Resources in Parenting: Access to Capitals Project Report

Rosalind Edwards and Val Gillies

Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group
London South Bank University
103 Borough Road
London SE1 0AA

May 2005
Published by London South Bank University

ISBN 1-874418-52-7

Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper No. 14

RESOURCES IN PARENTING: ACCESS TO CAPITALS PROJECT REPORT

Rosalind Edwards and Val Gillies

Introduction

This Working Paper reports on the aims, methodology and findings of the 'Resources in Parenting: Access to Capitals' research project. The project is part of the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group's programme of work on the inter-relationship between the dynamics of family change and processes of social capital. Broadly, social capital concerns the values that people hold and the resources that they can access, which both result in and are the result of collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships. Within this, the 'Resources in Parenting' project examined the micro processes of everyday family life focusing in particular on the resources that are available to parents of children aged between 8 and 12. The framework for the project conceptualised parenting resources in terms of social, economic, cultural, emotional and environmental capital, centring on social connectedness, material and financial status, values and dispositions, and levels or types of emotional investment in children. It involved both extensive survey and intensive interview data collection, using a particular perspective on the relationship between the different sorts of data.

We begin with a discussion of the context for the research, in terms of the thrust of policies for support in parenting (drawing on work previously published in Edwards and Gillies 2004 and Gillies 2005) and how this links to concerns about social capital (drawing on Edwards et al. 2003 and Edwards 2004). It is this context that led to our adoption of a mixed methodology for the study, combining a survey and interviews, and of a distinct way of conceiving the relationship between the two sets of data. Thus we next examine the purpose of the mixed methodology of our project, and especially its rationale in relation to various discussions of social capital in particular. We also detail the samples for both the survey and interview phases of the project, and the relationship between them. We then turn to the findings from our project, interweaving data from both phases of the research. In particular, we focus on key findings around, firstly, parents' views and practices in appropriate sources of support and advice, and secondly, their perceptions and practices in relation to social and other capitals. Throughout, we pay attention to gender and social class. (A more detailed discussion of the survey findings only is available in Edwards and Gillies 2004.)

Policy Context: A Support and Normative Deficit Filled by Expert Instruction

Parenting, and families generally, have been a longstanding source of concern for politicians. This has resulted in a range of developments over the years, including the establishment of health visiting as a universal statutory service and policies for enhancing 'parental' (mothers) involvement in education (Abbott & Sapsford 1990; David 1993). With the election of the first New Labour government in 1997, however, there has been an even more explicit attention to parenting as a focus for policy intervention (Wasoff and Hill 2002). In effect, everyday parenting practice has moved from a largely private issue to the centre of public, political concern. This concern operates within a support deficit framework.

Parents' childrearing practices have come under the spotlight, perceived as having consequences for society generally, rather than vice versa:

> *… Government cannot duck responsibilities to help people make a success of parenting. This is essential if we are to achieve our goal of a stronger civil society, offering people more opportunities in life. Parenting is hugely important to creating the kind of society we want to live in.*
> (speech given by then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, 'Human rights and personal responsibility – new citizenship for a new millennium', 2.10.00)

The family has come to exemplify the concept of dutiful community through the practice of parenthood (Driver and Martell 2002), with an explicit focus on the responsibilities and obligations of parenting. Responsible parents are posed as fostering and transmitting crucial values to their children that protect and reproduce the common good. The emphasis is on the development of cohesive norms and values – a feature of social capital (discussed further below). In carrying out this crucial work, and developing and adhering to responsible parenting values, parents are posed as in need of 'support' and instruction from expert sources.

In policy terms, notions of 'support' have customarily implied help in the form of material benefits, as in child support, income support, and so on. New Labour government discourse and practice, however, has moved away from concerns about material poverty towards a focus on moral 'poverty' and cultural pathology (Fairclough 2000; Levitas 1998). 'Support' in policy interventions targeting parents now involve education and advice from experts, especially in statutory/voluntary sector partnerships, and the inculcation of values in the practice of parenting in the face of a perceived fracturing of such norms in today's society. This support is regarded as *'relevant to all parents regardless of their circumstances'* (Home Office, 1998, p.7). Indeed, government aims to change broad cultural understandings so that *'seeking advice and help when it is needed is seen not as failure but as the action of concerned and responsible parents'* (speech given by then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, on the launch of the Lords and Commons Family and Child Protection Group's report 'Family Matters', 23.7.98).

The framework of 'support' promoted by government portrays parenting as an occupation requiring a 'tool kit' form of knowledge that can by taught to parents through 'expert' specialist advice and instruction, rather than a complex intimate relationship:

> *Being a parent is a challenging job. Many parents get by through a combination of instinct, advice, reading and family support, but this is not always enough ... By learning better parenting skills, [parents] can help to improve their child's health and educational attainment, as well as their own confidence and self esteem.*
> (Home Office, 1998, p.5)

The idea that parents need support and can learn how to be responsible in their childrearing practices has underpinned a range of policy measure, with the intention of making guidance on childrearing widely available. For example, the National Family and Parenting Institute's (NFPI) remit is to act as a 'centre of expertise', providing information and 'authoritative' advice on parenting 'good practice'. The NFPI also initiated discussions about the introduction of a 'Parents' Code', in which the rights and responsibilities of parents would be clearly defined, detailing the practices and values that parents are expected to adhere to and informing *'a national consciousness of what it is to be a parent'* (Henricson, 2003, p.94 – our emphasis). Parentline Plus UK offers a national telephone helpline advice service, information leaflets, workshops and courses. The Sure Start programme focuses on involving local communities in supporting parents and on improving parents' access to information and advice, as well helping to develop 'extended schools' provision that encompasses family learning and parenting support. Indeed, parenting education and support is delivered by a range of statutory and voluntary agencies (including education in schools for pupils as the parents of the future). Other examples of plugging the 'support deficit' and normative consciousness gap for parents include a Parenting Fund to build capacity for voluntary sector service provision for parents, and a website giving access to advice and information from the government on parenting issues (see Hansard, debate on Children and Parents, 26 March 2003, column 855 continuing).

Support as pedagogic instruction also shades into authoritarian control; those parents who cannot see their need for services giving advice and education will be made to see it. Parents who are *'unwilling or unable to respond to support when offered'* (Home Office, 2003, p.9) – in other words, those who refuse

to be advised and guided by experts to gain knowledge and skills 'voluntarily' – can be subject to fines and ultimately even imprisonment. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act compelled parents of young offenders to attend weekly 'counselling and guidance' sessions to be taught parenting skills. The 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act enables schools and local education authorities to ask parents of recalcitrant children to 'voluntarily' sign a Parenting Contract. If parents refuse to sign or fail to comply with the conditions, a Parenting Order can then be imposed. The Order can include requiring parents to attend intensive support schemes or residential parenting classes.

Fracturing of cohesive norms and support systems?

A key issue in the perceived need to provide parents with expert, sanctioned and authoritative, skills training is the belief that social change has fractured traditional support systems and cohesive norms, leading to widespread uncertainty in parenting practices. Changes in family relationships and a loss of values of duty and obligation are felt to make contemporary responsible parenting more elusive:

> *Parenting is probably the most important task any of us will undertake, yet it comes with no instructions or training. As more is known about children's needs, so parents' aspirations and uncertainties grow about how to care for and educate their children. At the same time, changing patterns of work and the breakdown of networks of family and friends, increased divorce and repartnering rates, all combine to add to the complexities and pressures of parenting and family life.*
> (Parentline Plus 'Who we are' information leaflet)

This 'support deficit' perspective highlights increases in divorce and separation, lone parenting and cohabiting as evidence that isolation and individual self interest have intensified at the expense of principles of responsibility and obligation. The traditional values and identities associated with family life are said to be in retreat, resulting in weakened social ties and damaged societal cohesion more generally. Some also stress the destructive role of welfare state provision in promoting 'free-rider' norms. (Examples of such arguments include Coleman 1990; Davies 1993, Dennis and Erdos 1992, Fevre 2000; Murray 1994.)

Policy attempts to create a national consciousness that regards turning to services for parenting advice as the norm, though, take place in the context of identified trends towards globalisation. On the one hand, this globalisation is seen as bringing about a convergence in lifestyle and values, but on the other hand it can equally give people greater awareness, knowledge of and access to a diversity of lifestyles, and a variety of viewpoints and information (Beck 1999). This latter aspect of cultural globalisation subjects claims to authoritative knowledge about the best way of parenting on the part of experts to questioning and critical evaluation. Generally, people are said to be aware that there are a diversity of experts and that opinions can be contested amongst them; there is no single authoritative guidance on which to rely (Giddens 1994).

Such a sense of diversity and flux may itself be a reason why governments and institutions wish to (re)impose normative order, including in and through parenting support. Under conditions of social change, there are arguments that governments, institutions and individuals long to return to a vision of the security of the 'traditional' past, when norms were supposedly cohesive across society and experts were accorded respect (Beck 1992, 1997).

Furthermore, there are other arguments addressing social change that regard it as creating opportunities for support in parenting from new and different sources. The loss of relevance of traditional notions of family and parenting is posed as allowing people to create more fulfilling relationships, building new associations based on democratic values of respect and negotiation, as

opposed to stultifying prescribed duty and obligation. Trends towards divorce, cohabitation and re-partnering, from this perspective, are a consequence of a shift in family relations from a 'community of need' to 'elective affinities', whereby people organise their own circles of contacts and relationships. Friendships, in particular, are said to be valued in a new way, providing egalitarian social and emotional support and a sense of collectivity. (Examples of such arguments include Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002; Beck-Gernsheim 1998, 2002; Giddens 1991, 1992; Pahl 2000; Stacey 1996; Weeks 1995.)

Yet another perspective, however, calls into question the extent of social change and the supposed complexity of parenting and family life – for ill or for good – as compared with the past (for example, Crow 2002; Jamieson 1998). This viewpoint emphasises continuing gender, class and ethnic divisions. Parenting norms and practices are not developed through conscious learning or coercion; rather they are an inherently everyday lived practice in social context – conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu (1990) as 'habitus'.[1] Norms and practices are shaped by, and sensitive to, parents' specific and differential social positioning and the resources that are available to them. Specialist knowledge is also shaped in this way and, in being legitimated as authoritative, works to confirm the position of experts and to consolidate the dominance of privileged groups.

Links to social capital

The specific pedagogic approach to the development of sanctioned and consensual parenting norms and practices implicates broader concerns about the existence and generation of social capital, with its focus on the importance of the values that people hold and the resources that they can access through collective social relationships. Social capital building has become an underpinning driver for much government policy-making (see for example Baron et al. 2002; Gamarnikow and Green 1999). Repairing and enhancing social capital is seen as the way forward in dealing with a whole host of social issues currently perceived as problematic, including individualisation, fragmenting and increasingly diverse family forms and society; and declining and alienated communities and neighbourhoods, and forms of social exclusion amongst particular groups in society. The New Labour government has commissioned a series of reviews, surveys and policy 'think pieces' on the topic from its various Departments and Units (for example, Office of National Statistics 2001; Performance and Innovation Unit 2002).

Families, and in particular the parenting of children, are often regarded as a well-spring of social capital generation or destruction, with particular implications for gendered and generational relationships (Edwards et al. 2003; Edwards 2004). The two social capital theorists who represent approaches that centre this in their conceptions of social capital are James S. Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu. Both are concerned with the links between individuals and small groups, notably families, and wider social organisations and institutions. While Coleman is concerned with social consensus and control however, Bourdieu highlights the complexity of class-based struggles, and the different investments that people make, in his focus on the politics of power in the reproduction of privilege and inequality. While Coleman's work has become part of orthodox thinking in the field of education policy and practice, Bourdieu's work has had less of an impact on policy framing, although it remains influential in critical strands of academic analysis.

For Coleman, social capital is a hidden-hand 'by-product' that *'inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons'* (1990, p. 302), including obligations and expectations, and norms and effective sanctions. In particular, he identifies social capital as a resource within 'the family' that relates to the structure of intergenerational relationships between parents and children. Parental interest in and support for their children enables those children to increase their human capital

[1] Bourdieu has been criticised for being reductionist in not explicitly incorporating disinterested normative judgement as to whether some practices are better than others (Sayer 1999). Whether or not this is the case, it is not our focus here.

(educational achievement). Parental human capital is not the same as their social capital, and those with low human capital can possess high social capital in terms of the attention they give their children and the expectations that they have of them. It is this parental attention and expectation that enables children to increase their human capital. The more children that parents have, however, the more this attention is diluted. In terms of wider social consensus and social order, Coleman sees the process of social capital building within families as integrally linked to social capital as a resource outside 'the family', where parents and children are embedded in close community relationships. Parent-child relations and social ties outside families come together to create a dense social structure of cohesive norms, extensive trust and obligations, which Coleman calls 'inter-generational closure'. As such, it transcends individual self-interest.

Coleman poses a number of changes in family life as key in undermining social capital, however. He posits changing family structures, specifically in terms of increases in lone mother headed families, 'absent' fathers, and mothers working outside the home, as creating a deficit of parent-led norms in children's socialisation, and hence in social capital:

> *The most prominent element of structural deficiency in modern families is the single parent family. However, the nuclear family itself, in which one or both parents work outside the home, can be seen as structurally deficient, lacking the social capital that comes with the presence of parents during the day, or with grandparents or aunts and uncles in or near the household.*
> (1997/1988, p. 89)

Amongst some features of contemporary popular culture, he also points to geographical mobility as disrupting inter-generational closure, and thus as another feature of social capital demise. Overall, these adverse developments mean that *'strong families and strong communities … are much less often present now than in the past'* (1997/1988, p. 93). Thus, in the face of eroding social capital, the contemporary policy dilemma concerns whether and how to put in place some substitute formal organisation of social capital generation (1990, p. 608). The government emphasis on parenting education, encouraging and enforcing responsibility, and the development of other parenting supports discussed above, can be seen, in Coleman's terms, as an attempt to fill the vacuum in social capital and create a (expert-governed information and sanction) consensus concerning parenting norms and practices.

Like Coleman, Bourdieu also focuses on generational socialisation within families in his thinking about social capital. He sees social capital as:

> *… made up of social obligations ('connections') … [it] is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.*
> (1997/1988, p. 47-51)

People derive their social capital from their membership of a group, such as a family or kinship group, but it has to be continuously worked at rather than merely being constituted in 'the genealogical definition of kinship relations'; it is:

> *… the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly useable in the short or long term.*
> (op cit., p. 52)

Material and symbolic exchanges that produce obligations and mutual recognition of group (family) membership are built up over time and can be transmitted over generations.

Bourdieu, however, is quite different from Coleman because, although social capital can derive from family relationships, he sees its type and content as inevitably shaped by the material, cultural and symbolic status of the individual and family concerned (1990). There is an interdependent relationship between social and other forms of capital, with economic capital at their root. Social capital is integrally linked, for example, to cultural capital, which comprises ways of thinking and being as well as cultural goods that are transmitted domestically: *'the scholastic yield from educational qualification depends on the social capital, again inherited, which can be used to back it up'* (1997/1986, p. 48). Symbolic capital, wherein certain ways of thinking and acting are legitimised and regarded as authoritative in society, is also integrally linked to social capital in such a way that the latter largely functions through the former. For example, Bourdieu notes that 'manners' may be included in social capital in the sense that, in being acquired, they indicate the status of the social group of which someone is a member (1997/1986, p. 57). Furthermore, the ability of parents to invest in transmission of social capital of the 'right' type is rooted in the family's economic capital. For example, while Bourdieu (like Coleman) identifies *'the mothers' free time'* (i.e. not working outside the home) as a feature of intergenerational social capital transmission (1997/1986, p. 54), he treats this as an aspect of social inequality rather than an indicator of social capital erosion (i.e. the family has to have enough income for the mother to be 'free' at home rather than in employment, and/or for buying in domestic help). Thus for Bourdieu, social capital is ubiquitous and continually transmitted in ways that reproduce privilege, manifesting itself in class-specific forms and working to reproduce class relations, rather than social capital undergoing a deterioration instigated by features of contemporary family life that fracture the 'proper' socialisation of children.

We now turn to explaining how the policy context discussed above, and its underpinning ideas about parenting norms and practices, influenced the methodology that we used to research support and resources in parenting, alongside a desire to directly address debates about the part played by parenting in the generation and sustenance of social capital.

Mixing Methods in Researching Parenting Support and Resources

As noted earlier, the 'Resources in Parenting: Access to Capitals' study aimed to examine the micro-processes of everyday family life, focusing in particular on the resources that are available to parents of children aged between 8 and 12. Our particular research questions included:

- what are parents' normative understandings of parenting support, and how do parents understand, value and draw on social and other capitals as part of their parenting practice; and
- do parents' normative understandings, and the resources or capitals available to them in their everyday parenting practice, relate to each other and to social divisions?

Within our focus on resources in parenting, we have confined our attention to parents of 8-12 year old children, rather than covering 'children' per se from toddlers to teenagers. This is in some contrast to surveys and studies that start from a base of parents generally or general surveys that separate out parents of 'dependent children' at some analytic points (for example, the British Social Attitudes Survey and the Home Office Citizenship Survey), or a particular group of parents on the basis of their own characteristics (for example, their age in the National Child Development Study cohort). While we are not adhering to a developmental model of childhood, the trajectory 'stage' of 'middle childhood' is defined by 'expert' knowledge as one in which, amongst other things, children are in transition between being significantly embedded in and dependent on familial relationships and parents, and developing their own, relatively autonomous, peer relationships (for example, Borland et al. 1998; Meadows 1990;

Terwogt and Harris 1993), in a context where parents are still held firmly responsible for their children's behaviour and development at this age. Parents of children in 'middle childhood' are thus defined, and may understand themselves, as facing some different issues to those involved in the parenting of toddlers or teenagers.[2] Interestingly, thus far policy has tended to highlight toddlers (for example, Sure Start) or teenagers (for example, Connexions), but the Parenting Fund has particularly identified the need for parenting support for children aged 5 to 10.

Rationale for mixed methods

Our data-gathering strategy involved both extensive survey and intensive interview data collection. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is not unusual in social research; indeed there is a growth in the use and popularity of investigations that combine the methods and regard them as compatible rather than irreconcilable paradigms (Brannen 1992; Bryman 2004). Quite how they are compatible, however, is less clear. Typical justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative research include triangulation (such as corroboration and correspondence), complimentarity (enhancement or illustration of one set of findings with another), development (using one method and its results to inform another), initiation (using paradoxes and contradictions to develop new perspectives), and expansion (extending breadth and range of enquiry through different methods) (Caracelli and Greene 1993). In this research, we adopted a rationale more akin to expansion, retaining a sense of different paradigms that each have particular strengths and can each answer different research questions.

Our research has been influenced by the methodology used by Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason (1993) in their landmark study of adult kin obligations and responsibilities, which combined quantitative and qualitative data. Their quantitative survey was concerned with publicly expressed attitudes to family responsibilities: in other words, not what people did but what were the norms they held about what should be done. Indeed, they argued that the data generated in answers to survey questions are judgements that may well be pulled towards what the sample feel is socially acceptable, rather than what they may themselves do in complex 'real life' situations. Their qualitative in-depth interviews were then concerned with the differently formulated question of what interviewees actually did. In terms of their topic, Finch and Mason argued that political debate, expressed through social policy in the field, was built upon an assumed 'natural' consensus about kin obligations for each other. In contrast, from their survey they found that there were few commonly held norms for attributing responsibility and courses of action, and from their in-depth interviews they found that what interviewees actually did in relation to kin obligations and responsibilities was contingent, contextual and negotiated rather than subject to prescribed imperative.

Our own focus is on resources and assistance in parenting children, which is quite different from adult kin obligations because prescribed imperatives are evident in how parents think about their practice (for example, Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2003). The policy context for our work is also rather different, as can be seen from our discussion above. It is assumed that all parents need support at some time, and that there are many who are unskilled and uncertain both about their practice and who to turn to. In this supposed vacuum there are attempts to establish a pedagogic consensus that expert knowledge and intervention should be the norm. Nevertheless, the relevance of Finch and Mason's methodology still holds, in addressing public norms through quantitative data, and everyday practices though theoretically sampled qualitative data. Our intention was to determine consensus or lack of it in publicly expressed norms about appropriate sources of 'parenting support' through an initial large scale survey in the first

[2] Indeed, a child's stage of development is noted as an issue in which formal sources of support that parents are aware of for the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Attwood et al. 2003, p. 131).

phase of our research[3], and to access the complex and specific circumstances concerning the resources that parents draw on and provide in their everyday, lived parenting practice through theoretically sampled in-depth interviews in a second phase. We discuss these phases, and their samples, below.

Phase one: survey of parents

The survey part of our fieldwork was completed through commissioning a series of questions as part of the NOP Parentbus survey. This is an omnibus service conducting face-to-face interviews with a nationally representative sample of parents, within which we were able to focus specifically on parents of 8-12 year olds. Four consecutive waves of the survey were conducted in September 2002, reaching a total sample of 1112 parents (all from different households) (see Table 1). Over half the parents were mothers, and most were working class (based on occupation). As we will see in our discussion below, gender and class were important features of differential norms. In addition, about a tenth of our sample came from minority ethnic groups.

Table 1: NOP Parentbus sample of parents of 8-12 year old children

Total sample	*1112 parents*
Gender:	
Mothers	61%
Fathers	39%
Social class:	
Working class	62%
Middle class	38%
Minority ethnic	9%

The questions that we asked in the survey focused on the sample's views of the types of help and assistance that contemporary parents might turn to from formal and informal sources. The sample were asked to compare the support that parents in general now receive from family and friends compared with 'the past'; to consider possible reasons for any decline, increase or continuity; and to consider the sorts of help that parents might need from these sources as well as formal organisations. The survey also explored the sample's views on the appropriateness of a range of informal and formal sources of assistance in relation to particular areas and circumstances of childrearing, including financial difficulties, housing, child care, behaviour, health and education. We used abstract multiple choice questions and also, like Finch and Mason (Finch 1987; Finch and Mason 1991), some brief and extended vignettes of parents facing specific hypothetical situations (though not their 'soap opera' cumulative scenarios) where the sample were asked to identify what they thought these parents should do in these circumstances.[4]

As Finch and Mason (1991) discuss, their – and our – approach to surveying attitudes reflects a theoretical stance on how norms may be conceptualised. This raises the question of what constitutes a normative consensus? Finch and Mason developed a 'consensus baseline' as a starting point for understanding in the context of multiple choice questions:

> *Clearly we are unlikely to find a total consensus but what level of agreement should we take as our baseline: over 90 per cent agreement? 75 per cent? 50 per cent? Whatever level we*

[3] Both the 'family networks and parenting support' module of the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Attwood et al. 2003) and the 'kinship and friendship' module of the British Social Attitudes Survey 1995 (McGlone et al. 1996) largely focus on behaviour rather than norms and so are not directly comparable with our work in this and other ways.

[4] We are grateful to Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason for making their survey instrument available to us, which helped inform the development of our own.

> *choose has to be related in some way to the number of choices offered in the question, since 75 per cent agreement clearly means something different when four options have been offered, by comparison with questions where there was a simple two-way choice … The logic that we have followed is to say that where our questions have offered two options, then for either option to accrue more than 50 per cent of responses would indicate a simple majority. If either option accrues half as many responses again (that is, 75 per cent for two-option questions), we will regard that as an initial indicator that we have a notable level of agreement. The corresponding figure for a three-option question is 50 per cent, for a four-option question it is 37.5 per cent and so on. We refer to this as our 'consensus baseline'.*
> (1991, p.349-50)

In our analysis of our survey data, we too have adopted this consensus baseline. In using it, we have also become aware of some qualifications. It is indeed only a starting point for interpretation, as Finch and Mason stress. The main consideration for us was that this approach assumes that the population represented in the sample is a meaningful whole entity, i.e. in government policy 'parents', and here specifically parents of 8-12 year olds. This may be true in a categorical sense, but it may also be the case that the sample is comprised of different social 'populations' (see, for example, Sayer 1992 on 'chaotic concepts').[5] There may well be or not be a consensus baseline for the sample as a whole but, hidden within this, particular sections of the sample (mothers/fathers, working/middle class, majority/minority ethnic) may or may not reach the consensus baseline, or they may or may not reach it at a significantly higher or lower level than the rest (ie. as a social group within the taxonomic group, hold norms or not more strongly). Examining such distinctions proved especially important for us in identifying some gender and class differences in norms, as will be evident from our discussion of our findings below.

Another qualification in our case was that, for a few questions and some vignettes we offered our sample the ability to choose more than one answer because we did not want to force what were likely to be multi-dimensional understandings into a single response. For example, following on a one-choice response question about whether they thought parents received less, more or the same levels of help and support from their family as they did in the past, we asked the sample why they thought that this was the case and gave them a relatively extensive list of reasons with no limits on the number of their choices in response. Those choosing 'less' as the level of help and support, for example, had a choice of up to 13 reasons. A consensus baseline is difficult, if not impossible, to operate with in these instances, so here we use a difference of proportion test. [6]

We discuss the findings from our survey later, around key areas of normative consensus both in relation to our sample as a whole and for particular social groups within it.

Phase 2: in-depth interview with parents

Within the total NOP Parentbus sample for our survey, 68 per cent of the parents responding (755 parents) agreed to allow their contact details to be passed on to us for possible inclusion in the second, qualitative phase of our research. Our aim was to explore the specifics of processes in resources in parenting in context, rather than access the generalisable patterns allowed by a survey; thus there was no methodological imperative to sample large numbers of parents for this phase. We theoretically sampled 25 mothers and 11 fathers from 27 households across England and Scotland from this pool.[7] The theoretical basis for our sampling was Coleman's categorisation of levels of social capital (1988).

---

[5] Our thanks to Lynn Jamieson for helping to clarify our thinking on this point.

[6] Our thanks to Anne Gray for statistical help and advice with using a difference of proportion test to establish significance.

[7] Our thanks to Lynn Jamieson for facilitating the Scottish fieldwork. In addition to Val Gillies, people who helped us with telephone 'sifting' parents for theoretical sampling and conducting some interviews are Sarah Baker, Anna Einasdottir, and Helen Willmot

Coleman draws up categorisations of high and low social capital family types in his work. In his terms, high levels of social capital are confined to quite an homogenous range of form and circumstances. They comprise families of two biological parents, one of whom (usually the mother) is at home full time, ensuring physical parental presence within the home and the possibility of community involvement and intergenerational closure. The parents should have one or two children, so that there is little 'dilution' of adult attention to the child/ren. The family/household should be on a middle range income, so that they can both need help and aid from, and give it to, others, thus generating trustful obligations and reciprocity. The family should not have been geographically mobile, especially since the start of the child/ren's schooling. If this type of family also have extended family members living in the household or nearby, this further enhances high social capital.

In contrast, for Coleman, low levels of social capital are found among a more diverse set of family forms and circumstances. Lone parent families fall into this category, whatever their other circumstances, because of the physical absence of the non-resident parent from the home. Two parent families where both parents are in full time employment also fall into this category because both are absent from the home and community at their workplace. Families on a high income, which reduces the need for help and aid from others, and thus the generation of trustful obligations and reciprocity, and families where both parents are unemployed and living on state benefits, and who thus have developed 'free-rider' attitudes, also have low social capital. Low social capital is also the case for large families of five or more children, where parental attention is diluted, and families who have been geographically mobile during the children's years of schooling and thus interfere with intergenerational community closure.

There are, however, a number of family forms and circumstances where it is difficult to judge, from Coleman's formula, into which of his categorical levels of social capital they fall. This includes situations in which there may conceivably be an 'off-setting' between features that denote high, and those that denote low, social capital. Coleman is ambiguous about the possibility of 'off-setting'. For example, he seems to imply an off-set between two parents in employment where they are living with or near extended family (see earlier quote on this). If off-sets are possible, then it is plausible to envisage a 'middle' level of social capital. For example, in a situation where a step-father (not biologically related to the children and therefore, in Coleman's terms, not having an imperative to invest time and attention in them) was working and the children's biological mother was at home, physically present with a biological imperative to invest, there could be a middle level of social capital. Another example of middle social capital would be where there are two biological parents with the father working and the mother employed part time during school hours only.

In theoretically sampling from the survey sample for the in-depth interviews of the second phase of our research, we thus worked with an adapted version of Coleman's levels of social capital, using the features of the categories of high, middle and low discussed above. The resulting sample of 27 family households was made up of just over half in the low social capital category, with the rest equally divided between hignd middle social capital (see Table 2). They encompassed a range of social class and ethnic backgrounds.

Table 2: Family households for in-depth sample by social capital level (adapted from Coleman)

HIGH social capital	MIDDLE social capital	LOW social capital
6 family households	6 family households	15 family households

Despite Coleman stating that *'[social capital's] current value lies primarily in its usefulness for qualitative analyses of social systems and for those quantitative analyses that employ qualitative indicators'* (1991,

p.305/6), his conception of levels of social capital is rather formulaic and deterministic. The sample's social capital is tautologically pre-defined by the characteristics on which we selected them; discernable largely through the family's structural characteristics without qualitative analysis being conducted. In contrast, Bourdieu's treatment of family life and processes of social capital is more dynamic in envisaging an interdependent relationship between social and other forms of capital. In order to address the micro-processes of social capital in parenting practices, we thus used an interview schedule and analytic processes that enabled us to investigate parenting resources in terms of social, economic, cultural and emotional capital, centring on social connectedness, material and financial status, values and dispositions, and levels or types of emotional investment in children. The interviews with parents thus focused on issues of time, money, locality, children's health and development, practical aid, schooling, and kin and other social networks, and our analysis addressed the interaction between social and other capitals in the resources that parents can draw on and give. The fieldwork for interviews was conducted between January and April 2003. Although we indicate the category of Coleman's level of social capital, or our adaptation of it, into which our second phase interviewees fall in this paper, we do not develop a considered discussion of contrasts between Coleman's and Bourdieu's conceptions of social capital in relation to our data here.[8]

In the rest of this paper, we detail the findings from both the normative survey and in-depth everyday practices interviews. We are attempting the task of integrating the data from both phases of our research around particular issues, but this is not in the sense of checking findings resulting from one method of data collection against the other (triangulation). This is because our survey data is concerned with norms about what parents in general should do, while our interview data is concerned with specific parenting practices in context. Bringing them into juxtaposition, however, does raise interesting issues concerning the relationship between norms and practices in relation to resources in parenting. We organise our discussion around sources of support both normatively and as part of everyday parenting practice in relation to family and friends, and professional advice and guidance; followed by normative and everyday practice social capital differences in relation to gender and social class.

Resources in Parenting

Family and friends as sources of support

Family and friends are normatively seen, and practically drawn upon, as sources of support by parents, despite policy and practice perceptions of a breakdown in such networks as a source of social capital for families. Indeed, data from both phases of our study shows that many subscribe to an ideal of extended family in particular as providing unconditional help, and that friends can also be subject to this.

In our survey of norms, family and friends, were regarded as the most suitable people for parents to turn to for most childrearing issues. Table 3 shows that there was a clear norm that they were the most appropriate source of support: 86 per cent of the sample agreed with this statement.

[8] We are developing a considered discussion of contrasts between Coleman's and Bourdieu's conceptions of social capital, using the in-depth data of everyday parenting practices from the second phase of our research, which will be published separately.

Table 3: Family and friends are the most appropriate source of support for parents (consensus baseline 75%)

Option chosen	*All parents*
Agree	86%
Disagree	11%
Don't know	3%

In this sense, while there are policy moves to place parenting support in the public sphere, for parents themselves it remains in the private arena.

As with our survey data, analysis of the follow up, in-depth interviews with parents also revealed a strong ethos of family in particular as an unconditional and implicit support structure. Not all those we spoke to had access to this support: some family members were separated by hundreds of miles, others had family members who were very ill or had died, and some relationships were problematic to the point of estrangement. Those with limited family help relied on friends, but significantly tended to portray other families as providing unqualified support to parents as a matter of course. For example, Louise and Gary were a White working class couple who fell into the middle category of our adaptation of Coleman's social capital because Louise worked part time. They had next to no contact with any of their family members. This was due to a long history of bad feeling among Louise's family, and bereavement and mental illness in Gary's. Their limited and fraught relationships with extended family were interpreted from a perspective in which 'normal' families are emotionally invested in looking after children. In answer to a question about the more challenging aspects of being a parent, Louise expresses a poignant sense of missing out on this ideal:

> *The worse thing I suppose is not having any family. Because we never had any family here, so it's always just the two of us. There's no like off to nan's in the afternoon, dumping them off at aunties and uncles to let them play a little while. So it's just, it's harder because we don't have that release … [It would] make my life easier basically to have someone on hand, like one of our parents or whatever, auntie or some family relative which you could, you know, not feel so, er, how can I put it? That they have more of an input and stuff. You wouldn't feel as if you had to ask somebody to look after them, or what we doing next, or would you mind having them for two days. Whereas I think in other families it would just be like an unwritten rule they don't have to worry about. It's a regular thing. Or they go to granny's every Sunday, or something like that. It's an unwritten rule really. Whereas we just don't have it. So I'd like that, that would be quite nice, just sort of [help] when you need it. But just don't have it, so.*

There was some ambivalence, however, as to whether or not extended family generally did provide parents with such support, both normatively and in practice.

Support from family:

We asked the survey sample whether they thought that parents received less, more or the same levels of help and support from family as in the past. Table 4 shows that there was normative agreement in the perception that parents receive less help and support in their answers, with the rest of the sample fairly evenly divided between saying the same or more. If we take the interpretive liberty of amalgamating the more and same responses, however – where both pose parents as generally receiving support from extended family – then the normative consensus among the sample for less support from extended family is not so clear.

Table 4: Do you think parents receive less, more or the same levels of help and support from their family as they did in the past? (consensus baseline 50%)

Option chosen:	All parents	Working class	Middle class
Less	50%	49%	57%
More	20%	23%	20%
The same	25%	28%	23%

We also asked the parents in our survey to select reasons for their assessment of the state of contemporary society. Of those who said that there was less support from extended family, the most frequently identified reasons (which tended to be selected together) were that families were not as close-knit as they used to be (52 per cent), that there is more divorce and single parenthood (48 per cent) and that families tend to live further apart geographically (47 per cent). Interestingly, though, parents who said that there was more support from family than in the past also identified divorce and single parenthood as one of the key reasons for this (43 per cent) along with the ways that children are brought up nowadays needing more involvement from extended family (42 per cent). Those who said there had always been the same level of support frequently identified as rationales that families had always helped each other out (61 per cent) and that family ties continued to be strong (41 per cent). (We discuss these and other reasons that parents selected further below, in relation to gender and social class.) These reasons reflect the three perspectives on social change and family life discussed earlier, regarding it either as creating a support deficit or as creating more opportunities for support, or challenging the extent of social change. Thus while the view that there is less familial support and social capital available to parenting in bringing up their children may be prevalent, it is not ascendant – at least among parents themselves.

A shift in focus to our in-depth interview data highlights the complexities and ambivalences of lived interpretations and experiences of support from extended family. Most of the parents we spoke to did receive family help in some form or another, but expectations and understandings of this help varied, as did the needs of the parents concerned. While parents may have felt normatively that family were the people to turn to, and our interviewees held an ethos of family as an unconditional support structure, few sustained this in practice. Only four of the 27 households in the second phase of our research were characterised by interdependent relationships with family members. Of these four – two African-Caribbean lone mothers, a Sudanese refugee couple, and White step-family – all were working class. The mothers from these households derived considerable financial, practical and emotional support from their family, and this was characterised by high levels of reciprocity. For example, Julie, one of the African-Caribbean mothers, received regular help with babysitting, money and collecting the shopping from her sister and mother, and in turn she provided childcare to enable her sister to work. While family provided a crucial support structure for these households, however, they also exchanged substantial resources through other social networks, including friends, work colleagues and church organisations. This sort of reciprocity is the very stuff of Colemanesque social capital generation – but it is obviously not confined to the specific family form identified by Coleman. For example, the two African-Caribbean lone mothers are considered to have low social capital in Coleman's schema merely on the basis of their family structure, despite the reciprocal family support systems in which they are embedded.

Siblings and (grand)parents were the main sources of family support for most parents participating in the second phase of our research. Sibling relationships were the most reciprocal, with support predominantly shared between the mothers we spoke to and their sisters. Such help mainly took the form of babysitting, regular child care, and emotional support. These material and emotional everyday support practices were also reflected in fairly strong norms about family support in these areas. As other surveys have found (see discussion in Duncan et al. 2004), family was the normative preference

in the case of parents needing regular help with child care (40 per cent with a consensus baselines of 30 per cent). Family, along with friends (see below), was also a normative preference for emotional support (22 per cent with a consensus baseline of 21.3 per cent). There was no normative consensus, however, that family were an appropriate source of financial assistance. While financial self-sufficiency might be a desirable aim (see also gender below), in practice parents did lend and borrow money among their extended family – although there were some differences in social class practices here that we return to later:

> *We swap money about during the month. Like I get a week at the beginning of the month where if I'm short [my mum'll] lend me money. And then I'll sort of give her that back. And then I think it's like the second or third week I lend her money. [Laughs] Moneywise, we do seem to pass a lot of money backwards and forwards between the two of us.*
> (Kelly, a White working class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category)

Extended family support in childrearing, however, could recede or was unappreciated, especially in the case of (grand)parents. Although several mothers described having a good relationship with their own parents, sharing experiences and concerns with sisters, or friends, of their own with children appeared to be more of a day-to-day practice. (Grand)parents' roles in providing help also seemed to decrease as their grandchildren grew older and more independent, but also because parents developed greater confidence and a more extensive support network outside of the family. While some (grand)parents had in the past acted as full time child minders to allow mothers to go back to work, provided money to ease financial difficulties and given practical advice, it appeared that this kind of support was less likely to be sought over time. Several (grand)parents were described as elderly and no longer able to take a substantial role in childrearing, although they preserved regular activities with children, such as outings, church visits or hosting family gatherings. Other forms of childrearing 'support' from (grand)parents was not always appreciated when it crossed the line into interference:

> *My late mother-in-law used to have this absolutely horrible – well, it was her last year or so where she was really a bit too ill and she couldn't really – she used to have this one thing I found incredibly irritating. When I was with the children and said something to them or did something, 'I must not comment' she would say. Which is awful, you know.*
> (Miriam, a White middle class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category)

In terms of the normative stress on extended family as a source of unqualified support, though, in everyday life the boundaries between family and friends could become blurred, and friends incorporated into this category. Several working class mothers in particular described how close friends had become like sisters or second mothers, stressing the supportive bond between them. (We return to gendered aspects of social capital again below.) For example, Denise was a White working class mother in a high social capital category in Coleman's terms because she was not in employment. She discussed the supportive bond she had with her long-standing female friend:

> *I mean I have one particular friend called Josie who we've been friends with about 28, 26, 27 years, from being kids. And she's just – I love her to bits. She's the one I go to. I mean she knows things about me that even me husband don't know. And same way round. We've got that relationship … Cos I never had a sister, me. Me mum were me sister, but I lost me mum five year ago, so I've lost that. I mean I were like that with me mum if not closer, but since I lost me mum it's Josie I go to … No, I mean she's always just been there. I mean the day me mum died, she rang me at 11. Me mum died at ten past 11 and Josie rung me at about 12 minutes past 11, didn't she, and she said 'Denise', she said, 'I'm in the middle of me washing', she said, 'but I've got a funny feeling something's happened'. And I told her what had happened, and*

within ten minutes – I mean Josh then, her lad, he were only a baby, and she were down here and she just never went home. And she knew. That's how close we are, she knew something had happened.

This incorporation of friends into family, or expression of closeness in terms of an equation with family relationships, reinforces the normative posing of extended family as an unconditional support system – a strong ideal that, as we have seen, was rarely experienced as unconditional in practice. A view of 'friends as the new family' is also lauded in perspectives that pose these sorts of support networks as now more important than family ties. We turn now to look at support from friends in parenting.

Support from friends and neighbours:

The social change perspectives discussed earlier invoke friendship networks in opposing ways. As well as the view of friends as increasingly important in contemporary society, there is also the perspective that friendship and neighbourhood support networks are breaking down in a dislocated social world. Amongst our survey sample, as Table 4 shows, there was no normative consensus for there being either less, more or the same help available from this source. Nonetheless, if we again take the interpretive liberty of amalgamating the same and more answers – where those parents choosing these options saw the closeness of friendships as important – then a different picture emerges. This upholds, if not perceptions of the increased importance of friends, then at least their importance for parents in contemporary society.

Table 4: Do you think parents receive less, more or the same levels of help and support from their friends as they did in the past? (consensus baseline 50%)

Option chosen:	All parents
Less	30%
More	24%
The same	35%

Indeed, all those we spoke to in the in-depth interviews were well networked, with most reciprocally exchanging day-to-day practical and emotional support from their friends as compared with family members (other than mother's sisters in several cases). Those parents who had limited or no physical contact with family members were particularly well integrated in supportive networks of friends, neighbours and work colleagues, albeit most still regarded themselves as missing out on the kind of unqualified family support that few parents in our sample actually received.

Parents in our second phase sample tended to make friends with other parents, providing and receiving help with child care/babysitting, picking up and ferrying children around, passing on useful information, and discussing and reassuring each other over mutual concerns around child health, development and education. Again, this is the very stuff of Coleman's version of social capital. Indeed, in the first phase of our research, we found a normative consensus that friends, along with family, were regarded as an appropriate source of emotional support, being identified as a likely reason why parents might approach them for help (22 per cent with a consensus baseline of 21.3 per cent). Normatively, however, there appeared to be some limits to receiving support from friends. They were particularly unlikely to be seen as a source of financial help. Other studies have also noted that friends are rarely thought of as someone to turn to in times of financial difficulty (Pahl 2000: 38). Friends were also normatively seen as less appropriate sources of child care than extended family (falling below the consensus baseline of 30 per cent at 12 per cent). As we have seen, however, while extended family care and support may be seen as advisable, it is not always available or appreciated in practice, and friends can be considered as 'family'.

Friendship networks were strong and extensive among the parents who we interviewed for the second phase of the research, but they were not static. Although many friendships had been built over time, children themselves tended to shape the kinds of supportive relationships that parents were able to access. As they grew older, children usually developed their own social networks thereby throwing different sets of parents together and providing opportunities for reciprocal arrangements around sleepovers, lending and borrowing, and so on. Parents, particularly mothers', lifestyles also changed as children grew older and become more independent, with some mothers returning to work, and both parents taking up new interests or rekindling relationships with childless friends.

A number of parents, again largely mothers, had developed close supportive friendships with neighbours (see also below on gender). These relationships could involve reciprocal child care and other childrearing support where the neighbours had children of their own:

> *My neighbour across the road … just by coincidence she job shares as well. So on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday her children come here after school and before school, and on Thursdays and Fridays [my daughter] Claire goes across the road … Her husband is a policeman so it's also dependent on his shifts, which makes child care for her really difficult. Because she was having to employ a childminder and sometimes she wouldn't actually need to use her because her husband was there. So it worked financially. It worked for both of us.*
> (Janet, a White middle class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category)

Emotional support from neighbours was also important, alongside the practical assistance. Katherine was a White middle class mother falling into Coleman's low social capital category by virtue of being a lone mother as well as her full time employment. She described the support she was able to draw on from neighbours who had become close friends after her separation from her husband:

> *I have found it a revelation how willing people are if you would just ask them to actually give you some support, cos they know that you need it … I have asked Jane and Linda, next door and next door but one. And that was a thing for me because I was very – I didn't want to ask, I was too proud to ask. But once I realised I just could say 'please could you do this for me?' or 'please do you mind if you do – I just need ten minutes to myself, can you have the kids?', or 'can you pick me up something from somewhere?', or – they feed me more or less every night (laughs). I mean they fed me tonight, you know, 'Here, come in and have food with us, come and have dinner and a glass of wine', you know. They just look after me and, you know, I would do the same for them. Linda, Jane and I have done three holidays … We just, we are very lucky because we all live, we live in each other's pickets but it's fun. We've been doing it for three and a half years and it's still fine, so.*

Friends with children of their own were commonly cited as people to approach for support and advice in our survey, in the cases of parents worried about various aspects of their children's behaviour, education and health. Middle class parents were especially likely to recommend friends as appropriate people to turn to in such cases, as well as some professionals (statistically significant at confidence levels of 99.2 and 99.9 per cent for a range of questions). This may well be because middle class parents' networks include friendships with other parents (as well as family, and indeed themselves) who are in relevant professional occupations (Pahl 2000: 147). For example, Colin was a White middle class father in Coleman's high social capital category because his wife was not in employment. When asked if he would approach anyone for advice concerning his worries about his daughter's transfer to secondary school, Colin replied: '*Brian's an ex-headmaster so he's sort of fairly knowledgeable about the education system.'* We return to such class-based issues again below.

Neighbours without dependent children of their own – often elderly women – also featured in parents' support networks. Many mothers described how such neighbours could be relied upon for occasional babysitting, picking children up from school in an emergency, or more generally to keep an eye on children when they were playing outside. Meena was an Indian working class mother in the low social capital category in Coleman's terms because she and her husband worked full time. She explained how her downstairs neighbour (an older woman whose children were now adult) provided help that she valued because her own and her husband's extended family lived in India. Although she has made a number of close and supportive friends, Meena deeply missed her mother and sisters, and felt that her neighbour was in part fulfilling the kind of supportive role that she might otherwise expect from extended family members:

> *She always keep my small son so I can go and leave them. It's very easy. He was just only three, four months old when she came here last year, not last year, two years before. So when I go to school she said to me that she always saw that I go to my son, the small fellow with the car seat and all. So she just told me, 'leave your son here and you just go and drop your kids off and come back and take your kids' … This only five minutes help is very big help. And sometimes he is sleeping. Because he is small, sometimes he used to sleep in the morning. So I said, 'oh what shall I do, shall I wake him up or what shall I do?' So I called the lady up. She used to come up and sit down with my son. He's sleeping, he's sleeping. She always come and sit down with him. So it's quite a big help. And I think if it is our family member here it's more easy life. We do miss our families.*

Thus, despite a normative emphasis on extended family support as the most appropriate source of practical and emotional support and advice, the day-to-day experience of parents of 8-12 year old children in our interview sample is more of reciprocal exchanges with friends and neighbours. Practice in this respect is shaped by pragmatic features of time, availability and children's own needs and activities, as well as shared experiences between parents in a local setting. Our interview data shows these friendship and neighbourhood networks to be strong and flourishing – at least for parents of children in middle childhood.

Professional support and guidance

In the context of normative ideas and everyday practice favouring support in parenting from family and friends, there was no normative consensus among the parents surveyed in the first phase of our research about whether or not parents need professional advice and guidance to help them in bringing up their children (although most felt that they did not – see Table 5).

Table 5: All parents need professional advice and guidance to help them bring up their children (consensus baseline 75%)

Option chosen	*All parents*
Agree	36%
Disagree	61%
Don't know	3%

Nevertheless, the survey sample still saw a particular role for the state and experts. Indeed, parents commonly identified professionals as providing practical help and advice about long-institutionalised welfare areas of children's lives, such as health and education, rather than the broader skills-based pedagogic support addressed by parenting education classes. For example, the local council or government was regarded as the most appropriate source of help for parents in need of temporary housing (53 per cent with a consensus baseline of 30 per cent), concerns about child health (35 per

cent of the sample recommended a doctor and 29 per cent a health visitor), and various educational problems (77 per cent recommended asking a teacher for advice about a child who did not want to go to school, and 32 per cent with a baseline consensus of 16.6 per cent for advice about choosing a secondary school). There were however some gender and social class differences among the survey sample here, and we return to these matters below. (Furthermore, as we have seen, family and friends were also viewed as important providers of support in such contexts.)

Our in-depth interviews show that the concept of parenting advice generates particular sensitivities and concerns. Parents tended to associate the term with intrusion unless the information provided was related to the more formal aspects of their children's lives, such as health and education. Most claimed that they consciously avoided dispensing advice to other parents:

> *I think one of the things first becoming a parent, you suddenly realise the usefulness and importance of other parents … People with children exactly the same age, so the same sort of things were happening, a chance to talk through and exchange notes … And I very much don't like this sort of 'do this, do that!', so I'm sort of wary of this 'do this, do that!'. But I suppose in the reading group [I'm a member of] it's almost we're quite the opposite, 'what do you think? What do you do?'.*
> (Miriam, a White middle class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category)

Working class parents were particularly dismissive of the advice that they had received from professionals, as these quotes demonstrate:

> *I wouldn't go for advice because half of them don't know what they are speaking about anyway. It's like half of them district nurses, I mean they have not got bairns so how can they read it out of a text book. The text book is a load of shit. A load of rubbish! (laughs) … They tell you to do this and do that and do the next thing. And you think how do you know?*
> (Paula, a White working class mother in Coleman's low social capital category)

> *They were saying, oh, you shouldn't be speaking to him like that. That was at the pre-school. And I said, 'look, you know', I said, 'you've got to understand that I don't really need you telling me'. And especially when, you know, a lot of them haven't got kids themselves, and that. It's not wanted advice, you know. He's my second child so it wasn't as if I hadn't had one and didn't know what I was doing.*
> (Louise, a White working class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category)

Kelly was a White working class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category because, while she was not in employment, her partner was not the biological father of her children. She was the only parent in the second phase of our research who had attended parenting classes. She had sought help because her son Craig's behaviour was demanding and he had become extremely disruptive at school. She was not impressed with the advice that she had received, however:

> *I find that going to the authorities just hasn't helped at all. I mean they give me this silly parent book thing and it was just a waste of time. I mean eight weeks I was going there and we got nothing out of it at all … They'd say to me things like, 'make sure you do 10 minutes a day playing with him'. Well I've always spent time with my kids anyway, so that really didn't make a difference. And I'd say to them, 'right, because Craig is so severe I sometimes send him to his room for the whole night, so how do I do that 10 minutes playing with him if I've sent him to his room for being naughty?'. So that just didn't make any sense. And they'd say, 'well you shouldn't be sending him to his room all night'. And my argument was 10 minutes punishment is just not enough for Craig. Ten minutes is like nothing. Like he'll just sit there and go into a*

daydream and get up and just be the same as he was … They told me to start star charts and things like that, and I done all them. But he just thought it was rubbish and he couldn't see the point of them.

For a number of working class mothers we spoke to, this kind of professional advice cut across their own sense of expertise as parents. Most felt that they were already skilled in bringing up their children, and expressed pride in their ability to parent well in demanding and difficult circumstances. Julie, an African-Caribbean working class lone mother and thus in Coleman's low social capital category, was particularly confident in her proficiency as a parent:

It's not something where I feel I'm weak in, you know. I think when it comes to like parental skills I have to take me hat off to meself, you know. Because as like me children didn't ask to come into this world, I know a hundred and ten per cent I've got to make sure that my children have got that foundation. You know, like I've got to make sure they've got the foundation, and obviously it definitely stems from the home. So I wouldn't like – I don't think there's any need for me to like to go out and look for like exterior help when it comes to, you know, parenting skills, you know. I must admit, don't get me wrong, I don't know everything, do you know what I mean. I don't know everything, you know (laughs). I've got problems and that with me son and whatever, but I don't feel it's out of hand [enough for me] to say well, you know, I need to go out there and ask for, you know, external help.

In contrast, while middle class parents were no more likely to feel a need for professional advice on parenting, they expressed a greater apprehension about the future, particularly in coping with their children's teenage years. Some could envisage themselves seeking advice on dealing with teenage behaviour in the future:

I would think that probably the most difficult time will be when the children get to that sort of semi-independent age where they are becoming far more streetwise. I think at that stage I might want to ask some advice somewhere about when do you tell them certain things, how would you discuss things like drugs and that sort of thing, how much freedom is appropriate to give them?
(Katherine, a White middle class mother in Coleman's low social capital category)

Here it is important to stress that working class parents are in a very different position to middle class parents in relation to professionals. We have already pointed out earlier, that middle class parents are likely to have friends who are professionals, and this may be significant in their normative identification of friends as sources of help and advice. In terms of direct normative recommendation of professionals in our survey, middle class parents were significantly more likely than working class parents to favour turning to a teacher for advice about various aspects of children's behaviour. For example, over half of the middle class parents recommended turning to a teacher for advice about a boy mixing with older friends and staying out late. In addition, although most parents as a whole favoured asking teachers for advice about secondary school choice (see above), this was more the case for middle class parents. (Both results are statistically significant at a confidence level of 99.2 per cent.) In the context of successive governments' policies posing parents as 'consumers' rather than 'clients' in relation to education, middle class parents may well feel themselves in a position of power in relation to approaching teachers.

Social capital and gender in parenting

Social capital in parenting is a highly gendered resource and is organised and maintained by mothers rather than fathers. It is predominantly generated, maintained and managed by mothers, often with

other women. Indeed, this is why the illustrations that we are using from the interview material from the second phase of our research largely come from mothers' accounts. Fathers' networks tended to be more formal and less kin-based, while mothers' networks were less formal and contained more family members. It was primarily mothers who accessed and provided help in parenting, although fathers could also benefit from the social support that mothers accessed. For example, Carol was a White working class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social class category because, while she was not in employment, her partner was a stepfather to her children. She described the reciprocal relationship that she had built with her female next-door neighbour, and which benefited both their partners when each couple wanted to go out together:

> *I see Annie practically every day. We take it in turn with the kids, they go up to school. She takes them up in the mornings and I pick 'em up. And if she's still working at Sainsburys, I have her little Michael and Kerry for her … You know, we look after each other's kids. If they want to go out, I go and sit with theirs, or if we want to go out, she comes in and sits with ours, you know.*

Furthermore, fathers often relied on their partners to organise their social lives and to direct them in providing appropriate help to others. For example, mothers sometimes sent their partners (or sons) to mow the lawn and change electrical fuses for, or give lifts to, friends and neighbours who provided occasional babysitting.

Similarly, while both mothers and fathers who were interviewed described accessing social capital from work colleagues, it was predominantly mothers who talked about receiving practical and emotional support for parenting through their workplace, while fathers were much less likely to discuss aspects of parenting with their colleagues. Several mothers described how they shared parenting experiences and gained important insights from other mothers they met in the course of their jobs. Work colleagues could also be a source for organising practical help with transporting children and babysitting.

Our interview data shows that, for most mothers, practical and emotional support was interlinked. Close relationships could develop from, or lead to, more practical forms of help. For example, Angela was a White middle class mother in the Coleman-derived middle social capital category because she worked part time. She described how practical and emotional support are intertwined for her:

> *Elaine, she's a good friend with practical help. She's got a son that's younger than my son and, specially when they were much younger, things didn't get worn out as quickly and we used to pass down things from one to the other, so that's practical help. Nothing's come back, but on the other hand her husband did the windows in our house so I suppose what comes round goes round. Done the double glazing for us. Emotional support. She lost a baby four years ago and that was an horrendous time for all of us, the friends and the family and everything. Just went round one afternoon with cream cakes and sat and cried together. Sometimes you just need people.*

In contrast, many fathers did not seem to feel that emotional or material support in parenting was either available or necessary, both normatively and in practice. Looking at the parents in our first phase survey who had said that there was less help and support available from family for parents than there was in the past, fathers were significantly more likely than mothers to suggest that this was due to a decline in community spirit than were mothers. In response to a vignette about parents concerned about their son spending time with older boys and staying out late, fathers were also more likely than mothers to say that parents should not need to seek help or advice in such circumstances. (Statistical significance at a confidence level of 99.2 per cent.) These 'isolated' and 'independent' stances may well reflect the everyday involvement of mothers in generating, managing and maintaining everyday social

capital, and fathers' ability to stand back from it, demonstrated in our in-depth data. When asked in the interviews about who they were likely to talk to about their worries and concerns, most were resolution focused. They tended to give examples of particular instrumental problems to do with work or family decisions, rather than emotional support either on its own or intertwined with practical support, and explain how they approached people with useful advice or a direct stake in the issue. For example, Ian was a White middle class father in Coleman's high social capital category because his partner was not in employment. In response to a question about whether there was anyone in particular who he talked to about worries, Ian replied:

> *Well, a couple [of friends] actually, I talk about work. If it's work related, I'll talk about that.*
> Interviewer: What if it's to do with family stuff?
> *Well I have two brothers and I talk to them. One of them in particular is better than the other, but in the main we've got a sort of dialogue going on about my mother, who's seventy-something, to sell the house sort of thing.*

Several of the fathers interviewed for the second phase of our research described themselves as having few friends of their own beyond work acquaintances and their partner's friends, despite falling into Coleman's high social capital category:

> *I don't have any friends, me, really. To be truthful with you, I'll be truthful with you, all the people I know is colleagues, work colleagues. But as friends go, I don't really bother with anybody, me.*
> (Ted, a White working class father in Coleman's high social capital category)

> *I don't really have that many people I would call friends. Marie has got more through the childminding people that she goes and hangs about with, and the support group and nursery teachers and stuff like that. But me, no. I have got folk that I go to work with but I don't really want to go out much.*
> (Don, a White middle class father in Coleman's high social capital category)

In the first phase survey, fathers were also significantly less likely than mothers to recommend borrowing money or turning to the school in a vignette case presented about parents who could not afford to pay for their daughter to go on a school trip, saying that the parents should tell the daughter that she could not go (statistically significant at a confidence level of 99.92 per cent). Fathers' identity and role in family life is still very much tied up with a status as a breadwinner (Lewis 2000), and so it may be that making 'public' their 'inadequacy' in this respect is normatively unacceptable. For these sorts of reasons fathers may be less likely to invest in incurring the sorts of obligations to others that oil the wheels of social capital generation for parents in bringing up their children.

Social capital and social class in parenting

In our discussions of family and friends as sources of support, and professional support and guidance in parenting above, we have pointed to issues of social class at particular points. These include normative and practice differences in how working class and middle class parents are positioned in relation to, and feel about, advice and guidance from professionals. Further normative differences evident in the data from the first phase of our research included middle class parents being more likely than working class parents to cite geographical distance as a reason for there being less help and support available both from family and from friends than in the past (statistically significant at a confidence level of 99.9 per cent in each case). This probably reflects the differential lived experience, with middle class households more subject to geographical mobility (e.g. Boyle and Halfacre 1995). This perception of a fractured

social fabric may also be a consequence of middle class parents more instrumental and individualised networking practices as we discuss below in relation to reciprocal exchanges.

Indeed, our in-depth interviews revealed wide ranging class-based disparities in the kinds of resources that parents were able to access on a day-to-day basis, whatever their level of social capital in our adaptation of Coleman's categories. The social capital accessed by parents was integrally linked to other forms of capital, highlighting the extent to which economic, cultural and social resources are interdependent. Clear relationships were evident between the resources held by particular parents and the childrearing practices that they pursued.

Middle class parents with access to resources such as money, high status social contacts and legitimated cultural knowledge, drew on these capitals to consolidate their power and advantage, and to advance the life chances of their children. In contrast, working class parents with severely restricted access to resources were emotionally and practically engaged in helping their children to negotiate disadvantages and challenges that were considerably less likely to trouble middle class children and their parents. This often set working class parents' practices at odds with the normative values structuring formal parenting 'support' initiatives, such as parenting education classes, especially in terms of education and discipline. Poverty, low social status and high vulnerability to emotional and physical violence were rarely compatible with middle class ideas such as parental investment in education and democratic childrearing styles.

The value and meaning of the social resources that parents acquired from and provided to their social networks tended to differ along the lines of social class. Working class parents' social capital was in the main converted to the practical help and psychological support that enabled reciprocal day-to-day survival. This often resulted in dense networks of family and friends, and strong emotional bonds with particular individuals expressed as interdependency, obligation and commitment, rather than personal gain. In general, working class parents were more likely to describe a core network of highly reciprocal, supportive relationships – sometimes subject to estrangement because of high expectations betrayed – supplemented by connections to more peripheral social contacts:

> *Like the circle of people I move with, or me family* I should say – not so much people because I'm not one for like having lots and lots of friends, I've acquaintances – because like we help each other, you know, we support each other.*
> (Julie, a Black working class mother in Coleman's low social capital category)
> * Julie included close friends as family

> *If [my friend] can help me she will. She has a car. If I want to go somewhere she'll take me. But only last week Liam had a sick day off school and I needed to go shopping, and she came from school and sat with him. I only rang her at quarter past 8 and she were here at twenty to 9. And I'd do the same thing for her. We do help each other out. And she won't take for things … You know, like if she's out and about, like you said before, she'll ring me from wherever she is and say 'I've seen such and such a thing, it's so much, do you want me to get it ya?' And I do the same with her.*
> (Denise, a White working class mother in Coleman's high social capital category)

Many of the working class parents we spoke to lent and borrowed small 'tide over' amounts of money from family and friends when there was a need, as well as buying small items of shopping for each other and giving it as a gift. This sort of mutual aid and reciprocity was more a symbol of an intimate connection that made day-to-day life possible rather than barter-like exchange.

In contrast, middle class parents were more likely to build relationships that, alongside the pleasure of friendships, could be drawn on to preserve and accumulate their relative social advantage, recognition

and legitimacy. In general, they discussed their attachment to more dispersed and less bonded social groups, with few obligations or responsibilities beyond socialising or regular visits to family members (albeit that some of the middle class parents had borrowed a large amount of money from family or friends, with negotiated systems established for paying it back). Material and practical resources obtained through or provided to other social contacts generated a sense of reciprocity, but often neutralised obligatory relationships by transforming them into a monetary exchange – usually at 'discounted' rate to acknowledge the social relationship. For example, Fiona was a White middle class mother who fell into the high social capital category in Coleman's terms because she was not in employment. She paid her sister less than the going rate to provide her daughter with piano lessons, and when financial difficulties forced a close friend to return to work after having a baby, Fiona helped out with childminding for an agreed low fee. Middle class parents were also consciously instrumental in their involvement in their children's schools (see also Gillies forthcoming):

> *I've joined the Parent-Teacher Associations at the schools. I've got to sort of network locally and meet a lot of local people. Went to the first Committee meeting and volunteered to do it. Because I knew that it was a good way, when we were new to the village, of getting to know local people. And I've been on the Committee now for, what, three years, well, both schools … I think it benefits me and it benefits the children.*
> (Katherine, a White middle class mother in Coleman's low social capital category)

In sum then, working class parents' social capital tended to involve dense networks and ongoing reciprocal exchanges as part of day-to-day negotiation of disadvantage. This is a strength in that it involves the exchanges of obligation and commitments, and values of solidarity, of social capital in Coleman's sense. The drawbacks, however, are that this practice is associated with the heavy demands of maintaining essential day by day support. Relationships are also subject to pressures of intense expectations and emotions that can, if not met, result in feelings of disloyalty and rupture in the relationship. Furthermore, the social capital is inherently unable to confer wider benefits. In contrast, middle class parents' social capital is more individualised and concerned with explicitly 'off-set' instrumental exchanges. This is a strength in that it is aspirational and ensures maintenance of, and access to further, resources. Its drawbacks are that the practice involves considerable worry about status maintenance, and disengages from the ongoing, trustful obligations and reciprocity that are a key component in Coleman's conception of social capital. Rather, it is more reflective of Bourdieu's ideas around investments and yields that reproduce class privilege. Yet, this orientation to the shoring up of resources for instrumental ends seems to contain the seed of individualised social fracture that are the very reasons why policymakers believe that there is a deficit of social capital and a need to generate it in particular ways.

Conclusion

Our study into 'Resources in Parenting: Access to Capitals' was conducted in the context of an explicit policy focus on parenting, and the need for cohesive norms and values concerning responsible parenting practice, as well as broader worries about the existence and generation of social capital. Social change is seen as producing weakened and fractured support systems, involving a loss of familial and community reciprocity and obligations, and leading to widespread uncertainty in parenting practices. In the face of this support deficit, professional instruction in the skills comprising responsible parenting has been introduced through parenting education classes.

Our research addressed both norms about support in parenting and everyday parenting practice around resources, for parents of 8-12 year old children. We used a survey to gather data on the former, and in-depth interviews to address the latter. The parents taking part in our first phase normative survey were

a nationally representative sample of parents of 8-12 year olds, while those taking part in our second phase interviews addressing the micro-processes of everyday access to resources were selected on the basis of a categorical approach to levels of social capital, and encompassed a diversity of family forms and circumstances.

Our integrated findings show little of the uncertainty concerning whom to turn to that is supposed to beset parents in contemporary society. Nor do they bear out fears of a support deficit. Family and friends were both normatively seen and practically drawn upon as sources of help and advice, and the parents taking part in the second phase of our research had all built extensive networks of material, practical and emotional support. Our work shows the enduring strength and pervasive influence of an ideal of extended family as providing an unconditional and implicit structure of support that was rarely born out in full, or indeed always appreciated, in practice. Friends could take on the attributes of family for some of the working class parents, and friends and neighbours with children of their own especially were important sources of support and reciprocal exchange. Help with child care and babysitting, picking up and ferrying children around, passing on useful information, and discussing and reassuring each other over mutual concerns around child behaviour, health, development and education permeated the accounts of the parents we spoke to. These practices form the essence of the sort of social capital that is portrayed as the foundation of a socially cohesive society, and yet are seen as in retreat.

Such processes concerning the generation and maintenance of the social capital that supports parenting, however, are firmly gendered. It was predominantly mothers whose everyday practices involved organising and managing the family's social capital, with practical and emotional support often intertwined for them. Both normatively and in practice, fathers tended towards a more isolated and independent stance, unlikely to incur directly the sorts of obligations to others that oil the wheels of social capital for parents in bringing up their children.

Professional advice and guidance in parenting was not regarded as a normative need, other than in relation to specific long-institutionalised areas of children's lives such as health and education. The broader skills-based pedagogic support addressed by parenting education classes generated particular sensitivities concerning intrusion and undermining of parents' own expertise among those interviewed, especially for working class parents. Working class parents were generally in a different position to middle class parents in relation to professionals, unlikely to have such people as part of their network of family members and friends.

Indeed, there were wide-ranging class disparities in the levels and kinds of resources that parents were able to access on a day-to-day basis. Their social capital was integrally linked to other forms of capital, with economic, cultural and social resources being interdependent. In particular, there were class differences in the value and meaning of the resources that parents acquired from and provided to their social networks. Working class parents were often embedded in dense and intensive networks of family and friends who provided the practical help and emotional support that enabled reciprocal day-to-day survival, while middle class parents were more likely to build relationships that preserved and accumulated their relative social advantage and neutralised ongoing obligation. Both practices have their particular strengths in the context of lived class-based support for parenting, but they also have their drawbacks. Most notably, working class parents' reciprocal and obligation-based social capital is unlikely to provide them with any wider benefits beyond the everyday negotiation of disadvantage, and middle class parents' instrumental social capital seems to contain the individualised seeds of obligation-limited social fracture that characterise the deficit model underpinning social policy in the field.

References

Abbott, P. and Sapsford, R. (1990) 'Health visiting: policing the family', in P. Abbott and C. Wallace (eds) *Sociology of the Caring Professions*, Lewes: Falmer Press.

Attwood, C., Singh, G., Prime, D. and Creasey, R. (2003) *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 270, London: Home Office.

Baron, S., Field, J. and Schuller, T. (eds) (2002) *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage.

Beck, U. (1997) *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1999) *World Risk Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995) *The Normal Chaos of Love*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualisation*, London: Sage.

Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1998) 'On the way to a post-familial family: from a community of need to a elective affinities', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 15: 3/4, pp. 53-70.

Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Reinventing the Family: In Search of New Lifestyles*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Borland, M., Laybourne, A., Hill, M. and Brown, J. (1998) *Middle Childhood: The Perspectives of Children and Parents*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Bourdieu, P. (1997/1986) 'The forms of capital', in A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A.S. Wells (eds) *Education: Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brannen, J. (ed.) (1992) *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*, Aldershot: Avebury.

Bryman, A. (2004) (2nd edn) *Social Research Methods,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caracelli, V.J. and Greene, J.C. (1993) 'Data analysis strategies for mixed-method evaluation designs', *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15, pp. 195-207.

Coleman, J.S. (1988) 'The creation and destruction of social capital: implications for the law', *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy*, 3, pp. 375-404.

Coleman, J.S. (1990) *The Foundations of Social Theory*, London: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, J.S. (1991) 'Prologue: constructed social organisation', in P. Bourdieu and J.S. Coleman (eds) *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, Oxford: Westview Press.

Coleman, J.S. (1997/1988) 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', in A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A.S. Wells (eds) *Education: Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

David, M.E. (1993) *Parents, Gender and Education Reform*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Davies, J. (1993) *The Family, Is It Just Another Lifestyle Choice?*, London: Institute for Economic Affairs.

Dennis, N. and Erdos, G. (1992) *Families Without Fatherhood*, London: Institute for Economic Affairs.

Driver, S. and Martell, L. (2002) 'New Labour, work and the family', *Social Policy and Administration*, 36: 1, pp.46-61.

Duncan, S., Edwards, R., Reynolds, T. and Alldred, P. (2004) 'Mothers and child care: policies, values and theories', *Children and Society*, 18, 254-265.

Edwards, R. (2004) 'Present and absent in troubling ways: families and social capital debates', *The Sociological Review*, 52: 1, pp. 1-21.

Edwards, R., Franklin, J. and Holland, J. (2003) *Families and Social Capital: Exploring the Issues,* Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper No. 1, London: South Bank University.

Edwards, R. and Gillies, V. (2004) 'Support in parenting: values and consensus concerning who to turn to', *Journal of Social Policy*, 33:4, pp. 627-647.

Fairclough, N. (2000) *New Labour, New Language*, London: Routledge.

Fevre, R. (2000) *The Demoralisation of Western Culture*, London: Continuum.

Finch, J. (1987) 'The vignette technique in survey research', *Sociology,* 22: 1, pp. 105-114.

Finch, J. and Mason, J. (1991) 'Obligations of kinship in contemporary Britain: is there normative agreement?', *British Journal of Sociology,* 42: 3, pp. 345-367.
Finch, J. and Mason, J. (1993) *Negotiating Family Responsibilities*, London: Routledge.
Gamarnikow, E. and Green, A. (1999) 'The Third Way and social capital: Education Action Zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community?', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 9: 1, pp. 3-22.
Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Giddens, A. (1994) *Beyond Left and Right*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Gillies, V. (2005) 'Meeting parents' needs? Discourses of "support" and "inclusion" in family policy', *Critical Social Policy*, 25:1, pp. 70-90.
Gillies, V. (forthcoming) 'Raising the 'meritocracy': parenting and the individualisation of social class', *Sociology*.
Home Office (1998) *Supporting Families: A Consultation Document*, London: HMSO.
Levitas, R. (1998) *The Inclusive Society: Social Exclusion and New Labour*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Lewis, C. (2000) *A Man's Place in the Home: Fathers and Families in the UK*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
McGlone, F., Parks, A. and Roberts, C. (1996) 'Kinship and friendship: attitudes and behaviour in Britain 1986-1995', in R. Jowell, I. Curtice, A. Park, L. Brook and K. Thomson (eds) *British Social Attitudes Survey: the 13th Report,* Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing.
Meadows, S. (1990) *The Child as Thinker*, London: Routledge.
Murray, C. (1994) *Underclass: The Crisis Deepens*, London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit.
Office of National Statistics (2001) *Social Capital: A Review of the Literature*, London: Social Analysis and Reporting Division, ONS.
Pahl, R. (2000) *On Friendship*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Performance and Innovation Unit (2002) *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper*, London: PIU, Cabinet Office.
Ribbens McCarthy, J., Edwards, R. and Gillies, V. (2003) *Making Families: Moral Tales of Parenting and Step-Parenting*, Durham: Sociology Press.
Sayer, A. (1992) (2nd edn) *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach*, London: Routledge.
Sayer, A. (1999) 'Bourdieu, Smith and disinterested judgement', *The Sociological Review*, 47: 3, pp. 403-431.
Stacey, J. (1996) *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age*, Boston: Beacon Press.
Terwogt, M.M. and Harris, P.J. (1993) 'Understanding of emotion', in M. Bennet (ed.) *The Child as Psychologist*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.
Wasoff, F. and Hill, M. (2002) 'Family policy in Scotland', *Social Policy and Society*, 1: 3, pp. 171-182.
Weeks, J. (1995), *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in an Age of Uncertainty*, New York: Columbia University Press.