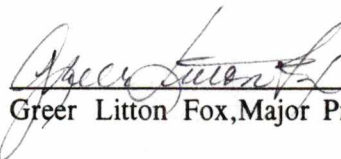


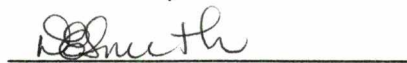
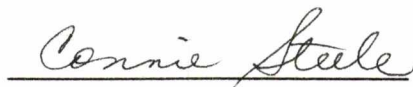
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Janelle Von Barga entitled "Bullets Ain't Got No Eyes: The Experience of Neighborhood Violence for 10 African American Mothers and their Children." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

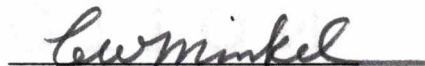


Greer Litton Fox, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

"Bullets Ain't Got No Eyes:"
The Experience Of Neighborhood Violence For
10 African-American Mothers And Their Children.

A dissertation
presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Janelle Von Barga

August, 1996

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the 10 mothers and children who allowed me to enter their lives and shared with me their stories. I am very thankful. Also, this dissertation is dedicated to Diane, Tynekia, Quisha, Debra, and Ibn. You welcomed me into your home with open arms and acceptance. I love you all.

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

In the United States public exposure to community violence is on the rise. For families living in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods exposure to violence is an every day occurrence. The present study was conducted to explore the experiences of neighborhood violence for low-income African-American mothers and their children. In-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 mothers and 10 children between the ages of 10 and 14. The mothers and children discussed three different ways of experiencing violence in their neighborhoods. The three types of experiences were (a) hearing it, (b) being the target of violence, and (3) incidentally walking into a violent event.

The mothers and children developed coping strategies that allowed them to respond effectively to each type of violence. The mothers taught their children at young ages how to learn ways to survive in their homes and neighborhood. In many instances, the children were more knowledgeable than their mothers about the types of violence occurring in the neighborhood because of their frequent interactions outside of the home. Many mothers said they did not socialize with people in their neighborhood so to "stay out of trouble" and "mind and their own business".

Future research must continue using qualitative methods in order to better understand how families cope and deal with their neighborhood environment. Children of different ages and men in the neighborhood also need to be studied. In order to better serve families living in violent neighborhoods, (i.e., teachers and social workers) must be aware of the conditions under which the families are forced to live.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Levels of violence

The level of public exposure to episodes of violence throughout the United States has increased significantly in the last five years (Uniform Crime Reports, 1994). Neighborhoods are being bombarded by violent events that make children and families innocent victims. Much of the chronic community violence is occurring in inner-city neighborhoods, that already are taxed by stressful dynamics of poverty, unemployment, and a preponderance of single-mothers as heads of households. Many inner-city children witness or experience violent events on a daily basis. Some of these experiences include the death of family members and peers or prematurely losing one's own life. As a result, children are forced to deal with violence and face its effects at a very young age. The mothers in these neighborhoods must confront the challenges of coping with their own fear and grief as well as that of their children. In light of this, it is therefore necessary to explore the perceptions and experiences of mothers and children who live with neighborhood violence in order to understand how they manage these adverse situations.

Currently, the United States has the highest murder rate in the industrialized world. Violent crimes, which include murder, rape, aggravated assault, and larceny, have increased 25% since 1988, with over 2 million occurring in 1993 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). It is estimated that a violent crime occurs every 16 seconds in the United States, with 96% of these crimes occurring in urban areas (Uniform Crime Reports, 1994). For many children in urban neighborhoods, exposure to violence and its aftermath occur in the social contexts of home, neighborhood, and school. Because the violence occurs so regularly, even very young children are able to vividly describe violent incidents that occur in their neighborhoods. For

example, when asked to talk about the violence in her neighborhood, a six-year-old child was able to describe a man being beaten up in the street, a drive-by shooting, and a speeding car chasing another through the neighborhood while both were trying to shoot at each other (Von Bargen, Blinn, & Doyle, 1993). Martinez and Richters (1993) found in their studies of inner-city children in the Washington, DC, area that many of the children, by the time they are in the second grade, reported seeing people beaten-up, stabbed, or shot and by the time they were adolescents, they reported witnessing homicides and had usually experienced some type of violent act directed toward them (Martinez & Richters, 1993). Similar findings were reported in other studies of many inner-city neighborhoods in Chicago, New Orleans, and Baltimore (Garbarino, 1994; Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Richters & Martinez, 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1993).

Effects of violence

Some of the negative effects of being exposed to violence are obvious; others are more subtle. The symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been cited as common characteristics of many children who are exposed to high levels of violence (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Richters & Martinez, 1993; Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1991; Roth, 1994; Pynoos & Nadar, 1988). These children are reported to have heightened anxiety, generalized fears, hypervigilance, and low levels of self-esteem (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). PTSD is a disorder that was first recognized with war veterans but now is commonly used to label the negative symptoms and characteristics found in other traumatized individuals, including many children living in inner-city neighborhoods. These children are experiencing distress symptoms comparable to shell-shocked war veterans' but resulting from violent activities occurring in their own backyards. Children who are not violence perpetrators, intended targets are victimized as well. There are consistent reports in the research literature that children who were witnesses to violence experienced PTSD as

frequently as the children who were the actual targets (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Bell & Jenkins, 1991). PTSD characteristics seem to have a negative impact on the child's interactions in school and other social environments (Roth, 1994). Some young children are unable to leave their mothers for fear of what may happen to themselves or their mothers while they are separated. Anxiety and fear can distract a child from performing well in school and in developing relationships with other children or adults (Roth, 1994).

School-aged children exposed to chronic community violence have been reported to exhibit more behavior problems and to be perceived as difficult children by their teachers (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Roth, 1994). The problem behaviors may stem from the children's inability to concentrate or remember. As a coping mechanism, the children tend not to remember or recall things from the past; while effective in coping with violence, memory loss is dysfunctional when transferred to the school setting because it impedes children's academic performance. For some children, the school may be the only place they can find solitude and relaxation and not be on alert for a violent episode. On the other hand, school may be the only place for the children to play, explore, and act like a child. This behavior may be interpreted by adults as acting out and is likely not to be supported by busy teachers. For adolescents, due to the over-exposure to violence, many teens are desensitized to other dangers and risks which makes them more vulnerable for victimization (Jenkins & Bell, 1992). Even some of the resilient characteristics associated with being streetwise, such as precocious maturity, dissociation of affect, and risk taking, that provide some children with strength to endure are not readily reinforced in all their social environments.

Although much of the chronic violence in the United States is concentrated in low-income inner-city neighborhoods, the effects can be seen rippling throughout society (U.S. Census, 1994). For example, the number of juveniles being expelled from school for carrying

a weapon has increased significantly in the last three years (Richters, 1993). Because they feel a need for protection, children from all neighborhoods and social economic groups are carrying guns, not just those living in inner-city neighborhoods (Garbarino, 1994). As a result, many schools are equipped with metal detectors at the door, and students are not permitted to wear thick coats or carry book bags to class for fear they may be hiding a weapon (Roth, 1994). Children are responding to the fear and threat of real or imagined violence by trying to be prepared. This can be seen by the increasing number of youths committing murders and being killed. But, ultimately, there is little children can do to gain control over most of the violence they witness or experience. Garbarino (1994) has suggested that the media blitz that occurs when a violent event takes place has helped to create a society of paranoid people that encourages children not to trust their neighbor. Children are receiving the message that they can no longer trust anyone. Therefore, neighborhood violence is no longer an issue just for inner-city families, but rather concerns families in communities throughout society.

In today's violent society, it is a challenging task for parents to provide the protection necessary to keep their children safe and free from harm. However, for parents in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods the challenge is intensified. Many of the primary caregivers in these neighborhoods are single mothers, already dealing with financial, personal, and societal struggles (McLoyd, 1990). The mothers often are young, have more than one child, have never been married, and receive little or no financial support from the fathers of the children (Scott & Black, 1994). In 1992, more than half of all children and 82% of all Black children living in poverty lived in female-headed households (Condition of Education, 1992). Such adverse living conditions become even more challenging when compounded with the stress of a constant sense of danger lingering in the neighborhood (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991).

Some mothers are forced to take extreme measures in an attempt to provide adequate

safety for their children. Anderson (1993) used the term "7-24 children" to describe children who are kept under supervision by caregivers, seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day because of the perceived threat of danger. To keep the children safe in the neighborhood, they often are not permitted to play outside. "House arrest" as a protective tactic may be possible for very young children, but it is not likely to be successful with adolescents, who cannot and will not be kept inside.

Although "7-24 children" may exist, there are many children who receive little if any supervision in their homes or neighborhoods (Taylor, 1994). Many children are left by themselves or under the supervision of an older sibling or a next-door neighbor who may not be trustworthy. This lack of adequate adult supervision can greatly increase children's risk of danger not only in the home but also in the neighborhood.

Ecological perspective

It is necessary to recognize the interplay between individuals and their environment in order to better understand the effects of neighborhood violence on families. The ecological framework can be used to help explain ways neighborhoods and society affect individuals and families (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Neighborhoods are said to influence behaviors, attitudes, values, and opportunities (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Kato, & Sealand, 1991). Individuals are viewed in the context of the nuclear family, extended family, peer group, neighborhood, community, and institutions of school and work place (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It is imperative to look at the ways these different contexts interact to affect parent-child behaviors if one wishes to truly understand the intergenerational relationship and its impact on the child (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The conditions of many low-income neighborhoods can negatively influence a family's functioning. The culture of violence that exists in many low-income neighborhoods perpetuates the acceptance of violence by allowing

violent acts to receive importance and prestige, thereby increasing the chance that more violence will occur (Gelles, 1983).

Low-income inner-city families cannot take for granted the availability of many of the intangible contextual effects that foster the development of healthy, well-developed children (Werner & Smith, 1982). For example, a stable environment that provides a sense of security in residents is missing in many high-risk neighborhoods. The families in these inner-city neighborhoods are isolated from other communities and, thus, are exposed exclusively to the culture within that particular neighborhood except for what they see in the media. These neighborhoods often are plagued with poverty, drugs, violence, unemployment, and young single-motherhood. These characteristics do not provide the stability needed to foster a sense of security in the neighborhood families and often only exacerbate stress that all too often ends in violent interactions in the home.

The parent, most often the mother in low-income African-American neighborhoods, influences the child by coaching, teaching, and managing the child's social environment (Dodge, 1990). If the mother's ability to interact effectively with the child is hampered, negative outcomes such as deviancy are the likely result (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994). The poverty and chronic violence that exists in many high-risk neighborhoods produce added stressors that make effective parenting difficult (Martinez & Richters, 1993; Hall, Gurley, Sachs, & Kryscio, 1991; McLoyd, 1990). The relative richness of the parent's social environment is a significant influence on the adequacy of the parenting provided. Socially rich environments tend to include people who are "free from drain," (i.e., those who have resources available and are able to provide support for themselves and others) (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Socially impoverished environments tend to lack people who are "free from drain" and, consequently, must operate with a scarcity

economy when it comes to neighboring. This situation may result in residents needing more help, support, and resources than can be given by other neighbors. Garbarino and Sherman (1980) found that those with the greatest need tended to cluster together in settings that struggle to meet these needs. The combination of high-risk families and high-risk neighborhoods can be especially detrimental to the well-being of the children who reside in them.

The response of some mothers to the violence and stress surrounding them is heightened feelings of social isolation from any outside network (peer groups) or institution (work, school, and social services) (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983; D'Ercole, 1988). The direct effect of the violence and stress on the mother may be inferred from higher rates of maternal abuse or neglect in the family. Abuse and neglect may be reflected in children's acting-out and other dysfunctional behaviors at school. An indirect effect may be seen in a mother's lack of interaction outside of the family or, at the other extreme, her overintegration into neighborhood and peer groups that also can create problems (Hashima & Amato, 1994). Lack of interaction may result in mothers receiving little or no support from the neighborhood and community. Families in general seem to benefit from emotional support received from relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Low levels of social support are related to increased stress and depression, while high levels of support tend to help reduce depression for mothers (White, Kasl, Zahner, & Will, 1987). However, if a mother's involvement in the neighborhood includes accepting and participating in negative behaviors like violence and drug abuse, such types of social support are more likely to have detrimental effects on the family.

Although a parent's coping behavior may be useful for her own functioning, it may not be as effective or positive on the developing child (Stevens, 1988). In the best of circumstances, schools, neighborhoods, and society all are needed to support parents and

children. And it is all the more true for children from stressed homes. When the mother is unable to provide a supportive context for optimal child development, other protective factors need to be called upon and sustained-- if not by the family system, then by some other social system in contact with the child, such as the school or a community group (Roth, 1994).

However, as argued above, a high-risk neighborhood may not be able to influence the child and family in a positive or productive way.

Despite negative characteristics in the neighborhood, many mothers must depend on the community for their social support. Families may require emotional, informational, material, and caretaking support from their neighbors. The amount of support given to the mother will be determined by her level of integration in the community (i.e., the age of the mother; her years in the area, number of friends or family in the neighborhood, and job status; and her level of acceptance of the neighborhood) will influence how integrated or isolated she becomes in the neighborhood. Even though the mother may not accept many of the neighborhood activities, she may feel she must rely on neighbors for support for the well-being of herself and her child. By being part of the neighborhood, she may be able to keep aware of her child's activities as well as rely on neighbors in time of need. Again, if this support is not available, the mother may feel very isolated from the community. These feelings of isolation may be transformed into depression that results in dysfunctional parenting behaviors. Having a depressed, unaware mother puts a child at great risk. The child may become integrated into neighborhood systems for his/her own support and, consequently, may come in contact primarily with negative influences of the neighborhood. Much can be learned from the families living in these environments concerning ways of coping (both successfully and unsuccessfully) with stress in general and with violence in particular.

All children should have a "safe haven" that includes the home, neighborhood, and

school. When children feel safe at home, they are ready to grow. When they feel safe in the neighborhood, they are ready to play and explore and form relationships with other children. When they are safe at school, they are ready to learn and to become confident and competent adults (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992). But when these "safe havens" are nonexistent, children are in grave danger of suffering harmful psychological and social consequences.

The damaging effects of growing up with high levels of neighborhood violence are only beginning to be understood. Researchers have demonstrated that many children experience high levels of stress and anxiety from these early experiences that may result in the development of dysfunctional behaviors. At the same time, many children appear resilient and capable of positive functioning despite their adverse situations (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Purpose of study

Much of the research pertaining to neighborhood violence has addressed only the level of exposure to the violence. The levels of violence are on the rise and bombarding inner-city neighborhoods and beginning to affect all of society. A next step is to discover the perceptions of the people who live in these high-risk neighborhoods to determine what coping mechanisms they have devised. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of mothers and children, I hope to learn how families manage living with neighborhood violence as well as ways they either incorporate it into their world views or distance themselves from it. Addressing this issue may help explain how some families continue to function productively and foster well-functioning children while living in such adverse situations.

Chapter II

Literature Review

There are many factors that need to be explored in order to better understand how families cope and deal with the neighborhood violence. The Ecological perspective will be used as a guide to investigate the impact and influence of the environment on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). To better understand this influence, it is useful to look at the environment (neighborhood), the individuals (parent and child), and the reciprocal relationships between these systems (neighborhood and parent, parent and child, child and neighborhood). Bronfenbrenner (1986) and Garbarino (1992) suggest that the relationship between the parent and the child cannot be understood without understanding the conditions surrounding the family. The family can be viewed as an open, adaptive system whose exchanges with the environment provide emotional and material support and socialize the family for beliefs, childrearing practices, and socialization. It is a culmination of the individual systems and the reciprocal relationships between them that lay the foundation for thinking about how families cope with and deal with neighborhood violence. The relationship with social environments may facilitate or deter healthy family functioning (Powell, 1979).

This chapter will be a selective review of the literature of low-income mothers and children living in violent neighborhoods. The characteristics of these systems will be reviewed as well as the relationships between systems. A review of existing literature was used to guide this research and to identify how this study may fill some of the gaps in the literature.

Neighborhood characteristics

Many inner-city neighborhoods are plagued with poverty and high rates of unemployment, as well as fixed stigmas because of the minority status of most residents. In addition, high stress, violence, drugs, and social isolation makes life in many inner-city

neighborhoods very dangerous (Scheinfeld, 1983; Wilson, 1989). Currently in the United States, 31% of all children live in poverty, while 46% of all African-American children are living in poverty. A family of four is considered to be living in poverty if the total family income is less than \$15,000 a year (Kids Count Data Book, 1995). It is important to recognize that those families whose sole income sources are Aid to Families with Dependent Children and food stamps live at no more than 75% of the poverty line in 41 states (Kids Count Data Book, 1995). Poverty status brings with it stigmas and humiliation from the larger society that put these families at a disadvantage. Many of the conditions that living in poverty brings with it are poor and inadequate housing, health care, and education (Huston, McLoyd, & Coll, 1994). The poverty is perpetuated and exacerbated by chronic unemployment of many living in these neighborhoods. Most inner-city neighborhoods have lost out on economic development and industry, and their African-American working- and middle-class neighbors have moved away for jobs and houses in the suburbs (Wilson, 1989).

Violence is another characteristic of many low-income inner-city neighborhoods. Violence has become an accepted, culturally normative response to conflict and anger (Gelles, 1984). In these neighborhoods, violence is used as entertainment and as a boost to self-esteem and is positively reinforced (Gelles & Straus, 1979; Gelles, 1985). Violence can be used as a way of obtaining respect in a culture where such behaviors are given prestige and power (Levinson, 1989). When there is cultural approval of violence and the rewards are higher than the costs, it should be expected that violence will be used. As a result, violence is pervasive in the lives of many inner-city families. Recent studies have shown devastating homicide rates in inner-city neighborhoods. Homicide rates of African-Americans are six to seven times greater than that for whites, and homicide is the leading cause of death for black males and females ages 15-34 (Bell & Jenkins, 1991). However, it is important to recognize that not all

assaults result in death. In Chicago, for every homicide, there were 44 instances of assault that required police intervention (meaning that the assaults were violent enough to require police involvement but did not result in death) (Bell & Jenkins, 1991). The amount of public violence has increased during the last five years and is highest in the poorest neighborhoods, making low-income children all the more susceptible to witnessing or innocently experiencing violent events in the neighborhood.

It is important to acknowledge that a family may be exposed to many types of violence (Steinmetz, 1987; Busby, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1986). It is also important to recognize that the individual members may have very different experiences with violence, such as being a witness, victim, or perpetrator of violent events (Gelles, 1984; Gelles & Conte, 1990; Emery, 1989). Individuals may be exposed to violence within the family, throughout the neighborhood, and frequently in both settings. Within the area of family violence, there may be violence between partners (Straus & Gelles, 1979; Yollo & Bograd, 1988; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Steinmetz, 1978; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981); parent-to-child violence (Emery, 1989; Youngblade & Belsky, 1989; Finkelhor & Baron, 1986; Wolfe, Wolfe, & Best, 1988); sibling-to-sibling violence (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz 1980; Steinmetz, 1977; Paglow, 1984); and child-to-parent violence (Cornell-Pedrick & Gelles, 1982; Peek, Fisher, Kidwell, 1985). Several of the psychological risk factors that may increase the likelihood for these violent acts are low self-concept, failure to achieve, low frustration tolerance, and personal approval of violence. Situational factors such as poverty, social isolation, social and structural stress, perceived level of violence in the community, and unstable resources also can increase the risk of violence (Burgess & Draper, 1989; Bell & Chance-Hill, 1988). Many of these risk factors are present in low-income neighborhoods and prevalent in the families in these neighborhoods.

There also are different types of neighborhood violence that a family may experience

in their inner-city neighborhood. These include being bullied by neighbors, seeing someone stabbed or shot, or being the witness to a random drive-by shooting from a person in a car into a crowd of people (Martinez & Richters, 1993; Garbarino, 1994; Schubiner, Scott, & Tzelepis, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). The level of harm varies with the nature of the incidences as well as the chronicity of events. For example, episodes of neighborhood violence may be considered acute or chronic. Acute violence is the unexpected dangerous event, such as a random shooting in a school by an irrational person, that children may experience only once. Chronic violence refers to dangerous events that occur on a day-to-day basis in inner-city neighborhoods (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelney, & Pardo, 1992). These events, such as random shootings in the neighborhood or the potential for violent exchanges that accompany drug trafficking on neighborhood corners, cause interruptions in daily activity in the home and neighborhood. Many of the same risk factors for interpersonal violence also are found to be present for neighborhood violence, especially many of the situational factors like poverty and social isolation. This makes families living in low-income, high-risk neighborhoods more susceptible to experiencing both types of violence along with their exposure to the negative effects of both types of violence.

The current levels of chronic violence for many inner-city children are alarming; nonetheless, the levels of exposure of children to all types of violence continues to rise (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Fitzpatrick, 1993; Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fink, 1993). Bell and Jenkins (1991) found in their study of 536 African-American children in grades two, four, six, and eight in Chicago's South Side that 26% of the children reported having seen someone shot and 29 percent reported having seen a stabbing. Even higher percentages of middle- and high-school students in this study reported witnessing violent acts (35% having witnessed a stabbing, 39% having seen someone shot, and 24% having seen someone killed). Many of

the older students reported having known the victims, and almost half of the victims were friends, family, classmates, or neighbors. Also in this age group, 46% of the students reported that they had personally been victimized by crimes ranging from having a weapon pulled on them to being robbed, raped, shot, or stabbed (Bell & Jenkins, 1991).

Similar findings have been reported with small, nonrandom samples of children in an area of Washington, DC (Richters & Martinez, 1993) and inner-city areas of New Orleans (Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993). Richters and Martinez (1993) found that 61% of the 77 African-American inner-city, first- and second-grade children in Washington reported having witnessed stabbings, threats of physical harm, or illegal drug use; and 19% reported having been victimized. For the 51 older children (fifth and sixth graders) 32% reported having been victimized while 72% reported having witnessed someone else being victimized. The New Orleans study paralleled the Washington, DC, study, using 53 fifth graders. The researchers found that 91% of the children had witnessed violence, and over half of the students reported having been victimized. It also was reported that 72% of the children had seen weapons used, and 49% had seen someone wounded (Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993).

Neighborhood influence on mothers and children

The negative characteristics of low-income inner-city neighborhoods have been shown to put children at a disadvantage for both healthy, adaptive functioning and high social competence (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Mayer & Jencks, 1989). The poverty, crime, violence, unemployment, and high stress do not foster the kind of stable and secure neighborhood environment that is conducive to healthy family functioning and individual development. Crime and violence in inner-city neighborhoods leave few people unscathed. Even those people who are not personally victimized are forced to live in a constant threat of

danger that permeates the neighborhood (White, Kasl, Zahner, & Will, 1987). High levels of fear can cause isolation from neighbors and family and can inflict a level of stress that is not easily compensated for and countered. The breakdown of social order instills a sense of powerlessness that can make people feel at great risk. The perception of being at risk for crime and violence promotes intense fear because of the little control neighborhood residents have over the environment (Rohe & Burby, 1988). This lack of control is reflected in the appearance of neighborhood incivilities, such as run-down buildings, groups "hanging out," drugs, and vandalism. These incivilities alone can increase the fear of crime and perception of risk throughout the neighborhood.

White, Kasl, Zahner, and Will (1987) found in their study of 337 Black and Hispanic women living in low-income inner-city public housing that maternal depression and somatization problems increased due to perceived risk of crime in the neighborhood and was not buffered by any social relationships. Baba and Austin (1989) examined the relationship between level of social participation in the neighborhood and perceived neighborhood safety. They surveyed 350 Oklahoma residents in a three-block area regarding their number of friends and length of residence in the neighborhood. They found that the length of residence and number of friends in the neighborhood influenced perceived safety in the neighborhood. Residents had a higher level of satisfaction with neighbors with whom they were more acquainted and higher levels of social cohesiveness, which is positively related to confidence in the neighborhood. The researchers suggested that being integrated into the community mitigates fear by decreasing the number of people who are strangers and providing knowledge of the respective dangerous or safe areas of the neighborhood. Similar findings were reported in other studies that have looked at the length of residence and number of friends in the neighborhood (Loo, 1986; White, et al., 1987; Riger, LeBailly, & Gordon, 1981).

The negative effects of low-income neighborhoods on children also can be seen in a number of ways. Poverty alone is considered an impairment for the development of children (Lerner, 1994; McLoyd, 1990). McLoyd (1990) suggested that poverty diminishes the capacity for supportive, consistent, involved parenting. Jarrett (1994) indicated that children in poor neighborhoods were reported as having more externalizing problems at home and school than children in affluent neighborhoods. Jarrett suggested that these children tend to be more aggressive because they are not socialized to refrain from acting-out and aggressive behavior. Indeed, some mothers may feel their children's antisocial behavior is actually adaptive because the children may need to protect and defend themselves in their neighborhoods. Thus, some mothers may encourage aggressive behaviors in their children, at least when they are out in the neighborhood.

Social class has a profound effect on the way parents view and rear their children (Gelles, 1994; Levinson, 1989). Some researchers have found that low-income mothers tend to use more physical punishment and place a higher value on conformity to external authority than do middle-income parents, who tend to support developmental values such as self-reliance and eagerness for learning and growth as a person (Murata, 1990; McLoyd, 1990). The physical punishment used by many low-income African-American mothers may be a function of social and economic factors, but it also may be a cultural adaptation to living in a dangerous environment (Mayer & Jencks, 1989; Levinson, 1989). For example, a mother may use physical force or coercion to keep her children in the house in order to keep the child alive. As well, physical punishment tends to be pervasive throughout the neighborhood and has been learned by many parents as the only effective way to make children conform. Many of the mothers in low-income neighborhoods were reared in similar settings, so they are only transferring that which they know (Davis & Rhodes, 1994; Cooley & Unger, 1991). Such

intergenerational transmission is reinforced in low-income African-American communities by frequency of three or more generations of family living together for financial and care-taking support (Reis, 1993).

Another negative effect of the neighborhood on the child is seen in children who experience violence at an early age and display symptoms similar to war veterans who experience posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In children, some of the symptoms, such as memory impairment and inability to concentrate, may be useful for coping with the violence but damaging in other social environments, such as the school setting. Also, because of a heightened sense of hopelessness and lack of faith in the future, children may be more prone to becoming involved in life-threatening behaviors that seem inevitable because they already have little hope for a future (van der Kolk, 1987). Another common symptom stemming from the stress of exposure to violence in the neighborhood is depression. Fitzpatrick (1993) looked at the depressive symptoms in 221 African-American youth between the ages of 7 and 14 in Birmingham, Alabama. He found that being directly victimized increased self-reports of depression and witnessing violence had a negative effect on depression. The author suggested that the youth who witness chronic violence may have developed more effective coping mechanisms that buffer the effects of daily exposure to violence, resulting in lower levels of depression. However, Fitzpatrick went on to suggest that, although the youth who witnessed violence showed few or immediate symptoms, their ability to survive and adapt over an extended period of time may not be without psychological, physical, and social costs. Follow-up and other longitudinal studies may be able to provide more information about what happens to such children in later years.

Parents can act as mediators or buffers of environmental stressors for children (Garbarino, 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1993). Fitzpatrick (1993) found that, for many young children,

the presence of a mother at home will buffer the effects of witnessing violence as well as reduce the level of depressive symptoms. However, there are times when the parent is not the best mediator; other social structures may be necessary to provide support for the child (Scheinfeld, 1983). There may be situations in which violence in the neighborhood becomes a contributor to the negative effects of the violence occurring in the home and vice-versa (Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993). Children who report the highest rate of family violence have been shown to be more susceptible to experiencing neighborhood violence. It also has been reported that children show more distress symptoms when they experience both types of violence (family and neighborhood) (Martinez & Richters, 1993). Bell and Jenkins (1993) reported that the level of family violence was five to six times that of the national average for the subjects in their inner-city Chicago study. Also, children living in violent neighborhoods who reported seeing drugs and guns in the home had the highest levels of self-reported distress. These children know the dangers associated with drugs and guns and are forced to face the fear of their being not only in the neighborhood but also in the home. One consequence of this to the child may be seen in their increased behavior problems and involvement in high-risk behaviors. For instance, early entrance into adulthood, which increases the likelihood of self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, delinquent behaviors, and promiscuity, frequently could be seen as an outgrowth of exposures to violence (van der Kolk, 1987).

Pertaining to the experience of violence in the neighborhood, researchers have looked at the differences in witnessing or being a victim of the violence (Baba & Austin, 1989; Rucker, 1990). Studies have shown that some children who witness the abuse of a parent show similar distress symptoms and aggressive behaviors to those shown by children who are physically abused themselves (Malone, Tyree, & O'Leary, 1989; Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Children who grow up in homes with high levels of conflict and arguing also show similar acting-out, aggressive behaviors as those who are physically abused (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985). In areas with high rates of neighborhood violence, similar fears and anxieties are expressed by both the children who have been the victims and those who have only witnessed or heard about different incidents of violence (Baba & Austin, 1989; Rucker, 1990; Pynoos & Nadar, 1988). This co-victimization often is accompanied by the immersion in a violent milieu in which the child is in constant danger but is never actually victimized (Bell & Jenkins, 1991). In many neighborhood settings, the traumatic experience is relived many times as the episode is retold over and over again by children and adults.

Although there are consistent findings about some of the behavioral outcomes of children who have experienced violence, there is less information about the long-term implications of early childhood exposure to violence. The notion of the "cycle of violence" and "intergenerational transmission of violence" has instigated much debate about whether adults who experienced violence as a child will be perpetrators of violence as parents (Kaufman & Ziglar, 1987; Widom, 1989a; Widom, 1989b). Many of these studies focus on family violence; however, because of the overlap in likelihood of exposure to both family and neighborhood types of violence and consistencies in effects, a parallel may be drawn between the two. Thus, the "cycle of violence" perspective could be applied to neighborhood violence. As has been suggested by various authors (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Greene, 1993; Martinez & Richters, 1993), children may carry within them psychological disorders caused by violent exposure to violence from childhood into adulthood. The symptoms of depression and anxiety, for example, may be reflected in dysfunctional adult relationships or ineffective parenting behaviors. Dysfunctional behaviors and incompetence demonstrated by young children are predictive of maladjustment and high-risk behaviors in

adolescents. If there is no intervention or change in the environment, it could be expected that these behaviors will continue past adolescence and become even more disruptive in adult life.

There also may be some children who witness violence as children and become perpetrators or victims as adults. Because neighborhood violence has deadly potential, it is difficult to know if a victim was or would have become a perpetrator if he were not killed first. Also, because of the amount of violence permeated throughout society, it would be difficult for anyone not to have experienced some type of violence. Again, it may be imperative to look at the chronicity of exposure to violence when looking at how it may perpetuate the cycle. Bell and Jenkins (1991) suggested that children fed a steady diet of violence will, in turn, feed into the cycle, as can be seen in many inner-city neighborhoods.

Widom (1989a) discussed the role of childhood abuse and neglect and its link to adult delinquency, criminal, and violent behavior. She also found methodological problems that make it difficult to conclude that early abuse and neglect result in later delinquent behaviors. Widom (1989b) suggested that there are mediating variables that can offset the effects of these early experiences, such as environmental conditions, biological pre dispositions, and positive events. For example, a positive role model or a personal experience with a different and better life may over-ride the negative influences of growing up surrounded by violence. Kaufman and Ziglar (1987) have presented weaknesses in the methodologies in many of the studies that concluded that intergenerational transmission is inevitable and suggest instead that only about one-third of the individuals who were abused as children are likely to abuse their offspring. They suggested that it may be more fruitful to focus on the conditions under which the transmission of violence is likely to occur.

As has been discussed, the negative characteristics of low-income neighborhoods appear to penetrate family life and inflict negative influences that hamper healthy family

functioning. The information in this section provides a framework for the next two sections of this review (on characteristics of mothers and children, respectively) that can further our understanding of how families cope with violence in their neighborhoods.

Characteristics of mothers

As was described earlier, neighborhood characteristics such as poverty and violence greatly influence family functioning. There are also specific individual characteristics of mothers such as economic status, age, education, parenting style, and maternal mental health that influence family functioning. These characteristics are pertinent for better understanding the relationship of the mothers with the neighborhood and the child. Again, a selective review of research on low-income, African-American mothers will be given to help guide our understanding of how these mothers live and interact with their children in an often violent environment.

Many low-income African-American mothers are single and remain single while raising a family. In 1993, approximately 68% of African-American children under the age of 18 lived with an unmarried mother, and many of these families have low economic status (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). There are several reasons why low-income African-American women remain single. Wilson (1987) pointed out that marrying unemployed fathers would not lift the families out of poverty and might risk welfare benefits that single mothers are able to receive. The age of the mother also influences her likelihood of remaining single. Teenage African-American women tend to have children out of wedlock and remain single throughout the child's life. Many teen mothers remain living with their own mother and, thus, receive the child-care support that they would not get from the fathers of the children (Beck & Beck, 1989).

The economic strain many African-American mothers experience is perpetuated by the

joblessness of many African-American men who are the unemployed fathers. The men are jobless and, therefore, unable to provide for their children. As a result, many of these men are uninvolved in their children's lives, thereby decreasing the children's exposure to male role models. Extended family members, such as uncles and cousins, or occasional boyfriends are frequently the only male figures available. Boyd-Franklin and Garcia-Petro (1994) found in their clinical work that many African-American women reported a yearning for closeness with their own fathers that they had never truly experienced. Many of the women alluded to the impact that lack of role models for healthy female-to-male relationships has had on their own lives when they have struggled to build relationships with men.

The nature of the relationship between poor nonresidential fathers and their children depends more on the relationship between the father and mother than that between the father and children (McLoyd, 1990). The mother shapes the child's behaviors and attitudes toward the father. If the mother has had a negative relationship with the fathers, she most likely will convey this information to the children. In many low-income African-American families living under chronic stress, conflict and violence are prevalent (Gelles, Steinmetz, & Straus, 1980; Staples, 1994). Children who witness conflict and violence between parents report higher levels of distress about the violence in their home and neighborhood (Martinez & Richters, 1993). As a result, violent two-parent families may put children at greater risk than nonviolent single-parent families. Also, children are more likely to experience abuse from their fathers than their mothers, even when their father-child time together is very limited (Gelles, 1994). Boyfriends who spend extended amounts of time in the home with the mother usually do not take an active role in parenting. The boyfriends are there for the mother, not for the children and, therefore, have limited exposure to the children. The mother remains the dominant provider of everything for her children's financial, physical, and economic needs.

One result of a women becoming pregnant as a teen is reflected in the educational attainment level of young mothers. A teen who is at least in high school when she becomes a mother has a higher probability of finishing school. Even so, less than half of teen mothers ever finish high-school. And a young teen is less likely to finish high school if she has her first child before the age of 14 (Ladner, 1988). Educational attainment level also has been reported to have a positive relationship with parenting. Therefore, the higher the level of education attained, the better the parenting (Blackwell, 1991). Many studies of low-income single mothers show high rates of school drop-outs, with eleventh grade being the highest grade most often completed (Randolph, 1994; McLoyd, 1990). This pattern increases the chance that children born to young mothers will not receive the most beneficial parenting. Thus, at an early age, many young low-income African-American children face challenges even before entering school that make school achievement very difficult (Ogbu, 1988; Edelman, 1993).

Ultimately, the combination of not finishing high school and having children increases the likelihood of unemployment for many low-income mothers. Employment options also are reduced for mothers with low-education levels and school drop-out status. Even if the employment is secured, much of the employment only pays only minimum wages and is low skilled with limited advancement. Also influencing work options for low-income inner-city mothers is the location of job opportunities. Few jobs are in and around their home neighborhoods, making transportation to jobs a necessity that may be very difficult to obtain (Bowman, 1991; Wilson, 1987). Systematic barriers from the past and present continue to restrict the majority of Black workers to low-level, secondary-sector jobs. And child care is a separate barrier to young women's employment. Although young mothers may be able to rely on grandmothers or other relatives for child-care support, other child-care options for poor

mothers are very limited (Phillips, Voran, Kisker, Howes, Whitebook, 1994). Yet, even with all these barriers, Black women make up over half of total employment of Blacks (Hacker, 1992.)

The parenting style of many low-income African-American mothers tends to be more punitive and restrictive and less supportive than parenting styles that foster the most competent and well-adjusted children (Baumrind, 1968; 1989).⁹ Baumrind has labeled different styles of parenting as "authoritarian," "permissive," and "authoritative." Authoritarian parents try to shape, mold, and control the behavior of their children according to absolute standards of behavior. These parents emphasize respect and obedience, which they see as being the most important qualities to foster in children. The children of these parents tend to be moody, unhappy, easily annoyed, and vulnerable to stress (Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984).⁹ Permissive parents, on the other hand, tend to not provide any discipline, do not mold or direct the child's behavior, and see themselves as a resource for the child. Children reared by permissive parents show impulsive-aggressive behavior and low levels of self-reliance and are frequently out of control (Baumrind, 1968). The third style of parenting, authoritative, is characterized by positive reinforcement and little use of punishment. The parent is responsive to the child's wants and needs while also controlling the child's behavior based upon what is best for his/her developmental needs. Children reared by authoritative parents tend to be the most socially competent and characterized as friendly, self-reliant, and cheerful (Baumrind, 1968).

Researchers (Baumrind, 1968; Belsky, Lerner & Spanier, 1984) suggest that physical and emotional punishment are generally detrimental to children's development, while consistent use of discipline and psychological forms of discipline are more effective in producing desired child outcomes (Straus, 1994).⁹ Ultimately, because of the stress and

uncertainty inherent in living in high-risk neighborhoods, parents there usually do not use consistent and psychological forms of discipline (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Parents there use different forms of parenting based on what they know. The mothers use discipline and socialization techniques that they believe will help prepare their child to succeed in the world (Gelles, 1994). And, it is important to note, depending on the culture, the authoritarian parenting style does not necessarily have negative effects on children.

Related to parenting is the mental health of mothers. Much of the research on the mental health of African-American mothers has shown an association with parenting stress, social support, and employment status (Quittner, Glueckauf, & Jackson, 1990; D'Ercole, 1988; Murata, 1994). In their study of the effects of unemployment and work interruption on 241 single mothers, McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, and Borquez (1994) found that stress related to unemployment adversely affected parenting behaviors. High levels of depression in the mothers were reported because of their feelings of vulnerability, lack of confidence about the future, and diminished sense of identity. The onset of depression in the women increased their levels of stress and reduced the occurrence of warm and affectionate parenting of their children while increasing their likelihood of engaging in punitive and unaffectionate parenting (McLoyd et al. 1994). Economic stress, unemployment, and number of children have been shown to have negative influences on the mental health of many low-income African-American adults (Hall, 1990; Brown & Gary, 1988). The mental health of African-American mothers is further jeopardized by dual minority status of being both woman and Black (Kessler & Neighbors, 1986). Although social support is often a buffer to depressive symptoms, many low-income mothers are not receiving the type of social support most helpful for stressful situations (McLoyd & Wilson, 1989; Hashima & Amato, 1994). As will be pointed out in the next section, there is a strong relationship between maternal mental health and a child's adjustment,

well-being, and behaviors.

Parenting in low-income neighborhoods

For parenting to be successful in high-risk neighborhoods, the mother must overcome powerful negative forces, such as being poor, a single parent, lacking social support, having minority status, and experiencing the depressive effects of living under chronic stress (Scheinfeld, 1983). Many of these factors may be precursors for abuse, violence, and ineffective parenting (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Young, poor, uneducated mothers are unskilled, untrained, and consistently unable to provide support for themselves and their children (Blackwell, 1991). Children born to low-income young mothers are at greater risk for low birthrate, lower educational attainment, and more abusive home and neighborhood environments (Bradley, Whiteside, & Mundfrom, 1994; Gelles & Straus, 1986). The emotional distress of many poor mothers, whatever its source, disposes them toward aversive and punitive parenting (Conger, 1984; McLoyd & Wilson, 1990).⁶

Many of the characteristics of low-income mothers may be negative contributors to their children's development and well-being. The mother characteristics that may directly affect the child also should be considered an indirect effect of the neighborhood (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994).⁷ The need for some type of positive social support remains important not only for the mental health of the mothers but also for the welfare of their children. Without support, the mothers may remain overwhelmed, which leads to increased depression that perpetuates their isolation from social support (Stevens, 1988). Neighborhood and social conditions affect maternal depression, and the child's well-being is affected by the mother's level of depression. The family environment created when mothers are depressed is characterized by decreased expressiveness, cohesion, and organization and increased conflict and hostility (Hall, Gurley, Sacks, & Kryscio, 1991; Murata, 1994; Zelkowitz, 1987). Hall and

Farel (1988) found maternal depression to have the greatest impact on maternal attitudes about child-rearing. As a result, mothers who are more depressed tend to be more negative about attitudes of parenting, which is reflected in poor parenting. The negative parental attitudes depressed mothers may display have been shown to be strongly correlated with child behavior problems (Hall, Gurley, Sachs, & Kryscio, 1991). Depressed mothers report more behavior problems in their children than non-depressed mothers and tend to not seek outside support or help. This is hypothesized to occur because the mothers have low self-confidence related to ineffective parenting. They realize the child is difficult to handle but would feel like a failure if they had to ask for help (Goodman & Brumley, 1990; Fendrick, Warner, & Weissman, 1990).

For many mothers, social support has been shown to buffer feelings of stress and levels of depression (Stevens, 1989; Murata, 1994; Gladlow & Ray, 1986; Chatters, Taylor, & Neighbors, 1989). In her study of low-income inner-city mothers, Murata (1994) found that many of these women did not receive the social support they needed from family or friends. However, the mothers who reported having someone to talk to and with who to do things were more likely to use more effective parenting strategies and conflict-resolution skills. The mothers who reported higher levels of stress in the family were more likely to yell at and to use violence with their children. As a result, sons displayed more internalizing behaviors such as being anxious, depressed, and socially withdrawn. Most often, the mothers reported friends were used more often than family members for social support. Gladlow and Ray (1989) also found that friends and family were used as different types of social support for low-income single mothers. They found that support from friends appeared to have the greatest impact on reducing the mothers' sense of loneliness. The highest levels of happiness were reported when they had frequent and satisfactory personal conversations with friends. Depression persisted in

mothers who felt isolated in their communities even though they had the support of friends.

When mothers' depression and sense of isolation continue, negative effects can be anticipated in their children. Mothers who are depressed and socially isolated may not be able to effectively assist their children to cope with the stress and violence they experience in the neighborhood, school, and home (Cochran, 1993; Garbarino, 1992). The mother may be in denial about, or not aware of, the daily risks faced by her family and, therefore, not able to provide needed protection measures (Schubiner, Scott & Tzelepis, 1993). Zerkowicz (1987) found that behavior problems in children were reduced when mothers used other adult support and help with parenting. Additional support from other adults had an inverse relationship with child behavior problems, especially when the mother was less nurturing. When mothers alone are not able to provide protective parenting, this additional support could be pivotal to keeping children safe in high-risk neighborhoods.

In a study of low-income mothers and children living in a high-crime neighborhood, Martinez and Richters (1993) found that mothers underestimated the amount of victimization and exposure to violence their children experienced, even though they reported the same amounts and types of neighborhood violence. Almost half of the mothers reported that their children never worried about being safe. None of the children said they never worried, and over half of the children said they worried a lot of the time. Children may hide the truth about the dangers they experience out of fear of parental rejection or knowing they will be told nothing can be done. This sense of powerlessness is linked with the fear of retaliation if crimes are reported (Dubrow & Garbarino, 1988). The resultant learned helplessness can lead to increased stress due to perceived lack of control in the individual's life (Wills & Langner, 1980). Persistent negative characteristics of the neighborhood often lead parents to perceive they not only have neither internal nor external control of the situation in which they are living

and rearing their children.

Studies looking at reports from both mothers and their children about experiences with violence suggest that mothers tend to underestimate both the level of exposure and the impact of violence on their children (Martinez & Richters, 1993; Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993). The mothers and children agreed on overall levels of violence throughout the neighborhoods but differed significantly on perceptions of the children's personal exposure level and feelings. One reason mothers underreport their children's experiences could be that the mothers are so overstressed themselves that they are unaware of their children's experiences. Mothers may not perceive that they are stressed because they have learned overtime to function while under great strains and have adapted to that lifestyle (Dubrow & Garbarino, 1988). One study that investigated how battered women perceive their children's experiences of living with the abuser found that the women were very aware that their children had many needs but knew they were unable to meet these needs (Henderson, 1993). This phenomenological study interviewed the women in order to ascertain their perception of the experience for their children. Although the women felt incompetent to help their children, they acknowledged that they needed help if they wanted to help their children in the future, as opposed to denying there was any need or risk.

There are several situational factors that limit support and increase stress that may help explain what is occurring in violent neighborhoods (Hobfoll, 1988). One factor is the expectation one has about independent functioning when responding to neighborhood events. For example, a mother may not expect her child to be scared by the sounds of gunshots, which leads her to not respond to the child even if he or she expresses some need. A second situational factor is when stressors become chronic and social support dwindles either suddenly or over time and the victim has not fully dealt with the violent event. People may rally

together for support immediately after a violent event but fail to provide long-term support for fear and anxiety that surfaces later. Another factor is that stressful events rarely affect only a single individual. More commonly, an entire family or neighborhood community is affected directly. In this case, those who are distressed often become unable to provide their normal support for others, like a mother for a child. Also, in a neighborhood where many people are affected, individuals may be more likely to pull each other down rather than provide support (Hobfoll, 1988).

In examining the level of stress with which many of these women are living, it is necessary to look at the entire social environment. Stress may be buffered or responded to differently in every situation because of the mother's interpretation of the situation. Stress refers to processes in the external environment or within the person that impose a demand upon the organism and, whose consequences are judged as important (Schlesinger & Revitch, 1980). Therefore, if an individual does not judge an event as stressful or important, the event will not evoke responses to help buffer or filter what has occurred. Behaviors that are employed for the purpose of reducing strain in the face of stress are called coping mechanisms. The mother may use familiar coping mechanisms such as ignoring an event that has occurred or talking about it in relationship to events that are worse so to make it seem less overwhelming. These behaviors, although familiar and useful for the mother, may be misleading to the child (Richters & Martinez, 1993). The child may be given the impression that the event was not dangerous so she will not perceive it as dangerous in the future. The child's interpretation could put her at greater risk when on her own and not with her mother.

There are continuous interactions between the mother, the environment, and the child. The relationship between the neighborhood and the mother is bi-directional, as is the mutual mother-child relationship. Not only are the unique characteristics of the individuals and the

neighborhood important to recognize, but it is necessary to accurately understand how mothers and children cope with neighborhood violence. The last section of this review will focus on child characteristics. The information will be discussed as it relates to the child's well-being and competence, and the nature of interactions will be addressed from the point of the child to the mother and to the neighborhood.

Child characteristics

Researchers consistently have pointed to the disadvantages that being poor and African American can place on a child (Garbarino, 1994; Lerner, 1994; Mayer & Jencks, 1989; Wilson, 1989; McLoyd, 1990). From the social environment to the family environment to individual characteristics, low-income African American children must overcome great adversities and challenges throughout their lives. Children living in low-income, single parent homes in violent neighborhoods are at greater risk for experiencing negative effects of the accumulation of risks with few or no compensatory forces at work (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostenly, & Pardo, 1992). Being of minority status, growing up in low-income, single-parent homes, and being male have all been identified as heightening the risk of disturbances in peer relations, higher incidence of behavior and psychological disorders, and lower levels of academic achievement (Rutter & Garmezy, 1983; McLoyd & Wilson, 1989). The violence in these neighborhoods also bombards the children with life- and-death situations and other stressful life events that many adults in our culture never have to confront. These children are characterized by low academic achievement and self-esteem and frequent psychological and behavior problems.

Poverty and factors associated with poverty have pervasive negative effects on a child's adaptation and well-being. Many studies have shown that development is delayed, and psychological and behavior problems are likely to be identified once these children are in

school. Unfortunately, effective functioning in some settings, like the home and neighborhood, may require skills that are different from those needed for effective functioning in other settings, such as school (Bronfenbrenner, Moen, & Garbarino, 1984; Ogbu, 1985; Garbarino, 1994). As a result, many low-income children do not exhibit the social and behavioral skills expected in school. Low-income preschool children often show behavior problems and function poorly on the social, emotional, behavioral, and academical levels (Egeland & Abery, 1991; Pianta, Erickson, Wagner, Kreutzer, & Egeland, 1990; Taylor, 1989). It is difficult for these children to improve in overall adaptation and functioning unless something changes in their social and family environments. In their longitudinal study, Egeland and Erickson (1990) found that changes over time were influenced by mother-child interactions and environmental support. Children whose functioning worsened across time had experienced significant decreases in environmental support and lower levels of mother-child interaction. Those children with some degree of recovery from earlier maladaptation had experienced improved maternal care and support. A predictor for higher quality mother-child interactions was a secure attachment during infancy and early childhood. Egeland and Kreutzer (1991) suggested that this may be a protective factor for children because positive mother-child interactions increased both early competence as well as positive adaptation in school. The psychological functioning of the child and mother was found to benefit from high quality mother-child relationship throughout development.

Consistent findings have been reported for children regarding the amount of exposure to neighborhood violence (Greene, 1993; Dubrow & Garbarino, 1988; Richters & Martinez, 1993; Bell & Jenkins, 1993). Not only are teens affected by the violence, but victims and witnesses to violence are becoming younger than formerly reported, which may help to explain the prevalent behavior and psychological problems appearing in children as soon as they enter

school. Dubrow and Garbarino (1989) interviewed Black mothers living in a high-rise housing development in Chicago and found that mothers reported that children as young as three years of age were very aware of the dangers and violence in their neighborhoods. The young children were aware of who was doing the shooting and when the family was in danger. These young children have been forced to start coping with difficult situations before they have been able developmentally to acquire good coping skills. Children who are very young are exposed to high levels of unexplained violence that school-aged children are enmeshed in. Richters and Martinez (1993) found that, as children grow older, they more often know both those who are victimized and those who are the perpetrators. The impact of the violence can be seen in higher levels of distress and participation in risky behaviors. The children in Richters' and Martinez's study reported frequent and high intensity distress symptoms ranging from trouble paying attention, not caring about anything, and difficulty avoiding fear, to depression and anxiety. The distress increased for children if they knew the person who was the perpetrator or the victim, and many times they did. Bell and Jenkins (1993) reported that one correlate for being more likely to witnessing, being victimized by, or perpetrating violence was the act of carrying a gun. Over 30% of the older children in this study reported carrying a gun, which might suggest that these children were trying to take safety into their own hands.

Several studies (van der Kolk, 1989; Sameroff & Siefer, 1990) have reported that in general children function sufficiently well in situations entailing one or two risks (for example, low SES, maternal depression), but with three or more risks, their development and well-being may be jeopardized. For example, van de Kolk (1987) found that intelligence scores dropped more than 18 points for children who experienced four traumatic or stressful events. Garnezy (1993) found similar effects of stress on psychological disorders in children who were experiencing stressful life events. He found that one stressor caused a 1% increase in

psychological disorder, three stressors caused a 6% increase, and four stressors caused a 21% increase. Again, the pile-up of stressors in children's lives is highly detrimental. Pile-up is ubiquitous in the lives of low-income, African-American children (Davidson & Smith, 1990) and the greatest concern must be for those who experience stress and trauma at very young ages because of life-situations and conditions over which they have no control (Garbarino & Dubrow, 1989).

When looking at the effects and negative consequences of such events the timing of stressful negative events is particularly relevant. Van der Kolk (1989) reported that children who experienced a traumatic event before the age of four were likely to later report having given up hope for the future, which may lead to extreme or fatalistic thinking. For example, the child may question the importance of doing homework when he believes that his life could end tomorrow. Davidson and Smith (1990) found in a sample of young inner-city children, those who had experienced a traumatic event before the age of 11 were three times more likely to experience PTSD. It has been suggested that these effects are so negative and detrimental because young children do not have adequate coping skills available to deal effectively with such highly stressful events. Young children have not had the time to develop their own effective coping mechanisms or observe alternative coping strategies used by others when they experience powerful negative events at such young ages (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Garmezy, 1993). Also, these children may not have helpful resources available from their adult care-takers nor receive adequate parental support at a time when many young children must rely solely on their parent for support (Nolen-Hoeksem, 1992).

Many of the coping strategies generally available to young children often are challenged when applied in high-risk families and neighborhoods. For young children, distress and poor functioning often end when the stressor ends, but children living under chronic stress

continue to show high levels of distress for long periods of time even after the stressors finally end (Nolen-Hoeksema, Gingus, & Sellman, 1992). Children who were distressed for an extended period of time became more pessimistic in their expectations for themselves and the future, and this pessimism remained with the children after the distress subsided. Nolen-Hoeksema, Gingus, and Sellman (1992) suggested that teaching young children different coping mechanisms may not only reduce the immediate stress of the event but also may reduce any long-term effects. Although some of the suggested coping mechanisms, such as expressing their emotions, reconstructing the event, using positive imagery, and developing reasonable goals, may be helpful for managing some stressful events. However, their effectiveness of these factors may be challenged for children living with chronic violence, stress, and negative life events. For example, a child may express fear and distress to her mother in the hope that she can make it better. However, in high-risk environments and families where the mother cannot change the stressor (violence or poverty), the child may feel betrayed and lose hope in capabilities of adults to provide help and protection in times of need (Kirschenbaum & Ordman, 1984). As well, many of the other suggested coping mechanisms require an adult to facilitate and reinforce the child's coping skills. The usefulness of teaching these skills to young children without effective adult support may be questioned.

Although there are many children experiencing negative life events and high levels of stress at very young ages, some children are able to repel the stress and appear invulnerable to these negative experiences (Luthar & Ziglar, 1991; Garmezy, 1993; Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). Studies of resilience, regardless of the risk conditions, consistently highlight the importance of supportive caregiving in the protective process (Rodke-Yarrow & Sherman, 1990; Garmezy, 1993). However, there is still much to be learned from children who are reported to be resilient or invulnerable through even the most adverse experiences. Faber and

Egeland (1987) have suggested that although some children show competent behavior and good coping strategies, they may not be emotionally healthy. Emotional unhealthiness may not show up until the child is older or during a later developmental transition. Many studies of resilient children have not followed the child into later life because the researchers have assumed the children to be permanently well-functioning or because the studies were retrospective and at the time the person was functioning well. Still, several protective factors have been suggested as fostering resilience in high-risk young children (Werner, 1989; Garmezy, 1992). The three types of protective factors that have emerged most clearly are (a) dispositional attributes of the individual, (b) affectional ties within the family, and (c) external support systems. Dispositional attributes consist of sociability and high activity level, at least average intelligence, competence in communication skills, and an internal locus of control. Affectional ties within the family refer to receiving emotional support in times of stress from a parent, sibling, or other relative. Lastly, external support systems that are needed are those that reward the individual's competencies and determination, as well as provide a belief system by which to live. These protective factors are useful not only during childhood but also during adulthood, to continue to foster competence (Werner, 1989).

As stated earlier, the mother's mental health may affect the child and his behavior, but the reverse is also true. Children who are aggressive and anxious have been reported to increase parental stress, which in turn affects maternal mental health (Bendell, Stone, Field, & Goldstein, 1986; Quittner, Jackson, Glueckauf, 1990; Bunker, Baxter, & Butler, 1994). Parenting stress consistently has been linked to high levels of maternal depression. Some of the child's behaviors that influence parental stress relate to their developmental progress; responsiveness to the mother; and their own temperament, self-esteem, and behavior problems. Bendell, Stone, Field, and Goldstein (1986) looked at parenting stress of 66 low-income

mothers. They found that the child's self-esteem and behavior problems were the primary contributors to maternal stress, even more so than all other life-stressors. It is still important to recognize that the child's self-esteem and behavior problems may stem from the mother's behaviors, but at the same time, those behaviors are affecting the mother. The child's negative social behaviors may erode the mother's capacity to discipline effectively by undermining her self-esteem and inducing feelings of depression. This may be the point at which the mother would most benefit from external forms of social support and care-taking (Zelkowitz, 1987).

As a result of maternal depression, parenting behaviors may be limited and fail to enhance competence in the child. Also, when mothers in high-risk neighborhoods become unable to effectively parent, their children are put at greater risk for danger. A depressed mother may not be aware of her child's activities in the neighborhood. As the child takes a more active role in the neighborhood, she may participate in more dangerous activities. Her acceptance of the neighborhood may enhance the likelihood of participating in more negative neighborhood events. The mother also may encourage participation in the neighborhood because she is not aware of the risks and danger. This is particularly likely to happen if the mother is isolated in the neighborhood and, thus, does not know the people in the neighborhood or their activities. Conversely, if the mother is highly integrated into the neighborhood and incorrectly perceives it as safe, she unknowingly may put her child at risk for danger. As Werner and Smith (1982) suggested, families who are integrated into the neighborhood may be at greater risk for danger because they no longer are cautious about the dangers. They do not fear the neighborhood because they feel they know the residents, even though that will not stop a stray bullet.

Many children living in high-risk neighborhoods respond to their environment with rage, distrust, and hopelessness. The characteristics of these children are attributed to their

experiences in these social environments, that affect the child's well-being. Greene (1994) has suggested that children growing up in violence and poverty are angry about what feels like everyone's inattention to their lives. Many mothers are unable to support and protect the child when the neighborhood in which they live is what they need protection from. Children are experiencing a phenomenon call "free-floating anger." They experience this anger in the neighborhood as violence just waiting to happen, and they experience anger toward what is occurring around them within themselves (Ramsey, 1991). Although a mother may try to support her child, the child may direct some anger towards her because she makes the child live in that neighborhood, even though she knows there may never be a change.

The distrust that evolves in children living in high-risk neighborhoods stems from the lack of supportive, intimate relationships in the home and neighborhood. These relationships either cannot develop or are stifled because of the chronic violence (Aber & Allen, 1987). Without a safe environment, attachments are developed out of a sense of what each party can get from the other. Trust is necessary for healthy relationships to occur, and many of these children do not trust anyone. As violence, anger, and distrust continues, the children develop a grim outlook on life. It is difficult to provide for children who feel so hopeless at such young ages. The children may not have goals for the future because that they do not perceive they will have a future or they do not have someone to help them along their way (Greene, 1994). Although a mother may be able to provide some of the safety and security that is needed to establish the trust with young children, by the time the child reaches adolescence, the mother often has lost her guidance, monitor and control her children.

These responses to anger, distrust, and hopelessness may point to why many children are not resilient in the face of negative influences in the neighborhood and family. As was stated early, several of the protective factors that enhance resilience and invulnerability are not

displayed by all children, as Green's (1994) work has demonstrated. It is with this in mind that the critical importance of studies that enhance our knowledge about the experience of neighborhood violence can be appreciated. Life for many families living in low-income neighborhoods is devastating. However, it is from these families themselves that we can learn what is important to them and how they continue to survive in their neighborhoods. The interest in low-income, inner-city, high-risk African-American families has increased over the years, as demonstrated by the marked increase in studies of this population that have been conducted. However, there is much still to be learned, particularly from qualitative and ethnographic studies about violence that will evoke the lived experience of these mothers and children. The groundwork has been provided by all of the quantitative information that has been gathered about the amount and kinds of exposure to violence that have been experienced by inner-city families. What is most needed now, I think, is more qualitative research that focuses on the specific experiences and perspectives of the mothers and children who actually live in violent neighborhoods. I have found no studies that have addressed how mothers and their children communicate about the violence in their neighborhoods. It has been established that the violence is prevalent in many inner-city neighborhoods, but little is known about how these families deal with the violence every-day. Now is the time for the story to be told of how these women and children cope with the violence and how it affects the relationships they share in their neighborhoods and families.

Chapter III

Methodology

This is a qualitative study of the experience and meaning of neighborhood violence for mothers and their children living in a low-income, high-risk housing development in the southeast region of the United States. This study has employed qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing to provide descriptions and interpretations of the experience of neighborhood violence for mothers and their children. This study was guided by both phenomenological and ethnographic interview strategies. Over a period of years, I have spent many hours in the neighborhood in order to better understand the culture of the people living there. I have come to know several families in the neighborhood very well, making afternoon and evening visits, as well as attending neighborhood activities and parties. These interactions have allowed me to become familiar with the ethnic dialogue of the neighborhood and have led to the development of the present study.

Ethnographic interviews explore the nature of a phenomenon by eliciting values, beliefs, and practices of a cultural group (Morse, 1994; Spradley, 1979). An ethnographic study not only looks at a phenomenon but focuses on the meaning of the phenomenon. The culture of the participants is recognized in order to help interpret the meaning given to the phenomenon or experience. Spradley (1979) refers to culture as the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior. Cultural rules guide behavior and are perpetuated by the groups to which individuals belong. A phenomenological study explores the essence of experiences and the meaning of a phenomenon (Morse, 1994; Ray, 1994; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). This approach allows for the study of human-being-in-the-world--not just the human or the world but the two together (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Phenomenological studies describe human experiences as they are

lived, from the first-person view. Questions are focused on specific experiences of the participants rather than on abstractions or speculations. The interviewer does not want to be seen as more powerful or knowledgeable because the respondents must be the expert on their own experiences.

The participants in this study were given the opportunity to give their own perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about neighborhood violence. The purpose of interviewing was to enter into each person's perspective and find out their feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Patton, 1990). In-depth interviews with a small number of people can provide valid, meaningful, and insightful information. In-depth qualitative interviews can allow the investigator to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions that have been used to construct each participant's world (McCracken, 1988).

Procedures

Pilot interview. In order to assess the usefulness of the interview protocol, a pilot study was conducted with one mother and her son. The pilot interviews were instrumental in finetuning the questions concerning experiences of neighborhood violence. These first interviews established the need to ask specifically of how each participant defined or described neighborhood violence. This approach allowed for probing questions regarding whether or not the mothers and children had experienced any of the violence they defined. In the pilot interview, it became apparent that the mother interpreted the words "experienced violence" as meaning she had personally been the target of neighborhood violence. Because this mother referenced drive-bys, gang fights, and drug dealers in her definition of violence, I asked her if she had seen or experienced any of the violence associated with her definition. She responded with information about personal experiences associated with each part of her definition. Therefore, I asked all of the mothers about experiences they may have had with the specific

examples they gave as definitions of violence. Another useful insight gained from the pilot interviews was about how much the mother talked about specific areas of the neighborhood or specific streets being either bad or good areas. As a result, I was able to create a map with streets and buildings in the neighborhood to show each participant in order to elicit information about perceptions of specific areas of the neighborhood, or any other information deemed relevant by the participant concerning the neighborhood.

Gaining access to the neighborhood. The neighborhood chosen for study in this project is one in which I had been working for five years. Through a mentoring program sponsored by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I became a mentor to a young girl and her family who lived in what I will call Darbyville (not the actual name of the place), a housing development in Knoxville. I also worked for this program, matching up university students as mentors to children from this neighborhood. In this capacity, I was able to meet over 75 families in or around the neighborhood. After spending many hours with the family of the child I was mentoring, as well as other families involved in the program, I became a familiar "guest" to the neighborhood. The time spent in the neighborhood allowed me to develop close relationships with several families and to make observations concerning the activities of daily life in Darbyville. The five years I spent in Darbyville, with open eyes and ears, contributed invaluable to my being able to successfully complete this study.

Because of my familiarity in the neighborhood, I was able to enter the field to conduct my research having established a level of confidence about information obtained during the interviews. I would not have had this confidence if I had not spent the previous in Darbyville. I have witnessed and learned enough about the residents' activities and experience with violence in the neighborhood to know that the information given to me in the interviews were not exaggerated or made up. Some mothers may have felt reserved about sharing with me

everything that they know about the neighborhood, but most were very open and honest. In fact, most of the information about "big" activities or events in the neighborhood was shared by several mothers and children, helping to establish confidence in data collection and demonstrating the accuracy of information. I also was able to bring up specific events or the pervasive East Side/West Side rivalry, which allowed the mothers to know I already was familiar with events in the neighborhood. I have known most of the mothers I interviewed for several years, and I have had numerous conversations with them about my concern for what is occurring in Darbyville. Again, because the mothers knew that I was knowledgeable and concerned about what was happening in their neighborhood, they may not have worried as much as if I were a stranger to the community that they might tell me "too much" or describe something I did not already know about that could get them into trouble in the community.

During the planning stage of this study, it was assumed I would use the home of the child I was mentoring as a familiar place to go as my homebase in the neighborhood. However, this family was able to move out of the neighborhood into a Habitat for Humanity house prior to my beginning to collect data for this study. I then asked a mother I had known during the first years of the mentoring program if she could assist me by making recommendations of mothers to be included in the study and letting her home be my "familiar place to go" (a necessary safety pre-caution). Wendy (a pseudonym, as are all the other names to be used for participants in this report) was pleased that I asked for her help and opened her apartment to me at any time. We talked on several occasions about how I might best approach mothers about being in the study. Wendy said that people in the Darbyville knew I was interested in helping children in the neighborhood, and she felt few mothers would decline if asked to be involved in the study. She then offered advice about how to ask the mothers to participate and when to pay the mothers. She said first to make small talk, then just ask if

they would like to tell me about living in Darbyville. She said most of these people do not associate with others too much, and they always are looking to talk to someone. Concerning the money payment for participating, Wendy suggested that I only carry the money for one interview and if other people were around, to wait to pay the mother until we were alone. She suggested this because she thought it might not be safe for me to walk around the neighborhood with a lot of money because people would find out I was paying the mothers for each interview. I took her advice and only carried the money for one interview at a time keeping the money in the tape cassette being used for the interview. I took Wendy's advice (along with my previous experience in doing research in Darbyville) and conducted the interviews within about four weeks altogether. I always stopped by Wendy's apartment upon entering the neighborhood in order to learn if anything had happened in the area that would make it dangerous for me to be there right then.

Recruiting participants. The participants in this study were single, low-income, African-American mothers with at least one child between the ages of 11 and 14 years, who live in the Darbyville Housing Development. A purposeful sample of mothers and children were recruited from families living in this one low-income inner-city neighborhood in a southern state. Currently, 98% of the families living in Darbyville are African-American, and 80% are female-headed households. Because this is a study of mothers within a neighborhood, mothers were chosen to represent different areas of the neighborhood (see the map in Appendix; the shaded rooftops indicate the buildings where the participants live). Mothers were recruited from four of the six blocks comprising the neighborhood. Three mothers who originally were recruited from the other two blocks declined to participate in the study because of having no available time. Two mothers originally agreed to participate but after I made three visits to each home neither mother felt she had any information to share. Both mothers

were thanked and asked to call me if they changed their minds. The third "turn-down" said she did not want to be interviewed at the present time. As a result of their dropping out and upon the recommendation of Wendy (who was assisting me in gaining access to people in the neighborhood), two additional mothers were asked to participate, even though they lived within the same blocks of the other eight mothers.

Although this was a small study, there were clear objectives for the purposeful sample of informants. Ten mothers and one child from each family were interviewed. The families were selected from different areas of the neighborhood to elicit information about experiences throughout the neighborhood. For example, mothers living on a corner of a street where drug dealers work may have a very different perspective of the neighborhood and its level of violence than a mother living on a dead-end street across from the flower gardens. It was important to gather both of these perspectives, as well as others, to better understand the neighborhood experience.

The age of the biological mothers ranged from 28 to 46 years. There were several reasons for choosing children between the ages of 11 and 14 years. First, developmentally these children were able to more effectively communicate their own personal experiences as well as perceptions about their mothers' experiences than would younger children. Also, these children are approaching the age when the mother may be beginning to permit them more unsupervised time out in the neighborhood, allowing them more opportunity to experience the neighborhood culture. Four male and six female children were included in this study. As was suggested in Chapter 2, boys and girls have different direct and indirect experiences with neighborhood violence, making it necessary to look at both experiences.

Each mother was paid \$10.00 for participating, and each child was given \$5.00 and a snack (sunflower seeds or a pickle). The mothers were surprised when they were told they

would receive \$10.00 for the interview. Four of the mothers questioned why they were receiving money and said they would do the interview without being paid. I told the mothers I appreciated their time and felt that they deserved being paid for assisting me in my research therefore, everyone would receive \$10.00. All mothers who agreed to participate also gave permission for their son or daughter to be interviewed, and no child refused to participate. The children were excited to receive \$5.00 and the snack of sunflower seeds or pickle. From previous experience I knew the children would like these types of snacks rather than cookies or chocolate. Two children even wanted to buy from me more sunflower seeds and pickles with the \$5.00 they received for doing the interview. All mothers signed a written consent form for themselves and their children to participate. Each child also signed a written consent form before being interviewed.

Data collection

The specific aims of this study were to explore the experience and meaning of neighborhood violence for mothers and children living in a low-income, high-risk public housing development. The data used for this study were (1) archival data, (2) transcriptions, and (3) field notes. The archival data provided contextual information about specific characteristics of the neighborhood and the people in it. This information was obtained from the Knoxville Community Development Corporation and the on-site manager of the housing development. Transcriptions came from the individual interviews I conducted and tape recorded with each mother and child. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions to obtain this information (see the interview protocol in the appendix). I probed for information at different times, based upon information already provided by the participants. Demographic data were gathered at the beginning of each interview. Each interview was tape recorded and immediately transcribed. Interviews with each mother took approximately two hours, and the child interviews lasted less than 40 minutes each. Interviews occurred at a time and place convenient to the mothers and children. The interviews were conducted in January and

February, and, because it was always cold, I did not come across many outdoor interactions or neighborhood activity. No interviews were completed without at least one interruption from the phone, a knock on the door, a child needing attention, or, in one case, a family member going into labor (she had a baby boy). From previous experience with conducting research in the neighborhood, I anticipated not being able to complete interviews without interruptions. Many times the interviews did not begin until about thirty minutes had passed "hanging out" and getting ready. Upon starting each interview we tested the tape recorder and how well the interview would be picked up on tape. This practice interview allowed the mothers and children to hear the background noise which usually caused them to turn off stereos and televisions or move to a new location, permitting better recording. Also, if needed I was able to move closer to the participant and ask for a louder voice in order for the interview to be heard. Once the interviews began the intrusions only caused minimal distraction. I did not hesitate to repeat a question already asked if I felt there was more information to be shared but had been stopped because of the phone ringing or someone knocking at the door.

I have found that my taking part in the research as a participant observer was beneficial in establishing the trustworthiness of the data I collected and in understanding the neighborhood activities and people. However, because I am White, middle-class, and completing a graduate degree, it is necessary to acknowledge that I have different perceptions and experiences about Darbyville than those people who live in the neighborhood. I am an outsider, a visitor. Although my racial and social-class identity is fairly obvious, neither seemed to stand in my way when I was gathering or evaluating my data. Still, my own personal history and characteristics do influence my interpretations of the data. Knowing this, I have tried to remain cognizant of my own subjectivities and always be mindful that I was trying to interpret the stories of the mothers and children in light of their own information and

experiences.

Cultural differences may influence how data are gathered and interpreted. Therefore, it is necessary to be as knowledgeable and comfortable with the culture I was studying so to help reduce misinterpretations. Again, it is important to remember that I was known by the people I interviewed, and most issues that may have cropped up in conducting this type of research have had time to occur in our other interactions over the last five years. Because I am familiar with much of the slang and language used throughout the neighborhood there were no dialogue barriers to hamper discussions or my understanding of their experiences. If there were words or slang used that I did not understand, I asked the participants to give an example or tell me more about what was being talked about. This allowed the mothers and children to know that they were the expert and I was there to learn from them.

The difference due to social class did not present barriers during data collection or analysis. In order not to be judgmental or evaluative it was necessary to analyze the data based upon the participant descriptions and experiences, not my own. Because I have previous knowledge of how some of these families live, there was little shock or surprise in the stories told. For example, I had previously observed communication and interactions patterns of several families so I was not alarmed by how the mothers and children talked, or did not talk, to one another. Finally, educational differences did not interfere in data collection or analysis. I took the role of an active learner, always wanting to know more and going to the "source" for the information, the mothers and children. I always explained what my research study was about and that the mothers and children were "helping" me finish my graduate degree. My training and knowledge related to neighborhood violence and research allowed for deeper probing and the continual search for more knowledge. Most importantly, I never denied or hid being White, middle-class, or college educated and always respected the differences that did

exist between the participants and myself.

I took field notes and gathered observational data from interactions with the mothers and children in the neighborhood. I wrote field notes while I was in the neighborhood, before and after the interviews. As well, I conducted ongoing observations to describe the setting, activities, and people involved in the study. I took field notes two different ways. While in the neighborhood a few weeks prior to beginning the actual interviews, I wrote field notes before and after visiting mothers and while I simply sat and observed neighborhood activity. I sketched a map of the neighborhood and marked places that were frequently used for "hanging out" and other interactions. During the time of the actual interviews, I dictated my own personal observations, feelings, and reactions before and after each interview. This tape was transcribed, and some of the information was used when describing the participants. The field notes were not used in depth or separately during data analysis.

Data analysis strategies

I personally transcribed all the interviews as soon as possible after each interview. The transcripts were read and reread, looking for categories. I identified the categories, which came from the data. Categories were drawn from each transcript and then compared across transcripts, pulling together common patterns. Tables were created to manage all information from each interview pertaining to each category. For example, information about each of the following categories became separate tables: drug dealers, definitions of violence, information about the map of Darbyville, and shootings. Separate tables were created from data coming from both mothers and children (see examples in appendix). From the categories, assertions were made in order to help develop patterns that led to the development of a thematic structure. Commonalities found throughout the transcripts were pulled together as global themes (Kvale, 1983). Themes were described, explained, and supported with direct quotes to

provide the evidence for that theme. The theme identification should not be seen as an exhaustive analysis but rather as common aspects emerging from a given set of personal experiences (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Categories and themes were examined at across mothers' and children's interviews. The language of the participants was used for thematic structure. These themes have been used to tell the stories of mothers and children who live day-to-day with neighborhood violence.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Data

Welcome to Darbyville

"Be careful." The first information two of my graduate school professors ever gave me about the Darbyville Housing Development was, "Be careful." They advised, "Do not go into the neighborhood by yourself, make sure someone knows you are going to Darbyville, and do not wear your 'good jewelry'." I listened to the advice as I took my first trip to Darbyville (a pseudonym) in the fall of 1990.

As I turned off Main Street, I drove two blocks until I saw the red brick buildings that make up the housing complex. I was told to park on Praire Street (all street names are pseudonyms) just past the second trash dumpster. I later learned that the trash dumpsters are familiar land-marks frequently used to direct people around the neighborhood. I also learned to be careful around the dumpsters because they occasionally are set on fire and have a lot of little "spray-bottle bombs" exploding inside, providing what the some adults and children in the neighborhood consider free entertainment. Along the side of the street where I was to park my car was a bed of broken glass, looking lie it was trying to keep me away. I was determined not to be bothered by the challenge and found a five-foot stretch that was only lightly covered with the fine pieces of glass, allowing me to park without fear of slicing my tires to shreds.

As I walked through the neighborhood in the direction of the apartment that was my destination, I felt my first sense of uneasiness. I was not completely sure where I was going, despite the fact that my directions were specific: "Go to the second row of buildings, third building past the dumpster, last apartment on the far end, knock hard on the front door."

There were many young children running around the neighborhood, playing at the play-park, and jumping rope. Several of the children asked who I was and who I was looking for, as if they knew I was not sure where I was going. I gave them a name, and they escorted me to the front steps of Tonya's (a pseudonym, as are all others) apartment. I knocked hard, was asked who was there, and was given permission to "come on in." I then entered the apartment that opened the door for the next five years of my interaction in Darbyville.

The most common sight in the neighborhood over the years has been the "hanging out" of young men. In my first few years visiting Darbyville, many of the young males hung out on the corner of Shield Avenue by the burned-up dumpster. The guys seemed to keep to themselves; I rarely saw them interacting with one another, and they would stand evenly spaced apart on both sides of the street. For the first few months going in and out of Darbyville, I was never approached by any of these men; however, after being in the neighborhood for about six months, I was approached and offered my first "wanna buy." I politely looked at the young man, who probably was not over 17 years old, and told him I was not there to buy anything, "But thank you anyway." I figured it was to my benefit to be polite as opposed to rude and thereby risking making one of these young men mad. This continued to be my attitude over the years as I sat in lines of traffic while "business transactions" took place. I did not want to jeopardize the safety of the family with whom I was working, and, because I was able to come and go in the neighborhood as I pleased, it was not in the best interest of "my family" for me to cause problems.

About three years ago, Shield Avenue, the busiest street in the neighborhood, was blocked off at one end and became a dead-end road. According to the housing management, the street was blocked to deter people who from driving in from the main street, purchasing their goods, and exiting through the back of the complex without any problems. After the

street was blocked off, all of the young men who formerly hung out on that corner, moved over one block to Cherokee Avenue, which became the new congregational intersection. This was also the stopping place for the "Big Dipper," the neighborhood "vendor on wheels" who sells candy, soda, sunflower seeds, and pickles to the neighborhood children around 6:30 every evening. Therefore, between 6:30 and 8:00 every night, the first block of Cherokee Avenue is full of neighborhood activity.

The latest addition to the neighborhood has been a five-foot high, cast-iron fence outlining most of the neighborhood boundaries. If you ask people in the neighborhood why the fence was put up, they usually laugh and say, "They [police] think they will stop the drug dealers with the fence, but the only thing they stop is themselves." Another frequently made comment is that the fence does nothing but inconvenience mothers and children who have to go all the way around and out of their way to get to their front doors because the sidewalk is blocked off by the fence. I personally have witnessed one police chase through the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the person being chased was able to easily jump the fence and get away from the pursuing police. I have yet to figure out any benefit for having the fence wrapped around Darbyville.

Darbyville sits on about ten acres of land and consists of 100 buildings with three apartments per building. The apartments are available with one to five bedrooms, newly remodeled windows, and permission to decorate as one sees fit. Although flowers are permitted to be planted, all yards are considered public domain, and as a consequence, flowers rarely survive one week of heavy child traffic. A public garden area has been designated on the blocked-off street right next to the neighborhood recreational center. About ten little gardens are planted each summer and watched over by the families in the nearby apartments. There is great pride in the gardens, and last year the gardeners received a green-thumb award from the

city's Park and Recreation Department. The gardens are by far the most sacred and beautiful part of the neighborhood.

It is not difficult to find Darbyville, but it is tucked away in a semi-urban city and it helps if you know where you are going. There is no shopping in the area, not even the ubiquitous convenience marts, or grocery stores or industry nearby. Although Darbyville is only about a five-minute drive from intersecting interstate highways and a six-minute drive from a major university, few people know where the rather infamous neighborhood is actually located.

Now that Darbyville has been reached, it is time to meet the mothers and children in this neighborhood. They are introduced here based on my experiences interacting with each in Darbyville. After being introduced to the participants, the neighborhood is described from the participants' experiences from both a historical and present-day perspective. Finally, the mother's and child's definitions, descriptions, and experiences with neighborhood violence are described.

Demographics of mothers and children

In the Darbyville neighborhood, 90 percent of the neighborhood is African-American; 65 percent of the residents are females, and the typical family is made up of two or three children. The average annual income per household is about \$5,000, and each family pays about \$105 each month for rent, and the average length of residence is ten years.

The ten African-American mothers who shared their stories were all single, residents of Darbyville for at least five years, and had at least one child between 11 and 14 years. I have known eight of the ten families for more than three years through a program sponsored by the local university. The two new families were friends and neighbors of two of the mothers and were happy to be involved. Table 1 gives information pertaining to the ten

mothers and children in this study. As can be seen, all the mothers in this study have at least three children and three mothers have had at least five children. Two mothers have also experienced the death of a child, one to a gunshot and one to childhood disease. Only three of the mothers have lived in Darbyville less than 10 years, even though Teresa and Ellen have just moved back after leaving the neighborhood for three and four years respectively. Three of the four mothers with a high school education are currently employed while only one mother with less than a high school diploma is currently employed.

Getting to Know the Mothers and Children

The following descriptions of each mother and child pair are based on my experiences and interactions with these families. I have known all but two of the participants for at least three years. The purpose of these descriptions is to provide a picture of the apartments and people who shared their stories.

Wendy and Kalla: "Come on in, Janelle I saw ya coming. So whatch ya' been up to, girl?" This is the greeting I always receive when visiting Wendy. She truly offers an open invitation to share everything that has been happening in my life as well as sharing the latest news in her life. She lives on the main street around Darbyville and watches out her front window to see who is coming and going. This allows her to be ready to answer the door whenever anyone knocks. Her big smile and dark eyes are always warm but a little guarded, perhaps because she has learned it is hard to trust people. Wendy once told me to be cautious of people. "They will take advantage of you if you let them and most have an ulterior motive."

Her living room is bright and inviting with a slight distraction coming from the stereo that is tuned to "T-Jam 1060, Urban Black Radio," only because it sounds a little fuzzy. I always admire Wendy's latest addition to her brass ornament collection.

Table 1. Demographic profile of mothers and children

Mother Child	Age	Number of children	Years in Darbyville	Education	Occupation
Wendy Kalla	40 12	3	40	high school diploma	Unemployed
Denotra Shaun	29 11	5(6)*	8	high school diploma	Fast food shift manager
Kelly Tiesha	36 14	3	17	10 grade	Unemployed
Sharon Tony	39 14	4(5)**	10	11 grade	Unemployed
Ellen John	42 12	3	20 (8)	11 grade	Unemployed
Melanie Niesha	40 12	3	22	9 grade	Unemployed
Glenna Jammie	46 12	3	46	high school diploma	Cleaning Manager
A.J. Demarcus	36 14	5	9	high school diploma	Nurses Aid
Teresa LaQuisha	31 12	3	27 (5)	11 grade	Fast Food
Dee Dee Debra	36 13	3	7	10 grade	Unemployed

* = Denotra had a baby who died due to childhood disease in his first year of life.

** = Sharon had a 16-year-old son that was killed by another teenager three years ago.

(#)= Number is the latest length of time living in Darbyville after moving out for a few years.

This month it's a brass elephant; a few months ago it was a brass bell. Each of the brass pieces are carefully displayed on the glass coffee and end tables around the room. The room smells like pine-sol and the kitchen floor is off limits while it is still drying. If you visit Wendy any time in the afternoon before the children get home from school, you will always catch her in the act of cleaning. The dishes are always washed and stacked, the floor always mopped, and a load of laundry perpetually running in the pantry.

Wendy shows me the latest picture of the grandbabies and a few pictures of her own children taken at Christmas time. She tells me the latest status with Mike, her boyfriend of ten years who is "not really ready to make a commitment." Her nails are usually beautifully done in the latest style or about to be filled in again, if she has the extra money. She offers me something to drink and suggests we get started with the interview before things get chaotic when the kids come home from school and the grandbabies make their way down the street for their daily visit.

Kalla wears her hair in the latest look, called "Mickey Mouse Ears." The hair style consists of two big rolls of artificial hair balled up and pinned to the top of her head, giving a familiar Mickey Mouse look. I told Kalla I liked her hair and she said her sister did it the previous week, but she would be taking it down the following day because she was tired of the look. We walk into her bedroom, and I see the inspiration for her hair, Mickey Mouse is everywhere. She has a Mickey Mouse bedspread, clock, throw rug, poster, and alarm clock. She chimes in that she just received a Mickey Mouse wrist watch for Christmas.

Kalla stretches out across the bed and barely takes up any space. Her dark skin and thin legs almost blend into the black color of the bedspread making her look even skinnier than she truly is. She eats sunflower seeds and rarely makes eye contact when she speaks to me, but is more talkative today than ever before. She tells me she was suspended from school for three days for fighting and is bored from being home for the last two days. Kalla has never liked school and has had a problem

with getting suspended in the past. Her attitude toward adults and authority has never been overly positive and becomes apparent when she does not wish to comply with the rules, as I have witnessed and experienced on several occasions. We begin our interview and the young 14-year-old turns into a voice of experience seemingly years older and wiser than her actual age.

Denotra and Shaun: Denotra's soft and gentle voice warms her invitation to come in out of the cold. She is wearing an emerald green bathrobe that accentuates her full figure and displays her long braids beautifully. Her braids are long and full, ending in little silver beads. She slowly flips her hair over her shoulder so as not to disturb the perfect braid job she has just completed. She asks if I mind if she smokes while we talk. I acknowledge that we are in her house and for her to feel free to do whatever she would like to do. She says her children are always "getting on her" about trying to quit smoking but she has not been able to kick the habit.

The living room is dark with no lights on and only a filtered glow is offered from the adjoining kitchen. The blinds are turned down so not to let in any sunlight or view of the outside. The old console television takes up half of the living room, and only offers a fuzzy distortion that causes one to squint in order to see the actual picture. The bareness of the apartment with only two pieces of furniture and a television, draws attention to the sheet draped over a rod and used as a curtain on the window, as well as the lopsided kitchen table leaning against the wall. The smell of greens stewing on the stove fills the room and sparks an occasional interruption in order for Denotra to add water or a much needed stir.

I have only seen Denotra in passing in the neighborhood and had never before had the opportunity to get to know her. She recalls one afternoon when I was playing school with her children on the front porch with some other children when I was visiting. Her youngest child had "adopted" me for the afternoon and was not ready to leave when Denotra called them in for supper. She says she knew then that I must be a nice person if her children liked me that well and was happy to help

me out any way she could. Denotra's chronological age is misleading in terms of what she has experienced and lived through. Being only one year older than I am, she has been through more than I could imagine experiencing in three lifetimes. She's 29 years old, has given birth to six children, lost one child, is recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, lived with an abusive partner and was abandoned when she was 16. Still, Denotra shares her stories with enthusiasm, showers her children with affection and love, and has a determined outlook about moving from Darbyville.

Shaun, otherwise known as Snoop by all the kids in the neighborhood, rushes home from school and goes straight to his room to start his homework. He is required to do an hour of homework every night, even when nothing has been assigned. After his hour of homework he is able to go outside to play if there has not been any trouble in the neighborhood that day, in which case he would stay inside and play a Nintendo game. He loves football and suggests he would like to be a running back like Emmett Smith. He is taller than his other 11-year-old friends and a little on the skinny side, which he will probably grow out of in the next few years.

Shaun lights up like a Christmas tree when I offer him sunflower seeds or a pickle as a snack. He has a difficult time deciding which he would prefer so I offer him both and get a sheepish smile and two open hands in return. Shaun is the oldest of five children and takes on the role well. He hears one of his little sisters crying and asks if he can go see what is wrong before we get started with the interview. When he returns he glides into his chair, folds his hands, and says, "Ready." He eyes his pickle and seems to debate if he should remove the wrapper or wait. I ease his tension by telling him that he is more than welcome to eat the pickle while we talk. In the same breath, I request that if his mamma does not let him eat sunflower seeds in the house, he must wait until he goes outside. As I suspected, he admits that he has been in trouble before for leaving shells in the apartment and is only permitted to eat them outside.

Kelly and Tonya: Kelly lives in the last apartment of the last building on the dead-end street

across from the gardens. She says nothing really happens on her street since they blocked it off a few years ago and now no one drives down the street unless they have a reason. I have known Kelly for five years and have seen her children grow up quite a bit. She has been attending GED classes and different job training programs since we first met. She talks about how difficult the GED classes are and that the instructors are replaced frequently and she has not been getting the consistent help she needs. Her oldest daughter is about to graduate from high school and has been taking nurse's training classes so she can be a nurse's aide when she graduates.

Kelly wears a bandanna around her head and complains that she needs to get her hair done because it has been such a mess for so long. Her t-shirt and sweatpants are baggy, and she seems very comfortable in her "day-off" clothes. Three days a week she has GED classes and on her off days she likes to "take it easy" and stay home all day. She sits in the big arm chair under a picture of Jesus carrying a cross. I have grown accustomed to seeing a Black Jesus in pictures but was distracted by the colors used in His robe and background. The light from the large console television is the only light in the room. All of the blinds are tightly closed as if no light dares to seep into the room. Kelly sits back in the chair, puts her feet up on the coffee table, and asks me how school is going. She says she knows my mom must be proud of me for going to school so long and that she sure is proud of her daughter who is about to graduate from high school. She gives a little sigh and says she does not think her son will finish high school and she has just about given up on him and that she focuses on keeping tabs on her youngest, Tonya.

Tonya is walking up the sidewalk as I pull into the neighborhood. I ask her if she would like a ride since it is a cold day in January. We are scheduled to do the interview in a few minutes, so I guess she was on her way home to meet me. When she gets into the car, she laughs about how cold it is and that she is ready for summer. I realize how tall she has gotten when I see her legs cramped in the front seat of my car. She is a freshman in high school and has a clear complexion that enhances

the beauty of her dark brown eyes. She is about five-foot-nine and seems to be at a healthy weight. Her hair is always up in a bun on the back of her head with hair ties that match the color of her outfit. Both ears have dangling earrings with one or two little studs going up each ear. On every finger she sports a ring, one with her initial and others with different colored stones.

We get out of the car and I comment on how tall she has gotten and how she is looking much older than her 14 years. She covers her mouth as she laughs and pulls out a key to the house attached to about ten different key-chains. As we enter the apartment, Tonya pulls out a half-eaten pickle from her coat pocket, sits down on the couch and starts eating. I give her the options of sunflower seeds and pickles and she says that she would like sunflower seeds, and puts them in her pocket knowing she will have them for later. Tonya talks about how quiet her side of the neighborhood has become since they blocked off street, almost sounding disappointed that nothing ever happens on her street anymore.

Ellen and John: I had spoken with Ellen on the phone about scheduling a time when I could come over to talk with her. She said I could come before John gets home from school and then I could interview him the same day once he was home. She said she would leave the door unlocked and to please call if I was going to be late or not able to come. She indicated that her health is not good and she is not able to get around very well on her own, and not want to make me wait outside the door if she did not hear me or could not get up. I arrived on time, the door was unlocked, and Ellen was propped up on the couch.

Ellen has not been very mobile for about two years. She has gotten a little heavier and appears to have aged much in the last few years. She has very little hair on her head and what hair she does have is put up in about eight short little braids sticking straight up and out on her head. A row of pill bottles are sitting on the coffee table in front of her and she has an emergency call button by her side. The room is bright and smells of fresh paint. They have been living in this apartment for

less than a month, and it must have been re-painted before they moved in. The blinds in the window are half-open with one end looking permanently bent. Throughout the interview I notice she reaches up to the window and looks out through the bent blind making sure everything outside is safe before John gets home from school.

Ellen was able to get a new apartment because all of the noise and commotion happening across the street where she used to live was contributing to her declining health. She says she was always on edge and jumpy and because she cannot get around well, she worries about her son going in and out of the house with so much violence outside. Now she feels like she lives in a completely different neighborhood because she does not see the boys hanging on the corner or hears their commotion late into the night. When I used to visit her in the old apartment, she would always tell me to be careful coming and going and back down the one-way street so not to drive into the crowd of people hanging on the corner. She no longer gives me the same advice and says she feels much more at ease.

John was slow to walk home from the bus stop, but we saw him coming down the street in his bulky down jacket with the hood up. When he entered the house and took off his jacket, I was amazed at how small he appeared. He just turned 13 and is barely any taller than he was when he was eight or nine. He is extremely thin and wears his hair in a high bush (afro), making his head look bigger than his entire body. John has been having trouble in school and has just gone back for his first day after a week suspension for not doing his school work. I asked how his day at school went, and he just shook his head and pulled his compact CD player and ear-phones from his pocket. He was not going to tell me anything about school and was ready to listen to his music if I was not ready to start the interview.

Melanie and Niesha: Melanie is watching for me from behind the sheet that was tacked to the wall hanging over the window. I see the sheet drop as I got closer to the apartment, and the door

swung open before I can knock. Niesha welcomes me with a hug and said that her mamma had told her I was coming that day. Melanie is standing in the doorway to the kitchen picking the back of her hair with a big red pick then leaving the pick standing in her hair. Niesha walks over to her mother and with an embarrassed look takes the pick out of her hair.

Melanie wants to sit at the kitchen table to do the interview. The stove is on low, and the door is slightly open to help take the chill off the kitchen. Melanie says it is hard to regulate the heat; it was either too hot or too cold and almost impossible to get it just right. Although it is snowing outside, Melanie is wearing shorts and a t-shirt and I realized it would be nice to be wearing the same after sitting in the house for a few minutes. I towered over Melanie who is about five feet tall and shows signs of age in the lines on her face and gray hair on her head.

I met Melanie three years ago at the Neighborhood Center one afternoon when I was playing with a group of young children. She asked if I could find someone to spend time with her daughter Niesha and told me a little bit about the trouble she was having with her two oldest children. Every time she talks about her son, an apparent heavy weight of stress and torment distorts her face which almost changes her appearance. At the time Melanie and I first met her son had been expelled from school and was hanging on the corner with the older teenage boys, and Melanie was nervous he was going to become a drug dealer. Her fears have come true and now she fears for his life or that he might take another person's life. Her oldest daughter, who is 16, comes and goes as she pleases, and Melanie tries to keep her protected by taking trips to the health department for birth control. As she talks about Niesha, her face softens and an eagerness to tell me what the two of them do together takes over.

Niesha is one of a number of children I would love to take home with me everyday. She is usually smiling from ear to ear and reminds me of a soft, round teddy bear just waiting to be hugged. Her hair is always a little flighty and a little out of place, just enough to remind others that she still is

a child. Niesha is never far from her mother's side, and the two of them have one of the most affectionate relationships I have ever seen. They frequently hug, touch, and joke with each other. Niesha tells me she gets to help her mother read some of the books she uses in her GED classes. They show their pride about being in school, as they are quick to tell stories of how the other one is doing. Niesha has a bashful side that takes over when she is in large groups and with other children, but one-on-one she is as pleasant and bubbly child.

Teresa and LaQuisha: Whenever I visit Darbyville, I see Teresa either sitting on her porch doing someone's hair or coming back from someone's house after finishing a client's hair. Her long thin body is a golden tan with a few freckles here and there. Her blue eyes are always visible under her latest hair style. She has offered to braid my hair on many occasions and chuckles as she says she thinks it would be fun to see me in braids. Teresa does not look a day over 20, though she is actually 31 and has three children.

Teresa has lived in Darbyville all but five years of her life and seems comfortable in knowing the neighborhood and being surrounded by many family members. Her apartment is always full of children, usually playing Nintendo or ready to play a game of football or basketball in the nearby playpark. Teresa displays her children's trophies all over her living room and always talks about how they are doing in whatever sport they happen to be playing. She never misses a game, even if it means sitting in the rain or rushing over after work. She coached the Darbyville girls basketball team last year and succeeded in getting her daughter interested in the sport instead of cheerleading; she thinks LaQuisha is too tall to be a cheerleader. She laughs as she whispers to me that she did not really want her daughter to be a cheerleader; she wanted her to be a "real athlete."

Teresa agrees to be interviewed even though the day of the interview is on her birthday. She said it was too cold to go out, and she wanted to be at home with her kids anyway. She showed me the card her youngest son had made her at school and said he always does real sweet things for her on

her birthday and mother's day.

LaQuisha let me interview her after school and before basketball practice, so we have a short 45 minutes. She said her team was playing the best team in the league this week so they really needed to practice so they could win. LaQuisha is absolutely her mother's daughter and could probably pass as a sister. She is a strong willed, assertive young lady who loves school and basketball and even gets along with her younger brothers. LaQuisha is very protective of her brothers and often babysits someone's child in the neighborhood. She loves children but says she does not want to have any until she is out of high school. She thinks it would be too much work to go to school and then have to come home and take care of a baby all night. Maybe she will stick to what she says.

Sharon and Tony: I met Sharon one day while visiting another mother in Darbyville. She was coming back from the store and was returning a beer she owed her friend, that was a pay back for borrowing one a few nights before. She sits down to visit and before long I heard several funny stories about raising her children as well as some fears about raising them in such a violent society. Before long Sharon excuses herself, saying her old man would be looking for her soon and so she better get back home. She invites me over any time to visit and when I asked her to be involved with the study she was more than happy to participate.

When I go to see Sharon I knock at the front door, but am asked to go around to the back. The front door has been taped to keep some of the cold air from coming through the cracks. I notice the pictures of her children and grandbaby displayed around the living room along with a picture of the Last Supper and a picture of Jesus on the cross. The blinds are tightly closed and only the light in the stairway is burning and allowing us to see our way. The big console television displays a blurry picture and every now and then makes a strange squeak that eventually annoys Sharon enough to turn it off.

It is not until we were doing the interview that I learn that Sharon's oldest son had been killed

by another teenager a few years ago. She shares with me some of her grief; his 19th birthday has just passed and has made the month of January very difficult for her. I see that she still grieves over the loss of her son but confesses that much of her grief is out of fear for her living sons. Sharon is a very small, frail woman who could almost blow over in the wind. When she speaks of her dead son as well as her fear for what could happen to her living sons, she almost disappears into the couch getting smaller and smaller. However, after talking about what had happened and being able to share her fears, she appears to regain some life in her disgruntled body. She hugs me after the interview is over and says she hopes I never have to experience the loss of a child, knowing a mother will never get over such an experience.

Tony is a handsome, 14-year-old teen who does well in school and is involved in different sports throughout the year. His hair is in five or six braids over his head and makes him look a little younger than he really is. While I'm there, he is waiting for soccer practice, has no homework and is pleased to have something to do besides his chores. He shyly says he does not like to hear his voice on tape because it never sounds like him. His mother's voice is deeper than his at the present time so he is a little bashful about testing the tape and making sure we can hear his voice. Tony is very relaxed throughout the interview and gives me a little smile every time he looks up and answers a question. He tells me he understands why his mother worries about him so much and whispers to me that he had an older brother who was killed by another "dude." Tony is probably one of the few children in Darbyville who truly realizes how dangerous and violent the world has become.

Glenna and Jamie: The front door is opened with the screen door locked even though Glenna was expecting me early that morning. Glenna's husky voice always makes me smile; it's so deep and scratchy and not the sound one would expect out of such a sweet, easy going woman. Her apartment is meticulously decorated. The walls are painted deep maroon with a flowery wall-paper border circling the room. The couches are dark green with pillows to match the border. The cherry coffee

and end tables are polished and shiny and covered with family pictures. The blinds and curtains are tightly closed and color-coordinated to match the room. The goose neck lamp winding over the palm-tree plants brightens the room and allows me to see how proud Glenna is of her apartment as I brag about how great everything looks. Glenna works two jobs, has raised two older sons, and has 13-year-old Jamie still at home.

I have known Glenna for four years and liked her from the first time we spoke. She is very easy to talk with and will talk forever if you, or she, has the time. She is always on the go, usually from job to job but is proud of her great apartment and being able to provide very well for her family. She was willing to give up her one morning off to talk with me. She did not want us to be rushed and when she is moving between jobs, there is little time for things not on her schedule. Glenna has lived in Darbyville for 40 years and is disturbed by the way the neighborhood is managed as well as how it is controlled by the young kids who seem to have no respect for anyone. Glenna is surrounded by family and because she keeps so busy, she is able to make the most of where she lives. She refuses to live in fear and allow others to control her life.

Jamie sounds just like her mother with her deep scratchy voice. She has just turned 13 but looks older because of her fancy hairstyles. She currently has her hair pressed into a shape of a cone and lined with little gold beads. Her hair stands at least six inches off her head. Jammie is very animated and physically expressive, knocking over the tape-recorder twice with hand motions while we were talking. She takes after her mother so there is not an ounce of shyness to be found. She has always been a good, fun kid to be around and is well liked by her peers. Jamie is crazy about her older brothers and is close with her whole family. She is a child known throughout the neighborhood and watches out for those who may need a little help. Since she knows where everyone lives in the neighborhood, Jamie is quick to offer assistance while I go around the neighborhood to do my interviews. I thank her for the offer and tell her I will let her know if I need her help.

Dee Dee and Debra: Whenever I see Dee Dee, she is always driving around the neighborhood in her little blue Bronco. Because she has a car she is often asked to run errands or to transport people to and from appointments. On the day of the interview Dee Dee was busy watching her grandson while her 16-year-old daughter was attending school and going to basketball practice later in the day. Dee Dee is decorated with gold jewelry around her neck and on every finger. The big gold Mercedes emblem on a necklace and the ring with a cluster of rhinestones quickly grabs one's attention. Dee Dee's dark skin blends into the black tone of her silk jogging suit. She is always dressed in a "spiffy" outfit and looks as young as her 18-year-old daughter.

Dee Dee asks if we can do the interview in her bedroom so she can fold and iron clothes. As we climb the stairs, I carry the baby so Dee Dee can carry all of the freshly laundered clothes. We enter her bedroom and there are two mattresses on the floor and an ironing board in the corner. The window is draped with a winter blanket to help keep the cold drafts of air out. The baby is laid down on one mattress and I sit on the other while Dee Dee begins to fold and iron. She says that having clean clothes and looking presentable are two important messages she wanted her children to learn.

I walked over to the neighborhood center with Debra so we could have a place to do the interview without any interruptions. Her house was full of several girls and their babies swapping some of the baby clothes their little ones had out grown. Debra was running to the center so she could keep warm because she did not want to search the house for her jacket; she knew she had worn it home but was not sure where it had ended up that afternoon. Debra is about five-feet-seven-inches tall and skinny as a rail. Her big smile has always caught my attention because of the contrast of bright white teeth and dark brown skin. Since she began attending middle school, I have never seen Debra with one hair out of place, and today the bun on the back of her head is in perfect shape with a black and green hair ring circling the bun.

Debra has two older sisters and while "hanging out" with them, she has been exposed at an

early age to a lot of activity in the neighborhood. She is very knowledgeable about what is going on Darbyville and is at times is reluctant to let on what she knows. Debra has been in trouble at school for fighting but reminds me that her mother has told her if someone hits her she had better hit them back. As a result, she is suspended from school for doing what her mother tells her to do. Before starting the interview Debra anxiously accepts the sunflower seeds I offer and puts her finger on the red "record" button on the tape-recorder, letting me know she is ready to begin.

A.J. and Demarcus: A.J., acting a little strange, was holding the door open in front of her but directing me to come on in. After she closes the door, I see that she was hiding her upper body because she is not wearing a shirt. She has just gotten home from work and is about to grab a shirt out of the dryer when I knock. The pine-sol smell lets me know she had been home long enough to get the kitchen floor mopped and is saving the rest of the cleaning for the boys when they got home from school. She says she was going to threaten them if they did not stop tracking mud in the house, because all she ever does is mop the floor after them.

A.J. is short and stocky and is always bubbly whenever I stop by for a visit. She is wiping the dust off the book shelf around one of the many trophies one of her sons had gotten for a sporting event. Trophies line the wall and are proudly displayed with a picture of each of the boys in one type of uniform or another. She reminds me that the boys had a basketball game that night and I could go with her if I want to attend. She understands why I have to decline but tells me to come back another time and I would still be welcome to attend. She is proud of her boys and prides herself in treating them like adults. She takes on the responsibility for teaching them respect and how to be good men, since their father is not around. I would imagine that the boys listen to everything she says. She is not the type of person to let a listener get away with not paying attention when she has something to say.

Demarcus comes downstairs after changing into a new shirt. He says one of the "dudes" at school wrote something nasty on it and he does not want his mamma to see it. He ventures into the

kitchen and opens the lid off the chitlins which had filled the room with a smell that is unfamiliar to me and a little overwhelming. He says he would wait to eat them until after we are done with the interview so I offer him a pickle and sunflower seeds to hold him over. He opens the pickle and with a goofy smile says he is not allowed to eat the seeds in the house.

Demarcus is a freshman in high school and is growing at the typical pace. His closely shaven head with a Nike swish on the side matches his Nike shirt, shoes, and socks. He talks about his Air Jordan shoes and how he wants to get the new ones that just came out except that he only has 50 dollars saved up and needs almost one hundred more in order to afford the shoes. I stare at him in amazement and let him know he could afford four pairs of shoes like mine. He laughs and shakes his head and says that by spring break he would have the money. He says his granny pays him for doing odd jobs around her house and that for every "A" he gets on his report card, his mamma gives him five dollars. He says he made 25 dollars from his last report card and thinks he will have two more "As" this time. He lets me know he is smarter than anyone in his family and would like to be the first to go to college.

The Old Darbyville

"Turn the clock back now, I wish I could live on those hands"

For many of the families living in Darbyville in 1996, there are fond memories of how the neighborhood used to be. Several mothers have spent their entire lives in the neighborhood and remember when Darbyville was first built some 40 years ago. Wendy, who has lived in Darbyville for 40 years, remembers when she was a teenager in the neighborhood.

Wendy: Well, Darbyville when I was coming up as a teenager, it used to be where you can do a lot of things as far as have different activities going on in your yard and sit out pretty late, play, play, play from dawn till dusk. (72-75)

Although being able to sit outside late into the evening and play freely in the neighborhood are activities taken for granted in many neighborhoods, these are activities longed for by families in

Darbyville. Another mother remembers being able to send her children outside to play and not having to worry about their safety.

Sharon: It didn't used to be like that out here, you could go in your back yard, you could cook out, you could sit outside, you could listen to your music and nobody would come along and bother you. Wouldn't have to worry about jumping up and running into your house cause somebody coming down through here shooting or you know, you wouldn't have to worry about running and finding your kids cause they on the basketball court and some fool coming through here shooting or something like that. You didn't have to go through that. (42-56)

The frequency of violent events has escalated in the last five years and has taken away a sense of freedom in the neighborhood. This freedom would be as simple as being able to walk out one's front door and not have to look both ways, stop and listen for gunshots, or stand guard while children play in the backyard.

Kathy: It wasn't like it is today. No, you could sit on the porch, you could leave your windows up, you could walk around without fear of what's going to happen to you once you go out your door. (171-173)

Some of the mothers who were reared in the neighborhood have chosen to stay in Darbyville because of the positive experience they had as children growing up. There used to be a sense of community, knowing that parents would know what had been doing by the time the children got home because neighbors used to look out for one another. One mother grew up in the neighborhood, moved out for a few years, and moved back to raise her family in Darbyville because she knows many people in the neighborhood. Today, though, she is not happy with how the neighborhood atmosphere has changed. For many, the surge of young teenagers and drug dealers "hanging out" in the neighborhood has created an atmosphere that suggests it would be better to have the neighborhood like it used to be years ago.

Glenna: They will drink beer and throw it up against the trash can, you've seen all the broken glass and everything. They shoot out the lights and everything out here. So I basically go to work, come in and that's it....The young people have really taken over out here, they really, really have taken over out here. (127-129;316-318)

Present Day Darbyville

The Darbyville map (see figure 1) shows the specific areas of the neighborhood that all mothers and children recognize as the wild, dangerous, or bad areas of the neighborhood (stripped area on the map). This area is where Cherokee and North street converge and is convenient for drive-by shootings to take place. This area is also the "meeting ground" of the neighborhood and is frequently filled with people standing around "hanging-out." The mothers live in different areas of the neighborhood and only two live near the designated "bad part." Melanie and Ellen are the most content with where they live because they are the farthest away from the "hang-out" places in the neighborhood. Ellen had recently moved from North street, where the drug dealers stand on the corner, to Farewell drive, where it is quiet. Although she was happy with the move, her son was less pleased because it is too quiet and nothing "goes on" on his new street.

Melanie: This is more better [living on Shield] cause when I use to live on the other end up on Cherokee, it was, it was rough. People was noisy going in and out, doing a lot of things. The people, the young people like to party and play their music loud. Up here [on Shield] you don't have that cause I'm around the older person. I wouldn't go on North or Cherokee cause they are the two wild streets. **Are there places you don't let Niesha go?** Yeah, she can't go on North and Cherokee, I don't allow her up there. She had a friend up there one time and she wanted to walk up there and I told her No. (14-20/31-35)

Ellen: Come to North and Cherokee avenue, that's not the good part of the neighborhood. That's where the drug dealers hang. I know I could see it in my window and see it on North and Cherokee, that's as far as I could see. Farewell drive is the best street, I would say. To my knowledge we don't have any drug dealers hanging on the corners or on the streets or on your porch... Seems like I'm in a different town, yes, seems like it completely. It's so much different around here than around on North, just around the corner, right around the corner. (49-57/130-137)

John: Why is this, North, the bad part? That's where all the shootings at. **Who does it?** Different people just hanging out. **Where's the best part?** Farewell but there is nothing to do around here except go to the center. **Is it different living over here than on North?** It was better than living right here. (48-53)

As can be seen, the neighborhood is small enough that just about any loud violence or commotion can be heard throughout the neighborhood. The fences around the neighborhood have not provided the safety or protection they were intended for, but add a depressing look and feel for the families.

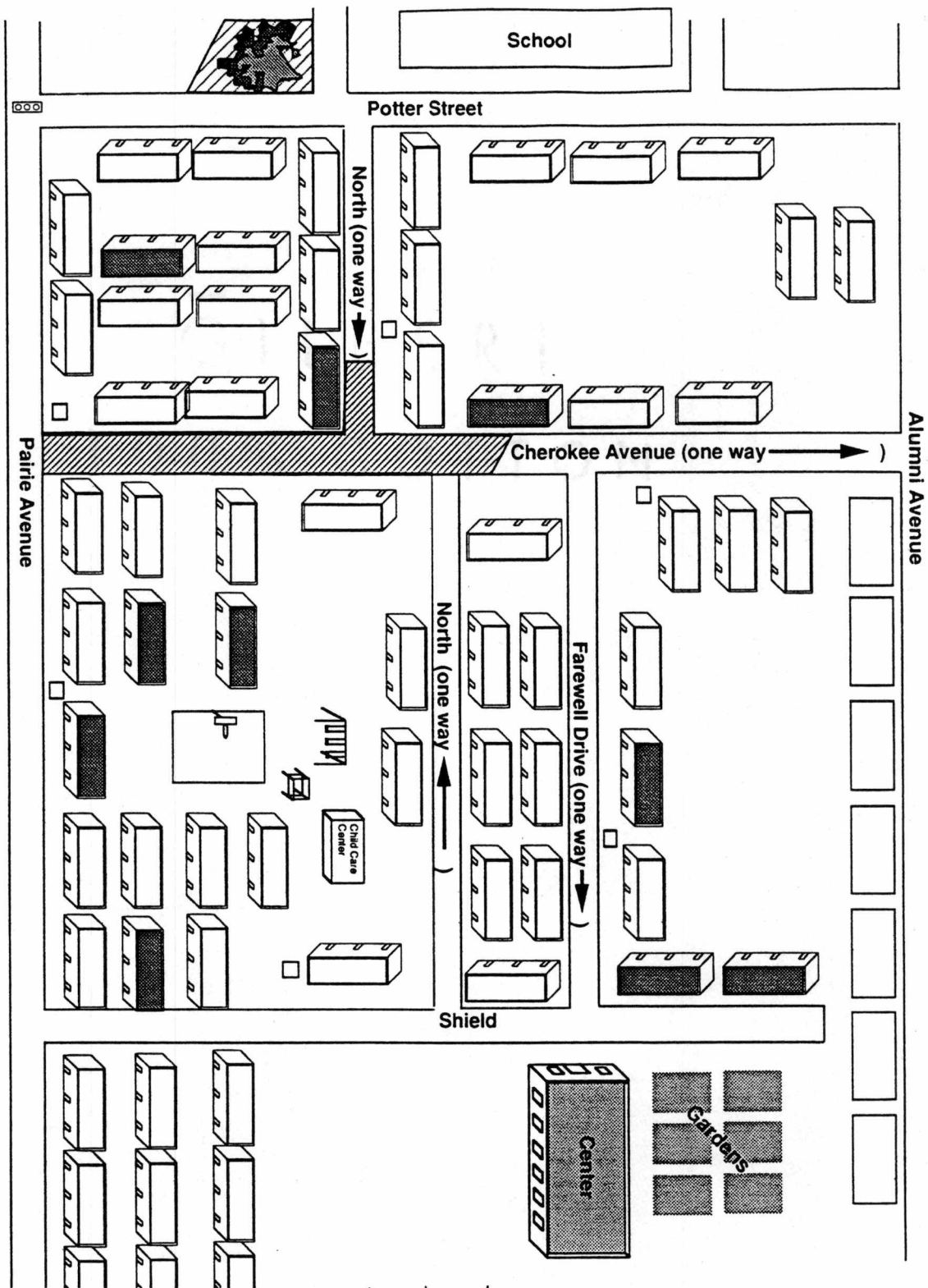


Figure 1. map of neighborhood

Sharon: But as far as I'm concerned, as far as the way Darbyville used to be, I feel like I'm in prison. Look how they got our building now, they didn't use to be like this, you got fences everywhere. They just started doing that since it got bad, you know. I used to go down Darbyville sidewalks and Darbyville was much prettier (196-198/211-216).

The memories of yester-year are long gone and the present day Darbyville is full of dangerous activity, drugs and drug dealers, young children, and concerned mothers. Much of the concern stems from the activities and people in the neighborhood who are not interested in the welfare of the children. Denotra suggests a split in the types of people who live in the present day Darbyville.

Denotra: I guess you would split it up in three ways. People that is working, trying to raise their family, and then you have the drug dealer section and then you have the drug user section and then you have this young teenager section that does both. (330-337)

The mothers suggest that not everyone in Darbyville is bad, the neighborhood as a whole is pretty good. Still, the present day chaos throughout Darbyville leaves a lot to be desired for many mothers and children. It is just a small few, in a small area that disrupts, destroys, and devastates the rest of the neighborhood. The young drug dealers hang out on one street and drive-by shootings occur for the most part only on two streets, so the mothers and children generally feel the rest of Darbyville is fairly safe from neighborhood violence.

Kelly: I don't think I'd be living out here as many years if I thought it was bad. But maybe some parts it might be bad. It's just the people that doesn't live in Darbyville that bring everything in, that's all it is. (278-280)

Of course, not everyone who lives in Darbyville is innocent of illegal activity, but there are many innocent people victimized by their surroundings. Twelve-year-old Jammie expresses well the popular sentiment of people in Darbyville.

Jammie: It's not a bad neighborhood. If I was making a judgement between all the neighborhoods, I'd say Darbyville is the best cause it's not bad. It's just when it comes to shooting. It's not a bad neighborhood. It just make people scared. Now it's bad when it come to that part, other than that it's not so bad. (4-10)

Drugs and drug dealers

Ellen: If we could get all these drug dealers out of here we would have a nice neighborhood

here. It's nice people here in Darbyville Project, very nice people here in Darbyville projects but these drug dealers just taking over here. Once we get them [drug dealer] cleared out, I think we could feel like we home again, have a happy neighborhood (256-262)

According to some of the mothers drinking, smoking pot, and selling drugs are everyday activities in the Darbyville neighborhood. It is believed that many of the buyers and sellers of drugs are not residents of the neighborhood, but, as one mother suggests, these are people who come to Darbyville "so not to mess up their own house." Even though much of the drug dealing is done with non-residents, there is a disturbing portrait of the very young, small-time dealers who are readily available to transport the "goods" or make a quick sale. I have been told by the children that youngsters from Darbyville can make \$50 dollars a day by standing on the corner and watching for police from the local drug dealers. After these young boys get involved in the actual sale and distribution of the drugs, their salaries goes up.

Kelly: From 13 up to 18 to 22 (years old). The little young boys like 13, 14 be out there. They don't even need to be out there, they get expelled from school cause the older ones just influence them more. (121-125)

This quote comes from a mother who fears she may have lost her 16 year-old son, who is selling drugs and is involved in neighborhood activity, to the streets and feels she can only hope he will come back to her one day.

Because of the small size of Darbyville, with only two main streets entering the neighborhood, the drug-dealers who frequent the corner and nearby dumpster overwhelm the neighborhood. The mothers suggest that although there are many drug dealers around the neighborhood, there are roughly 6 to 10 regulars. Several mothers were reluctant to try to give an estimated number of drug dealers because they are most recently seeing young girls getting involved, and they know there are "big dealers" behind the scenes as well as those who actually stand on the corner.

Glenna: I'm going to be honest with you, I could not really say (how many) because see, we have girls doing it now, so I couldn't say. (663-666)

Females are becoming involved in the drug trade because of the "easy" money and access to frequent buyers. This may stem from having a boyfriend who is involved in the drug trade and encourages the girl to take an active role.

The children, who seem to interact in the neighborhood more than their mothers, suggest there are as few as 10 but probably more than 20 dealers. A few children even stated that there are 40 or 50 drug dealers in the neighborhood.

Tiesha: How many dealers? About 40 of them...they be coming from everywhere too.
Where? Like different projects and things, half of them you not even be seeing, they just be popping up from everywhere. **Do they live here?** No, they just be, probably got somebody probably living out here and they just be coming out here with them. (165-173)

Apparently the drug dealers are always present and always looking to make a sale. Associated with the drug activity is usually some type of gun activity that creates an atmosphere of fear. It is believed that most of the drug dealers carry weapons and that they are the ones shooting their guns while they are just "hanging out."

Ellen: They stay up all night long shooting guns and breaking glass and shooting out street lights and all that stuff. **Who?** Those drug dealer boys up there. It's quite a few of them up there too...it's quite a few here in the Darbyville area, quite a few in this projects anyway, I would say it like that...they are the ones causing the problems. Besides the drug dealers, we don't have any problems in the projects, not to my knowledge we don't. (19-30)

The people using and buying drugs are both from within the neighborhood and from outside the neighborhood. The local neighborhood "chronic" is explained by a mother and her daughter.

Mother: Well, we use this word "Chronics;" abusers, drug abusers would be called a chronic. People that steal from other people to get "high." People that goes from door to door to get money for a little something that they sell. They'll sell a piece of their jewelry to you for \$10 or \$20 just to get them a "high". (Wendy: 409-415)

Child: The chronics are the people who buy the drugs and do them. Sometimes they'll sell them just to get rocks [cocaine] and stuff. Like they will sell TV's, guns, pagers, clothes, anything they can get their hands on, they will come out anywhere. It's not out here where they come and steal stuff, it's like other places where they steal stuff. (Kalla: 97-104)

It is also suggested that there are many purchasers from the outside. In the five years I have been visiting Darbyville I have seen numerous expensive cars (Mercedes, Jaguar, and Porsche) drive

through the neighborhood, making a 30-second stop which I presume is a one-stop drug purchase.

One mother reflects that the buyers are people from the outside that have "nice jobs and things."

Either way, there is rarely a shortage of buyers or sellers. Even in 11-degree weather in January, the dealers wrapped up in big winter coats stand their post ready to make the sales.

The notion persists that many of the people who buy and sell drugs do not have a permanent residence in Darbyville, but become part of the neighborhood simply because they have "bombarded it and taken it over." The disassociation the mothers make for the drug dealers being "members" of the neighborhood supports their belief that the neighborhood and the people in the neighborhood are not bad. Without this belief, it could be very difficult to continue living in a neighborhood if you felt everyone and everything was bad.

Shootings

Kelly: Oh God, wonder what it's going to be like once you get out there. Who crazy going to be running down the side of the building or who's going to be somewhere with a weapon or whatever, waiting. See, people do things now for no reason, people just walk up on you and start shooting you and just doing things for no reason. Maybe they don't care. (183-187)

The shootings and drive-bys are everyday occurrences that have caused fear to spread throughout the neighborhood. The people with the guns are given credit for not only shooting at people, but frequently just shooting their guns into the air to see who has the loudest or biggest weapon or just testing their guns. As a result, gunshots have become common background noise for some, while still startling and scaring others.

Niesha: How often do they shoot? Not that much... maybe once or twice a week. (63-64)

Tiesha: Oh, I hear them all the time, almost every night or something. It be up in the morning time though, about 3:00 a.m. or something, they just be shooting up in the air and stuff. (158-162)

Wendy: Just shooting, just testing their guns. They shoot all the time, Honey. I done got so use to it but it makes me jump when I hear it. Then I get scared because by me being on the front street and I'm just scared one of my kids and I are going to get hit by a bullet. (514-519)

The greatest fear hangs on the knowledge that "bullets have no eyes" and could hit innocent children while playing in the neighborhood.

Sharon: But they got to shooting right up there and I had my grandbaby with me and kids was out running around playing, little bitty kids and stuff, you know. (295-304)

Denotra: So your main, you main goal is to keep them in the house and keep them on the floor. You know, these bullets don't have eyes so you don't know. (571-574)

Unfortunately, these fears have been validated. In the last two years, two drive-by shootings have "accidentally" hit two young children. Two years ago, nine-year-old Natalie was grazed with a bullet in the shoulder from a drive-by shooting as she walked into her house. However, Natalie has made a complete physical recovery. One month ago four cars stopped on Potter Avenue at 3 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and opened fired while five-year-old Tiffany played in her yard. She was shot in the heart and was buried four days later. Obviously, "bullets have no eyes."

Currently, there is a heated rivalry between two different sides of town. As a result, there are more "drive-bys" which are thought to be either a type of retaliation or an instigation. Whatever their genesis, they are seen as a real threat to everyone. The "colors" associated with the different sides of town have taken on meaning for almost everyone. Although the mothers and children protest that no one has a right to tell them what to wear, especially those who do not buy their clothes, nonetheless, for safety reasons, the clothing color code of the neighborhood is usually followed. It was also suggested to me not to wear the color associated with the other side of town while I was in Darbyville conducting my interviews.

Shaun: The East side come over here and start shooting...they don't like us or something like that. (112-113)

Kelly: This side is blue and white, or just blue, that side is red and white and those two sides should get along but they don't get along. They're against each other. I don't know why, but they don't agree with one another. If I go over there and wear blue or say something wrong, they are going to come over here and start shooting up, you know, start shooting for no reason or maybe doing something to a family member. (115-123)

Although there is much violence associated with the colors of the neighborhood, it is

understood that the identification with colors and defending the "group" is part of belonging to the neighborhood. Trouble may get started out of a sense of honor or in defense for the neighborhood.

Denotra: Mostly all the problems come from like if we say for instance, we [Darbyville] have been over there messing with them [East side], they going to come over here and mess with us. (727-729)

Glenna: It's just that if you staying in Darbyville and somebody from the East side come out here and start shooting and going on, the people out here in Darbyville gonna stick together. (160-163)

The identification with the neighborhood could in theory, help create a sense of community; however, the shootings and violence create an atmosphere that may destroy the community.

As the temperatures in the summer go up so does the number of violent events in the neighborhood. Although the number of shootings have been limited during the last few winter months, the anticipation of an increase in violence lingers throughout the families. Mothers and children are aware that as more people start "hanging out" on the streets and tempers rise with the heat, violence is bound to follow.

Parenting

Because of the present day status of Darbyville, "the people who are working, trying to raise their kids" are faced with extremely difficult challenges. The mothers in the neighborhood are concerned for their children, interested in their well-being, and terrified of what their children must face in the violent world in which they live. The single mothers have few resources or help in raising their children unless they have family members nearby. The few mothers who have large extended families in the neighborhood are pleased to have this kind of trusted support available. Resources may be limited for all families and the extended family support is invaluable. Two mothers who each have two sisters, one brother, and a mother in the neighborhood enjoy being surrounded by family.

Teresa: Yeah, it is [nice to have family around] cause if you need help doing something you don't have to go to nobody else, you could always go to your family and you don't have to worry about finding a ride to them, walk to them. I don't really have too many friends, I just have a couple of little associates. (8-14)

Glenna: So like I say, we just a close tight family. If I need one of my sisters for anything they will come....I mostly stay to myself other than my sister and my sister-in-law. (86-88)

In contrast, many of the mothers and children do not socialize within the neighborhood but rely on only the immediate family. This seems to create a structure in which the members are close with one another and the mothers and children become more peer-like when it comes to socializing. This occurs because most mothers are wary of trusting others in the neighborhood and feel it is safer to "keep to themselves and mind their own business." This message is directly conveyed to the children and although both mothers and children know many people in the neighborhood, there is limited interaction and only few whom they call friends.

Acquaintances or people that are waved to and thrown a quick "Hi" or "Bye" in passing, are referred to as "associates" and have not been given the rank of friend. Mothers also state that they do not associate with people in their neighborhood usually because they do not like what the people do and do not want to be a part of that lifestyle. Often, the general references made about the neighborhood do not include the mother or her family. More over, when I asked mothers and children specifics about behaviors of people in the neighborhood, they were likely to report behaviors that are openly witnessed on the street and then stated that they really did not know what people do because they do not associate with anyone.

A.J.: I really don't associate with anybody out here, they just there and I'm just in my own house minding my own business. I really don't associate with them cause they ain't no good. (17-21)

Denotra: But I know a lot of people, we speak, we say "Hi" and that's it. I don't, you do what you gotta do and I'm going to do what I gotta do. I'd rather keep it like that cause out here in the projects, people like to keep things going on. They love to keep things going on and I'm not with that. (146-155)

Sharon: I'd just rather stay to myself, cause I can live in my house but I don't have to live outside. Okay, that's my motto. I don't have to live out there in that environment, I live in my own environment. (29-38)

The children are aware of why their mothers do not socialize in the neighborhood and are

faced with similar situations even with other young children. They may not be permitted to "hang" with other children in the neighborhood or they may choose to keep to themselves because they do not want to get into trouble, as some of their peers do. The children are aware that they need to be knowledgeable of what others are doing and must do what they can to avoid trouble.

Shaun: I got one friend, we call him a cousin cause we know him for so long. That's basically it, other kids around here some of them smoke, they got violence in their mind, they drink beer, stay out late on school nights, (they are) my age. (65-70)

Demarcus: I just watch myself, gotta be careful, watch out for trouble. **How do you know where trouble is?** You would know, you live out here long enough, you would know. It's those people that are out there, they are trouble, you learn who's trouble and try not to be around them. It don't take very long being in the projects to know, we all know. (143-151)

Several of the mothers know well what a challenge it is to be a single mother but they state that it is a parent's responsibility to raise the children; they report that, in their view, many mothers in the neighborhood are "letting their children go" too soon. It is believed that the young drug dealers are somebody's children who were not taught respect for themselves or others. The need for strict parenting and discipline is believed to be necessary to counteract the negative influence of peers in the neighborhood. The mothers address the need to model positive behaviors at home because it is the first teaching-ground for the children.

Glenna: It's a lot of kids out here right now that are very, very disrespectful. I think it's the parents, I really do, I really do think it's the parents. When your child, I figure like this, when you have kids and your children are small what you do in your house they pick up on it. And you need to start them at a young age and chastise them, make them mind instead of "just go over there and sit down or go upstairs or get out of my way". You have to make them mind, whip their butts. (110-118)

A.J.: You gotta be mean to make them mind. There are too many bad people out there not to have your kids minding...I know I teach them what to do so theys can take care of themselves. I won't always be with them so they need to be able to take care of themselves. (123-133)

It was also recognized that as a parent, one may think she has done everything right but a child may still end up in trouble. This is probably most feared for the sons who too often become intrigued by the drug dealers and all of the money that goes with such a lifestyle. The mothers are direct with their

young children about not getting involved with the drug dealers lifestyle and the risks one would face in trying to make some "quick, dirty money."

A.J.: And that's all I let them know, if you want to live like that, all you going to be is in the ground or be in jail or be in the hospital somewhere. Cause you now going to be here walking the streets, not living that kind of life. (399-404)

Denotra: Like I tell them, I'm not going for it. You not going to sell drugs as long as I'm living. I want you to get your education. (86-89)

Shaun: She (mom) don't want to see me on the corners, selling drugs. She want me to make an education of myself, be somebody. (128-131)

Because of the dangerous situations these families are forced to face every day of their lives, mothers feel they must keep a tight rein on their children. Still, mothers are aware of the fact that they cannot control the external environment in which they live and cannot truly protect their children outside of their homes. Ultimately, these neighborhood activities influence how mothers and children experience and deal with violence in their neighborhood. The circumstances of the present day Darbyville greatly influence the lives of these ten mothers and children and how they experience and deal with neighborhood violence.

What is neighborhood violence

Table 2 provides the definitions given by the mothers when asked to describe neighborhood violence. As can be seen, neighborhood violence can be defined in various ways but the most common descriptors used by these mothers were drugs and shootings. As Wendy poignantly told how she sees drugs turning into violence in her neighborhood, the relationship between the two becomes apparent. Even the few mothers who mentioned that robberies do occur in the neighborhood suggested that the robberies were committed to obtain money for buying drugs. On the surface drugs may not appear as the true cause of violence but for those who are on the inside and know what takes place in Darbyville, drugs are a definite source of violence. There is also a common belief about the violence related to the East side/ West side rivalry and how it perpetuates much of the on-going violence in the neighborhood. Much of the gang violence is associated with drugs so this rivalry is heated by the drug problems. The issues of domestic violence and child neglect were mentioned but were often considered in a large picture of violence and not necessarily a part of neighborhood violence. However, for Denotra, these types of violence happened in the neighborhood so they could, therefore, be defined as neighborhood violence.

Children's experiences

From the children's point of view, fighting was most often cited as a definition of violence as well as some reference to killing people. The children are likely to see their peers as well as adults fighting and recognize that much of the violence in the neighborhood begins as a fight. They are familiar with the "he say, she say" fights which come from both children and adults and observe this as the starting point for bigger and more intense conflicts. Like their mothers, the East side West side feud is seen as a big source of violence for the children because much of the related activity involves teens and people the children know. Some of the children have observed fights in the neighborhood. These are often settled by guns and may result in someone getting killed.

Table 2. Mother's definitions of neighborhood violence

Wendy	To me, I think the big issue about the violence is drugs. I'm just so hung up on drugs because that's where everybody has there misunderstanding because it's quick money. And by them making the quick money, they all get the big head and it's a competition thing. Well, like I got it going on, like you more fine. People try to be like a Ping-King. What I mean by that, who's selling the most drugs, whose got it going on and the, as far as the crime, drugs are the crime in our neighborhood because that is floating around, handguns and dope.(395-406)
Denotra	Okay, I think neighborhood violence is drugs, drug dealing, shooting, let's see, domestic. All that can be defined as neighborhood violence. We don't have any burglaries around here except for people going in people houses they know and taking things. But they are mainly on drugs, I mean, they will go into their parent's house or whatever you know. That's neighborhood violence to me, neglecting children.(371-379)
Kelly	Neighborhood violence, again it's like when the East side and West side. Have you heard about the East side/West side stuff?(115-117)
Sharon	I mean violence is violence period. It's just not shooting and drugs and stuff. It's all kind of violence, I can't tell you exactly what all it is because I'm always in the house. But you know there's fighting, you know, it's just violence. Violence is considered all kind of different ways.(456-462)
Ellen	I would think it is a very bad neighborhood, yes, it's a very bad neighborhood. All the shooting that goes on and we have a few robberies in this neighborhood. I mean up on Minnesota, I've known of a few robberies that gone on up there. I think that's violence.(78-84)
Melanie	People breaking in, and people fighting with bats and breaking glass and stuff like that.(324-325)
Glenna	Tell me how you would define violence in your neighborhood? Well, it's like this, you don't mess with them they won't mess with you. But if you do something to them they gonna go after you.(147-148)
A.J.	Violence, as far as knife, when they be fighting with knife, shooting, drug wise. Guns, shooting, kids fighting, drug dealers, that's about all the violence out there.(51-55)

These children have seen more violence than have many adults but still know that violence should not be going on. Table 3 lists the definitions given by the children in response to defining and explaining neighborhood violence.

Experiencing neighborhood violence

Experiencing neighborhood violence in Darbyville seems to occur in three different ways. One type of experience with neighborhood violence is "hearing it" or "hearing about it" but not actually seeing the violence. Another way to experience neighborhood violence is "being a target of violence." The third type is the incidental experience of unknowingly walking into or being caught in the cross-fire of neighborhood violence.

The remainder of this chapter describes each type of violence experiences from the mothers and then from the children's perspectives. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how each type of violence affects mothers and children involved in this study. We will see that each type of violent experience can have a different effect on the mothers and children but none of the experiences can be minimized or believed not to influence the lives of the families.

"Hearing it"

Dee Dee: You hear the gunfire and you know something is going on. Other than that you can't really say I see this unless you are out there in it, and I don't try to be out there in it. (312-316)

The mothers and children report hearing gunshots, people yelling, glass breaking, people fighting, and police chasings in their neighborhood. All of these are random but frequent activities throughout the neighborhood. As a result, the families become victims and are imprisoned in their apartments out of fear. Hearing the violence is just that, hearing the sound but not actually seeing the violent events in the neighborhood. Because such noises are so common (and can be deadly), mothers are forced to respond. As a result, the mothers have developed strategies for responding to violent activities they hear in the neighborhood.

Table 3. Children's definitions of neighborhood violence.

Kalla	There is a lot of fighting and "He say, she say" stuff and there's just everything going on here. Who does the fighting? These young girls that live out here and the dudes that don't fight, they just shoot. A lot of "who sleeping with who," talking about each other and everything else. (15-24)
Shaun	People trying to kill each other, trying to hurt people in other ways, strangle them, kill them with guns.(37-38) They be shooting and stuff. Like sticking them with knives. (40-41)
Tiesha	Something that don't need to be going on, that's all.(80-81)
John	People protecting their own selves and their family members. Somebody going to end up getting killed by gunshot, that's all.(60-62)
Niesha	They have guns, we hear gunshots, sometimes the ambulance com out. (58)
Jamie	It's not bad. Fighting and a lot of arguing and there don't be so much shooting, there be a lot of fighting and a lot of arguing.(71-73)
Debra	The East side West side, that's violence. They just ask you why you got that color on and stuff but if you a teenager, they want to start something with you. Then it leads to a big thing and they get their guns and everything. (140-145)
LaQuisha	Mostly fights, it's all it is, mostly fights like fist fights, mostly all I see is fist fights. (82-84)
Demarcus	There ain't really no true definition to it..just violent. Fighting and killing..nothing more to say, that is violence, don't need anything else.(73-77)

First, when gunshots are heard, the mothers have an "Oh God" reaction concerning the location of their children. The primary goal is to find the children. They search nearby or call around the neighborhood, in order to make sure they are safe and uninjured. Even if the children are nearby or in the apartment, the automatic reaction is "Where are my kids."

Wendy: I just got shaken up. The first thing through my mind was "Oh God, where is my kids" and then I started calling around. (568-570)

A.J.: I think of my kids first, then I hope no mamma has to lose a baby, that would not be easy, lose a baby to guns. I always be wondering where my kids are if they ain't at home. (345-349)

The distress of hearing the sound of violence and not knowing who is involved with the incident is escalated when your teenage children have become part of the neighborhood crowd. For Melanie, the experience of hearing violence is always unnerving because both of her teenage children spend time "hanging out" in the neighborhood. Her 16-year-old son sells drugs and she believes her 15-year-old daughter is involved with wrong crowd. As a result, every time she hears gunshots or a siren she is stricken with fear and the thought of her estranged children.

Melanie: What do you think about (after hearing a shooting)? That they (kids) could get shot. That somebody come up here and knock on the door and tell me that they are out there laying dead and they have to take them in a body bag. (429-432)

To date, Melanie has not received the infamous knock on the door and prays each day it will never come.

When hearing the violence, the mothers with children at home are forced to see the effects of the violence immediately. Even though the children are not physically harmed, the negative effects can be seen in the child's behaviors. Denotra talks about the sadness she sees in her children's face and Ellen talks about her children feeling nervous at night when they hear gunshots.

Denotra: My children if they hear it sometimes, you can tell by the look on their face.

They are like, what's going on.. I know they look sad when it happens but after that, as long as it's not happening, they're okay but when it's happening, they're sad about it. (435-37/497-500)

Ellen: They (kids) didn't sleep and they'd come in and ask me, did you hear this or did you hear that? And I'd say yes I did, and being that they have to be in school, it takes them a time to go back to sleep after being awake during the hours in the night....He (John) just gets upset and nervous, he just wonders why and when they going to stop. Why they keep doing those things. It makes him wonder, you know. (117-121/200-203)

Often times there are no justifiable reasons why the violence occurs. Therefore the mothers try to give some response, so as not to give the impressions that there is approval for the violence. They contend that if nothing is said concerning the negative aspects then the children may develop an accepting attitude for violence because it is so common in their lives. Dee Dee suggests that is important to talk to the children about what is going on in the neighborhood even if the activities cannot be explained.

Dee Dee: I think about it (shootings) and I think how if I didn't explain to them what it meant and why they do what they do, then they (my children) would probably grow up getting the idea that it's okay. So I talk about it as far as letting them know it's not right. (205-210)

After making sure the children are safe an assessment is made concerning the closeness of the gunshot. Gunshots in the distant are sometimes shrugged off and ignored or used as preparation for what could be coming next. Many times there will be retaliation shots so the mothers and children stay in their houses so to avoid getting caught in the cross-fire. If the gunshot is nearby the mother will keep her children in the house for the remainder of that day and in some cases, throughout the next day. For some mothers there is apprehension about sending children outside without adult supervision on any given day because of the frequency of the violence.

Denotra: All we can do is stay away from it but it's not fair that we have to sit in our house cause people want to act crazy out there. I don't think that's fair to my children. I can deal with sitting in my house, but my kids, they should be able to go outside and play. (299-307)

Ellen: I just ask them if they can be more careful, you know, and try not to be out, just stay in as much as possible because we don't know which way they'll come from, what direction they coming from, what time, and when. So I ask them to be more cautious and more careful themselves and stay in as much as possible. (173-179)

Finally, after making sure the children are safe some mothers venture out to see who was involved and what happened. There is often a basic curiosity for what has happened as well as an inquiry for information. Some mothers want to know what is happening in their neighborhood and with their neighbors.

Wendy: I didn't see it but I heard the gun shots and I went over to see it. (804-805)

Kelly: This young man got shot, I think it was over some drugs but I wasn't there when it happened but after it happened I went to see what was going on cause I wanted to find out too. The paramedics were there and trying to bring him back but he was already gone. (139-145)

As well, there are mothers who refuse to get involved or find out about what is going on after a shooting because of the fear of retaliation and out of disbelief of what is going on in the neighborhood. There are times when the violence that is heard has actually taken a victim. Because it is difficult to truly understand or explain the behaviors of the people who are doing the shootings, mothers are left confused and do not know how to make sense of what is happening. As a result, they choose to stay away and keep to themselves unable to find explanations and unwilling to make excuses.

Kelly: If something happened now, I don't want to get on the phone and find out what happened because I don't want to know. **How come?** I mean, you know, it's not that I don't care what happen or I do care what happen, it's just I don't want to know anything about it. Cause I think people should get along and not go against each other like that. I'll put it that way. (151-155)

Melanie: I just, I was scared and I stayed in the house. I couldn't believe that nobody could come out here and shoot somebody over little petty stuff if that's what it was over. I just couldn't believe it, it devastated me. It kept me in shock for a week, I just couldn't understand it. (407-423)

Children's experiences. Children respond similarly to their mothers when they hear violence in their neighborhood because they have learned what to do from their mothers. The

children have learned to assess how far away the shootings occur and respond accordingly. If the shooting is far away and stops at one or two shots, the child continues his activity. If the shooting is nearby and a bullet could come through the window, the child will run upstairs or get down on the floor. The children are scared and are saddened by what is occurring but have learned to be concerned with their own safety.

LaQuisha: Sometimes I already be in, but when they start shooting I go in the house. I don't want to get hit, if it's a gun, a bullet ain't got no face, no eyes, and if it hits you? So the best bet to be in the house, run to the house. (15-21)

Niesha: [When hears about shooting] It's just sad for everybody else that got to live with it, in that kind of environment, and for them, for getting shot. (94-97)

The children are accustomed to hearing gunshots and noises in the neighborhood and some have accepted it as a part of life. The more the child becomes desensitized to the risk of random gunshots, the greater the risk for becoming a victim. Some of the children believe the shootings are "just shots in the air" so because the bullets are not directed at a person it is believed there is less danger.

Jammie: She [mother] don't really react because I'm use to it and she use to it and it happens so much. **Do you ever ask her about it?** No cause I just know it's going to happen no matter what, you know. (154-156)

Kalla: When there be drive-bys, when they just do it, like come down Texas and just start shooting over that away and go on over there. I've never been in the cross-fire but they be shooting last night, that's all but we just came on it. But they was just shooting up in the air. We be thinking they be shooting at people but you know, not straight at people, they were shooting up in the air. (86-94)

Kalla may be under-estimating the risk of drive-bys, especially because when there is not a direct target, anyone in the vicinity is susceptible. Random bullets, even if not directed at a person, can be deadly. And like her mother, Niesha is saddened by every gunshot and fearful one of her siblings could become a victim.

Niesha: It makes me think of my brother and sister getting shot. If they got shot I'd be scared. **Do they hang out in the neighborhood?** Yeah, they'll come in the house

and they go out. (154-156)

Hearing gunshots and fights is inevitable if living in Darbyville. The startling noise of the neighborhood sets in motion the next few minutes of behavior. The mothers respond with "where are my children, are they safe, and who was involved with the violence." The children follow the lead of the mothers and have learned to respond just as quickly. Mothers must caution their children about the risk of shootings but can do little more to protect them. Answers are often sought but few are found concerning the violence they hear. Sometimes out of concern, at times out of curiosity mothers go towards what they hear. Although this may feed their curiosity, it may put them in danger of being caught in the cross-fire or for "knowing too much."

"Target of violence"

Fist and verbal fights were mentioned as common types of violence for adults and children in the neighborhood and most often the way mothers and children became the direct target. Several mothers and children have had the experience of being the direct target of violence. For mothers, they may vicariously have the experience through their child being the target or become the target as a result of a previous conflict with the child. There are times the violence stops with the child but usually involves some motherly intervention. Because mothers are involved by witnessing or intervening with the violence, they too are affected by the experience as well as having to see their child have the experience. Other times the violence is carried over to the mother making her the target of violence. For example, two mothers may be discussing why their children were fighting and their discussion turns into a fight between the mothers. Sharon and Denotra have both experienced their children being targets of violence while Wendy and A.J. became targets in defense of their children.

Sharon: Because there was two little boys, well my boys got off the school bus, they walked all the way home and when they got to the door, they knocked on the door and

I said well, there's the kids, you know. I opened the door and two of the boys, they stood...they gonna come all the way down to my house, on my porch to start a fight with my boys. And I'm opening the door and I'm like "how you all doing, you all have a nice day?" and next thing I know this little dude leaped up on the banister and I seen a swing and I said what the heck is going on? You can imagine what I said, you know. (86-104)

Sharon and her boyfriend had to intervene in the fight between her two sons and the other two boys. She is extremely fearful of her children being involved in conflicts and fights because that is how her oldest son was killed.

Denotra: He was at the basketball court and he was playing basketball and we were sitting on the porch. He was 10 at the time and this 13 year-old-girl, she was real big, had jumped him from behind because he had accidentally tripped her on the court. So she jumped him from behind and beat him. We ran up there and my sister pulled the girl off and I said what is going on with you. (787-794)

Denotra was very disturbed by the older child beating up her son and tried to discuss with Shaun alternatives to fighting because he could really get hurt. She told him to walk away, avoid being around the girl, or go home but if he had to, he should fight back.

Wendy and A.J. were involved in fights that did not start with the mothers but occurred in defense of their children.

Wendy: This girl called Kenya (daughter) a bitch. Kenya mind her own business, she don't bother nobody. Then I'm just standing in the door asking Kenya what's going on. The girl went back and told her cousin that I got smart. A lie told on me! And they came to my house talking crazy so I called the police and went and grabbed my gun. I stood in the house in the door with my gun behind me. The didn't know I had it, but Kenya got hysterical because she thought I was getting ready to shoot. (952-961)

A.J.: There was this one time me and this girl had a fight and she couldn't get to me and she busted all my windows out. Started with her kids and my kids and then me and her got to arguing and stuff and she got mad at me cause she couldn't get to me. (68-76)

Both mothers were discouraged by the behaviors of the other mothers but were prepared to fight or do whatever it took to defend their children and themselves.

When violence occurs and the mother is the target, the experience reiterates the

negative feelings about people in the neighborhood and the ineffective way people deal with conflict. All four of the mothers reflected on how they felt the need to stand up for their children. At the same time, they recognized that there is a risk in becoming involved in conflict with people in the neighborhood because "they don't fight fair." Wendy said she believed the woman coming to her house would have a gun; therefore, she needed to be prepared. For Sharon, the reality of what can happen between feuding teenagers is fresh in her mind because of the death of her oldest son.

Wendy: And I think if somebody take her life (daughter) away I could take theirs but I don't want to look at it that way...I just had to pull my weapon out because they came to my house talking crazy but I wasn't going to fire mine until they fired at me first. And I wasn't going to go out of my house. **Did they have a gun?** I don't know, but people that carry guns, those the ones that goes to your house, cause people nowadays don't go to your house unarmed.(949-951/962-968)

Sharon: Okay, my son and this little dude, they suppose to call themself friends. They had been getting into it and getting into it but I didn't know they were fighting off and on. Nobody was telling me that they were "really" fighting off and on. So they had done fought about three or four times and it just so happened my son was getting the best of him so he retaliated against my son by shooting him. That's how I lost my son...Now you see why I'm so protective of my others. I was like that with him too but I guess I'm even more protective. My kids don't understand. (430-442)

Children's experiences. Many children have witnessed fights and have probably been involved in more conflicts than they were willing to discuss. Perhaps this is because they did not feel their fights defined the term "neighborhood violence." Still, three children talked about having fights in their neighborhood. LaQuisha did not discuss a specific experience with fighting but talked about how she would fight when she is "mad." She related how she has been told by her mother to fight back if she became the target of someone's aggression. This is the general message given to many of the children. Sharon and A.J. both have told their children to defend themselves.

Sharon: I'm not going to tell them not to defend their self because they have to do that. If they can, avoid it, try to, but sometimes it's no avoiding these things because the way these kids come up nowadays. (131-135)

A.J.: I told them (children), I say you all not going to be running in the house from nobody, you going to stand up for your rights. You ain't going to have nobody have you running in the house being scared of them, always want to fight. If they hit you, you hit them back, point blank. That's all I tell them, I'm sorry you gonna have to stand up for your rights cause out here, you have to stand up for your rights. (193-205)

As a result of this advice, a number of these children have been suspended from school.

Although they must fight in their neighborhood to defend and protect themselves, fighting is not accepted behavior at school under any circumstance.

For John, having a fight in the neighborhood was a means of defending himself and keeping people from bothering him in the future. The fights in the neighborhood often expand because the fighter will solicit help from family members. John talks about this in terms of being "ganged."

John: Cause people gang you all the time, when you get into a fight with somebody, they will get their brother or their cousin or something like that. **Do you ever get into fights?** Once in a while. **Why?** They won't mess with you no more. If you fight them, they won't mess with you no more. (22-28)

Tony was a direct target of violence when he was harassed on his porch by older boys before and after school in the neighborhood. The teenage boys fighting with Tony do not attend school and are often seen "hanging" on the corner.

Tony: These two dudes, they be messing with me and my brother all the time. This one day when we got off the bus they started messing and followed us home. They be saying stuff and then my mamma opened the door and this one dude tried to fight before we had to go in. They be messing with us all the time, they ain't got nothing better to do cause they don't go to school or nothing. **What did you do?** I was mad but I just went in the house cause I know my mamma be all worried and everything. See, my brother got shot by some dude messing with him so she be worried every time we go to school. (160-174)

James and Tony do not have many options for responding to conflict except to defend themselves and hope it does not continue.

In the past, mothers have expressed their concern for their children's safety and that their children must fight so they will not be continually targeted. The people who win the

fights or who are the most violent are often the ones who have been given the most respect and power in the neighborhood. Therefore, there is some prestige given to being tough but it may be more an issue of survival rather than status, especially for children. The experience of being a target of violence is very frustrating for mothers and children because they are forced to respond. As with hearing violence, these experiences reiterate the negative aspects of the neighborhood and perpetuate the reality of danger.

Incidental neighborhood violence

Many of the experiences with neighborhood violence (shootings, fights, stabbing, domestic violence, robberies) are experienced by mothers and children accidentally or simply as a result of stepping out into the neighborhood. Incidental violence is when the mother or child is not the target of violence but may accidentally become involved with neighborhood violence by simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The purposeful action of staying out of the neighborhood so not to be bothered by violent activity is not always successful. The incidental violence is common to all mothers and children in this study and is perhaps the most difficult to deal with and respond to because it cannot be predicted and hence cannot be avoided.

The mothers had different experiences with incidental violence. They related two different ways to experience incidental violence in their neighborhood: (1) observing a fight or shooting getting started and (2) walking upon violence or unknowingly being caught in the cross-fire.

Observing the violence from beginning to end

"I was there"

Observing the beginning of a violent event and watching it carried out extends the experience and intensifies the effects especially if the event is deemed unnecessary. This

experience is not as frequent for mothers and children because they keep to themselves and are not usually interacting in the neighborhood. Still, several mothers and children have witnessed the onset and the follow through of violent events in their neighborhood. The mothers feel powerless because there is nothing they can or should do, for safety reasons, to stop the violence. Teresa had this experience, but because she knew her children were out in the neighborhood and could become a victim, the experience was intensified.

Teresa: I've seen a shooting. Well, these guys had got into it, these two guys were together, they had a little shoot-out or argument or something. They guy came up in front of my mamma's house, I was up there at the time and LaQuisha and them was on the playground... So the guy that got shot, he was with the guy that was arguing with the guy who was shooting. He parked up on Pascal on my mamma's street and he come up to him and said, "you want something to do with it" and he just shot him 5 times but he survived, he lived. We heard his Auntie, she live on the other end of my mamma, and we heard her hollering, "Don't you shoot that boy" you know, so we all ran to the door and looked out that's when he started shooting, just shooting you know. Like my kids on the playground and he started running down through here to get rid of the gun. (154-164)

Teresa's first response to the incident was for her children because she knew they were outside and near the shooting. After the shooting ended Teresa searched for her children and found them in a friend's house a few doors away from where they were playing. When mothers are put into these situations, their main concern is for their children. However, the devastation of seeing the violent event is reduced by the relief of knowing the children have not been hurt. This is not to say the mothers are not concerned, but unless they know the people involved with the violence, it is no longer their concern. Still, Teresa was scared by the event as was her child LaQuisha.

Teresa: Well, actually I was scared. See, he was, he looked like the devil, like a demon came out of him after he did it (shot the boy). His whole face just totally changed, he was just walking around just like he had went insane and then when he came out here towards the playground, I was like Oh God, I hope he's running, I hope he's not going down there just to shoot up some people. Like I said, the kids was on the playground but he was just running. (188-197)

Teresa: How did LaQuisha respond? Well, she was actually scared at first, she was

real scared after I got her and saw the expression on her face. It didn't affect her cause she knew he was already gone, they knew the police had already got him and he was gone. She said, "mamma, we heard some shooting and we ran into Toot's house," that was all she said. (221-229)

Teresa could tell LaQuisha was scared by the shooting but commented that she did not feel the violent event really affected her child. Perhaps the fear of being caught in the cross-fire decreases once the event ends. Because LaQuisha did not show more concern, and boasted about running to safety during the shooting, her mother assumed the fear was only momentary. LaQuisha's behavior did not change, nor did her activity in the neighborhood; therefore, it allowed her mother to conclude that the event did not have a lasting effect. If there were signs of constant fear and LaQuisha cried about the event, her mother might have assumed there was a greater effect.

Children's experience. Children are more likely to experience this type of incidental violence if they spend much time interacting in the neighborhood. Both Demarcus and John witnessed the same shooting at a party but Demarcus was at the scene before and during the incident whereas John was watching the even from his porch.

Demarcus: When this boy got shot in the head, it was a party and he got into it with this man's nephew and somebody went up there and told his uncle. His uncle came down and walked in the party and seen them fighting and when the dude got up, he just shot him, I was there. Everybody just fled the party. (80-88)

After the shooting Demarcus said his first thoughts were about getting shot and how bad it would hurt to actually get shot. He said he then thought about his family and how he hoped nothing like that shooting would ever happen to them. He said he tries not to think about it anymore. Demarcus discussed being able to just stop "thinking about it," which may be his way to cope with the disturbing violence. Repressing the memory of seeing someone shot may be the only way he can "shake off" the experience.

Demarcus: What else did you think about? Nothing else really, it's just scary when

it happens then you kind of forget about it and go on. **So you forget about it?** Yeah, gots to, don't want to think about it all the time. **Is that hard?** Nope, just don't think about it any more.

John was on his porch across the street from the party and saw the shooting take place from a distance.

John: It was down by where we use to live at. **What happened?** They were at a party and this dude came by and started shooting and he hit this dude in the head...I seen it. He died, it happened about a year ago. (113-120)

John said he first laughed when he saw it happen because it looked funny but then realized there could be more bullets that could hit him, suddenly it was not so funny after all.

John: I was laughing, it was funny...I just ran, I'm hoping I don't get hit by one (random bullet). It don't affect me because I see it every week and I watch it all the time on t.v.. **Do you ever think about getting shot?** Yeah, I think about it, I hope I don't die if I get shot. (76-83)

John flippantly said he thought the shooting was funny, but it was real enough to make him think about what it would be like to be shot. In the presence of danger, a coping mechanism of laughing may ease the initial response of fear. Seeing someone shot in the head may put one in a state of shock which may help explain why John initially laughed at the incident. These events caused the children to think about their own death or injury, how it would hurt, and to hope that they would not die from a shooting rather than thinking about the violence stopping. This is the grim reality of the neighborhood experiences these children are having.

Getting caught in the cross-fire

"I didn't know what to think"

Getting caught in the cross-fire or unknowingly walking into violence is a common experience for many mothers and children. The random and unpredictable activity in the neighborhood creates an atmosphere that does not allow people to avoid violent events. These experiences are very intimidating for the mothers and children because they not only occur out in the neighborhood but can penetrate the home boundaries. The following three experiences

were different ways incidental violence has been encountered and how each mother responded to the event.

Wendy had the experience of someone invading her home one evening during dinner.

Wendy: Just the other night Kenya and I was eating our dinner and I heard this knock-knock (at the door). And we sitting there eating, they kept banging so hard, I kept saying who was that. I said, "You don't say who you are, you don't get in." So Kenya went and opened the door and he said "I need to chill here for a minute." And I jumped up and said for what? He said, "let me chill." I said something struck through my mind police was out there. So I thought, get out of here, go, go cause I know he had something on him. About that time he left and we went back to the table and I heard knock-knock on my door again and it was the police... They took him to jail, yeah, he sold, they call it the word quail. He sold a quail to a Narcotic (undercover officer) and didn't know it. He wanted somewhere to hide, so he chose my house to hide and I wasn't going out like that, you know. (433-448/478-484)

As a result of this experience, Wendy now keeps her doors locked to keep out any other intruders who feel they may need a place to hide. These types of events take place very quickly and without any warning and often are "over and done" before there is time to think about what has taken place.

Wendy: Well it happened so quickly, you don't have time to think or feel nothing. That's why you know, the kids always teased me about why I keep my doors locked. I said, so many people running in and out of your house and people getting fired at with guns and people getting in trouble and got to find somewhere to go hide. They will run into your house.(492-500)

Denotra was interrupted by neighborhood violence one afternoon while sitting on her porch watching her children play.

Denotra: We were sitting on the porch and the kids were out playing in the yard and all of a sudden I seen four men. They had, I guess it was an Uzi, I don't know what it was, it was a big, big old gun. And then there were three more that had, I don't know what it was, they were silver guns.. they had those guns and they were running up the sidewalk and somebody was shooting from down that-a-way and they were running up this way. I just took my kids and threw them all in the house, I mean, and we just shut the door. I told them to get down on the floor and stay down on the floor cause I don't know what was going on. (532-544)

Again, because her children were right in the middle of the action and exposed to the possibility of getting shot, Denotra was very upset and unable to make sense of what was

going on.

Denotra: Now I was so angry, it makes you angry, it makes you want to just hurt them (the shooters). I mean you know, cause it don't make any sense... But that day it really scared me, you just want to pick up and go, as soon as it happens. But you can't, you know you can't do that (550-555)

Sharon had the experience of being away from her house with her grandchild and two sons and getting caught in the cross-fire of drive-by shootings.

Sharon: We was just riding him in his buggy (grandchild). Right up here at the top of the fence, right here in my court. I was just standing there talking to a girl and all of a sudden something went Boom, Boom. I took off flying my little boy took off flying the other way, I said boy come this way. See, this is the way it came around, around to my back so I was too scared to come back down through here. But they got to shooting right up there and I had my grandbaby with me and the kids was running around playing. I had to fly him down through here and come around the dang-gone (around the fence) long way to get in my house and it's not fair.

Needless to say this experience scared Sharon and her sons and can only be a constant reminder of the danger lurking in the neighborhood.

Sharon: Shit, I didn't know what to think, all I knew was get the heck away from wherever it was, if I could. And i'm trying to figure out where my little boy, scared him so bad he went the other way and I'm telling everybody to go this way and I'm saying, "Come on boy, go this way." I'm trying to push the stroller and stuff, I mean what can you think. I mean, you've got to think fast because you got, I mean it was right there where we were. (320-328)

The mothers make avid attempts to stay away from the neighborhood activities but as can be seen, they are invaded everywhere. The reactions are quick and furious because they have to be. Having someone enter into your apartment and the space which provides the only protection against what is happening in the neighborhood can only cause frustration and anger. When interacting in the neighborhood, mothers do not have time to contemplate options for what to do while bullets fly around their heads. Again, their first concern is for their children and to make sure they are safe and somewhat out of harms way. Although the mothers make desperate attempts to do so, no place is free from danger.

Many of the children discussed violence that fit the incident description but few gave

the detail given by Jammie and Kalla. They both had two very different experiences but were affected enough to provide great detail. Jammie talked about an experience of getting caught in the middle of a domestic violence incident while Kalla talks about walking upon a gang fight in the neighborhood stemming from the East side West side rivalry.

Jammie: Okay, my next door neighbor and his wife, they always fighting, and one day, she shoplifts and she on drugs and she came over here one day to use the phone. Her husband, they must have got into it that day cause they always fighting and every time, I always hear them. I be on the wall with my ear like that (holds ear against the wall) and they always fighting and stuff. So one day she came over here and he said where are the keys to the house and she lied and she said she ain't have it and she was sitting in that chair in there and she like drops the key in there. He just, my mamma was downstairs with her and I had came downstairs and I was getting ready for school and my mamma didn't have to work that morning and we were going to leave about 7:30. He was beating her in the head and kicking her and fighting her and everything and she was saying "Call the police, call the police" and he was saying, "No, don't call the police." And my mamma was trying to break it up and he fell on the table and he said if he break anything he'll pay for it. She kept saying, "Call the police" and my mamma tell me to go call the police and I did. I had to tell the police what happened. (88-103)

Jammie witnessed a brutal fight at 7:30 in the morning while getting ready for school. Like much of the violence in her neighborhood, she has experienced the fighting before. Still, she was surprised at being made to witness the violence in her own house. She said she was actually relieved to be there and called the police because she could give the woman the help she has never provided for her before.

Jammie: What were you thinking? My eyes just got big, I thought he ain't going to hit her in front of me, he'll wait till' I go upstairs but he just popped her in her head and he was kicking her in the face and kicking her in the back and stuff. **What else where you thinking?** Makes me feel bad for her, sometimes I feel like I should call the police and sometimes I don't cause it's not my business. The reason why I listen cause he might kill her, he say, "I'll kill" and stuff like that. He'll say, "I'll kick you between the eyes and make you go blind," and like she probably over there about to die and I could call the police and stuff.

Kalla had the experience of walking upon a fight that was already started and ended brutally as well.

Kalla: We was just walking and well, like when they was fighting, a whole bunch of

them, everybody. It was from the East side and they moved over here and so they was just talking that stuff, and then all those girls came out here and from the West side, and so they just started throwing bottles at the door. They were inside the house when all that was going on. And one girl had a nine, a gun, cause she already done killed somebody, I don't know, I don't even know her..they kept on throwing bottles at the doors and windows and trying to get in, kicking on the door the one girl who use to live out here. I don't know where she was coming from so I can't even say and one boy said she from the East side let's get her. So everybody was just kicking her and beating her on the head and just doing everything to her and then, like they felt sorry for her so they picked her up and knocked on the door and said let her in...but they stopped beating her up and they said see, you should have said you was on the West side. (135-171)

Kalla responded to the incident with humor and then disbelief as many children do when they are not sure how to react. Again, the humor is not "real humor" but a way to cope with the event.

Kalla: I was just thinking like, they need to quit it. I don't know, I was just watching. It was just fun. The whole time I was just laughing...I just don't get it, when they be up there saying all this East side West side stuff, I just don't see no purpose of it. (174-189)

It is disheartening to know both of these experiences were seen incidently by young children who had no expectations for such events. The events occurred in places where the children are suppose to be or not considered dangerous, Jammie's house and the park across from the center. The children may expect danger or violence to occur in the dangerous areas of the neighborhood but when it occurs outside of those places and invades "safe space" the children are forced to re-evaluate their previous knowledge of what is safe and what is not safe.

Summary

The experiences for neighborhood violence may sound, feel, and look different, but they each carry a heavy weight on the lives of these mothers and children. Families have learned to respond in different ways to each type of experience. Although the type of violence called "hearing it" may not put the mothers and children in physical harm, the emotional distress and uneasiness persists. Being a target of neighborhood violence can cause physical as

well as emotional harm and may be easier to explain and therefore somewhat easier to comprehend and deal with. For incidental violence, physical and emotional distress can occur for the mothers and children but few explanations given for why the violence occurs. Table 4 provides an organization of the type of violence, impact, and explanation given by mothers and children.

Table 4. Types, impact and accounts of violence

Type of Violence	Impact of Violence	Account for Violence
"Hearing it"	Emotional	None
"Target"	Physical, Emotional	Retaliation, Eye for Eye, Defens of Self/Family
"Incidental"	Physical, Emotional	Retaliation, Senseless

Mothers may physically respond to each of the events in similar fashion as well as having the same emotional responses of fear and disbelief. Mothers are as frustrated with hearing the violence as they are with walking into it or even with being the target. There is no escape and there are always constant reminders. Sharon gives an honest opinion about anyone making sense out of the neighborhood violence.

Sharon: Who can make sense about what's happening? I can't make no sense out of it. I mean it's happening but what sense is it. I mean, ask anybody. If you can sit down and tell me that anybody can make sense out of it, any of these things that happening, then I'll eat my hat. Because I don't think nobody can make no sense out of anything that goes on now-a-days.(489-496)

In helping their children understand the violence, mothers may discuss the incident with their children immediately after it occurs but there is rarely any elaboration or future discussion. This may occur for several reasons. One reason given by the children is that when you continue to talk about it, the experience is relived and will never go away. Another reason is their feeling that talking about the violence or people involved with the violence may

impart danger to the family as the following three mothers suggest.

Denotra: They don't talk about it cause I tell them (kids) that people's business is their business, you all don't need to sit around and talk about it. (494-496)

A.J.: He was telling them what happened and I told him not to. He wasn't suppose to do things like that cause they might end up coming after him. So you don't get on t.v. or say you saw this or what happened, you know...cause it's not none of his business cause that's how he end up getting himself in trouble and get killed, you know. (286-329)

Wendy: But I always tell my kids, if the police whatever, when people get into things, if the police stop you and ask you questions, you don't answer. You know, because I don't want my kids lives taken away all because they been snitched on and somebody been snitched on. I just tell my kids, say you didn't see it. Gotta tell lies if you wanna keep living. (717-724)

Another reason mothers may not discuss the violence with their children is because they try to shield them from having to deal with such difficult information. Mothers try to protect their children from the violence around them and perhaps because they cannot guarantee their physical safety they attempt to provide some sense of mental stability.

Glenna: I just take her and hug her and comfort her. We talk it out you know, about different little things that happen in the neighborhood but I try not to tell her things that happen out here. The only way she finds out if she goes to school the next day or just to be at the center and somebody will bring it up. But things that happen I try not to tell her. **How come?** Because she's too young to have all that burden on her, I think. (620-631)

A few other mothers use the violent experiences to talk about the dangers with their children and expose them to the "real world" and so hopefully they will understand they should not get involved with the violence in their neighborhood.

A.J.: And that's all I let them know, if you want to live like that, all you going to be is in the ground or be in jail or be in the hospital somewhere. Cause you not going to be here walking the streets, not living that kind of life. (399-404)

Teresa: I would rather for them to see it so they know what's going on in life and they could choose to be that way or better. If I don't let them see what it's like, then they will probably want to experience it. So to keep them from experiencing it, fine, hey you know. I want you to see it, I want you to see what's going on. (293-300)

There is also the notion that the violence does not have an effect on the families

because they have been accustomed to these everyday occurrences. Therefore, there is no need to talk about what is going on because everyone is able to ignore it and accept it as a way of life. The mothers may be used to dealing with whatever their environment has to offer, or forces them to deal with, so if violence is a part of the neighborhood, they face it and go on with their daily lives. A.J. and Glenna are two of the strongest willed mothers in the neighborhood and have accepted this belief.

A.J.: Because living out here, when you see it all the time, sometimes it really don't affect you. It just be like, oh another day, somebody got killed again, and it really don't affect them. (366-372)

Glenna: So really it's nothing, if you stay in the housing projects you are going to see something. You are bound to see something and it's hard staying here and not seeing it, not unless you just want to stay in your house and not get out and mingle or do anything. Sure, I've seen violence. (227-231)

Ultimately, the mothers have to maintain a stance that they can and will survive. They do the best they can, raise their children the best they know how to, and for some, with the help of a little prayer, they make it through another day.

Wendy: I just get worried, I just grit my teeth and go on and keep praying and ask the Lord not to let nothing happen to them when they out. (860-862)

Denotra: I don't know, sometimes it's depressing to even think that we may have to be here for some more years, okay. But while we are here, this is our home and we just have to deal with it. (299-303)

Sharon: It's going to take a whole lot more than me, for real, and I can't do it by myself and the only thing I can do is just try to deal with it as I have to live with it. That's the only thing I can do and try to teach my kids to come up the best way I can and try to protect them the best that I can. That's all I can do it just keep my fingers crossed and hope they do the right thing and put it in the hands of the Lord and hope that He guides them right. That's all I can do, I can't be with them 24 hours. I'm going to tell you it's wear and tear off of a mothers's brain, yes it is. (388-395)

Ellen: It's hard to deal with, very hard. I would say it's very hard to deal with it. **How do you deal with it?** Just take one day at a time, that's all you can do. Take one day at a time. (145-148)

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

The experiences of neighborhood violence for these ten mothers and ten children share many common aspects. Many of the families have even shared the same violent incident because the neighborhood is small but the impact is large. Nearly all have heard the gunfire and other noisy activities accompanying an act of neighborhood violence. Others have been present and seen violent episodes. A few have themselves been physically injured in violent neighborhood encounters. For all, the carryover effects of fear and panic are real. These mothers and children begin each day not knowing what will happen, but they carry on. Some forge ahead with faith, all with the hope that no one in their family will be touched by violence.

In understanding their experiences, it is important to understand how mothers and children define neighborhood violence. Neighborhood violence is defined in different ways but shares common elements: drugs, shootings, fights, and drug dealers. These elements make up different types of violence that are experienced in different ways. The families hear the violence, become targets of violence, and incidentally experience violence in their neighborhood.

Hearing the sound of gunfire may not seem as devastating as actually seeing someone shot, but when a mother does not know if her child is at the wrong end of the gun, the devastation is worse. In dealing with the violence associated with the drug dealers/users, the mothers have developed anticipation of what can and probably will occur, so the reality if something does happen is less stunning. The violence that is targeted towards a mother or child evokes anger because there is often a physical response so that the families actually "feel" the involvement. The incidental violence creates the most fear because of the chaos that

often is involved. People must respond instantly, and there is no time for thinking about which way to go or what to do. The violence that is heard and/or incidently seen and experienced is the most disturbing. These types of violence are also the most commonly experienced in Darbyville, and as a result, they become the most difficult to cope and deal with, as well as to understand and explain to the children. Specific episodes of these types of violence are unpredictable because of not knowing when they will occur, even if they have become so commonplace that they are generally expected. What is commonly anticipated is where the violence occurs on two main street corners, where the drug dealers "hang-out," through the "cut" extending from the basketball court to Cherokee Avenue (see the neighborhood map). The times of these episodes are somewhat predictable, as they are more likely to occur in the evening, any time groups of people are "hanging out," or if conflict has been instigated with the [Other Side]." As a result, violence can occur really at anytime of day or night--and so these episodes are not readily explained as acts of reason or logic.

The violence has become background noise but still startles and still alarms those who hear it. Several mothers and children alluded to the violence as a part of living in the Projects as well as living in a violent society. Because some of the mothers have few experiences living outside of Darbyville, they perceive their experiences to be normal and no different from those of anyone else. For a few of the mothers with family in the neighborhood, there is less fear or anxiety for their children because they are known to people throughout the neighborhood. Teresa feels that, because her mother is the neighborhood spokesperson, no one will bother her children "everyone knows who they are." Although this may allow the children to be safe among people in their neighborhood, much of the violence is attributed to people outside of the neighborhood who do not know the families, so safety for the children cannot be guaranteed.

The mothers and children often suggested that they do not know much about what is going on in their neighborhood; however, they are able to describe in detail the violence and activities that occur in Darbyville. They cannot help but experience violence, even though attempts to avoid it are made by staying to oneself and off streets and out of open spaces in the neighborhood, because some of the violence literally knocks on the door, invades the front porch, or interrupts a Saturday afternoon's walk outside.

Most of the children made general references to experiences with violence and discussed the frequencies of shootings and fights in the neighborhood but only a few gave much descriptive detail. The ones who shared a story give explicit detail. Jamie, for example, remembers the time of day the violent event took place, that her mother did not have to go to work, and specifics about the fight she witnessed between a neighboring couple. Of course, all of this occurred before she is to go to school where she was expected to concentrate on reading and writing for the day. She freely suggested that violence is a part of the neighborhood, that it is not "too bad," and that it does not really disturb anyone. Still, the image of this one violent event that occurred four months prior to the interview is etched in her memory.

In order to cope and deal with the violence, the mothers have developed ways to respond based on what they have learned from previous experiences. Physically, they try to avoid activities in the neighborhood. When a shooting is heard or a drive-by occurs, they dive on the floor, run upstairs, keep their doors locked; when possible, they try to do activities outside of the neighborhood altogether. These physical reactions are taught to the children more by way of example rather than by explanation and have become automatic responses. The children also are told never to intervene, but rather leave the scene of a fight instead of going to it or getting involved. However, some mothers do not always follow their own

advice and, out of curiosity for what is occurring in the neighborhood, go to a violent event rather than stay away. As might be expected, the children occasionally do the same.

Emotionally, the mothers are scared for themselves and their children. They allow the children to see their own fear so they will know that the risk of danger is very real. Some mothers feel it is important for their children to see what is happening in the neighborhood. They feel that seeing the negative aspects of drugs and violence will deter involvement in those types of activities. Other mothers attempt to keep their children uninformed about what is happening in the neighborhood because they consider them too young to have to deal with such devastating experiences. At times, the mothers are looked to for answers and explanations about the violence but, more often, the children are at least as knowledgeable about what is occurring in the neighborhood as their mothers.

The mothers attempt to limit the time spent and places where the children interact in the neighborhood, but once the children are outside of the home, there is little a mother can do. The children have learned places in the neighborhood to avoid and times of day when the chance for danger is the greatest. Although there are times the mothers feel overwhelmed and depressed about their living conditions, there are some who are able to use these feelings to push them to find alternatives for their children. Three mothers suggested that they use the violence as a motivation to work towards moving out of the neighborhood to live somewhere better. For A.J. and Denotra, living in public housing is seen as a temporary situation and one that they want to discontinue. Both are working and trying to move out of the neighborhood but do not have many options for alternative living. For Dee Dee, one option is moving to another housing development that is considered not as dangerous or chaotic as Darbyville, so she has left Darbyville and is pleased with the move. However, not all mothers are working or not all see moving into another housing development as a better option. They do not know

where to move nor do they have much assistance in finding information for alternative housing. Darbyville is considered one of the better housing developments because it is small and has less violence than several of the other developments. Therefore, moving out may not make life either safer or better.

There are not many options for responding to the violence in the neighborhood. The options of calling the police or taking the violence into their own hands are not recommended behaviors. One mother and one child reported calling the police to intervene in violence they observed in Darbyville. Glenna, with the help of her neighbor, the resident spokesperson, called the police to report "the boys hanging out late into the night." She said, after calling the police every night for one week, the police would drive by and ask the young men to move. They were successfully moved from her corner; now they stand on the other side of the street, one corner down. Her daughter called the police when a domestic violence incident was brought into her house, and she feared for the woman's life. Perhaps for several reasons, no other mothers reported either calling the police about the violence or turning to the management of the housing development for help. One reason is that the mothers reported the police are not quick to respond, and the incident is over before they are able to get to the neighborhood. Another reason is that the mothers do not want the police approaching them and asking questions because they will be seen as "narcs" in the neighborhood. The fear of retaliation is overwhelming, and the mothers know there is no protection or way to prevent people from knowing who told the police. For their own safety and that of their families, the mothers and children do not report to authorities what is occurring. Although there is still risk because of the neighborhood violence, they believe there is less risk in the random violence than if someone is out to get revenge. Several mothers reported the protection offered by the on-site police officer gives little relief because he is seldom seen interacting in the

neighborhood and leaves at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, about the time when everyone is coming out into the neighborhood and activities begin.

It is not that the mothers have not thought about taking the law into their own hands; on the contrary, they probably would like to pay back many of the offenders for the fear and pain they have inflicted on their families; however, these women are mothers, the primary caretakers for the children and, as a result, cannot retaliate against the violence. One mother spoke of being prepared for violence, having her loaded gun ready, but she said that she would not use it unless she was fired upon first. She also said that it would be more devastating to leave family members behind--so if one of them were to get shot and killed, it would be better for all of them to be shot and killed. The behavior of taking things into their own hands is the very behavior the mothers complain about and know nothing will be resolved by. Even 14-year-old Demarcus suggested that it does not make sense to kill someone when there is conflict but that it would be better just to "knock them out" and let them pay for it in jail, rather than you for committing murder.

Another problem in the neighborhood is the on-site housing manager who is not given much credit for supporting or helping the residents because she does not interact or know people in the neighborhood. Some of the mothers suggest that the manager is too lenient with residents who break public housing rules, and, because the rules are not enforced, there is little deterrence to breaking the rules. The two possible sources of help, the police and the housing manager, are seen as ineffective in helping to control or deter the violence in the neighborhood. This leaves mothers feeling powerless because a possible source of strength that should be available is not there.

There is also a concern in the neighborhood because there are few activities for the teens or adults to do in the neighborhood. There are neighborhood sports teams for the

children to join, but no activities for the adults. Even the neighborhood teams face violence when they interact with other developments from across town because of the East Side/West Side rivalry. The mothers have limited resources to take part in activities outside of Darbyville, but they try to keep their children involved with places like the Boys and Girls Clubs and local church facilities that provide free recreation. Glenna said that if she ever wins the lottery, she will build a center and keep it open for all adults and teens to have things to do besides "stand around and drink beer."

Research summary

As was demonstrated in Chapter 2, the literature on neighborhood violence is still in the early stages of development but has begun to grow in the last five years. Research that can address issues beyond simply counting the number of times violence occurs or is observed is greatly needed. As well, research that focuses on minority and other understudied populations also is needed. The present research contributes to both aspects of this research field.

Consistent with most research on neighborhood violence in inner-city neighborhoods (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Martinez & Richters, 1993; Garbarino et al., 1992; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993) this study found that the exposure to neighborhood violence was prevalent with every mother and child who was interviewed. The types of violence to which the participants were exposed also were similar to past studies in that fights, people shooting guns in the air, drive-by shootings, and seeing a person shot were reported. Also previously supported in the literature, violence associated with drug dealers and users frequently was reported.

In looking at how families cope and deal with violence in their neighborhood, the neighborhood context needs to be understood. The Ecological Perspective (Bronfenbrenner

1977, 1979, 1986; Garbarino, 1992) suggests that the family is an open, adaptive system and that exchanges with the environment can greatly impact family functioning. It was found in the present study that the Darbyville neighborhood has changed over the years and is currently experiencing episodes of chronic violence, day-to-day violence. This chronic, day-to-day violence in the neighborhood influences the daily activities of children and their mothers. The neighborhood also affects attitudes, perceptions, and options about parenting and socializing in the neighborhood. Few decisions can be made without contemplating the present state of the neighborhood. For example, if it is evening time and "guys" are on the basketball court, most children would not be permitted to spend time outside because of the risk of violence erupting on the basketball court. Because it is not always known when or where the violence will erupt, mothers and children stay close to home and try to avoid spending time in the neighborhood.

Previous research (Anderson, 1993) has suggested that some mothers keep their children in the house seven days a week, 24 hours a day in order to protect them from random violence. It was found in this study that the mothers would try to keep a watchful eye on their children when they were in the neighborhood but the children did take part in some outside activity. However, then they would keep them in the house for the remainder of the day and always cautioned the children not to leave the house. The parenting strategies used by these mothers to guide and control their children tended to follow the "authoritarian" style with the young children, which is consistent with previous research (Baumrind, 1989; McLoyd, 1990). However, with older children the mothers became more relaxed and interactive. The mothers felt they have taught their children how to manage in the neighborhood, and they must be given the opportunity to make decisions and choices for themselves. This is an important finding that helps to illustrate how mothers may change parenting strategies over time but first

must establish firm rules while children are young. The "authoritarian" parenting style is often considered to be not as effective in promoting healthy child development as the authoritative style; however, for these families, it may be the best way to protect a child.

It has been suggested in previous research on low-income African-American mothers that the stressors in their lives, such as chronic unemployment, poverty, being single heads of households, and having few sources of social support will deter effective parenting and mother-child interactions (Powell, 1979; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1991). In the present study the social support for the mothers was almost nonexistent regarding peers in the neighborhood. No mother said she socialized on a regular basis with anyone other than family. For mothers who had extended family available, there was a definite feeling of support and help whenever needed. Several of the mothers who had no extended family in the neighborhood alluded to the fact that they were depressed about their neighborhood and felt "locked up." Without utilizing people in the neighborhood for social, emotional, or material support, mothers only have their immediate family, usually children, with whom to interact and socialize. Yet, the mother's ability to parent her children effectively did not seem to be hampered and may have been more effective because the mothers openly discussed and communicated with their children. Even in the worst of times, as with the death of a 16-year-old son, the mother was able to respond so as to guide and protect her other teenage boys.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support much of the previous research on neighborhood violence. Violence is an everyday occurrence in this inner-city neighborhood, and many mothers and children inadvertently are exposed to many risks. There are risks to witnessing as well as personally being involved with violence throughout the neighborhood. Mothers are forced to take extreme precautions in order to keep their children safe. The families have developed coping strategies in order to carry out their daily lives. For these

low-income African-American families who are faced with many external stressors, neighborhood violence has been added to the list. The mothers and children have developed skills that allow them to cope with their neighborhood experiences.

Recommendations for future research

There are many implications from this study for both research and practice. Much of the research addressing neighborhood violence investigates how many times mothers and children experience different types of violence in their neighborhoods. The surveys used to elicit this information provide lists of violent behaviors such as shootings, knifings, fights; but these do not allow for the respondents to give their own accountings of violence. The present study allowed the participants to give their own definitions of violence, as well as to relate personal experiences associated with each particular type. No other study was found that actually asked mothers and children how they define neighborhood violence, how they describe their personal experiences with it, and responded to it. The present study was conducted specifically to elicit this type of information. This information is critical in order to shed light on issues the mothers and children feel are important, as well as making sure researchers are talking about the same violence to which the mothers and children are referring.

Many studies ask only mothers to report on their child's behaviors and experiences or only the child to report on his/her own behavior and experiences. No other study was found that asked dyads of both mothers and their children on their own experiences and the experiences of the other. These are two important elements of research that reveal what is being experienced. From this, one is able to see what the mothers said they have told their children about violence, as well as the message the children say they have received from the mother--and vice-versa. These data showed consistencies in the transfer of information from

mother to child and child to mother. Also, many times children are not given the opportunity to share what they know or have experienced. As was found with this study, the children are frequently more informed about neighborhood activities than are their mothers and can fill in details for their mothers. The children also see things from a different perspective, one that should not be ignored.

Qualitative research must continue in this field in order to provide the detail and descriptions of experiences families are having with violence in their neighborhoods. Future research should follow children over extended periods of time, starting with young children and following them throughout their high school years. This information may help track how children experience changes over time and with age. Case study research with one or two families over an extended period of time would contribute to the understanding of exposure to violence over time and when and how coping skills begin to be developed. Research needs to be conducted in other neighborhoods, both less and more violent than Darbyville. This may provide insight as to how families are able to adapt to different levels of violence and help to assess different resources that may be available in the different neighborhoods. Also, men need to be included in future studies. The fathers, drug dealers, and single men who are not fathers should be included to explore how they experience violence in the neighborhood, how they perceive the violence effects the women and children in the neighborhood and how they cope and deal with the chronic violence. Future studies also should include varied sources of information, such as school teachers, social workers, and others who have daily interactions with these families so that what is happening to persons where violence seems inescapable can be documented and ways for coping with it found.

For future researchers in the field, it is necessary to conduct the above suggested research but to do so, there are precautions to be addressed. Ethnographic and

phenomenological research should be conducted with a knowledge base about the culture under study. Researchers should not go into the "field" without being prepared. Safety and ethic issues must be addressed. The safety of the researcher and the participants must be evaluated and deemed useful enough to outweigh the risks and dangers. For example, will the participants be in danger for talking with the researcher and if so, how can the researcher guarantee safety. For the researcher, personal safety questions need to be addressed to prepare for possible dangers. Ethic issues need to be answered concerning why the research is being conducted and who and what will benefit from the research always keeping in mind the well-being of the participants. Researchers must do there "homework" and earn the right to step into the lives of others.

Practical implications

For practical use, the information provided from this study sheds light on the daily lives of ten mothers and ten children living in public housing. There is often the perception that these mothers are involved in much of the illicit neighborhood activity; otherwise, they would report what is occurring to the police. This study gives alternatives to that perception in that the mothers are knowledgeable about neighborhood activity but are fearful of retaliation if they report the violent activities in their neighborhood. The mothers cannot just pack up and move away; in fact, many of them do not want to move because they are surrounded by family and familiar surroundings, even though it is violent. It would be very difficult for a single-mother to move her family out of the neighborhood if she does not have a car, has few family members available for support, and is working on her GED. Also, these families are fearful of moving into environments with which they are not familiar.

The information provided in this study can help social workers, doctors, police, teachers, and others who work with children and families living in public housing better

understand how their hours are spent at home and in the neighborhood. Several of the children experienced violence before school, went to bed hearing violence, or had their dinner time interrupted by gunfire and having to dive on the floor. When home and the neighborhood are not very relaxing, school may be the only place the child can calm down. Conversely, because of all the stress in the home territory, many of the children may be very anxious and excited at school and, thus, are unable to stay focused or let their guard down. Also, children may not have anyone to talk to about their concerns and fears about neighborhood violence, so they may need someone at school who will be a good listener.

Teachers and social workers must be aware of the larger context outside of the classroom and respond to it, not just acknowledge it. For example, the ways in which some of the mothers interact with teachers and people outside of the neighborhood is judged as confrontational and defensive. These mothers are under great stress and may find it difficult to let down their barriers even when outside the neighborhood. Also, it should be recognized that mothers must prepare their children, the best way they know how, to protect themselves in the neighborhood. Some of the behaviors that are encouraged in the neighborhood, fighting back when confronted, are "outlawed" in school therefore contradicting that which the mother has told the child. Although these behaviors are not accepted at school, the children are doing as their mothers have instructed them and doing what they need to do to survive in the neighborhood. Children and mothers need to be exposed to alternatives for resolving conflict and aware of why they are not permitted to fight at school. Still, many children may feel, for good reason, that they are not safe at school unless they are prepared to fight. The mothers may have the same reservations concerning their child's safety based upon the ability of school personnel to provide safety. Schools, teachers, and families must respond to the needs of one another, in order to provide the best and safest education and services to all children.

The neighborhood is small. The drug dealers can be forced to leave, but it will take a community effort. This community effort must extend beyond the boundaries of Darbyville because many of these families are using all their strength just to survive daily life. Concerted efforts made by people outside of the neighborhood have not been effective for the mothers and children interviewed. The efforts must be collaborated with those living inside and outside the neighborhood. People from within the neighborhood have insight, but often times the people who are the most willing to be verbal about the neighborhood are the least respected by their peers in the neighborhood. Therefore, it is recommended to obtain the assistance of "insiders" but, those who are respected and knowledgeable of what is occurring. Qualified "exports" from outside the neighborhood are needed and they too must be respected by those in the neighborhood. The schools may be a starting place for building bridges between those within and outside of the neighborhood, especially schools within walking distances of the neighborhood. The mothers could assist the teachers and their children while also being able to escape the stress of the neighborhood. It is important to start at the ground level and establish success and then continue to work up to larger scaled intervention and prevention.

The fence around the neighborhood, the on-site manager, and the residential police in the office from 8:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m. all have not changed attitudes or behaviors within the neighborhood. Since the time of the drive-by shooting that killed 5-year-old Tiffany and prompted the addition of several more police in the neighborhood, five drive-by shootings have taken place. Unfortunately, the people who are shooting are not impressed by any of the minuscule community change efforts that have been implemented in Darbyville. What will it take to get them to respond and leave this neighborhood in peace?

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APPENDIX

"Hear it"

Responses to Neighborhood Violence

Wendy	*Somebody out there in the backyard shooting. We had to dive on the floor....Just shooting, just testing their gun. They shoot all the time honey. I done got so use to it but it makes me jump when I hear it but then, I get scared because by me being on the front street and I'm just so scared one of the kids and I are going to get hit by a bullet.(511-519) *Well, I don't really react to it, I just get shaken up, the first thing going through my mind is Oh God, where is my kids, and then I start calling around.(568-570) *All my kids was in my house except for Nikki and I got real hysterical, because I had all my kids and I said if anything was to happen, I wanted it to happen with all of my kids, with us as a whole family, no leave nobody out.(573-577) *If something has happened and they're not around me, and they at the center and they heard a gun blast they will call me from the center and make sure I'm alright.(770-773) *First thing that went through my mind, Oh God, what happened. But it was so sad the way that it happened, it kind of affected all of us.(820-823) *Well, it affected me because it really didn't have to happen. It left me kind of depressing because I had to show my feelings although her and I didn't get along...my heart goes out for anybody, anybody that has to leave their kids behind, and don't know which way they going to go.(829-835) *I don't question God, and ask him what happen because sometimes people bring things on their selves when they can avoid a lot of things. But it just make me say Ooh, I hope it don't ever happen to me. I hope I don't never have to have this kind of situation.(837-842)
Denotra	*I felt bad for her and her children cause it's, it hurts to go through that. Woman that go through(domestic violence) that go through a lot.(429-433) *My children if they hear it sometimes, you can tell by the look on their face. They are like, what's going on.(435-437) *Well, you know, I think about the times I may have had a problem, you know. And that how much I'm not going to go through that problem anymore.(446-448) *Most of the time when you see people going through things like that (domestic violence) you want to change it, you want to make it better for them.(451-453) *So, that's what it did to me, it makes me a better mother.(490-491) *So, I know that they look sad when it does happen but after that, as long as it's not happening, they're okay, but when it's happening, they're sad about it.(497-500) *I'm like oh goodness, you know, hysterical. Look at him, he's on the ground, blood is everywhere, get him some help, you know. Even though this woman was trying to stop the bleeding...even to see somebody you don't know. You want to help them, you know. That's how I reacted, I was in shock really, tried to comfort her. That's all I really remember feeling(927-937)

Kelly	*If I hear something happening I don't go to any scenes, I don't go out this door and start going down the street because something still could be going on.(145-147) *If something happened now, I don't want to get on the phone and find out what happened because I don't want to know. How come? I mean, you know, it's not that I don't care what happen or I do care what happen, it's just I don't want to know anything about it. Cause I think people should get along and not go against each other like that. I'll put it that way.(151-155) *She just talk about how sad it was. How sad and everything it was about it. And I said it could have been you, could have been me, you know. You on your front porch or in your yard playing, you don't know who's going to come up and do something to you. I hate it happened to 'em myself, I really do.(218-222)
Sharon	*I heard the shooting, I didn't think it was a drive-by, you know, I really didn't pay no attention to it because you hear it so much all the time, you know. I keep hearing people running and screaming, you know, I dropped the mop and grabbed my (grand)baby out of the stroller and I flew upstairs, cause that's what I do. When I'm here by myself or my kids or something and a gunshot is going off close to us, I always teach them to go upstairs and lay down.(350-359) **Shit, it scared the hell out of me, you know. You in the house and all of a sudden you want to go to the store or go outside...and then you walking out to the middle of something and you don't even know what's going on.(584-589)
Ellen	**Well, I just thinking I wish I was in some other direction or some other neighborhood, wondering if I can ever move out of this neighborhood.(95-98) **When I was almost, I do have a home nurse that visits me during the day and I was at the point were I couldn't sleep at night and then they could tell it was a big difference with that going on (drive-byes) because I stayed upset and nervous all the time around there and didn't' ever know if there was going to be drive-byes.(100-106) **...So (drive-byes) kept me always very uneasy. Never knowing what's going to happen. Gong to bed at night, I couldn't sleep and then my kids got to the point where they couldn't hardly sleep at night because it was too much going on up there.(111-115) **They (kids) didn't sleep and they'd come in and ask me, did you hear this or did you hear that? And I'd say yes I did, and being that they have to be in school, it takes them a time to go back to sleep after being awake during the hours in the night.(117-121) **Well, they (kids)just be frightened and they get restless and they can't rest and they can't go to sleep and they just keep walking. You can tell that they are a nervous wreck.(163-166) **Well, he seem like he be very upset, nervous like, very upset.(193-194) **He just gets upset and nervous, he just wonders why and when they going to stop. Why they keep doing those things, it makes him wonder you know.(200-202)
Melanie	**What were you thinking? Why did he get shot, what was he doing out here, lots of stuff...I just came back home and started crying.(399-402) **I just, I just was scared and I just stayed in the house. I couldn't believe that nobody could come out here and shoot somebody over little petry stuff if that's what it was over. I just couldn't believe it, it devastated me. It kept me in shock for a week. I just couldn't understand it.(407-413) **What do you think about? That they (kids) could get shot, that somebody come up here and knock on the door and tell me hat they are out there laying dead and they have to take them in a body bag.(429-432) **Well, first of all she (daughter) gets mad but instead of getting mad we say positive things instead of negative things.(456-458)

A.J.	**Usually when there be shooting we be in the house and they drop to the floor, cause they scared the stray bullets gonna be coming through the windows, and that don't make no sense.(321-325) **When hear a shooting) I think of my kids first the I hope no mamma has to lose a baby, that would not be easy, lose a baby to guns. I always be wondering where my kids are if they ain't at home but I usually know where they are so I don't really have to worry that much.(345-351) **Because living out here, when you see it all the time, sometimes it really don't affect you. It just be like, oh another day somebody got killed again, and it really don't affect them. When they hear the shooting they just run to the house, try not to see who got shot or whatever.(366-372)
Dee Dee	**You get tired of laying down, especially being on that I'm on the main street and drive-byes come past. You get tired of hearing bullets come past your window. It very seldom happens but I know as it gets hotter, the more and more it gets hotter, the more and more it will add up and start getting worser.(185-190) **What's your reaction when you hear shootings? Well, if it's not in distance, I just lay there and keep on going to sleep if I'm sleeping. If it's close range I get down on the floor with my kids unless I'm already in bed. But other than that it doesn't really bother me except it motivates me to want to get out more. (192-197) **One time somebody came by shooting and they got scared and jumped and it was just like for that second and then it was over with. But other than that...I just told them that it would be okay, you know, they don't know when it's going to happen but they are very aware that there is a problem. I don't know if it bothers them like it use to, they can keep on going about their business when they hear it.(572-582)

Melanie	*Sometimes they usually just shoot up in the air. That's the thing that scares you. Why do they do that? I guess just to have fun or act a fool. I don't know, I ain't never understood that..most of them do (have guns), the majority of them do.(98-103) *Sometimes they get mad at each other, break glass and start fighting....If I'm going to kill you over a crap game or whatever, you know. People they fight over that, and that's just not right.(328-334) *One time this guy got shot up on Pascal. All I know he got shot, got shot in the leg and he was laying out there. Did you see him? Yep, he got shot in the leg and was bleeding to death. I was down here on Badgett by the center and we heard the shot ad went up there. I didn't stay long, I just went up there and came back down here and went in the house. I can't look at stuff long.(391-398)
Teresa	*If I'm here and they (kids) are outside and I hear some shooting I'm going to go to the door and see cause one of them could be on their way home.Anything could be happening while they coming home. They could be right there at the door and something could happen to them and I not know so if I hear any shooting I'm going to look outside.(213-220)
Dee Dee	*But only real shooting I've ever really seen or hear of is when the guys,or something out on the basketball court are fighting over the basketball game and shooting. They get mad and start shooting then, but other than that, the shooting isn't really that bad, but it gets to you.(177-183) *You hear the gunfire and you know something is going on. Other than that you can't really say, I see this unless you are out there in it. And I don't try to be out there in it. The only reason I knew about the little girl (getting shot) was that it happened in the daytime and I happened to be outside. But it was a little girl that got shot where apparently they were shooting at someone else and the little girl got caught up in the cross-fire. She's okay, she just got brazed but it's just the point of getting shot.(312-327)

Mother's Interview Protocol

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to talk to me. I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences with things in your neighborhood. I am not interested in specific names of people in your neighborhood, so please do not tell me specific names of people. First I would like to ask you some background information then some questions about your neighborhood.

Age, number of children/ages, education level, work status, years in neighborhood, relatives in neighborhood

1) Tell me about your neighborhood.

Tell me what it is like, what the people do, etc.

Tell me about your friends/family in the neighborhood.

2) Mothers are shown map of the neighborhood.

Tell me about where you live.

Tell me about other areas of the neighborhood.

3) Tell me how you would define/ describe neighborhood violence.

4) Think about those types of violence, think of a time when you experienced violence in your neighborhood.

prompts: Tell me about that experience.

Tell me what happened.

Tell me what you did, thought.

Tell me what you told your son/daughter about the experience.

Tell me how that experience affected you.

Tell me how that experience affected how you interact in your neighborhood.

Tell me how that experience affected how you parent (you as a mother)

Tell me how that experience affected your child.

Tell me how the experience affected how you interact with your child.

4) Think of a time when you were aware of the fact your child had experienced/witnessed/heard about neighborhood violence.

prompts: Tell me about it.

Tell me what she/he told you.

Tell me how he/she reacted.

Tell me how you responded to your child.

Tell me what you told your child.

Tell me how the experience affected your child.

Tell me how the experience affected your child's interactions in the neighborhood.

Tell me how the experience affected how he/she interacts with you.

Child's Interview Protocol

To be read to child:

I am going to ask you some questions and tape-record what we say. I am not interested in specific names of people in your neighborhood so you do not have to tell me any names of people. If you do not want to answer a question, tell me you would like to go on or skip that question and we will. If you want to stop our talk, just tell me you want to stop and we will. I will not be upset or you will not get into trouble for not answering the questions. Do you understand? Do you agree to talk to me? Okay, let's get started.

First I would like to ask you some general questions about your neighborhood.

- 1) In as much detail as you can, tell me about your neighborhood.

If you were telling another boy/girl about your neighborhood what would you tell him/her.

Tell me what it is like.

Tell me what it is like living in your neighborhood.

Tell me about your friends/family in the neighborhood.

- 2) Child shown map of the neighborhood.

Tell me about where you live.

Tell me about other areas of the neighborhood

- 3) Tell me how you would define/describe neighborhood violence.

- 4) Think of a time when you experienced/witnessed violence in your neighborhood.

Tell me about the experience.

Tell me what happened.

Tell me what you did, thought.

Tell me what you told your mother about the experience.

Tell me how the experience affected you.

Tell me how the experience affected how you interact/ what you do in your neighborhood.

Tell me how the experience affected your mother.

Tell me how the experience affected how your mother treats you/parents you.

Tell me how the experience affected what your mother lets you do in the neighborhood.

- 4) Think of a time when you knew your mother experienced/witnessed Neighborhood Violence.

Tell me about it.

Tell me what she told you.

Tell me how she reacted.

Tell me how you responded to what your mother told you, how she reacted.

Tell me what you told your mother.

Tell me how the experience affected your mother.

Tell me how the experience affected what your mother lets you do in the neighborhood.

VITA

Janelle Von Bargaen was born November 28, 1967 in Bloomingburg, Ohio. After graduating from Miami Trace High School she attending Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. After obtaining a degree in psychology, Janelle headed for Knoxville, Tennessee to attend graduate school in the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee. Janelle received her Masters in May of 1992 and continued at UT for her Ph.D. Janelle was the project coordinator of the Tennessee One-to-One Mentoring Program for six years. After successfully completing her Ph.D. and enjoying herself with family and friends, Janelle now resides in Newark, Delaware.