenile crimes. This Hispanic mother explained:

"...almost always I am thinking when she goes to school, when she is in school, when she is in the recreational area outside. That is my sorrow, when she is playing outside because the school is not safe, the doors are not closed. They play in the air with open doors. That is my fear that someone comes in and hurts her."

These types of fears necessitated that rules be created for protocol in the event of an incident and self defense. For example, one Hispanic mother stated:

"I always tell her in school, she should not go to the bathroom by herself. If she wants a drink, she should also not do it by herself."

And another Hispanic mother reported:

"Not long ago there was an incident and no one told me about it. Not even the teachers, as if nothing happened. My son, he was pushed down a stairs by some boys from the top of the stairs, someone pushed him. They didn't even investigate this. This I don't understand. ...I was very upset because I thought, he could get killed in there and no one will say nothing. ...I don't know, it seems like they fear the students. I tell him he must tell me these things."

For these parents, it appeared that their local schools were places that posed elements of risk for their children. Without being present to protect their children, rules were one of the few available means of educating children to danger and mitigating parental anxiety.

Rules also were tools that some parents employed for the purpose of socialization. Many were designed to address social behaviors in the public arena and appeared to reflect personal or cultural values. For example, when one parent from India was asked at what age her female child would be let out alone to play, she responded:

"No, this not happen where I come from. She not go out without me. This not happen for girls."

Some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents also discussed rules for personal conduct which stressed interpersonal relations, e.g., not swearing, talking politely to adults, and being honest with friends. Other rules of conduct encouraged pro-social behaviors, such as sharing toys, watching out for younger siblings, and helping injured friends. This Hispanic mother's rules for her son were:

"He has to be polite to other people too, the kids you know. He has to watch the other people. A little consideration he's got to have, so you have to teach him sharing. He's very friendly so he gets along with a lot of different kids and he doesn't get into trouble with no one."

Some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents also described rules stipulating that their male children should avoid disputes with other children that could result in injury or refrain from anti-social conduct with peers, like hitting anyone. This was emphasized for Hispanic male children who occasionally had disagreements with other boys in school, particularly boys from other racial backgrounds.

Parents' Conceptions of Urban Danger and the Consequences

The Emotional Effects on Children

Recent research documents that exposure to particular types of dangers in urban settings has lasting effects on "children's psychological disposition and personal outlook on the world" (Garbarino, Koestnlyng, and Dubrow, 1991). Many of the parents believed that living in Corona and Elmhurst affected their children's psychological well-being. According to parents, the gravest threat to their children's safety or well-being stemmed from social factors which subjected them to the risk of moral injury or physical assault, e.g., exposure to anti-social behavior, kidnapping, or sexual molestation. The presence of these types of social threats in their communities generated fear and worry for most parents and children.

Fear is a complex emotion that arises from a combination of factors, specifically the biological programming for survival and learned responses, many of which are culturally acquired (Lowrance, 1976). According to some Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers, their children's fears of social threats affected every area of their lives by generating fear of being left alone and/or going out

without a parent present. One Hispanic mother explained:

"She worries all the time about everything. She's just become that way. She stays close and doesn't go out too much."

Another Italian mother commented:

"If she goes over to play with her friend, I watch her from the window as she goes. She knows I'm there watching her, otherwise she wouldn't go there without me watching."

To what extent children's fear of strangers, kidnapping or other forms of social crimes were acquired from their parents could not be ascertained from the data, but should be considered as a possibility. Out of the five children who had a tendency to stay close to their mothers, three were non-Hispanic females, one was an Hispanic male and the other an Hispanic female. Three of the five mothers worked including the mother of the Hispanic male child. Fathers didn't report any emotional responses from their children.

Zill's (1983) study of children's fears found that over 45% of all children surveyed across the nation worried about kidnapping. According to the parents in this study, children did feel frightened or cautious around people. Parents reported more female children, in general, feeling frightened. Almost equal numbers of male and female

Hispanic children were upset, frightened, or cautious compared to only one non-Hispanic male. These children had mothers who either worked full-time or stayed at home.

.

Fathers were not particularly verbal about their children's feelings on the subjects of kidnapping and sexual molestation. Many of the Hispanic fathers stated:

"..he understands" or "he's not affected."

Only one Asian-American father confessed that he believed his daughter was "affected a lot," but wouldn't explain further.

For some of the Corona and Elmhurst children "worry" appeared to be manifest in their behavior; specifically, their seeking close proximity to a parent. This type of response was primarily reported by mothers of female children. One Italian mother stated:

"She's a clingy child - she won't let me out of her sight anywhere. And I know its because of all this stuff she hears about."

And this Hispanic mother commented:

"Even if we go to the mall, she's frightened to leave my side for a moment. It's all those people all around. She's just frightened to go anywhere."

Whereas, this African-American mother remarked:

"I think it does affect her, 'cause her fears make her want to be with me all the time. She's always grasping me, she doesn't want to let go... It makes her not want to be independent, you know, always clinging to adults and that's not good."

Prior research suggests that female children are socialized to stay closer to home because they are perceived to be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and/or less capable of defending themselves (Saegert & Hart, 1978). This was evident in some of the responses given by parents:

Hispanic father: "Well, girls are in more danger than boys, always."

Hispanic father: "...boys are, ...you know, girls are more soft. Boys no, boys are bigger than girls, boys can hit back."

Hispanic mother: "If she was a boy I'd be more worried. Boys are more rebellious. At that age they would want to stay out with his friends. Girls stay inside."

Asian-American mother: "It's different in the world now, it's different for a girl. She is better to stay inside now."

East Indian mother: "Boys not that much problems that way. I understand that but girls are...quiet, but boys I know can take care of themselves. Especially girls coming and going. We have to take care of them."

Italian mother: "Somehow my son was more street wise. Well, we just figured that boys were tougher...also, I have more fear for her, I think, I don't know how to explain it.

However, a few parents felt strongly that both their male and female children were vulnerable to social crimes, such as sexual violation or kidnapping and that all children, regardless of gender, could be either physically harmed or psychologically abused. As this Irish mother explained:

"I feel sorry for him. Its not like when I was a kid and could go out and just hang around. Now I've got to watch him and everything he does. I feel scared and I know that even he gets scared sometimes."

And this Irish father stated:

"No, I worry about both [his boy and girl]. Something bad could happen to either one of them. There is no difference. That's why they have the same rules."

Children's conceptions of danger and the emotional sequelae could arise from a variety of sources. Hart (1978) proposes that certain types of indirect experiences, such as stories told by peers and the observation of others contribute to the development of fears in children. One Italian mother from Corona described the circumstances

surrounding her first discussion of sexual molestation with her 9-year-old child:

"She didn't even know about it 'till last week, believe it or not, about being molested. Her girl friend, we were coming home from the dance studio, and her girl friend was talking about this girl in her class - her uncle molested her. And my daughter was listening and I know she never heard, well you know, that someone could do this to you. Then I had to explain it to her."

According to the literature on perceptions of crime, learning about incidents of crime from secondary sources can have repercussions for the individual. For example, Skogan & Maxfield (1981) found that residents hearing of local crimes became fearful and responded as if they were the victims. It is possible that children of Corona and Elmhurst hearing of incidents of murder, rape, and assault happening to other children would react in a similar fashion. An African-American mother living in Elmhurst described the children's responses to the Queen's rapist like this:

"We had a couple of scares with the people around this part last year when some man was picking up little girls in Queens. During that time I think all the parents were afraid and disturbed and the children were frightened. The kids were having nightmares and there was a lot of talk about sex. A lot of kids got their information at that time as to what sex was about. So I think they were all basically afraid 'cause it's distilled in them a fear of strangers. They can see what's going on and how children disappear."

Some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents also believed that their children's fears were exacerbated by the constant barrage of information on these subjects. Information on social crimes came from a number of sources; the media's depiction of incidents, school programs, books, videos, peers, and parent-child discussions. As one Irish father explained:

"Well, like I said, kids know a lot at this age than I ever knew existed at that age. So they're learning it on television. They're learning it in school and from neighbors and from us. We have open discussions on what's going on, you know, it's not a big dark secret."

And this Hispanic mother remarked:

"She is very cautious about them [strangers]. Although at her age, she does not really understand the things I tell her. But she reads the newspaper and hears the news and my explanations. She puts it all together."

Other parents stated that their children had adjusted to information given them on kidnapping and sexual harassment. Almost twice as many non-Hispanic children were "not affected" or had adjusted with twice as many males as females. There were almost equal numbers of male and female Hispanic children who had "adjusted" but the numbers were few. Both groups had equal numbers of mothers who worked full-time or stayed at home. Male children had more mothers who worked full-time.

Some parents' fear of danger appeared to influence their children's outdoor play. A few parents reported that their children were more or less "indoor" children.

According to one Hispanic mother:

"She likes to read a lot and play with her dolls. She doesn't like to go outside and I don't encourage her too much."

Another East Indian mother commented:

"He has much to do after school. He has no time to go out because of his homework and religious instruction. He doesn't ask to go, so I just leave it or let him play in the backyard."

And another Hispanic mother stated:

"If she goes outside she sits right there on the doorstep. Right there. She doesn't go farther. She knows to stay close by me and she don't want to go. You see that's it. She plays there."

However, many Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents believed that the restrictions they imposed caused their children to miss valuable types of play experiences. Certain types of motor activities, such as riding bicycles, skating, running, etc., were restricted or prohibited in their present setting. Other parents mentioned that their children's social opportunities, such as playing traditional ball games and street games with other children in the neighborhood, were absent from their play or limited to a certain extent. Parents' distrust of automobile

drivers forced them to limit occasions for children to go alone to a friend's house or to the local playground if they were off of the block they lived on. This West Indian mother stated:

"I think they need to run around. They need to loosen and get all that anxiety that they have after coming home. They're locked up in that apartment all evening, ...day after day."

One Italian mother, who lived in Corona all her life, described her daughter's experience:

"I feel their personal relationships with each other or making friends or having relationships with other children is missing from their childhood because, like I said, when I was a kid everybody came out after school or after you did your homework. When it was warm we all played together. There was 20 or 30 of us. We were all strangers but we all got along. Baseball -- five to six people played baseball. These kids don't have that. That's why I feel so bad for them growing up. They don't have that intermingled relationship with kids, you know. They have a friend at my place or my daughter goes there, you know. She can only go out if her older brother's there, and he can't be bothered with her half the time."

The location of children's friends in the neighborhood was, at times, an obstacle for some Hispanic and non-Hispanic families and interfered with opportunities to play. If peers were not in close proximity, children were required to consult with their parents' schedules in order to go out or socialize away from home. Having a child's friend live in the same building or on the same street was

considered an advantage by some parents. Of the 17 non-Hispanic parents, 11 children (six male and five female) had friends in their building or on their blocks. Six of these mothers worked full-time, but permitted their children to visit their friends regularly or on occasions, if escorted. Hispanic children (three males and six females) had more friends living either on the block or in the residence. These nine children had four working mothers but three of the four children were permitted to visit their friends. As this Hispanic mother stated:

"Thank God her friend lives upstairs. They are with each other all the time and I don't have to worry about taking her places or her going alone down the street."

But again, not all parents shared the same opinion on the effects of local dangers on their children's outdoor experience. One quarter of all parents reported that their children's play was not affected. They stated that their children either played in their yards or pursued other types of outdoor activities. According to this Hispanic mother:

"No, I don't think so [his play is not effected]. Wherever he doesn't go, you know, that other kids go, I take him, if I have the time which is in the afternoon."

A few Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents felt guilty for restricting their children's movements around the neighborhood. One non-Hispanic father wished his son "could be freer to come and go." "More freedom" was a strong theme throughout many of the mothers and fathers interviews. It appeared that for these parents more freedom was conditional on having a safe environment which would eliminate the need for so many restrictions. More freedom was also associated with their children's ability to play more independently with greater access to different areas of the neighborhood, and more opportunities to socialize with friends without direct supervision of an adult. When one Italian mother was asked if her child's play would change in a safer neighborhood, she responded:

"It would change in the sense that she would go outside. She would play instead of being locked up."

Many of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents' recollections from their childhoods included descriptions of a "sense of freedom;" the choice to go places, see people, and act on their own accord. Some parents' recollections of childhood contained memories of being or feeling unencumbered by the knowledge of social deviances. These memories ran contrary to perceptions of their children's experience of growing up in the city. It may be that the comparison between their children's present

circumstances and the memories of their own childhoods magnified the importance of this concept. As one Irish mother explained:

"I was outside all the time when I was a child. I ran around, climbed trees. Jane doesn't have that option here. So it's completely different. She is mostly indoors. I don't know how they stand it."

An Hispanic father stated:

"You know, he can't do anything. He can't go anywhere. Not like where I was raised. We were on our bikes all over the place, climbing trees, playing ball. Nothing like here."

Bartlett (1991), and Sebba (1991) wrote that adults have mixed feelings about their childhoods because this period of time also involved considerable feelings of stress, confusion, and fear. Sebba goes on to explain that these types of recollections provide their own defense against painful memories, but that few adults can consciously recollect the range of experiences during their youth, which creates problems for children of the next generation.

Conceptions of Urban Dangers: The Effects on Parents

Access to outdoor settings affords children a wider range of social, emotional, and physical experiences. When

Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents were asked to describe their children's outdoor interests, most parents reported social or physical activities, such as playing ball or games with friends. When parents were asked where their children liked to "hang around and/or be alone," most parents regardless of cultural background appeared unsure as to whether these activities occurred outside or at all. Wolfe (1977) documented that outdoor settings were among the places that urban children used to achieve a sense of privacy depending upon certain variables, e.g., density of the home, a private room, etc. For some children, the purpose of going out alone could be to find a place to be away from their parents. A few Hispanic mothers mentioned their children's bedrooms as places to be alone or with friends. Yet other parents', particularly Hispanic fathers and mothers, responded that these behaviors were not in their children's repertoire of daily activities, either indoors or outdoors. When one Hispanic father was asked if he knew of any places where his daughter would go outside to be alone, he answered "definitely not." It is possible

that parents from different cultural backgrounds did not understand the concept of either being alone or hanging out or did not condone these types of behaviors for their young children.

The presence of danger in urban neighborhoods exacted a price on the quality of life for parents as well as children. The consequences of parental fears of social dangers appeared to manifest emotionally in tension, anxiety, and fear for some of their male and female children. Many non-Hispanic mothers reported feeling "worried," "terrible," and "bad" about having to discuss these subjects with their children and living in fear on a daily basis. Contrary to the non-Hispanic mothers responses, Hispanic mothers reported feeling good about their discussions with their children because they were now "aware." Some fathers reported that the mothers discussed these subjects with their children (particularly female children), but a few Hispanic and non-Hispanic fathers voiced anger that their children were constantly confronted with threats of physical and emotional injury. As this Asian-American father explained:

"Well, let's say that it doesn't effect him. The ones that get effected are us because we worry for them."

An Hispanic mother commented:

"I am always worried about them. When I am not home physically--I am home mentally thinking about my children's welfare."

Many Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers described feelings of worry and concern about where their children might be playing, with whom they might be talking to, and the possibility of losing sight of them in public spaces. A few non-Hispanic parents went so far as to describe how supervising their children created tension and anxiety depending on the location and the familiarity of the people around the parents and children. This Italian mother's comment is an example of the stress generated by one particular type of situation:

"...but I'm looking at something over here [in the mall] and she's like where I can see her, I still get nervous that she's going to make a wrong turn or see something a little further away and walk to it. And she's going to look for me and not find me and I'm not going to be there. So basically like that."

One of the anxieties of childrearing is accidentally losing a child temporarily in a crowd -- not an uncommon experience. Four parents (two Hispanic and two non-Hispanic) described incidents of losing their children in

parks, restaurants, and malls. One Hispanic mother explained:

"Now, like I said you hear of things happening and you become more aware and you also become more careful."

Parents' knowledge of social dangers sprang from a variety of sources. Some parents listed their information sources as the local newspapers and television news shows which kept them apprised of current urban crimes, such as the "Queen's Rapist." Fewer Hispanic parents made reference to this crime, possibly due to the language barrier. Hyson and Bollin (1990) found that increased reports of sexual crimes resulted in children keeping in closer contact with responsible adults and curtailing their interactions with friendly adults in the community. This Hispanic mother took the following course of action:

"...but I'm strict with her because I read in the paper or find out on the T.V. about daily crime not only against children, but against adults and the elderly. This worries me a lot and has forced me to look after my daughter and my parents. This is why I hire a home attendant for them, so they can be taken care of."

Information coming from so many sources might negatively affect children and resulted in parents' curtailing their children's outdoor activities, as well as the children deciding to stay close to a trustworthy adult.

Some of the local institutions, such as schools and churches also assumed a role in informing parents of various dangers that could harm their children such as the "Queens Rapist." Some of the schools incorporated information on social dangers into their curriculums with discussions on kidnapping and sexual molestation (Principal, personal interview, May 14, 1988).

Word-of-mouth between parents cannot be underestimated as a source of local information on urban dangers. Although only a few parents mentioned hearing of dangers to children directly from neighbors or friends, a number of discussions about local incidents began with the phrase "I've heard..." According to Best (1991), stories of urban dangers involving children are kept alive through hearsay and rumors, which serve to warn parents to care for their young or suffer the consequences. Best provides an example of a popular "urban legend" of a boy who had his penis cut off in a public restroom. One Italian mother in this study described a similar incident she had heard occurred in the borough park down the street:

"Well, I don't know if I told you, but there's a voodoo cult in the park. Yeah, and a couple of years ago I heard that, you see, this boy went into the men's room over there by the athletic field. Those people hang around there at night taking drugs and, well you know, it was getting dark and he went there and he had his penis cut off."

Most Corona and Elmhurst Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents believed it was their "duty" to educate their children about the social crimes that threatened them. For some parents, this sense of obligation appeared to run contrary to their desire to protect them from knowledge of social deviances. Some parents voiced resignation to the fact that their children's growing awareness of social deviance affected their childhood "innocence." The concept of the "innocent child" emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as a social ideology which proposed that innocence and naiveté were the noblest of youthful virtues and should be protected at any price (Wishy, 1968). Some parents wished they could protect their children's innocence. As one Italian mother remarked:

"I think they're [the dangers] making them grow up too fast. Because when I was their age, I never knew the things they know today and it's something they have to be told, you know, and I feel even though they play, this is not a childhood for them to go around with all these fears in their heads. ...It's parents' job to worry, not kids."

Whereas, an Hispanic mother commented:

"It's not like when I was a child. She knows more and more everyday. Some days I think she knows more than me. It's a sad world that we do this to children."

And this West Indian mother stated:

"I think it's a shame for the children today of the things they have to be aware of. Whereas we didn't. We were allowed to be innocent and be children, and they aren't. No, I guess in my own way I try to let my children deal in their own way. I prefer that they don't (didn't have to.)"

However, some parents possessed stronger feelings about educating their children about social dangers. A West Indian father stated:

"Well, its better for him that he knows than if he doesn't know."

An Italian mother remarked:

"I don't like that I have to talk with her about these types of things, but if I don't and something happens, I couldn't live with myself."

Most parents analyzed the situation from the perspective of costs and benefits before discussing certain types of dangers with their children. These parents compared the possible consequences of withholding information that might protect their children against an evaluation of their children's ability to cope with the knowledge and constructively use the information to protect themselves against these threats. Some Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents reported feeling "good" about their

decisions to inform their children. As one Hispanic mother remarked:

"I feel fine talking to her about it. But she gets fearful. But I tell her it is not for her to become scared, but that she knows and learns that when something is going to happen to her that she is mentally prepared."

And this Hispanic father commented:

"I feel that she has to recognize that this is a real world we live in. You know that we can't grow up in a fantasy. I feel much better letting her know what the situation is than if I didn't say anything."

Most parents in Corona and Elmhurst elected to discuss social dangers with their children and to selectively provide the information they judged appropriate to the age and gender of their child. This also minimized the possibility of their children's acquiring misinformation from outside sources. Mothers appeared to assume primary responsibility for these discussions, particularly with female children.

More Hispanic children both male and female appeared to be worried or frightened of social crimes. Over half of their mothers worked full-time. More non-Hispanic children were "clingy" to their mothers of which three of the five mothers worked.

Non-Hispanic parents did not report fear among their children as much as worry. Most of the mothers worked full-time. Perhaps the Hispanic parents reported more fear among their children as a projection of their own feelings of insecurity living in an unfamiliar community and a foreign country, and not capable of availing themselves to the systems that might alleviate their fears.

It is interesting to note that during the eight month period of the "Queens Rapist" criminal spree, Community Board 4 Children's Division did not take leadership on behalf of the community, but instead shifted major responsibility to the police.

As mentioned before, the schools took an active part in informing parents of the sexual crime being perpetrated against female children, and the school's principals along with their PTA worked together with both parents and police.

Parents' Conceptions of Danger and Safety

The study of the complex nature of parents' conceptions of urban dangers must question the relationships between the two opposing states or conditions of safety and danger. Both danger and safety are social constructs that vary by definition according to the individual's cultural values, gender, age, and the socio-physical environment (Merry, 1981; Thyrgerson, 1986). Danger, for parents, could be defined as disparate cues signifying the potential for moral or physical injury to themselves or their children. Safety is an antithetical state to danger, signifying a condition of well-being wherein the social or environmental cues indicating danger are either absent or believed to be under the parents' or children's control. Both conditions require parents' cognitive appraisal of three factors; the parent's abilities, the child, and the characteristics of the socio-physical environment.

How does danger and safety stand in relationship to one another in a theoretical model of urban dangers for children? In reviewing all of the parents' interviews, it was discovered that for non-Hispanic mothers and fathers, "danger" was expressed in terms of levels of intensity, similar to a scaled measurement. For example, they viewed

strangers as having the potential of being "very dangerous" to their children. This West Indian father stated:

"He's never to go down to that corner. There are many strange people and the drug pushers. It is very dangerous."

Whereas, another level of intensity was expressed by a number of non-Hispanic parents who considered it "dangerous" if their children were bicycling down the street. In a similar vain, non-Hispanic parents' vocabulary for "safety" was also assessed by levels of intensity depending upon the conditions surrounding the specific circumstance. For example, many non-Hispanic mothers felt the "safest" place for their children was next to them, where they could be directly watched. However, some of the parents considered it "safe" for their children to play outside if the neighbors were watching. The another expression emerged that described yet, another measurement of safety. As one Italian mother put it:

"Its pretty safe to go to that playground ,cause during the summer they have this maintenance man there and he watches over everything."

In first examining these various states of danger and safety, it appeared that they fell on a continuum. A continuum is defined as a whole, whose series of parts are unique, and cannot be repeated or separated from the whole (McKechnie, 1979). However, after reviewing again the

interviews from Phase I and Phase II of the study, the term "unsafe" appeared in three different contexts. For example, one Italian mother commented that it was unsafe for her son to climb trees, whereas a Greek father discussed how manufacturing areas were unsafe because of the trucks. Another Italian mother felt that a vacant lot was unsafe because of the glass. The terms "pretty safe" and "unsafe" appear not to imply safety or danger, but rather an element of risk. Another example to consider would be if "not dangerous" means the same as "safe." They would seem to lay somewhere outside a safety-danger continuum. According to how non-Hispanic parents evaluated and expressed potential risk, it would appear that danger and safety are not one continuum, but two separate continua that are conceptually related, but assessed separately. A state of danger cannot exist without safety as a point of comparison. The state of safety is the antithesis of danger, but the English language has evolved such that measurements of various states overlap thus producing two continua instead of one.

What emerges when examining the interviews of Hispanic parents for their conceptualizations of danger and safety, was a culturally-bound set of definitions that constructed a different model from the of non-Hispanic parents. Hispanic mothers and fathers did not use the word "danger"

or "more dangerous." There was only one word used to express the state which was "dangerous" or "*peligroso*," which means knowing that risk or danger is present (Dutton, Harvey, & Walker, 1986). In the same vain, Hispanic parents discussed the condition of safety by using the word "safe" or "*seguro*." Seguro was defined as a condition of absolute security, where no harm could befall you (Dutton, et al., 1986). For many Hispanic mothers, seguro was the home, a place of absolute security. They did not employ expressions like "safer" or "less safe." For Hispanic parents, safe or seguro was the complete opposite of danger, and other variations of the term were not required. As one Hispanic mother remarked:

"Wherever the home is, my children are safe."

For Hispanic parents, danger and safety appeared to exist on a bi-polar continuum. Each end of the continuum had the term that expressed to the maximum degree the condition most valued by the culture.

Each group of parents, however, did share in common a psychological perspective toward danger and safety and their children. In assessing risk or potential danger all parents had to determine the degree of control they possessed over a circumstance. Danger, by definition, has

varying degrees of unpredictability, particularly where children are concerned. Parents would assess the risk and, depending upon their sense of control, in a particular circumstance, respond with behaviors like avoidance, restricting children's spatial movements, etc. Parents, in urban environments, had little control over their circumstances and could be viewed as living in a state or belief of external locus of control.

In terms of safety, most parents believed that they could create conditions that would safeguard their children's well-being. For example, some parents kept their children indoors or only let them out with an adult supervising, and created rules for children to follow. Under these conditions, parents had an internal locus of control or the belief that they had command of the situation.

Danger and safety can be interpreted as different conceptual models depending upon the parents' cultural backgrounds, psychological experiences, and the context in which they live. For most Hispanic parents who had only resided in this country for a short period of time, the foreign values, language, and cultural traditions put them at a disadvantage for feeling safe anywhere but inside their homes. But both groups of parents were confronted

with dangers in their neighborhoods that made them wary of their surroundings, and for the most part, feeling out of control.

SUMMARY

This study on mothers' and fathers' conceptions of danger for their children in urban neighborhoods strongly confirms that parents believe their neighborhoods are dangerous places for children to play. Parents' greatest concerns related to their children playing or walking adjacent to city traffic and the presence of strangers in the community. Parents associated strangers with criminal activities and the possibility of moral or physical harm or kidnapping.

Many parents' conceptions of danger differed according to the gender of the child, the gender of the parent, and the racial or ethnic background of the family. Mothers' employment status was also another factor that influenced a few of their beliefs and responses to their children's safety.

With regard to the concept of "safety," Hispanic parents believed the safest place their children could be was in their homes. According to Hispanic mothers and

fathers, the home was a setting that offered security and absolute protection against risk or harm. More Hispanic parents resided in houses with yards for their children to play in. Non-Hispanic mothers and fathers reported that the "safest" place for their children was next to them. Some non-Hispanic parents mentioned the home, but the proximity of the child appeared to be the most important issue.

More Hispanic male children were permitted to play on the sidewalks in front of houses, and bicycle further than Hispanic females. Many of these male children were slightly older (10- and 11-years-old) and both parents worked full-time. Hispanic females were highly protected by their mothers and often sequestered in their homes or escorted places where they would not be exposed to men with "bad habits."

A large number of Hispanic and non-Hispanic (male and female) children owned bicycles. This generated a form of tension for parents because of the unpredictability of city traffic. Hispanic mothers were concerned about "irresponsible drivers" and the erratic driving of gypsy cabs. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents believed drivers were unreliable and that the streets did not have adequate traffic signals. Although almost equal numbers of

male and female Hispanic and non-Hispanic children had bicycles, there were more rules for male Hispanic children whose mothers worked full-time.

It should be noted that parents and children residing in high-rise buildings had different sets of issues to address compared to parents residing in 2 and 3-family homes. Their lives were more readily threatened on a daily basis by the presence of drug dealers and the absence of security. Consequently, most of the children remained indoors with the exception of the male children whose mothers worked full-time.

As for public spaces, many families enjoyed the borough park, but were suspicious of people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds or those observed to be involved in illicit activities. Hispanic mothers felt their male children could be raped or abducted in the park, whereas their female children would be raped and exposed to bad habits. Non-Hispanic parents also voiced fears of social crimes, but were more concerned about the safety of their female children.

The paramount fear for all parents was the presence of strangers or unfamiliar others observed in their neighborhoods. It was evident that many parents'

definitions of strangers included racial or ethnic characteristics. This was also true for anyone considered be a potential kidnapper or child molester. Strangers were associated with drug activities and other crimes. Foreign-born parents, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic were more suspicious of strangers and spoke out with greater fear. Hispanic mothers of female children also feared strangers because of their association with drugs, whereas non-Hispanic parents spoke of strangers and drugs and fear for their male children. The fear of strangers' kidnapping their children influenced Hispanic mothers to keep their female children closer to home. These female children were given more rules to follow on the subject of strangers compared to non-Hispanic females.

More Hispanic males and females had rules regarding social interactions with unfamiliar children. Mothers of male children reported occasional problems in and out of school with their children fighting children from other racial backgrounds. Female Hispanic children were taught to protect themselves against any form of violation in school, e.g., to be escorted to the restroom by a friend.

It was evident from discussions with parents that the presence of social dangers in their communities affected their children. Non-Hispanic parents reported that their

male children worried more. Especially male children whose mothers worked full-time. Non-Hispanic families had more "clingy" children or children who chose to stay close to a parent. Both non-Hispanic and Hispanic parents stated that their female children were more frightened despite their efforts to mitigate their fears. Parents of Hispanic male and female children stated their children to be both frightened and cautious. Whether the mothers of these children worked full-time or stayed at home had no bearing on their children's fears or worries.

When parents were asked about how they felt about discussing issues of sexual deviance and kidnapping there was a range of responses. Non-Hispanic mothers reported that they felt "terrible" or "bad" that these topics had to be brought up. Whereas most Hispanic mothers stated that talking to their children about these subjects made them feel "good" because now they were "aware." Some fathers expressed anger that these conditions had to influence their children's childhood. Other fathers (mostly Hispanic) commented that they did not talk about these things. A few parents left their children uninformed.

There is no doubt that most parents believed these socio-physical dangers influenced their children's access to their neighborhoods. Some children did not go outside

at all. Some children were restricted to their yards or the front sidewalk which gave them approximately 400 feet of movement. Other parents commented that their children could not see friends living nearby without an escort or play street games like they used to do when they were children.

Urban danger is a complex concept affecting parents and children in different ways. Various forms of urban dangers were present influencing the quality of life for both children and parents. The next section will provide a number of questions for future research with the potential to impact public policy regarding issues of urban children's safety.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION SECTION

Conceptions of Danger in Urban Neighborhoods

For Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents of young children, an amalgam of environmental forces appears to trigger conceptions risk or possible threats to their well-being. It was evident in parents' discussions that their neighborhoods operated as a dynamic system of social and physical conditions affecting their conceptions of danger and their strategies for coping with these potential threats. According to Held (1983), the individual's ability to cope with danger is dependent upon their aptitude for predicting and controlling socio-environmental conditions surrounding their place of residence. But with most types of dangers, parents were forced to confront a sense of loss of control unless the children were sequestered in or around the home.

Best (1991) described danger as a psychic threat that, in the case of many parents, transcended individual boundaries to threaten the entire family's equilibrium. Current research documents a variety of conditions that intensify the conceptions of urban dangers among residents, such as fear of crime, community instability, perceived

ethnic and/or racial differences, and the disintegration or absence of social networks (Merry, 1981; Rainwater, 1966; Skogan, 1990). Many of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents of Corona and Elmhurst reported similar conditions existing in their communities. Parents felt particularly uncomfortable, threatened, or in danger in areas of their neighborhoods, e.g., parks and commercial streets, where people were unfamiliar, of different ethnic or racial backgrounds, or displaying activities perceived to be anti-social or criminally oriented. Lofland (1973) explained that unfamiliar people observed throughout urban neighborhoods are assessed as potentially dangerous in terms of both their physical appearance and social behaviors. Parents of Corona and Elmhurst evaluated the social qualities (personal characteristics and activities of strangers) in conjunction with the physical attributes of a setting before a particular place was judged to be safe or dangerous for use by their children. Danger was assessed as a cognitive matrix of factors to be evaluated before parents could arrive at a course of action.

Most parents reported that the most serious danger their children could confront involved unsupervised interactions with adults who were strangers, members of racial or ethnic groups other than their own, unknown

neighbors, or anyone exhibiting suspicious behavior. The data from this particular study did not explain the rationale behind parental fear of and concern about the presence of strangers in the community, with the exception of their association of strangers with drugs, drinking, possible criminal activities, or having minority status.

Rohe and Burby (1988) proposed that for urban residents the presence of the stranger in the community is a symbolic challenge to perceptions of social control. For many of the parents of Corona and Elmhurst, the presence of strangers or unfamiliar people in their neighborhoods represented a variant of danger to children that was unpredictable and, consequently, posed a risk to their children and themselves. For these parents, the availability of information that could mitigate the fear of strangers or unfamiliar people was not readily accessible. Many of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents were aware of the changing profile of their communities. But information or support from community institutions was unavailable to ease the transition. Future research might explore some of the following questions:

1. What were parents sources of information that roused fear or prejudice of strangers? Were parents from specific Hispanic cultures also suspicious of strangers from other Hispanic cultures?
2. What type of information and from what sources would be required to counteract the development of negative stereotypical attitudes and beliefs?
3. How could various forms of information be disseminated to people from different cultures?
4. Merry (1981) says that the lack of familiarity builds fear and distrust. If information was disseminated by community institutions, could it help to build a community?

Many parents from different cultures, particularly Asian-American and Hispanics, associated strangers with immoral or illegal activities in public places like parks and playgrounds. The presence of the stranger appeared to challenge the customs and beliefs integral to their cultural identities, thus posing the threat of moral injury to their children. The random presence of strangers in

their communities weakened parents' ability to control their children's exposure to non-conforming social conduct with specific regard to language, behavior, and ideas. In addition, the suspicious nature of strangers exacerbated parental fears of criminal acts being perpetrated against their children; acts ranging from petty theft and drug use to various forms of physical assault, such as kidnapping and sexual molestation.

For most parents the fear of random physical assault by a stranger superseded all other fears of violation or harm. The prospect of injury inflicted on their children in both an unpredictable and violent manner by an unknown assailant appeared to undermine the belief that they could control their children's interactions with the socio-physical environment and ultimately protect them from harm. The possibility of physical, psychological, or moral violation of their children generated worry and stress for parents, particularly mothers of Hispanic females, as well as perpetual fear for their children's safety. According to Suro (1992), the fear of strangers or unpredictable violence challenged parents' assumption that they were living in an orderly society; namely, a society with institutions that can manage criminal activity and has respect and the need to protect those who are small,

helpless, and incapable of defending themselves -- specifically its children. Another reason why these forms of crimes might have generated such extreme fear in parents was the fact that they appeared to be senseless acts of violence. The irrational nature of specific crimes like kidnapping and the sexual abuse of children are not necessarily rational acts, and thus, do not provide parents with information with reference to time, place, or characteristics of the perpetrator that would aid them in protecting their children. As a result, parents (mostly mothers) created elaborate systems of rules for their children regarding contact with strangers. The use of rules for children as a protection strategy is dubious at best. Some children follow rules and some children do not. There are a number of interesting research questions to investigate on this particular subject:

1. Is there a difference between how a parent and a child defines a stranger?
2. Does the information children are given on rules about strangers vary by the gender of the parent, the gender or age of the child, or the racial or ethnic background of the family?

3. Does the child's gender, age, or cultural background influence what elements of the rules they comprehend?
4. Is there information from the school or other sources which may contradict what the child has learned at home? How do children integrate information from various sources?

For many parents, the stranger associated with drug trafficking was also viewed as having the potential to perpetrate other forms of criminal actions, the most serious of which were kidnapping and sexual molestation. Most parents believed that anyone, particularly strangers, could be a potential child molester. It was evident that many parents believed that an individual capable of manifesting one form of deviant or antisocial behavior had the potential to commit other types of criminal offenses. This posed a threat not only to their children, but to the entire family unit.

The highly charged emotions associated with crimes of violence against their children and lack of information to the contrary may have contributed to their fear and distrust of all strangers. For example, research shows

that children are more likely to be sexually molested by a familiar adult and not a stranger (Hechinger, 1984), but this was only mentioned by one parent in the Corona or Elmhurst community. Perhaps parents believed that strangers who had the potential to perpetrate drug-related crimes were just as capable of the criminal acts of kidnapping and sexual violation because of a similarity in their intent. The inveigling of a child into using drugs violates the psychological and physical integrity of the child, as well as removes them from parental control. This form of violation might be considered by some parents analogous to the act of kidnapping.

In light of the evidence that more children are harmed or killed in automobile accidents (National Safety Council, 1990), one must question the extreme reactions of parents to the possibility of a social crime perpetrated against their children. Children's use of bicycles is a double-edged sword on city streets; an enjoyable activity that parents encourage by purchasing the vehicle, but have to limit its usage because of the unpredictable nature of traffic and children's behaviors. There are some apparent contradictions that should be explored in further research:

1. If bicycle riding on or adjacent to city streets was one of parents' biggest fears, why then do so many parents purchase bicycles?
2. Are children responsible for exerting pressure on parents to purchase and ride their bicycles? Is there peer pressure on children?
3. Could the purchase of bicycles to ride on city streets be attributed in any way to parents' memories and beliefs about what constituted "normal childhood experiences?"
4. Is it possible that parents provide children with rules or create spatial restrictions in the neighborhood to feel that they have in some way mitigated the possibility of an automobile accident? (Many parents know that male children are more likely to break the rules.)

Rules regarding strangers compared to rules for bicycle usage can be more ambiguous and confusing to children. Rules regarding strangers involve characteristics of people and circumstances which can vary strikingly. Parents may, therefore, feel more out of

control in defending their children against the approach of a stranger compared to riding a bicycle. Parents may also be more fearful of the threat of a social crime because they could believe that the physical or sexual violation of children would result in irrefutable psychological damage which the parent would be powerless to remedy. A third possible explanation involves the nature of social crimes. For some cultures, the violation of either male or female children is a social transgression that brings disgrace upon both the child and the family. For some families, depending upon their cultural background, sexual molestation could be viewed as a territorial invasion or defilement of private property.

Injury or death resulting from collision with an automobile involves a set of circumstances that are unpredictable and accidental in most instances. Though the physical or psychological violation of a child by an adult is unpredictable, it has an element of intentionality that carries social significance for the child, the family, and the community. For many parents, the feelings of terror and helplessness associated with social crimes contain their own unique forms of horror with repercussions that are not so easily alleviated. It was apparent from the interviews with Hispanic mothers (who were willing to

openly discuss the subject) that protecting their female children from sexual molestation was a major responsibility. Hispanic fathers were more aloof on the subject. Future research might ask:

1. For Hispanic parents, what are the fears or taboos about discussing sex or sexual deviance with their children?
2. Would there be psychological ramifications for female Hispanic children, by having to be so closely guarded by their mothers or other family members?

Acts of physical or sexual violations of children must be explored in their socio-political context. Society is, and has been historically, apprehensive about the issue of sexuality which manifests itself in extremes, from the implementation of censorship to manifestations of conspicuous, antisocial behaviors and attitudes toward sex such as child pornography. This social state of flux could generate anxiety and fear for parents who might not share similar social values. For some families from different racial or ethnic backgrounds, the violation or defilement of children (male or female) might challenge cultural norms

that place value on the "purity" or "innocence" of children without the option of retaliation. Parental strategies to protect children should be explored in greater depth to understand:

1. What, if any, information is transmitted to children about sexuality and social deviance and by whom? This area would involve the study of children's comprehension and utilization of the information they have been given.
2. Are there social and cultural inhibitions that prohibit parents from explaining social deviance to their children? Do these inhibitions vary by the gender of the child or parent or cultural background of the family? Does the lack of this information make a child more vulnerable or capable of protecting themselves?

It is apparent that the taboo on the subject of sexuality and social deviance only serves to hurt the vulnerable and profit the perpetrator.

Parents' attachment to this social ideology of "childhood innocence" may be a remanent of past experiences and selective memories that may deny present reality to their children. It would be interesting to study parents' definition of "childhood innocence" and then interview children on what they know and compare their responses. For parents and children, it is possible that the concept of innocence has changed.

1. Is it possible that the concept of "childhood innocence" has changed? What factors might be an influence; the child's age, gender, ethnic or racial background, degree of acculturation, religious background, sibling order and, place of residence?

Despite the fact that most parents in Corona and Elmhurst spoke most earnestly about their fears of the social environment, urban dangers were omnipresent in the physical environment as well. City streets presented threats of traffic. However, parents' conceptions of physical and social dangers were enmeshed. Neighborhood playgrounds were generally safe, if patrolled. But with the presence of groups of adolescents, bullies, or unfamiliar others who were possibly involved in illicit

activities, the setting was viewed as threatening. Many parents believed that if children's play areas were better supervised by either the presence of park personnel or police, their children would not be exposed to these individuals and there would be more opportunities for children to play. This poses some interesting questions for future study:

1. What actual activities or functions would these authority figures perform in these places?
2. Does the parents' sense of security lie in the notion of the presence of an authority figure or in the actual performance of their duties?
3. Does the presence of park personnel or police actually discourage "undesirable people" from entering?
4. What would be the difference in the criteria for police, park personnel, or parents as to who is acceptable to enter the premises and who is not? Who might be discriminated against, e.g. on playgrounds - men, minority men, groups of adolescents?

This last question raises an important issue with reference to the privatization of public space versus community standards or norms. If children are sheltered or denied the experience of diversity in public places they miss out on valuable learning experiences about the customs of people from different cultures and varied life styles. For children, the lack of opportunities to interact or observe people with individual differences impedes the development of understanding diversity and tolerance. Without these types of experiences, prejudice and misunderstanding can result in racism and stereotyping.

From the perspective of Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents, all types of dangers invaded their neighborhoods, streets, schools, and homefronts. A sense of territorial invasion by strangers or unfamiliar persons appeared responsible for exacerbating parental fears for the safety of their children. Although parents reported that strangers were most commonly seen using local parks, playgrounds, and commercial areas, their presence in local convenience stores brought them into their immediate neighborhoods. Consequently, most Hispanic and non-Hispanic children were forbidden off the block to go to the local stores or to run errands.

Kantar and Lehr (1975) suggest that family units create "safe zones" around their homes and neighborhoods that can be easily patrolled by family members. It was apparent from some of the parents' interviews that these safe zones, such as the streets in front of family homes, were no longer perceived as safe for children's play. If strangers were observed in nearby establishments, or even driving through the neighborhoods, the home territory was no longer a buffer from the social dangers that lurked outside. But, it is interesting to note that parents voiced contradictory feelings with regards to their children playing outside. The immediate neighborhood was viewed as dangerous by most parents, but they nevertheless let their children play in front of their houses. The parents claimed that they had some form of visual or auditory access to their children and that this was their means of protecting them from harm.

1. Did children have adequate means of supervision if parents utilized these techniques, or were they a form of "magical thinking" for parents? Did they believe that their children were safe or relatively safe by virtue of physical proximity to the "home zone" whether or not they could hear or see their children?

2. Were parents more confident about this form of supervision if they thought neighbors were watching or their children were playing with other children compared to parents who had no local supports?
3. As children played outside in front of the home, what were parents activities indoors in relation to seeing or hearing their children?

With the ambiguity of territorial boundaries, the presence of the stranger impinges on the lives of families in both public and private spheres, threatening parents' sense of security and ability to protect their children. Since parents feel powerless to change the social and physical environment surrounding their children, there is little recourse but to attempt to control children's activities through supervision, the creation of rules, their place-use, and the monitoring of their home-range in their neighborhoods.

But parents fail to recognize that children's safety is an illusion. It cannot be controlled in all circumstances or under all conditions. Rules and regulations are a facade in that the potential for risk or

threat exists inside the home as well as outside. If children are to play outside, alternative strategies for safe-guarding their well-being must be explored. One non-Hispanic parent suggested creating play streets or cutting off a street from traffic during specific times of the day to let children play and parents congregate, similar to the play-streets in The Netherlands.

1. How could neighborhood residents go about creating different types of defensible spaces for children in both homogeneous and heterogeneous communities?
2. What roles could local institutions play in supporting parents in creating defensible play spaces?

Best (1991) suggests that fear of crime and urban dangers are social constructs generated by policy makers and the media, symbolizing urban anxiety and apprehension. Suro (1992), in turn, proposes that fear of crime in urban and suburban neighborhoods is now a part of the American psyche and that we are in a era in which all strangers are regarded suspiciously, even neighbors. He goes on to say that this suspicion of unfamiliar others is, in fact, a

reflection of distrust of the social systems designed to support the community. This raises questions for future study:

1. What are parents' conceptions of their local civic institutions and their effectiveness in generating programs to safeguard the community and its families, including children's? Does any minority group in particular distrust any specific institution that it may need for support?
2. What is the relationship between Hispanic parental conceptions of institutional support and their sense of safety for their children? A few Hispanic parents spoke openly of their distrust and fear of the local schools. Could particular factors influence this, such as:
 - a. Their lack of knowledge or understanding of their child's school system and how it operates in comparison to the systems they were accustomed to in their home lands.

- b. Feelings of alienation in their new community and their new country as a place of residence.
- c. Language barriers between the school and the home.
- d. Does this hold true for Hispanic parents residing near relatives for support, or is the social estrangement from the dominant society too strong to mitigate fear of their children going to school alone.

Parents' Conceptions of Danger and the Risk-Taking Process

In their roles as protectors, parents assume responsibility for the appraisal of potential danger, as well as the development of strategies to mitigate forces or conditions that challenge their control or ability to safeguard their children. On various levels, society assumes that parents are capable of monitoring and controlling all their children's interactions with the socio-physical environment. For example, in the case of accidental injury

to a child, the parent is considered the responsible agent and is held accountable for circumstances that may be, in actuality, out of their control (Sweenson-Garling, Garling, & Valsiner, 1989). The assignment of blame to the parent distracts attention from other social or political factors that might have influenced the child's safety or the parents' decision-making process (M. Wolfe & L. Rivlin, personal communication, April 2, 1992).

When parents are inappropriately blamed for harm or injury to their children, they become subject to moral judgment, criticism and, in some cases, legal liability. In this sense, they also become victims of urban danger and may feel compelled to be overly protective of their children. This could result in their becoming overly cautious of the socio-environmental conditions which jeopardize their sense of control over their children's safety.

Integral to the conception of danger is the assessment of environmental conditions and forces that signal a threat to the individual's well-being. Parents assume the responsibility of risk-assessment from the early infancy of a child, which involves the balancing of the child's growing independence and the parents' desire to protect

(Hyson & Bollin, 1990). Although an analysis of parents' risk-assessment process was not the focus of this study, parents' discussions of dangers revealed insights which lead toward a better understanding of parents' conceptualization of urban dangers.

Parents' strategies for risk-assessment appeared to share some common features with the Stress Model proposed by Baum, Singer, and Baum (1981). According to Baum and colleagues, the cognitive appraisal of environmental stressors or threats consists of four interrelated components: first, the individual's attitude toward the potential threat; second, the individual's prior experience with the threat; third, the individual's knowledge of the range of possible consequences related to the threat; and fourth, the individual's appraisal or evaluation of the "costs" or consequences that might result from engaging with the threat.

These four components described in the Stress Model appear theoretically related to the cognitive processes described by parents in their assessment of potential risks or dangers to their children in urban settings. First, parents' attitudes and beliefs about a threat play an important role in their assessment of a potential danger

and their subsequent responses. Numerous other factors also influence parents' attitudes, such as knowledge of their children's disposition, their developmental abilities, and the parents' attitudes and beliefs about children's abilities, and gender differences (Hyson & Bollin, 1990; Valsineer, 1987). These attitudes reflect cultural values which shape the parents' responses and expectations of their children and their relationship to the socio-physical environment (Ogbu, 1982). For example, the child-rearing ideologies of Hispanic mothers compelled them to be extremely protective of their female child's virginity (Javier, personal communication, November 11, 1992).

The second component involves the parents' prior experience, psychological disposition, and perceptions of a sense of power to assess and assume control over a situation. It was evident from parents' discussions that their perceptions of control influenced how seriously they regarded a potential threat and their strategies for managing either their children's behavior or the presence of danger, e.g., avoidance of a situation.

The third component affecting the risk-assessment process consists of the parents' effective response to the

threat or presence of danger to their child. The prospect of harm to a child is laden with emotional implications for most parents. Children represent not only personal affiliations to which parents will go to extreme measures to protect in most instances, but children also symbolically represent parents' experience of social and emotional vulnerability (Best, 1991). Consequently, any external forces that threaten the well-being of the child can challenge the parent's conceptions of control, self-efficacy, and sense of security for themselves and their families.

The fourth component of parents' risk-assessment comprises the evaluation of available information pertaining to a particular danger to assess the possible consequences. Pertinent information might be derived from prior experience, from the media, or through local networks such as word of mouth from neighbors. Parents then use this information to assess familiarity with the threat, the magnitude of the risk, the predictability of the threat, and its possible consequences for their children's safety. In that parents' conception of control over situations is a significant factor, future research might investigate various parents' conceptions of control over a social or physical environmental threat:

1. Is or can the media be a positive means of providing parents and children with a sense of control or is it presently producing only negative images and fear?
2. What kind of role can community institutions play in bolstering parents' and children's sense of control over of danger in their neighborhoods?

Future research might also explore parents' risk-assessment processes under various residential and familial conditions (Garling & Garling, 1987):

1. What types of children's accidents do parents feel most responsible for? Are there psychological effects that might vary by culture, the gender of the child, or the parents, or parental social and physical responsibilities for their children's safety?

The keystone to the risk-assessment process is parents' conception of their own ability to control a particular danger. Control is manifest in functional responses, such as the parents' ability to manipulate, regulate, restrict, supervise, avoid, instruct, or flee a

potentially dangerous condition or situation. However, given the complex nature of various types of dangers to children, e.g., the threat of kidnapping or traffic, many parents feel powerless against particular dangers that contain social components. For example, the unpredictable or, at times, offensive behaviors of strangers observed in their neighborhoods exacerbated their fears and apprehensions, thereby intensifying the pressure to exert greater control over their children's activities through the development of management strategies.

In the urban setting, the forces or conditions that might constitute safety are subject to individual interpretation, experience, and cultural beliefs (Thygerson, 1986). For Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents, it was apparent that safety was a state of being, like danger, with spatial, temporal, and social components that they assessed before deciding on a course of action. A state of safety existed for children when or if parents had control over the socio-physical factors which might cause harm to their children. In order to cope with the unpredictable nature of the urban setting, parents attempted to impose a sense of order and control through the utilization of a number of child-monitoring strategies. These child-monitoring strategies could be manipulated to

varying degrees in accordance to the needs of the parent (who might or might not be present), the child, and the characteristics of the setting. These strategies consisted of the presence of a trustworthy adult (considered the safest strategy), the creation of rules, the restraint or regulation of children's activities, the demarcation of children's play settings, and the acquisition of pertinent information. To what extent any or all of these strategies were employed depended upon the parents' assessment of the severity of the threat to the child, the availability of a specific resource, and the parents' or children's ability to control it.

For most parents, it appears that two sets of conditions were integral to the assessment of a potential danger and served as guideposts that affected parents' decisions regarding their children's exposure to or utilization of neighborhood play areas. Under one condition, at least one responsible adult was present to mediate danger on the child's behalf. Specifically, any condition signaling danger is intensified without the maturity and command a trustworthy adult could bring to the situation. In the second condition, the adult or parent was absent or not available, leaving the child to play or possibly negotiate a particular danger independently. Very

little is known about how children conceive of or negotiate a danger. In the area of traffic accidents, research has gone to greater lengths to understand children's cognitive capabilities (Sandels, 1974). But little is known about children's conceptions of and response to other types of dangers. This could be colored by their ethnic or racial backgrounds, the age and gender of the child, and the setting whether it be familiar or unfamiliar. Research questions into urban danger must also investigate children's perspectives, such as:

1. Without the presence of an adult, how do children assess danger and respond accordingly?
2. What would influence children's danger assessment process and responses - their gender, racial or ethnic background, age, experience with similar situations, parents' rules, or what they have watched on television?
3. Would their responses be different from their parents and in what ways?

According to parents, the most effective strategy for exercising ultimate control over their children's safety involved their direct supervision of children's outdoor activities. In this capacity, the parents assessed any possible risk to their children, regulated their interactions with others or the environment (often supplemented by rules) or, in a condition of extreme distress, retreated from the situation. Parental supervision, as a safety monitoring strategy, assumed a variety of forms depending upon the parents' assessment of the danger, their confidence in their child's ability to cope with the dangers, and other conspicuous factors, such as the parents' cultural values (Thygerson, 1986), the gender of the child (Hyson & Bollin, 1990), and the availability of assistance to either the parent or the child (Merry, 1981; Rainwater, 1966).

Depending upon the degree of risk and the influence of other factors, the situation may warrant varying levels of intervention on the part of the parent. A menacing situation may require parents' direct presence to oversee children's activities in order to scrutinize conditions and intervene if appropriate. Depending upon the site and the parents' sense of security for themselves and their children, various levels of supervision might be employed.

Some forms of supervision required that parents have visual or aural access to their children, which is a technique that is less demanding on parents' attention, e.g., overseeing children's outdoor activities from inside the house or from a park bench.

A more comprehensive examination of parental monitoring behaviors would also lead to a better understanding of the tensions or conflicts parents and children experience with regard to the formulation and implementation of their monitoring strategies and how they influence the quality of life for the parent as well as the child. According to some parents, their children were vigilantly supervised outdoors. Continual supervision may have consequences for children as well as for parents. Some questions that might be explored are:

1. What might children be losing out on in terms of social and play experiences, if they are constantly supervised any time they go outside?
2. To what degree is children's freedom of movement curtailed by the parent? Consideration should be given to the age, the gender, and the child's and parent's ethnic or racial background.

3. Does the parent's presence influence the child's choice or decisions regarding play activities or with whom they play? Again, Would the children's ages, their gender, and the parent's and child's racial or ethnic background influence this?
4. Does the child have opportunities to experiment with the physical environment (risk-taking) or are these types of behaviors inhibited? Would these types of behaviors be condoned more so by mothers of boys?
5. Would parents encourage any specific types of outdoor play behavior among girls, e.g. playing house, playing dolls, board games that would not be encouraged for boys?

As an extension of the parent, other responsible persons, e.g., relatives, siblings, and neighbors, may act as parental surrogates to monitor children's behaviors and safeguard them from hostile encounters with the environment. This raises some interesting questions about the role of neighbors and relatives in a multi-ethnic community in the monitoring of children's outdoor play behavior. Some parents in Corona and Elmhurst reported

feeling secure about their children playing outdoors when neighbors were willing to share responsibility for monitoring children's behaviors and street activity, while other parents' didn't. In children's outdoor play safety neighbors assume various roles in the monitoring process.

1. How are some neighbors, many of whom might be relatives and/or other children's parents, assessed to be reliable supervisors by a parent? Is knowing them a specific length of time a factor? Do they share similar personal qualities in common, e.g., religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds?
2. If neighbors, as supervisors or guardians, are present how do they influence children's play activities?
3. Does the type of supervision given by a neighbor vary by their age, ethnic or racial background, gender, or the children's activities?
4. What constitutes supervision? Where is the supervisor or neighbor located? On the porch? On the streets? Watching from the house?

One of the more frequently utilized child-monitoring strategies consisted of the formulation of rules regulating children's activities and movement through the neighborhoods. These directives communicated conditions for child/environment interactions according to the experience, conceptions, and the cultural system of the parent (Kantar & Lehr, 1975). These types of regulations also defined for children the socio-environmental qualities viewed as dangerous by parents and the larger society. Such rules lay the foundation for children's development of their own conceptual schemata of danger that is transferred from parent to child (Garling & Garling, 1987).

Parents may experience the least amount of confidence in the utilization of rules as a means to control children's interactions with the environment. Parents must assume that their children understand the purpose of the rules, that they are willing to comply with the rules, and that they possess the skills to interpret the socio-environmental cues that signify the appropriateness of a rule. The development of rules for children's outdoor play safety is a complex subject and warrants future study. Future research could explore the process by which parents construct rules, as well as their effectiveness:

1. Are different types of rules conveyed in different ways to children? Does age, gender, personality disposition influence how specific rules are interpreted or complied with by children?
2. Under what conditions are children more likely to follow parents' rules? Is the gender or the ethnic or cultural background of the children a factor? What are their relationships to other family members, e.g. siblings?

Exploring children's interpretation of rules regarding urban dangers would provide us with a better understanding of children's conceptions of the socio-physical environment as well as their coping mechanisms in the face of danger.

The parents from Corona and Elmhurst also created rules to demarcate spaces for the purpose of the supervising children's activities and regulating their movement through the neighborhood. Physical features such as fences were used to separate acceptable from unacceptable play areas in both public and private spheres. Fences, walls, or cement barriers in playgrounds created areas for easy surveillance by parents and was a

conspicuous message to other groups that their presence was not welcomed. Enclosed spaces such as many designed playgrounds, were also valued for the proximity of others engaged in similar activities who might also serve as a bastion of defense (Franck & Paxson, 1989).

1. What constitutes an enclosed play area? Does it vary by children's ages?
2. What would be the differences between children's activities in an enclosed area compared to an open space? Does the gender of a child affect his or her behavior in these spaces?
3. Do parents' behave differently in terms of supervision, according to the type of space, the age, and gender of the child?

In the case of the home, the fences surrounding the front or back yards conveyed a message of ownership or private territory that was socially recognized and the sanctity of the home was protected. For parents, especially Hispanic parents, the home residence was indubitably the place where maximum security could most likely be obtained. It was a place where parents'

perceived themselves to have maximum control. Riger, Gordon, and Le Bailly (1982) stated that fear of crime and perceptions of social disorder in the urban community is believed to have caused residents to retreat into their homes, creating a "fortress mentality." Fences, yards and, ultimately, the homes could be, in part, an extension of the "fortress as home." Future research could explore to what degree this is true and for whom it is true, e.g., the more vulnerable members of society.

1. Is the meaning of "home" affected for parents and children, if the world outside consists of fear and peril leaving little recourse but to lock themselves away?
2. In what ways, if any, does living a life style of a fortress mentality impact the family's interactions with community institutions?
3. How does this way of living impact family life? Do children see other children less? Do parents socialize less?

4. Are there any positive outcomes to this life style? Do family members do more activities together in the home or do children resort to entertaining themselves by watching more television?
5. Is a sense of privacy affected in certain homes for both children and parents?
6. What factors influence healthy family functioning, e.g, ethnic or racial background, the number of siblings, the relationship of the parents? Is a home a home or a place where one resides (Carrick, 1985)?
7. How safe is it for some children inside the home knowing the possibility of social deviance is not environmentally restricted?

Another important means of assessing danger was for parents to obtain pertinent information. Information was necessary to evaluate the puissance of a threat, its predictability, the conditions that might exacerbate the risk, and the possible consequences for both children and parents. In some respects, information on urban dangers

could be viewed as a private arsenal of data and strategies. Some parents acquired information from direct experience in their neighborhoods or hear-say from friends or neighbors. But in communities where social contacts might be minimal or absent, parents might rely on the media or community institutions for input on local and national issues that were relevant to their families' well-being. Important questions to ask would be:

1. To what extent do neighbors, relatives, community institutions, and the media influence the construction of a social reality of danger in their communities?
2. How do parents interpret this information and respond to it? Does the interpretation vary by factors, such as the gender of the parents or the child, the parents' racial or ethnic background, education, or the source of the information?
3. Do certain forms of communication sources instigate or mitigate myths, racism, and stereotypes with regards to social dangers?

Best (1991) suggests that there are numerous problems with relying on the media for information on the victimization of children. This might also be true for information disseminated from any organization. Over the course of the last 30 years, institutional structures and communication sources in our society have assumed greater responsibility for dictating and shaping familial and community values, assuming the role of the "expert" (Best, 1991). Best goes on to say that, as the so called "experts," the media has become a seminal force in the construction of a social problem by manipulating information and transforming reality such that an issue becomes part of the social consciousness and consequently, for some individuals, the truth. To what extent information on crimes against children has been misrepresented by the media and various political bodies is unclear at this time. To what degree this information has informed or misinformed parents' conceptions of dangers in urban settings is an important question still to be understood.

This assumption of trust and responsibility also applies to the institutions children attend. In most instances, parents conferred trust to persons associated with children's facilities without question. The

popularity of after-school programs is an example of such trust in the both the programs and the staff. But removing children from the "potential dangers" that exist in their local neighborhoods and placing them in structured, supervised settings does not negate the possibility of social danger. Parents' assumption that their children will not be exposed to danger in these settings defies evidence that abuse or injury to children can be perpetrated anywhere; on the street, in the home, or in institutional settings. Not only are children in a school setting exposed to "bullies" and may be physically or emotionally abused (Titman, 1989), but also, not all adults in these settings may be "trustworthy." As an example, in one of the local parochial schools in Corona, a priest was removed from his duties after sexually abusing two male students (Newsday, 1990). How parents define and confer trust in institutional settings and the people who work there defies a social reality that their children could be abused anywhere.

1. To what extent are parents aware of the various types of abuse that could occur within various children's settings, and that the abuse could come from adults or children?

2. If parents think of these issues, how do they psychologically cope knowing that their child may be subject to abuse?

Urban Dangers and the Consequences for Children

A more comprehensive study of children's safety in urban neighborhoods should also explore children's conceptions of danger. For children, their conceptions of danger and the emotional sequelae might assume various forms depending upon the child's age, gender, cultural experience, familial supports, parents' behaviors, and the qualities of the physical environment associated with the concept of danger. According to parents' interviews, their children's worries were intensified by the presence of strangers because they feared harm or violation. Future research should explore how children conceive social danger and what factors related to the social environment are likely to influence children's activities or sense of security in various neighborhood settings.

1. To what extent are children's fears related to a sense of vicarious victimization acquired from

various sources, such as parents, friends, relatives, the media, or community institutions?

2. If children fear the possibility of harm inflicted by strangers in their neighborhoods, what are their emotional or physical responses to this fear? Could some of the responses possibly be withdrawal, nightmares, stress, staying indoors, only playing with friends?
3. Zill (1983) documented in a large scale study that many children are frightened of strangers and physical harm or violation. What would be the short-term and the long-term psychological effects?

It is important to consider that perceptions of danger and the coping responses of both parents and children could result in either positive or negative implications for the quality of their lives. Danger, in its various forms, is frequently associated with having negative consequences for people. The individual has the potential to manifest a range of reactions to a threatening condition, such as exerting control or adaptation. It is possible that limiting children's outdoor play activities may affect, to

varying degrees, the child's knowledge of the urban setting, the development of environmental competency, and also impair their abilities to develop coping skills that will be needed to assess potential danger (Hart, 1986).

One must also inquire into how the restrictions children are experiencing are affecting their sense of privacy. Privacy is important for the development of self-esteem and psychic separation from others (Wolfe & Laufer, 1975).

1. What if different dimensions of privacy are unattainable for either the child or the parent? Does the need for certain types of privacy vary by the racial or ethnic background of the family?
2. If children are not permitted the freedom to explore or go places alone without the guardianship of a parent, how do children emotionally cope with conditions wherein opportunities for privacy are absent? Might they find ways to compensate, e.g. inventing secret places in the house?

Another issue that concerned some parents in the study was related to their children's limited opportunities for socializing with peers. Conditions that restrict children's access to peers could have serious impact on the development of play skills and later social development (Goleman, 1990). Aspects of children's social development thwarted by certain parental monitoring strategies might also be supplemented in other settings, such as schools and after-school activity programs.

1. Could parents' fears of urban dangers inadvertently generate a range of adaptive responses that are creative and support other dimensions of children's life experiences, e.g., artistic behaviors?

The possibility cannot be ignored that the restriction of children to the home setting could have positive effects, such as greater intimacy with siblings and family members, the development of hobbies, i.e., reading, which could compensate the child, either directly or indirectly, for the absence of other types of outdoor play experiences.

Urban Dangers and the Consequences for Parents

In parents' attempts to cope with fears for their children, numerous safety strategies were formulated that served two purposes. The most important purpose of a safety intervention, whether it involved supervision or rules, was to protect the child from incurring injury or abuse. These strategies also functioned to alleviate the constant worries or fears related to their perceived control over the external forces which interacted with their children within their neighborhoods.

The import of parents' emotional responses toward the dangers surrounding their children cannot be underestimated in terms of their possible effects on family life. It might be assumed that on some level fear and worry are omnipresent in every parent's reaction to their children's autonomous interactions with the environment. They are responsible for the continual evaluation of risks or threats to their children on a day-to-day basis and attempting to exert some degree of control over their circumstances. Seligman (1975) reported that the absence or lack of control can intensify feelings of stress. But, in the case of some parents, when fear begins to dominate reason and personal experience, the repercussions could be

significant. For example, one emotional response parents could manifest is an over-compensation for their fears of danger by over-regulating their children's activities and place-use. This type of response can circumscribe the range of their children's environmental experiences and limit their opportunities for interactions with children from diverse backgrounds. In addition, fear, like other emotions, is not static but can be augmented with other affective responses, such as paranoia, agoraphobia, etc. These extreme types of emotional responses could result in the parents experiencing unhappiness, loss of health, disruption of family functioning, and interference with the parents' ability to devise a constructive plan of action to protect themselves and their children in the event of a threat. These various emotional responses from a parent could be inadvertently transmitted to children, generating anxiety, fear of novelty, and worry concerning strangers that might inhibit their comfort in public places, or generate fear when the parent is not present.

1. If parents are fearful or stressed in their residential circumstances, what, if any are the emotional sequela? How do their children respond to these feelings emotionally and behaviorally?

Do they become fearful or easily panic or manifest other neurotic symptoms xpressing their own fears?

Related to parents' emotional responses to danger are their perceptions of control. The development of monitoring strategies are related to their perceived abilities to control events or conditions that suggest risk. But, parent's abilities to exercise control under all conditions is tenuous at best and subject to conditions. Firstly, parents must be capable of recognizing the conditions that could signify danger and be capable of mitigating those conditions. What, if any, resources could be made available to support parents in terms of publicly voicing their concerns and receiving community support? For example, are police available on playgrounds to dispel drug pushers? In Corona and Elmhurst this was not the case. The definitive responsibility for safeguarding children against urban dangers has been implicitly assigned to parents. Urban danger is a social construct which comprises the interaction between the dangerous condition, the parent, and the child. Other forms of support that could be effective in generating conditions of safety, such as that which could be provided by educational and community institutions and a more

responsive policing system, do not contribute effectively toward protecting children and subsequently do not alleviate the worry, fear, and responsibilities born by parents.

1. What types of community supports would work in varying residential conditions to alleviate parents' fears of urban dangers, e.g. the presence of more police, school or park programs, block associations, neighborly relations, play streets?
2. What are the conditions that would make some of these interventions work in some neighborhoods and not others, e.g., racial tensions, community turnover, poor institutional support?

Policy Implications

It is difficult to discuss the subject of policy implications because, as previously mentioned, further research should investigate the possible strategies and outcomes of various forms of interventions. They may vary according to residential characteristics, e.g., high-rise versus 2 and 3-family housing, the ethnic and racial makeup of the community, and effectiveness of the community institutions.

It was evident from the research findings that parents viewed their neighborhoods as dangerous places for their children. Their comments revealed the fact that city traffic was a serious threat to their children's safety, but this reality exists in most urban settings. Urban planning for traffic must take into consideration that children are pedestrians as well as adults and do not have the cognitive abilities to always safely negotiate city streets. Parents, schools, and community boards must take a far more active role in demanding that urban planning includes thoroughfares, traffic signals, and set speed limits that accommodate children. The police must assume greater responsibility for enforcing speed limits and adherence to the vehicular rules and regulations.

The danger that generated the most fear for all parents involved the observation of strangers in their neighborhoods. This influenced where families went for recreation and children's use of neighborhood space and resources. In a multi-cultural community where neighbors may not even speak the same language, everyone may look foreign or different. The next policy objective would be to find ways to bring people together in their own neighborhoods such that they become familiar and generate a sense of community. Again, the community board, with support of local schools and religious institutions, could initiate neighborhood block parties and festivals with games and music to encourage people to come out and meet one another. These festivals can involve ethnic music and song to introduce different customs. This might also benefit parents by providing the opportunity to meet parents from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, thus expanding their children's friendship network. If people in small a neighborhood felt a sense of familiarity, they could petition the community board to create play streets that would permit children and parents greater opportunities for socializing.

A sense of community familiarity would make people more aware of strangers and their activities in relationship to children playing outside. Every urban community will always have strangers; that's a fact of urban life. But the objective is to safeguard children from contact with individuals whose intentions are unclear.

As for children's areas, playgrounds should be supervised by park personnel. They remain clean of debris, and children are often provided with play activities that are not dependent upon static equipment situated in most playgrounds. But the park employees should not assume the responsibility for removing from the premises people parents consider undesirable. Park rules stipulate that alcohol and drugs are prohibited. Only these individuals should be asked to leave. Parents must accept diversity in an urban population. For example, homeless people exist and have a right to be in public places and children can learn that not all people have the same resources, skin color, and that all strange men do not necessarily represent danger. In a supervised facility both parents and park employees can assume responsibility for children's safety.

The public park can also provide additional employees to monitor events for children. Well publicized children's events are bound to attract large numbers of families within the area who would be presented with the opportunity to learn other racial and ethnic customs. More children's events will encourage parents to take them to the park where they will learn about individual differences. According to the findings in this study, parents felt safer with groups of parents involved in organized activities. Strange people manifesting unacceptable behaviors, such as drunkenness and drug activities can be removed by park patrols.

It is one thing to discuss social policy initiatives and another to have them implemented. In the case of Corona and Elmhurst, children's safe play will depend upon parents demanding policy change from community institutions and parents' openness and willingness to meet and accept people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Despite parental use of protective strategies for achieving a sense of safety for their children in the neighborhood, parental efforts are not always met with success. For example, parents cannot be omnipotent in their roles as protectors. Children contribute to risk by virtue of their environmental interactions and play activities. Danger is inherently unpredictable and cannot be controlled in all circumstances. In light of the myriad of forces influencing children's well-being in the urban setting, children's absolute safety is an illusion. Parents' efforts to control or manipulate the conditions surrounding danger are honorable. Community institutions must now set as a priority the importance of children's safety, provide supports for families on a community level, and create safe neighborhood settings for children's play. If parents have no or few alternatives but to confine their children in the home or yard, or placing them in institutional programs, the right to privacy and freedom of choice are denied for both parents and children which could ultimately stifle creativity, the possibility of social and emotional growth, and a basic understanding of the ecology (good and bad) of their community.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Appendix A-1

PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

1. Describe for me the different types of places your children go without you, when they are outside.
- 1a. Describe for me the different types of things they do outside when they go to these places.
2. You have described for me a variety of places your children go when they are outside. Do they usually go to these places alone, with friends, or with their brother or sister?

Let's start with the first place, the _____
(response may be store, playground, etc.)

(Sometimes where parents like their children to play
and where their children want to play are two
different places.)

3. If your children could have the complete freedom to go any place they wanted in your neighborhood, where do you think they would go? Describe for me the things about these places that you think makes your child want to go there.

Probe: Alone or with other children--

4. When your children are outside, are there places where you forbid them to go, or to go near?

Describe for me these places.

What about them makes you forbid your child to go near them?

What types of feelings do you have when you think of your child going near there?

Under what conditions would you let your child go there?

5. Have any of your children ever told you about a place in the neighborhood where they have felt anxious, frightened, or uncomfortable? Please describe for me the places and what happened to make them feel that way.
6. Describe for me the places in your neighborhood that you feel are the safest places for your child to play, if there are any. Describe for me the things about them that make them safe.
7. Describe for me the places in your neighborhood that you feel are dangerous to your child, if there are any. Describe for me the things about them that make you feel that they are dangerous.
8. How about the places your children play? Describe for me the places in your neighborhood that you feel are dangerous for your child, if there are any. Describe for me the things about these places where your children play that make you feel they are dangerous.

9. Have you or any of your neighbors ever experienced any problem in your neighborhood? Any types of experience in which a child was hurt or frightened? Could you please describe to me what happened?
10. I would like for us now together to help make a list of the most important issues or concerns for the safety of children living in your neighborhood.

(Interviewer will then review the list asking parents if these issues change depending on the sex of the child, and whether the child is alone or accompanied by friends or siblings.) [Time].

11. Suppose that I was a young mother from a foreign country, I'm learning to speak English, I understand it pretty well, but I'm not familiar with some words, and I'm not familiar with your neighborhood. I would like you to explain to me some words and ideas so that I can better understand them:

A. Can you put in a sentence for me the word dangerous? Tell me in a sentence what might be dangerous for my child outside.

- B. What makes a place dangerous?
- C. Can you put in a sentence for me the word safe?
Tell me in a sentence what might be safe for my
child outside.
- D. What makes a place safe?
- E. Can you put in a sentence for me the word unsafe?
Tell me in a sentence what might be unsafe for my
child outside.
- F. What makes a place unsafe?

Appendix A-2

CHILDREN'S FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Introduction:

Hi, my name is Kim. I've asked you to come meet me to talk about where you live and the things you like to play. If you don't feel like talking, you don't have to. In fact, you can leave the room and go back to your class if you'd like to. But I hope you will stay and tell me about all the things you like to do outside.

1. I have two children about your age, and I'm thinking about moving into your neighborhood. We have never lived in a city before so we don't know anything about what it's like to live in a city.
 - a) Can you tell me, what it's like to live in your neighborhood?
 - b) My two children (a boy and a girl) would like to know what your neighborhood looks like.

- c) What do you think is important for my children to know about your neighborhood before we move there?

- 2. Can you tell me about the different types of places you go to play in your neighborhood.
 - a) by yourself.

 - b) places you go to play with your friends, or brothers or sisters.

 - c) places you go to play with your parents or other adults.

- 3. Tell me about the kinds of things you play or do in each of these places.

- 4. If you could have the complete freedom to go to any place you wanted in your neighborhood, what places would you go to?

- a) Tell me about the types of things you like about each of these places.
 - b) What types of things would you like to do in these places?
 - c) Tell me why you don't go to these places.
5. Are there any places in your neighborhood where your parents forbid you to go?
- a) Tell me what these places are like Look like?
 - b) Tell me about the things in these places that make your parents not want you to go there.
6. Are there any places in y our neighborhood that make you feel nervous or scared or frightened to go there?
- a) Tell me about the things in these places that make you feel this way.
7. Tell me in which places in your neighborhood you think are the safest places to play.

- a) Tell me the things about these places that makes them safe.
8. Tell me which places in your neighborhood you think are dangerous to play in.
- a) Tell me about the things in these places that makes them dangerous.
9. I'd like to talk about playgrounds for a few minutes.
- a) How many of your ever go to playgrounds in your neighborhood?
 - b) Tell me about the different kinds of playgrounds, are there different types? Tell me what they look like.
 - c) Tell me about the different kinds of things you do or play in each of these playgrounds.
 - d) Is there anything that is unsafe or dangerous about these playgrounds? Tell me about these things. What do they look like? What makes them unsafe or dangerous?

e) Tell me what would makes these playgrounds the safest places to play.

10. If you could change your neighborhood in any way you wanted to make it more fun to play in, what would you change or do to it?

Appendix B - 1
CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW

Introduction

My name is Kim Blakely and I'm a person who talks to children and parents about their neighborhoods. I ask questions about what they like and what they don't like in their neighborhoods and what they would like to change. I hope to take the information to people give me and write about it in a study, so people can use it to make safer and better neighborhoods for children.

I have a few questions about your neighborhood that I would like to ask you, if it's OK with you. Questions about where you like to play and any rules your mother may have about your playing outside. You don't have to answer my questions if you don't want to. This is totally up to you. You don't have to do this. My questions will take about 10 minutes, and if your mother gives us permission I would like you to show me some of these places in your neighborhood. If I start asking questions and you decide that you don't want to do this anymore, you just tell me and I'll stop. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and we can stop at any time.

Is it OK with you that I ask you some questions about your neighborhood and where you play?

1. What is your name? How old are you? What grade are you in?
2. Generally speaking, on a nice day, do you like to play outside or inside?
3. Where do you like to play? What types of things do you play there?
4. Where are the places in your neighborhood that you like to play with your friends? Can you show me any of these places?
5. What types of things do you like to play with your friends? In these places?
6. Are your friends older, younger than you or the same age? Where do they live?
7. Where is the safest places to play? Why is that?

8. Where is the most dangerous or unsafe place to play outside your neighborhood? Why is that? Can you show me these places?
9. Does your mother have any rules about where you can go or what you can do outside? Probe: Why?
10. If you could change anything in your neighborhood to make it a more fun place to play, what would you change?

Thank you very much for talking to me about your neighborhood. Would you like to take any pictures with the camera?

Appendix B-2

Parent's Flier in English

Children's
Environments
Research Group
The Graduate School and
University Center,
CUNY, 33 West 42 Street,
New York, New York 10036

Children's Neighborhood Play Safety Project

P.S. 143

Parents are the experts!!



We would like to interview you for 45 minutes about your neighborhood's play safety. Parents from all over Corona from other schools agree that this is important.



Purpose:

Children's Environments Research Group of The Graduate School and University Center, CUNY would like to find out what mothers think is safe or dangerous in their neighborhood for their children's play.



Why:

In order for park planners and designers to know more about what you think is important to design safer neighborhoods and parks.



Who:

Our group has been funded in part by the Hasbro Children's Foundation to research children's play.



Time:

You will be interviewed by a female graduate student any time that is convenient for you.

Place:

Any place convenient for you.

How:

Just fill in the bottom of this sheet and send it back to us in the enclosed stamped envelope. We will call you for an appointment.

Questions:

Call Kim Susan Blakely at (212) 944-2335

Please fill in this form and send it to us in the enclosed envelope

1. Name _____ Telephone Number _____

2. Address _____

3. What are the names, ages and sexes of your children attending P.S. 143?

SEX

NAME

AGE

M F

M F

M F

M F

4. How would you describe your family's ethnic-cultural background?

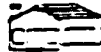
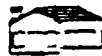
Parent's Flier in Spanish

Children's
Environments
Research Group
The Graduate School and
University Center
CUNY 33 West 42 Street
New York, New York 10018

Proyecto para la Seguridad del Juego de los Niños en el Vecindario

P.S. 143

Los Padres son los Expertos!!



Nos gustaría poder hacerle una entrevista acerca de la seguridad del juego de los niños en su vecindario. La entrevista es de una hora de duración. La P.T.A. de P.S. 143 and P.S. 19 está de acuerdo con que esto es importante.

Objetivo:

Al Children's Environments Research Group of The Graduate School and University Center, CUNY le gustaría saber que es lo que las madres consideran seguro o peligroso para el juego de los niños en su vecindario.

Por Que:

Para que los diseñadores y grupos de planeación de parques tengan conocimiento de que es lo que Usted considera que es importante.

Quien:

Nuestro grupo ha sido auspiciado por la Hasbro Children's Foundation para hacer investigaciones acerca del juego de los niños.

Como:

Usted será entrevistado por una estudiante de posgrado a la hora que sea conveniente para Usted.

Donde:

El lugar que sea conveniente para Usted.

Cómo:

Simplemente escriba la información necesaria al final de esta hora y mandenla en el sobre adjunto. Nosotros la llamaremos para hacer una cita.

Preparación:

Llame a Kim Susan Blakey al (212) 944-2335

Por favor llene esta forma y envíenla en el sobre adjunto

1. Nombre _____ Telefono _____
2. Dirección _____

3. Cuáles son los nombres y edades de sus hijos que asisten al P.S. 143?

SEXO	NOMBRE	EDAD
M F	_____	_____
M F	_____	_____
M F	_____	_____
M F	_____	_____

4. Cómo describiría el grupo cultural y étnico al que su familia pertenece?

5. Desearía que la entrevista la hiciera una persona que habla español? Si _____ No _____

Appendix B-4
Introductory Telephone Call

Hello Mrs. (Mr.) _____:

My name is Kim Blakely and I work with a group called Children's Environments Research Group of the City University of New York. I sent the flyers home from school with your child(ren) asking your permission to interview you on your ideas and feelings about your neighborhood and your child playing outside. I am doing my dissertation on this subject and would like to know the places you feel are safe or dangerous for your child to play.

I have discussed the study with your Community Board and your PTA and they have granted me permission to proceed.

It will take about one-hour of your time. Everything you say is confidential and your name will not be used. If we meet, but you don't want to answer a question, we can move on to the next one.

If you wish to stop the interview, you can at any time. All participants in the study will receive a report

If you wish to stop the interview, you can at any time. All participants in the study will receive a report summarizing the results of the study after it is analyzed.

Would you be willing to be interviewed?

1. If so, where would be a convenient place to meet you?
2. If not -- Thank you very much for your time and have a good day.

Appendix B - 5

PARENTS' BACKGROUND SURVEY

I'll begin with a few brief background questions.

Date: _____ Interviewer: _____

Parent Code Name: _____

1. <u>Children's Names</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Grade</u>

Bicycle[illegible]

2. Does anybody watch over your 9 to 10 year old child during the day if you are not home? (If parent works part-time -- Probe days).

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Person</u>

<u>Monday</u>		

<u>Tuesday</u>		

<u>Wednesday</u>		

<u>Thursday</u>		

<u>Friday</u>		

<u>Saturday</u>		

<u>Sunday</u>		

- 2a. Are you married, divorced or separated?

3. Where were you raised as a child? (City, State, Country)

4. Where was your spouse/partner (children's father) raised?

5. What type of housing were you raised in from ages 9 to 10 years old? Please check.

High-rise apartment building/higher than 4 stories: _____

Low-rise apartment building/1 to 3 stories: _____

Two or three family house: _____

Single family house: _____

_____ City _____ Suburban _____ Rural

- 5a. Was there a play yard in the front, back, or courtyard?
6. At what age did you walk to school or take a school bus without adult supervision?
7. Approximately how far away from school did you live?
8. At what age did you go to the local store by yourself?
9. Age:
- 15 - 20 years _____
- 21 - 30 years _____
- 31 - 40 years _____
- 41 - 50 years _____
- 51 - 60 years _____

10. Where do you live now? Please check.

- ☐ An apartment building 4 stories or under
- ☐ An apartment building higher than 4 stories
- ☐ An apartment building with a courtyard
- ☐ An apartment building with a play yard
- ☐ A two or three family house
- ☐ A single family house
- ☐ A single family house without a backyard

11. What is the length of residence at present address:_____

12. Do you own or rent your housing _____

Occupation

13. In addition to caring for your children, do you do any other work? What type of work do you do?

14. What type of work does your spouse/partner do?

15. Do you or your partner belong to a union at work?

16. Are you:

____ Living with a husband

____ Living with a partner

Number of children they have: ____

____ Living with a roommate

Number of children they have: ____

____ Living with other family members

Number of children they have: ____

____ Boarders

Number of children they have: ____

Education

17. What is your educational background? Your spouse or partner?

Culture/Ethnicity

18. How would you describe your cultural or ethnic background? Your spouse or partner?

After-School Activities

19. Does your 9 to 10 year old child participate in any structured after school activities? (i.e. boys clubs, dance lessons, etc.)

TYPE OF ACTIVITYHOURS A WEEK[illegible]

20. Does your child have any responsibilities or chores they perform during the week?

Type

Day

Hours
per week

Occasionally/
Regularly

I have a few questions about your family's economic situation. Please read this and answer the questions you feel comfortable with:

It is believed by some people that the family's economic situation influences the choice of living arrangements, choice of neighborhoods, childcare options, etc.

Housing Expense. (Rent, mortgage, gas, electricity, telephone). Please place a check next to the letter which correctly completes the following sentence.

21. I (we) pay about _____ for housing expenses.

_____ 1/4 of the family's income

_____ 1/3 of the family's income

_____ 1/2 of the family's income

_____ 2/3 of the family's income

_____ 3/4 of the family's income

_____ Over 3/4 of the family's income

_____ I prefer not to answer this question.

22. Do you own a car? _____

23. Family Income (approximately):

☐ Under \$10,000	☐ \$31,000 to \$40,000
☐ \$10,000 to \$20,000	☐ Over \$40,000
☐ \$21,000 to \$30,000	☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Appendix B - 6

PARENTS' INTERVIEW

Family Name:

Date: _____

Interviewer:

1. Generally speaking is _____ an outdoor child or an indoor child? Does _____ like to play more outside or more inside?
- 1a. Is _____ allowed to play outside without an adult watching her/him?
- 1b. If no, how old will _____ have to be before she/he is allowed to go outside to play without an adult watching? Probe: sibling watching?
2. Must she/he ask permission to go some places?

- 2a. What places?
3. Can you see your child playing from outside your window?
- 3a. Can you talk to or shout to your child from your window?
- 3b. Can you hear your child outside if they call for help?
4. How much time does _____ spend outside playing during a typical weekday during the school year? On a weekend day during the summer?
5. When _____ is outside what types of things does _____ like to play?
- 5a. I have marked on this map where your house is. Could you show me the homes of your child's friends? Which home is _____ allowed to go to alone? (mark in purple)

What places in the neighborhood is
_____ allowed to go to alone? (mark in
turquoise)

What places is _____ allowed to go
to with children his/her own age? (mark in blue)

With older children? How old? (mark in
green)

What places is _____ allowed to go
to on a bicycle? (mark in yellow)

What about within your building? (the floor
numbers)

6. Are there any outdoor places that _____
likes to go to for reasons other than play? Example:
to hang out, be alone, to think.

7. Can you show me on the map the boundaries of your
neighborhood? Can you show me where it starts and
where it ends? Tell me about your neighborhood.

Mark on the map in pencil.

8. What about these places do you think are so attractive
to your child?

9. Please show me on the map any places in your neighborhood where you forbid your child to go. (Mark in red.) Why? How would you change it?
10. Under what conditions would you permit your child to go to these places?
11. Parents have different rules for children, including rules where they should play, or who they should talk to outside, etc. Do you have any general rules that you've discussed with your child about when they are outside?
- 11a. Who makes up the rules in our family about where your child may go or may not go?
12. Do you and your spouse/partner have any arguments or conflicting feelings about any rules about going outside? Which rules?
13. Do you think your child ever breaks your rules and goes to any of these places anyway? If so, which places? What does he/she like about these places?

14. How do you know they go to these places?

I now have some questions about your childhood:

15. Did anything happen outdoors when you were a child in your neighborhood, an incident or accident which might have frightened, hurt or scared you when you were a child? (Was it something you saw or did it happen to you?)

16. What do you think are the major differences, if any, between your childhood in your neighborhood and your child's?

I now have some questions about your neighborhood:

17. Have you or any of your neighbors ever had any problems in your neighborhood, any type of experiences where a child was frightened or hurt or scared?

18. Describe for me any places in your neighborhood that your child visits which you feel are the most dangerous places for them to play:

Place/ Routes	Time of Day	What makes it dangerous	What types of people are usually present	What you fear might happen

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

* Mark these places on your map with pink.

19. There are things that are great types of play experiences for children, but they can't do them because they're in a dangerous place. Can you tell me some things you'd like your child to play at but they cannot do because they are in a dangerous place?
Probe: What types of play experiences are they missing out on because places are dangerous?
20. Describe for me the safest places in your neighborhood outside the home or apartment for your child to play?
(mark in orange)

Probe:

Place/ Routes	Time of Day	What makes it safe	What types of people are usually present

*Please mark in orange.

*** Parents choose their house/apartment for a variety of reasons. There are many considerations, for instance, the cost, the type of neighborhood, school system, so on.

21. If you could live anywhere you wanted in terms of your child's safety, would you live here or someplace else? Where? Why?

21a. If you could live there, how do you think your child's play activities would change?

22. Coming from your experience of different neighborhoods in the city, if you could change your neighborhood in any way to make it safer for your children's play, what would you change?

23. How would your child's play change as a result?

*** I would now like to get your opinion about the local parks and playgrounds.

24. Are there any parks, playgrounds or athletic fields that your child goes to alone or with friends, or with you? Mark them on the map with

For each park or playground: Probe: F.M.P. (Does your family ever go to Flushing Meadow Park?)

25. Describe for me the safest places for your child to play in each park or playground. Probe: What makes them safe?

26. Describe for me the things about this place that are dangerous. (Discuss one at a time).

26a. If you could change anything in this playground/park to make it safer for your children's play, what would you change? (Discuss one at a time.)

*** I just have a few more short questions.

27. Is there anything you tell _____, any rules you may have about safe play in these parks/playgrounds?
28. Are you ever worried about _____ getting lost? Where? What do you fear might happen?
- 28a. Is there anything that you tell your child about this? If you don't, then what could you?
29. Are you ever worried about _____ being sexually molested? Where? By whom? What do you fear might happen?
- 29a. Is there anything that you tell your child about this? If you don't, then what could you?
30. Are you ever worried about _____ being kidnaped? Where? By whom? What might happen?
- 30a. Is there anything that you tell your child about this? If you don't, then what could you?

31. Are you ever worried about _____ being mugged or assaulted by other children? Where? By whom? What might happen?
- 31a. Is there anything you tell your child about this? If you don't, then what could you?
32. How do you feel about telling your child about these types of dangers?
- 32a. How do you feel these issues are affecting your child?
- 32b. Would you feel any different about these dangers if _____ was a boy/girl?
33. Are there any questions or issues which you feel I should have raised or is there anything else you would like to discuss with me on the subject of children's safety?

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. Are there any questions you have for me?

1. Do you have any friends in the neighborhood with a child 9, 10, or 11 years old who might be interested in being interviewed by me? Do you think you can ask them and give them this form to fill out?

2. For the next phase of this study I am talking to families, both children and parents about their neighborhoods and will be taking pictures of places and asking parents and children to show me around. I would like to spend some time on a weekend with you and your family, watching your child play, watch the other children in the neighborhood and asking you questions about play and your neighborhood. Would you be available and interested in participating in this phase? If yes: well thank you. I'll be writing you in the next couple of months to ask you about times that are convenient for you.

Table C - 1

Household Arrangements (n=37)

Household Arrangements	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Hispanic				
Married	8	25.00		
Married Living				
with Relative	3	9.38	1	20
Married Living				
with Boarders				
Single Parents	3	9.38		
Single Parent				
Living/Relative	2	6.25	1	20.
Hispanic				
Married	4	12.50	4	80
Married Living				
with Relative	4	12.50		
Married Living				
with Boarders	2	6.25		
Single Parents	1	3.13		
Single parent				
Living/Relative	5	15.63		
Total	32	100	5	100

Table C - 2

Age, Gender, and Ethnic Grouping of Children (n=37 Children)

Age	Female	Male	Total	%
Non-Hispanic				
3	8	5	13	76
10	1	3	4	24
11	0	0	0	0
Sub	9	8	17	100
Total				
Hispanics				
9	5	5	10	50
10	5	1	6	30
11	1	3	4	20
Sub	9	8	17	100
Total				
Total Non-Hispanic and Hispanic				
9	13	10	23	62
10	6	4	10	27
11	1	3	4	11
Total	20	17	37	100

Table C - 3

Childcare Arrangements

Household Arrangements	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Hispanic				
Parent	8	25.00	0	0
Relative	3	9.38	1	20
Neighbor or Sitter	1	3.13	0	0
Day Care	1	3.13	0	0
Sibling or Unattended	3	9.38	0	0
Hispanic				
Parent	6	18.75	2	40
Relative	6	18.75	1	20
Neighbor or Sitter	3	9.38	1	20
Day Care	0	0	0	0
Sibling or Unattended	1	3.13	0	0
Total	32	100	5	100

Note: N = 37 Households

Table C - 4

Parental Educational Background

Educational Background	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Hispanic				
Less Than High School	2	6.25	1	10.
High School Diploma	5	15.62	1	10.
Further Education	9	28.13	3	30.
Hispanics				
Less Than High School	10	31.25	3	30.
High School Diploma	2	6.25		
Further Education	4	12.50	2	20.
Total	32	100	10	100

Note: N = 42 Households

Table C - 5

Family Income

Annual Earnings	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Hispanic				
Declined	1	3.13		
Up to \$10,000	1	3.13		
\$10,000 to \$20,000	4	12.50	1	20.
\$20,001 to \$30,000	4	12.50		
\$30,001 to \$40,000	4	12.50		
Over \$40,000	2	6.25		
Hispanics				
Declined	2	6.25	1	20.
Up to \$10,000	3	9.38		
\$10,001 to \$20,000	5	15.63	1	20.
\$20,001 to \$30,000	2	6.25	1	20.
\$30,001 to \$40,000	4	12.50	1	20.
Over \$40,000				
Total	32	100	5	100

Note: N = 37 Families

Table C - 6

Housing Types

Housing Types	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Hispanic				
High-Rise	4	12.50		
Low-Rise				
(Below 4 Stories)	2	6.25		
2-3 Family House	9	28.13	1	20.
Single Family	1	3.13		
Hispanics				
High-Rise	1	3.13		
Low-Rise				
(Below 4 Stories)	2	6.25	1	20.
2-3 Family House	10	31.25	3	10.
Single Family	3	9.38	0	0
Total	32	100	5	100

Note: N = 37 Families

REFERENCES

- Albrant, R. S., Jr., Charney, M. K., & Cunningham, J. V. (1977). Citizens perception of their neighborhood. Journal of Housing, 34(7), 334-347.
- Aldrick, A. A. (1979). The influences of the man-built environment on children and youth. In W. Michelson, S. Levine, & E. Michelson (Eds.), The child in the city: Today and tomorrow. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Anderson, L. M., & Schroeder, H. W. (1983, March). Perceptions of physical safety in urban parks. Paper presented at the Southeastern Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Appleton, J. (1975). The experience of place. London: Wiley.
- Appleyard, D., & Lintell, M. (1978). The environmental quality of city streets: A resident's view. In S. Kaplan, & R. Kaplan (Eds.), Human Scape: Environments for people. North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press.
- Arenberg, G. S., Bartimole, C. R., & Bartimole, J. E. (1984). Preventing Missing Children. Hollywood, Florida: Compact Books.
- Baba, Y., & Austin, M. (1989). Neighborhood environmental satisfaction, victimization, and social participation as determinants of perceived neighborhood safety. Environment and Behavior, 12(6), 763-780.
- Balkin, S. (1979). Victimization rates, safety, and fear of crime. Social Problems, 26(3), 352-358.
- Barkus, J. L. (1978). Victims. New York: Charles Scribners and Sons.

- Baroni, G., & Green, G. (1977). Who's left the neighborhood? A report on relative conditions in White, Black, and Hispanic working class neighborhoods of our older industrial cities. Washington, D.C.: The National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs.
- Bartlett, S. (1991). Kids aren't like they use to be: Nostalgia and reality in neighborhood life. Children's Environments Quarterly, 8(1), 48-58.
- Baum, A., Singer, J. E., & Baum, C. S. (1981). Stress and the environment. Journal of Social Issues, 37(1), 4-35.
- Baumrind, D. (1980). New directions in socialization research. American Psychologist, 35(7), 639-652.
- Baumrind, D. (1965). Parental control and parental love. Children, 12(6), 230-234.
- Becker, F. (1976). Children's play in multi-family housing. Environment and Behavior, 8(4), 545-574.
- Bell, C. (in press) Traumatic stress in children in danger. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved.
- Berg, M., & Medrich, E. (1980). Children in four neighborhoods: The physical environment and its effect on play and play patterns. Environment and Behavior, 12(3), 320-348.
- Best, J. (1991). Threatened children: Rhetoric and concern about child victims. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.
- Bjorklid, P. (1987, June). The traffic environment as an obstacle to children's creative play in local environments. International Association for the Child's Right to Play conference. Stockholm, Sweden.

- Block, M., & Walsh, D. (1985). Young children's activities at home: Age and sex differences. Children's Environments Quarterly, 2(2) 34-39.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1, (2nd ed.) New York: Basic Books.
- Boulton, M. (1983). On being a mother: A study of women with pre-school children. New York: Tavistock Publications.
- Brower, S. (1974). Recreational uses of space: An inner city case study. Baltimore, MD: City of Baltimore, Department of Planning.
- Brower, S., & Williamson, P. (1972). The use of outdoor space in an inner city residential area. Environmental Research Design Association, Vol. 1.
- Butler, S. (1985). Thinking about prevention and education: A critical look. In M. Nelson, & K. Clark (Eds.), Preventing child abuse. Santa Cruz: Network publications.
- Carrick, J. (1985). Where children play. Birmingham: Play Board.
- Carroll, M. (1987). The castrated boy. Folklore, 98, 216-219.
- Cerra, F. (1986, January). Missing Children. Ms., 14, 14-16.
- Christoffel, K. K., Schofer, J. L., Lavign, J.V., Tanz, R. R., Wills, K., White, B., Barthel, M., McGuire, D., Donovan, M., Buergo, F., Shawver, N., & Jenq, J. (1991). "Kids and cars", an on-going study of pedestrian injuries: A description of early findings. Children's Environments Quarterly, 8(2), 39-49.

- Coates, G., & Bussard, E. (1974). Patterns of spatial behavior in a moderate density housing development. Environmental and Design and Research Proceedings 5, 12, 197-211.
- Coghlan, W. (1980, November). Growing up in Corona. Long Island Forum, 232-235.
- Cohen, S .M. (1972). Report for the Homewood Education Corporation: The Margaret Brent Playground Project. Baltimore, MA.: Department of Parks and Recreation.
- Coles, R., & Piers, M. (1969). Wages of neglect. Chicago, IL.: Quadrangle Books.
- Conklin, J. E. (1971). Dimensions of community response to crime. Social Problems, 18(3), 373-385.
- Cooper, C. (1970). Adventure Playgrounds. Landscape Architecture. 12, 18-34.
- Cranz, G. (1980). Women in urban parks. Signs, 5(3), 579-595.
- Department of City Planning. (1986). A socio-profile: A portrait of New York City: 1980 census. New York: Department of Urban Planning.
- Donaldson, O. F., & Aldrick, A. (1975). The child in the urban environment: A review of literature and research. In R. Wismewski (Ed.), 42nd Year Book. Washington, D.C.: National Council for Sociology.
- Dubow, F., McCabe, E., & Kaplan, G. (1979). Reactions to crime: A critical review of the literature. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Ellis, M. J. (1973). Why people play. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Erskine, H. (1974). The pack: Fear of violence and crime. Public Opinion Quarterly, 38(2), 131-145.
- Fingerhut, L. A., Klienman., J. L., Malloy, M. H., & Feldman, J. J. (1988). Injury fatalities among young children. Public Health Reports, 103, 399-405.
- Finkelhor, D. (1984). Child sexual abuse: New theory and research. New York: The Free Press.
- Fisher, C. S. (1976). The urban experience. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich.
- Fisher, B. S., & Nasar, J. L. (1992). Fear of crime in relation to three exterior site features: Prospect, refuge, and escape. Environment and Behavior, 24(1), 35-65.
- Forrest, A., & Paxson, L. (1979). Provision for people. Grand Central Terminal study. Unpublished manuscript. New York: The City University of New York.
- Franck, A., & Paxson, L. (1989). Women and urban public space: Research design and policy issues. In I. Altman, & E. Zube (Eds.), Public places and spaces. New York: Plenum Press.
- Fried, M., & Gleicher, P. (1961). Some sources of residential satisfaction in the urban slum. Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 27(4), 308-315.
- Frost, J. L., & Henniger, M. L. (1984). Making playgrounds safe for children and children safe for playgrounds. In R. D. Strom (Ed.), Growing through play. Monterey, CA: Brooks Publishing.
- Fry, A. (1987). Safe space: How to survive a threatening world. London: J. M. Dent & Sons.
- Furstenberg, F, Jr. (1971). Public reactions to crime in the street. American Scholars, 40(1), 601-610.

- Garborino, J., Kostlyn, K., & Dubrow, N. (1991). What children can tell us about living in danger. American Psychologist, 46(4), 376-383.
- Garling, T., & Garling, A. (1987). Parents protection of children from dangers. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), Children's development within socio-cultured structured environments. Boston: Abex.
- Geertz, C. (1983). Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic Books.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory. New York: Aldine/Antherton.
- Glass, D. C., & Singer, J. E. (1977). Behavior and the physiological effects of uncontrollable environmental events. In D. Stokols (Ed.), Perspectives on environment and behavior. New York: Plenum Press.
- Glass, D. C., & Singer, J. E. (1972). Urban stress: Experiments on noise and social stressors. New York: Academic Press.
- Gold, S. (1977). Neighborhood parks: The non-use phenomenon. Evaluation Quarterly, 1(2), 1-7.
- Gold, S. (1974). Deviant behavior in urban parks. Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 50, 50-52.
- Goleman, D. (1990, October). The study of play yields clues to success. New York Times. p. C1.
- Goodchild, B. (1974). Class differences in environmental perception: An exploratory study. Urban Studies, 11, 157-169.

- Goodman, G. (1979). Choosing sides: Playground and street life on the Lower East Side. New York: Schocken Books.
- Gordon, M. Y., Riger, S., Le Bailly, R. K., & Heath, L. (1981). Crime waves and the quality of urban life. In C. R. Stimpson, E. Dixler, M. J. Nelson, & K. B. Yatrakis. (Eds.), Women and American Cities. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Greenbein, B. B. (1981). Space: Dimensions of human landscapes. New York: Yale University Press.
- Hart, R. A. (1986). The changing city of childhood: Implications for play and learning. The 1986 Catherine Mahoney Memorial Lecture. The City College Workshop Center, City University of New York, NY.
- Hart, R. A. (1979). Children's experience of place. New York: Halstead Press.
- Hart, R. A. (1978a). Exploring the environment. Ekistics, 278, 389-390.
- Hart, R. A. (1978b, July). Children's explorations of tomorrow's: Some changing forces influencing children's accessibility. The International Symposium of the Child in the World of Tomorrow. Athens, Greece.
- Hartnagel, T. F. (1979). The perceptions and fear of crime: Implications for neighborhood cohesion, social activity, and community affect. Social Forces, 58(1), 176-190.
- Harvey, D. (1976). Labor, capital and class struggle around the built environment in advanced capitalistic societies. Politics and Society, 6, 265-295.
- Hechinger, G. (1984). How to raise a street-smart child. New York: Facts on File Publication.

- Held, V. (1983). The obligations of mothers and fathers. In J. Trebiliot (Ed.), Mothers: Essays on feminist theory. NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Henneberger, M. (1992, August, 17). Crime and ethnic tension on the rise as Queens Neighborhoods change. New York Times, pp. B1, B3.
- Hindellang, M. (1974). Public opinion regarding crime, criminal justice and related topics. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 1, 101-116.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). Content analysis for the social sciences. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hunter, A. (1975). The loss of community: An empirical test through replication. American Sociological Review, 40(5), 537-552.
- Hyson, M. C., & Bollin, G. G. (1990). Children's appraisal of home and neighborhood risks: Questions for tomorrow. Children's Environments Quarterly, 1(3), 50-59.
- Jackson, R. H. (1977). Children the Environment and Accidents. New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). The life and death of great American cities. New York: Vantage Books.
- Jacobson, D. (1971). Mobility, continuity, and urban social organization. Man, 6, 630-645.
- Jones, S. B. (1973). Geographic mobility as seen by wife and mother. Journal of Marriage and Family, 35, 210-218.
- Kantar, D., & Lehr, W. (1975). Inside the family. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

- Kasarda, J. D., & Janowitz, M. (1974). Community attachment in mass society. American Sociological Review, 39, 328-339.
- Kennedy, L. W., & Silverman, R. A. (1985). Perceptions of social diversity and fear of crime. Environment and Behavior, 17, 275-295.
- Knoblauch, R. C. (1977). Causation factors and counter measures for rural and suburban pedestrian accidents (Report# DOT-HS-802-266). Washington, D.C.: National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.
- Ladd, F. (1970). Black youth view their environment neighborhood maps. Environment and Behavior, 2, 74-79.
- Laosa, L. M. (1981). Maternal behavior: Socio-culture behavior in modes of family interaction. In R. Henderson (Ed.), Parent child interaction: Theory research and prospects. NY: Academic Press.
- Lee, B. A. (1981). The urban unease revisited: Perceptions of local safety and neighborhood satisfaction among metropolitan residents. Social Science Quarterly, (4), 611-629.
- Lewis, D., & Maxfield, M. (1980). Fear in neighborhoods: An investigation of the impact of crime. Journal of Research on Crime and Delinquency, 17, 160-190.
- Lofland, L. H. (1973). A world of strangers: Order and action in urban public spaces. New York: Basic Books.
- Loo, C. (1986). Neighborhood satisfaction and safety: A study of a low-income ethnic area. Environment and Behavior, 18(1), 109-131.
- Lowrance, W. W. (1976). Acceptable risk. Los Altos, CA: William Kaufman.

- Lynch, K. (1979). The spatial world of the child. In W. Michelson, S. Levine, & E. Michelson (Eds.), The child in the city: Today and tomorrow. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mason, J., Forrester, L., & Hermene, P. (1975). Berkeley parks' study. Berkeley: Department of Parks and Recreation.
- McIntyre, J. (1967). Public attitudes toward crime and law enforcement. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 374, 34-47.
- McKechnie, J. (Ed.) (1979). Webster's new twentieth century dictionary of the English language. (2nd Ed.) New York: William Collins Publishers, Inc.
- Mead, M. (1966). Neighborhoods and human needs. Ekistics, 21(123), 124-126.
- Meisels, A. (1988, January). The molester stalks Queens. Daily News. p. 31.
- Merry, S. (1981). Urban danger: Life in a neighborhood of strangers. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Merton, R. (1956). The focus group interview. Glencoe, IL.: Free Press.
- Michelson, W. (1970). Man and his urban environment. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Michelson, W., Levine, S., & Spina, A. (1979). The child in the city: Changes and challenges. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Michelson, W., & Roberts, E. (1979). Children and the urban physical environment. In W. Michelson, A. Spina, & S. Levine (Eds.), The child in the city: Changes and challenges. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Middleton, D. (1986). The production and management of fear. The anthropology of fear. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Moore, G. (1985). State of the art in play environments. In J. Frost, & S. Sunderlin (Eds.), When children play. Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International.
- Moore, R. (1986). Childhood's domain: Play and place in child development. London: Croom Helm.
- Moore, R., & Young, D. (1978). Childhood outdoors: Toward a social ecology of the landscape. In I. Altman, & J. Wohlwill (Eds.), Children and the environment. New York: Plenum Press.
- Moore, W, Jr. (1969). The vertical ghetto. New York: Random House.
- Nasaw, D. (1985). Children of the city: At work and at play. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- National Safety Council. (1990). Accident Facts: 1990 Edition. Washington D.C.
- Naylor, H. (1985). Outdoor play and equipment. Early Child Development and Care, 19, 109-130.
- New York City Department of City Planning. (1983). A demographic profile: A portrait of New York City. New York: Department of City Planning.
- New York City Department of Planning. (1983). 1980 Census: Income for New York City and boroughs. New York: Department of City Planning.
- Newman, O. (1972). Defensible Space, New York: Collier Books.

- Newson, J., & Newson, E. (1976). Seven years old in the home environment. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Newson, J., & Newson, E. (1968). Four years old in an urban community. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Noschis, K. (1984). Children at play in their neighborhoods. Unpublished manuscript. Paris: Librarie des Moridians.
- O'Hanlon, T. (1982). Neighborhood change and New York City: A case study of Park Slope 1850-1980. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, City University of New York.
- Oakley, A. (1974). Women's work: The housewife, past and present. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ogbu, J. (1982). Socialization: A cultural ecological approach. In K. Borman (Ed.), The social life of children in a changing society. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ogbu, J. (1981). Origins of human competence: A cultural-ecological perspective. Child Development, 52, 413-429.
- Parkinson, C. (1987). Children's range behavior. Birmingham: Play Board.
- Perez, C., & Hart, R. (1980). Beyond playgrounds: Planning for children's access to the environment. In P. Wilkinson (Ed.), Innovations in play environments. London: Croom Helm.
- Peters, J., & Gentile, D. (1988, October). Girl killed in Queens: Sexual Attack. The Daily News. p. 2.
- Pienciak, R, Jr. (1988, January). The Molester stalks Queens. The Daily News. p. 31.

- Play Board. (1985). Making way for children's play. Birmingham, England: Play Board.
- Rainwater, C. (1922). The play movement in the United States: A study of community recreation. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rainwater, L. (1966). Fear and the house as haven in the lower class. Journal of the American Institute of Planners, (33), 23-37.
- Reizler, K. (1944). The sociological psychology of fear. American Journal of Sociology, XLIX(2), 144-157.
- Richardson, M., & Parkinson, C. E. (1986). Children's range behavior. Birmingham: Playboard.
- Riger, S., & Gordon, M. T. (1981a). The female fear. New York: Free Press.
- Riger, S., & Gordon, M. (1981b). The fear of rape: A study of social control. Journal of Social Issues, 37(4), 71-93.
- Riger, S., Gordon, M., & Le Bailly, R. (1982). Coping with urban crime: Women's use of precautionary behaviors. American Journal of Community Psychology, 10, 369-386.
- Rivera, F. P., Reay, D., & Bergman, A. B. (1989). Analysis of fatal pedestrian injuries in King County and prospects for preventions. Public Health Reports, 102, 293-297.
- Rohe, W. M., & Burby, R.T. (1988). Fear of crime in public housing. Environment and Behavior, 20(6), 700-720.
- Root, J. (1983). Play without pain: A manual for playground safety. Melbourne, Australia: Childhood Accident Prevention Foundation.

- Ross, H. (1974). Behavior and perception of strange environments. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Rothchild, R. (1989). FY89 District Needs Statement, Community Board 4, Elmhurst, NY.
- Saegert, S., & Hart, R. (1978). The development of environmental competence in girls and boys. In M. Salter (Ed.), Play: Anthropological Perspectives. Cornwall, NY: Leisure Press.
- Sandel, S. (1974). Why are children injured in traffic? The Scandic report. Gottenberg, Sweden: Skandier Insurance Co.
- Sandels, S. (1968). Children in traffic. London: Paul Elek.
- Schoenberg, S. P. (1979) Criteria for evaluation of neighborhood viability in working class and low income areas of cities. Social Problems, 27(1), 69-78.
- Schutz, A. (1964). The stranger. In A. Byoderex (Ed.), Collected papers: Vol. 1. Studies in social theory. The Hague: Martinus Nijtoif.
- Sears, R., Maccoby, R. I., Eleanor, E., & Levin, H. (1959). Patterns of childrearing. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Sebba, R. (1991). The landscapes of childhood: The reflection of childhood's environments in adult memories and children's attitude. Environment and Behavior, 23(4), 395-422.
- Sell, J. L. (1985). Territoriality and children's experience of neighborhoods. Children's Environments Quarterly, 2(2), 41-48.
- Simmel, G. (1950). The Sociology of George Simmel. K. H. Wolff (Ed.) Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

- Skogan, W. G. (1990). Decline and decay in the spiral of decay of American cities. New York: The Free Press.
- Skogan, W. G. (1986). Fear of crime and neighborhood change. In J. Reiss, Jr., & M. Tonry (Eds.), Communities and crime. Chicago press: University of Chicago Press.
- Skogan, W. G. (1981). On attitudes and behaviors. In D.A. Lewis (Ed.), Reactions to crime. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Skogan, W. G. (1974). The validity of official crime statistics: An empirical investigation. Social Science Quarterly, 55(1), 25-38.
- Skogan, W. G., & Maxfield, M. G. (1981). Coping with crime: Individual and neighborhood reactions. Newbury Park, NY: Sage Press.
- Spencer, C., Blades, M., & Morsley, K. (1989). The child in the physical environment. New York: Wiley.
- Spivack, M. (1975). The political collapse of the playground. Landscape Architecture, 59(4), 288-291.
- Spradley, J. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Rinehart & Winston.
- Staff. (1989). Community district needs. NY: New York Department of City Planning. (DPC #89-66)
- Staff. (1990, September). Priest molests children in Queens. Newsday. p. 4.
- Stratton, P. (1989). The role of the family in early childhood risks. In T. Garling, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), Children in the environment: Toward a psychology of accident prevention. New York: Plenum Press.

- Strauss, A. (1987). Qualitative analysis for social scientists. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Suro, R. (1992, February). Crime and its amplified echoes are rearranging public lives. The New York Times. p. C1, C3.
- Suttles, G. (1968). The social order of the slum: Ethnicity and territory in the inner city. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1982). A performance theory of peer relations. In K. Borman (Ed.), The social life of children in a changing society. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
- Sweeny-Briggs, T. (1980, November). The ideal playground just doesn't exist. The New York Times. p.B2.
- Swenson-Garling, A., Garling, T., & Valsiner, J. (1989). Parents' knowledge of children's competence, perception of risk, and causes of child accidents and residential satisfaction. In T. Garling, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), Children in the environment: Toward a psychology of accident prevention. New York: Plenum Press.
- Taltsch, K. (1988, July). In Queens a preview of future cities. The Daily News. p. B22.
- Tattum, D. (1989). Violence and aggression in schools. In D. Tattum, & D. Lane (Eds.), Bullying in schools. Stoke-on Trent, England: Trenton Books.
- Taub, R. R., Taylor, J. G., & Dunham, J. D. (1981). Neighborhood safety. In D. A. Lewis (Ed.), Reactions to crime. Newberry Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Thygerson, A. L. (1986). Safety. Second ed. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Tindal, M. (1971). The home range of black elementary school children: An exploratory study in the measurement and comparison of home range. (Unpublished manuscript). Worcester, MA: Graduate School of Geography, Clark University.
- Tinsworth, D. K., & Kramer, J. T. (1990). Playground equipment-related injuries and deaths. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- Titman, W. (1989). Adult response to children's fears: Including resource materials. In D. Tattum, & D. Lane (Eds.), Bullying in schools. Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham Books.
- Thomas, J. (1987, August). On the city's playgrounds, both joy and danger. The New York Times. p. A1.
- Tomeo, V. (1977, March). Forgotten Corona. The Queens Tribune. p. 4.
- Torell, G. & Biel, A. (1985). Parental restrictions and children's acquisition of neighborhood knowledge. In T. Garling, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), Children in the environment: Toward a psychology of accident prevention. New York: Plenum Press.
- Townsend, P., & Davidson, N. (1982). Inequalities in health: The Black report. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (1978). Child sexual abuse: Incest assault and sexual exploitation. Washington, D.C.: Administration for Children, Youth, and Families.
- Valsiner, J. (1987). Culture and the development of children's actions. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Ward, Colin. (1978). The child in the city. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Warr, M. (1980). Dangerous situations, social context, and fear of victimization. Social Forces, 68, 891-907.
- Warren, D. (1977). The functional diversity of urban neighborhoods. Urban Affairs Quarterly, 13, 151-180.
- Warren, D. (1975). Black neighborhoods: An assessment of community power. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wilkinson, P. F. (1986). Safety in Children's Play, Children's Environments Quarterly, 2(4), 9-12.
- Wilkinson, P. F., & Lockhart, R. S. (1980). Safety in children's formal play environments. In P. F. Wilkinson (Ed.), Innovations in play environments. London: Croom Helm.
- Wilson, J. Q. (1985). Thinking about crime. New York: Vantax Books.
- Wolfe, M. (1977, September). Growing up in cities: The concept of privacy in childhood. Paper presented at the IV Biennial Conference of the International Study of Behavioral Development. Pavia, Italy.
- Wolfe, M., & Laufer, R. (1975). The concept of privacy in childhood and adolescence. In D. Carlson (Ed.), Man-Environment interaction: Evaluations and applications. Stroudsburg. Pa: Hutchinson & Ross.
- Wolfe, M., Scheares, M., & Laufer, R. (1976). Private Places: The concept of privacy in children and adolescence. Paper Presented at Environmental Design Association. Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Wood, D. (1977). Free the children: Down with the playgrounds. Industrialization Forum, 8(1), 11-14.

- Wortham, S. (1985). A history of outdoor play 1900-1985: Theories of play and play environments. In J. Frost & S. Sunderlin (Eds.), When Children Play. Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International.
- Yancey, W. H. (1971). Architecture, interaction, and social control. Environment and Behavior, 3(1), 3-21.
- Yeaton, W. H., & Bailey, J. S. (1978). Teaching pedestrian safety skills to young children: An analysis and one year follow-up. Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis. 11(3), 315-329.
- Zill, N. (1983). Summary of preliminary results: National survey of children. New York: Foundation for Child Development.
- Zinsmeister, K. (1990, June). Growing up scared. The Atlantic Monthly. pp. 49-54, 56-57, 60-61, 63-65.