



SUMMARY OF LITERATURE SOURCES FOR THE WELL-
BEING PARENTING STRAND

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Barn, R. (2006) *Parenting in multi-racial Britain* published for the JRF by the National Children's Bureau as part of the Parenting in Practice series, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0396.asp>

- This was a study of 'ordinary' parents from diverse ethnic communities in England.
- Minority ethnic families reported more frequent contacts with the wider family network than white families, who reported more frequent contact with friends. Often, however, the impact of migration and fragmentation affected the extent to which wider family members were available to support some minority ethnic families.
- The study suggests that the demarcation between public/private concerns seems to be evident in different ethnic groups. While some ethnic groups felt able to raise concerns about poor housing and a lack of finance, they were less likely to vocalise their children's behaviour as problematic to outsiders.
- Most parents wished to be involved in their children's education, regardless of ethnic background and socio-economic status.
- The report offers quotes from participants commenting on the fact that their small social housing meant that they did not that their children were able to play properly.
- The report documents no real differences between ethnic groups with regard to physical punishment of children.
- There was evidence of parenting strategies being in a constant state of flux throughout the parenting cycle.
- The author argues that the difficulties of raising bilingual children suggest that parents need better and more external help.

Bloomfield, L. et al. (2005) 'A qualitative study exploring the experiences and views of mothers, health visitors and family support centre workers on the challenges and difficulties of parenting', in *Health and Social Care in the Community* 13(1): 46-55 (Abstract only)

The full report is not accessible, and the abstract is reasonably uninformative. This report notes that successive policy documents have referred to the need to support parents as an approach to reducing social exclusion, behaviour problems among young people and crime rates. A number of themes emerged surrounding the challenges and difficulties of parenting and effective parenting (of children under 6 years), including expectations of others, establishing routines, play, behavioural issues and discipline, empathy, and communication.

Edwards, R. 'Present and absent in troubling ways: families and social capital debates' - Families & Social Capital Research ESRC Research Group, London South Bank University.

The Sociological Review, 2004, 52, 1, Feb, 1-21

Social capital has become a key concept in government policy making & academic circles. Particular forms of social capital theorizing have become dominant & influential, invoking certain conceptions of the nature of family life. Inherently, ideas about 'the family' not only draw on gender divisions in fundamental ways, but also on particular forms of intergenerational relationships & power relations. This paper explores the place, & understandings, of family in social capital theorizing from a feminist perspective, including the way that debates in the social capital field interlock with those in the family field. These encompass: posing both 'the family' & social capital as fundamental & strong bases for social cohesion, but also as easily eroded & in need of protection & encouragement; the relationship between 'the private' & 'the social'; notions of bonding & bridging, & horizontal & vertical, forms of social capital as these relate to ideas about contemporary diversity in family forms & the nature of intimate relationships; & analytic approaches to understanding both the natures of social capital & family life in terms of an economic or moral rationality. **It argues for greater reflexivity in the use of social capital as a concept, revealing rather than replicating troubling presences & absences around gender & generation as fundamental axes of family life.**

Gillies, V. (2005) 'Meeting parents' needs? Discourses of 'support' and 'inclusion' in family policy', in *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 70-90 (2005)

Critically examine the assumptions structuring policy discourses of support and inclusion, and will link them to wider political and theoretical debates. Reflecting an increasing professionalization of childrearing practices, recent policy documents have emphasized the need for all parents to have access to support, advice and guidance. Implicit in this approach is the notion that 'socially excluded' parents in particular are isolated from the information and assistance that enables effective parenting. Meanwhile, the concepts of poverty and inequality are becoming increasingly detached from government definitions of social exclusion. Policies addressing the 'condition' of exclusion commonly emphasize a perceived disconnection from mainstream values and aspirations, as opposed to marginalization from material resources. In the case of family policy, interventions framed within the discourse of 'parenting support' stress the importance of helping parents to do the best they can for their children. However, tacit moral judgements direct the nature and type of support that is promoted, with a particular emphasis placed on advising and 'including' marginalized parents. In this paper, policy definitions of support will be analysed and their implications in terms of gender and class will be drawn out. It will be argued that **despite a rhetoric of empowerment and investment, the current emphasis on support represents a top-down projection of values and standards on to families, thereby 'supporting' conformity rather than promoting access to parenting resources.**

McAuley, C. et al. (2004) *The outcomes and costs of Home-Start support for young families under stress*, JRF, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/954.asp>

Home-Start offers volunteer home visiting support to families with children under five years of age. Over an eleven month study period, overall evidence did not point to a cost-effectiveness advantage for Home-Start. There was much improvement seen in mothers, but comparable levels of improvement were seen amongst mothers who were not part of the Home-Start programme. Many of the issues relating to the transition to parenthood were resolved through time and experience.

Maclean, M. (2004) *Together and Apart: Children and Parents Experiencing separation and divorce*, JRF, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/314.asp>

This report offers various suggestions/recommendations including:

- The need to see parental separation not as a single event, but as a process
- Formal interventions need to be child-centred and available to all on the basis of need rather than civil status of the parents
- The fact that we need to move on from seeing the children of divorced and separated parents as having an experience which is essentially different from that of other children. All children experience a number of transitions that can be difficult for them, and for which they may require additional support
- Children have very diverse experiences and in designing services for them, one size will not fit all
- The author identifies the need to distinguish between keeping children informed of what is happening in their lives, involving them in decision-making, and providing them with appropriate support

Patterson, J. et al. (2005) 'Parents' perceptions of the value of the Webster-Stratton Parenting Programme: a qualitative study of a general practice based initiative', in *Child Care, Health and Development* 31(1): 53-64 (Abstract only)

There has been little research on the impact of parenting programmes in families where children's development falls in the 'normal' range. This was a qualitative study of the impact of the Webster-Stratton 'Parents and Children Series' programme on participants in a controlled trial, whose children's behaviour was below average, but generally in the normal range. Parents reported increased confidence, better relationships with their children, successful use of new behaviour management techniques and improvements in their children's behaviour as a result of the programme. The conclusion is therefore that the Webster-Stratton Parenting Programme is useful for parents of 'normal' children as well as children whose behaviour is in the clinical range.

Pike, A., Coldwell, J. and Dunn, J. (2006) *Family relationships in middle childhood*, published for the JRF by the National Children's Bureau as part of the Parenting in Practice series, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0436.asp>

- This is a study of parent-child relationships of 346 children in 173 families with at least 2 children aged 4-8 years.
- Factors affecting how well fathers got on with their children were related to family 'climate'. The best relationships were in smoothly run households, where the whole family got involved in activities and where the father had a good relationship with the mother. 'Climatic' factors were also important in assessing how well siblings got on with one another.
- Factors affecting how well mothers got on with their children were related to 'temperament'; the mother's own mental health, temperament and education.
- Lone parent households were no different from two parent households in the quality of relationship between mothers and their children.
- The personal characteristics important to the parent-child relationship were also linked to how well siblings got on with one another.
- The researchers suggest that mothers influence the family climate, and this climate, as well as the quality of the marital relationship, can foster good quality relationships between fathers and their children, and among the children themselves. It is, however, difficult to generalise from this sample of households with a traditional division of household labour.

Scott, S. (2005) 'Do parenting programmes for severe child antisocial behaviour work over the longer term and for whom? One year follow-up of a multi-centre controlled trial', in *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 33(4): 403-421 (Abstract only)

This study aimed to see whether there were lasting effects of a behaviourally-based group parenting programme when delivered in a real-life, regular clinical practice setting. The participants were 59 children aged 3-8 years referred with anti-social behaviour whose parents received the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years basic videotape group programme. Follow-up a year afterwards indicated that the original improvement in the intervention group was found to have persisted, with no loss of treatment effectiveness. Children with the most severe initial problems changed the most; risk factors such as low income, being a lone parent, or being in an ethnic minority did not reduce treatment effectiveness.

Scott, S., O'Connor, T. and Futh, A. (2006) *What makes parenting programmes work in disadvantaged areas?* JRF, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/9781859354636.pdf>

- This report looks at how parenting programmes can be made to work in deprived, multiethnic parts of Britain.
- Despite the effectiveness of parenting programmes, the majority of UK families will not have access to those that have been shown to work.
- The study investigated the factors that affect the impact of an intervention programme for parents of five and six year olds, called Primary Age Learning Study (PALS).
- An advantage of this study over other studies into parenting programmes is that this study is independent of those who set up the programme.
- The study discovered differences in parenting practices between ethnic groups. The African population reported more use of praise and rewards than the white British population. That said, the programme was equally effective in changing the parenting practices.
- The report argues that targeting families by the area that they live in is an inefficient way to meet need, but that parenting can be improved. It argues that a questionnaire should be used to screen parents, and then only those in need should be selected.

Seaman, P. et al. (2006) 'Parenting and children's resilience in disadvantaged communities' published for the JRF by the National Children's Bureau, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0096.asp>

- This report argues that there has thus far been little research into how parents and children promote their children's well-being and safeguard them from day-to-day risks. This study looked at parents and children in ordinary families in four disadvantaged areas of Glasgow.
- Parents' main concerns centred on threats from youth gangs or from adults or young people misusing drugs and alcohol.
- Parents described parenting styles that were open, democratic, sophisticated and tenacious in working with their children to keep them safe, which challenges views that parenting problems are rife in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour by young people.
- The capacity of many parents to fulfil the high aspirations that they had for their children (based on realistic assessments of their children's capabilities), especially educational aspirations, relied on knowledge and resources that the parents sometimes lacked.
- The positive aspects of young people hanging around in groups – going to risky places together, using mobile phones to check that all was well – was sometimes overlooked by parents.

Stace, S. and Roker, D. (2005) *Monitoring and supervision in 'ordinary' families: The views and experiences of young people aged 11 to 16 and their parents*, published for the JRF by the National Children's Bureau as part of the Parenting in Practice series, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0165.asp>

Research involved talking to 50 families (from a range of backgrounds) with children aged 11-16.

- Parents described knowing where their children are, what they are doing and who they are with as a key part of parental care, love and protection.
- Mothers were more involved than fathers in monitoring and supervising children. Mothers often described this responsibility as time-consuming and stressful.
- Technology was seen as useful, but also as a potential threat.
- Parents described the local neighbourhood, age, gender and personality of the young person as particularly influential on their arrangements for monitoring and supervision.

Welsh, E. et al. (2004) *Involved fathering and child well-being: Fathers' involvement with secondary school age children*, published for the JRF by the National Children's Bureau as part of the Parenting in Practice series <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/724.asp>

- This was a large-scale study, and children were asked to consider their 'father' as a 'father figure' whom they identified themselves.
- Resident fathers were more likely to be involved if the mothers were involved with the children, if the father held egalitarian attitudes to gender roles and if the children were well-adjusted.
- Children living with the person they identified as their father were likely to be better adjusted if they were living with their biological father and if their father had good mental health, was well educated, and highly involved.
- There was no association between non-resident fathers' involvement and children's well-being.
- Many fathers admitted that they often lacked the confidence or skills to form close relationships with their children.
- Fathers in supportive relationships tended to be more involved with their children.



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