

**The Relative Risk: Parenting, Poverty, and Peers in the
Three City Study of Moving to Opportunity**

Gretchen D Weismann

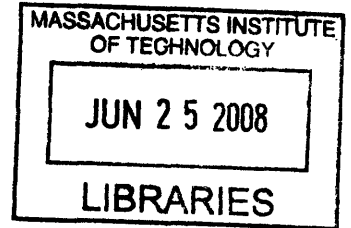
Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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Abstract

This study shows how kin networks, parental monitoring, and housing mobility structure low-income adolescents' engagement in risky and delinquent behavior. I use ethnographic data from a mixed-method study of a randomized housing experiment: The Three City Study of Moving to Opportunity. The ethnography was conducted over 8 months in 2004-2005 with thirty-nine families, including fifty-two male and female adolescents (ages 11-23) in greater Boston, Los Angeles, and New York. Beginning in 1994, two-thirds of the families (members of the experimental complier group) relocated from public and assisted housing in high poverty neighborhoods to very low poverty neighborhoods, using a rental housing voucher and other program supports. The remaining one-third of the sample, a control group, continued to live in high poverty "project" neighborhoods. Using case-study logic, I examine how the content and location of adolescent's daily routines and social ties to friends and relatives are associated with their involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. I also examine the role of parental monitoring and housing mobility patterns in moderating exposure to risk.

I find that for most adolescents in the experimental-complier group, the neighborhood of residence has not become the primary neighborhood of influence in that the former only partially structures their routines and important social relations. How parents manage their social relations, especially with kin, shapes their children's level of engagement in new residential neighborhoods, and involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. Socializing with kin is risky because it brings youth back to dangerous neighborhood environments and because many youth stay connected to kin who are actively engaged in risky and delinquent behavior, including gang banging, drugs, and crime. Parenting moderates this exposure, but for some families, it does not change dramatically after relocation. These findings contribute to research on low-income housing policy and neighborhood effects by demonstrating the critical role of extended family networks, ongoing housing mobility, and multiple neighborhoods of influence in shaping exposure to risk. My policy recommendations include strategies to: help very low-income families who escape high-risk neighborhoods to stay out of them over time, and to manage the risk in their lives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

How ghetto poverty creates “concentration effects” and the role and design of housing policy in creating or addressing problems associated with geographic and social inequality continue to require attention because of the deep and long term impacts that even short-term, isolated spells of poverty can have on people and places. Affordable housing programs influence the residential choices many low-income families have, and shape individual as well as collective neighborhood outcomes. As a result it is important to know how participation in different kinds of housing programs changes families’ opportunities and the quality of both poor and non-poor neighborhoods, if resources are directed toward one strategy versus another. At the present time, the major forms of low-income rental assistance include public housing (1.1 million households) privately owned assisted projects, (1.5 million households), and housing vouchers (1.8 million households). Nearly all of the more than 4,600 families who became participants in the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program, the basis for this study, identified crime and violence as the most important reasons they wanted to get an MTO housing voucher and move out of public and assisted housing projects. Many families felt that their children would be unable to avoid getting caught up in criminal activity if they stayed in the high poverty neighborhoods where these projects are located.

This dissertation specifically examines how family relocation from high to lower-poverty neighborhoods through the MTO program has affected mover adolescents’ engagement in risky and delinquent behavior compared to the behavior of adolescents who remained in the kind of high poverty neighborhoods from which the relocates moved. In this study I examine how adolescents daily routines, their family’s parenting practices, and their social ties to friends and kin are influenced by relocation and the neighborhood context in which they live. The data for my analyses come from a family-focused ethnography which is part of a mixed-method study of MTO called The Three-

City Study of Moving to Opportunity (3cMTO). The ethnography was conducted over eight months in 2004-2005 with thirty-nine families, including thirty-four mothers and fifty-two male and female adolescents (ages 11-23) in the metro areas of Boston, Los Angeles, and New York. Beginning in 1994 two-thirds of the families in the ethnography moved out of public and assisted-housing in high poverty neighborhoods to very low poverty neighborhoods with the assistance of a housing voucher. The remaining one-third of the sample, a control group, continued to live in high poverty project neighborhoods. This study addresses three primary research questions: (1) Does moving away from poor neighborhoods and living in lower poverty ones change the structure of risk for adolescents? (2) *How* do neighborhoods matter for adolescent risky and delinquent behavior? (3) Why might adolescents who move away from high poverty, high risk neighborhoods continue to get involved in risky or delinquent behavior?

MTO Program Background and Theory of Neighborhood Effects

High poverty neighborhoods are considered to be those in which there is more than a forty percent poverty rate (Jargowski 1997; Wilson 1987). Nearly eight million poor people lived in extreme poverty in 2000 and more than half of all high poverty neighborhoods are predominantly Black or Hispanic (Jargowsky and Yang 2006; Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit 2003). Though the number of very poor neighborhoods is declining when measured by this standard, there are still significant and severe pockets of poverty in the United States. In addition, the number of moderately poor neighborhoods (20-39% poverty rate) increased dramatically as the number of high poverty neighborhoods declined (Briggs and Keys 2005). And while most high-poverty neighborhoods are still majority non-poor, housing projects have been particularly isolated and low-income families often inhabit a separate world from their non-poor neighbors (Popkin, Gwiasda, Olson, Rosenbaum, and Buron 2000; Venkatesh 2000). Compared to more affluent neighbors, residents of poor neighborhoods do not have access to the same institutional resources or to social networks that might provide greater resources (Jencks, 1990, Leventhal, 2000). Even though most households change their

residence multiple times over a life time, and many families exit poor neighborhoods, poor and non-white families have shorter spells in lower poverty areas, and are more likely to return to high-poverty disadvantaged locations (Briggs and Keys 2005).

This is a concern because adolescents growing up in neighborhoods marked by concentrated poverty are at risk for a range of negative outcomes, including poor physical and mental health, and risky sexual behavior (Aneshensel and Sucoff 1996; Leventhal, 2004). Researchers have also documented a positive association between living in high poverty neighborhoods and adolescents' participation in delinquency and crime (Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Tolan and Loeber, 1993; Jencks and Mayer 1990). Furthermore, the risks from neighborhood disadvantage may be greatest in the most extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods (Crane, 1991; South and Crowder 1997) such as the ones that MTO families came from.

Moving to Opportunity Background

In 1994 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) implemented MTO to respond to the social problems associated with concentrated poverty. MTO's planners advocated a demand side voucher-based housing strategy in recognition that some of HUD's supply-side programs, such as public housing, had unintentionally contributed to damaging social conditions by clustering housing for poor people in poor neighborhoods. Using Section 8 vouchers and housing counseling assistance MTO moved very low income families from some of the poorest project neighborhoods in five major cities (Boston, Baltimore, Los Angeles, New York and Chicago) to low poverty neighborhoods (neighborhoods with a less than 10 percent poverty rate). By design MTO was a social experiment: the program moved only some families to low-poverty neighborhoods to test their experience compared to a control group that stayed in their poorer neighborhoods in project-based assisted housing, and a regular Section 8 group who received a voucher to use in any type of neighborhood. In total 4,600 families

became participants in this randomized housing mobility experiment including the low-poverty experimental or “treatment” group, the Section 8 group, and the control group. In total eight-hundred and sixty families in all five cities moved to low-poverty neighborhoods through MTO – almost half of the families placed in the experimental group actually relocated. In ongoing research on MTO’s impacts the families who were offered the low-poverty voucher but did not move are still considered part of the program and are called non-compliers, the movers are considered compliers. This dissertation focuses on a small subset of families randomly selected for the 3cMTO study from the experimental complier group (hereafter called “movers”) and control group (“stayers”).

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity

The 3cMTO study built on evaluations at each MTO site conducted one to three years after families first enrolled in the program, and on the statistically-based “*Moving to Opportunity: Interim Impacts Evaluation: Final Report*” which was completed four to seven years after families relocated {Orr, 2003, September #12}. The *Interim Impacts Evaluation* assessed MTO’s impacts by treatment group in several outcome areas: mobility, housing, and neighborhood; adult and child physical and mental health; child educational achievement; youth delinquency and risky behavior; adult and youth employment and earnings; and household income and public assistance receipt. The mixed-method approach of the 3cMTO study was designed to examine puzzles that emerged in the survey based research and to complement the analytic framework of the evaluation. The three parts of 3cMTO are (1) In-depth qualitative interviews; (2) “family-focused” ethnographic fieldwork sequenced to follow a selection of interviewees from the qualitative sample; and (3) neighborhood “scans” – based on census data – of the changing neighborhood and metropolitan area contexts in Boston, New York and Los Angeles. Both the qualitative interviews and the ethnography focused on “the next generation” – families with adolescents and young adults. Complementing the statistically outcome focused evaluations 3cMTO was designed to explore the mechanisms or social processes underlying the observed effects – in other words the

“how” and “why” behind the outcomes. The literature that supplies the models and framework for studying these mechanisms comes from the fields of sociology, criminology, economics, and psychology but is assembled in a body of work called “neighborhood effects.”

Answering the How Question in Neighborhood Effects

Non-experimental research on the effects of a court-ordered housing mobility program showed that moving and living in different neighborhoods had positive effects on individual outcomes prior to the MTO study. The Gautreaux program in Chicago relocated families with backgrounds similar to MTO’s participants (low-income, mostly non-white, public housing residents) to more affluent and racially integrated neighborhoods beginning in 1976. Gautreaux’s findings helped provide support for the government’s investment in MTO. Fifteen years after their relocation families were, on average, still living in more racially integrated, higher income neighborhoods than residents in Chicago’s public housing developments, and Gautreaux youth had much improved test scores and lower school drop-out rates (DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2003; Keels, Duncan, Deluca, Mendenhall, and Rosenbaum 2005; Popkin, Buron, Levy, and Cunningham 2000; Rosenbaum 1995). Moreover the program appeared to improve families’ sense of safety, well-being and confidence, and most families reported that they were better off because of their move (Rusin-White 1993).

However, demonstrating that housing programs like Gautreaux or MTO can help people with individual and social problems beyond housing affordability remains challenging because of the difficulty in isolating “neighborhood” effects from the influence of other ecological factors (characteristics of the family, peer relationships, school resources, etc...). Second, it is challenging to attribute individual and social outcomes to neighborhood effects because people move around a lot. In changing where they live, and spending time in non-residential areas for work, socializing, or other reasons, people are

often “exposed” to many different neighborhoods. The question of exposure (how much and what kind of time is required for a neighborhood to have an effect) is largely unexplored in the literature on neighborhood effects. Housing mobility programs such as MTO also call attention to a necessary pre-condition for neighborhood effects. If families are *able* to move to different, better neighborhoods with the help of vouchers, will they stay and under what circumstances? A related question is whether relocation to a new neighborhood causes a shift in the social world of the people who move and what impact that has on other kinds of opportunities or challenges they face. Much of the literature has argued that low-income residents lose important sources of support when they are relocated, and studies of housing mobility programs have shown that many people return to their old neighborhoods after relocation. Public criticism of MTO has been almost entirely based on the suggestion that housing mobility programs devalue communities and fracture the social ties of the people who live in them. This study explores more thoroughly than prior research the behavioral consequences for adolescents of the impact that housing relocation and housing mobility has on their social relationships to friends and family.

Adolescent Risky Behavior in 3cMTO

One of the key social outcome areas of interest in MTO was youth engagement in risky and delinquent behavior. As mentioned in the introduction crime and violence were the key concerns of MTO families as measured by baseline surveys in 1994. Along with the families who signed up for the program, MTO’s designers believed that moving youth to lower poverty neighborhoods would decrease the likelihood of their involvement in risky and illegal activities. The early evaluations of MTO (one to four years after it began) showed that the treatment group families had indeed moved to neighborhoods that were not only lower in poverty but in crime rates and levels of social disorder and that this improvement in neighborhood safety translated into reduced levels of victimization and youth involvement in violent crime. Treatment effects on specific measures such as adolescent substance abuse, problem behavior, and delinquency were mixed; some sites

found positive effects, others negative effects or no effects, and others showed mixed results (Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001; Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2001). Overall the “treatment” seemed to be working. However, several years later, analyzing data collected for the Interim Impacts Evaluation, researchers arrived at a puzzling finding. Relative to the control group, the number of lifetime arrests for girls in the experimental group was 33 percent lower, including a significant reduction in violent crime. However, boys in the experimental group were about 13 percent more likely than the controls to have ever been arrested, largely due to increases in property crime (Kling, Ludwig, and Katz 2005; Liebman, Katz, and Kling 2004).

How This Study Contributes: Neighborhood Engagement and Relative Risk

My aim in this study was to learn about the neighborhood conditions that structure adolescent involvement in risky and delinquent behavior.¹ To explain the Interim findings the recent MTO research in this domain (Risky Behavior) focuses on the different ways that low-income boys and girls adapt to relocation and characteristics of lower poverty neighborhoods. I do not explore this argument, in part, because mover adolescents in the ethnography had better risky and delinquent behavior outcomes than adolescents in the control group and I did not find any gender differences. Below I summarize the ethnographic data.

The ethnographic data suggest that less than a quarter of the adolescents in the sample are involved in *delinquent* behavior, regardless of treatment group, gender, or neighborhood poverty level and less than half in any risky behavior. There are 22 youth in 18

¹ I define Risky Behavior as non-criminal/legal behavior. Risky behavior includes teenage pregnancy and STDs, fighting, skipping school, disciplinary problems at school, gambling, and alcohol use. Delinquent behavior, which is illegal behavior, includes using or selling drugs, sexual harassment, vandalism, robbery, assault, shoplifting and theft, gang involvement, involvement with the courts, and/or incarceration. This definition is consistent with the prior MTO research to allow comparisons with findings from the Interim Impacts Evaluation (Orr et al. 2003) and 3cMTO In-depth Interviews.

households who are engaging in risky behavior, only slightly more boys than girls. By treatment group less than half in the control group are engaging in risky behavior. Likewise an almost similar percentage of youth are engaging in risky behavior in the experimental group.² The risky and delinquent behaviors that adolescents report on being involved in are fighting, truancy, substance abuse, selling drugs, theft, and gang involvement. The chart on the following page shows a summary of the primary risky and delinquent behaviors.

² Outcomes for youth in the ethnographic sample were different from the several thousand adolescents and young adults in MTO's control, Section 8, and experimental groups. Recognizing that the ethnographic study deliberately oversampled locationally successful treatment group youth ('movers') by a margin of approximately two to one, it is not surprising that adolescents in the mover group were not more likely than adolescents in our control group to be involved in risky behavior. While treatment group comparisons are not applicable, the variation in risky behavior outcomes in this study's sample is representative of the experience of MTO youth overall.

Table 1.1 Adolescent Risky and Delinquent Behavior by Type and Gender

Risky Behavior	Total	Boys	Girls
Using drug <i>other</i> than alcohol and Marijuana	6	4	2
Marijuana Use	12	8	4
Selling Drugs	7	7	0
Alcohol Use	6	4	2
Teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, sexual harassment	8	5	3
Fighting	15	8	7
Vandalism	4	4	0
Robbery	2	2	0
Shoplifting	3	3	0
In a gang	5	4	1
Skipping school	6	1	5
Disciplinary Problems at school	7	3	4
Gambling	2	2	0
Court involvement	6	4	2
Incarcerated	4	4	0

The data show that there are some behaviors that only boys have engaged in: selling drugs, gambling, vandalism, shoplifting, and robbery. Many more boys than girls have been arrested or incarcerated as a result of their behavior and only one girl claimed a gang. Boys also report abusing substances almost twice as much as girls, while fighting is common for both genders. Girls also report skipping school much more often than boys. Youth engaging in risky and delinquent behavior live in all types of neighborhoods from low (less than 20% poverty) to medium (20-40%) and high poverty neighborhoods (more than 40%). However, given the residential mobility of the families, and variation in the types of neighborhoods youth lived in, schools that kids attend, and in the types of risky activities, my analyses concentrate on patterns across cases rather than on strict treatment group comparisons. For example, in higher poverty neighborhoods several of the girls were “jumped,” and for girls in mover families that end up living in higher poverty neighborhoods again, their experience is similar, suggesting that girls’ risky behavior may be more defensive than offensive. Engaging in risky behavior in high poverty project neighborhoods was more detrimental for boys as measured by the consequences. Boys who were at all involved in risky behavior in the projects had a history of delinquent behavior and most had been incarcerated at one time.

Mechanisms of Neighborhood Effects

The body of work that examines neighborhood effects draws on theoretical contributions from urban sociology, psychology, economics, and criminology along with studies of housing mobility and social networks. In this dissertation I examine two important mechanisms of neighborhood effects that are strongly associated with risky behavior outcomes in the literature: peers and family management practices. The MTO research on adolescent risky and delinquent behavior I have noted abandons models of peer effects and finds little gender difference in parenting that would explain the survey based research results. However, the ethnographic data show that the socializing mechanism underlying theories of peer effects adequately describes the way in which adolescents and

parents perceive their exposure to risk, but suggest that the model requires more elaboration. In this study I explore family relationships more deeply than the qualitative or quantitative analyses described above. The study also pays close attention to adolescents' routines over an extended period of time. My findings, more than other MTO research on this subject, and based on a method which favors "getting the context right," emphasizes the critical role of social ties to *specific* people and places in understanding adolescent risky and delinquent behavior.

I argue that one of the overlooked factors in MTO adolescents' engagement in risky and delinquent behaviors is the role of non-household kin. This is despite abundant research suggesting social relationships as the mechanism of neighborhood effects and although kin support is a well covered subject in the community life of low income families. Where family structure is considered in the literature it is primarily presented as a means by which low-income families are surviving.

Similarly the literature has recognized parenting as a critical element of how neighborhood effects work but has paid less attention to established knowledge about family routines and average teenagers. For example, the literature is particularly strong on family management at work in "high risk" neighborhoods but to date, there has been limited data on this in the context of MTO or other programs that relocate low-income families and use randomization to help isolate family effects from selection effects of neighborhoods.

The findings in this dissertation, suggest that there is considerable variation in the degree to which adolescents' social networks and institutional involvements center on their residential neighborhoods. One drawback of the literature has been its failure to map the location and content of social relationships with peers and others across time and space. I include MTO mover families' lived experience as measured by neighborhood engagement through routines and social relationships taking place inside and outside of

the residential neighborhood to contribute knowledge about housing mobility as a mechanism of neighborhood effects.

Limitations

One of the outstanding questions in the neighborhood effects literature on housing mobility, and about which the 3cMTO study hoped to learn, is the set of conditions under which families experience a shift in their social worlds as a result of relocation and what effect this change has on other aspects of their lives. My results offer a partial answer to this question – partial because there was enough variation between families in the ethnography to require that each case be seen as somewhat unique and also due to the focus of my analysis on routines, social ties to family, and neighborhood mobility, and not on other potentially important aspects such as employment prospects, school achievement, and geographic distance to name just a few.

A major limitation of this study for this dissertation's analysis was the limited data that was collected on youth' peers and the location of activities taking place with peers. A related and unanswerable question for me was about the location of crime and with whom exactly which types of crimes were committed. Future MTO research might consider a more in-depth focus on peer relationships and adult role models since explanations about how these neighborhood mechanisms function and their relevance to youth risky behavior outcomes is less established than conclusions about the role of parental monitoring.

Analytical Strategy and Research Question

The 3cMTO ethnography focused on understanding family life, social relationships, and how daily life gets accomplished. My work offers a narrative account of individual MTO parents and youth using case study logic to illustrate the important adaptive process that

has taken place over the years as families moved into and out of neighborhoods similar, and different from the high poverty projects they left behind. This study follows each of the adolescents in both groups (control and experimental) through their daily lives and across the neighborhoods with which they have contact, whether they moved several times or stayed in one neighborhood. Therefore the study considers how patterns of exposure to neighborhood(s) of residence shaped outcomes for low-income adolescents who relocate to lower poverty neighborhoods to answer the question of how neighborhoods matter for adolescent risky and delinquent behavior and under what conditions peers and parents are mediators of neighborhood influence.

Outline of this Study

Following this introduction is a review of the literature that relates neighborhoods and adolescent risky behavior drawing from studies in the disciplines of criminology, psychology and urban sociology. I begin with background on the association between neighborhood poverty and delinquency, followed by studies on the impact of housing mobility on social ties and adolescent behavior and explore the development of models that consider the role of peers and parenting as mediating and moderating factors in neighborhood influence on youth outcomes. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and background of the 3cMTO study to place my data and analysis in the context of the overall MTO research on which it is based. I describe the study in detail from my perspective as an ethnographer, coder, and reporter. I next outline my analytic strategy and research questions. I conclude with a discussion of the case study logic that I use to analyze the data used in the dissertation and show how I will present the evidence for my claims. Chapters 4-7 present my findings in the content domains I examined: Routines and Neighborhood Engagement, Peers, Parenting, and Risky Kin. I begin each chapter by describing the data collection instrument and measures used in the analysis. In each chapter I use descriptive frequencies to describe the range of variation within treatment groups, or categories of groups identified as significant in inductive analyses. Throughout

the chapters I use excerpts to illustrate my findings and develop my arguments. At the end of chapters 4 and 7 I also include a revelatory case as an example of the social processes that I am describing in the chapter (for example, the conditions under which returning to old neighborhoods is risky). Chapter 8 begins with a detailed summary of my findings. I locate my research contribution in ongoing MTO, and then offer some suggestions about how the research could be improved to answer the central questions outlined in this work. I conclude with three policy recommendations about housing mobility and family support based on the findings in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Research on neighborhood influences on families and adolescents spans several disciplines but is concentrated in a growing body of work termed “neighborhood effects” which draws its theoretical arguments from the fields of urban sociology, psychology, criminology, and economics. Comparison of the variation in social and structural features of city neighborhoods is based on the work of sociologists from the Chicago School (1920-1940s). Working from within a traditional ecological perspective one branch of the Chicago school emphasized the socially disintegrative features of density, heterogeneity, and anonymity in the “naturally occurring” spatial distributions of cities. As a result of this ecological process, they argued, some less “valuable” areas closer to the city center developed a normative order characterized by deviant non-mainstream culture. This tradition’s research established the view that neighborhoods, as sites of spatial and social differentiation, can have potentially negative individual and collective outcomes.

Suburbanization in the late 1940s and 50s, and concern about its potentially harmful impacts on community life, reinvigorated an examination of the impacts of urbanization on community structures and the role of place in causing collective negative outcomes, including aberrant sub-cultures. Later, community studies and ethnographies took up the subject of deviant “street corner” youth and underclass enclaves (Becker 1963; Gans 1962; Liebow 1967; Whyte 1943). In the late 1960s and 1970s analyses of the government’s role in segregating and concentrating a “class” of poor people through urban and housing policy was explored in political and sociological texts on housing projects and urban renewal (Downs 1972; Friedman 1963; Gans 1962; Goetze and Colton 1980; Lewis 1966; Newman 1973; Rainwater 1970). Academic interest in neighborhood effects was renewed in the late 1980s in an effort to reframe and explain the causes and consequences of concentrated poverty among selected groups in urban areas (Jencks and

Mayer 1990; Massey and Denton 1993; Small and Newman 2001; Wilson 1987).

Although at base it is still an effort to understand how neighborhoods shape connections between individuals and society, the aim of recent work in the neighborhood effects literature is to uncover the *mechanisms* underneath observed effects.

In this chapter I review the neighborhood effects literature that relates to my research question of how neighborhoods structure adolescent involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. I specify the models and approach that examine mechanisms of effects and describe how the literature explains adolescent delinquency and risk as a product of the interaction between neighborhoods, poverty, peers, and parenting. I include work focused on housing mobility and social ties and suggest how the theoretical models in that literature contribute to an analysis of the adolescent outcomes among the MTO youth in my study. I also incorporate a selection of quantitative and qualitative studies from the MTO research community on adolescent risky and delinquent behavior outcomes. Finally, I identify some theoretical and methodological limitations in this multi-disciplinary literature and indicate how my research will approach these gaps. I conclude the chapter by describing the case study logic and the measures I use to analyze the ethnographic data from 3cMTO.

Associating poor neighborhoods with poor individual outcomes

Children who grow up in concentrated poverty do worse in school, have more health problems, and get in trouble more often than kids from lower poverty neighborhoods (Elliot, Wilson, Sampson, Elliot, and Rankin 1996; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003a; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2004; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). Most of the literature asserts a positive association between the level of poverty in a neighborhood and the likelihood that an adolescent will become involved in delinquency and crime (Crane 1991; Peeples and Loeber 1994; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Tolan

and Loeber 1993; Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). Furthermore, the risks from neighborhood disadvantage may be greatest in the most extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods (Crane 1991; South and Crowder 1997). The research that finds an association between disadvantaged neighborhoods and poor individual outcomes employs a wide range of study designs, survey data sets, theoretical approaches, outcome measures, and statistical models. The most widely tested model of neighborhood effects across studies that are focused on delinquency outcomes – collective efficacy – draws its origins from combined work in the fields of sociology and criminology. Sociological criminology, a sub-discipline of the field, also addresses the role of peers and daily routines in adolescent risky and delinquent behavior: two aspects important to my analysis of the mechanisms of neighborhood influence.

Social Disorganization Theory – origins and adaptations

Robert Merton's (1938) notion of Durkheim's anomie – the social instability caused by modern society – is a precursor to much of the current work in criminology on how social context creates delinquency. According to Merton, in what is sometimes called Strain theory, industrialization undermines social control and creates individual powerlessness while encouraging the pursuit of industry (Merton 1997). As a result crime can be considered a normal response to an abnormal environment which values money and success but blocks opportunities to get them. Closely related to Strain theory is Control theory, which suggests that ordinary people will commit crimes if the opportunity presents itself unless they are attached to social rules and norms that dictate against it. In a seminal work outlining control theory, Causes of Delinquency (1969), Travis Hirschi wrote that delinquency results when an individual's bonds to society are weak or broken (Hirschi 1969). He defined the bonds as both an emotional attachment and as a connection through an involvement with society. Routine Activities theory builds on the idea of social engagement as necessary for stable and positive behavior and gives Control theory a specific application by asking how incidents originate or are limited in the routine activities of everyday life (Cohen and Felson 1979; Osgood and Anderson 2004).

What is important in these foundational ideas is the emphasis on the interplay between the structure of the environment and an individual's response as the explanation for criminal behavior.

The other important contribution with origins in criminology-based sociology elaborated on the aspects of structure that might cause deviant behavior (now more often called delinquent). Shaw and McKay's opus Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas (1942) mapped the *residences* of juvenile delinquents in Chicago and other cities drawing upon the Chicago School's work in human ecology – the study of spatial and temporal relationships in cities (Shaw and McKay 1942). In staying close to the communities they were writing about and producing life histories of offenders (in Shaw and McKay's work) practitioners in the Chicago school tradition also laid the methodological groundwork for the application of field methods more traditionally used in anthropology to the study of delinquency in urban US neighborhoods.

In their studies Shaw and McKay found that youth delinquency conformed to a regular spatial pattern, and was correlated with indices of many other social problems in parts of urban areas where there was inexpensive rent, weak social control, internal social differentiation, and rapid residential turnover. Theirs is primarily an economic analysis and one that uses housing and housing markets to explain concentrations of poor people across geographies. In their work they showed that high rates of crime in “lower class” neighborhoods were not only consistently higher than in higher income neighborhoods, but that they were stable over time even when the population of a neighborhood changed rapidly. Therefore, they theorized that the cultural fragmentation and social disorder of communities fraught with crime must be independently influential, since different people were moving through them. However, they also categorized the people in these disadvantaged neighborhoods as similar over time – communities mostly composed of poor, immigrant families.

Taking up the Chicago School's central argument that deviant behavior reflects inadequate social conditions, but arguing against an individual (genetic) predisposition towards criminality, Donald Sutherland (1939) advanced a model of *Differential Association*. He argued that criminal behavior like any other behavior is simply "learned" through one's environment. Sutherland thus disputed a naturally forming "culture" of criminality, claiming that the behavior observed in poor communities was not *disorganized*, rather it was organized around different values and concerns (Sutherland 1939). Here again, endorsing Merton, deviance is conceptualized as a rational response given the community context instead of a self-perpetuating culture of depravity based on group characteristics.

William Julius Wilson's book the The Truly Disadvantaged (1987) marks a reinvigoration of academic interest in neighborhood influences and follows the earlier literature in its focus on explaining the structural and economic conditions that lead to poor neighborhoods. In describing the response of people in poor communities trapped by a societal structure which limits mainstream opportunities and access to mainstream resources, Wilson echoed arguments made by Merton, Hirschi and others. In his explanation he also built on the contributions of later writers such as Cloward and Ohlin (1960) who observed lower class male subculture from the perspective of social disorganization theory and concluded that the men they studied were trying to gain status in a world in which they could not achieve economic independence (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). These writers were arguing against a 'culture of poverty explanation' which blamed a class of people labeled the 'underclass' for their own problems including crime (Moynihan 1965). Recent work on neighborhoods tries to more explicitly integrate and examine the spatially and culturally-based approaches, showing how normative differences in social behaviors arise based on distinct frames of reference, which are a response to local culture and community as well as to economic and structural factors of neighborhoods (Anderson 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 2000; Small 2002). In Code of the Street (1999) Elijah Anderson writes about the human "response" to inequality, describing the development of an alternative "cultural" code held by some inner city youth that is based

on norms and attitudes different from the mainstream white culture that they are excluded from. He points out that even within the structure of culture individuals are not beholden to a particular set of behaviors. Debate about what constitutes an “underclass,” whether there is a distinct “culture” that can be associated with poverty, and how and why deep pockets of poverty persist in some communities but not others, continues to animate current debates in housing and social policy (Gans 1997; Jargowsky and Yang 2006; Small and Newman 2001; Waquant).

Robert Sampson and colleagues have also been elemental contributors to the literature, particularly in the area of crime. Their work has addressed multiple subjects from social disorganization theory and criminal careers, to their ongoing work to catalogue and describe the social and physical dimensions of neighborhood context in the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. In a review article in 2002 they identified more than 40 studies on the relationship between neighborhood and multiple crime outcomes within the neighborhood effects literature (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Based on that review they conclude that the evidence of neighborhood effects on crime rates is stronger than the evidence for other types of social outcomes.

The most applied model from Sampson’s work – collective efficacy – comes from efforts to test social disorganization theory. Collective efficacy describes the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good, based on a scale that measures levels of mutual trust, social order, and the cohesion of a community. They argue that structural constraints, such as resource disadvantage (either in a neighborhood, or because of the neighborhoods proximity to other disadvantaged areas), underpin disorder. In neighborhoods with high collective efficacy there is less disorder, more residential stability, and less neighborhood violence.

Social Ties and Housing Mobility

The housing mobility literature that applies to my dissertation's research questions primarily examines the impact of housing mobility on the creation, maintenance, and rupture of social ties, almost always viewing social connections as sources of support. Current research on social ties vis-à-vis low-income housing mobility programs such as MTO expands on findings from classic sociological studies of community life such as Carol Stack's All our Kin (1974), Herbert Gan's The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community (1967), and Lee Rainwater's Behind Ghetto Walls(1970), as well as more recent examinations of life in selected housing projects such as Sudhir Venkatesh's American Project(2000). This work has shown the conditions under which social interaction is related to spatial proximity, and has demonstrated that family ties are often more important than friend or neighbor ties, particularly for low income families, and even when those ties limit individual achievement or insulate an entire community.

Social ties that provide affective or emotional support are strong ties which are often based on proximate networks of friend and kinship ties (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Wortley 1990). Certain types of support, such as instrumental exchange of childcare or transportation, often require personal contact as well. The literature that examines the association between neighborhoods and social ties, almost always focuses on how neighborhood disadvantage impacts the *supportive* function of *proximate* social ties. One explanation for the supportive role for family is that residents in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty have fewer interactions and exchange less instrumental support with their neighbors (Campbell and Lee 1992; Geis and Ross 1998) which necessitates more reliance on family or friends. And relative to whites, non-whites tend to have larger extended families, interact with family members more frequently, and receive more support from extended family (George 1990). Residential segregation by race and class contribute to a pattern in which non-white, lower income individual's friends and kin often reside in the same neighborhood or in nearby areas (Feagin 1970; Massey and

Denton 1993; Massey, Gross, and Eggers 1991), which also makes family socialization and exchange more likely. Although some work finds that in poor disadvantaged neighborhoods supportive ties are strained and their capacity to achieve particular ends is diminished (Granovetter 1973; Hurlbert, Haines, and Beggs 2000; Rankin 2000), most research emphasizes their benefits.

A particular focus has been the way that proximate social ties offer emotional and instrumental support among lower income black women. Sources of support that help women cope with stressful circumstances are often family, fictive kin, and friends (George 1990 ; Johnson 1995; Saegert 1990). Carol Stack's ethnographic account of how kin networks functioned to provide childcare in All Our Kin (1974) is an often cited study of the strong association between supportive ties and neighborhood disadvantage (Stack 1974). Stack suggested that welfare agency statistics reporting that twenty percent of dependent children were living with a woman other than their mother, vastly understated the phenomena. A more recent study found that black women were much more likely than white women to live with one or more adult kin members (excluding husbands) and that this increased childcare resources for those women (Hogan, Hao, and Parish 1990).

Social Ties: Burden, Benefit or Both?

While reciprocity in social exchange may be particularly strong among people of lower socioeconomic status (Belle 1982 ; Campbell and Lee 1992), the question remains: to what effect? Hogan et al.'s examination of the benefits of living with or near kin also found that kin network support still provided insufficient access to childcare for the mothers in the study (Hogan et al. 1990). At least a quarter of the women in the 3cMTO ethnography are themselves caring for a grandchild, a foster child, or the child of a family member. As Jeanine, a mother in the ethnography says, "I come from a family where leaving your kids with someone else is part of the routine." My results show that MTO

mothers rely on their extended family members for support and instrumental aid more than anyone else in their lives, but most also reported feeling an obligation to someone in their family, and half the mothers reported on someone in the family who had drained resources or was problematic for them. In a study of the impact of MTO on mothers' social ties in Chicago Rosenbaum and colleagues suggested that while previous research has shown some ties to be very important in poor neighborhoods, other ties might be better broken (Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton 2003; Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2001).

Research on attachment and the relevance of social ties and bonding for mental health points out that there are costs associated with having social ties, especially for women as they tend to provide more social support to others than men (Kessler and McLeod 1984). With their own adversity to manage, women may experience greater distress (House 1987; Turner 1994). LeClare, Rogers and Peters show that households in disadvantaged areas face stressful challenges that can reverberate through a network of obligatory ties (LeClare, Rogers, and Peters 1997). Involvement in others' troubles may have detrimental effects on one's own well-being and low-income mothers often have social networks that are localized, insular, and sometimes draining (Fischer 1982; Menjivar 1997; Rainwater 1970). In their ethnographic research on low income women in Boston Watkins and Dominguez (2003) describe how drug and alcohol abuse among some low-income families can make resource exchange impossible even when kin represent the most important source of support (Watkins and Dominguez 2003).

Deeply embedded social ties can also be the ones that protect and support criminal activity (MacDonald 1999; Rainwater 1970; Venkatesh 2000) as residents are unwilling or afraid to implicate neighbors and kin. Mary Patillo's book Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class (2000), an ethnography of a middle class Black community in Chicago, shows the ambivalence and multi-faceted ways in which the same neighborhood based social ties can be both protective and connect young people to risk and crime (Patillo-McCoy 2000).

The impact of Relocation on Relationships with Kin

Moving to a new neighborhood implies some disruption of social networks and how they function. At issue is the impact of relocation on existing ties and whether individuals will be able to find new supportive social networks when they move. Of primary concern is the isolation and loss of social support potentially created if supportive ties are broken (Fried 1982; Gans 1962; Greenbaum 2002; Imbroscio 2008). In turn, an individual's social isolation and loss of social support through housing mobility could engender a host of social problems from poor mental health (Aneshensel and Sucoff 1996) to youth violence (Haynie and South 2005) to a loss of connection to community, leading to crime and disorder (Sampson 2001). At a community level social isolation is seen as contributing to social problems through concentration effects (Wilson 1997). However a review of the literature and empirical research on housing mobility, as well as the findings from this study suggest that while for individuals leaving neighborhoods there is some loss of social support, social isolation is less of a problem than neighborhood crime and violence, and less of a motivation for moving than other housing related reasons (Comey, Briggs, Weismann 2008).

Evaluations of the primary U.S. housing mobility programs, including Gautreaux (Section 8 court-ordered housing desegregation), Yonkers (scattered-site unit-based subsidized housing), Hope VI (public housing redevelopment), and MTO (Section 8 research demonstration program) ask similar questions about the strength, location, and function of social ties for lower income families. Early site findings from MTO in Boston and Los Angeles confirm that ties to kin and old friends, remain more important to mover families than new neighbors, whom they were unlikely to know or to trust (Pettit 1999). Yet early Gautreaux studies show contradictory results, indicating that for families moving into racially and economically different neighborhoods social integration was challenging at first, but ultimately highly successful (DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2003;

Keels 2005; Rosenbaum, Reynolds, and Deluca 2002). However, more recent qualitative analyses of some Gautreaux families highlight the challenges of adaptation for youth living in neighborhoods that are higher income and culturally foreign to them (Keels 2005; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000).

Apart from the level of social integration and acceptance experienced by mover families, supporters and critics of housing mobility programs have suggested that relocation impacts critical sources of support, which is very often family-based. One study investigating the impact of social ties on the intra-neighborhood mobility of families with children, suggests that social ties inhibit mobility. Particularly for low-income families “the magnitude of the impact of nearby relatives on mobility is about forty percent larger for low-income families, and the magnitude of the impact of childhood friends is more than two times larger for low-income families (Dawkins 2006). Tellingly the density of local kinship ties and childhood friendships both deterred mobility but the density of adult friendships did not (Dawkins 2006). Although there are many reasons for the locational decisions among families participating in housing mobility experiments, attachment to family in neighborhoods left behind is at least a part of the explanation for the high rate of move backs to poorer neighborhoods observed in MTO over the decade (Comey, Briggs, and Weismann 2008).

Housing mobility and Adolescent social ties

The literature that examines how adolescents’ social ties are influenced by housing mobility and the consequences on ties on their behavior is nascent, and there are few standardized measures or methods across the work. There is almost no data on the way in which daily routines are impacted by housing mobility, for example. Some studies have explored the impact of families’ residential moves on adolescent development of positive behaviors and outcomes, concluding that residential *instability* negatively impacts youth and may not outweigh the benefits of moving – even to higher income neighborhoods

(Burton and Jarrett 2000; Haynie and South 2005; Pribesh and Downey 1999; Ross, Reynolds, and Geis 2000).

Given that the literature on mobility and MTO experimental research suggests that poor people often end up in the same kinds of neighborhoods over time, there is an expectation that families will continue to be negatively affected by their environment, and even more so if this is compounded by frequent moves. However the literature has shown that neighborhood poverty rate (by itself) is inconsistently related to adolescent delinquency. Further, one study examining the independent effects of school and residential mobility on youth school achievement scores concluded that 90 percent of the impacts of mobility reflected prior differences in the types of families that moved, wherein mobile youth tend to also have other disadvantages such as growing up in low-income or single-parent households (Pribesh and Downey 1999).

Additionally, most people move in and out of neighborhoods for work, school, and socializing. In one study of disadvantaged youth in Boston researchers state that poor youth from poor neighborhoods “are clearly not geographically isolated and the majority leave their neighborhoods to go elsewhere essentially every day” (Case and Katz 1991). Quantitative analysis of longitudinal data from a national survey on adolescent health, combined with qualitative interviews with youth to investigate the resources and social supports that enable adolescents in risky environments to make positive choices, similarly finds that there is an important subset of youth who are hardly involved in their neighborhood at all. Moreover, these youth tend to be among the high achievers (Newman 2005).

Some of the most detailed examinations of the impact on adolescents’ social ties are just now being explored based on the findings from extensive research being conducted on the housing mobility programs mentioned above. This work focuses almost exclusively

on the impact of youth ties to friends, rather than to kin, perhaps because youth social ties to kin have been conceptualized as a subset of their parent's family networks. Yet, literature on the formation of social ties in community life suggest that it might be easier for younger children, than adults, to integrate into new social networks (Gans 1967; Harris 1998).

Although there has been limited work on this subject in the area of housing mobility, an analogous case comes from Boston's METCO school desegregation program begun in 1966. METCO students and their parents, all poor non-white youth from the inner city, volunteered to cross "class and color lines" every morning on a bus in order to get a better education in suburban school districts. Stories from children who participated in METCO described the adaptation that took place on a nearly daily basis, over the years, which often left them ambivalent, feeling torn between their home neighborhood and their school neighborhood (Eaton 2001). Their experience sheds light on the way that social ties are managed across geographic and cultural space. Even if adolescents make new friends and find a place for themselves in their new neighborhoods, this does not mean that they will not maintain ties to their old neighborhoods and the people there. In fact, the literature reviewed above would suggest just the opposite. Findings from Gautreaux, Yonkers, and MTO similarly find that when families in housing programs move to different, often higher income neighborhoods, the teenagers frequently visit and retain strong ties to peers there or in other higher risk neighborhoods (Briggs 1997; Briggs 1998; Keels et al. 2005).

Consequences of the ties that Bind

As compared to the mixed effects of relocation on social ties, staying in very poor neighborhoods can have damaging consequences that even strong social ties are ill equipped to manage. The social isolation view suggests that residential stability in poor

neighborhoods exacerbates the damaging effects of neighborhood disadvantage (South and Crowder 1997; Ross, Reynolds, Geis 2000). Among the full MTO sample the number of episodes of reported physical harm inflicted on family members through criminal activity while in project neighborhoods suggests that the benefits of moving outweigh any advantages from supportive social ties. One quarter of household heads responded that someone who lives with them had been assaulted, beaten, stabbed, or shot within the past six months. An additional twenty-five percent reported that someone had tried to break into their home, or that someone who lives with them had been threatened with a knife or a gun or had their purse or jewelry snatched in the past six months (Orr et al 2003). The survey-based research, qualitative interviews, and the ethnographic data all identify safer neighborhoods as the most important reason for initial participation in MTO, and for the movers, the primary improvement in their quality of life.

Mechanisms of Neighborhood Effects

Mechanisms of neighborhood effects are studied using a wide range of research designs. Study types include neighborhood-based studies, designs that use national probability samples, and experimental designs. Typically the longitudinal surveys provide knowledge about risk/protective factors impacting children and identify correlations among a set of neighborhood characteristics and family or individual level factors that increase or decrease risk probabilities. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies are used to evaluate the impact of neighborhoods on selected groups of people. Examples are quantitative work which often include neighborhood structural factors or family background variables, and qualitative studies which delve more deeply into neighborhoods as distinct cultures, or consider resident's perceptions and use of neighborhood space.

Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn review survey and quasi-experimental research and show that most studies reporting the presence of a neighborhood effect are from national samples as compared with city or regional-based studies and that family-level variables are more important than neighborhood level variables to a variety of outcomes (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). However, much of the work reviewed uses data sets that were not designed to explore the specific neighborhood questions of interest and they are still primarily descriptive and cross-sectional (Burton and Jarrett 2000). More recently studies taking an ecological approach, with foundations in the psychology of adolescent development, have begun to incorporate potentially relevant factors into their analysis, suggesting that neighborhood effects are likely to be indirect, operating through more proximate behaviors (Bowman, Prelow, and Weaver 2007; Burton and Jarrett 2000; Byrnes, Chen, Miller, and Maguin 2007; Chung and Steinberg 2006; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry 2000; Meyers and Miller 2004; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry 2003). Developmental-ecological theory holds that individual development is influenced by the many qualities of the social settings in which children live or participate – commonly identified as family, neighborhood, school, and peers (Bronfenbrenner 1986).

Yet questions remain about what aspects of which contexts matter and how can they be separated as influences in a model that relates environment to social behaviors. To date the neighborhood effects literature has been better at establishing reliable (statistically significant) correlations among neighborhood traits and social outcomes, than on explaining the social processes that underlie these correlations (Briggs 2002). This emphasis reflects the acknowledged methodological and conceptual challenges of specifying the mechanisms that link social context with the outcome of interest, in this case adolescent pathways into risky behavior and delinquency. Overall there is more theoretical than empirical research on the mechanisms through which neighborhoods act. One recent literature review stated that “the task of securing precise, robust and unbiased estimates of neighborhood effects has proved remarkably difficult” (Duncan and Raundenbush 1999). Another widely cited review found that strong conclusions could not be drawn from the existing body of empirical work on neighborhood effects (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Pebley and Sastry 2003).

There are many ways of describing the same ecological processes and trying to separate influences. The literature argues that important intervening variables can mediate or moderate effects. In the context of both adolescent development generally, and delinquent behavior specifically, risk and protective factors have been identified from the empirical work in the relevant sub-fields of criminology and psychology. If a particular outcome would not be observed but for the presence of some condition or characteristic, it is considered a mediating factor. A protective factor can be thought of as a variable that interacts with a risk factor to minimize the risk factor's effects. This is considered a moderator. Risk and protective factors occur at multiple levels – individual, family, neighborhood, school; and the effect of each may vary for particular subgroups of children or families (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). In this review I focus on aspects of two intervening influences on delinquency that have been most studied and have the strongest empirical support – parenting and peers. Before examining the leading questions and findings in both content areas I outline the distinct ways through which these influences operate.

Neighborhoods may directly affect parenting behavior and family dynamics through structural or social characteristics. Across studies of neighborhood effects using different data sets and methods, and drawing from different disciplines and approaches, the strongest evidence is provided for norms and/or collective efficacy as the underlying catalyst for neighborhood effects (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). In that case neighborhood social organization moderates the effect of parenting or mediates the effect of neighborhoods through peer groups. Yet, while some studies show that better child and adolescent outcomes occur in neighborhoods with high value consensus among residents and high levels of monitoring and supervision of youth activities in public space (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Gephart 1997), others show that in high collective efficacy neighborhoods monitoring has little effect on social competency or problem behavior. Peers are often identified and tested as potential mediators of neighborhood influence on adolescents, and parenting and families as both mediators and

moderators between children and neighborhood environments, including peers (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, and Sameroff 2000; Jarrett 1998). A further hypothesized, but far less studied, mediator of neighborhood effects is residential mobility (Briggs 1997; Pettit 2004; Ross, Reynolds, and Geis 2000; Schieman 2005). Testing social disorganization theory, Sampson and Groves found some evidence that high rates of residential instability are associated with adolescent juvenile delinquency and crime, particularly property crime (Sampson and Groves 1989).

Peers as Mechanisms

Criminologists, sociologists, and developmentally-focused psychologists all have an interest in the relationship between peers and individual outcomes. In the neighborhood literature, the assumption is that neighborhood-level *social* processes may explain how community-level structures promote or limit youth engagement in risky and delinquent behavior (Elliot et al 1996, (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). I identify three major arguments in the literature about the operation of these socialization processes. First, proximity to criminal behavior and peer pressure may be enough of an inducement for an adolescent to engage in risky behavior. Second, the costs and benefits and/or the rationalization of risky and delinquent behavior may result from exposure to peer violence or peer behaviors which normalize risky behavior. Finally, risk taking peers may present an alternative, attractive diversion when adolescents feel as if there is a lack of opportunities, or positive activities in their world.

There is extensive research on the connection between adolescent risk-taking and peer influence. Participation in delinquent activities is highly correlated with having a peer group that is delinquent. Most teenage crime is committed in groups, and the criminology literature reports that the correlation between peer delinquency and self-report delinquency is robust. Self-report studies confirm that offending in the teenage years is relatively common, with property crime as the most common (Farrington,

Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, VanKammen, and Schmidt 1996). In psychological accounts of adolescent delinquency risk-taking is considered a normal part of development (Moffitt 1993), but crime (as opposed to risky behavior) is generally thought to be a problem of control – by the youth, their parents, or other adults in the child’s life.

Efforts to understand developmental pathways towards crime often focus first on particular individual risk factors such as age and genetic factors, followed by ecological influences. Most work on the subject, from across disciplines and methods, points out that disentangling causal influences in peer relationships is extremely difficult (Pebley and Sastry 2003). It is difficult to assert that an individual’s delinquency was primarily the result of association with peers. It is also possible that an individual could be predisposed to engage in risk-taking and criminal behavior. Neighborhood effects research, with its distinct interest in the multiple levels of environmental influence, has recently taken up the cause of more carefully specifying the cumulative, sequential, and interactive associations of risk factors.

In the neighborhood effects literature “peers” have generally been conceptualized as friends or neighbors – with adults in the neighborhood conceived as playing a role in which they influence teens through their own poor conduct or non-mainstream socializing, as moderators of social disorder by intervening on behalf of a neighborhood standard of non-deviant behavior, or less often (though frequently hypothesized and more commonly explored in the neighborhood literature examining social networks and employment) as role models for positive behavior. When peers are operationalized as friends, the studies are generally quantitative, relying on social network data, using data sets that capture school-based friend relationships or health and well-being survey data. There has also been some limited investigation of peers in MTO’s qualitative research, focused on how the disparate gender outcomes in the area of risky behavior might reflect differences in how males and females socialize (Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan March 2006) and findings from Yonkers and Gautreaux using mixed methods to

understand social networks across neighborhoods (Briggs 1997; Keels 2005). However, in the majority of studies peers are operationalized as same-age teenagers or adults who live in the same neighborhood as defined by census data or another demographic measure of neighborhoods. Although some qualitative work examines the content and network structure of youth social ties these accounts almost always focus on the social ties *within* one location such as a neighborhood, housing project, or street corner (Venkatesh 2000; Whyte 1943) and on one type of peer affiliation such as gangs or young mothers. In the following sections I highlight some of the important work on peers and neighborhoods heuristically plotting the conversation about peer influence into two kinds of studies.

Studies testing the assumption of the relationship of neighborhood disadvantage to delinquency

The first research question is whether or not there is an association between disadvantaged neighborhoods and deviant peers as posited by the early structural accounts offered by Shaw and McKay and others in the field of urban sociology.

Wikstrom and Loeber's (2000) analysis separates the influence of risky places from risky people using longitudinal data on male criminal careers from the Pittsburgh Youth Study (Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). They assigned a risk index to the men, from youth, based on individual risk/protective factors (including disposition, attitudes and family influences) and to neighborhoods based on their socioeconomic level and matched this index to the men's record of serious juvenile offenses. Their results suggested that for individuals with high-risk scores to begin with, there was no significant neighborhood effect; however for low-risk individuals living in a disadvantaged area, there was a significantly increased probability of offending (Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). In other words children and adolescents with high risk scores engage in serious crime at a similar rate *regardless* of what kind of neighborhood they live in, but poor neighborhoods may also encourage delinquency in individuals who would otherwise not be involved in risky

behavior (based on their “risk” profile). These results have been used to buffer claims that concentration of poverty, and public housing neighborhoods in particular, might be especially deleterious (“swamping individual effects”). The authors also acknowledge that the individual factors used to assign risk to the men, may have been indirectly influenced by the community context in which the youth were raised.

Brody et al. (2001) tested contributions of neighborhood disadvantage, neighborhood process, and parenting process to deviant peer affiliation with 10 and 11-year olds using a hierarchical linear model and a multi-site sample of African American children (Brody, Ge, Conger, Gibbons, Murry, Gerrard, and Simons 2001). Their first question was whether affiliation with deviant peers during childhood is associated with residence in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Secondly, they were testing the hypothesis that the influence of neighborhoods might matter at different times if peers are the mechanism through which neighborhoods influence, because children are more apt to be contained within a family structure at younger ages. Their argument was that the tendency to associate with deviant peers develops over time, and during middle school, therefore parenting as a mediator of peer influence may matter more at younger ages. The dataset used was designed to sample children living in a variety of neighborhoods which were economically and racially mixed. Brody et al. also studied whether predictions of children’s affiliation with deviant peers varied according to the source of information about neighborhood characteristics. They triangulated data gathered from census measures at the block level, with phone surveys of caregiver’s appraisals of neighborhoods, and children’s appraisals of neighborhoods.

Ethnographic research calls attention to the ways in which children’s and parents assessments of context may vary (Burton 1997; Comey, Briggs, and Weismann 2008 ; Galster and Santiago 2006). Regarding the difference that perception makes, Brody et al. (2001) found that neighborhood assessments of structural disadvantage and disorder converged but did not entirely overlap and concluded that structural neighborhood risk

factors can be generalized across community size and location given their sampling range. They also found that, even in middle school, children and parents reporting less social disorder in their neighborhood were less likely to associate with deviant peers.

What has been less tested in this area of inquiry is work that incorporates peers as mechanisms. The basic premise in the relationship between poor neighborhoods and deviant behavior is that social integration in poor communities – at least those that are characterized by some measure of deviance – should lead to more deviance of the part of adolescents. In a study of school-based friendships, (Pribesh and Downey 1999) argues that the “effect” of peers is strongest when adolescents are more attached to their peers and those peers display negative behaviors. Similarly, early work in criminology advanced the same ideas about the importance of attachment to social relationships or to society, as opposed to the number of ties a person has (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990 ; Hirschi 1969). The level of integration in neighborhoods, and the difference that this might make, is not often explored in this work, rather some measure of “being there” or not, is taken for granted as the explanatory variable.

2. Studies testing mechanisms of peers– through a social disorganization model

- a. collective efficacy
- b. routines

One of the most commonly advanced models to explain the relationship between neighborhoods and adolescent risky outcomes is collective efficacy. This model posits that peers, defined as collective residents of a neighborhood, either do or do not act to control disorder, which in turn contributes to delinquency. The collective efficacy model argues that weak neighborhood structural factors such as poverty or residential mobility are linked to juvenile delinquency because these factors make it more difficult for residents to maintain effective social controls. Robert Sampson explains (1989):

“The capacity of residents to control group level processes and visible signs of social disorder is thus a key mechanism influencing opportunities for interpersonal crime in a neighborhood. Examples of informal social control include the monitoring of spontaneous play groups among children, a willingness to intervene to prevent acts such as truancy and street-corner “hanging” by teenage peer groups, and the confrontation of persons who are exploiting or disturbing public space.”(Sampson and Raudenbush 1999)

Evidence for the collective efficacy model is based on Sampson’s work across neighborhoods in several large cities. According to Sampson, three dimensions of neighborhood stratification— concentrated disadvantage, immigration concentration, and residential instability— explained 70 percent of the neighborhood variation in collective efficacy. Collective efficacy in turn mediated a substantial portion of the association of residential stability and disadvantage with multiple measures of violence (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999).

Whether or not residents are capable and choose to act to limit disorderly conduct is based on the level of social trust and cohesion neighbors feel. What determines the level of social trust and cohesion is both structural and cultural. Although Sampson and colleagues stop short of declaratory statements about culture, several theorists posit that the *normative environment* itself is the key element linking neighborhood characteristics and child outcomes. Extreme concentration of poverty in inner-city African American neighborhoods since 1970 has created negative normative environments in which behavior considered negative by the middle class is reinforced and valued (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey, Gross, and Eggers 1991; Wilson 1987).

A specific application of the social disorganization model, akin to collective efficacy, is the epidemic hypothesis (Case and Katz 1991; Crane 1991). Crane adapted a model from

epidemiological work – the contagion model — which demonstrates how social disease spreads. The basic inference is that social problems, like crime, are contagious and are spread through peer influence. Crane suggests that a large body of empirical work on delinquency and differential association supports this assumption (Crane 1991). Crane hypothesized that as neighborhood quality decreased, there should be a sharp increase in the probability that an individual will develop a social problem, such as might occur in an epidemic. In other words, he argued that the influence of neighborhoods should be stronger at one end of the neighborhood income distribution. His research modeled selected risk taking behaviors of adolescents across neighborhoods of varying socioeconomic characteristics. He chose the U.S. census PUMS neighborhood sample for the range of neighborhood types and locations, (though it was not longitudinal (and measured an average of all the neighborhoods adolescents may have lived in over the course of their lives. His analysis demonstrated that in neighborhoods with very low rates of workers holding professional or managerial jobs there was a significantly increased likelihood of dropping out of school and early childbearing.

Overall, although most studies theorize a normative environment that *transfers* risks, the work primarily shows that particular locations *contain* risk; in other words they demonstrate an association between neighborhoods, but do not hypothesize a cause and effect relationship.

b. Activities and Routines

Examining routines and activities is another way in which studies have looked at the association between community characteristics, peers, and youth risky and delinquent behavior. This approach links routine activity theory to the social disorganization/collective efficacy tradition (Moffitt 1993; Osgood and Anderson 2004). In particular the presence of unsupervised peer groups or leisure time may be a mediator between the

structural characteristics of neighborhoods and levels of delinquency in a community (Sampson 1991). Further, engagement in pro-social activities and groups may serve as a protective factor against anti-social or criminal behavior.

Institutional based models, also commonly advanced in neighborhood effects research, make the argument that organizations can create the foundation for more stable routines. A strong case has been made that daily routines, which provide structure and meaningful activity, and prevent idleness and boredom, will limit the amount of time and incentive to be involved in delinquency and crime (Hirschi 1969; Osgood and Anderson 2004). Recent research on crime careers and pathways argues that meaningful routines and a change in environment, increase the chance that ex-felons will desist from crime (Sampson and Laub 1993).

Another way that the neighborhood environment might influence leisure time and thereby delinquent behavior, is if different types of behaviors are encouraged or discouraged depending on the poverty level of a neighborhood. If most neighborly social interactions are likely to take place outside of individual homes, and if residents feel safer being outside in lower poverty neighborhoods, then moving may facilitate positive forms of neighborhood engagement. Or it may simply be that *an absence of* involvement in structured activities is more risky in some types of neighborhoods – places where “hanging out” is more likely to result in more serious delinquency, or more likely to call attention from law enforcement. Using qualitative interviews with a sample of adolescents at two MTO sites (Baltimore and Chicago), a team of researchers looking at the question of gender differences among MTO youth in risky behavior outcomes hypothesized that patterns of interaction mattered as much as peer *associations* because boys’ different routines (taking place outside) tended to attract negative attention. They argue that this ultimately accounts for the higher rates of measured delinquency for MTO boys as compared to girls (Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan March 2006).

Social network analysis and qualitative methods are used by some to study youth routines and activities. The work of Haynie and Osgood (2005) is an example. They consider the contribution of peers to individual delinquency from the perspective of two sociological traditions: socialization and normative influence and opportunity theory using social network data on friends from the national Adolescent Health (AddHealth) study (Haynie 2001; Haynie and Osgood 2005).³ They find support for both models but with caveats. Adolescents engage in higher rates of delinquency if they have highly delinquent friends and if they spend a great deal of time in unstructured socializing with friends. However, the contribution of opportunity is independent from normative influence and of comparable importance. Influences from the peer domain did not mediate influences of age, gender, family, or school. Although not widely used in the neighborhood effects literature related to peers or delinquency, some researchers have suggested the use of time diaries and cognitive mapping as more effective means to examine relationships across time and space (Pebley and Sastry 2003).

Researchers of neighborhood effects have called for more work that explicitly targets the mechanisms, or the “how” of neighborhood influence. An initial effort at this is provided in those studies which employ multiple methods or which include multiple levels of influence using statistical methods to hold specific variables constant, or so that levels of risk associated with each factor can be identified. For example, negative peers could outweigh the advantages of less risky neighborhoods, but positive parenting could moderate this association with risky peers. The adolescent development literature generally argues that risk is additive. Any number of risk factors, regardless of their origins, will increase an adolescent’s likelihood to be involved in risky and delinquent behavior. In this sense they do not give relative “weight” to the interactions among risk factors, including parenting.

³ One limitation in this study is that they only consider adolescents in-school friendships.

Families as mechanisms

Criminologists have often applied social learning theories, adapted from developmental psychology, to explain the process through which criminal behavior is learned (Akers 1990; Rock 2007; Sutherland 1939).⁴ In this explanation a person becomes delinquent because of attitudes that rationalize criminal acts. Social learning theory suggests that kids will get into trouble if their parents are themselves delinquent, and if their parents do not prevent them from it (or both), because the family is the central, or at least first, transmitter of social values and behavior. The neighborhood effects literature argues that neighborhoods also play a role in the socialization process of families, impacting youth by influencing parents and parenting. In the literature, poor parental supervision or monitoring is the most often studied and considered to be the strongest predictor of offending. Parental involvement (measured by levels of attachment, or by time/effort) is considered another important factor in whether or not kids engage in risky behaviors or become “well-adjusted” young adults (Dearing 2008 ; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) The reason that parental involvement and monitoring is considered a key factor in youth outcomes, especially during the teenage years, is because of the “normal” adolescent tendency to act out and to perhaps misbehave in groups as they approach adulthood (Bottoms 2007; Moffitt 1993; Sampson and Laub 1993). Monitoring adolescents then is especially important in high-risk neighborhoods where there is more opportunity for delinquency or it is harder to avoid. The following section describes the ways in which the family role has been accounted for in the literature.

Family Characteristics

⁴ An alternative set of theories labeled “attachment theories” are more common in the field of psychology and are sometimes incorporated in measures of family structure and process in the literature measuring neighborhood and family interactions. Attachment theories focus on parent-child emotional closeness and maternal warmth in developing healthy adolescent outcomes.

Selection theories argue that disrupted families produce delinquent children because of differences from other families in risk factors, such as parental conflict, anti-social parents, low family income, or poor child rearing methods (Farrington et al. 1996; Tolan and Loeber 1993). And though one of the most critical risk factors for children is the history of risky and criminal behavior in the family (Farrington 2007; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry 2003) this background characteristic is all but ignored in the neighborhood effects literature. While studies of family influence almost always include measures of parenting styles, and sometimes also include parental attitudes or background family characteristics such as family income level or parents' education, the literature does not often explore one of the central models of neighborhood effects: the socializing function of adults in role modeling to their children. As a result I draw from the criminologists and economists research on families to establish the influence of these family risk factors on adolescent risky and delinquent behavior.

Two life history projects provide informative detail on the role of family background: Farrington's *Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development*, a longitudinal study of 400 London males from age 8-48 begun in 1961, and the *Pittsburgh Youth Study* based on a community sample of 1517 young boys which began in 1987 (Tolan and Loeber 1993). These two projects have produced scores of papers, and recent efforts focus on "the wider social context in which criminal pathways are embedded" including the neighborhood context and the family.

Results from the Cambridge Study suggest that criminal and antisocial parents tend to have delinquent and anti-social children. Having a convicted father, mother, brother, or sister predicted a boy's own convictions, and all four relatives were independently important as predictors. Sixty-three percent of boys with convicted fathers were themselves convicted of a crime. Co-offending by brothers was surprisingly common; about twenty percent of boys with brothers close in age were convicted for a crime committed *with* their brother. Having a convicted parent or a delinquent older sibling was also the best predictor, after poor parental supervision, of juvenile self-reported

delinquency (Tolan and Loeber 1993). The Pittsburgh Study showed similar but more expansive results which included aunts, uncles, grandfathers, and grandmothers as critical predictors of later delinquency, though a fathers' conviction remained the most significant factor.⁵

One neighborhood-based study that attends to the individual and background characteristics of families is a comparison of economic outcomes among low-income youth from three Boston neighborhoods in the late 1980s. Case and Katz (1991) examined the effects of family background variables and neighborhood peers on the behaviors of inner-city youth using data from a 1989 National Bureau of Economic Research survey (Case and Katz 1991). The survey consisted of 1200 adolescent and young adults aged 17 to 24 who lived in high-poverty, but racially mixed neighborhoods in Boston. The study is distinct from most neighborhood effects research in two ways. First, the survey data on which the findings are based contain extensive information on youth's social contacts including extended family members, their individual view and *use* of their neighborhood, as well as the criminal and risky behavior history of individual youth and their family members. Second, by using actual residential addresses and assigning youth to neighborhoods roughly one to four square blocks in size, and four or five youth per neighborhood for their empirical analysis, their study also more accurately reflects functional neighborhood dimensions, and therefore local social networks.⁶ The study's model included measures of a youth's peer and family history of substance and drug use, out of wedlock childbearing, dropping out of school, being out of work, and criminal activity and conviction record.

The findings show that characteristics of family members and neighborhood peers both substantially affect the behavior and outcomes of disadvantaged youth "in a manner

⁵ However as Ludwig and Kling (2007) point out in "Is Crime Contagious?" differences in conviction rates may also reflect environmental factors if policing is applied differently across neighborhoods.

⁶ Census tract neighborhoods are commonly approximately 4,000 people per tract.

suggestive of contagion models of neighborhood effects” (Case and Katz 1991). Youth with family members in jail when they were being raised were more than twice as likely (25 percent as compared to 12 percent) to admit to being involved in criminal activity [in the last year] than were those who reported no family members in jail. As to the effect of peers, residence in a neighborhood in which many others are involved in crime, use illegal drugs, or are out of work and out of school is associated with an increase in an individual's probability of the analogous outcome even after controlling for a variety of family background and personal characteristics.⁷

They write:

“The pattern of influences suggests that two inner-city youths with the same personal characteristics may have quite different socioeconomic outcomes depending on family role models and peer influences in their neighborhoods” (Case and Katz 1991).

Given the finding that adolescent risky and delinquent behavior outcomes depend at least in part on family characteristics I next describe how the literature connects neighborhoods and family characteristics. Applying the findings from the research of neighborhood context on parenting, as well as on peers, provides a possible explanation of how neighborhoods promote or inhibit negative family functioning. The research argues that practices of family management are the key to understanding how

⁷ Although neighborhood factors may be more clearly reflected in this work because of the smaller geographic size, “peers” are defined as neighbors within this residential area. One might still argue that “peers” would be better conceptualized as those people with whom youth are spending time, regardless of location. However this is a limitation in most neighborhood effects research. The NBER survey did ask respondents to identify people in the neighborhood who were involved in delinquent activities. The authors write: “A significant fraction (at least 37-42 percent) of both the black and white youths report that they “know very well persons” involved in crime in their neighborhoods. A large proportion of black youths (30 percent of males and 16 percent) of females report having friends in gangs (although very few admit to being in gangs themselves) and most have friends who sell drugs” (Case and Katz 1991).

neighborhood and community conditions may affect children's development. In particular, monitoring is critical to adolescent risky and delinquent behavior outcomes.

Neighborhoods and Family Management

The literature advances two models as lenses to see how neighborhoods can affect youth outcomes through parenting directly. Both employ the perspective that poverty, or the social disorganization (the level of collective efficacy) are the primary neighborhood characteristics that affect parenting. Overall the literature seems to provide more support for the idea that neighborhoods influence parenting through their level of social disorganization rather than by other neighborhood structural characteristics, including poverty rates (Rankin 1983; Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger, and Whitbeck 1996). In the first model social disorganization impacts parenting through resource levels and institutional supports, and in the second danger and disorganization in a neighborhood lead to stressful circumstances and difficulties that influence parenting.

Collective socialization and contagion theories focus on networks and the role that social interactions have on attitudes, values, and behavior. The hypothesis is that neighborhoods in which parents frequently come into contact with one another and share [positive] values are more likely to monitor the behavior of all neighborhood children and be aware of potential dangers (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). For newcomers to the neighborhood, the model suggests that adults in the neighborhood will exert pressure, through collective social norms, to ensure that parents become responsible. Qualitative research on the MTO ethnography families confirms that residents of lower poverty neighborhoods recognize a difference in social climate between the project neighborhoods they left and the lower poverty areas they moved to.

Still, there is disagreement in the literature as to whether (and how) neighborhood poverty and disorganization impacts parenting. The concentration of deprived and stressed families in one neighborhood could be expected to produce adverse effects on parenting and much research suggests that the influence of protective processes is strongest under conditions of highest risk where there is more to gain and more to lose. A study analyzing adolescent problem behavior outcomes based on parental perceptions of their community's level of problems, combined with census data on the structural characteristics of the neighborhood, offers partial support in finding that parenting styles were unrelated to youth outcomes (social distress, delinquency) for adolescents in low-risk communities, but closely linked to poor outcomes in high risk, more socially disorganized neighborhoods (Meyers and Miller 2004).

Qualitative studies of family management have provided the most support for the idea that neighborhoods influence family strategies. This work has largely endorsed a theoretical link between restrictive or active parenting styles and disadvantaged neighborhoods as parents struggle to protect children from high-risk neighborhoods (Jarrett 1998; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003a; Stack 1974). In some high-risk neighborhoods, strategies range from extreme protection and insulation to assuming an active role in developing community-based networks. Further, recent work on risky and delinquent outcomes among MTO youth posits that some of the observed behaviors may result if parents let down their guard when they move to lower poverty neighborhoods, thus leaving the door open to danger (Popkin, Leventhal, and Weismann 2007). Lack of familiarity with a neighborhood may also limit participation in pro-social activities if parents are unaware of opportunities, youth feel out of place, or families do not possess the resources to take part in them (Sampson 1999). Some studies examine parenting outcomes across neighborhoods with different resources and characteristics though most studies focus on family practices in poor urban areas.

In *Managing to Make it* (2000) Furstenburg et al. study the assumption of greater risk management by parents in high poverty neighborhoods, focusing on whether parents' different strategies have greater success in terms of healthy child outcomes in neighborhoods with different levels of resources and supports (Furstenberg et al. 2000). Their book is based on a qualitative study (following a survey of 500 families) which conducted 486 interviews with parents and children in five disadvantaged neighborhoods in Philadelphia. They conclude that the Philadelphia neighborhoods they examined appeared to have little direct impact on youth outcomes. Although some aspects of parenting are important to adolescent success, this research concludes that parenting was not influenced by resources at the household or neighborhood level in their study.

This conclusion conflicts with some recent empirical studies. Employing similar variables and outcome measures, Simons et al. (1996) find that although collective efficacy moderates the association between authoritative parenting and affiliation with deviant peers parenting style did *not* have more of an influence in higher risk communities (those with lower levels of collective efficacy). Instead the effect observed was an amplification process wherein places with low collective efficacy, and low levels of social cohesion, were also likely to be the neighborhoods in which parents were struggling and therefore the impact of their parenting, regardless of type, was not sufficient to prevent adolescent social problem behavior (Simons et al. 1996).

Tolan and colleagues (2003) add to this literature by using measures of parent and adolescent beliefs and attitudes, along with parenting strategies, to measure impacts over four years on male adolescents' delinquent behavior in disadvantaged neighborhoods in Chicago (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry 2003). Their innovation in research design creates typologies of families and neighborhoods as independent measures combining attitudes and practices, and indices of delinquency designed to detect differences between chronic, minor, escalating, and serious chronic offending. Their analysis cross tabulated

each family type⁸ and each delinquency pattern within each of three neighborhood types (inner city with and inner-city without functioning social processes, and urban poor with more structural resources. Based on the literature their design presents a more accurate picture of developmental pathways towards delinquency, and tries to capture differences in the neighborhood effects models regarding how neighborhoods might act through resource levels, social norms, or other structural characteristics. Likewise, their measures of parenting may more accurately capture the whole experience of family management.

Like Simons et al. they find that the impact of poverty and crime in neighborhoods may blunt the moderating capacity of otherwise well-functioning families to protect their children from risky behavior. Conversely their data showed that even in struggling families, children were not likely to be at all delinquent, unless their neighborhood was also socially disorganized. This is in keeping with some studies that suggest high levels of neighborhood social organization can step in and take the role of protecting children from serious delinquency in the absence of effective parenting (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry 2000; Kowaleski-Jones 2000).

Parenting and Peers: Indirect Neighborhood Effects

When the neighborhood context is considered as an influence on parenting, one of the ways in which it is hypothesized to act is through the effect neighborhood poverty level or social disorganization has on the risk levels of peers, and therefore on the importance and effectiveness of parenting. In high poverty, or socially disorganized neighborhoods, there are thought to be a greater number of potential criminal peer confederates. This makes the role of parental monitoring of peers more urgent. In the literature this is described as parents moderating the effect of peers – who are serving as mediators of

⁸ Family types are 1.exceptional 2.task-oriented 3.struggling or 4.moderately functioning.

neighborhood influence. Not surprisingly, studies that have included peers, have often found that they are important mechanisms of neighborhood effects

One study using survey research and which controls for parenting within families finds that characteristics of community adolescents – youth peers – predict individual adolescent outcomes over and above family parenting. Furthermore, the authors suggest that contact with well-functioning peers (defined by their grade point average, class room engagement, and other measures of school-based behavioral success) is associated with better adolescent adjustment, whereas the aggregate quality of parenting in the community overall (measured in the same way as individual parenting) did not predict behavior once the quality of the adolescent’s home life and peers were accounted for (Darling and Steinberg 1997). Supporting this finding, some research has indicated that it is peer violence specifically, not general deviance, that relates to an individual’s risk of becoming violent (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry 2000). An important but controversial work in developmental psychology suggests that peers (and siblings) become more important to youth development than any characteristic of parenting as soon as children reach school age and begin to identify and compare themselves with individuals of like age (Harris 1998).

Rankin and Quane use data from the *Youth Achievement and the Structure of Inner City Communities Study*⁹ in a hierarchical linear model to test the pathways by which neighborhoods influence, both directly and indirectly, via their impact on families and peers (Rankin and Quane 2002).¹⁰ The study combines interviews with African-American

⁹ This study gathered extensive information on a variety of social isolation indicators, including social networks, neighborhood associations, and community resource use, as well as individual and family characteristics and has been the source for several recent studies of neighborhood effects.

¹⁰ The outcome measures replicate youth outcome scales used by Elliot et al. (1996), and represent outcomes vital to the developmental tasks that adolescents must accomplish for a smooth transition to conventional adult roles. To control for differences in the normative climate of families, the study includes two measures of maternal normative and value orientation:

mothers and up to two of their adolescent children and tract-level census data to construct measures of disadvantage and residential stability in sixty-two neighborhoods with poverty rates ranging from three to eighty-seven percent (a range similar to the 3cMTO study). In keeping with the literature on the most important aspect of family characteristics on youth behavior, Rankin and Quane find that with the exception of monitoring, neighborhood measures had no direct effect on other characteristics of family management. Their analysis indicated that parental monitoring was higher in neighborhoods with greater collective efficacy. Regarding peers and neighborhoods, youth whose parents monitored their friends were likely to have conventionally oriented friends, engage in more pro-social behavior and less problem behavior.¹¹ However in high collective efficacy neighborhoods, monitoring had little effect on social competency or problem behavior. It is unclear from their model whether this result is primarily a consequence of having fewer problem peers or more parental monitoring since both are associated with neighborhoods high in collective efficacy.

Another finding from this study is that the *effects* of monitoring also vary by the type of neighborhood in which families reside; effects were greater in neighborhoods that are *low* in collective efficacy (although there is less of it than in neighborhoods with higher collective efficacy). In this case monitoring is even more important when parents cannot count on other adults in the neighborhood to help monitor children. They write “while this contrasts with Furstenberg, et al.'s (2000) finding that the benefits of effective parenting are greater in more advantaged neighborhoods, it is more consistent with the hypothesis that parenting strategies can buffer the ill effects of neighborhood disadvantage” (Brooks- Gunn, Duncan, et al. 1993; Burton 1990; Jarrett 1997, Gorman 2000).

deviance intolerance and conventional values. The former is a 14-item scale of how “wrong” the mother judges a range of delinquent behaviors to be for a youth in the same age range as the focal child. The latter is a 12- item scale of how “important” various conventional goals are (e.g., college education, good reputation, happy family life, saving money, working hard, and studying hard to get good grades).

¹¹The link between neighborhood poverty and negative peer groups was insignificant net of collective efficacy).

Summary

Overall the literature does not come to any strong conclusion about the direction and strength of neighborhood influence on parenting-peer relationship as it pertains to adolescent risk and delinquency. Some studies find that peer effects are moderated by parents by limiting their children's involvement in risky behavior. Other studies find peer to parent effects vary by neighborhood characteristics, that peer effects are the entire explanation for youth outcomes, or that both operate independently to influence youth participation in delinquent behavior. Some of the variation in findings is due to which variables are used, differences in measurement, and study technique.

Despite divergent findings in the literature regarding the distribution and effectiveness of parenting across neighborhood types, all of the studies that include family characteristics beyond parenting concur that that neighborhood effects on children are reduced once family and individual background is accounted for. There is strong evidence to suggest that most of the neighborhood differences in parenting styles are the result of the neighborhood clustering of socioeconomic and normative family-level factors (for example family economic levels, parent and youth attitudes towards delinquency, and family risk factors) and not an emergent property of the neighborhoods themselves. This might reflect the fact that families select neighborhoods (or are selected into neighborhoods) where they share normative orientations, and in places with less social disorder parents are also more likely to monitor their children. It also means that monitoring is a property of the family – it does not mean that adults are likely to be monitoring other people's children.

This is an important, but often overlooked distinction which from my reading of the literature appears to be often misinterpreted in cross-sectional designs. This is apparent even in the most comprehensive of studies, such as the one by Rankin and Quane (2002)

in which the authors argue that their results suggest a snowball effect whereby “the normative climate in neighborhoods with greater collective efficacy encourages parents to monitor their children more intensively, which in turn is associated with better youth outcomes.” They conclude that “the fact that parental monitoring is higher in neighborhoods with greater collective efficacy supports claims that parents adjust their parenting style to conform to neighborhood norms (Rankin and Quane 2002). However, there is no modeling or test of parent to neighbor monitoring interaction in their study.

MTO Research on Adolescent Risky and Delinquent Behavior Outcomes

Short-term findings on Risky and Delinquent Behavior and Neighborhood Social Climate (one to three years after program implementation)

Initial findings on MTO measured impacts on participants at each of the five cities separately and cover the first three years of the program. Studies in Boston, Baltimore, and New York examined the short run effects of MTO on youth risky and delinquent behavior using quantitative analyses of data on all treatment group families (control, Section 8, and Experimental) from a baseline survey conducted at program enrollment and a follow-up survey administered 1 to 3.5 years after random assignment in the program.¹² Baltimore also matched Juvenile arrest records to the survey data to measure program impacts. Boston’s study found significant and positive impacts for both treatment groups – fewer behavior problems (disobedience, bullying, and depression) among boys and improved neighborhood safety for experimental group children (Katz, Kling and Liebman 2000). Baltimore’s study found that several months after assignment to a treatment group, juvenile arrests for violent crime declined relative to the control

¹² This set of papers (which can be found at: <http://www.nber.org/~kling/mto/>) use a standard method for evaluating program impacts. Controlling for characteristics known prior to randomization, the authors estimate the effect of the Intent To Treat (ITT); that is, the average causal effects for those who took-up the treatment and those who did not. The effect of Treatment on the Treated (TOT) is then estimated by using treatment assignment as an instrumental variable, and imputing a "Control Complier Mean" (CCM), a counterfactual estimating what the effect of treatment would have been for control group members, had they received treatment.

group, reducing the treatment group's arrest for violent offenses by 30 to 50 percent. Reductions in robbery accounted for about half of the decline. Youth in the experimental group also showed higher rates of property crime arrest relative to the control group, which were not statistically significant when controlling for pre-program characteristics (higher rates of property offense violations pre-program assignment as compared to the control group) (Ludwig, Duncan and Hirschfield 2001). New York's study found a beneficial impact on children's mental and physical health, but no improvement in child well-being as measured by such things as involvement in school activities, delinquency, or substance abuse (Leventhal 2001).

Studies conducted at the Chicago and Los Angeles sites primarily used qualitative analyses to examine outcomes other than adolescent risky and delinquent behavior (Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton 2003; Hanratty, McLanahan and Pettit 2003). I include those findings which are relevant to the mechanisms I examine in this dissertation. Treatment groups in Chicago reported very large improvements in neighborhood safety and social order, and in feelings of security compared to their project neighborhoods. As in Chicago, the treatment groups in Los Angeles experienced substantial reductions in neighborhood crime rates, and reported substantial increases in perceived neighborhood safety levels relative to the control group. The Los Angeles study also examined the impact of relocation on the mover's social networks. Parents in the treatment groups reported that they were somewhat less likely to have friends and family in their neighborhood than the control group, but their children were just as likely to have friends in the neighborhood. In general there was no difference between groups in their connection to neighbors – families who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods were equally likely to be connected with neighbors and local institutions as were parents who moved to poorer neighborhoods or who did not move at all. New York's study suggested that moving had a beneficial effect on both treatment groups in terms of most aspects of parenting, particularly for experimental group parents who provided more structure for their children and used less restrictive behavior than parents in the control group. Parents

in the treatment groups in Los Angeles were just as likely to be involved in their children's activities after moving.

Overall the single site-based studies were consistent in their strongest finding that treatment group families moved to neighborhoods that were not only lower in poverty but in crime rates and level of social disorder and that this improvement in neighborhood safety translated into reduced levels of victimization and youth involvement in violent crime. Treatment effects on adolescent substance abuse, problem behavior, and delinquency were mixed; some sites found positive effects, others negative effects or no effects, and others showed mixed results. The results also suggested that concerns about social isolation as a result of relocation were premature. The effects of moving to lower poverty neighborhoods on social networks, mental health, and parenting capacity were either insignificant or positive for children and adults. This set of work concluded that in the *short-term* the MTO program was having a positive impact on families and that the social costs of increased property crime for some groups, was outweighed by the reduction in violent crime, along with other positive changes in health and neighborhood safety.

Interim Impact findings (four to seven years after implementation)

To test *longer term* effects on the full MTO program sample a later set of studies on MTO used survey data from HUD's *Interim Impacts Evaluation* which measured program impacts across all five sites between four to seven years after random assignment. The quantitative analyses of risky and delinquent behavior outcomes that followed these survey findings primarily aim to understand the role of gender in the MTO experimental group's experience and to explain why treatment effects for boys in the experimental group reversed direction – from positive to negative – after continued participation in the MTO program. Arrest data gathered for the MTO population aged 15-

25 was assessed along with survey data from 1,800 children of MTO families aged 15-20. Researchers found that relative to the control group, the number of lifetime arrests for girls in the experimental group was 33 percent lower, including a significant reduction in violent crime. However, boys in the experimental group were about 13 percent more likely than the controls to have ever been arrested, largely due to increases in property crime (Kling, Ludwig, Katz 2004; Kling, Liebman, Katz 2005), echoing the single site finding in Baltimore a few years earlier. Experimental boys also self-reported higher rates of substance abuse and problem behaviors, contradicting Boston's earlier results.

Selection of studies on MTO's findings on Adolescent Risky and Delinquent Behavior

In a re-analysis of MTO's Interim findings Ludwig and Kling (2007) focus on understanding why experimental boys fared worse than control group boys in the area of property crime. They test a model of peer influence which is MTO's primary operating assumption of how neighborhoods affect a range of social outcomes, but delinquency in particular. They use MTO's baseline surveys (at time of entry into program), follow up surveys in 2002 with 4,248 households and 1,807 youth from all five sites, and administrative data on juvenile arrest records (lifetime arrest histories) to argue that crime is not "contagious." By this they mean that the neighborhood crime rate (corresponding to "beat level" policing areas) in MTO participants neighborhoods is not positively associated with individual crime rates of MTO participants. Youth who moved to neighborhoods with relatively greater declines in beat-level violent crime did not experience relatively greater declines in their own violent crime arrest rates, and boys in lower poverty, low crime areas had relatively higher rates of property offending.

Instead of the contagion model, they suggest three factors which may be plausibly related to the greater arrest rate for property crime for boys in the experimental group. First, MTO baseline surveys showed that the fraction of experimental boys ever arrested prior to random assignment was higher than the control group boys mean. Families with

boys with problem behavior may have been more likely to want to move from the projects, so the findings may reflect something particular to this group of MTO boys. They also argue that because police resources are fixed, in areas where there are more serious crimes, boys may not be arrested for property crime as much in high crime rate neighborhoods, versus neighborhoods where there are fewer violent crimes (Kling and Ludwig 2006). Finally, because they controlled for poverty and race they suggest that there are aspects of neighborhoods that affect crime, particularly neighborhood residential segregation, but that neighborhood crime is not the primary explanation.

In “Neighborhood Effects on Crime for Female and Male Youth: Evidence from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment” Ludwig, Kling and Katz (2004) offer three hypotheses for risky behavior outcomes based on gender differences in adaptation to neighborhood moves: peer sorting; coping strategies; and comparative advantage in property offending. Their analysis rests on averages between treatment groups, controlling for gender and age interactions. They conclude that their data support the idea that boys are taking advantage of opportunities in their new neighborhoods (which girls are not) but not the other two hypotheses.

Their primary explanation for why boys take advantage of neighborhood affluence, whereas girls would not is that boys are more risk-taking to begin with. They also suggest that girls may be more competitive than boys in school or have less parental supervision when not at home, both of which potentially affect boys’ tendency to engage in problem behavior. They argue much of the beneficial effect for females and detrimental effect for males comes from neighborhood effects on the volume of arrests for those who are criminally involved. In other words, they suggest that increases in the incidents of arrest reflect a phenomenon in which delinquent individuals are increasing their illegal activity (and/or being arrested more often for it) rather than an increase in the number of people who are committing property crimes in new neighborhoods. From this they hypothesize

that more affluent neighborhoods have more goods for delinquent individuals to take. They rely on administrative arrest records matched to MTO youth for their analyses.

They reject peer sorting or the idea that like begets like such that “already” delinquent youth will attract other criminally minded peers when they move to a new neighborhood based on MTO’s baseline data on differences in boys’ problem behaviors before some of them moved to lower poverty neighborhoods. Data showing that although experimental boys had higher ratings of problem behavior than boys in the control group, pre-program assignment to the treatment group was associated with similar increases in property crime arrests for males with and without prior histories of anti-social behavior, and with reduced arrests for females in both groups. Therefore, having been involved in a delinquent peer group prior to MTO did not affect the risky outcome measure (although it might be that they did sort into risky peer groups, but that peer groups are not the explanation for the observed outcomes).

Kling et al. also use this data to explain why an increasing number of years in the experimental group negatively impacted boys offending and not girls. They reject a psychological explanation that girls are able to adjust to new neighborhoods better than boys, because mover boys, like girls, showed decreases in property and violent crime arrests after their first few years in new neighborhoods, the time when they would have most trouble adjusting. Instead they rely on the idea that boys are riskier to begin with, and suggest that it took time for boys to learn the landscape well enough to know where to find property, and people with whom they could commit crime, as well as how to avoid getting caught.

One hypothesis (of the MTO) research is that it may be easier for girls than for boys to adjust to new social environments and to fit in with their peers (Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan March 2006; Kling, Ludwig, and Katz 2005). A recent contribution to

MTO research on MTO's findings that considers a cultural explanation is a qualitative paper based on in-depth interviews with youth from Baltimore and Chicago in 2004.

In "Moving At-Risk Teenagers out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: Why Girls Fare Better than Boys," Clampet-Lundquist et al. consider relative deprivation, collective efficacy, and peer selection as alternative explanations for why there were negative outcomes for boys and not girls. However the authors find the most support for a variant of a 'cultural capital' model (Anderson 1991, Carter 2003, Dance 2002) in which mover boys adoption of non-mainstream language, style, dress, musical taste, and routines (such as 'hanging out' on the stoop) triggers attention from formal (police) and informal (neighbors) mechanisms of social control in lower poverty neighborhoods. In this study they find that girls spend more time alone, or in places with adult supervision, and have fewer friends in their neighborhood of residence. They conclude that the key difference between males and females overall which explains the difference in risky and delinquent outcomes is not the neighborhood context, but differences in how boys and girls act in their free time.

Limitations of the literature

This review shows that a wide variety of literature addresses distinct aspects of the literature drawing on the theoretical contributions from urban sociology, psychology and criminology. These disciplines independently examine the role of neighborhoods, peers, routines, and family roles in adolescent risky behavior and delinquency. The neighborhood literature has advanced knowledge about interaction effects among these multiple layers of ecological influence by incorporating contributions from each field. Conceptual and methodological challenges remain some of which my dissertation addresses. In the following chapter I describe the ways in which my research avoids some of the methodological challenges – including endogenous effects, identification and timing of neighborhood influences, pathways of the effect of interest, measurement error, and simultaneity bias (what is causing what) – by building on MTO's quasi-experimental

design and employing an ethnographic method and case study logic. Below I outline some of the limitations in the literature and how my work approaches them.

One clear gap in the literature is that most empirical studies are cross-sectional and they focus on non-white, poor, inner city families and male adolescents. The more in-depth qualitative work centers on one or a few select communities but does not cover a range of neighborhood types. Studies using cross-sectional and longitudinal data show that variation in neighborhood and family type make a difference to social outcomes for youth but are not designed to understand how or why. My analyses include sources of *within-neighborhood* and *within-family* variation in outcomes as well as across neighborhoods. Additionally, because many of the studies use datasets that were not specifically designed to address the puzzles in *neighborhood effects* research – the conditions under which certain effects adhere – they may not focus on the most conceptually and contextually relevant factors. Part of the value in the ethnographic method is learning what is most relevant based on how individuals see and interpret their own circumstances.

I argue that one of the overlooked factors in MTO adolescent's engagement in risky and delinquent behaviors is the role of non-household kin. This is despite abundant research suggesting social relationships as the mechanism of neighborhood effects and although kin support is a well covered subject in the community life of low income families. Where family structure is considered it is primarily presented as an individual level factor designed to isolate the role of other influences. Similarly the literature has recognized parenting as a critical element of how neighborhood effects work but has paid less attention to established knowledge about family routines and average teenagers. For example, the literature is particularly strong on family management at work in "high risk" neighborhoods but to date, there has been limited data on this in the context of MTO or other programs that relocate low-income families and use randomization to help isolate family effects from selection effects of neighborhoods.

Findings based on MTO's survey data show no significant peer effects as a result of moving to more advantaged neighborhoods and questions remain about the amount and context of youth contact with peers as well as the locations of these interactions. The literature argues that neighborhoods, as a site for interaction, are an important factor in peer influence and research on neighborhood social processes often emphasizes localized networks.

The findings in this dissertation, suggest that there is considerable variation in the degree to which adolescents' social networks and institutional involvements center on their residential neighborhoods. One drawback of the literature has been its failure to map the location and content of social relationships – with peers and others across time and space. An exception is an empirical study of neighborhood context on serious crime, which found that controlling for individual effects, only if a youth's friends came from the home disadvantaged neighborhood was peer influence seen to be related to delinquent behavior (Bottoms 2007).

Most research treats 'the neighborhood' as a static concept by attempting to hold neighborhood characteristics constant, or by employing a conceptual framework that views neighborhoods dichotomously as safe or unsafe, high or low poverty, or by considering the "effect" of a neighborhood at one point in time. By following adolescents and their families over time and through their social worlds, this thesis recognizes a more fluid and nuanced concept of neighborhoods which is based on adolescent routines and participation in their neighborhoods. While the ethnographic data suffers from some of the same timing and directional issues plaguing cross sectional, longitudinal and retrospective designs (families and adolescents with particular characteristics may be selecting locations rather than being influenced by neighborhood context), the ethnographic data favors a pathway analysis and an historical explanation which incorporates timing and exposure as an explanatory factor.

Most of the work testing social disorganization as a mechanism of neighborhood effects assumes that neighborhoods are places where non-familial adults act as gatekeepers for other people's children. The willingness to intervene is taken as a measure of collective efficacy, even if there is no actual intervention. At the same time in places with high collective efficacy, there may be no reason for intervention to begin with. Families in the ethnography observed that safety and lack of involvement with one's neighbors went hand in hand in lower poverty neighborhoods. There is not sufficient deconstruction of the role of adult peers, or neighbors in the socialization process of collective efficacy models. Parenting within families for example, might be distinct from parenting of collective youth.

Many researchers have acknowledged that there is a "surprisingly lack of clarity in conceptualizing peer influences" in the literature (Pribesh and Downey 1999). In their study of how peers matter in regards to delinquency, Haynie and Osgood (2005) focus on whether normative influence is contingent on the nature of peer relations. They use social networking data from a national sample of school-based friendships to identify an individual's delinquent peers, arguing that previous research may have overstated the influence of peers due to several methodological problems including, the chicken and egg problem of 'peer selection,' and 'assumed similarity and projection' – or the tendency of individuals to project their own attitudes and behavior onto their friends when reporting on their peer's activities (Haynie and Osgood 2005).

Drawing on the family-focused ethnographic fieldwork allows me to triangulate between adolescent and parenting reports, and fieldworker observations. Likewise, although the data cannot squarely address the self-selection problem, many of the narratives of the teens speak to the developmental timing of their engagement in risky and delinquent behavior, explaining for example with whom and how they got started doing risky things or conversely explaining why they stopped. Furthermore, the depth of the ethnographic method leads beyond the question of the impact of the delinquency of one's peers and

towards a focus on the question of who and where one's peers are "located" in the story of their own risky behavior more generally. I believe this focus expands knowledge about how to support youth and buffer them from negative influences in their environment.

Incorporating Housing Mobility

Mixed findings in the MTO research ten years after families moved points to an understudied aspect of the social experiment, the impact of housing mobility itself on how and why neighborhoods matter. MTO families in the ethnography moved an average of 2.3 times after receiving their voucher (over a period of approximately seven to nine years). Only nine families of thirty-nine in the ethnography remain in the same location as when the MTO study began. Of the twenty-eight families in the experimental mover group only three remain in the same apartment in their lower poverty neighborhood. As of the beginning of the fieldwork (2004) seventeen of the experimental movers were considered "locationally successful" – in that they were living away from the central school district of the project neighborhood. Yet many of the children in this mover group attend schools outside of their neighborhood of residence. At the time of the ethnography only six of twenty-eight mover families still lived in neighborhoods with a poverty rate less than ten percent, the target for the experimental group of movers.

My thesis shows that low-income families, who move, are no less likely than "higher income" families to maintain connections to many different neighborhoods based on their activities and social relationships. The MTO families I followed moved frequently, had busy lives with multiple places in which they spent time, and many stayed connected to their old neighborhoods for some activities, primarily related to kin networks. For some adolescents and parents staying connected to the old neighborhood is an effective strategy for managing the process of adapting to new places, whereas for others this attachment was a potential minefield. The families' trajectories demonstrate that there are a variety

of risky environments for adolescents including those in the mover group. The projects, schools, old high poverty neighborhoods, and new low-poverty neighborhoods all offer their own set of challenges. Therefore, this dissertation expands on traditional explanations of the mediating factors of peers and parenting (between neighborhoods and risky behaviors) by re-introducing housing mobility as another critical mechanism.

Analytical Strategy and Research Question

Although it does not address the role of non-household family members directly, the literature points to several ways in which kin might be considered a potential risk to adolescents who move from their high poverty neighborhoods to new lower poverty ones. Depending on the amount of contact and the location of the interaction an individual has, kin may pose a risk in the same way that peers as confederates can encourage risky behavior based on opportunity, access, and/or peer pressure. Kin may also be a risk for the same reason that the literature argues that it is important to get away from high poverty neighborhoods; an assumption that continued exposure to high levels of social disorganization and violence normalizes non-mainstream, delinquent behaviors and reduces the emotional costs and or real punishment for participation in these activities. Structural inequality between neighborhoods that result in a lack of resources and opportunities for “positive” activities, or the youths’ perception of this difference, may result in adolescents seeking out less “boring” venues, based on associations with kin neighborhoods that continue to be risky environments. Finally, parenting activities and parent’s perceptions that relatives are risky can serve as a protective factor, conditional on family routines and the location of their activities.

In this dissertation I address three questions: (1) Does relocation from very poor neighborhoods to safer, lower poverty ones restructure the impact of neighborhood environment on adolescent risky and delinquent behavior? (2) How might neighborhoods matter for adolescent risky and delinquent behavior? (3) Why might adolescents who move away from high poverty, high risk neighborhoods continue to get involved in risky or delinquent behavior? I do this by examining elements of three factors hypothesized to mediate neighborhood effects – peers, parenting, and neighborhood engagement.

Analytic Strategy

My analytic strategy is first to evaluate the importance of social relationships to peers and non-household family for the fifty-two adolescents and young adults who participated in the ethnographic component of the Three-City study of Moving to Opportunity, in essence mapping their social networks. Second, I identify the routines and activities that adolescents and young adults have and describe what influences them, including the choices and limitations that parents impose. Here I map the activities and characterize the parenting styles according to the parent's level of monitoring. Third, I determine (when possible) the *location* of these social relationships and activities within and across neighborhoods paying attention to several features of neighborhoods including:

- a. If the activity or relationship is located in the neighborhood of residence or outside the neighborhood of residence.
- b. Adolescent and adult perceptions of safety and crime in the neighborhood of residence, as compared to the former project neighborhoods – relying for this analysis on what is said and by what is said is *done* in response to these perceptions (for example, any changes in parental monitoring).
- c. Poverty levels of neighborhood of residence.

d. Exposure to neighborhoods: the length of time and stability in the neighborhood of residence and level of engagement in the neighborhood of residence through activities and routines there.

Finally, I examine each adolescent and young adult's individual history with risky and/or delinquent behavior based on self and parent's reports of their own history, and the risky and/or delinquent behavior of household members and non-household kin. In this analysis I identify parental reasons for continued contact or avoidance of contact with kin.

The analytic framework I use recognizes the multiple pathways through which neighborhoods can influence human development and social outcomes. I take advantage of the ethnographic design to capture lives that are lived over a range of geographies. The idea that neighborhoods are influencing people to the degree to which they are engaged in them is not new, nor is the observation that most people don't exclusively inhabit one geographic space when there are other opportunities elsewhere (work environments, communities of interest, etc...). However, attention to this factor in this thesis is a critically different way of conceptualizing the places that MTO families moved to, as well as their experiences after they moved. In Mary Patillo's (2000) ethnography of a middle class Black neighborhood in Chicago she finds that extended social networks are neither all risky nor all supportive (Patillo-McCoy 2000). Whereas she examines a single neighborhood and the ways in which the local networks are positioned within that neighborhood my research captures how and why the same types of social networks function and are sustained across many different types of neighborhoods, and the result that this has on adolescent's involvement in risky and delinquent behavior.

Chapter 3: Study Design and Methods

The Moving to Opportunity Housing Demonstration Program (MTO)

Origins

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is part of a larger debate about the most effective way to confront problems of housing affordability – through demand or supply side subsidies. In 1970 The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) launched the Experimental Housing Allowance Program (EHAP) to examine the administration and impacts of a direct income transfer program to qualifying families that allowed them to rent housing at fair market rents. The experiment, which included random assignment and a control group, was designed to address questions about how changes in the program's subsidy amounts or standards would affect the behavior of participating households. The experiment is considered a partial success. Demand-side critics were satisfied that the housing allowance did not substantially disrupt the private housing market, but the impacts on low-income households were also slight. Participation in the program was lower than expected, mobility behavior was largely unaffected, and housing consumption was limited (Struyk and Bendick 1981). Yet confident that the allowances offered valuable support for at least some families, without the same hefty government investment required by large public housing developments and other supply side programs, the 1974 U.S. Housing and Community Development Act enabled the Section 8 Housing program, one component of which provides government vouchers to low-income individuals to reduce the cost of existing housing in the private market.

The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) for Fair Housing Demonstration, begun in 1994 and operating through a special Congressional appropriation for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, was designed to evaluate the success of the Section 8 program on some of the same measures first studied in 1970. Additionally, it was intended to

provide a test of the ability of vouchers to provide a remedy for a housing market increasingly segregated by income and race, a condition exacerbated by the concentration of project-based and public housing units in low income neighborhoods as part of HUD's supply side strategy. HUD launched MTO based largely on the evidence from studies of the Gautreaux housing desegregation program in Chicago. Gautreaux was based on a Supreme Court case (*Hills vs. Gautreaux* 425 U.S. 284) charging the Chicago Housing Authority with racial discrimination. The court ordered the housing authority to provide housing vouchers for 7,100 low-income African American families and to assist them in moving to higher income, non-segregated neighborhoods. Research on Gautreaux demonstrated that many families remained in much less poor neighborhoods over time, were socially integrated into their communities, and benefited in other ways from their access to the low crime, better school districts they moved to (Popkin, Buron, Levy, and Cunningham 2000; Rosenbaum 1995). Like Gautreaux, MTO targeted very low-income families in distressed public housing neighborhoods and used housing subsidies to offer them a chance to move to lower poverty (though not necessarily racially integrated or mostly white communities). Unlike Gautreaux, but like EHAP, MTO used an experimental design and was interested in how voucher holders would fare in the private housing market with and without housing search assistance. MTO was also designed as an important test of the potential effects of neighborhood poverty on individual and household outcomes, including risky and delinquent behavior, mental and physical health, education, and neighborhood and housing quality, for a selection of families participating in the Section 8 program.

Design and Implementation

In 1994 Congress appropriated \$70 million, and HUD selected five sites for the MTO demonstration: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City.

Over 5,300 families, most of whom were African American or Latino, applied, and just over 4,600 met basic eligibility requirements.¹³ These families were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups: a control group (families retained their public housing unit, and received no new assistance), a Section 8 comparison group (families received the standard counseling and voucher subsidy, for use in the private housing market), or an experimental group. The experimental-group families received *special relocation counseling* (focused on opportunities to live in low poverty areas) and *search assistance*. They also received a voucher useable only in a low poverty neighborhood (less than 10 percent poor as of the 1990 census), with the requirement that the family live there for at least one year. Of the 1,820 families assigned to the experimental group, just under half (48 percent or 860) found a suitable apartment and moved successfully (“leased up”). Most successful MTO families – those who were able to lease up in low poverty areas - moved to predominantly minority outer-ring neighborhoods of central cities or inner-ring suburbs.

Early Assessments and Baseline Tracking of MTO

The five selected PHA’s partnered with non-profit housing agencies providing search assistance to the experimental group to facilitate the implementation of the program and to test the challenge of using vouchers in the private housing market. HUD commissioned an early assessment of the effectiveness of the search and counseling on families’ ability to secure housing. At the same time, a baseline tracking study began that captured social, economic, housing and neighborhood characteristics for families in all three groups (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit 2003; Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2001). In early impact studies families at each site were evaluated on different outcome measures of

¹³ Family eligibility: Minimal eligibility requirements were that families had to live in public housing or private assisted housing in areas of the central cities with very high poverty rates (40 percent or more), have very low incomes (30% or less of median income), and have children under 18 years old (Orr et al. 2003).

interest (crime and behavior in Boston and New York, education in Baltimore, etc...) the findings of which are detailed in the book *Choosing a Better Life: Evaluating the Moving to Opportunity Social Experiment* (Eds. Goering and Feins 2003). The preliminary short-term evidence from these single site studies showed that after approximately two and a half years after random assignment boys in both the experimental and Section 8 groups exhibited fewer behavior problems (disobedience, bullying, depression) than those in the control group in Boston (Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001) and in New York (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003b). Evidence from MTO in Baltimore suggested that the experimental group males had fewer arrests for violent crimes but a short-term increase in arrests for property crime (Ludwig, Duncan, and Hirschfield 2001) relative to the control group.

Interim Impacts Evaluation

As mandated by Congress an *MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation* was conducted in 2002, approximately five to seven years after families relocated (depending on when families leased up). The evaluation targeted 4,248 families that were randomly assigned by the end of 1997. Extensive in-home, structured interviews were conducted with heads of households and up to two randomly selected children per household between the ages of five and 19 years (N = 6,683). At the time of the study, many of the experimental group families had moved, some of them several times. Furthermore by 2002, about 70 percent of the *control* group had moved out of public housing, albeit mostly to other poor urban neighborhoods. However, families in the MTO experimental group were still more likely to be living in low poverty areas (either the original placement areas or other areas), and had lived for longer periods of time in low poverty areas than families in the control group (Orr et al. 2003). Therefore, MTO is now a test of the experience of living in lower poverty neighborhoods for some period of time (between one and ten years depending on the family) and of relocating to a low poverty neighborhood.

MTO: Program Evaluations and Findings

For the first phase of HUD's Interim Evaluation of MTO, researchers carried out a small scale qualitative assessment at each MTO site by completing in-depth interviews with adults and children (Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2001) to inform the questionnaire development for the Interim Survey. These preliminary studies suggested that the demonstration might be having—at least in the short term—impacts on such dimensions as health, safety, delinquency patterns, and educational outcomes. Most significantly researchers found that families moved into significantly better neighborhoods (as rated by participants), and that the new neighborhoods were much safer, and had lower levels of physical and social disorder (Orr et al. 2003). The early studies did not find any employment or other economic effects.

After five years, approximately 1,800 children of MTO families (at all sites) between the ages of 15-20 were surveyed on several outcome domains including risky behavior. Arrest data was also gathered for the MTO population aged 15-25. Unexpectedly, the full sample Interim Evaluation showed that the positive results for experimental group boys (in Boston and New York from the Early Impacts studies) had reversed direction from a few years before, contrary to what theory predicted. Researchers found that relative to the control group, the number of lifetime arrests for girls in the experimental group was 33 percent lower, including a significant reduction in violent crime. However, boys in the experimental group were about 13 percent more likely than the controls to have ever been arrested, largely due to increases in property crime (Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001; Kling, Ludwig, and Katz 2005; Liebman, Katz, and Kling 2004). Experimental boys also self-reported significantly higher rates of substance abuse. Thus, key puzzles in the Interim Evaluation regarding this domain include: (a) non-impacts where experimental impacts were expected (e.g., violent crime); and (b) differential impacts for subgroups within the treatment groups (e.g., girls and boys).

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity (3cMTO)

My dissertation focuses on the adolescents and young adults who participated in the ethnography that was part of the *Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity (3cMTO)*. The study was designed to examine some of the key puzzles that emerged in the findings described above and to complement the analytic framework of the cross-site, statistically-based Interim Impacts Evaluation. Like the evaluation, 3cMTO follows the experimental design of the MTO demonstration program in following the treatment groups but responds to the puzzles by focusing on two types of variables: (a) social outcomes captured in important research and policy domains, and (b) interveners or mediating variables through which important social processes are thought to operate. To understand the mechanisms of neighborhood effects 3cMTO uses a mixed methods approach. The approach engages multiple frames of reference and allows the findings from each individual source of data to strengthen the study's conclusions with additional sources of evidence. The Interim Impact analyses provide the best counterfactual tests of whether MTO has had an impact, and the analyses guided the analytic structure and subject domains examined in 3cMTO. But whereas survey research limits what can be learned about everyday life patterns and links between domains of interests (family management, social relations, neighborhood life) qualitative methods, including “ethnography” – participant observation and flexible, naturalistic interviewing in a range of social settings – extends knowledge about how neighborhood context and social dynamics interact over time.

Dissertation Methodology

The methodology for this dissertation – including the research questions, method of data collection, sampling logic, and data analysis – are based on the 3cMTO family-focused ethnography with 39 families in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York. The data gathered from 15 months of fieldwork (from the interview phase until the last family closed)

explores the social relationships, daily routines, and expectations of adolescents and young adults in *different* kinds of neighborhoods, over time, and from several perspectives including adolescent, parent, and sometimes sibling and other household members. In this chapter I begin with the contribution of ethnographic research to neighborhood research generally, followed by its value for questions related to the influence of neighborhoods on family processes. Given the complexity and scale of this mixed-methods research I include an explanation of the sampling logic, and the recruiting process followed by a description of the ethnographic sample. The remainder of the chapter focuses on my experience as a fieldworker, and the application of the ethnographic method to my analysis.

Getting the Context right

Ethnography is about taken for granted meanings, patterns, rules and behaviors (Becker 1970; Bronfenbrenner 1986). It emphasizes “getting the context right” because local phenomena and social behavior are linked to wider social systems. By following people’s behavior in their own environments, rather than simply asking them about what they do (which is often different from what they do), the researcher is provided with a more a holistic understanding of how the individual understands and lives in their own world. Ideally taken for granted meanings are uncovered naturally, instead of placed into pre-determined categories by the researcher. Ethnographic methods thus attempt to move closer to ‘truthful’ accounts of experience.

Ethnographic methods aim to answer how questions rather than what or why questions. Ethnography is best for these types of questions because there is always a combination of interrelated factors that go into kids and parents choices about the actions they take. The survey data from MTO’s *Interim Impacts Evaluation* portrayed an experimental population that on average, seemed to identify the benefits of living in safer lower-

poverty neighborhoods, but with an important exception – adolescent boys on average were doing worse than the control group in measures of crime and delinquency. But not all boys, fit the average portrayal, and in some ways the averages may obscure important distinctions about the relevance of and reasons behind particular incidents. Revealing more about the range of individual circumstances and trajectories, the ethnographic data gives as much weight to “deviant” cases, as to averages. In this way ethnographic methods can expand the frames by which we understand social behavior, and capture ideas that variable-based methods may overlook.

Quantitative work also suggests that much of what we think of as “neighborhood effects” is mediated by parenting practices, but without significant understanding of how that works in practice, not just within and across families, but in the same families over time in different types of environments (Burton 1997; Burton and Jarrett 2000). This dissertation provides more data not only on what risks continue in low-poverty neighborhoods for youth coming from high-risk neighborhoods but on the range of mechanisms by which youth encounter or avoid risk. The road to risky behavior is not a straight or uniform path for every child, even when certain risk factors make crime more likely.

Ethnographic methods help to address thorny methodological issues such as developing neighborhood measures that accurately approximate the theoretical constructs of interest, and allow for the simultaneous influence between youth and context. Most neighborhood effects research relies on structural or demographic characteristics to define the boundaries of a neighborhood. Ethnographic methods help to address the omitted variable problem common in studies of complex social processes – including the one of neighborhood definition, by focusing on the lived experience in the use of neighborhoods. Secondly, because ethnographic methods are not suited to causal arguments, it does not force competition among the many contextual variables which may be influencing youth outcomes, but more easily encourages a picture of interaction

that includes mediating variables – an important distinction that (Duncan and Raundenbush 1999) suggest most neighborhood effects methodologies cannot account for.

Family-focused Ethnography

Through ethnographic methods focused on the family – participant observation and flexible, naturalistic interviewing in social settings – researchers have identified risks, described the lives of poor kids in ghetto neighborhoods, and provided detailed accounts of how parenting practices can buffer youth from dangerous environments (Burton 1997; Furstenberg et al. 2000; Jarrett 1998; Weisner 1997). In a family-focused ethnography families are the unit of interest (as opposed to neighborhoods or schools or themes) and the focus is on daily life – the routines, social relationships and use of place. This work, drawing on developmental psychology, has pushed the neighborhood literature to more closely consider how families might mediate the neighborhood influence on youth outcomes.

Ethnographers talk about the importance of identifying relevant conceptual frameworks. For example an important frame of reference identified by adolescents in this ethnography is adaptation to new places rather than particular characteristics of specific neighborhoods. Given the recognition that social behaviors are context dependent, ethnographic methods are also concerned with the adaptive responses of individuals to *changing* environments (Weisner 1997).

One of the greatest strengths of case study research is the ability to elicit in-depth or ‘thick’ description. In this situation ‘thick’ refers to data that are detailed and complete enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on (Maxwell 1996).

If a particular case is information rich or ‘thick’ it can “greatly strengthen descriptive and causal inference” (Brady and Collier 2004). For example, analysis of the ethnographic data on social relations, and routines, underscored that ‘peers’ are often also non-household relatives, a critical conceptual category that was not emphasized by the survey research or the qualitative work that preceded the ethnography. This re-conceptualization of kin as an important peer group led me to rethink the dynamics of housing mobility and the context in which adolescents were exposed to risky behavior, providing the foundation for this thesis. Family focused ethnography encouraged the focus on routines and family level processes.

Ethnographic methods that address family-level concerns can serve to create more effective and focused policies (Briggs 1997; Stack 1997). Writing about MTO adolescents in Chicago one researcher said that the qualitative work “provides a reminder that poor families are not just wealthy families without a bank book” (DeLuca 2008). Likewise, public policies are often evaluated as if they have a uniform impact on participants when the reality is that effects tend to depend not only on conditions in the environment and in the implementation of programs, but on differences among people (Popkin, Cunningham, and Burt 2005). Recent research on the MTO program shows that the benefits of a housing voucher on social outcomes of interest (such as housing stability, mental health, and delinquent behavior) may be particular to sub-groups of the mover population (Turner and Briggs 2006, Popkin, Leventhal and Weismann 2007).

Limits and benefits of the family approach

Other established ethnographic traditions include the community study tradition and peer-group ethnography. In community studies an issue or phenomena is looked at against or within the surroundings of other individuals and behaviors that make up the life of a particular community – it is the study of life in a community but not necessarily of a

whole community. Like family-focused ethnographies this method studies behaviors through observation and naturalistic interactions rather than through isolation and abstraction or through an experimental model. In contrast a family-focused ethnography situates the individual in the context of family and studies the household level of interactions involving routines and exchange among its members, albeit as those routines take place in a community or in a series of communities. The great number of neighborhoods in the 3cMTO study made the community method less feasible and with the family-focused method we cannot generate hypotheses about the overall life in any of the many neighborhoods in which our participants moved to.

By choosing a family-focused method we were able to capture only some details about the places that youth lived in and visited, and were unable to answer some important research questions. For example, although some neighborhood effects models predict that the presence or absence of institutional resources in a location should influence successful educational and behavioral outcomes we were able to gain limited information on the availability and access to neighborhood-based institutions, or to observe youth as they interacted with neighbors and others in the community. Likewise we did not gather information about how other families in the receiving neighborhood viewed their neighbors and how these contextual interactions may have contributed to the actions families took in response, although we know from the ethnography that some families felt discriminated against at least at first.

Nor we were able to focus more intensely on peer group relations as a peer-centered ethnographic method would. Although this was one intent for the project, both the elusiveness of some of the youth, boys in particular, and the emphasis on learning about a range of outcomes limited the time fieldworkers spent hanging out with the friends of adolescents and young adults. As a result we gathered far less information on the whereabouts of peer related activities, and on the dynamics of peer relationships shaping the outcomes of interest.

However, there were many benefits to focusing on the smaller ecological context of families. Grounded theory emphasizes that what is important may not be what the literature predicts or what researchers decide is important. The focus on family demonstrated that there is considerable variation in the degree to which adolescents' social networks and institutional involvements center on their residential neighborhoods. Instead of attributing causes to the fixed characteristics of neighborhoods, the family-focused method followed the social worlds of the teens across neighborhoods pointing out when and how specific aspects of a place seem important to them.

Given that this was a family-focused ethnography, rather than one with neighborhoods as the central unit of analysis, the method revealed that another shared context for adolescents, across widely varying neighborhood types, is kin who are involved in risky or delinquent behavior. Surely the fact that every adolescent who participated in this ethnography was related to someone who had been incarcerated, often their father, is meaningful information in a study that is interested in risky and delinquent behavior outcomes. In turn, this more developed, and hopefully more "truthful" construct helps explain why it can be difficult for adolescents in lower-poverty neighborhoods to avoid risk when lower neighborhood crime statistics associated with residential locations cannot. Family structure is also a meaningful and distinct context for understanding housing mobility patterns and why some families, though not in the majority, decided to move back to high poverty neighborhoods (Comey, Briggs, and Weismann 2008).

The Ethnography Sample

The data for my dissertation is based primarily on the ethnographic component of an integrated mixed-method, three-part study, the Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity (3cMTO). The 3cMTO study builds on the findings and analytic framework

of the cross-site “Moving to Opportunity: Interim Impacts Evaluation: Final Report” completed five to seven years after families relocated (Orr et al. 2003).¹⁴ The three parts are (1) In-depth qualitative interviews; (2) “family-focused” ethnographic fieldwork sequenced to follow a selection of interviewees from the qualitative sample; and (3) neighborhood “scans” – based primarily on census data – of the changing neighborhood and metropolitan area contexts. The three sites – Boston, New York, and Los Angeles – were chosen to offer sharp contrasts in metro and neighborhood-level patterns of change, historic settlement patterns and race relations, and MTO program administration. Both the qualitative and ethnographic components focused on “the next generation” – families with adolescents and young adults. The 3cMTO family-level data were collected in 2004 and 2005—about six to ten years after families’ initial placement through the MTO program and about two years after the interim survey data were collected.

The first two phases of 3CMTO were closely coordinated, in sample design, recruitment, and content. I was part of a larger team with researchers from the Urban Institute along with fifteen others doing fieldwork for the ethnographic component of 3cMTO. The two samples – the in-depth interview group and ethnographic sample– were designed as part of a single, multi-stage sampling and data collection strategy. The interviews were scheduled to provide an entrée into the fieldwork and the ethnographic data collection complemented and expanded on information gathered from the interviews. Team members were linked together during the in-depth interviews, and again during the follow-up phase while we recruited families for the ethnography.

For the qualitative sample (from which the ethnographic sample was drawn) 123 families were randomly selected from the full MTO sample including compliers and non-compliers in the control, experimental and Section 8 comparison groups (sampling randomly from all three groups within the stratum of families who had an adolescent

¹⁴ The key measures of intermediate and end outcomes are specified in the statistically-based MTO Interim Evaluation.

child resident in the home at the time of the interview, and by race and ethnicity). Families in Los Angeles were oversampled because it was the site with the highest lease-up rate for MTO experimental group families and because a large number of L.A. families were excluded from the interim survey because they had moved after 1997 (as compared to participants in the rest of the cities who began moving in 1994).

Researchers from the Urban Institute conducted 278 semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with parents, adolescents (12-17 yrs), and young adults (18 –23 yrs) in all three treatment groups. The in-depth qualitative interviews, which were conducted in English, Spanish, and Cambodian, explored a variety of issues, including neighborhood environment, housing, health, education, and employment. The sample covers the full range of outcomes, from very successful to highly distressed, for all three MTO treatment groups and both complier statuses. Interviews with parents averaged one to two hours; interviews with adolescents and young adults averaged 45 minutes to an hour. Overall, we conducted 81 interviews in Boston, 120 in Los Angeles, and 77 in New York. In my experience family members were often receptive to the interviews and enjoyed talking about their lives. Many of them had previously been interviewed for the study several years before.

3cMTO Sample Descriptives

Table 3.1 Comparison of <i>Interim Evaluation Sample</i> with 3cMTO <i>In-depth Interview</i> and <i>Ethnography Sample</i>			
	Interim Evaluation Sample	Qualitative Interview Sample	Ethnographic Sample
Total Number of Households	(n=4248 households)	(n=123 households)	(n=39 households)
Demographic traits			
Adult female	98%	98%	97%
Children female	53%	52%	51%
Household head is black non-Hispanic	43%	54%*	47%
Household head is Hispanic	46%	35%*	42%
Family size: 2-4 children under 18	64%	68%	61%
Locational and social outcomes			
Living in a neighborhood less than 10% poor	15%	14%	14%
Living in a neighborhood more than 30% poor	48%	48%	47%
Residential mobility: Moved 1 to 3 times	58%	61%	68%

Adult ever completed high school	37%	41%	39%
Adult employed	52%	55%	42%
Total household income (mean)	\$16,448	\$18,513	\$16,703
Respondent or child receiving TANF	31%	40%*	52%*
Adult Body Mass Index (BMI, mean)	30%	30%	30%
Adult psychological distress index (mean)	0.33	0.32	0.34
Child psychological distress index (mean)	0.27	0.21	0.21
Child ever arrested	12%	16%	25%
Youth risky behavior index (mean)	0.29	0.31	0.30

Table Source: Comey, Briggs Weismann 2008.

Statistical tests confirm that both the qualitative and ethnographic subset are quite representative of the much larger population of MTO families surveyed at the interim mark, both in terms of background traits and employment status—though we modestly under-sampled Hispanics and over-sampled families on welfare—and a range of other social outcomes. As a result, the study allows for appropriate triangulation on key data points and the findings should generate hypotheses generalizable to the overall MTO population.

Table 3.2 Ethnographic Sample Traits

	Total #			
Households	39			
		Female	Male	
Adults	35	35	0	
Focal Adolescent	39	18	21	
Focal Young Adult	13	7	6	
Total Youth	52	25	27	
Total	87	60	27	
City and Treatment Group				
	Boston	Los Angeles	New York	Total
Control	3	6	2	11
Experimental	10	11	7	28
Total	13	17	9	39
Race, Ethnicity, Age of Youth				
Hispanic	38%			
African American	49%			
Caucasian	0%			
Cambodian	10%			
Haitian	3%			
Youth age range	11 - 24 years			

We do not have fieldnotes for four Cambodian focal parents and three male adolescents in Boston.

Recruiting the Sample

I received access to the families in this study through my involvement as a paid fieldworker at the Boston site, and as a project coordinator for the ethnographic sample at all three sites. The ethnographic team – 16 students (most completing their doctorates) from the fields of sociology, anthropology, social policy, social work, and urban planning – met in the spring of 2004 at Harvard University for an intensive two-day training on the aims, methods, and logistics of the project, and to enable coordination and communication across sites.¹⁵ At that time, along with researchers from the Urban Institute, we began recruiting families and conducting two-hour in-depth interviews with them.

Recruitment for the ethnographic component was more challenging than for the in-depth interviews given the commitment required from families. During this time (and throughout the fieldwork) Xav Briggs conducted weekly team conference calls with the fieldworkers that enabled us to discuss field strategy, tactics and thematic lessons, as well as problem solve around our difficulties with recruiting. Each fieldworker was assigned families on a rotating basis based on an ideal quota of 3-5 families per fieldworker and a hoped for final sample of approximately 60 families. In families with both male and

¹⁵ The training was led by Xav Briggs, the co-principal investigator with Sue Popkin of the Urban Institute and John Goering of CUNY and included lectures by Jeffrey Liebman, who conducted several quantitative assessments and analyses of MTO's impacts, and Tom Weisner and Eli Leiber who designed the qualitative software program EthnoNotes to facilitate multi-party, multi-site ethnographic data analysis. Fieldworkers were hired from a general job posting for MTO researchers/PhD students to achieve a balance of experience in fieldwork, relevant work and research interests, and knowledge of the local environment of the sites. In addition some fieldworkers spoke Spanish, others Cambodian to reach out to these populations, and there was at least one male fieldworker at each site (city) in order to facilitate communication with the adolescent and young adult male population.

female adolescents a male and female fieldworker were assigned to work together. In the end we visited 39 families repeatedly over a period of six to eight months.

To assist in the recruitment of families for the ethnography, and given delays in the qualitative interviewing phase of the study which resulted in concurrent recruitment efforts, fieldworkers attended many of the interviews as observers. I attended five interviews in Boston, of which three families were also recruited for the ethnography, one of which was assigned to me. Attending the interviews turned out to be a helpful advantage in that we could gradually introduce the family members to the fieldworkers and to the ethnographic component of the study, which would require much more of their time and personal lives. For me, coordinating the recruitment database, it was also an important part of developing rapport between researchers doing one part of the 3cMTO study in Washington DC and our fieldworkers at the three city sites. For the qualitative interviews adults received \$50 and children \$25, and for the ethnographic fieldwork families received \$20 per visit up to \$150 total. Fieldworkers in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York were responsible for managing and reporting their payments to families to me, and their hours to the Urban Institute, through which the funding was disbursed.

Beyond issues of assignment (families to fieldworker and management of a changing database from which recruited families were selected and sometimes recruited for one or both components) and coordination between sites and among people (mostly via email), the recruitment stage for the qualitative and ethnographic components was primarily smooth, although there were some common problems. Families were not always at home at the appointed time, although this was most often true for the adolescent interview (interviews were conducted separately for the adults and the kids). Sometimes the environment in which they lived was too loud or there were too many interruptions to get the individual's full attention. At one of the interviews in Boston I attended (whose family later became one of my three families) the fire alarm, which the mother told us was frequently broken, was going off in the house during the entire interview and we had to conduct it outside.

Recruiting a family for the ethnography was sometimes a straightforward process of introduction and explanation of the project over the phone followed by a first “consent” visit and subsequent visits. However, on plenty of occasions visits did not happen, addresses were incorrect, and fieldworkers were forced to knock on neighbors doors and leave repeated notes of introduction. In several other instances families at first agreed to participate but were later “dropped” after repeated failures to show up at the agreed time. In particular we had difficulty recruiting Caucasian families. I attempted to recruit a white family from the control group living in the South Boston projects. I’m often told I look Irish and was familiar with that neighborhood and thought this would provide me with an entrée. However, after the initial meeting which took place in Heather’s apartment I could not get her to meet with me again despite repeated calls and notes.

We also conducted a second round of recruitment in order to include more adolescent males – given the puzzles about gender that arose from the *Interim Impacts Evaluation*. This round required coordination with Abt Associates, the organization responsible for the maintenance of the sample’s residential addresses, to seek out additional potential applicants from the experimental group. We recruited from this second sample with letters and follow-up calls and visits. The cooperation rate (consents as a percentage of contacts) was 78 percent for the interviews and 70 percent for the ethnographic subsample.

Beginning with the recruitment stage and throughout the project family members identities had to be protected which made coordinating across sites and individuals challenging. For example, we wanted to share the qualitative interviews, as they were being completed, with the fieldworkers assigned to recruit that same family. We installed password protected software, which required conversion of all publicly accessible documents. Along with another fieldworker in Boston, I coordinated this data exchange over the several months of recruitment. The sample recruited for the ethnography was

made up of a subgroup of families within the larger stratified random sample of families with whom in-depth qualitative interviews were completed.

Sampling Strategy

The ethnography was designed as part of a mixed-method strategy to understand mechanisms underlying the statistically based Interim Evaluation findings, particularly uneven adolescent outcomes. The ethnographic sample thus built upon the results of an experimental design that used probability sampling techniques to assess program impacts quantitatively. Probability samples aim to achieve representativeness, which is the degree to which the sample accurately represents the entire population of interest. Through triangulation 3cMTO also aimed to leverage the power of mixed-method research *within* the 3cMTO study itself, enabling more rigorous tests of validity than any one data source alone can provide. The qualitative portion of the 3cMTO study used stratified random sampling. In this technique, the groups of interest in the population (which included compliers and noncompliers in the experimental and Section 8 comparison groups, and the control group) were divided into strata. Families were then sampled randomly from within the stratum of families by (1) those who had an adolescent child resident in the home at the time of the interview, (2) race (3) ethnicity of the family. Finally we selected a smaller number of cases to study intensively within each strata based on purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling techniques may be defined as selecting deliberate units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions.¹⁶

¹⁶ Maxwell (1996) further defines purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices.”

The strategy of purposive sampling is to learn as much as possible from a smaller number of carefully selected cases (not to select a large number of units to be able to generalize to a population), focusing on depth rather than breadth and ideally achieving saturation of information, wherein the information about a phenomena or case becomes repetitive (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Since prior research generated considerable findings on poor families and youth living in *disadvantaged* neighborhoods, this sample aimed for a range that was one-third control group and two-thirds experimental (complier – those families who were both offered the voucher and used it to move to lower poverty neighborhoods).¹⁷ To understand the conditions under which some families appeared to stay in lower poverty neighborhoods *over time* and whether this housing trajectory would benefit these families in other ways, we over-sampled families who were still living in low poverty areas, including suburban school districts—considering these to be “locationally successful.”¹⁸ The ethnographic sample was designed to make comparisons across age groups in the same households, and whenever possible to capture gender and sibling experiences within families to respond to the puzzles from the survey research.

Limitations

As mentioned above the final ethnographic sample had some weak spots. One was that we were unable to interview any Caucasian families. We had more difficulty recruiting families with boys and most of the boys in the control group were of an older age, as opposed to the experimental group which had a greater range. Although not directly problematic given our sampling logic and design, there were some characteristics which might have influenced our findings, and which emerged from the ethnographic data such as the potential importance of families who considered themselves “the first generation to

¹⁷ The ethnographic sample included only control-group and experimental-group complier families, allowing only a treatment-on-treated (TOT) analysis.

¹⁸ We also drew a special sample of Southeast Asian refugee families at the Los Angeles site, because of the large number of refugee families receiving housing assistance in Los Angeles and other refugee gateway cities and the very limited research base on their special needs.

have been in public housing” (which meant different things including ‘many relationships and relatives in public housing neighborhoods’, an ‘intention of leaving the projects with or without MTO assistance’, etc...). In hindsight the design of the ethnography, limiting the control group to one third of the sample limited the variation we could observe among this group. However, this is a trade off in ethnographic work where interests of depth and scope must be managed.

The ethnographic sample, and my analysis, drawing from the MTO population retain some of the strength of the initial experimental design, as well as some methodological challenges in application. There may be self selection bias – those who volunteered for MTO to begin with may be different from those who did not – more motivated or able to succeed. Secondly, a significant amount of residential mobility post-relocation for families in all three treatment groups makes the identification of neighborhood mechanisms, already socially complex, more dependent on concepts related to subtle differences in neighborhood locations, trajectories, and exposure. In my dissertation I have tried to exploit the strengths of the ethnographic design by attending to some measures of neighborhood engagement and residential trajectory which is more accessible because of the method’s focus on daily routines, and the history of events.

Because the MTO intervention changed so many aspects of neighborhood and housing environments simultaneously – which in turn may influence other intermediate factors impacting outcomes – the initial experimental research design may not be ideal for determining mechanisms (Liebman, Katz, and Kling 2004). How well did the ethnographic research address this fundamental problem? It suffered from the mile wide inch deep problem in some of the critical areas of interest, while also offering insight that was not available through the other research methods employed to study MTO.

For example, the survey research asked several questions based on the hypothesis that peers are a mechanism of neighborhood influence including whether or not a youth had friends who get involved in school activities, use drugs or carry weapons, and whether or not youth visit with friends from old neighborhoods. There were no significant effects in the survey findings for either the experimental or Section 8 group on having friends involved in school activities or on friends carrying weapons to school, and while there was some visiting of baseline neighborhoods by those whose families leased up through MTO and moved out of the origin neighborhood, the fraction either living in or making visits to the baseline neighborhood was much higher in the control group than in the experimental or Section 8 groups.¹⁹ The fieldwork suggests a different picture in part based on the different social construction and meaning of ‘peers.’ By spending significant time with families, and asking about daily routines, the role of kin in most adolescents’ lives was very apparent in a way that would not necessarily be captured in a single interview or survey research. My data shows that youth in the experimental group very often return to their neighborhoods of origin. It also suggests that there are important distinctions within the experimental group based on length of time and stability in a low poverty neighborhood that impacts the degree to which youth made friends in new neighborhoods. In the discussion chapter (chapter 8) of this dissertation I describe in more detail how my analysis, based on ethnographic data, responds to the quantitative and qualitative work on the same subject of adolescent risky behavior outcomes.

Fieldwork with Three Boston Families

The analysis for this dissertation is based primarily on the 39 households and 52 adolescents and young adults from the ethnographic sample. I use several sources of data, building my account of adolescent and young adult’s experiences from the ethnographic

¹⁹ There were significant effects for both the experimental and Section 8 groups relative to the control group of having more friends who use drugs, largely concentrated among boys (Orr et al. 2003).

data, then drawing from the in-depth qualitative interviews to cross reference my narrative and using the survey findings to structural and comparative purpose. My dissertation's research questions were generated from the MTO experiment, and informed by the designs of the *Interim Impacts Evaluation* and the qualitative research designs I inherited, as well as by the findings of extensive work on MTO that preceded my own. However, it was in *doing* the fieldwork with three of the families in Boston that I learned most about the methods I report on here. Below I briefly summarize the three families that I was assigned to visit, in thanks as much as for illustration.

The first family I visited with was Tessa, an African American woman, age 72, who was assigned to the MTO control group but moved down the street from her housing project in Roxbury with a different kind of Section 8 voucher by the time we contacted her in 2004 (her neighborhood is 85% non-white and has a poverty rate of 29.8% - the second highest rate in our Boston sample). She moved to Roxbury from Alabama when she was 22-years old joining several of her siblings who came north looking for work. Tessa is six feet tall, has a regal bearing, and a thick southern accent. She has arthritis in her knees. She is a mother to six, and a grandmother to more than twenty. She is also the adoptive mother to Cedrick who is her long-term boyfriend's son with another woman who was addicted to drugs and never in Cedrick's life. She is close to and relies on her family and they rely on her. She has diabetes which makes walking difficult, but she manages to help take care of her sister who is blind and lives close by. Cedrick, the 18 year old adolescent recruited for the study, initially agreed to participate but was often absent or reluctant to speak to the male fieldworker when he did show up. I observed him smoking out (using drugs) on the front porch when I arrived for one of the visits and from his mother I learned of a history of juvenile arrests and several years in the custody of a juvenile detention center. Tessa said that he had had behavior problems where "he couldn't sit still since the age of 6." At the time of the fieldwork he had dropped out of high school but said that he was looking for work. Towards the end of the year of my visits, when he turned 18, Tessa had kicked him out of the house for not following her rules, and because she thought he was old enough to "get himself a room." Still she looked forward to his

visits and seemed happy when he came by a couple of times while I was visiting. This family was bordering on destitute and though living adjacent to a slowly gentrifying neighborhood, her apartment building – a side-by-side brownstone – was badly deteriorated, and a murder (which she believed was a lovers quarrel) occurred on the floor below during the winter I was visiting. Still, she likes the neighborhood – to her it is home. Tessa’s goal for the future is to travel to Detroit and to stay alive.

The matriarch of my second family is Erika, an African American woman in her mid-fifties who lived for many years in the East Boston projects and then in the notoriously dangerous Franklin Hill housing project in Dorchester where she was living when she received her MTO voucher. With it she moved to a quiet residential neighborhood of suburban Quincy (neighborhood poverty rate 8.9%), where she has stayed since her initial relocation. In this Erika is one of six locationally successful families in the ethnographic sample that is also residentially stable. Shortly after their move to the suburbs Erika’s oldest son was shot and killed at age 18 in the Dorchester projects they left, but where he continued to spend time with friends. Erika now lives with her daughter, age 22, who was not interviewed as part of the ethnographic sample and at times with her adopted son Andre, age 11, a seemingly bright and highly energetic boy. During the majority of the fieldwork time Andre was placed in a residential facility for troubled foster kids. Therefore he was not part of the ethnographic sample except through Erika’s words. Although Andre’s diagnosis was not entirely clear Erika’s explanation was that he was bi-polar, which she thought was a result of his mother’s crack addiction and the violence he had observed as a child. Like Tessa, Erika “inherited” Andre from a “cousin” who was related to Andre but could not care for him. Although Erika is from a big family, they are scattered throughout the northeast, and she rarely sees them in person though they speak often. Erika is gregarious, a raconteur of considerable charm (she wrote poetry) and is extremely obese (as is her biological daughter), which is causing her severe health problems that make it extremely difficult to move around. She uses a scooter when she needs to go to the store and a medical van to get to her numerous doctor appointments. Nonetheless she is very enthusiastic and positive about the change that

MTO has made in her life – she feels that a calmer environment led to less stress, better mental health, and a more positive attitude. Her voice gives life to her MTO experience in several places throughout this dissertation.

Sabrina, a young 33-year old Puerto Rican mother is the head of the third family I visited with. Like Erika she has also remained in Quincy since receiving her MTO voucher although she has changed apartments and neighborhoods within Quincy. Both her children (son Randall age 13 and daughter Josie age 6) attend a local neighborhood school. In terms of spending time in their residential neighborhood and participating in local institutions and activities, they are the most integrated into the neighborhood though they lived in four different apartments in Quincy over eight years. By the end of the fieldwork the owner of her apartment was trying to sell the property and she was looking for another place in the same town. Perhaps because Sabrina is younger and in good health, compared to my other two families, the family is mobile and active, visiting kin in a higher poverty neighborhood of Boston, and participating in the Puerto Rican community there and in the South End (another Boston neighborhood) where Sabrina has worked for several years. She is an administrator at the cultural center of the well-known Villa Victoria housing development in the South End of Boston (Small 2002). Unlike my other two families Sabrina's relatives do not live in the projects. Sabrina grew up with her mother, disabled stepfather, and two sisters in an apartment subsidized by Section 8 and moved into her own apartment in the projects when she was 21 where she was living when she received the MTO voucher. Her siblings now live in other cities, one in another suburb of Boston, and Sabrina's social networks extend from Quincy to Puerto Rico. Like the other women I visited Sabrina alone supports her children – the children's fathers are not in their lives and Randall's father is in and out of prison. Almost all of the time I spent with Sabrina was at her house or at the pizza place across the street. However, the majority of the information I have about Randall's activities comes from Sabrina and from my few interactions with the whole family. I include information about Randall's activities, schooling, and delinquent behavior (he has not engaged in any risky behavior) in my analysis but it is truncated and provides only his mother's perspective.

I visited these three families for eight months approximately every other week. Erika I visited mostly on Saturday mornings, and I usually visited Tessa and Sabrina on week nights and stayed for several hours. They welcomed me into their homes and seemed to be open with me about their experiences, sometimes expressing curiosity about my questions but almost always happy to talk about their lives. I shared most about *my* life with Sabrina, perhaps because we were closer in age than the other two women. As the brief descriptions above illustrate, the variety of experience in only three lives is great. As a result the common characteristics of sub-groups of families in the ethnography stand out in relief. This dissertation is about the collected stories of thirty-nine families and eighty-seven individuals, and the ways in which they are similar as well as different.

Data Collection for Ethnographic Fieldwork

For approximately 8 months 16 fieldworkers in Boston, New York and Los Angeles met with 39 families, in visits that ranged from 1 to 4 hours, with a frequency that ranged from roughly biweekly to monthly. The ethnographers used semi-structured Data Collection Guides (See Appendix) that included questions and probes as well as cues for direct observation. An "interview guide" approach to naturalistic interviewing starts with a list of issues to be addressed, still allowing for other topics to emerge, specific to each participant (Patten 1980). In this approach, the data collection guide is a prompt and questions are asked in such a way as to minimize predetermined response categories.

These guides were developed over the course of the time spent recruiting and doing fieldwork, with feedback from ethnographers on how the guides were working in the field. The guides were sequenced as follows: *Routines, Social Relations, Neighborhoods and Institutions, Education, Work and Money, Health and Risky Behavior, and Outlook and Cultural Repertoire*. The subject domains correlate to the mechanisms and outcomes of interest identified in the 3cMTO research questions and analytical framework. A brief

description of these categories is listed below and the coding categories are in the appendix. The questions and subjects on the guides were derived from theoretically relevant concepts based in the literature and the pathways identified through earlier MTO research. We also based the unstructured data collection guides on neighborhoods and social relations used in the qualitative work for the Three-City Study of Welfare (Wilson, Edin, and Burton 1999).

Borrowing from topically related studies that also use ethnographic methods improves reliability and transferability of the information that is collected. As we prepared the guides we thought about the different kinds of answers we would get from the participants, and about the responses received from questions we had already asked. Fieldworkers with an expertise in a particular subject domain researched and wrote a draft of each subject guide based on the literature and similar experimental studies, which was then vetted by the research team in an iterative process. I wrote the first draft for two of the data collection guides; the Routines guide and the neighborhood mapping exercise in the Neighborhoods and Institutions guide I describe below. In the process of working on the guides, questions were often changed and/or had to be excluded in order to manage the large quantities of data and to provide the space for even less structured conversations and observations.

Ethnography Data collection guides

Routines: How, where, and with whom our subject families get daily life accomplished and how much neighborhood context matters for that accomplishment. *Routines* connect directly to *social relations* (including networks and interaction and exchange habits) and *neighborhood engagement* (how much, what kinds, with what attitudes and “mental maps” to make sense of the environment).

Social Relations (Networks): Contents of social relations, with a primary focus on aid and influence. Reciprocity and trust—network structure – diversity, density and sources of contacts, the geography of ties, changes over time, and shared activities.

Neighborhoods and Institutions: Focuses on three dimensions of neighborhood institutions²⁰: 1) residents’ perceptions of availability of and access to community organizations, including volume, location, cost, mode of resource distribution, and attitudes about the characteristics of service providers; 2) residents’ reports of engagement and rapport with neighborhood institutions, including time budgets, space budgets, and contact records (including rapport with service providers); and 3) residents’ use (or lack thereof) of institutions to facilitate the creation of social networks, housing histories, comparisons of past and present neighborhoods, and views of housing program and housing quality.

Education History and success in school, defining educational goals, planning one’s educational future (in connection with career planning, and getting help with access (from preparing an application to recommendations for scholarships), parental involvement in child’s education.

Work and Money Learning about the world of work, getting a job, getting a better job than one has now, and getting ahead on the job (advancing, gaining skills and valuable job contacts). Also, getting small cash loans, in-kind assistance, and other aid to make ends meet or even finance self-employment.

Health and Risky Behavior Health issues include obesity, exercise and diet, and mental health as well as access to and use of institutions providing recreation and health care

²⁰ These include especially “anchor” or “formal” institutions such as health, child care, community, education and job training centers, churches, less formal organizations and popular hang-outs such as barber shops, supermarkets, playgrounds and parking lots, as well as “third sector” organizations such as Parent-Teacher Associations, block clubs, community policing groups, and other voluntary associations.

services in present and past. Risky behaviors include violence, gang involvement, fighting, vandalism, and substance abuse.

Outlook and Cultural Repertoire Identity, attitudes, goals for the future, sense of accomplishments and failures, goals for children, values, cultural routines and dress.

Comments about Fieldwork

One important observation about fieldwork is that being in someone's home (and neighborhood) gives the context of their lives much more meaning. There are many details that not only give color to a narrative but which help to explicate or underline important facts about their situation, routines and relationships. For example, I mentioned above that Tessa, the control mother I spoke with above was living in desperate circumstances. Following the 'work and money guide' provided some information that she was having trouble paying bills and was not employed. I was able to find out about her work history (never formally employed, neighborhood childcare on and off) and how she managed to get by in a pinch (her boyfriend, and family). However, my impression that times were rough was reinforced by the time I spent in her home (after the first few visits her lamp broke and she did not have lights in two of four rooms), the objects in her house (a wall of pictures of family, almost no furniture), the thin old plastic plates on which she served food to me, her broken eyeglasses held together by tape, and intermittent heat.

Another example comes from one of my families in Quincy. Erika had a long history of work, though she had not been working for several years at the time of the fieldwork. As a statistic in the survey research, she is one of a number of unemployed people though she is not near retirement age. What does this tell us? The survey questions did not ask about informal employment (a means by which many low-income women are surviving), or details about work history, and the statistic does not tell us why she was not working.

As part of an average, there might have been many hypotheses about her lack of work being a result of her lack of education. Another analysis might attribute her lack of work to the availability of low-wage jobs or her distance from them. Perhaps these explanations are yet part of the reason; however the context and story that emerged from spending time with Erika suggests that her lack of employment has as much to do with her weight and the significant health problems she suffers from as a result of it. It was clear from spending time with her, as well as from what she said, that she could not move around very much.

In my experience doing the fieldwork the questions from the guides were well received and mostly understood. There were some uncomfortable moments, but for the most part I felt at ease and it seemed the mothers did as well. Only a few incidents stand out in my mind – one question we asked was “how do you identify yourself?” This seemed to cause some confusion among the two African American women I was speaking with, and a surprising answer from one who said she was “Part Indian.” Another time I asked Tessa if she would say she had a lot of friends and she raised her eyebrows and said sarcastically “do YOU have a lot of friends?” During the first visit with Tessa, she and her son Cedrick got in a fight when I asked if there were a lot of drugs in the neighborhood. She started to tell me about all the people on the street, and those kids who hang out on their stoop, and Cedrick got upset and told her not to be telling everyone their business. He stormed out after she told him to be quiet. As another example, I did not like asking her questions about money because she was so obviously poor and so I sped through that guide as fast as I could and interspersed the questions with conversation about other things happening in her life.

While the fieldwork was happening we had weekly team conference calls (by city) to discuss issues that came up, what we were hearing, how to ask something or follow up with someone, and where to focus our time. During these phone calls we made substantive connections between families and issues – for example, health issues seemed

to be a common factor for families. Through these calls I also learned about some of the other fieldworker's experiences including challenges getting some women to meet at the assigned time (sometimes after ethnographers had traveled up to 2 hours in Los Angeles), or a couple of occasions in which the participant showed up drunk. One fieldworker was out to lunch with the kids (and without the parents) when one of the children stole some items off the table. Another issue that came up a lot was people needing assistance. I had someone who was having trouble with her electric bills and had experience working with the City on programs which could help – but I didn't know if I was allowed to share that information and thereby change her circumstance. We decided that I could leave some written information for her. Other people asked for advice about child rearing. One area in which the ethnography was strong, perhaps because we spent much time in people's homes, was family management strategies. We both heard a lot about that from teens and adults, and were often able to observe family dynamics over time. For example, I observed that Sabrina wouldn't let her daughter watch TV until she cleaned her room and that both children cleaned their dishes without being asked. Another mom took away her daughter's cell phone and grounded her for staying out late. Numerous examples of parenting strategies were collected in this issue area.

Adolescents and young adults were also asked to draw a physical map of their neighborhood using a standardized guide to direct them and to enable coding and comparison between the maps. The youth were asked to indicate what they considered to be the boundaries of their neighborhood and why, and what kinds of locations and activities were inside the boundaries versus outside of them. They were asked to include such items as their home, the homes and location of their friends homes, and their school, as well as areas that they felt safe or unsafe in, and areas where they spent time and with whom. In many cases they mapped out their daily routine. Although we did collect several of these maps, they were inconsistently collected, and they have not been coded (I did write up a memo detailing the purpose and suggesting a strategy for coding them). It appears that the mapping exercise may have been suited to a particular age group – old enough to manage the instructions without frustration and young enough to be interested

in doing it. If using this method in the future I would include the exercise early on in the sequence of the guides and make it a more explicit part of the project.

Learning through Unstructured Time

Free-style conversations in which both researcher and participant are allowed to guide the direction and meaning of the conversation leads to new lines of inquiry and a fuller understanding of the respondent's perceptions, feelings, and interests. Practically speaking it means that the person often talks about what aspects of the questions (or related questions) *they* are interested in, which is often on the topic suggested by the guide, but sometimes nowhere near it. Having the flexibility to let the conversation flow naturally can lead to a more complete understanding of the respondent's world.

In one of my visits with Sabrina which was focused on the social relations guide she offered forthcoming but brief descriptions of her views, filling in a "social networks table" with descriptions of her friends and relatives half-heartedly. However, at the end of another visit in which we were discussing health issues, she mentioned that her mother was staying with her sister, and when I asked why, she launched into a description of an affair her mother had recently had (during the time of the fieldwork), how she felt about it, and the effect it was having on her relationship with her family, and other people in her mother's neighborhood and church where she grew up. Until then I had not known that church was an important part of her life. It also provided information on her feelings about visiting family in her old neighborhood and her ideas about discipline. This information provided rich data on how her kin networks worked as well.

Sabrina expressed a lot of anger at her mother for leaving her stepfather, and says she's closer to him than to her mother. "I've always been a loner, the black sheep. I'm not close to my mother, or sisters, and she favored my sister, and everyone knew it and would tell her she was doing it. I was closer to my stepfather. He used to take me fishing, and I loved it, putting that worm on and everything. Now he takes Randall (her son)...He was a mother and father to me, and he took

care of the house and us... We were raised Pentecostal but my sister (older) is... I don't know, a feminist - she has this crazy woman with a dot on her head on a picture on the wall, and she sided with my mother - I was like whatever." [Fieldnote]

The affair was with a man who was part of a couple her parents were friends with, and socialized with, and they all went to the same church. The man who she was having an affair with got sick and her mother reacted in a particular way – saying “I can’t live without him” which caused other people in their social circle to know about the affair, and they were all kicked out of church. About the man her mother is having an affair with Sabrina says:

“I want to give him a piece of my mind. They are Banditos – all fucked up – they just want sympathy... I don't want to be around the Puerto Ricans [which is her ethnicity]. They bring you down if you stay there. That's why I left. I got my Section 8 and moved away.” She made a sweeping hand gesture and continued, “I don't go to parties, I have to bring Christmas gifts for my own kids as well as theirs because they don't think of it. I have to take a cab in December because no one will come pick me up. Forget it. I stayed in on Christmas Eve this year.” [Fieldnote]

She doesn't feel supported by her family, except her step-dad, who spoils her kids. She hasn't seen her mother in a month. For example Sabrina said that she didn't know her mother was in town recently watching her sister's kids until she called over to her sister's house for something.

“I was like, why didn't you call me – maybe I could have used help.” She feels like her family will just use her. “They only come around if they want something.” As an example she says her cousins have used her address for their car insurance without asking. “I can't depend on them for anything. They are trouble, Puerto Ricans.” [Fieldnote]

Part of the goal of the ethnography was to spend time with families as they went about their daily routines. This turned out to be harder to do with some families because of time constraints and because of the scope of the ethnographic material – we were collecting a lot of information from multiple sources, and it was often a choice between getting to the subjects on the data collection guides and going out somewhere or simply hanging out with the family doing an activity. The amount of time, and therefore data collected about people and places important to the families varied widely from family to family and ethnographer to ethnographer. However, several ethnographers did attend church, picked kids up after school, went to family events, out to eat, to the movies, and sometimes to baby showers. It was also a challenge to interact with the friends of the adolescents, and in retrospect that would have been an area in which I would have spent more time. We heard about friends, but we rarely met them and the questions about where the teens spent time with their friends was not a focus of the ethnography, though peers were an identified mechanism of potential neighborhood effects. It was also sometimes hard to get sensitive information from the adolescents because there was no private place to speak, or it was difficult to get their attention or complete answers (the TV might be on, they might be playing video games). Some fieldworkers had a hard time getting parents to allow their kids to go out with the fieldworkers alone, though other parents were happy to have the fieldworker take them off for an afternoon.

Writing Fieldnotes

An important part of the data collection is getting complete, detailed, and precise fieldnotes. These form the basis of the excerpts used for analysis. The ethnographers were trained in note-taking; their notes were reviewed by Xav Briggs, the director of the ethnographic component and co-principal investigator for 3cMTO, and then peer reviewed by other members of the full team in order to facilitate consistency and reliability. In order to approximate a natural conversational style these interviews were not tape recorded. At times, fieldworkers did jot down notes or questions or phrases that

captured the respondents' own voice during the visits as well as their own observations (e.g. "I was late" or "mom seemed tired.")

Fieldworkers were encouraged to complete their fieldnotes, a narrative account of the conversation or event, as soon as possible following the visit. This process of writing up notes could take anywhere from an hour to several hours. The average "fieldnote," covering one visit, ranged from 10 pages to 20 pages of text. Included in the fieldnotes was a summary of the conversation or event, a note of where and when the event took place and with whom. Naturalistic inquiry depends on a presentation of "solid descriptive data," or "thick description" to improve an analysis' transferability. Fieldworkers also provided descriptions of the neighborhoods and housing where respondents lived based on their own observations about neighborhood and housing characteristics such as disorder, cleanliness, density of housing or businesses, green space, and loitering. As a whole the fieldwork data collection effort resulted in approximately 6,500 pages of field notes over a total of 430 visits.

Coding and Data Analysis

After 18 months of interviews, recruiting, and fieldwork we were ready to begin the process of coding and analysis. Again, the fieldnotes were password protected and sent en masse to the three individuals (including myself) who shared the work of coding. As a result I read several of the fieldnotes from Los Angeles and all of the Boston notes in complete form as written by the ethnographer. As might be expected in a multi-party outfit there was some inconsistency between the notes. Though all trained together, some ethnographers wrote longer notes, some were better written and more detailed than others, and some showed a particular interest in a subject area and the notes would then tend towards observations in that direction (for example someone with a social worker background might tend to emphasize mental health concerns). Part of the job of coding in

this type of project was to even out the consistency through application of the same codes to similar contents of text across all the notes.

The coding scheme built on the “issue focused” structure of the fieldwork, meaning that it focused on what could be learned about specific issues. The first step in the process was to develop a coding schema based on the study’s theoretical assumptions and research questions. This was also done iteratively, as a group. Over several sessions we debated (including everyone who did fieldwork – with Xav Briggs bringing the notes to the three sites where he met with the ethnographers) the meanings of particular codes to identify what we thought we were asking and what we were saying and to refine the codes appropriately. In this way the respondents own voices were incorporated into the category making. New codes were also added as time went on and a need for new categories was uncovered. As a group, we worked on coding the same few examples of fieldnotes independently, which were then vetted as a group, to improve coder reliability. As the person responsible for moving the fieldnotes between sites and keeping track of the data I became very familiar with the process of doing the analysis. Beyond using the codes consistently and in a way which made sense, one of the challenges in coding was to determine how much to excerpt, and how many codes to apply to a piece of text such that it made literal sense, and was conceptually focused. The coding scheme can be found in the Appendix.

The ethnographic fieldnotes were coded using a macro in Microsoft word and then uploaded to an internet site using EthnoNotes, a software program which facilitates multi-site team ethnography (Lieber, Weisner, and Presley 2003). While having the data on a central server accessible by all ethnographers was helpful during particular stages of the work, the unfamiliarity of the program to all of us (as opposed to other qualitative analysis software) resulted in a learning curve that often slowed the process down. All of the ethnographers experienced difficulty at times, in using EthnoNotes, and coordination and troubleshooting took up time. In EthnoNotes, the researcher can search in multiple

fields at varying levels of abstraction through all of the excerpted notes. So for example, I could “pull out” into a word document, all excerpts related to any one or several of the codes in conjunction. For this thesis a typical search would be for all excerpts coded “risky and delinquent behavior” (and within that I could choose to look at only one aspect – for example “gangs,” “social networks,” and “non-household members.” The qualitative interview was also linked to the EthnoNotes site by family ID. I worked with one of the designers of EthnoNotes to identify the important ID fields in our database (gender, age, etc...) and was the liaison between the program/server manager at UCLA and all of the fieldworkers during the trouble shooting and training.

Memoing and Analysis

“Memoing” is an established way to move from the immediate details of individuals’ lives to a more general understanding of the data as a whole based on theoretical constructs (Miles and Huberman 1994). The memos we produced from the data included both family and group-level analyses. We analyzed both the interview and fieldnote data using MTO’s treatment-group structure and also analyzed the fieldnotes (beyond that structure) on the basis of exposure (years in low poverty environments), patterned social relations, and other dimensions. The latter centered on within-treatment-group variation.

The analysis for the memos is based on a grounded theory approach through which our specific coding scheme was used to identify patterns (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Memos are always conceptual in intent, tying different pieces of data together in a cluster, or showing how a particular piece of data is an instance of a general type or a pattern (Miles and Huberman 1994). 3cMTO hypothesized several possible pathways of effect on parents and youth, by priority outcome domains, and through relocation from high to low poverty neighborhoods. Ideally the data allow the researcher to trace a path by which a respondent’s choices led to particular outcomes, which can then be compared to the path

taken by other respondents. The identification of a common core among cases through an analysis leads to a typology, which is a way of generalizing from a concrete case. We define a member of a type by assigning a conjunction of significant characteristics such as someone who meets a set of criteria (family moved to low poverty and stayed in low poverty neighborhoods, and children are not engaging in risky behavior). The typologies are theories in the form of models of people or institutions that capture important dynamics of the phenomena that is being explained (Yin 1994).

Analysis of the interview data took place at the (1) individual level (2) household level; (3) site-level; and (4) cross-site and produced several types of memos – descriptive, analytic, and neighborhood based. In the descriptive memo the analysis was by theme, at times combining one or more subjects but remaining with the general theme. At the individual level I have explored the risky behavior of girls and boys separately, and in comparison to each other, based on the themes of parenting and neighborhood engagement. At the household-level I have prepared memos that provide a detailed account of the neighborhoods in which families live, based on accounts from multiple household members as well as observations from fieldworkers, that summarize neighborhood characteristics, the family's level of engagement in the neighborhood and their housing history, including their social and institutional ties to the location, perceptions about and experiences in the neighborhood. At the site level I have looked at issues surrounding housing mobility and housing markets, comparing experiences in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York. At the cross-site level I have prepared descriptive and analytic memos on risky behavior, housing and neighborhood engagement, and family management strategies, which summarizes the complete data set from all households in each subject. All of these memos (and those produced by three other ethnographers on other subjects) are available on the project's website. While researching and writing these memos the four ethnographers who continued to work on the project (most exited after the fieldwork stage) spoke weekly to bi-weekly on a conference call with Xav Briggs for an additional year to compare and share notes, offer feedback and critique.

To date the analysis of the data in this study has been used in several issue briefs and co-authored papers on school achievement, risky behavior, housing mobility, and employment; all of which integrate the three sources of data – quantitative, qualitative, and ethnographic. Equipped with this rich data set and four sources of data on the ethnographic subsample (quantitative, in depth- qualitative, and ethnographic, and neighborhood scans), the analysis has examined patterns of corroboration (where the “stories” told by each source align well), disconfirming evidence (where the stories differ or indicate the need to limit claims about specific phenomena of interest), and extension (where a given data source provides singular insight into a phenomenon or raises important questions for future research). I have collaborated with researchers working from the data produced by the in-depth qualitative interviews on an issue brief and a paper on girl’s risky behavior, a paper on housing mobility, and a paper on boys’ risky behavior. Triangulating results on all these levels will increase the reliability of the interview data and, to the extent that the results on each level corroborate each other, will increase potential generalizability of findings (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Miles and Huberman 1994). Finally, as this thesis will show my analysis of the ethnographic data reveals important issues that were not identified by the other methods of inquiry.

Case Study Logic

In *The Comparative Method* (1987) Charles Ragin describes the problem of applying method to social phenomena as one of deciphering “order in complexity” for rarely does an outcome of interest have a single cause (Ragin 1987; Ragin and Becker 1992). To employ this method the researcher tries to simplify and specify by creating useful typologies or constructs a model from among combinations of causes of an outcome (observable across a range of cases). Proceeding inductively, the aim is theory

development by refining a concept (theory or models) to specify more carefully the conditions under which it does or does not offer potential for explanation (Vaughn 1992).

Case oriented strategy attempts to approximate experimental rigor by identifying comparable instances of a phenomena and then analyzing the theoretically important similarities and differences among them (Ragin and Becker 1992). The focus is on comparing cases and cases are examined as wholes. In this dissertation I have considered the case in which kin are risky. I derive my analysis of the similarities and differences between instances of these phenomena by analyzing the context in which adolescents are living their lives, relying on both theory and an inductive process to guide ideas about which aspects of that context are most relevant.

The logic underlying the strategy is that each case predicts similar results (literal replication) or predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (theoretical replication). Each individual case will demonstrate how and why a particular proposition was demonstrated (or not demonstrated) – each case is its own “experiment” in this replication logic. The internal validity is that each case has a circumstance or activity that must be explained, and it’s “plot” has to make sense (Vaughn 1992). The validity of the story I tell is also supported by the multiple sources of data on MTO, and by the ongoing collegial exchange of numerous MTO researchers, which helps to check my bias for a particular argument.

What case study logic is not (Large N)

Case study logic is not probabilistic and cannot make causal arguments about prevalence across a population. The method is insensitive to the frequency distribution of cases. In other words a single case can cast doubt on a cause established by many observations

(George and Bennett 2005). If a single case exists, it is questioned and deviance accounted for. More important than relative frequency in this approach, is the variety of meaningful patterns of causes and effects that exist.

To illustrate what I mean consider how the ethnographic sample is skewed to focus on families considered “successful” at staying out of high poverty – so there’s more of one group than another and they can’t be directly compared. Instead I look within each group (either treatment group or sorted by a different construct) and ask “what’s the pattern of X within this group and describe that with a frequency (#). From that analysis I show that there is a common pattern (paths or types) and I also learn something about the range of X *within* a group – how common is that pattern or is it a unique case? Both are important, and help to identify *the conditions under which X is occurring*. Furthermore I can specify that pattern X seemed to be more common in some groups than others, thereby generating hypotheses.

Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions, not to populations (Yin 1994). Though the logic can be driven by theory, it is not based on hypothesis testing. Instead Ragin suggests a focus on patterns in co-variation among variables (for example risky kin and risky behavior) across observations and following a different logic of inference in which the focus is on causal processes and mechanisms *within* cases. Vaughn points out that a case becomes the opportunity to discover how it is both specific to and representative of larger phenomena – its originality does not keep us from making comparisons and its representativeness is to analytic categories, not laws (Vaughn 1992).

How I will use the cases

As case study logic does not determine causal relationships between neighborhood type, mediating factors, and adolescent risky behavior I consider that each household might be a “case” of observed phenomena. I consider individual adolescents (and sometimes families) as cases of a particular mechanism I am interested in – for example, parental monitoring as a way of limiting an adolescent’s involvement with risky peers. I concentrate on the social ties that adolescents have with peers and family, focusing on how they spend their time and how those ties are connected to their neighborhoods.

I use the cases in two ways. First, I exploit the strength of the ethnographic method by telling a holistic story. These are revelatory cases in which I am following a life through neighborhoods, social relations, and risk to shed light on these contexts. Second, I use representative excerpts from multiple cases to frame my findings and to illustrate the common patterns among groups.

Areas of focus

In my analysis I first examined the narratives in the data tracing social processes to help define the important conceptual structures. I then looked across all 39 families and the 52 youth in my sample with the idea that the cases would support the theory that length of time in lower-poverty places and residential stability would be important parts of the positive benefits of moving to lower poverty neighborhoods. I thought that one measure of being in a lower poverty neighborhood would be social ties in the neighborhood of residence and friendships that were positive. Another measure of the integration in neighborhood of residence would be adolescents’ participation in activities there. I further thought that where teens were concerned, that parents could provide a vehicle

through which that engagement took place – either by getting their kids involved or by being able to reduce their restrictions on monitoring and discipline in a safer place. This part of my analysis was deductive in that initial theoretical notions served as my guide in the examination of causally relevant similarities and differences.

As I looked at housing mobility patterns across the cases I was reminded of recurring themes from the descriptive and analytic memos I wrote on boys' risky and delinquent behavior, as well as a paper on the outcomes of moving on 3cMTO girls' risky behavior. I was reminded of the many families in which non-household relatives, particularly fathers, were involved or had been involved with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, I had learned from my work on the boys memo that many of the boys who were getting into trouble, seemed connected to their old neighborhoods. On work for a paper on 3cMTO housing mobility patterns I analyzed the ethnographic data to understand why some families left their lower-poverty neighborhoods, some even moving back to their old neighborhoods. What emerged as I read through the stories, sorting the data, was a consistent puzzle about the location of adolescents (and families) social relationships and activities relative to the residential neighborhood. As I did an important story about kin relationships began to take shape.

The analysis of the data corresponds to chapters organized by the content domains in Table 3. Here I briefly outline below the measures I concentrate on throughout the dissertation.

Figure 3.1 Domains for Analytic Categories

<p><i>Engagement in neighborhoods:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) A measure of time in neighborhood of residence, looking at mobility/stability (number of moves, “exposure” to low poverty/high poverty neighborhoods in terms of years there).(b) A place of social relationships, and (via measures of social relations – locations of those relationships, inside and outside neighborhood of residence).(c) The routines and activities of youth, both inside and outside of neighborhoods.
<p><i>Parenting Strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) The level of discipline and monitoring of adolescents, treated as a mediator of effects on youth.
<p><i>Social relations, routines, and activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) The location and contact of youth friend ties(b) The location and contact of youth and mother kin ties
<p><i>Risky Behavior</i> – Self reports on the incidence of crime and delinquency associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Friends(b) Kin(c) Self

Limitations and Challenges:

Although we collected extensive data on routines and many of the social relations of the households participating in the ethnography – including much more than any of the other studies associated with the larger MTO demonstration population – we did not get a comprehensive or consistent picture of where risky behavior is currently taking place and with whom. What I have are pieces of whole stories about the social lives of adolescents and adults and their perception of risks in their world. For example a *complete* analysis of the place or neighborhood where youth met or spent time with *specific* friends was not possible. Where exactly specific kin lived, or where all routine activities took place was also more detailed for some individuals than for others, although I was mostly able to identify whether or not that activity or relationship was inside or outside the neighborhood of residence for all cases.

How I Report the findings

Throughout the results chapters I report on treatment-group (and other group) comparisons in ways that reflect case-study logic. The logic of matching cases is to establish experiment like designs, identifying cases that are as similar in outcome or in characteristics as possible. The ethnographic data here are considered in matched-pair comparisons (for example when I hold some explanatory variables constant, such as parenting and peer risk factors, what do I learn about the association between risky kin ties and youth risky behavior?). The technique is used to identify patterns of association not to explain variation because there may be multiple factors, not included in my analysis, which have an impact on the outcomes I observed. I use descriptive statistics, which involve no claim about treatment-group differences, on how many individuals (or households) in a group are engaged in neighborhood of residence/have risky peers/engaging in risky behavior/etc...to show common trajectories and themes.

Table 3.3 below explains this analytic approach in abbreviated form using some of the categories I examined (and 5 cases). The appendix contains the populated tables that I used for the analysis in the results chapters and which show how the sample is distributed across important analytic categories.

Table 3.2 Method for Analytic Strategy and Data Analysis

Group	Name Focal (teen)	Location of current (as of 2005) housing	% Poverty (2000 Census) for tract where respondent lived in	Proportion of time living in 40% or greater	Poverty. Low = (less than 10%); Medium 10-40% ; High (40% or	Peers Risky	contact with kin	Kin RB	Self RB	Involved in structured activities in residential neighborhood
Boston, exp.		Norwood	2.3%	10%	Low	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Boston, Control		Hyde Park	38%	16%	Medium	Y	Y	N	N	N
Los Angeles exp		Long Beach	4.2%	25%	Low	N	N	Y	N	Y
NYC, Control		Bronx	68%	50%	High	N	N	Y	N	N
NYC, exp		Staten Island	9.9%	3%	Low	N	Y	Y	N	N

Exp = MTO treatment group that received a voucher and successfully moved to a lower poverty neighborhood (“experimental compliers”).

RB = Risky Behavior.

In each of the columns the determination of Y/N was made on the basis of a careful reading of the fieldnotes covering both parent and adolescent accounts, and in some cases on data we collected and analyzed separately, such as the 'social relations' profiles we completed with all participants.

Chapter 4: Routines and Neighborhood Engagement

"Kids here is in daycare, take a long time to get home and don't have time to get in trouble.... For some apparent reason more trouble in summer. You do see drugs here but not that much." [Fieldnote]

Erika, experimental complier, Boston suburbs

In this chapter I concentrate on the context of social interactions— institutional, neighborhood, and community – focusing on routines and activities as a mediator between community characteristics and youth risky and delinquent behavior. This emphasis links routine activity theory to the social disorganization/collective efficacy tradition (Osgood and Anderson 2004; Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). Several arguments are commonly advanced to explain *how* neighborhoods impact social and behavioral outcomes, such as an adolescent's engagement in risky behavior, including contagion theories or peer effects, collective efficacy (or social disorganization), and institutional or resource models (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Ellen and Turner 1997).²¹ All of these models suggest social interaction as the mechanism for impacts. In particular the presence of unsupervised peer groups or leisure time may be a mediator between the structural characteristics of neighborhoods and levels of delinquency in a community (Sampson and Groves 1989). Further, engagement in pro-social activities and groups may serve as a protective factor against anti-social or criminal behavior.

Institutional based models predict a positive change, or a decrease in teen risky and delinquent behavior, as children enter a world of more supportive, connected, and vigilant adults and institutions. In addition, some types of neighborhoods, perhaps those

²¹ At times the language that identifies and describes the effects of the models is inconsistent (e.g. 'resource model' might either describe either a lack of institutions which makes it difficult for parents to effectively raise their children, or it might mean that non-resident adults attached to institutions are more likely to treat young people like criminals if the neighborhood is poor (Jencks and Mayer 1990). For reviews of neighborhood effects models and their usage see Newman and Small 1997.

with greater resources for institutions that provide organized activities, create the foundation for more stable routines. Beginning with support for a national public school system in the 1830s and extending to today's investment in youth summer jobs programs, a strong case has been made that daily routines that provide structure and meaningful activity, and prevent idleness and boredom, will limit the amount of time and incentive to be involved in delinquency and crime (Blum, McNeely, and Nonnemaker 2001; Hirschi 1969; Osgood and Anderson 2004).

Recent research argues that meaningful routines, as well as a change in environment, increase the chance that ex-felons will desist from crime (Sampson 1998; Sampson and Laub); which could apply to youth who change neighborhoods during the course of their adolescence. To understand MTO youth' engagement with neighborhood institutions I focus on adolescent (age 12-18) and young adult (age 18-23) membership in structured activities and groups. I address the question of how neighborhood may be related to the activities that MTO youth are participating in by examining *where* these activities are taking place; a pre-condition to argue a neighborhood role in youth' institutional participation.²²

Another way that the neighborhood environment might influence leisure time and thereby delinquent behavior, is if different types of behaviors are encouraged or discouraged depending on the poverty level of a neighborhood. If most neighborly social interactions are likely to take place outside of individual homes, and if residents feel safer being outside in lower poverty neighborhoods, then moving may facilitate positive forms of neighborhood engagement. Or it may simply be that *an absence of* involvement in structured activities is more risky in some types of neighborhoods – places where

²² The data collection instruments were not designed to answer questions about the full range of activities that were "available" across neighborhoods, so the findings in this chapter reflect what groups and activities individuals were part of, in lower and higher poverty areas at the time of the fieldwork.

“hanging out” is more likely to result in more serious delinquency, or more likely to call attention from law enforcement. Danielle is an MTO mover with two young teenage girls who returned to a higher poverty neighborhood of Boston after she lost her apartment in the suburbs. She expressed the concerns of many mothers in the ethnography when she associated dangerous places with a lack of structured activity. She was asked whether she thought it was harder to raise a girl or a boy in her current neighborhood.

Danielle: “Oh No! No! No! NO! No! I would never raise my son in Dorchester! Hell No!

Fieldworker: In all of Dorchester or just this block?

Danielle: “This block. Boys here don’t do nothing! They just sit and smoke! Young Boys. They have nothing to do. There’s nothing for kids to do here.”
[Fieldnote]

Danielle’s concern about boys also highlights MTO’s Interim Evaluation findings showing greater benefits in some areas of risky and delinquent behavior for girls, yet more neutral or negative findings for boys. In the section on neighborhood engagement I identify any gender differences in activities and routines from the ethnographic data.

I follow the findings on participation in structured activities, with a section on collective efficacy, where I focus on teen and adult perceptions of community collective norms to identify *how* lower-poverty neighborhoods convey their “safety” benefits to residents. In other words, what *about* the “poverty” level of a community makes a difference in risky and delinquent behavior. One of MTO’s strongest findings to date shows that MTO families were willing to trade the familiarity or convenience of project neighborhoods, where they had a network of family and friends, to move to lower poverty neighborhoods because they thought these neighborhoods would also be safer. However, along with less crime it seems there is less social interaction outside the home, of any sort, among residents in the lower poverty neighborhoods that MTO participants moved to. In contrast to social disorganization’s emphasis on social networks as the basis for community control over crime and delinquency (Sampson 1991; Osgood and Anderson

2004; Shaw and McKay 1942) this observation suggests that “active” neighborhood engagement may not be a requirement for collective efficacy to serve its peace-keeping function.

Finally, even if poor neighborhoods limit youth’ involvement in pro-social activities due to a lack of institutional resources or for some other reason (Wilson 1987) much research finds that family structure and process mediate this impact (Burton and Jarrett 2000; Furstenberg et al. 2000). The activities of younger children may be particularly influenced by parenting choices; strategies which may themselves be informed by the context of the neighborhood and community. While I focus on strategies families developed to deter risky behavior in another chapter, I briefly address the role of parents as they overlap with adolescent’s routines and activities, including an attention to the age of the children.

In summary, the findings in this section address the following questions/factors:

- Do the MTO teens who get in trouble participate in scheduled activities or do they have a lot of free time? (b.) Are they less scheduled in lower or high poverty neighborhoods? (c.) Does being unscheduled have a different impact on their propensity to be in trouble depending on the poverty level of their residential neighborhoods? (d.) Does age or gender matter to these outcomes?
- If there is variation in the risky and delinquent behavior of teens across neighborhoods how does this seem related to the neighborhoods they live in? Is there a greater sense of collective efficacy, or norms against offending in lower poverty neighborhoods? If not, what other neighborhood related factors may be influencing differences in risky and delinquent behavior?

Ethnographic data is suited to answer questions about routines and activities because the method is flexible enough and the duration of the fieldwork long enough to capture both

the specific activities that participants are a part of, as well as the context of daily routines, and any change in them over time. The survey research design for MTO's Interim Impacts Evaluation did not examine the daily structures and interactions that underpin any outcome measures, such as the process of changing friends or the movement between neighborhoods. The advantage in the data gathered for the ethnographic portion of the 3cMTO study is being able to show the complexity of the relocation experience for movers, much of which revolves around how daily life is different, in a different environment.

Measures

The ethnographic fieldwork collected information about parent and children's routines in several ways. We learned about daily activities through the data collection guides (one focused exclusively on routines, others indirectly) and by socializing with families informally. We also conducted a mapping exercise with several of the children to better understand the physical geography of the local social relationships and neighborhood institutions that family members were a part of. We asked about places that youth visited in their neighborhoods and about areas they tried to avoid or where their parents did not allow them to go. In my analysis I used responses from social networks and neighborhood engagement questions in combination with information about routines to triangulate responses about where particular activities were taking place and with whom. The level of detail about with whom and where specific activities took place, including risky behavior, varies with each participant.

The activity measures I concentrate in this section correlate with ideas about which pro-social activities and institutions likely promote positive behaviors. Activities are defined as youth' involvement in church and community organizations as well as sports and afterschool activities where through supervision, and/or access to positive role models

youth may be less likely to engage in risky behavior. Structured activities include those which follow a set schedule, are recreational or social, and take place in an environment in which youth are being monitored.²³ I analyzed the data by looking at the full range of responses from youth and parents' about their activities and routines and then categorized them according to subject area, reporting on work as a separate category of activity.²⁴

Given my interest in the impact of the subject's residential neighborhood poverty and neighborhood engagement level I focus on whether the activity or institution was *inside* the neighborhood of residence or outside of it (as defined by the household member who was asked). With some youth and parents there was a clear second or third neighborhood in which the subject repeatedly spent time. I note when this neighborhood was the original project neighborhood from which the family moved, or a high poverty neighborhood located close to the original project. When possible, I also identify the primary reason given for the location of an activity.

Adolescent routines and activities

The majority of adolescents and young adults we spoke with were not involved in structured organized activity (besides school), regardless of treatment group or neighborhood type. We collected enough data to report on the daily routines and activities of forty-one youth (including adolescents and young adults).²⁵ Twenty-one (eleven girls and ten boys) do not participate in any structured activities. For five

²³ Daycare is excluded given the association between age and engagement in risky behavior. I also excluded several of the young adults over age 19, who were working, and no longer living full time at home.

²⁴ Most youth in the study were in school and much of their time was spent at school or traveling to and from there, but the ethnographic method we employed was not designed to capture school-based relations or dynamics beyond individuals or peers that youth identified.

²⁵ There are 52 adolescents and young adults in the 3cMTO ethnography sample. For some of the other measures discussed in this chapter there are different sub-samples due to differences in data collection.

adolescents work is their only non-school scheduled activity. On the other hand, a minority of youth in the sample – sixteen adolescents split almost evenly between boys and girls– are participating in organized activities, and a smaller minority (9 kids) has time that is *highly* structured – they are working part time *and* participating in multiple groups and activities. The most popular structured activities are after school sports programs, including dance troupes, followed by participation in church related youth groups. The youth who are highly structured, likewise come from both treatment groups and different kinds of neighborhoods.

Terri is a typical “scheduled” teen. She has lived in San Bernardino, a suburb of Los Angeles, with her family since the age of ten. Until last year she was getting into trouble, ditching school and hanging out in the park with her friends, and was almost held back. At 16 she turned herself around. She now works, is doing well in school, and is involved in several school-related activities. Here’s how she describes her routines and activities:

“I usually get up at 5:30, but today I was running late. Since I walk to school, usually I leave the house at 6:30am or 6:45am and I get to school at 7:15 or 7:25am.” The ethnographer writes: at 7:40am she has physiology, then U.S. History, third period is Geometry, fourth period is Spanish II, fifth period is English, and sixth period is track and field. She chose track and field because she is going to run on the track team in the spring, starting March or April, and she wanted to have some practice ahead of time. Cheerleading ends before track starts. She used to run cross-country, but she dropped that so that she could be a cheerleader. She gets out of school at 2:25pm. If she has practice, she stays longer at school, if not either her mom picks her up or she walks home. After that she goes to work. She also works either Saturday or Sunday. [Fieldnote]

When cheerleading was conflicting with Terri’s work schedule, she had to make a choice. Instead she joined a dance troupe that is a group at her school.

"I decided to quit the cheerleading team. I actually made it and then I have to either quit cheerleading or quit my job." She said that she tried to do both, "It was at my first competition and I was like no, cuz I had to work that same day... I was going to join to this thing at my school called BSU, Black Student Union. I'd rather do that than cheerleading because it fits with my schedule." We barely started to plan stuff out (in the dance troupe) 'cuz we're trying to go to colleges and colleges come to see us perform and all of that so right now it's just the very beginning so we still like trying to see what we are going to do with fundraising, like car washes on the weekends and stuff like that. She said, "I actually like all of my classes now. I remember last year I did not like none of my classes, but now I like 'em. All of my teachers are cool. When I finally get to fit in and settle in." [Fieldnote]

While not all youth are scheduled, not all are idle either.²⁶ In many families older children have regular childcare responsibilities for younger siblings. There are several cases in which there is an infant or toddler age child who is a sibling, half-sibling, or the child of a sibling (cousin) who lives in the household – and childcare responsibilities are shared among the family. This in fact becomes a means by which parents feel that they know their child's whereabouts and activities.²⁷

When asked about caring for her two-year old baby brother Terri said, "That is constantly. That is an everyday thing. And he still thinks that I am his mom!" [Fieldnote]

²⁶ The literature recognizes unstructured time (as well as pro-social activities) as a potential catalyst for risky behavior. While it is not in the scope of this dissertation to address this in depth, it is important to note the potentially wide differences between having free time and not having free time, even if there is no formally structured activity. Given the detail of the ethnographic data I am able to identify when a youth appears to have no free time due to activities and when a youth is not involved in activities but is also not free to "hang out" because of other responsibilities.

²⁷ Although it is also true that sometimes they are uninformed as in one case in which a mother believed that her older son was taking his younger sister all the way to school when in fact he shared that he was not.

Activities by residential neighborhood poverty level

Kids from poor neighborhoods might be getting involved in risky behavior due to a lack of positive alternatives, yet participation in scheduled activities among the youth in our sample is not different in low versus high poverty neighborhoods. Of the forty-one youth for whom we have data there are four families living in neighborhoods with poverty rates below 10 percent, with youth in two families among the “unscheduled” and two in the scheduled group. Thirteen of forty-one families live in high poverty neighborhoods (above 40%), with youth in seven families “unscheduled” and in youth in six families who are “scheduled.” Fifty percent of the adolescents and young adults are unscheduled in neighborhoods with medium poverty rates. However, being unscheduled in a higher poverty neighborhood may constitute more risk. (I can do an analysis using less than 20% poverty comparing unscheduled in high versus low and risky behavior)

Profile of routines of adolescents involved in risky behavior by activities

Having scheduled activities does seem to play a role in youth refraining from risky or delinquent behavior, but only under certain conditions.²⁸ Forty percent of the risky/delinquent teens in the sample are scheduled in structured activities, in which they are monitored by an adult, yet the majority of the risky teens are not participating in any activities.²⁹ However, the structured activity of half of the adolescents involved in risky and delinquent behavior is work whereas the structured activity for youth *not* involved in risky or delinquent behavior is almost always something other than work, such as sports,

²⁸ In the full sample for kids from whom we collected data on routines, seventeen of forty-one adolescents and young adults have been involved in risky (9 youth) or delinquent behavior (8 youth). This is approximately 41 percent of all the teens.

²⁹ Among the teens not involved in risky or delinquent behavior approximately 58 percent (14/25) are involved in formal structured activities – a mirror image of the percentage of teens in structured activity from the risky group.

or church related groups. And teens not involved in *any* structured activities are more likely to have been involved in *delinquent* as opposed to just risky behavior. This finding partially supports the idea that while structured time is important to healthy adolescent development, the positive influence of particular kinds of activities or mentoring may be even more critical to limiting the severity of trouble that adolescents become engaged in. Finally the data also shows that some kids get caught up in risky behavior despite routines that might militate against it and though they live in neighborhoods with a range of poverty levels, many of which both adults and children perceive as safe.

The location of routines and activities for MTO youth

A basic level of neighborhood engagement is indicated by looking at how much time adolescents and young adults actually spend doing activities in their neighborhood of residence. The data shows that children who are involved in structured activities are not necessarily engaging in those activities in the lower income neighborhoods where they live. Thirteen of the twenty-one youth with structured activities (including work) have at least some activity taking place *within* or near to their immediate residential neighborhood – youth either attend school in their neighborhood or in a local district school – or they participate or use local neighborhood institutions for their structured activities. This does not include informal socializing with family members, which often takes place in the old project neighborhood or outside their current residential location.³⁰ For example, an adolescent may be playing sports after school on the basketball team in his/her suburban neighborhood, but may also go to visit family in the old neighborhood on some nights or weekends.

³⁰ Kids in suburbs with limited transportation options do seem to spend more time in their neighborhood of residence – however, this is more in Boston and Los Angeles, than in New York where kids are able to rely on public transportation from a young age.

Analysis of parents and youth routines (such as daily commutes) lends support to the finding that families' levels of engagement in their residential neighborhood varies in regard to how much the neighborhood serves as the primary location for all their activities. There is also variation in how many distinct neighborhoods individuals *feel* a part of. When individuals were asked "What do you consider to be your neighborhood?" as part of the data collection guide, most explained their neighborhood in terms of where they routinely spend time, responding as Terri did during a mapping exercise a fieldworker used to understand the locations of her daily routines and neighborhood boundaries. She put red dots on Bakers (where she works), Stater Brothers (where the family shops for food), Styles for U and Rainbow (where she buys her clothing), her school, and the Library. She put blue dots on her friends' houses: Charlene, Lucretia, Paul. Likewise, several teens identified a second or third important neighborhood based on where their relatives lived.

The data also call attention to two location-related patterns in youth routines and activities: adolescents and young adults who (1) spend time outside their house versus those who are "inside" kids and (2) movers whose social worlds primarily revolve around returning to higher poverty neighborhoods and those who are either more embedded in their lower poverty residential neighborhood, or who utilize several different neighborhoods depending on the location of their activity.

Indoor versus outdoor youth

Indoor Youth

Sixteen of fifty-one youth we spent time with are "indoor" kids. This distinction between being an indoor or outdoor kid was identified by several adolescents and their parents during conversations about youth social networks, routines and family management

techniques. For example, when asked about monitoring a mother would say “he is an inside kid so I don’t really have to look after him.” Other adolescents describe their lack of involvement in risky behavior as a result of staying to themselves, being a “homebody” or as “someone who doesn’t hang out.” They also tend to identify themselves as “indoor” or “outdoor” in comparison to someone else, such as a sibling or friend. In some cases fieldworkers learned of the youth that chose to stay inside watching television or playing video games by observing these activities first hand and following up with teens about their interests. The data does not directly address whether specific teens chose to be “indoors” as a result of a fear of being outside in risky environments, though it shows that indoor youth were from neighborhoods with varying poverty rates – low, medium, and high – and were equally like to be boys as girls. These sixteen youth were also from a wide age range and came from both the control and mover groups.

Outdoor youth

In contrast to the indoor kids, “outdoor” kids think of themselves as more social and are in fact more mobile, and get into trouble more often than indoor kids. Of thirty-five outdoor youth, twenty-one – or 60 percent – are involved in risky or delinquent behavior. Being an outdoor youth is a necessary condition for getting into trouble among our sample – none of the indoor youth were involved in risky behavior – but it is not sufficient. MTO’s premise that environments matter to youth risky behavior outcomes and the Interim Evaluation findings showing that the original mover group found their neighborhoods to be safer, suggest that being an outdoor kid in a high poverty neighborhood should lead to more trouble than in lower poverty neighborhoods. Yet the standard measure of poverty that captures that residential neighborhood characteristic does not appear to determine risky behavior outcomes for our sample. There are slightly more “low” poverty residential neighborhoods among the fourteen ‘outdoor’ kids not in trouble – but the variation is still greater within groups than between them. Outdoor kids in lower poverty neighborhoods get into trouble too.

Is Collective Efficacy the Answer?

Scholars in the ecological/social disorganization tradition agree that structural characteristics of offending are mediated by community social processes (Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). These social processes can take different forms but incorporate collective efficacy at their core. Whereas routine activities theory focuses on a structural explanation based on unsupervised time, social disorganization moves towards an explanation of delinquency based on shared norms and trust. Collective efficacy is defined as informal community practices that limit an individuals' ability to engage in anti-social activities through group value-consensus about "right" behavior and collective monitoring to enforce shared norms. The monitoring aspect has a contextual effect and is not dependent on individual parenting strategies – the group level monitoring impacts even those kids whose particular parents don't have control over them – to lower the overall level of violence in a community (Sampson 1989). In these accounts neighborhoods with high poverty rates allow risk-taking behavior because residents struggle to maintain social control and organization in areas of concentrated poverty, residential instability, and institutional abandonment (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Shaw and McKay 1942; Wilson 1987). In turn, unsupervised youth in socially disorganized neighborhoods are more likely to engage in the same delinquent behavior as their peers (Crane, 1991). The image of high-poverty neighborhoods like the ones surrounding many projects is crime that happens without an accountable criminal. In contrast, in a neighborhood with high degrees of collective efficacy everyone is responsible.³¹

³¹ The questions that we asked participants focused on neighboring, trust, and informal engagement. Are there informal spots in your neighborhood, such as places to hang out? Do you spend time there? Do you think people around here are willing to help their neighbors? Do they get along with each other? Do you think most people in the neighborhood can be trusted? Was it different in the last you neighborhood you lived in? How about in the public housing neighborhood? Would neighbors get involved if they saw kids skipping school? Spray Painting? Fighting?

All of the research on MTO shows that the adults and children who lived for any length of time in lower poverty neighborhoods did identify a significant difference in social climate between their original project neighborhoods and the lower poverty neighborhoods they moved to (Orr et al. 2003). Comments about the project neighborhoods centered on what they often referred to as ghetto behavior: not working, “hanging out”, being “fast” (promiscuity of teenage girls), evidence of drugs on the street, noise, fighting and gang violence.

A mother in the Los Angeles suburbs compared her old project and low-poverty neighborhoods:

“In Torrance [low poverty neighborhood] everyboday kept their kids in their own yard.” What about in the projects? *“Oh, man, that would be a mess, 'cuz the parents was worse than the kids. My granddaughter got in a fight, and the girl's aunties came 'round and jumped in it instead of trying to break it up. What kind of adults are those? It's sad. They gonna be doin' the same thing all their lives. [Fieldnote]*

When asked why her 12 year old daughter Shauna had begun fighting since they moved back to a high poverty neighborhood in Boston Danielle first said she thought it was because Shauna’s father was not around. But she then said,

“But we didn't have those problems in Brockton, it all started here. Kids here are fast. You know what I mean right? Kids try to grow up too soon. I don't like fast kids. My girls aren't like that....the kids here are getting into fights and trouble more because they have nothing better to do.” [Fieldnote]

In contrast lower-poverty neighborhoods were more likely to be described as peaceful, less violent, with fewer drugs and fights, or people hanging out on the street. Here's how one mother described the social relations in her neighborhood in Yonkers:

"There's no arguing, fighting, carrying on, on the block...I guess it's like that when you don't have too many kids on the block. People go to work, mind they business." [Fieldnote]

Compared to where she used to live in Dorchester, Veronica found Randolph, a low-poverty suburb of Boston: *"a lot different" in terms of how the neighborhood feels...don't allow teenagers hanging out on corners 'round here"... people are nicer."* [Fieldnote]

Isabela, a young adult who spent her later adolescent years in the Valley, talked about the difference in the types of people she interacted with as compared to the projects in Los Angeles, *"They just walk, talk and do different things. People talk more proper, dress cleaner, walk normal, no limp."* [Fieldnote]

Though parents and teens generally recognized lower poverty communities as safe (or if the teen was older and could compare it to their project neighborhood, safer), they were not always comfortable with or trusting of their neighbors. Jeanine, a mother who moved out of the projects in Los Angeles said that although she doesn't think her neighbors would get involved in trouble, she would rather go to her uncle's house than form relationships and ask neighbors for help. She sums up the feelings of many of the MTO participants when she says:

"I used to walk around over there (the projects) - I don't walk amongst strangers and feel comfortable. Since been behind the gate, I don't explore beyond the gate. I don't go meet the people out there. I live here, that's all!!" When asked if neighbors helped each other she said, "No helpin', no harmin". [Fieldnote]

Robin in Los Angeles was asked if she thought that people around her area were willing to help their neighbors. She said, *"Everybody mind their own business. They don't talk to nobody. The only person I talk to is the next door neighbor and I barely even talk to her."* [Fieldnote]

Carmela, a 13-year old from the control group, who moved out of the projects a year before the fieldwork began to a working class suburb of Boston, was asked if she thought adults in her current neighborhood would get involved if they saw something like a fight or kids skipping school.

Carmela: No parents don't get involved unless they're a friend of your parents or something." She felt that adults just "leave you alone." [Fieldnote]

When asked if she thought it was the same or different in the projects she lived in she said:

"In the projects other kids get into it. They have big arguments. Over there you can see it, you can hear it. Here, you can't. So it's hard to say (where adults get involved more). In her current (non-project) neighborhood "everyone lives their life. They don't bother you. Everybody goes to work. In the projects they ask you what happen. They want to know everything." [Fieldnote]

In some ways then, the familiarity of people in the projects and the tendency to "be involved" in street life outside the home may supply more eyes on the street in *higher* poverty neighborhoods – a supposed antidote to crime (Jacobs 1961; Newman 1973). At the same time, this does not necessarily lead to more "monitoring" of risky or delinquent behavior. Still, according to most MTO movers' accounts, residents of lower-poverty neighborhoods do not get involved in violent and dangerous activities that their neighbors can see, and the environment itself is different – safer and calmer. If collective efficacy is conveying rules of "good" behavior on adolescents, it seems to be less about being

actively monitored or mentored on the streets, nor a result of engagement with the neighborhood through activities or socializing, rather the movers' neighborhood comparisons tell us there is simply less to be involved in, overall, in the lower poverty neighborhoods.

Perhaps one answer to the link between lower poverty neighborhoods and some continued risky and delinquent behavior is that adolescent's neighborhood preferences are not always the same as their parents. The peacefulness of the neighborhood for adults is often described by the teens as boring and isolated, even for those kids who have maintained a stable residence in a lower- poverty neighborhood for an extended period of time. Research on the impact of moving on the social connections of MTO youth in Los Angeles confirms that adolescents had a harder time than their parents or younger siblings in adjusting to the move (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit 2003). The teens often say that they have nothing to do, and don't have friends in their immediate neighborhoods. And like their parents, there is an element of "comfort" with the old neighborhood that parents may forgo in order to provide a safer environment, but which adolescents with their different priorities, seek out. It is as if they "know" there is another kind of neighborhood where there is more "action."

Dean, age 12, recently moved from the projects in Los Angeles neighborhood (Sherman Oaks). He began to get into trouble with drugs and gangs after he moved to a safer, lower-poverty neighborhood. With some ambivalence and perhaps bravado, Dean explains his attraction to the projects and how his new neighborhood is not "cool" enough.

Ethnographer: "Do you like where you're live now?" Dean: "I don't really like it." E: "Why not?" Dean: "I don't know." E: "How about living here? This place is nice. There's a Jamba Juice." Dean: "There isn't enough tagging." E: "You want the neighborhood to have

tagging?" Dean: "Yeah." E: "What if there were tagging on your house?" Dean: "If it's from a crew that I know, it's ok but I wouldn't like if another crew tagged on my house." E: "Ok, where would you want to live?" Dean: "In the projects." E: "What?! You want to live in the projects rather than here in Sherman Oaks? Why?" Dean: "There's more tagging there and drive-bys." E: "Drive-bys? I thought you didn't like drive-bys. You told me that you were scared of drive-bys." Dean: "It's cool over there. People are cool." E: "How are they cool?" Dean: "They smoke weed and have drive-bys. That's where I grew up at. When I was a kid, that's where I was. I want to be true to the hood." E: "Do you even remember when you lived in the projects?" Dean: "A little bit only." [Fieldnote]

This feeling of boredom or restlessness is expressed by teens who are engaging in risky behavior as well as but those who are not. Bernardo is a 17 year old living in suburban Los Angeles.

"I don't really hang around here much." Ethnographer: Where would be a place around here that you would hang out?" Bernardo: "There isn't much to do around here. The only place I'll go to is the Commerce Center. I only go there if I had to buy something like a shirt." E: Do you ever walk there?" Bernardo: "Yeah, I'll walk there sometimes like when my friend wanted to get a controller at Game Stop and I'll just go with him. I don't really hang out there though 'cause there's nothing to do there." [Fieldnote]

Crystal, the mom from Yonkers expresses the difference between parents and children regarding the neighborhoods: She said now she's more relaxed, less stressed.

"I used to see people hand-to-hand [sellers and buyers passing drugs] all day, all night, didn't want to live around it." I asked if it was difficult because of the kids, how they felt about moving out of the South Bronx where they had lived for five years. She said, "By the time

we moved, Maurice [her son] only had one friend left" there; his other neighborhood friends had also moved away by then. She continued, "Dionne [her daughter] didn't go out then anyway, she was just home," but she had friends around, and her cousins could get to the South Bronx quickly and cheaply, but Crystal said it wasn't like they did anything in the neighborhood, "back there just hang on the stoop." Crystal told me that it's an adjustment when you move. "Even I, I had to adjust. Me and my children, we all had to adjust." [Fieldnote]

It seems however, that for some of the adolescents the adjustment is too challenging. Many return to areas in or near their old neighborhoods to socialize with friends or family.

Another Answer: Returning to the 'Hood'³²

Youth' routines and activities vary more by individual than by neighborhood, and many adolescents and young adults (and parents) are not embedded in their neighborhood of residence – either through activities or institutions. Instead the aggregate impressions of lower poverty neighborhoods and the locus of youth' social interactions suggests much more fluidity and some tension between and among the neighborhoods they travel. A closer examination of where and why youth were spending time, beyond the residential

³² This category applies only to the mover families - both those who continued to spend time in high poverty neighborhoods (their own or another after moving) as well as to those teens who moved back to high poverty neighborhoods with their families. Youth from the control group, who never left the neighborhood are excluded here. There are eight teens in the control group, who have not left the project neighborhoods they grew up in, though one pair of siblings have spent hardly any time in the neighborhood of their project. Instead, their mother has deliberately enrolled them in private school several minutes away by bus, and their daily activities are located near their school or at their church, which is also in another distant neighborhood.

neighborhood, begins to outline a clearer, more positive association between risky places and risky behavior.

Kids Without Ties to the Old 'Hood

There are forty-four adolescents and young adults (from both the control and treatment groups) who moved out of their original project neighborhood. A minority of these teens (17/44 or 38 percent) do not maintain ties to their former neighborhoods or spend any significant amount of time in another high poverty neighborhood. Ten of the youth without ties to the old neighborhood are in structured activities – some in their own neighborhoods and some in multiple locations. Only one of these seventeen mover youth, a boy of 12 years old in the Bronx, was engaged in risky behavior – getting into fights at school – at the time of the fieldwork. Two other older teens (age 18 and 19) from different suburbs of Los Angeles, both working and in college at the time of the fieldwork, had once been involved in some risky behavior in their residential suburbs as younger teens. The youth who do not maintain ties are from all types of neighborhoods, and all three 3cMTO cities. Most live at some distance from their original project neighborhood (at least 5 miles), though about 1/3 live near enough to conveniently visit if they wished.

Going back but staying out of trouble

A total of twenty-six adolescents and young adults (27/44, or 62 percent) maintain ties in their old neighborhoods, moved back to a high poverty neighborhood, and/or return to visit frequently. Forty percent of these “returner” adolescents – 6 boys and 5 girls – are not involved in risky or delinquent behavior, although two of the girls were in the past. These eleven youth are all in mid to late adolescence or older (age 13 and older). Like those without ties to their old neighborhoods they come from neighborhoods with widely

varying poverty rates and characteristics. What do these adolescents do in the high poverty neighborhood when they return, and are these activities different from the teens who do get in trouble? The ethnographic data helps to contextualize the experience of spending time in the old neighborhood, the reasons for returning, and how some of the youth say they have avoided trouble.

Table 4.1 Youth who Return to Old Neighborhood without Risk

Gender	Age	Neighborhood Residence Poverty Level	Structured Activities	Outside Kid?	Main Reason for Return	Return alone or with parents
M	13	low	Y	Y	Relatives	Mom
F	13	medium	N	N	Relatives and Move back	Mom
F	13	high	N	N	Relatives	Mom
M	14	high			School	Alone
M	21	high	Y	Y	Relatives	Alone
F	19	high	N		Boyfriend	Alone
F	15	low	N	Y	Boyfriend-Relatives	Alone
M	12	low	Y	Y	Relatives	Alone
M	14	medium	N	N	Move Back	
M	17	medium	Y	Y	Move Back	
F	13	medium	Y	Y	Relatives	Alone

The eleven youth who are not engaged in any risky behavior fall into one of three “returner” categories. Three of the households are “move-backs”, by default ending up in their high poverty neighborhood, though as children all spent significant time in lower

poverty neighborhoods. In addition, their *current* exposure to their high poverty neighborhoods seems limited. Though these households live in higher poverty neighborhoods they are not an *active* part of them. The youth in these three families have few friends, and their friends live in other neighborhoods. These are not teens who are highly scheduled, but two of the adolescents are “inside” kids, and all three have mothers who are actively aware of and concerned about the risks in their children’s neighborhoods and schools; all three mothers limit where their children can go outside, and as much as possible, with whom they have contact.

Another two teenage girls return to the old neighborhoods where their boyfriends currently live. The two cases are very different in that one young adult, age 19, Dionne, has a child with her boyfriend and lives with his family there part-time because Dionne’s mother will not allow the boyfriend to stay at her house in the New York suburbs. Dionne is also one of the women who used to be involved in risky behavior – drugs and alcohol – and though reformed, still finds her lower poverty neighborhood boring. In the other case, 15-year old Cassandra met her boyfriend in her old neighborhood while visiting her cousins there. However, her mother is very strict with Cassandra and her three sisters, and Cassandra’s social world and all her activities – school and recreation – remain firmly in the Boston suburbs where she has grown up since age five. Another five adolescents mainly return to the old neighborhoods to visit their kin, the younger adolescents returning only when accompanied by their mothers.

Finally, one adolescent continues to attend school (10th grade) in his old project neighborhood. Javon, age 15, grew up in the projects but moved with his mother and sister to a suburb of LA shortly before the fieldwork began. When asked why he has not gotten into trouble he says, “I just go my own way.” His mother, a strong presence in his life, attributes Javon’s lack of trouble to good parenting, and indirectly to peers. She believes that he always had someone watching him and she carefully controls his access to people she considers risky. Jeanine also acknowledges the importance of the context of

the dangers her son would face living in high-risk neighborhoods – beyond the concerns of normal adolescence.

Jeanine: "With Javon, I did good. He went to Marcum [Middle School] in the midst of all these gang bangers. He had the chance to ditch. But the grades didn't drop, there was no ditching." She says that Javon always had people watching him. "I was home, my daddy was home. We see you. You try it, you die... Javon was able to avoid trouble at school because not too many people know that he lived in the Projects. Most of his friends live in houses."[Fieldnote]

When Going Back is Trouble

Of twenty-seven teens who maintain ties to projects or high risk neighborhoods, sixteen (59 percent) are involved in risky or delinquent behavior. Two common patterns emerge across these cases and in contrast to the above “non-risky” returners. First, eight of the adolescents (half the youth) are in families that “moved back” into the projects or near to their old high poverty neighborhood.³³ Like the move back families in the non-risky group above, some returned because housing market pressures caused them to lose their apartments, and some because they felt they needed their extended family networks to help with childcare. Others were only able to locate apartments through family when they lost the first one (all but one of the move back households shares an apartment with extended family members). However, in the “risky returner” group, adolescents are more likely to maintain *friendships* back in the old neighborhood, along with their family connections. Much more than the non-risky youth, their social worlds (“socializing”) revolve around the old neighborhoods. These adolescents and young adults have more exposure to, as well a different type of exposure to specific higher poverty environments. Therefore, to the extent that these neighborhoods contain greater “risks,” youth are more involved in activities there that are also more likely to result in risk taking behaviors.

³³ Compared to 3/11 in the non-risky returner and 8/28 in the experimental group as a whole.

Table 4.2 Youth who Return to Old Neighborhood With Risk

Gender	Age	Neighborhood Poverty Level	Participates Structured Activities	Outside Kid	Primary Reason for Return	Alone?
F	12	high	Y	Y	move back/Relatives	Yes
F	12	medium	N	Y	Move back/Relatives	Yes
M	12	medium	N	Y	peers	Yes
F	13	medium	N	Y	Move back/Relatives	Yes
M	13	medium	N	Y	move back	Yes
F	15	medium	N/A	Y	Peers/relatives	Yes
M	15	medium	Y	Y	Peers/Relatives	Yes
M	15	medium	Y	Y	move back	Yes
F	16	medium	N	Y	Move back/Relatives	Yes
F	16	low	N	Y	Peers	Yes
F	16	medium	Y	Y	move back	Yes
M	16	medium	N	Y	Peers	Yes
F	18	medium	Y	Y	Peers/Relatives	Yes
M	18	medium	N	Y	move back	Yes
M	18	medium	Y	Y	Peers	Yes
M	19	high	N	Y	Peers	Yes

The Lure of the 'Hood: Fernando

A family in Boston from the experimental group provides an illustrative example of the types of social worlds and activities that youth become involved in, and why, and how different neighborhood environments contribute to the challenges that youth and parents face in achieving non-risky outcomes.

Fernando is a second-generation Puerto Rican 18-year old living with his mother Adriana, and sometimes with additional family members or Adriana's boyfriend who stay temporarily, in their suburban neighborhood of Norwood. They moved out of their project neighborhood when Fernando was 7 years old and his sister was 12 and have lived in adjacent suburbs xx miles from Boston for 11 years. Fernando has 18 aunts and uncles (Adriana has 9 brothers and 9 sisters: 4 sisters and 1 brother in Boston.) and his sister has two children. Apart from one uncle all of Fernando's Boston relatives live in public housing. Most of the rest of the family is in Puerto Rico. Fernando and his mother are close to her family and their many children. Fernando's mother sees her own sister in [Roxbury public housing] almost every weekend and while in town stops in on the rest of the family to visit. Fernando does not have contact with his father, who was abusive to Fernando's mother.

Fernando's sister Alba also grew up in the suburbs, but was older when they moved. Now Alba and her two children live in Charlestown (neighborhood of Boston) in public housing. Adriana's old neighborhoods in Boston remain a part of her life because her friends and family continue to live there, but her engagement with these place(s) is limited to practical activities like visiting with friends at their houses, or shopping at a particular grocery store.

Fernando is also well integrated into the MTO neighborhoods – both attending school there and working there. When younger he participated in many local activities both indoors and out. For the past 4 years he has been dating a girl from the nearby suburb of Foxboro where the family lived after getting a housing voucher through MTO in 1991. Fernando often stays at his girlfriend’s parent’s house during the week. Here’s how he describes growing up in his current low-poverty suburban neighborhood:

Fernando: The neighborhood is fine, you know, but it's not really much to do because it's just like a square--you know, it's like a square mile, and not even, you know, like you walk down the street, walk back, that's all you can do, you know, hang out with a couple friends, and then you form a group, and then people hassle you out here because we're young and we like to have groups, and they think that we're up to something, but we're not... But it's fine here. I like it, but the bad thing about it is there's no transportation. I was always used to taking a train with my friends going downtown, you know, going to the movies. I can't even do nothing here, unless my mom is home and I get a ride... You know, I think in the city I was used to hanging out in groups of my friends, you know, and here you can't do that, so you got to take your time, you know, meet the right people, make sure that you don't fall into some type of drug or you meet somebody that will bring down what you want to do, you know. You got to make sure of everything. But when I moved here when I was like about nine years old, I liked it a lot, you know, because I was young and the kids young, and ice skating, baseball. Like I used to play in a band. I used to be in a lot of activities, and I wish I could still bring part of that back. You know how young teens like to have parties and stuff like that, that's what kind of teen I am. I'm a teen that likes to have fun, but not too much. (Qualitative Interview)

Fernando’s mother Adriana is definitive about how important neighborhood context is in terms of risky behavior even as she recognizes how her own family’s dynamics have

shaped their choices. According to Adriana, the risks of living in the projects are a temptation for children living with unstable family circumstances. She compares the experiences of her son and daughter and her nieces and nephews growing up in different places.

Adriana: "Fernando grew up in the suburbs and it is so much quieter here. She (her daughter) never adapted when we moved. She always wanted to go back to the projects. She wanted to be in Mission Hill.... But if they adapt to the suburbs, they can have higher self-esteem...and positive thinking...this means that there is less likelihood of doing drugs. If Fernando had grown up there, he would have done so much worse. He felt okay living at home but my daughter wanted to get out...she used to leave all the time to go to Mission Hill. I would take her to malls to try to get her mind off the projects but she wanted them so bad. Projects are never good; they are never in nice neighborhoods." [Fieldnote]

Although he was only seven years old when they left and may be drawing more on his current experience than memory, Fernando's impression of the contrast in his project and current neighborhood is like his mothers.

THE INTERVIEWER: How does this neighborhood compare to other places that you lived? Fernando: It's safer. Like when I used to live in Roxbury in Boston, I used to wake up to like shootings. I used to wake up to like fiends in the hallways, with like heroin and stuff, you know. One time me and my sister was walking down to the school, because the school was right next to the projects, and we saw this lady get raped in a taxicab, and like we saw a lot of things that we weren't supposed to see, so that's when my mom finally said we're moving to the suburbs, and we're going to try to fit in. [Qualitative Interview]

In comparing her nephews who grew up in the Boston Mission Hill Projects to Fernando's experience, Adriana calls attention to the subtle interactions between social relations, and the opportunities and activities that are embedded in places.

Adriana: "Those kids [her nephews] had to go to the street because of family problems. On the other hand, my depression had its consequences on Fernando. There was no room for Fernando...I was in so much pain that I could not be there for Fernando. His escape here was to move to his girlfriends. In the projects, he would have gone into the streets. Here, I had rules for Fernando...he could not have his girlfriend stay over. He had to ask before bringing a friend over the house. He had to clean after himself and take out the trash."
[Fieldnote]

Much of what Fernando talks about involves the past: his social world in Foxboro, the tension between living in Foxboro with his friends there, and the lure of maintaining ties in the Boston project. He describes this tension as a "split between positive and negative," the positive being "good influences" in Foxboro and the negative the world of "slingin'" in Boston. Fernando continues to maintain ties with friends near his old project neighborhood though he recognizes the potential dangers.

"I got a friend right now in Boston named Pedro. He has his own studio, and we go over there once a week and kick it, you know, and then come back home, you know, because I'm 18 so my mom is not really on my back like that, like come home at 10:30. I can call at 12:30, but call her to make sure, you know, I'm fine, mom, I'll be home at this time, trust me, I'll be through that door, because where I go and visit my friends in Dorchester, like--it's like--we go over there, it's like a lot of violence. And my mom gets worried, you know, because I'm not that type of dude but, you know, I'm going to stand up for myself if somebody comes and tries to start something, of course, because that's what a man does, you know, protects himself. But besides that, I don't go around looking for trouble. I'm not in no gangs. I was never a part

of that because--and it's funny because half my family is like in jail, and like they grew up like as criminals. I was never into that, and like I really appreciate my mom. Like I give her 400 percent for raising a kid like me.” [Qualitative Interview]

However Fernando recounts many anecdotes about his involvement with kids from the projects involving drugs and illegal behavior (e.g. shoplifting and vandalism) during his adolescence, but claims that he is no longer involved in these activities. It does appear that between school and work and spending time with his girlfriend, that he spends less time with old friends. Fernando shares that his mother, on finding a bag of marijuana in his room, took it to the Foxboro Police Department, and asked them “how could my son have this in Foxboro?” Fernando’s explanation is the peer pressure (although he does not specify where these peers are from).

Fernando: You know what I'm saying, like somebody could put peer pressure. But that's how I got to start smoking marijuana because I got peer pressured by older kids, but I brought about--at first I was like there's no such thing as peer pressure, but there is. Because I've seen younger kids that were my age like really get peer pressured and, you know what I'm saying, sometimes I stop them, sometimes I was like, hey, what can I do. You know, I can only look out for myself, because if I look out for others and then--you know. [Qualitative Interview]

When asked by the fieldworker why he decided to sever ties with some of the people from the old neighborhood, he says that he realized “*your friends [from the projects] won't visit you in jail, they won't visit your grave, but your mom will.*” In fact, the relation with his Mom comes up quite a lot in the context of her monitoring his contact with the project and his attempts to keep that contact a secret (in the past). Interestingly he also mentions peers at his high school and his teachers as influences in his decisions about how to act.

Fernando: "The principal thinks that--he don't see no weakness in me because my weakness was back then I was going to drop out [of school], and one day I just woke up and I can't do this, I can't let my mom down. I can't let my peers down, you know, because they tried to help me out a lot. And I like that. I don't like them to call my mom about a home assignment. I'm saying my teacher don't do that. My teacher, instead of calling my mom and complaining, they help me like stay after school late and we'll finish this project, or we'll do this test, or we'll repeat the test. And I think that's a good--you know what I'm saying, that's a good school. I like that school a lot." [UI Qualitative Interview]

He says he also straightened up his act because he got caught. Again, it is not clear where he was when he was arrested, but his knowledge and experience with his cousins in the project appear to have contributed to his thinking about continuing to engage in risky behavior.

"I got arrested. That's what really made me not want to mess with that drug anymore because it's going to ruin your life and it's going to ruin your record, and as soon as you're 18, you're by yourself.... You're a grown man and you're going to get treated like a person, like a grown man would be treated like... So that's what really, really turned my head around. I was thinking like if I keep doing what I'm doing, I'm going to end up like my cousin. I don't want to end up like my cousin, like in the projects 24-7, doing nothing but robbing cars and selling them just to get a little pocket money. Don't want to do that, you know. I want to work for mine, you know, because then when I make enough money, I can invest my money in something, and then I could open up something real good. I don't have to be like a hot--like a knucklehead, I'll be in the street begging for money or, you know, I'll probably get killed or something. I don't want to live that way." [UI Qualitative Interview]

Yet Fernando also points out that there are risks in his lower-poverty neighborhood.

I fit in, you know. Like I said, I moved in, you know, I made a couple friends, and then when you get older and you enter into high school, you know, say like groups split, like you go into a group that you belong, you know? get along with everybody, you know, but you know, there's always problem. There's--you know, there's always somebody messing around with you or somebody didn't have to--you know... It's a public school, yes, and there's no type of gang signs, no gangs, nothing like that. Just a little bit of drug problem. Like today, they had the sniffing dogs come into the school to search the lockers, search the cars in the parking lots, and I guess they wasn't successful, so they pulled out. [UI Qualitative Interview]

While the fieldworker did not interview Fernando's sister about the reasons she felt pulled back towards the projects, or about why he himself returned at times, Adriana suggests some of the initial awkwardness that may have come from being in a new and different environment for all of them. Although Adriana doesn't know her neighbors and would not ask them for material help she trusts them and leaves her door open. She says that "when you live in a nice place you want to keep it that way" and believes neighbors would intervene if there were a fight or criminal behavior in the vicinity. Most of her neighbors are White and she presents a complex view of how she interprets her identity in terms of these neighborhood demographics.

Fieldworker: How is it being Hispanic in this neighborhood?

Adriana: "Up to now, I think it has not been a factor...when I don't feel comfortable I inhibit myself thinking that they will not react well to me...being perceived in that way, makes me want to compete with them, and I think that that's a positive. The negative is the fact that I can be very lonely...Giselle was with Latinos in high school...Latinos that were being bused through Medco. But Fernando, he says that they looked at him as if he was an alien. He told me that they use to make fun of me (Adriana) when I used to go to the school to talk to them...particularly about my accent. But I didn't care. Fernando on the other hand feels antagonized."

Fieldworker: "Was it different before you moved out here, when you still lived in the projects? Adriana: "Yes it was different, because I didn't feel different." [Fieldnote]

Summary

These findings are somewhat consistent with the idea that unstructured time does leave teens with more opportunities for risky behavior (Osgood and Anderson 2004), however it is in contrast to research showing that neighborhoods influence the amount of unstructured time that adolescents have. Nor does being a highly structured teen necessarily mean more engagement in the residential neighborhood because many of these "activities" revolve more around school location or another neighborhood— in fact, being more structured often means less time in local neighborhoods.

Secondly, there are definitely different "norms" in lower poverty places but living in lower poverty neighborhoods does not necessarily make kids more engaged in neighborhoods through activities. The "norms" appear to dictate a respectful but uninvolved distance and sometimes those norms may drive adolescents away because they are bored or feel isolated.

This findings perhaps also help to build more accurate measures of the key concepts involved in linking community to delinquency – what should be measured is perhaps something besides willingness to intervene or community trust – the pressure not to offend may be coming from something other than social networks in which adults all know each others kids. Survey research on Los Angeles MTO participants showed that movers were less likely to know the parents of their children's friends, and mover children were less likely to be involved in structured activities compared to the control group (Petit 2003).

It was an unexpected finding that neither higher neighborhood poverty rates, nor an adolescent's lack of involvement in structured activities in lower poverty neighborhoods increases the likelihood that a teen engaged in risky or delinquent behavior. What *is* remarkably consistent across the group of adolescents engaging in risky behavior, however, is that much of their time is spent outside of their residential neighborhood and/or specifically in their old high poverty project neighborhoods. While this may also be true of youth who are not getting in trouble, the non-risky returners are more likely to be spending time outside their residential neighborhood in order to participate in some structured activity.

The reasons that youth returned to their "old" high poverty neighborhoods are first and foremost to socialize –particularly with kin, especially for younger kids traveling with parents and for kids visiting fathers, although many youth also keep in contact with friends. Secondly, some kids in the experimental group clearly expressed "boredom" with their lower poverty neighborhoods and expressed a desire to be hanging out "where the action was" or where they felt more "at home." Some adolescents returned to the old neighborhoods for school, and finally a small minority of youth continued to participate in activities in old neighborhoods, though this was more common for mothers than children.

When adolescents did not return to the old neighborhood it seemed to be that they were more embedded in their newer neighborhoods, either because they attended school there, or because they were simply located at a distance from the old neighborhood. As importantly, however, was the mother who limited or prohibited her children from returning to the old neighborhood, by cutting off their ties to people who still lived there, by disciplining and monitoring their locations closely, or by distracting them in some way in neighborhoods outside the old project location. In the next chapter I describe how mothers' social ties connect children to old neighborhoods and in chapter 6 I return to the role of parenting in buffering adolescents from risk.

Chapter 5: Peers

“I'm like 'man look at these kids'. It's a faster pace. My kids are slow, so when my kids go down there now and they look at them, like, 'you guys are different', you know they tell 'em that they are different or whatever, 'you guys changed since you lived out there', they talk about them. And I say, well, you are slower than these kids out here, that's the only thing...” [Fieldnote]

- Robin, mother in suburbs of Los Angeles

This chapter examines 3cMTO adolescents' relationships to friends focusing on where those relationships are enacted and how residential mobility impacts their ability to maintain them.³⁴ I also consider the ecology of risk for MTO youth – whether birds of a feather truly flock together and how moving and living in a different neighborhood, specifically a comparatively low-poverty neighborhood, changes the association between a risky social tie and an adolescent's involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. Finally I look at the explanations that youth and their parents give for adolescents continued association with, or avoidance of, the risky social ties in their lives.

Most of the literature on peer influence argues that disadvantaged neighborhoods such as those that the MTO families moved out of contain riskier peers than more affluent neighborhoods. Although they were not asked about the source or nature of risky influences prior to random assignment to the treatment groups MTO parents indicated that their primary reason for signing up for the MTO program was because they wanted to be in a *safer* place than the project neighborhoods they were living in at the time.

³⁴ The study did not collect enough data on participants' social relationships with neighbors to include them in this analysis. However, most adults in the mover group suggested that they were not close to their neighbors. Although they could be relied on for a cup of sugar they did not spend any time socializing with them. If an adolescent socialized with a neighbor they were likely to identify that person as a friend, therefore the most influential of youth 'peers' may be adequately captured by their friendship and family networks.

MTO's theory of neighborhood effects suggests that moving and living in lower poverty neighborhoods removes children from dangerous areas and precipitates the development of social ties in neighborhoods with less crime and fewer potentially delinquent associates (role models). MTO mothers clearly felt that moving out of the projects would reduce the chance that their children would become involved in risky behavior. However this outcome relies on several assumptions including (1) a lack of risk or risky peers in lower poverty neighborhoods (2) a fixed location that is the source of risk (3) a lack of engagement in higher risk neighborhoods after relocation and (4) the generation of social ties in lower poverty neighborhoods. In this chapter I address these assumptions and show how the association between peers, neighborhoods, and the observed adolescent risk outcomes are more complex than can be derived from a set of neighborhood characteristics such as neighborhood crime rates or neighborhood poverty level.

Measures

The ethnographic fieldwork asked adults and adolescents (separately) about their important social relationships (in the categories of friend/family member/ acquaintance/ neighbor) at the time of the fieldwork (See Appendix for Data Collection Guide). The Data Collection guide we used was designed to understand the aid and influence of each named network tie and captured two basic kinds of support – affective (emotional), and material – in each relationship. The guide was focused on support and asked only two questions about burden: (1) Are there people in your life that you think influence you in a negative way? I mean like bringing you down in school, getting you into fights, encouraging you to steal or do bad. Why, who? (2) Sometimes people can be a burden, even if we like or love them a lot, because they have many needs or make many demands of us. Which relationships would you say are most burdensome to you or most draining? Why? For the experimental compliers the guide also included open-ended questions which asked about how any important relationships were affected by neighborhood relocation and subsequent moves. This guide also asked youth about their own risky behaviors as well as the positive and/or risky and delinquent activities that their peers

were involved in. In addition to directed questions fieldworkers were sometimes included in social events with adolescent's friends or with extended family members as at a party or at church, or sometimes at gatherings in the home.

Following the fieldwork a *Social Relations* profile was completed on the social network data for each focal parent, adolescent and young adult in the family (See Appendix for Social Relations Template).³⁵ The profile includes data on how each named person in the overall network is related to the focal individual, where they know each other from, how often they interact and for what kinds of activities and where. For some individuals data was also gathered on the work history and education level of each individual mentioned in the network. Although there is some social network information for each person in the ethnography the data was inconsistently collected and the level of detail varies. The data from the *Social Relations* profiles were supplemented by four descriptive and analytic memos on the content of adult and youth social ties completed by a member of the research team.³⁶ Along with fieldwork excerpts, the profiles and these memos provide a basis for this study's analysis of the impact of social relations on adolescent risky and delinquent behavior.

Profile of Youth Social Ties

Table 5.1 on the next page presents the number of ties reported by youth for each treatment group and includes all youth with social relations profiles. Therefore, the means reported reflect cases where more than one youth was observed and/or interviewed per family.

³⁵ These social relations profiles were constructed by three members of the 3cMTO research team, Maria Rendon, Silvia Dominguez, and Cynthia Duarte.

³⁶ Maria Rendon.

Table 5.1 Network Size of Adolescent Social Ties				
	Experimental Mover families	Experimental Mover and Locationally Successful	Control	Total
Family and Kin	Mean: 5.8 Min: 0 Max: 27	Mean: 6.5 Min: 0 Max: 15	Mean: 8.8 Min: 0 Max: 32	<i>Mean: 6.7</i> <i>Min: 0</i> <i>Max: 32</i>
Friends	Mean: 5.9 Min: 0 Max: 34	Mean: 5.2 Min: 3 Max: 14	Mean: 5.3 Min: 1 Max: 11	<i>Mean: 5.6</i> <i>Min: 0</i> <i>Max: 34</i>
Acquaintances	Mean: 1.2 Min: 0 Max: 6	Mean: 1.4 Min: 0 Max: 5	Mean: 2.6 Min: 0 Max: 15	<i>Mean: 1.6</i> <i>Min: 0</i> <i>Max: 15</i>
N=	26	10	12	48

(Source: Analytic Memo Youth Social Relations, August 2006, M. Rendon)

On average adolescents named 5.6 friends, a number which varied slightly if the teen was part of the locationally successful group (at 5.2 friends), part of the experimental group (5.9) or control group (5.3).³⁷ In some cases we know where youth spend their time when they are with their friends, but not necessarily where they know them from. For example, we know from his mother and his self-report that Emilio a 16-year old in Boston is hanging out with friends from school in his medium-level poverty neighborhood in Dorchester (neighborhood poverty rate is 19.6%) which from local knowledge and history has a reputation for being a high crime area. He indicates that he often spends time there “around the basketball court” and that it is where he met several

³⁷ The study sampled purposively on locationally successful families, those families which were living outside of the central school district in the project neighborhood at the time of the fieldwork. They are a subset of the experimental group families. There are 17 locationally successful families of 28 experimental families in the sample. The table on network size includes all experimental families in the first column and only the locationally successful in the second.

of his friends and two of his girlfriends, but the data does not show where those friends live or exactly where the court is, or provide any details of what the environment there is like. Overall there is data on where youth know their friends from in 47 cases although the level of detail varies.

Although nearly all adolescents report having at least one friend from school, on average fewer have friends – whether they know them from school or from outside of school – from their neighborhood. This is not surprising given that school enrollment covers more geographic area than any individual neighborhood, as kids age they change schools, and several adolescents continue to attend school in a different location from their neighborhood of residence, particularly if they moved several times. Overall half of the friends reported by youth were friends from school, about 20% were from the neighborhood, another 20% were unknown, and 10% were from other places, such as church, a job site or they were a family friend.³⁸

Adult Social Ties

The literature suggests that parents may mediate neighborhood influences on youth, particularly for younger kids. As parents social ties may influence where an adolescent is spending time, and with whom, I briefly summarize the network structure of mothers' social ties (Table not shown). On average, mothers in the ethnography had more ties to kin than to friends or acquaintances. Overall, they named, on average, approximately 13.5 kin ties, 4 friends, and 3 acquaintances. While the differences were not substantial, locationally successful families reported having the most friends on average, while experimental families reported the most acquaintances. Overall, about 35% of friends that adults reported were made in the neighborhood, 26% were made at a job, and 11% were

³⁸ These friends do not include peers who are relatives, such as cousins or half siblings (Analytic Memo on Youth Social Relations, Rendon, 2006).

childhood friends. However, when locationally successful mothers referred to having friends in the neighborhood, most were actually referring to friends from the old neighborhood. In total only four mothers from the mover group said that they made even one friend in their new neighborhoods (Rendon, 2006). Yet control mothers reported even fewer friends in the neighborhood as compared to movers – on average they named only 2.4 friends whereas as experimental mothers named 4.5 friends, and locationally successful mothers said they had, on average, 5.6 friends.

Where socializing takes place

Although we have limited data on where youth report spending time with their friends there is evidence that it is more likely for both adults and youth to visit their friends and family where their friends and family live rather than the other way around. Many mothers spoke about how relocation had made visiting with friends and family much more difficult. Patricia, an experimental complier from Los Angeles, moved back to her project neighborhood after her first lease up in a low-poverty neighborhood, in order to be closer to her family and her church:

“...the reason why I moved by here, because, uh, I wanted to come closer to my family down here because I was the only one in the Valley and everybody stayed over here, or over there, and nobody would come visit me or my kids because they was like you stay too far, you stay too far, you know. And I was like, you know, but still, can't you all come get us or, we used to be down here like every weekend catching the Metro all the way from the Valley all the way here. I found a church home down here in L.A. and I liked it and I wanted to be closer to my church home, so I moved down here with my mother, and my sister, and my family and stuff. I liked it out there, but I wanted to move closer to my loved ones...my kids, they was like, mama, don't nobody come visit us.” [Qualitative Interview]

Some mothers recognize advantages *and* disadvantages of being at a distance. Sabrina, living in a suburb outside of the Boston that requires a 45-minute train ride to get to without a car, likes being able to escape to her home and control the flow of social traffic. Sabrina thinks she would hang out with more people if they lived close by yet, she chooses to socialize in her old neighborhood when she feels like it, instead of in her lower poverty MTO neighborhood.

Sabrina: "When I moved to Quincy my social life turned down a notch. It's just home-work, home-work. I'm too tired to go back and hang out. Maybe I would hang out in the summer but in the winter time there's nothing to do." [Fieldnote]

Huynh is a 19-year old teenager from Los Angeles who was part of the control group but moved with his family to a lower poverty, more suburban neighborhood not long before the ethnography began. He likes his new neighborhood but he still has a large social network based in his old neighborhood in the projects.

"What gang are you in?" Huynh hesitates a second but then says, "Oriental Boys." He continues, "We're hard and we're from the projects. All the gangs like Oriental Lazy Boys, Wah Ching, and other gangs around here in Chinatown was started by us in the projects. It all began in the hood." [Fieldnote]

Although he is on parole and he still uses and sells drugs, he states that he is no longer really in his gang. The ethnographer asked Huynh if his declining gangbanging activity is the result of no longer living in the projects.

"Are you still in the gang?" Huynh: "Yeah, I'm in the gang but I don't gang bang that much no more... Yeah, I think if I was over there (living in the projects), it'll be harder to lay low because you don't even do

anything over there and people be just coming over to your house and kick it. You can't get away from it. Now, people just don't just come over my house no more because my house is not close to over there. Now I don't do anything anymore. I just smoke weed now. That's all I do." [Fieldnote]

Relative Strength of Kin Ties among All Social Ties

Looking at the network size and structure for adults and kids what stands out is the much higher number of kin ties as compared to friends or acquaintances. While this is especially true for control group mothers, it also applies to all of the mothers and teens in the mover group. The closeness to kin among control group mothers – 17 named kin ties, as compared to 11.1 for experimental mothers and 15.6 for the locationally successful mothers – reflects several conditions including some parents choice to be closer to family members, a concern about the negative influence and trustworthiness of non-family members in housing project neighborhoods, and the convenience of proximity to family. Although youth have more ties to friends on average than their parents do, they also said they had more ties to kin than to friends (with the exception of experimental group youth who have an equal number of friend and kin ties). For both adults and adolescents it is unclear how many of those friend ties might also be relatives.

Neighborhood of Influence versus Neighborhood of Residence

One question of interest in this dissertation is whether moving to different neighborhoods exposed some MTO families to different social worlds. If so, did this exposure impact pre-existing social ties or influence youth risky and delinquent behavior? *MTO's Interim Impacts Evaluation* suggested small network differences among treatment groups as a result of relocation, but did not explain the how those differences may have come about or what difference they made. During the fieldwork visits we asked adults and teens

about people who used to be part of their life but no longer were, and how moving changed their social relationships. We also asked about any new people that came into their lives and how they came to know them.

The results indicate that the association between residential neighborhood and friend ties is more dependent on residential stability than on treatment group. However, since control group youth are more likely to have lived in the same location for a longer period of time, their friend ties are more often located close to home. Slightly less than half of the adolescents in both treatment groups (twenty-two youth of the forty-seven for whom we have data) **do** have a network of friends in their current residential neighborhood. For *some* youth, place of residence greatly influenced who he/she befriended. The data suggest that those who had lived most of their lives in one neighborhood (including both control and mover families) and attended neighborhood schools, were most likely to name a network of neighborhood friends.

For MTO's designers the experimental group youth who currently live in a low poverty neighborhood and have friends there represent the program's ideal of residential integration as measured by the creation of new, local social ties in less risky neighborhoods. By this measure a total of ten youth are socially integrated into their lower poverty neighborhoods through friendship networks; six of them have also lived in the *same* lower poverty neighborhood while growing up, whereas the other four youth changed neighborhoods and cities several times.³⁹ As might be expected the ten youth who have local friends in low poverty neighborhoods have had time to develop friendships in the neighborhoods where they live. All attend/ed local schools in or near their local neighborhoods as well. However, it is important to note that almost all of these adolescent's *also* have friends from, and living in, other places. Thus, even for the most

³⁹ Only eleven of thirty-nine families in the sample might be categorized as low-mobility families (families that either never left their project neighborhoods, or experimental families who only moved once with their voucher (N=6 low mobility experimental movers)).

socially integrated youth, their neighborhood of residence is not the only neighborhood of influence.

Impact of Residential Mobility on Youth Social Ties

Residential mobility does impact adolescents' social ties to friends. Of the few adolescents and young adults **without** any network of friends in their residential neighborhood, all but one pair of siblings are from families in the mover group. Among the group of adolescents who **do** have friends in their neighborhoods (regardless of the poverty level of their neighborhood of residence) many youth know their friends from a variety of places including school and church, and other neighborhoods where they participate in activities. Some adolescents have friends not in their immediate residential neighborhood but in an adjacent neighborhood, some kept friends they met while living temporarily in a lower poverty neighborhood, even when they moved back to a higher poverty one, and some kept a friend in a higher poverty neighborhood, or their old project neighborhood. Still, adolescents with the densest network of local friends (and fewer friends outside the neighborhood) are those teens who grew up and continue to live in the projects. In contrast, for most mover adolescents residential mobility expanded the range of locations where they were likely to have friends. And overall, since most youth' friends are from school, residential mobility impacts friendships if adolescents change schools when they move.

In conclusion, of all of the families who moved out of the project neighborhoods including 25 youth from the experimental group who moved with vouchers to a lower-poverty neighborhood and an additional six teens from the control group who eventually also moved out of the projects without an MTO voucher, approximately one-third (10/31) meet the *program's* ideal of social integration, emphasizing that integration into a new neighborhood does not follow automatically from relocation. It also reflects the fact that

youth move frequently, and most of youth' friends are from school. One factor that does influence whether mover adolescents have friends in their new neighborhoods is the length of time they have lived there. More than having friends in old neighborhoods, a factor that influences whether youth return to project neighborhoods is the degree to which mothers maintain social ties to family members, which are less affected by relocation than ties to friends. Finally, socializing with family and old friends often takes place in old neighborhoods, rather than mover's new neighborhoods.

In the remainder of this chapter I examine the association between adolescents' exposure to risk and the risky behavior of their friends. Based on the literature and the above results on social ties, I expect that both having risky friends and where youth socialize with them will have an impact on their risky behavior.

Risky Friends

In this section I use the social network data to identify where youth' friends are from, where and how often they see them, and whether or not they report that their friends have engaged in any risky or delinquent behavior. I first examine the assumption that higher-poverty neighborhoods have more delinquent peers than lower-poverty neighborhoods. I compare risky behavior outcomes for youth who are socializing in their neighborhood of residence with those who socialize with friends outside of their neighborhood, or specifically in their old neighborhoods. Second, using self and parent reports on risky and delinquent behavior, I identify whether kids with risky friends are themselves engaging in risky behavior. Third, I explore the question of the association between risky youth and risky peers by looking at what both adults and youth say about the role of their friends in their own choice to avoid or participate in risky activities.

Neighborhood Poverty and the Geography of Risky Peers

Just over half of all the adolescents and young adults in the ethnography –had at least one friend who they identified as being involved in some risky or delinquent behavior.⁴⁰

Adolescents **with risky friends** are from the control and mover groups, include boys and girls, and live in neighborhoods with a wide range of poverty levels. Six adolescents live in neighborhoods with a high poverty rate (above 40 percent), twelve adolescents live in neighborhoods with a low poverty rate (up to 20 percent), and four adolescents live in neighborhoods with poverty rates that range from 20 to 40 percent.⁴¹

For those teens not reporting risky friends there is a similar range of neighborhood types, though a few more of these adolescents come from neighborhoods with poverty rates below ten percent (six adolescents are from high poverty neighborhoods, and eight are from neighborhoods with poverty rates between 20-40 percent). These numbers suggest that there is little difference in the geography of risky ties based on the numbers of risky friends that adolescent's report associating with. This seems to contradict most of the literature on the positive association between neighborhood poverty and risky peers. There are several explanations which I explore in greater detail in the sections below. There may be risky peers in both high and low poverty residential neighborhoods as the

⁴⁰ Of the 49 youth for whom we have sufficient data, approximately 25 teens identify at least one peer who is engaging in risky behavior. Nineteen of the twenty-five households with youth who say that they have a risky friend, are also engaging in risky behavior themselves. There are six female teens who report having risky friends but who do not report participating in any behavior themselves.

⁴¹ Although families in the experimental group were first required to move to neighborhoods at or below 10% of the area poverty rate, I categorize low poverty rates as below 20% and high poverty rates as above 40% based on neighborhood effects literature demonstrating the tipping points at which “effects” are understood to be effective (Galster et al 2006). In my analysis changing the rate to below 10 percent has the effect of placing 11 of the 12 families in the 20-40% neighborhood poverty range. Some of the literature argues that this is the most critical range; above 40% effects level off and become non-significant. However, one reason to report the statistics as I have is that only 5 of 39 families in the total ethnography sample currently live in neighborhoods with poverty rates below 10% and four of those five households are in Boston.

data indicate. Or, as I have illustrated, youth friends are not necessarily from their neighborhood of residence, and they do not spend time in their neighborhood of residence with risky friends.

Associating with risky friends

Three-quarters of the adolescents who identified a risky peer among their friends were engaging in risky or delinquent behavior themselves. The activities they report their friends are involved in, ordered by prevalence, are fighting, using substances (alcohol or drugs), theft and vandalism, selling drugs, and being involved in gangs. The evidence that friends matter to risky and delinquent behavior outcomes is supported by parents and adolescents' accounts. Many parents expressed concern about their children's friends and were quick to identify any they thought were "trouble." Parents primarily worried that their daughters would be influenced by girls who were "too fast" sexually, or about environments in which teens and adults are quick to fight or escalate fights. Even when a mother thought that the majority of their friends were "good kids" almost all identified at least one they thought was too "fast."

Danielle, a mother in the experimental group that moved back to a higher poverty neighborhood of Boston after several years in a lower-poverty suburb, explains why she doesn't want her daughters, ages 12 and 13, to spend time at a local skating rink.

I asked Danielle if there were places her daughters like to go to but she doesn't like them to go. "Oh, yeah. _that's a skating ring". Danielle explained that the skating rink is in Dorchester. When I asked Danielle why she doesn't like her girls to go there, Danielle explained that "Little girls there are too fresh...they're too advanced, you know." She said that "little girls ...want to jump them...those little girls are too fresh, you know what I mean". I asked her if she was afraid that those girls were going to jump her daughters or if they would just expose them to things she doesn't want them to get exposed to. "Yeah, they pick fights" she said. "They also try to grow up too fast, you know." [Fieldnote]

One indication in the data of how youth view the connection between risky friends and their own likelihood of getting into trouble comes from girls describing how they choose or change friends to avoid risk. Javon a 14-year old from the control group in Los Angeles moved out of the projects with his mother to a less dangerous area but continues to attend school in his old neighborhood. He explains that he no longer has friends in the project: *"I don't have many friends in the PJ's (projects) because a lot of them have gotten into trouble."* [Fieldnote]

Twelve-year old Shana moved back to a high poverty project neighborhood in Watts after living for several years in a low poverty neighborhood. Most of her friends and relatives are in her immediate neighborhood now and attend school with her locally. She mentioned that she no longer hangs out with a bunch of her friends. The ethnographer asked her about a list of friends she had marked as ex-friends.

"Banesha. We had a fight. I don't like her. I just don't like her. Le Shay, she just too fast. Destiny, I just can't stand her Daniel, Just hate him because he play too much, and Andre, he abusive." I asked him how he is abusive. She said, "He play too much. Too violent. He get in too much trouble too. He be going to jail, doing dumb stuff." I asked her, "So he has actually been to jail already?" Andre is 12 years old. She said, "13 times. He'll be 12." I asked about Le Shay. "Do you think she is sleeping around with guys?" She said, "She is." I asked, "Are the guys older than her?" She said, "They are too old for her, like 20, and she only 13. She in the 7th grade. She go with boys like 15, 18." I asked, "Do you think she does other things like drink or smoke, like marijuana, or anything?" She said, "Marijuana. Her momma sell it."
[Fieldnote]

Upon receiving their MTO voucher, 16-year old Terri moved with her family outside of Los Angeles County to San Bernardino County. While living in San Bernardino her family moved several times but remained in lower poverty areas. During her sophomore year Terri found herself hanging out with a group of girls who would ditch class and smoke weed. Her grades began to fail and she got in a fight. One day Terri was

“jumped” (beaten up) as a result of hanging out with these girls. She explains why she ended ties with these girls.

“I don't talk to none of them no more...They are kicked out of high school and have to make up the credits at a continuation school...I cut myself off from them...I got tired of everything, the things they were doing, and going through so I stopped talking to them before school ended last year. And then they thought I was trying to be better than them. It's like, I am!” [Fieldnote]

Neighborhood Social Climate as a factor in the Risk Level of friends

Some literature suggests that neighborhood poverty is a factor in the influence of neighborhoods on adolescent risk outcomes because it determines the type of peers that one has access to (Crane 1991, Case and Katz 1991). However many empirical studies find that it is social disorder and lack of collective efficacy, not poverty per se, which is the relevant neighborhood characteristic (Sampson et. al. 2001; 2002). While measuring collective efficacy for each of the neighborhoods in the MTO ethnography is beyond the scope of my dissertation the data does indicate that movers reported differences between the social climate in project neighborhoods they left and the lower-poverty neighborhoods they moved to. Specifically, both parents and adolescents acknowledge the greater risk of violence and criminal behavior in the projects they moved from as compared to the lower poverty neighborhoods they lived in. This “difference” often referred to a difference in the type of people in lower poverty neighborhoods as well as a difference in the general social environment of the neighborhood. Despite the evidence offered above that the poverty level of youth’ neighborhood of residence does not influence the risk level of their friends, or make it more likely that youth will be surrounded by criminal confederates, there is as much or more data suggesting that

neighborhood social climate does play a role in the riskiness of peers, and friends specifically.

Brianna, a mother from the experimental group now in a lower poverty area of Los Angeles, comments on the differences between pressures on her daughter in their current neighborhood and the project neighborhood where some of her daughter's old friends still live.

"I pay attention and it's different. The girls, they're different around here. I always say that. It's different. It really is. You know, if I would compare them to out here, out here they better... You don't see them walking and hanging out and drinking and something that not a teenager don't supposed to do with a grown man." [Fieldnote]

Erika and her family have lived in the same low poverty suburban neighborhood of Boston since receiving their voucher with MTO ten years ago. Shortly after the move her oldest son was killed at age 18 while visiting friends back in their project neighborhood. She told the ethnographer "They took him there. He couldn't stop going back. He was getting into bad trouble... and they killed him." Erika explains what she sees as a difference in peer influence in current somewhat suburban neighborhood and why she feels safer now with her younger son Andre, age 11.

"What happens now when Andre [is outside playing]? I say I want you home in 45 minutes." Does he listen? "If they know what you like. A lot of kids know he has bi-polar disorder. They gonna be more concerned that he needs to be home if his mother said so." Would this be different in the projects? "More likely he's gonna be ending up in jail. They have this group thing in Dorchester - kids hanging around influencing." I asked, "and that doesn't happen here?" Erika's response was "you do see the kids here but they are more into 'listen to your mom.' ... In the old neighborhood even though you forbid them and even though everyone is a neighbor either you do it or they make you do it." [Fieldnote]

Sixteen year-old Terri, described earlier as one of the girls who changed friends because she felt they were influencing her behavior in a negative way, describes what she thinks is difficult about growing up in the projects in Los Angeles as compared to the San Bernardino Valley where she lives now.

"Toughest about growing up in LA is... I don't know, people like... out here they have it, students have it easier out here cuz you don't have to walk to school everyday wondering if you are going to get kidnapped or get shot or get caught in a bullet, in a shooting." I asked her if there was anything tough about growing up in San Bernardino. She said, "No. Not really. But this is getting just as bad, actually it is, getting just as bad with the kids and students at school." [Fieldnote]

Can Neighborhood of Residence Explain Risk

The data we gathered on friends and risk demonstrate that an adolescent's neighborhood of residence does not always mediate the influence of risky peers. Adolescents reported that much of the risky and delinquent behavior that occurs among their peers is happening at school or on the way to and from school. Most adolescents' friends are from school, and many youth don't attend school in their neighborhood of residence. When schools and neighborhoods are in the same geographic location, as they are more often for low-income youth living in areas of concentrated poverty, it can seem that the neighborhood of residence is the source of problems which might be better attributed to school environments.

Since moving back to a higher poverty neighborhood not far from the projects where their grandmother lives, Danielle's daughters have begun to get into fights. Danielle

believes the problem stems from what happens at school. The ethnographer asked if the problems might be taking place [now] because her daughters are growing up and entering their teenage years.

She responded forcefully, "No. It all started at the new school. She never brought these kinds of problems home". Danielle sounded convinced that it had to do with the kids at the school. As she explained, "You see, my girls didn't grow up in these kinds of neighborhoods. They're not used to this. Kids around here grow up real fast, but not my girls. They don't care about that stuff."
[Fieldnote]

The picture that the ethnographic data provides is one in which school environments, like neighborhood environments, are dangerous to a different degree in higher poverty or project neighborhoods, but risky peers and illegal activity is not absent from the neighborhoods that experimental compliers moved to.

Niran is a 17-year old adolescent who grew up in several different neighborhoods in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys in California. When she was younger Niran got involved in a gang and used drugs. She said that she started using drugs because she had friends who were doing it and the kids in her school were talking about it all the time.

Ethnographer: Where was [this drug activity] happening? "In Encino," replied Niran, "But people were experimenting a lot in the San Gabriel Valley too. I mean everyone was doing meth out there [in the San Gabriel Valley]."

Ethnographer: How did people get it? NIRAN: "Well, people would pull over and ask you, 'You smoke shit'? These were the drug dealers. I mean everyone smoked weed and drank beer. The drug dealers would come up to you and even sell it at school. It was easy. They'd just come up to you and say, 'You smoke shit?'"

Ethnographer: "What kinds of drugs are out here?" NIRAN: "They have cocaine here. There's also crystal [methamphetamine]. But most people did a lot of weed. It was just a scene. Everyone was doing it. Like when I moved out here [back to the San Fernando Valley from the San Gabriel Valley], it was really hard to get crystal[methamphetamine]. Instead, I got Ritalin. I used that to study because crystal was just dirty." But since I moved back here [from the San Gabriel Valley to the San Fernando Valley], I've only bought it twice. [Fieldnote]

Eamon, is a 14-year old youth, and an outlier from the control group in New York in two ways. First, he is one of the older boys who grew up in the projects and continues to live there yet has not been involved in any significant risky or delinquent behavior. He does not have risky friends. Second, he has attended a competitive private school since the age of nine which is located outside of his neighborhood. Still he describes the kind of risk that can ensue in and near school.

Eamon said, "fighting should be used as a last resort." He then told me about the threats a couple of kids had made to friends of his and how he did something "really stupid" carrying a hatchet to school. I asked, somewhat incredulously, how he had managed to get the hatchet into the school. "In my book-bag." I wondered about the level of security at the school and while there is security by Eamon's description it is quite lax. On another occasion he joined a group of his schoolmates to meet in a park close to his with a group of kids who had threatened one of his friends. [Fieldnote]

The fact that youth from all neighborhood types and schools have been able to find friends who are risky might argue against the theory that there are fewer "bad" apples among peers in lower poverty neighborhoods, though it may also reflect a tendency for risky youth to seek out risky friends no matter where they live. The ethnographic data cannot resolve this selection problem but many of the comments from parents and teens suggest that adolescents have agency regardless of the social climate of the environment.

As Isabela, a young adult from Los Angeles says, “...*It’s not where you grow up it’s you who can make the choice.*” Yet some environments appear to make risk more likely, and some conditions may help adolescents avoid trouble. In the following section and chapter I describe parents and teens explanations for how they have avoided risk in their lives.

The ‘Go Your Own Way’ Choice

The findings so far suggest that there are risky peers and activities in high and low poverty neighborhoods and shows that teens in the ethnography recognize how peers can pose a threat. How do some adolescents manage to stay out of trouble? Adolescents offer two primary explanations, corroborated by parents, about how they are able to avoid being involved in risky behavior. The first focuses on the agency of the youth, and the second on parenting. As I describe the role of parenting in the next chapter here I illustrate only the first reason. One of the most common stories about avoiding risk focuses on narratives about being “independent” and resisting peer pressure. Most of the kids in the group who have avoided risky peers identify themselves as someone who “isn’t like that,” “goes their own way,” or if the teen is female, as someone who “isn’t fast” or “doesn’t have fast friends.”

Javon is the control group adolescent in Los Angeles who moved just before the start of the fieldwork to a less dangerous area but continues to attend school in his old project neighborhood. Both Javon and his mother suggest that he is not engaging in risky behavior because he has chosen non-risky peers as friends despite growing up in a high-risk environment.

Javon has three close friends that he walks to and from school with. Jeanine (Javon's mother) describes their route as taking them through "four different hoods." His mother is not worried about this because as she says: "His boys that he hang out with, they kind of squared off in their own group. They know people, but they don't participate." Javon told me that had never used drugs, smoked or drank before. To get Javon to elaborate about what influences his or someone else's behavior, I asked what leads a person to use drugs, smoke or drink and how did it start. He responded in reference to drug use, that the main factor is the "crowd they hang out with" and it's usually "not really at home." In reference to smoking, in his opinion it is "common" and occurs "because they want to try it out since everyone else is doing it." [Fieldnote]

Mitchell, age 21, is a young adult in the experimental group living with his mother and brother in Harlem. He was asked about gangs in his neighborhood.

The ethnographer writes... He identified one gang as the Bloods but argues that they are not big in the area now, not like it used to be. He explained that before they used to be flagging a lot or walking around a lot and screaming out their signs. He said he has not seen the Crips - who wear blue bandanas - in his area. Mitchell acknowledges that there is gang activity at nights, but because he is not part of the street scene he is ignored, and he keeps walking. Moreover, he walks where he wants and wears any color he feels like.. Mitchell identified loneliness and lack of self-esteem as two reasons people join gangs, and it is because of these two reasons he doesn't find it necessary to join a gang - he is neither lonely nor possess low self-esteem. [Fieldnote]

Eighteen-year old Ramiro from the experimental group in New York, talks about avoiding the gangs at his school. The ethnographer asked Ramiro if the gang wars and drug activity made it more difficult for him to get his schoolwork done or to go to class.

Ramiro shook his head emphatically and replied: "No. Not for me. I didn't get involved in that." The hallways used to be filled with gang members fighting and playing dice. As Ramiro stated: I'd go by and they were in the corners, playing dice. They didn't go to class." The

teachers didn't "do nothing." Ramiro explained "they [teachers] would just come up to them and they would just keep playing dice." I probed Ramiro further to get at how he was able to stay away from all these negative influences. I asked: Wow. How were you able to stay away from all of that stuff? Ramiro met my eyes fleetingly and stated firmly: "I just go my own way." [Fieldnote]

Summary

In chapter four I show how routines and activities of mover adolescents in the ethnography take place in a variety of neighborhoods including the lower poverty neighborhoods where they live, their old project neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods where they go to school, work, or participate in activities. In this chapter I examine the location of adolescents friend ties and find that mover youth have a more diverse social network than control group youth, because movers tend to maintain ties outside of their neighborhood of residence (as well as within it) whereas control group youth have more social ties in their neighborhood of residence, in part because most adolescents friends are from school and control group youth are more likely to go to school in their neighborhood. Another reason for the difference in social ties to friends is relocation and residential stability. While moving did not disrupt all social ties to old neighborhoods, adolescents who lived longer in one place were more likely to have friends in their neighborhood of residence.

The literature finds that adolescents who engage in risky behavior tend to have friends who also engage in risky behavior and shows that teenage crime is often committed in groups (Farrington 2007; Newburn 2007). Recent studies of adolescent peer networks support the idea that the content and importance of a tie in the overall social network determines how influential it will be for a teen's behavior (Haynie and Osgood 2005; Haynie 2002). In this application a negative outcome will result to the degree to which a teen is *attached* to someone who is involved in delinquent or risky behavior. To the extent that adolescents are attached to and spend time with people who are involved in

risky behavior they are likely to also become involved in it (Farrington et al. 1996). The findings in this chapter show that having risky friends is associated with an adolescent's own risky behavior but question the idea that neighborhood of residence is the source of risky ties, especially for mover adolescents.

In this chapter I also demonstrate how the poverty level of neighborhood of residence is an incomplete measure of the risk that kids face not only because they spend time in many different places, but because neighborhoods of similar poverty rates or perceived levels of social disorder are not uniform in many other ways. As some studies of growing up in high risk neighborhoods have shown, risks remain in lower poverty neighborhoods (Furstenburg et al. 2000). Although mover parents and youth consider 'peers' to be riskier in old, higher-poverty neighborhoods and consider the social climate of the lower poverty neighborhoods they moved to be less dangerous and conducive to risky behavior, adolescents in both groups (control and experimental) recognize risky peers in places where they live regardless of the neighborhood poverty level.

Adolescents and parents have more social ties to kin than to friends, and movers more often socialize in their old neighborhoods in order to see relatives. Rarely do friends from the old neighborhood visit youth in their new neighborhoods. Therefore, for some youth relocation made keeping in contact with friends from the old neighborhood more difficult. Finally, youth who are able to avoid peer pressure and stay out of trouble indicate that they "go their own way." For some youth this involves changing friends whereas for others it simply means keeping to themselves. Many parents and kids also attribute their avoidance of risky behavior to strict parenting. In the following chapter I examine the role of parental monitoring in buffering youth from risk.

Chapter 6: Parenting

I ask Jeanine why she thinks it is that Javon has managed to avoid gangs. "Home training," she states. "What you see at home. You can grow up in the middle of anything. I grew up with them same people, females with six, seven kids, and look at me. I got two. I been back to school, working consistently. Birds of a feather flock together? Not all the time, sweetheart." [Fieldnote]

- Jeanine, mother in Los Angeles

Parental involvement has been suggested as an important factor in whether or not kids engage in risky behaviors (Dearing 2008 ; Jacobson and Crockett 2000). Parent's can be said to be an important mediator of risk through their control of access to people and places. The first way parental involvement matters is through monitoring – by knowing their kids' friends, and activities and sometimes by restricting their access to peers who are perceived or known to be dangerous – parents may limit the amount of risk their child is exposed to. Another important way parents involvement matters is through engaging their children in pro-social activities, which encourages non-risky behavior either through monitoring (from another adult) and/or by connecting youth to social networks and positive role models or institutions that support pro-social, non-risky behavior (Furstenberg et al. 2000; Wilson 1987). While there may be additional psychosocial ways in which parenting matters – such as maternal warmth – monitoring and pro-social activities are suggested as important elements in explaining healthy youth outcomes.

Poor neighborhoods can make parenting challenging. All of the mothers in the ethnographic study expressed their concerns about safety while living in the projects. Some research suggests that mothers are more restrictive (limiting their kids activities) in response to a dangerous environment (Burton 1990; Jarrett 1997). Recent work on MTO youth posits that risky and delinquent behaviors may result if mothers let down their guard when they move to lower poverty neighborhoods. Lack of familiarity with a neighborhood may also limit parents ability to access institutional and recreational

activities if parents are unaware of opportunities, youth feel out of place, or families do not possess the resources to take part in them.

MTO planners hypothesized that there would be a reduction in criminal activity surrounding families living in lower poverty neighborhoods – both as victims and perpetrators of crime. When the interim results showed that boys in the treatment group were doing worse than the boys in the control group on several measures of risky and delinquent behaviors, one suggested explanation among MTO researchers was that if girls are more closely monitored than boys than boys would be more likely to get into trouble in lower-poverty areas, if mothers were further relaxing their standards of monitoring as a result of a calmer social environment.

To examine the question of associations between neighborhood poverty, parenting, and adolescents' risky and delinquent behavior I analyze the ethnographic data in the domain of family management. I first identify whether parents are limiting their kid's access to risk and if so, how, and why. Secondly, I examine whether a categorical increase in parental involvement decreased observed risky and delinquent behaviors. Finally, I looked at these associations across neighborhood types to see if levels of parental involvement varied by neighborhood type (low-medium-high poverty), by treatment group, gender or age of the child.

Measures

As part of the ethnographic study we spoke with mothers and children about family management in the areas of discipline, monitoring, roles and scripts, emotional affect and

spousal relations.⁴² Although the data does not lend itself to fine quantitative scales, broad differences emerged in the degree to which parents were monitoring their children, as well as how. (Looking at the ‘how’ led to some understanding of the ‘how much.’) There was more commonality, than not, among all families with regards to their concerns about parenting, as well as their methods of monitoring and discipline. For example, a frequent comment is that parents know their older kids’ whereabouts, particularly the location of older daughters, because parents require them to watch their younger siblings (though it may not be a deliberate strategy). Though many strategies and comments were the same, there were also examples of “outliers” in either direction – parents who are very strict, as acknowledged by both the parent and child, as well as parents who are very permissive. The ethnographic data we gathered about family management also included fieldworker’s observations about parenting styles during visits with families.

Parental Monitoring

Based on the literature parental monitoring is characterized by the following characteristics: child’s ability to be outside the home alone; parent’s knowledge of peers and peers’ parents; when parent is absent there is an adult monitoring the child; parent’s knowledge of child’s whereabouts and activities; child or parent expresses feeling that the parent is strict; observations of strict or permissive styles of discipline by fieldworker; comments about discipline by parent or child.⁴³

⁴² This section focuses on parenting strategies rather than the content of concerns and reasons for those strategies. In summary there seem to be several categories of common worries that parents have about their children getting into trouble. They worry about the onset of adolescence – boys becoming rowdy and sexual promiscuity or sexual violence – the latter seems to be one of the biggest concerns, which applies to both girls and boys. Parents also mention gangs but generally don’t say “I worry he/she might start selling/using drugs.”

⁴³ For literature on measures of Parenting see: Baumrind 1991; Furstenberg, et al. 2000; Dearing, et al. 1992. Interim Impacts Evaluation (Orr et al. 2003).

Figure 6.1 Categorical Levels of Parental Monitoring and Discipline

I. Level 1: Highest Level of Discipline/Monitoring Qualities of Level 1 – Parent does not let child outside or over friends' houses/knows child's peers and parents/keeps children away from risky kin or kids/very scheduled/always has someone monitoring them.

II. Level 2: Some Discipline/Monitoring Qualities of Level 2 – Parent knows some of the child's peers/curfews/expresses importance of role of parents in watching/children express parents as strict or as having limiting role in their risky behavior/allowed to play outside.

III. Level 3: Very limited Discipline/Monitoring Qualities of Level 3 – Parent does little to no monitoring of child/does not know their peers or whereabouts most of time or/and expresses feeling loss of control by child or adult /Parent knows the negative activities youth is doing and does not restrict their activities).

In all there are 35 households from whom we gathered sufficient data on parenting.⁴⁴ These 35 households include data from 51 adolescents and young adults. The data show that the degree of parental monitoring in any household cannot be anticipated by which treatment group families belong to – control or experimental. Less than half of all parents in both groups are among the least restrictive parents. Approximately twenty percent of the control group parents were in the *most* restrictive group along with twelve percent of the experimental families. Overall most families parenting strategies fall somewhere in the middle range.

⁴⁴ Three of the four households for whom we had missing parenting data were Cambodian. Three of the teens from these households (two boys and a girl) had engaged in risky behavior. The two boys continued to be involved in delinquent behavior at the time of the study. The young boy from the fourth household without parenting data was also involved in some risky behavior – fighting at school. Three of these four families were part of the experimental group.

Least Restrictive Parents

Five out of eight youth in the group with the least restrictive parents (which includes families in both treatment groups) have been involved in delinquent behavior and have also been incarcerated or involved with the juvenile justice system.⁴⁵ Another two, both teenage girls, have been involved in fights. There is only one teenage boy from New York, who has never been in trouble. His mother explains that she doesn't need to monitor him, or have any rules about where he can and can't go because he's a "good boy" and doesn't go anywhere, and she "knows he is going to college." She adds that if he were to start getting in trouble that his uncle and cousins would be "on him" and he would stop. Interestingly this boy is also the only one from the group of the least restrictive parents living at a distance from the projects – the other families in this group of permissive families either never left, or moved back to high poverty areas. So although treatment group does not suggest how much monitoring a child is apt to receive from his/her parents, the majority of the youth in this group of more permissive parents have not really "moved away" from higher poverty neighborhoods, in the same way that many of the other children in the larger MTO ethnographic sample have.

Given this observation about mobility and the role of housing location, the effects of permissive parenting may be conflated with the effects of exposure to poverty such that risky behavior is coming not from parenting per se, but from the impacts of parenting given neighborhood conditions. I return to this question in a later section.

⁴⁵ I found this to be an important distinction between treatment groups for boys in the ethnography – while many in the treatment group were engaged in risky or delinquent behavior, far fewer had been incarcerated for that behavior as compared to boys in the control group.

How permissive parenting is explained

While it is tempting to attribute youth outcomes to the form of parenting they received, it is impossible to indicate which way the causal arrow is pointing in regards to which came first, risky behavior or permissive parenting. Permissive mothers may be that way because their child's behavior is unusually difficult or rather because they are so easy to manage. The mother's narratives support both these explanations. Many mothers in the least restrictive group identify their feelings of helplessness in regards to what their children are doing, and express the feeling that they have lost control of their kids. Yet mothers in the more restrictive parenting categories also express fears about being able to maintain their authority and capacity as their children age and become teenagers. With the exception of one 12-year old girl, all of the children in this group (with more permissive parents) are in their late teens – another possible explanation for the high rate of risky outcomes in this group.

Juan, age 15, appears to have a lot of freedom in the Los Angeles neighborhood he lives in. His mother allows him to make his own decisions. He talks to her freely about his illegal activities such as driving a car underage and without a license, wanting to hack into the school's computer system, and using fake tardy slips at school, and uses a casual tone. His mother talks about her feelings about his recent delinquency.

"Last year, he was found with three kids and smelled of Marijuana." Juan was suspended from school and she said that she and his father gave him "the third degree". "But we didn't whoop him." However she is worried that they may have "over done it". I asked if he felt bad, or realized it was wrong. She said, "I don't think he felt bad, just angry." So I wondered if he has done it again and she said, "He claims he hasn't don't it again." [Fieldnote]

Laura, the mother of Santiago (age 18) in the control group, does not feel that she can interfere with her sons behavior which includes sexual activity with an older neighbor which began when he was 14 years old, fighting, violence, stealing her belongings at times, and smoking marajuana. She was asked about her rules for him in terms of being able to go out in the neighborhood or hanging out with friends:

Laura told me she doesn't have any rules for him, but then also said, "Don't do drugs, don't drink. But he just sleeps here. Oh, and don't bring people over. I can't tell him not to have sex." Laura also mentioned that Santiago has been staying at home lately, that the cousin of the woman he's involved with is visiting. Laura told me, "He has other girls, and I think that's a good thing." [Fieldnote]

About her older son Israel's (age 22) involvement in crime for which he spent several years in prison beginning at age 14, she explains:

"Has anyone you know been arrested or charged in court?" Laura said, "No, not that I know of." "Except Israel?" Laura said, "Oh, right, except him." I asked, "What was that about?" Laura said, "Hanging with the wrong crowd." I asked, "And it was robbery?" Laura said yes. I asked, "So in the neighborhood, is arrest like an everyday event?" Laura said, "In the neighborhood, no. Well, sort of. It happens everywhere. I see people sleeping on the street downtown, and there's none of that here." [Fieldnote]

Elena, an experimental group mother in Boston is worried about her teenage son's interaction with a girlfriend – Emilio's (age 16) whose parents have pressed charges of sexual harrassment.

Ethnographer: Is there anything bothering you that keeps you awake at night? Elena said, "Only the kids you know?" Elena is worried that the situation between Emilio and his ex- girlfriend may be a bad

influence for the other two younger children...yelling that she was not going to be there for him if he went to jail.[Fieldnote]

As with drug use and drug dealing, some boys reported that parents “looked away from” other types of crimes they commit and often blamed other boys for their son’s involvement. Statements from parents whose sons had been incarcerated for selling drugs typically included a variation on the theme: “he was hanging around with wrong crowd.”

By putting family management in the context of many other details of a family’s life, through ethnographic observations and memos completed by fieldworkers, I can observe that some of the parents in this group of more permissive parents seem to be disengaged for some personal reason (poor mental health prevents them from being aware and active in their children’s lives or the mothers are themselves abusing substances). In sum, the data suggests three primary explanations for permissive parenting. Mothers suffer from their own health issues, they feel they have already lost control of their children, or they aren’t worried about their kids getting into trouble in the first place.

Most Restrictive Parents

There are five households and six children who fall into the *most* restrictive parenting category. These mothers do not let their children spend time hanging around outside or let them stay over at their friends’ houses. They know their children’s peers and the parents of those peers. They are successful and deliberate about keeping their kids away from people they perceive as threats, they have strict discipline in the form of rules and chores and they always have someone monitoring the kids if they are not around.

Other common household characteristics emerge among the mothers in this most restrictive parenting group. They are all working full time, in contrast to the least restrictive group, in which none of the mothers are formally employed at all. Whereas much more monitoring might be expected from the group of mothers who stay at home, and are not working, our data shows exactly the opposite phenomena. Perhaps those mothers who are working take extra care to have their children supervised since they cannot be around themselves.

As might be expected none of the youth in this group have been engaged in any risky behavior. There is a caveat, given that almost all parents in the sample identify “growing up” as their primary worry regarding their own role in limiting the behavior that their children might participate in. The youth with parents in the most restrictive group (with the exception of one 12-year old girl mentioned in the permissive parents group) are younger than the children with the least restrictive parents – are all in their *early* teens ranging from 11 to 14 years old. In terms of neighborhood influences, only one of the families continues to live in the projects, the other control group family later moved out of the projects without the assistance of MTO. The other three households in the most restrictive category– from the experimental group – have stayed out of high poverty neighborhoods.

Parenting in the Middle

Most mothers (22/35) fall into the middle range category of parenting – they are neither noticeably strict, nor obviously permissive – when compared to the most and least restrictive. They are concerned about their children’s physical and emotional well-being, aware of their activities and whereabouts, and concerned, but realistic about adolescence in general, and the potential risks of growing up in dangerous neighborhoods in particular.

Mothers speak directly about engaging their children in activities as a way to buffer them from risk and so they won't have time to get in trouble. The narratives of relating activities to staying out of trouble is particularly true of sons, though daughters are just as likely to be engaged in activities. The most highly scheduled kids come from scheduled families – that is all siblings in the family are similarly scheduled. This is true across groups – there are highly scheduled youth in both the control and experimental groups. This parenting strategy seems independent of the neighborhood, except for the instances in which parents gain access to resources for kids, or lose them, through moving. Motivated kids and parents find a way to get themselves onto teams and into dance troupes, wherever they are located.

Though mothers were not generally connected to community institutions in their residential neighborhoods, parenting seemed to play a role in whether or not children were enrolled in activities. Parents could be influencing activities of kids by what they allow their children to do or by what they are doing themselves. Several mothers talk about the arrangements they must make with family members or friends to accommodate kids' free time after school.

As Lanelle, the mother of 4 teenage daughters in the Bronx says: *"I always tried to get my kids up and out of the house at least once a day, get them moving."* The daily routines of the household seem to revolve around education, health care, and child care. Lanelle keeps her kids busy and engaged in school on purpose – one did ballet as a girl, another was in an after school program, the two older girls are in college, and have their own professional aspirations, even though both are pregnant and not yet 20 at the time of the fieldwork. She says *"I raised my kids to work... at age 7 they were taught to clean and even before they can get real jobs [I] get them set up babysitting or something."* Lanelle is strict and organized with their schedules, sometimes relying on her older daughters to

help out and monitor their younger sibling and nephew, which they do. Both younger kids have to be in bed by 9pm.

While most parents talk about trying to limit the danger their children are involved in or the risky activities they are taking part in, not all children are engaged in activities and institutions that encourage pro-social behavior beyond the home. Yet from the comments of parents, this has been an effective means of limiting risky behavior. Many parents talk about getting their kids involved in activities and programs so that they won't be tempted to get into trouble.

But more often the strategies were more deliberate than a relaxation of monitoring and included trying to get their children engaged in "healthier" afterschool activities. Boys who reported that they were not involved in substance use cited non-tolerance on the part of people in their lives (friends, parents, neighbors) for their lack of participation. The other reason that boys reported for not using drugs or smoking was because of the opportunity for organized activities, especially sports (Herbing, 3cMTO Qualitative Data).

Neither of Jessica's children, Mitchell(21) or James (11) have been engaged in serious risky or delinquent behavior. They first moved from the projects in New York to a lower poverty neighborhood in Massachusetts where Jessica's sister lived. Jessica talked about her strategies for keeping her son out of trouble.

Jessica said, "In Massachusetts – yeah. We had a community pool, and we watched each other's kids at the pool." Jessica laughed as she said, "In the projects, no," She said, "I did things with Mitchell so he wasn't tempted to spend time. Most of the kids Mitchell went to school with are in jail now." [Fieldnote]

Residential Mobility, Neighborhood Poverty, and Parenting

Much research suggests that mothers are more restrictive with their children in response to an environment they perceive as dangerous. Given that mothers in both the control and treatment groups uniformly expressed the feeling that the projects were much less safe places to raise children, it seems puzzling that there were not more mothers from the control group in the most restrictive group. The findings from this data show that the most restrictive parenting is not associated with living in higher poverty areas whereas permissive parenting is happening primarily in the higher poverty neighborhoods. This finding conflicts with the suggestion that higher poverty neighborhoods, associated with more dangerous climates, either necessitate strict parental monitoring or deliver it. It also calls into question the hypothesis that mothers relax their standards when living in a lower poverty area. Rather mothers, who are restrictive, such as Jessica, tend to be attentive to risks in the environment no matter where they are living, and the effects of that parenting often effective.

Although they live in a lower poverty neighborhood in the San Bernardino Valley, Robin, the mother of 16-year old Terri, explains her family management strategy.

"I be on her. I ain't no stupid. I watches everything and um, I keep a close eye on them girls, I mean, it's hard when you have girls, you have to watch 'em, especially if you have a lot like me, I got three to watch. I say, 'Don't worry about what they say about you', I say, 'You are doing good, no kids or nothing.' I mean, 'just go the way you are going'. [Fieldnote]

When Robin decided she didn't like some of the friends that Terri was hanging around with she went to the friend's mother.

So I told her mom I was like, I don't want her around my daughter no more, because she put stuff in her head and I don't want her to even think like that right now. And then my daughter started, 'Why I can't have no boyfriend?' I'm like, 'No. You are too little.' [Fieldnote]

Jeanine expresses pride in the fact that her children have grown up in the midst of many social problems and have managed to stay out of trouble. The ethnographer asked Jeanine to explain why she thinks 14-year old Javon hasn't become friends with kids in gangs, even though he was living in the projects with neighbors who were gang-involved.

Jeanine responds that "It's not really the neighborhood, it's your parents. If your kids come in every day, see you smoking weed, drinking, having different people in the house all day...that's what they follow. Now, I drink, I don't keep it a secret. But I go to work every day, and if I'm gonna spend money on drink on my day off I have to save it up all week out of my money for lunch. With Javon, I did good. He went to Marcum [Middle School] in the midst of all these gang bangers. He had the chance to ditch. But the grades didn't drop, there was no ditching." She says that Javon always had people watching him. "I was home, my daddy was home. We see you. You try it, you die." Jeanine says that her children have avoided drugs and gangbanging because as a working mother, she provided them with a good example: "I gave them something else to look at." [Fieldnote]

However, as I describe in the next chapter, Jeanine not only carefully monitors Javon's activities, she has cut off all her ties to extended family members because she considers them a risk.

Summary

Mothers from all groups have a range of strategies that they use to monitor their children from assigning older siblings to watch their younger siblings, to enforcing curfews to talking to their children about risky behavior. Although recent MTO research has hypothesized that disparate adolescent risky behavior outcomes can be explained by differences in the way that mothers monitor girls and boys (Clampet-Lundquist et al.; Popkin, Leventhal and Weismann 2007) age, rather than gender, shaped mothers level of parental monitoring in the ethnographic sample. More restrictive mothers were those with younger children, but the mothers of older teens were characterized by more and less permissive parenting styles. Girls and boys alike shared stories about strict mothers, although it is difficult to tell with the data whether the impact was different by gender. Some mothers felt that it was more difficult to raise girls, and others worried more about boys. Parents from the control and experimental groups both expressed concern that their adolescent children were being mischievous as they aged and that they would become victims of crime or violence.

My analysis of the ethnographic data on family management challenges the idea that neighborhood factors determine parenting strategies. Although mover mothers in the ethnography found lower-poverty neighborhoods to be substantially safer and calmer, they were more focused on the onset of adolescence as a risky time, than on the insulation from risk provided by better neighborhoods or neighbors. I did not find evidence of collective efficacy in action based on mover mother's responses. While some mover mothers did talk about how they are able to let their younger children outside whereas in their old project neighborhoods they would not have felt comfortable doing this, this perception did not translate into greater leniency for adolescent age children.

Interestingly mover mothers were the most restrictive in terms of providing supervision, and in the degree to which they were knowledgeable about their children's friends and whereabouts. One hypothesis is that control group families are more likely to live among relatives who can provide informal childcare support, whereas mover mothers must be more active about arranging supervision and seeking out alternative activities. There is evidence in the data that childcare is an ongoing challenge for mothers in the mover group. Several mothers explained how they kept their children from getting into trouble by keeping them "busy" with activities. Another hypothesis is that mothers in the experimental complier group, those who not only signed up for MTO but have managed to adapt to one or more new neighborhoods, are uniquely motivated to keep their children out of trouble. The ethnographic data is unable to resolve this question, but provides some context for understanding why some mothers are less restrictive. Though a small sample, the most permissive parents (in both groups) indicate that they either do not need to monitor their children closely because they are "good" kids, or they feel that they have already lost control. Furthermore, the mothers in the ethnography who are not monitoring their children as much seem to have additional challenges as several are involved in risky behavior themselves, or have physical or mental health issues. Overall, the data does confirm the importance of parenting to adolescent risky and delinquent behavior outcomes. Not surprisingly parents who were very permissive had children who were involved in risky and delinquent behavior, whereas kids with strict parents had not been in any kind of serious trouble regardless of the poverty level of their neighborhood of residence. Despite the evidence that neighborhood poverty is not the critical factor in the effectiveness of parenting (as measured by the likelihood that a teen was engaged in risky behavior) recall that most children spend a considerable amount of time outside their neighborhood of residence and recounted that much of the risky and delinquent behavior in their lives was happening in and around their schools.

Chapter 7: The Relative Risk

"I always be with the family. Ain't nothing like family...and sometimes you can't even get along with them." [Fieldnote]

- Tessa, control group mother in Boston.

"I asked if people would borrow eggs on her block, and Shari said "I always go to [her] house and borrow eggs. Anywhere I go I borrow eggs. Mainly people on this street we all relatives. Like these couple houses down. Adrienne seem like relatives too." [Fieldnote]

- Shari, 12-year old experimental complier in Los Angeles, who moved back to the projects with her family.

"I got a cousin who has been in jail over 13 years, looking for a place to stay. I was like, 'Oh no you're not. You been in jail. I wouldn't be comfortable in the same house with you.' My kids say, 'Why you keep me away from my family?' I'm like, 'protecting you from the bullshit!'" [Fieldnote]

- Jeanine, control group mother in Los Angeles, who moved out of the projects.

This section describes the kinds of contact that MTO households have with their kin, and where that social interaction takes place. I trace mother's kin ties to understand the circumstances through which adolescents maintain connections with their extended families. I also describe the reasons that mothers give for the presence or absence of contact with kin. One aim of this dissertation is to incorporate housing mobility (to lower poverty areas) as a potential factor in youth delinquency. As with the social ties to friends in chapter 5, I examine whether changing neighborhoods and residential stability (mover's length of time in their residential neighborhood) impacts adolescents' social ties to extended family networks generally and their social ties to *risky* kin specifically. I look at this question first by comparing the relationship status and content – instrumental and affective – of the kin ties of all of the focal subjects (N=52 youth and N=34 adults), and then I look for differences within treatment groups. Given the residential mobility of the

sample, and differing levels of exposure to high poverty neighborhoods, I look for differences in contact and social relationships among comparison groups of focal subjects defined by their distance from/exposure to/and residential stability. The section concludes with an analysis of the association between risky kin and the risky and delinquent behavior of adolescents and young adults.

Measures

Descriptions of the reasons for keeping kin close, or maintaining or instituting distance, emerged from conversations and interactions about all aspects of families lives as well as from the social relations data collection guide (See Appendix). Likewise, much of the content about contact with family members was offered in the context of their housing and neighborhood choices, questions about child support, work experience, and money. For example, over 8 months of talking with Sabrina, a woman from the experimental group I visited in a suburb of Boston, I learned that her stepfather often picks up her kids from school if she can't make it on time; her cousin used her address to get a car loan; her mother was in town watching her sister's children but she never calls Sabrina to offer help with childcare; she got her job through one of her sisters who used to work for the same organization; most weekends she gets together with her family in someone's house near the old neighborhood where they usually drink a little before going to a club; she learned about which school to send her son to through another sister who is a school teacher; and she spends time with, and is a friend of, the sister of her son's father who is still in and out of prison.

In addition, detail about the content and contact of social ties with kin comes from fieldworkers observations and interactions with families as they attend church, have baby showers, and engage in other socializing activities. The way in which the information emerged organically suggests that this question of managing relationships with kin, and

sometimes specifically vis-à-vis risk, is an important aspect of the puzzle of risk outcomes for teens. In order to understand the scope of the social ties to families I analyzed the social relations tables and neighborhood-based memos, as well as all excerpts on housing mobility, routines, social relations, and risky and delinquent behavior. However in effect I moved iteratively between all of the stories and excerpts about social relations from all of the coding and analysis I did, for all of the families, and in all of the coding categories. I use the terms kin and extended family network interchangeably in this chapter.

The Geography of Kin Ties

On average, families had many more kin ties than friends or acquaintances. Overall families named 13.5 kin ties, compared to 4.1 friends and 3 acquaintances, with control mothers reporting more kin ties, on average, compared to the two other groups. Like their parents, most of the youths' social relations are to kin followed by friends, and then acquaintances (though the number of friend ties and kin ties is equal in the experimental group - approximately 6 of each). Also like their parents, this is especially true among the control group where relatives often live close by, if not in the same development or apartment, and where cousins and half-siblings often attend the same school.

Kin Contact

There are no families who have absolutely no contact with any member of their extended family. Eighty-one percent (29/36 and 3 missing cases) are in some kind of regular contact with kin, though some mothers indicated they had contact with *some* of their relatives, just not the risky ones. The data suggests that there is also a wide degree of difference regarding *how often* family members see each other. Several families live with

their extended kin, several more live in the same building with them, and many control group families live in the same projects with kin. In contrast, several families feel close to some members of their larger network, but see them infrequently. This is especially true for first and second generation Hispanic families who maintain ties to family in their country of origin.

The most “active” members⁴⁶ of the kin networks of all of the families in the control group are based almost entirely in the projects or near to where they also live. For families from the experimental group who moved back to an area closer to their original neighborhood – often living near but not in the projects - this is also true. When families move back to a higher poverty neighborhood they almost always move back closer to kin (as opposed to some more distant higher poverty neighborhood). Nearly all the kin networks for the experimental families in Boston and Los Angeles remain in the projects where the family moved from originally. However, many of the kin of experimental families in New York live in another neighborhood, not often the same projects the family left when they received their voucher, not clearly in public housing, and often the family members are more spread out in other locations or states (Although this is not untrue of some families in the other cities, it is more pronounced in NYC).

Near and Far of Kin Location

Another way of looking at the location of kin networks – given the residential mobility of most families over the decade and the considerable number of families that moved back closer to their former neighborhoods (nine of twenty-eight experimental families in the ethnography) is to ask whether kin reside “near” or “far” from the residential locations where MTO participants ended up in 2004. As expected this mirrors observed mobility

⁴⁶ I define “active members” as those kin members who families do see at least several times a year, as opposed to family members living abroad or in other states, since families often have both types of ties in their kin networks.

patterns; families who continue to live at a distance from their original projects tend to be further from kin, with the exception of a couple of families whose kin have moved out of the central city closer to where the MTO family lives. So for example, 45 percent of families live relatively far from their kin.⁴⁷ I examine the possibility that kin ties were impacted by residential mobility, as an explanation for the higher number of kin ties among control group families as compared to experimental families by considering the case of those families who are most stable – living in one place in the same low poverty neighborhood since receiving their voucher.

Impacts of MTO Movers Residential Stability on Kin Ties

Given the high degree of residential mobility among the MTO families (2.6 moves over seven to ten years among the ethnographic sample) the most stably housed might present characteristics different from the more mobile experimental group, particularly in ways involving neighborhood familiarity and engagement. To test this idea I examined the social ties for the few families who moved and remained in the same low poverty residential location for the duration of the program. Would social connections of this group of mothers appear more like the control group families, many of whom have lived continuously in their project neighborhoods years in the projects?

Mothers in the most stably housed group are comprised of five families in the experimental group who moved only once with their section 8 voucher and lived in the same neighborhood. Four of these families live in Boston, which may reflect local housing markets in Boston that are more amenable to assisted housing families, or a less

⁴⁷ I am defining near/far based on (a) household descriptions and perceptions of where and how far their family lives from them, as well as (b) geographic distance which roughly corresponds to living at least 30 minutes from kin by car or other public transportation. I only include households with relatives who live ‘far’ and not those households who indicate that they have some relatives who live near them.

volatile regional housing market as compared to Los Angeles and New York over the same decade (Comey, Briggs Weismann 2008). Mothers in these families did not consider their closest friends to be people in the low poverty neighborhood they lived in, or even identify any friends who lived in their neighborhood at all. However their children were likely to have a network of friends in the local neighborhood, and to attend school locally.

If the women in this small group (of 5) were close at all to any extended members of their families (how they described the importance of that person to them), those family members lived outside the projects, often in a neighborhood nearer to the mover. Only one mother, a woman with severe health problems that limited independent movement, was very close to or reliant on any of her kin.

The women in this group present as very independent, though not unhappily isolated. They are all content with their neighborhoods though they don't have friends who live there. The women divide into two groups based on health status – which may reflect something about their network ties – two of the women have health problems that completely limit their mobility, and a third appears to have some developmental challenges, including being unable to read. Additionally, none of the three have cars and all live in the suburbs outside of Boston. None of the three mothers in these families is employed. The other two women in this low mobility group are in two parent households, one in Los Angeles and one in Boston.⁴⁸ These two women work full time and have completely separated themselves from their old project neighborhoods. Their friends tend to be from work or church.

⁴⁸ Of 39 total households there are 8 two-parent households (father of at least one of the children) in the ethnographic sample. Three of those families with two parents are Cambodian.

Therefore the most stably housed of the women are also the least likely to be returning to the old neighborhoods. Three factors which may contribute to this are the lack of connection to and reliance on people – family or friends – still living there, and more limited physical mobility related either to transportation options and/or health restrictions. The data does not suggest that new friendships and ties based in the new low poverty neighborhoods have supplanted kin ties, or explain their reasons for staying away from the old higher poverty neighborhoods. We have data on five youth in four of these families. Two of the adolescents spend almost all of their time in their residential neighborhood. One spends most of her time near home, and has a network of friends in the area, though she has recently started dating someone she met through her cousin, who lives near the old neighborhood. The other two adolescents go back to visit family in the old neighborhood.

Explanation for the level of contact with kin

An analysis of the data reveals at least sixteen different explanations for the level of contact with kin.⁴⁹ When households were in contact with extended kin the top reasons given were (1) they live close by (2) mother's instrumental support (such as childcare or rides) (3) involved in organized activities together (church mostly) (4) mother feels emotional support from family members (5) kids say they attend the same schools with their cousins and identify kin as friends. The top reasons that household members gave for not being in contact with kin were (1) deliberately avoiding relatives because they were a burden in some way (2) located at a physical distance from them (3) mother says the family is "dysfunctional" or mother or child says they are not "close" to their family

⁴⁹ These categories are not discrete. The totals reflect every time one of the explanations was mentioned, so there may have been multiple explanations per family. Likewise, some families mentioned explanations for why they were in touch with kin' *and* explanations for why they were not in touch with kin, if they maintained contact with some relatives and not others. In those cases both explanations were included in the totals.

members (4) mothers say they deliberately avoid kin because of the “risk” they pose to children (5) Kids just “hang out with friends” more.

The Mixed Content of Kin Ties: Support and Burden

As indicated in chapter 5 ethnographers collected data about the people that provided mothers with material and emotional support. Most mothers reported that they relied on someone for instrumental aid, and on average, this was more likely to be kin than anyone else. About seventy percent of those who provided aid to control families were kin, compared to forty percent for the experimental families. About half of the families in the study also reported that they had someone in their life that was burdensome or draining. On average, mothers reported 2.5 ties that were burdensome. About half of the families (18 out of 31) reported someone in their lives who was or had been a draining or problematic tie. Again, it was mostly kin whom mothers reported to be burdensome. These included relatives, such as nieces/nephews, cousins, siblings, parents, children, and ex-husbands (Rendon 2006).

Most families also reported having some sort of obligation towards someone in their life, most often kin. Mothers who reported to have kin obligations identified caring for someone ill in the family, providing financial support to kin and/or shelter, caring for or providing financial support of parents, and caring for adopted or foster children (Rendon, 2006). Often when relatives were living with family the situation was temporary, for example one mother in Staten Island allowed her brother to stay with her when he got out of jail. In another case an experimental family in Boston was evicted from their apartment in the suburbs, and they moved back to a high poverty neighborhood, when the father of one daughter stabbed the father of her half sibling (apparently near the apartment). This family moved in with relatives temporarily until they could find another place, and needed to find another apartment in order to accommodate an aging, sick

grandfather. Three of the five reasons that family members give for not being in contact with at least some of their kin involved seeing them as a negative influence or burden.

Living in neighborhoods at a distance from the original project neighborhood helped some mothers maintain distance from their family. Even when they are on friendly terms, mothers sometimes experience kin as both a burden and a support. Though Sabrina and her two children have lived in a suburb of Boston for eight years she maintains close ties with kin and friends in Boston. Her kin ties are mixed; she relies on them and returns the favor, yet, not as often as before. She goes to Boston to work and to socialize and says that she likes to keep that separate from her home life where she wants to just relax, something she finds easier to do in her “calmer” suburb. She says “...*I like to keep people at a distance; I like to keep my social life out of my house and the excitement in Boston.*” Yet at times she also bemoans the fact that fewer people visit her because they think she lives too far away (Rendon 2006).

Some mothers are clear that their relatives pose a risk and should be avoided. Jeanine is the control group mother with a 14-year old son and a 10-year old daughter who moved out of her project neighborhood by the time we contacted her for the ethnography. She comes from a difficult family background. Her mother and father had both been crack addicts before they passed away, at the ages of 54 and 55. During her youth both parents became homeless and abandoned their children and she had to raise her brothers and her cousins. As she says, “*I come from a family where leaving your kids with other people is part of the program.*” Her son’s father was a “gangbanger” who is now in prison. Since she has moved away from the projects she has made it a point to maintain her distance from her extended family.

Jeanine says that after graduating from high school, she first “*had to get my momma straightened up. Which was really a waste of time.*” Then, she says, her brother had a baby. “*He had a baby in June, and he was in jail in September.*” Jeanine explains that she

finds her brothers irresponsible: "I got him [one of her brothers, age 27] out of the [foster care] system...The day after he turned 18; they picked his ass up and took him to jail. He ended up doing six years. Now he's back in. Jermaine [her other brother, age 23] only did a year for a violation. I see him; I call him. When the problems come up, he calls." Another brother got arrested for white-collar crime. His girlfriend wanted to get him a lawyer, but Jeanine refused to help pay for it, because she had to spend \$10,000 to take care of her brother's bills for items purchased in her name when he went to jail. "It was my blood, sweat and tears, not his," she says. Now, she says, she's not helping anyone out. "Even my little brother, I was like, I can't do nothing for you, bro." [Fieldnote]

Jeanine explains that she maintains her distance from her brothers and cousins because she considers them to be trouble.

Ethnographer: "Are you still close with your brothers and cousins?"

Jeanine: "They call, check in, but they don't come around. I started getting moody. I'm not gonna hang out...I don't want my family to know where I stay. I have three aunties and two other uncles who don't know I'm here."

E: What would happen if they knew?

"They would come visit, and they would become a problem, wanting to borrow, coming to stay. I got a cousin who has been in jail over 13 years, looking for a place to stay. I was like, 'Oh no you're not. You been in jail. I wouldn't be comfortable in the same house with you.' My kids say, 'Why you keep me away from my family?' I'm like, 'protecting you from the bullshit!'" [Fieldnote]

As Jeanine describes it, the ties she established while living in the projects, including ties with burdensome friends and relatives she "cut with a BIG knife." Although the degree to which Jeanine distanced her extended family is unusual among the MTO mothers, the risk that some of her kin pose is not.

Anique and her 11-year old daughter Clara have moved several times since receiving their voucher, trying to find a place where Anique can balance a full time job, and mothering responsibilities while staying in a decent apartment in a lower-poverty neighborhood that is not several hours away from where she works. Anique is lucky to have the support of her mother and an aunt and uncle whom she feels she can depend on for childcare and who do not pose a risk. About the rest of her family she says:

“I don’t even think of ‘em at all (relatives). I just stay away. If it’s to the point where I wanna fight with them, I can’t deal with them. Everyone who lets them in, they do that too. It’s like, we don’t have the same blood line or something...I’d end up in jail somewhere dealing with them.” [Fieldnote]

Anique described some of these relatives as “crooks” and considers them vindictive - knowing that they had “keyed her car” because they were “jealous.” In order to avoid problems Anique and mother decided to stay away from them.

“We cut them off. There’s too much pain there. Some people, you have to let them go. They messy... They been involved with drugs, they try to influence us...” [Fieldnote]

When Relatives are a Risk

The following section focuses specifically on kin and the risky behavior that is associated with them by household (N= 37). The data show consistency across treatment groups and gender (not shown) in terms of presence of risky kin. Approximately 75 percent of all households identified kin who were involved in risky or delinquent behavior. I examine who these family members are, whether there is actual contact with risky family members, and the content of the contact. I use proxy measures of geographic distance along with mother, adolescent, and young adult’s narratives (about reasons for maintaining or avoiding kin, as well as general stories of activities and feelings about

family that are present throughout the field notes) to identify the extent and nature of the contact with risky kin.

Interestingly mothers rarely explicitly describe any of their own kin, as a “negative influence,” even when they consider them a burden, and especially considering how easily they describe other people, including the friends of their children, and neighbors in project neighborhoods (many of whom *are* kin) as a negative influence. Across groups, control families report slightly more individuals with negative traits compared to LS1 and experimental families, 2.1 ties compared to 1.4 for the other groups. Regardless, the data suggests that most mothers’ social ties to kin involve individuals who could be perceived as negative influences for them and particularly for their children.⁵⁰

The kin mentioned most often as being involved with risky behavior are fathers (outside the household), cousins and uncles, followed by aunts and half-siblings, and in-laws. The risky behaviors mentioned most often include drugs, substance abuse, gang or other violence, domestic or child abuse (most often indicated by a parent, often the mother of the household speaking of past experiences with her own mother – not the adolescent referring to their own circumstances). The current risky and delinquent activities of these kin members is substance abuse/substance abuse related crimes (N=21), teenage sexual activity/childbearing (N =17), having recently been or being in jail/prison (N=13), having engaged in violence, specifically getting shot and/or killed (N=8), gang membership (N=7), fighting/assault (N=6), domestic violence/abuse (N=7), property theft/hustling (N=4), gambling (N = 2). There were also individuals named that were homeless (N=7) or who

⁵⁰ With the exception of eight mothers in the study most had someone in their lives with negative traits that could be perceived as a potential negative influence for them or their children.

smoked (N=4).⁵¹ Many of the kin engaging in these activities were male adults. About half of the youths' fathers were mentioned as possessing one or several of these traits.⁵²

The following family portrait of risky kin networks is illustrative of the circumstances of many of the youth in the ethnography with risky kin. I choose this family to demonstrate how the risk of kin is present within both treatment groups and among families living in neighborhoods with a wide range of poverty levels. These siblings in the experimental group, both included as focal youth in the ethnography, are among the most stably housed after living for seven years in one apartment in a low poverty area (they moved to another town right before the fieldwork began). Their neighborhood (both the one they currently live in and the one they were in for five and a half years) is also a considerable geographic distance from their original project neighborhoods, where many of their relatives live.

Javier (age 12) and Jaclyn (age 17) live with their adoptive mother Roxanne in a relatively low poverty neighborhood of Los Angeles. For most of their time with MTO they have lived in one apartment in Torrance. Jaclyn's real mother has a crack addiction and lives in the Nickerson projects where they moved from. Their 16-year old cousin was living in their house in Torrance and running with a gangbanger, until he went to prison. Javier and Jaclyn's 22-yr old half sister (Roxanne's daughter) Arlene has just had her 4th child. Her three younger kids live at the house with Roxanne, (and Javier and Jaclyn) because of Arlene's on-going problems with drugs. Arlene is now staying at the house with her new baby because the housing authority found drugs in her apartment and

⁵¹ These numbers represent total counts. In some families, there were kin engaging in several of these activities.

⁵² Nine of the families talked about having kin in jail, not including fathers. Additionally at least ten households have fathers who are in prison or were in the past. Contact with fathers who are not currently in prison but not living in the immediate household varies, primarily based on mother's decisions.

she was evicted. She says that they found drugs in her house but not in her system which is why she got to keep her baby. Apparently drug dealers were paying her to use her apartment in Nickerson as a place to deal from. Arlene says she is clean now.

Amazingly neither sibling has been involved in risky behavior, though Javier is starting to have trouble at school with his teachers. Though his sister Jaclyn does not spend time in their old project neighborhood, Javier spends some time there visiting family, and their cousin and half-sister move back and forth between their house, which is in a suburb of Los Angeles, and the project neighborhood.

Contact with Risky Kin

Simply having family who live nearby, or who are risky, is not sufficient to explain the transmission of “risk” from kin to adolescent, if youth rarely or never have contact with family members. Indeed some mothers explained how they insulate their kids from risk by isolating themselves from their families. Eleven youth do not have contact with their kin: three of the adolescents from the control group, and two of the adolescents from the experimental group, are in families that moved back to high poverty neighborhoods. Two of the mothers among the total group of households stated that they deliberately stayed away from their kin because they felt they were a risk to their children.

There are many more mothers who *said* that they did not let their children hang out with risky kin, when in fact they did by allowing them to spend time with their extended family members where risky kin either lived or spent time as well. The explanation for this cognitive dissonance is left unexplained by the mother’s themselves. It could be that for some mothers who rely on kin networks for support, such as childcare, there is no alternative arrangement they can make. Another explanation may be that many of the mother’s individual social ties are mixed – both supportive in some ways and

burdensome in others, and this may be especially true across the network as a whole. Some mothers may feel that the non-risky characteristics of one kin tie (for example a grandmother) may be sufficient protection against a risky family member (a substance abusing uncle) when their children are in the presence of both types of ties. The following mothers in Boston illustrate this dynamic.

The ethnographer asked Danielle, a mother in the experimental group in Boston, if there were people that she thought might influence her daughters in a bad way.

“Yeah. They have cousins who are like 9 or 11 and they are smoking, doing weed, stuff like that. But I don't let them hang out with them” she said. (These cousins live in and around the Mission Hill Projects where their grandmother lives and they spend most weekends there.)

Ethnographer: Not when they go to visit their grandmother who lives there?

Danielle says “No, because LaToya is into herself and Kia goes straight to my mom’s house. She don’t hang out.” [Fieldnote]

Danielle also reports that her cousins (the girl’s aunts and uncles) “*have nice stuff and don’t do drugs.*” However, they “*get their hustle on*” by which she explains that they sell stolen goods - as does Danielle herself. Her cousins get the “*stuff*” and then she drives them around or finds them people to sell it to, explaining that she’s kind of like a “*chauffer.*” The ethnographer reports that she doesn’t worry she will get in trouble because she doesn’t “*put herself in harm’s way*” and writes “*it also seems she thinks that because they don’t do drugs that they will be fine.*” It bears noting that this is the same mother who would not let her daughters spend time at a local skating rink (chapter 5) because she feels that the girls who hang out there would be a bad influence because they are “*too fast.*”

Francisca, another mother in Boston, is severely disabled by Lupus and relies on her mother (her daughter Bianca's grandmother) and her sister to help her out. Although Bianca feels emotionally closer to her cousins in Puerto Rico, over the time of the fieldwork she went to her grandmother's house nearly every day, where she sees her local cousins and often her aunts and an uncle. Bianca and her mother moved away from the projects in Mission Hill when they received their MTO voucher but her cousins are still there and according to her mother a 16-year-old niece, one of her younger brother's daughters who lives there, "got jumped." Francisca explains:

Her niece [in the Mission Hill Projects] "handa vagando a todas horas en la calle" (is running the streets at all times of the day). Francisca says, "yo no dejo que mi hija vaya para alla. No quiero que vea esas cosas" (I don't let my daughter go over there. I don't want her to see those things). When I asked Francisca what she meant by "those things" she explained, "drogas, sexo a temprana edad, peleas en grupos de los Negritos Americans, en especial, drogas" (drugs, sex at an early age, group fights between Black Americans, especially drugs). [Fieldnote]

Yet, Francisca allows Bianca to spend every day at her grandmother's house after school. Bianca's other cousins and an uncle live at her grandmother's house which is in another higher poverty area (compared to Francisca and Bianca's residential neighborhood), and one of her cousins appears to be engaging in seriously delinquent behavior, while the other has been skipping school. Bianca claims that her aunt is scared of her own son. The ethnographer asked Bianca to tell her about her cousin.

"He's 18 and he's a delinquent, he's been in and out of jail a lot. We think he sells marijuana, but we're not sure." I asked Bianca if she's close to him. "I used to be, but not anymore. He's never home he's always out. We never see him." [Fieldnote]

However, during one of the ethnographer's visits at the grandmother's house she met the cousin.

I did catch a glimpse of L. who walked into the house and into his room for a little while, maybe half an hour. We said hello. He was a tall young man, with short braids and a baby face. During [my] visit, however, neither of the aunts there mentioned anything negative or positive about L... When we left the neighborhood, we saw L again hanging out at the park with several more young men. [Fieldnote]

By the end of the fieldwork Bianca reported that she no longer liked to go over to her grandmother's house because she didn't feel comfortable with her cousins' around. The ethnographer asked:

"So how are your cousins, L and S?" I asked. "Bad. Real bad", she said. "I like to be at home more now". Bianca said that L "hit S in the eye and it was purple". She didn't know if he hit his sister intentionally or if they were both fighting and he did it in self-defense. Bianca did mention however that L gets "pissed" when the family doesn't give him money. "I don't' know if he uses it for drugs or what", she said. In addition Bianca also talked a lot about her uncle, her mother's youngest brother who used to live with them in their MTO apartment and who has fathered 8 children from 4 different women. She explained that his girlfriend kicked him out of her house and so he is now living with his mother, Bianca's grandmother. [Fieldnote]

The Association between Risky Kin and Risky Kids

I first compare the basic association between having kin that are risky and adolescent's parents, and sibling's reports of an adolescent's own risky and delinquent behavior.

Comparing the youth outcomes based only on having risky kin, none of the thirteen youth

without risky kin are themselves engaging in risky or delinquent behavior, though 3 adolescents were at one time involved – one in an isolated incident for which he was caught (theft of gameboy video games), or a period during which they were engaged in delinquent behavior (using drugs). Youth from these 13 families without risky kin are equally distributed between Boston, New York and Los Angeles and all but one is from the experimental group. Two of the families in this group of non-risky kin have moved back to higher poverty neighborhoods, both due to difficulty in the housing market, rather than a desire to live closer to support networks. In contrast, of thirty-six youth with risky kin, nineteen are engaging in risky behavior. Therefore slightly more than half of the youth with risky kin are themselves engaged in risky behavior. Among those with risky kin there is no treatment group or neighborhood poverty level factor distinguishing the risky from the non risky youth.

Contact with kin may be a more important factor than simply being related to them, based on the contagion model. Table 7.1 illustrates youth risky and delinquent behavior outcomes based on contact with kin.

Table 7.1

Association between Contact with Risky Kin and Adolescent Risky and Delinquent Behavior

1	Kin not risky; No contact with Kin; Adolescent not Risky	3 youth (2 families)
2	Kin not risky; Yes contact with Kin; Adolescent not Risky	10 youth (8 families)
3	Kin ARE Risky; NO contact with Kin; Adolescent Not Risky	9 youth (8 families)
4	Kin ARE Risky; Contact with Kin; Adolescent Not Risky	8 youth (6 families)
5	Kin ARE Risky; Contact with Kin; Adolescent IS Risky	19 youth (15 families)

Risky = Risky or Delinquent Behavior

In the first two rows any connection to extended family members is irrelevant for this model because the kin are not risky to begin with. Likewise in the third row, the kin are risky but the teen does not have contact with them. The fourth row is the most interesting for my hypotheses as I would expect that contact with risky kin would lead to risky adolescent outcomes. Therefore the youth in this category require explanation and I return to some their stories in the discussion. The final two rows suggest that approximately seventy percent of the youth who have contact with risky kin, are themselves engaging in risky or delinquent behavior. This finding lends support for the idea that risky kin and risky youth outcomes may be associated. (The number increases slightly to 74 percent if I include one young adult who was formerly involved in some risky behavior including using drugs, and early childbearing).

Near and Far of Kin and what it Means for Risk

Given that reports of the riskiness of kin may be incomplete and to examine the data more thoroughly based on an important construct – the meaning of housing mobility – I analyzed the risky behavior of adolescents based on parent and youth statements about the geographic distance between MTO families and their kin. Regardless of treatment group, kids who live “far” away from kin (regardless of the “risk” factor of the kin themselves) are not likely to have engaged in any risky or delinquent behavior. Of the 14 households living at a distance from kin, only 2 teens were engaging in risky behavior – fully 86 percent were not. Of the two who were, the risky behavior would be considered minor/non-criminal - having a fight in school and smoking marijuana in the past year. Both of these teens live in suburbs of Boston; one a 13-year old control group girl, an only child who moved out of the projects with her mother, and Fernando, the 16- year old boy from the experimental group (described in chapter 4) who got in a lot of trouble with his mother when she found the drug in his room and reported him to the police herself to teach him a lesson.

Adding strength to the clear finding that geographic distance is associated with the teen's engagement in risky and delinquent behavior, the data show that the kin referenced above are almost all involved in serious risk behaviors themselves. According to the parents and kids, 10 of the 14 families said that at least one, or several members of their kin network were engaged in criminal or risky behavior (if fathers are included the number increases to 11 or 78 percent). Both of the adolescents mentioned above have "risky" kin.

Of the eighteen households who have kin that live "near" them eleven – or more than half are themselves engaging in risky or delinquent behavior. However, of the seven households in which the focal adolescent was not engaging in risky or delinquent behavior – are three girls, two of whom had been in fights (in which they say they were attacked by other girls) and one 18-year old who used to do drugs, skip school, and belong to a gang but no longer does. So including these reformed adolescents, the percent of teens engaging in risky behavior who themselves live near risky kin is 14/18 or 78 percent. In addition 15/18 or 83 percent of the adolescents living near kin said they had kin engaged in risky behavior.

When Peers are Kin

In other chapters of this dissertation I have suggested that (1) youth return to old neighborhoods to socialize with friends and family members and (2) risky friends do seem to be associated with risky behavior outcomes for adolescents to almost the same degree of association with risky kin and (3) both youth and adults on average report more social ties to kin than to friends. An analysis of the data suggests another important finding about the mechanisms of neighborhood effects by identifying the way in which ecological contexts overlap. Another potential explanation is that peers are kin. It is difficult to separate the effects of risky kin from risky peers using a categorical analysis of the data because having risky kin and risky peers are so highly correlated. One reason for this may be the artificial conceptualization of two separate categories.

Much of the evidence for peers as kin comes from the data we collected on routines, neighborhood engagement, and risky behavior. When asking directly about social ties we identified the friends and family as separate categories. But from the stories we heard from teens, risky behavior occurs with individuals who are both friend and relative, as well as with each independently. In their explanation of why they became involved with risky behaviors and with whom – many adolescents often talk about a relative as the person who introduced them to that lifestyle.

Lahn, a 21 year old young adult who completed 2 years in prison for robbery recently returned to live in the projects in Los Angeles where he grew up. His entire extended family also lives in the projects and he is close to his cousins there. Lahn believes he was lucky to have gone to jail given the risks in his neighborhood. Lahn believes that the trouble was neighborhood based, and notes that most of his friends that lived there experienced the same dangers even if they were not a direct cause of the violence.

"Yeah, people in the neighborhood are all in the same gang. There used to be killings all the time. Before, if a strange car drove in, it'll probably get shot at. You don't know who's coming in so it's best to shoot them before they shoot you. Everyone gets shot." Me: "Did a lot of the gang members die?" Lahn: "Yeah, they get shot. The most killings were done before I got locked up and when I was locked up. A lot of my friends have bullet holes. They got shot but they didn't die you know. Bullet holes in their backs. Big holes too. They show them to me and I'm like, 'How'd you live?'" A lot of people I know died too. Last weekend, there was a funeral." [Fieldnote]

Lanh's cousin was in his gang and when they skipped school as a teen he would come and pick Lanh up with Lanh's friends, in a cousin's car. I then ask Lanh about people who influence him in good and bad ways. Lanh: *"My mom is a good influence in my life. She always tells me to do the right thing. She keeps me in check and tells me to stay away from my bad friends."* Me: "How about bad influences?" Lanh: *"Some bad friends I had*

in the gang, my cousin Rob who got me into the gang. He's in jail now. His family lives in Long Beach." [Fieldnote]

Kin Ties that Bind: Dionne

Dionne is an 18-year old experimental complier who lives with her half-brother Maurice, her half-sister Lori, her mother Crystal, and her infant daughter in Yonkers. For the family it is mostly a place to live that offers a safe environment and access to necessary resources and services. The South Bronx, where they moved from originally is still an important second neighborhood for them. Crystal works as a teacher's assistant in the South Bronx and her youngest daughter attends day care across the street. They also have important family and other relationships that keep them affiliated with the Bronx. Dionne's boyfriend and father of her infant daughter live in her old neighborhood in the South Bronx and she splits her time between his apartment and her mother's apartment in Yonkers. All of Dionne's friendships are in her old neighborhood. Even though they remain close to family, their social relations have changed because of the distance from the South Bronx. Before they moved to Yonkers with their MTO voucher Dionne's grandmother and cousin lived in the same building with them. While they spend a lot of recreational time with family, it is not as frequent as before because it takes so long to get to their old neighborhood.

Dionne's first exposure to risk comes from her many relatives. Her mother describes their extended family: Dionne's father has just been released from prison and her brother Maurice's father, who Crystal was with for seven years, drank beer and smoked weed. At the time of the ethnography Crystal had recently kicked their stepfather out of the Yonkers apartment because he was using crack. However, during one of the visits

the ethnographer reported that he was sleeping on the front stoop of the house and Crystal indicated that she had been driving him to the homeless shelter. The ethnographer writes,

"...Crystal opened up to me about drugs and her family, telling me that it wasn't just Dionne's father who had a drug problem. She said her brother had a drug problem when he was younger, too, and that their mother(Dionne's grandmother) kicked him out. Once he wasn't doing drugs anymore, he would say he couldn't believe how he used to live, out on the street. I said, "Okay, wow, so your brother struggled with it too. Anyone else in your family?" She said "Yes, cousins also. And my father." [Fieldnote]

Dionne's father lives in Brooklyn. She talks to him twice a week and they see each once a week if she is in the Bronx. He has been "in and out of jail." He visits Dionne when she's in the Bronx or he goes to his sister's house when Dionne visits her aunt so that he can see her. Crystal is not sure if Dionne's father is still doing drugs but thinks it is ok if they see each other because "*people need their fathers.*" Dionne herself used to do drugs but has stopped within the last year. The ethnographer asked her about engagement in risky behavior – why she started, who she was with when she did it, and why she stopped.

Ethnographer: "What led you to smoke that one cigarette, to drink, to smoke weed?" Dionne just said, "Curiosity. I don't know." I asked, "Was it peer pressure at all?" and she said no. E: "What did you get out of it?" Dionne said, "Nothing." E asked if she ever tried any other drugs, pills, or anything and Dionne told said she hadn't. She said she never wanted to try more serious drugs. E: "Like crack?" She said, "Yeah, I seen crackheads on the street, and my mother's husband - how he acted." [Fieldnote]

Dionne primarily did drugs with her boyfriend, who also sells them, and two of her cousins. She said that she stopped doing it because she drifted apart from her cousins, and adds that one of them lost his car which made it more difficult. Her cousin Amanda is

now also doing crack, but Dionne thinks that is because of bad influences in Kentucky where she is now living. The ethnographer asked her about why she stopped using drugs.

E: "Is it because you got pregnant with her [her baby] at all?" She said, "No, it was before that. I just didn't want to do it anymore - it was just a phase. If I wanted to, I would now. But don't want to." E: "But you think your cousins still do?" She said, "Yeah. Amanda does. More than weed, too." E: "What?" She said Amanda has been smoking crack...And you said you stopped because....?" Dionne responded, "Like I said, it was people just drifting apart. And Rakim lost his car, so there was no way to get around." E: "So it was like the opportunity was lost?" Dionne said yes. E: "And what did you do after that? With all that time you had since you weren't drinking and smoking anymore?" We laughed together and she said, "I guess I just stayed home or went out with friends." [Fieldnote]

Summary

The conventional sociological wisdom is that low income families rely on networks of kin for support and assistance. This seems true of the MTO mothers in the ethnography. In particular control group mothers reported having the most kin ties, and the least friends and acquaintances, but mothers from the mover group also reported more ties to kin than to friends, neighbors, or acquaintances (See: chapter 5). However, the literature on social ties, and studies of assisted housing programs, has also shown how social ties can be beneficial, burdensome, or mixed depending on the strength or weakness of the tie, the position of the tie in a larger social network, and the ends to which the tie is being activated. For MTO mothers the character of their kin ties was often mixed. That is, sometimes the mothers relied on their extended family members for support (though the MTO mothers rarely describe themselves as burdensome), and they often described having to accommodate and support members of *their* extended families. In a few cases kin, often with no other options, lived with MTO families although it violates the

program rules of Section 8 (HUD). While some mothers accepted an ambivalent relationship with their family members, others worked to distance themselves from kin, using their housing voucher as a way out of troublesome neighborhoods *and* difficult families. Still, even when MTO families moved several times with their vouchers to different neighborhoods, most mothers remained in kin-embedded social networks near or in their old project neighborhoods.

I also find that kin ties may be particularly problematic for the MTO families in the ethnography. In the majority of families there is at least one kin member who could be characterized as a risk. Almost of the study's households identified kin who were involved in risky or delinquent behavior, though not all families maintain contact with their kin, or with those members of their extended families that they believe pose a threat. The character of kin risky behaviors ranged from mild substance abuse to life threatening abuse to gang involvement to repeated incarceration. Mothers reported most on males who were involved in risky behavior, often their children's father, or a past boyfriend although there were a surprising number of stories about abusive mothers (grandmothers) as well. When youth described their social ties to risky kin it was almost always in the context of a story about socializing with extended family members, about how they became involved in risky or delinquent behavior (joining gangs and selling and using drugs especially), or simply in describing the people with whom they now socialize.

Seventy-five percent of the adolescents who maintain contact with risky kin are themselves involved in risky or delinquent behavior. In comparison, of those adolescents who have no contact with risky kin, primarily because their mother has cut ties with relatives, and those who have contact with *non*-risky kin, none have been involved in any risky or delinquent behavior. Based on the measures I examine in this study – neighborhood engagement, neighborhood mobility, parenting, and peers, few commonalities emerge among the few adolescents who do have contact with risky kin but manage not to get into trouble themselves (Table 8.1). The adolescents come from the experimental and control group, range from 11 to 18-years old, and some are residentially

stable whereas others have moved frequently. In some of the families there is another sibling in the immediate household who has been involved in delinquent behavior. Recalling the youth' own explanations for why some teens are able to avoid trouble, it may be that these adolescents are unusually independent minded or keep to themselves but I have not explored neighborhood mechanisms underlying their independence in this study.

An interesting aspect of the data is the finding that most of the mothers, as well as the teens, do not have the same degree of vigilance about risky relatives as they do about risky peers and places. Some mothers fully acknowledge the illegal activities that family members are involved in, without restricting their children's access to them. More often though kin are not considered a danger, or not enough of a danger to outweigh the supports that kin relationships provide. Clearly living at a distance from kin, and particularly risky kin may serve as a protection for youth as when mothers choose to use relocation to create social and geographic space away from problems. In contrast adolescents living near risky kin are much more likely to find themselves getting into trouble. However, the prior chapters demonstrate that one need not *live* "close" to risky kin – as long as youth continue to spend time hanging out with their family or with friends in risky environments they are more likely to participate in risky and delinquent activities themselves.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows how kin networks, parental monitoring, and housing mobility structure low-income adolescents engagement in risky and delinquent behavior. Based on the literature I hypothesized that socializing with risky peers would be one mechanism of neighborhood influence on youth' problem behavior and that parents would mediate the peer influences of a neighborhood by monitoring their children's contact with risky peers and places. I expected to find that adolescents in the mover group would have greater exposure to lower poverty neighborhoods through local engagement measured by stable residency, friends, and daily routines located in their neighborhood of residence. In turn local engagement in lower poverty neighborhoods would lead to less participation in risky and delinquent behavior because of a relatively less dangerous environmental context and fewer risky peers in lower poverty neighborhoods as compared with high poverty project neighborhoods.

My findings indicate that greater long-term residential stability in lower poverty neighborhoods increases adolescents' engagement in their local neighborhood to positive effect, but most mover families did not stay in the same housing or in very low poverty neighborhoods over time. For the majority of mover adolescents neighborhood of residence is not the primary neighborhood of influence. Instead, the neighborhoods where adolescents' social ties are located are more influential in terms of risk because those are the places in which the youth spend time. While I find that parental monitoring is an important part of limiting adolescent involvement in risky and delinquent behavior in both high and lower-poverty neighborhoods, another aspect of family management – how families manage their social ties can expose mover adolescents to risk.

In this chapter I review the major findings in chapters four through seven on routines and neighborhood engagement, peers, parenting, and risky kin. To frame the findings about mechanisms of neighborhood effects I first offer a brief profile of how youth in the ethnography fare on the measures of risky and delinquent behavior that are the major outcome of interest in this dissertation and other MTO work.

Contribution

The literature on neighborhood effects has focused on the support that kin provide low-income families and emphasizes risky peers – either conceptualized as friends or neighbors – as a mechanism of neighborhood influence on adolescent risky behavior outcomes. My findings suggest that for many low-income families peers are kin, kin can be burdensome and risky as well as supportive, and attachment to risky kin, like attachment to non-kin peers who are risky, is associated with adolescent involvement in risky behavior. By offering this different and important view of how social ties to kin mediate neighborhood risk my study also contributes to an extensive and ongoing collection of research on MTO's impacts. I provide a summary of the MTO research in section two and explain how my dissertation responds to the results and hypotheses of the selection of studies which focus on adolescent risky behavior outcomes.

Recommendations

In the final section of the chapter I recommend increasing support for families in housing mobility programs such as MTO. A precondition for change in social outcomes through exposure to lower poverty neighborhoods is residential stability and there are concrete ways that housing programs can help families stay out of high-poverty neighborhoods. The implications of my findings on risky kin also suggest that MTO families need and want assistance in managing the types of everyday challenges of balancing work and

childcare and transportation and needy kin that *all* families face, but which can force dangerous compromises when combined with economic insecurity. While greater institutional or program support for housing and ancillary social services may not be a panacea for managing risky kin, this study suggests that adolescents are more likely to become involved in risky behavior without this investment.

Summary of Findings

My results show that there was diverse experience among mover youth in their exposure to and experience in lower poverty neighborhoods. Families that moved were likely to maintain connections to other neighborhoods through their activities and social relationships. Neighborhood of residence was the primary neighborhood of influence for only a few adolescents who moved at a young age and stayed primarily in one neighborhood during the time of the program. For these youth their social worlds are centered in their lower poverty neighborhood, their school is in the local school district, and half are involved in structured activities near to where they live. However while most adolescents and adults felt that the lower poverty neighborhoods they moved to after living in the project neighborhoods were much safer, and less saturated with violence, social disorder, and illegal activity, from their accounts there is clear evidence that risk remains in these neighborhoods. *As one mother told us “It is not like there are no abusing and alcoholic parents here in suburbia, but the environment is different and the children have less of an ability to get in trouble.”* [Fieldnote]

Youth exposure to lower poverty neighborhoods was also dependent on families’ patterns of housing mobility. The majority of the families in this study moved frequently and lived in neighborhoods with a range of poverty levels. Moving shaped if and how social ties were maintained and the activities youth were able to engage in. Only some of the youth who moved participated in structured activities in their neighborhoods, and most of their friends were from school rather than from the neighborhood. Therefore their

exposure to lower poverty neighborhoods through socializing with peers varied. Youth exposure to neighborhood poverty was also conditioned more by their social ties to family, than by their relationships with friends. To the degree to which parents or youth maintained contact with kin in old neighborhoods, youth also remained connected to neighborhoods other than their neighborhood of residence. Therefore I suggest that an accurate account of the influence of neighborhoods on youth should consider the amount of time that youth actually spend near their home, and the activities they take part in when there.

My results also suggest that social ties to kin influenced adolescent risky and delinquent behavior outcomes both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, social ties to kin and friends, among the mover group drew adolescents back to known risky neighborhood environments, even when youth acknowledged that they themselves were seeking excitement in their old 'hood. Associating with kin appears to be directly risky because most of the adolescents' extended family themselves engage in risky and delinquent behavior. When 3cMTO adolescents share their own stories of becoming involved in or exposed to risky behavior relatives play as much of a role as friends (though they may also consider relatives as friends) in their history. Moreover, mothers seem more likely to act to limit adolescents' exposure to risky places and friends, than to kin, even when they acknowledge the illegal activities that kin are engaged in. Although the control group of MTO youth has more contact with kin because they often grow up in the same neighborhood together, and relatives often become friends, housing relocation altered kin ties only for those mover mothers who deliberately maintain a social or geographic distance from family. Therefore, the ethnographic work in this dissertation supports what others have found regarding social supports and embedded kin relationships among low-income families using quantitative and qualitative methods and emphasizes that social networks to kin create burdens as well as offer support (Belle 1982 ; Briggs 1998; Stack 1974).

Risky Behavior

My aim in this study was to learn about the neighborhood conditions that structure adolescent involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. The ethnographic data suggest that less than a quarter of the MTO youth are involved in *delinquent* behavior, regardless of treatment group, gender, or neighborhood poverty level and less than half engage in any risky behavior. Differences do emerge in the types of risky and delinquent behaviors that MTO girls and boys engaged in and in the seriousness of the activity. The data show that there are some behaviors that only boys have engaged in: selling drugs, gambling, vandalism, shoplifting, and robbery. Girls are mostly fighting with other girls and engaging in early sexual activity. Furthermore, involvement in risky behavior was more detrimental for boys in higher-poverty project neighborhoods as measured by the consequences. Boys who were at all involved in risky behavior in the projects had a history of delinquent behavior and most had been incarcerated at least once. As opposed to the all or nothing picture illustrated by the experience of youth in the highest poverty neighborhoods, none of the boys in the experimental group had been incarcerated although several had been arrested. The data also reinforce the view that there is an extreme amount of violence and risk surrounding most of these kids, even when they are not engaging in it directly.

Routines and Neighborhood Engagement

Neighborhood of residence does not structure the social world of most mover adolescents. This is much different for adolescents who grow up in the projects whose social worlds *are* largely structured by their neighborhood of residence in comparison. I do not suggest that project kids never leave the projects only that their important social ties are much closer to home. In contrast the social networks of mover adolescents are geographically dispersed so that they spend time in school neighborhoods, neighborhoods where they work or do activities, and especially neighborhoods where their kin live. The

kin of most mover families continue to live in or near the project neighborhoods movers left, or in similar high poverty neighborhoods elsewhere. As a result of these social ties, movers return to their old project neighborhoods often, and primarily for the purpose of seeing family. Some of the older youth also return to visit friends *and* family, but over time mover adolescents are much less likely to maintain friendships there unless they continue to attend the same school in the project neighborhood as some of the youth did.

Youth also spend time outside their neighborhood of residence because they are involved in activities such as part-time work, sports teams, church, and dance groups or they attend school outside the neighborhood area. The results support the theory of routine activities (Osgood and Anderson 2004) that says when kids are in structured activities they have less time to get involved in crime. My results also confirm the importance of certain types of activities. If the routine that takes adolescents back to their old neighborhoods is structured and monitored, returning has a different and less risky impact than if adolescents return just to socialize. When looking at where youth spend their time for activities an important distinction between indoor and outdoor youth emerges. Although not tied to neighborhood type or perceived neighborhood safety at the time of the ethnography, it is possible that youth who were exposed, or were at the risk of being exposed to neighborhood violence in the past, are now more likely to be indoor kids. While our data did not probe on this question the data show that some kids tend to stay inside and to themselves and they are much less likely to get into trouble than outdoor kids regardless of what kind of neighborhood they live in. Care of younger siblings is a major activity for almost all of the girls (age 13 and older) in our study. While I did not find any major differences in routines by gender in this sample, the duty of childcare certainly influences adolescent girls and boys differently in regards to their after-school time, leaving girls with less free unstructured time, and probably leading to more indoor time as well.

The data indicate that movers do not have a homogenous response to moving and living in lower-poverty neighborhoods and that the reasons for returning to old neighborhoods are not entirely uniform. Adolescents and parents sometimes see their neighborhood of residence differently. As adolescence is a time for experimentation and socializing, naturally many mover kids reported that the “calm, quiet” environment that their mother’s felt relief in was “boring.” Like 18 year-old Fernando who thinks that his semi-suburban neighborhood was great when he was little and could play outside with other kids but which he now finds kind of dull, some youth’ perception of their neighborhood changes over time. Mover youth are able to make some comparisons between project neighborhoods and the neighborhoods where they live even if they moved before they were old enough to register differences in their physical environment because they visit kin in old neighborhoods. Although kin ties, often mediated by mother’s ties to family, represent the strongest pull factor leading adolescents back to old higher- poverty neighborhoods, youth’ perception that there is more action in the ‘hood as compared to their neighborhood of residence is certainly another reason that some teens return. In our sample, it is the adolescents who are already engaging in risky or delinquent behavior who were likely to share that they found their neighborhood boring, perhaps offering a justification or rationale for their existing behavior.

What is evident from the data is that half the mover youth who do return to their old neighborhoods are engaging in risky behavior, whereas of the youth who do not return, none are delinquent or risky enough to warrant attention. Interestingly, the few teens from the control group whose parents deliberately kept them from socializing in their neighborhood of residence, primarily by involving them in activities elsewhere, also had no history of risky or delinquent behavior as compared to many of their peers.

Overall many factors about adolescents’ routines and level of neighborhood engagement interact to influence whether or not they are likely to become involved in risky and delinquent behavior. One of the outstanding questions in the neighborhood effects

literature on housing mobility, and one which the 3cMTO study hoped to learn about, is the set of conditions under which families who relocate experience a shift in their social worlds and the effect of this change on other aspects of their lives. My results offer a partial answer to this question – partial because there was enough variation between families in the ethnography to require that each case be seen as somewhat unique and also due to the focus of my analysis on routines, social ties to family, and neighborhood mobility and not on other potentially important factors such as employment prospects, school achievement, and geographic distance.

Two broad themes emerge in my data in answer to the question of which adolescents experienced relatively greater shifts in their social world and why. First and sensibly the length of time that adolescents live in their residential neighborhood, without moving around to other neighborhoods –is a precondition for a shift in social world. The adolescents in the study who moved when they were younger, stayed longer, and moved around less were more likely to have a social world almost entirely based in their lower poverty neighborhood even when they maintained some connection to family elsewhere. The few families in this category were also less connected to kin although the causal direction (if less attachment, are they more likely to move or does moving lead to less attachment?) is not possible to decipher with this data. Furthermore, adolescents in this group of the “most stably housed in lower-poverty neighborhoods” were not engaging in any significant risky or delinquent behavior; but which aspects of their routines and social worlds were more determinative of this outcome will have to wait for additional analysis, which will hopefully be included in MTO’s final evaluation. Second, and connected to the first condition, a shift in social world was associated with limited contact with the old project neighborhood often because of choices made by parents. Again, the direction of causality is not clear but my results underscore the multiple ways in which parents channel potential neighborhood influences for their kids.

Peers

It is conventional wisdom that risky friends will lead to risky behavior because ‘like begets like.’ The literature considers peers to be a primary mechanism of neighborhood effects, but is undecided on how directly peer behaviors relate to individual choices about engaging in risky behavior. Some research makes a convincing case that stronger ties are more influential (close friends, siblings) and that status in the overall social network is important too (Farrington 2007; Granovetter 1973; South and Haynie 2004). When peers are conceptualized as neighbors, as in epidemic models, the evidence for peer influence is less robust (Ludwig and Kling 2007). Studies of adolescent development largely agree that the relative influence of peers on adolescent risky behavior is strongly affected by parenting practices (Furstenberg et al. 2000; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry 2000; Jarrett 1998; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Tolan and Loeber 1993). In the 3cMTO ethnography we were unable to examine youth friend ties with the detail of a traditional peer group study, and because of the challenges recruiting and talking with adolescents and time constraints we captured only breadth of information about peers. I describe these methodological choices and challenges in more detail in chapter three. However, as peers are such an important part of adolescents lives it is important to include them in any analysis of youth risky and delinquent behavior. Furthermore, following the literature and MTO’s study design I expected that along with family management practices and routines, subjects on which we *were* able to collect a lot of data, that youth ties to friends would provide an explanation of where youth were spending time.

Given the data we collected my aim in this dissertation was to identify whether youth with risky friends were also engaged in risky behavior and whether this varied by neighborhood poverty level. If there was a difference between the location of friend ties of youth in lower and higher-poverty neighborhoods I looked at whether this changed as a result of neighborhood relocation, and tried to identify where adolescents’ closest friends were from. In general, parents and adolescents in the mover group thought that their “peers” in their old higher poverty neighborhoods were riskier than in the lower

poverty neighborhoods they lived in. However, an important finding is that youth identify plenty of risky peers in their new neighborhoods, although they were mostly referring to kids from school – which was sometimes not in the same neighborhood. Overall the collection of stories about neighborhoods, peers and risk in the mover group provides an image of any typical city in which some areas are dangerous, while the next block is not, and some kids are trouble, but others are not. While the control group adults and kids are more unanimous about the prevalence of social problems and problem people in the projects, mover youth' experience with risky peers seems to be more a matter degree than a matter of occurrence. The results support the idea that poor neighborhoods are dangerous and that families feel that part of the reason is because of the people who live there and who are “doing drugs, hanging out, doing things a girl not supposed to be doing with a grown man.” Yet the data also suggest caution in considering lower-poverty neighborhoods as uniformly safe and risk-free.

We also asked youth about their specific friends and not just about their peers. About half of the adolescents in the sample, both movers and stayers, reported that their friends were engaging in at least one risky behavior. As the model would predict, most youth with risky or delinquent friends were also engaging in risky behavior themselves. More interesting was that youth and parent's ideas of what limits adolescent engagement in delinquency were consistent – the rare moment when teens and their parents are of the same mind – and straightforward. They all report that avoiding risky peers/friends requires a mother (our families were nearly all female headed) who is strict and carefully monitors behavior, and a child who is able to “go their own way” and not succumb to peer pressure. When the subject of avoiding risk came up participants from all types of neighborhoods gave a lot of weight to agency, stating that it is the individual who makes the choice of which kind (trouble or not) of friends they associate with. It is beyond the scope of my dissertation to explain the interaction between parenting and youth self-control but my findings suggest that in some types of neighborhoods it may be more difficult to “go your own way.”

Indirectly the finding about how adolescents and parents consider risk and feel they can freely choose their peers supports an important argument about risky kin in my dissertation which is that people don't choose their family. In our sample, there were more social ties to kin than to friends, even for movers. In chapters five and seven I show that when youth move, kin remain an important social tie to the old neighborhood, whereas most youth do not maintain their friendships there. The data also highlight a finding which should not have been surprising yet I did not encounter any discussion in my literature review of what difference it might make if most of one's friends are also one's relatives. Although most youth' friends are from school, the school-neighborhood geography more strongly overlaps in the control group, such that for many adolescents their friends, and relatives are often located in the same general neighborhood. My results suggest that there are important impacts of this connection to extended family which affect housing mobility and potentially delinquency, beyond the economic implications of a smaller social network size.

Parenting

The findings on parenting challenge the idea that neighborhood factors determine the parenting strategies of poor families. However, they support the literature that asserts the importance of parents in buffering youth from risk. The data indicate that moving to lower poverty neighborhoods did not change mothers' perceptions of the sources of risk, or their vigilance in monitoring their children's behaviors. Although some did talk about how they were able to let their younger children outside more in lower poverty neighborhoods, they were much more concerned about the influence of risky peers and the on-set of adolescence. Mover mothers described management strategies that ranged from curfews and cell phones to involving their children in activities, even sibling care, to keep them from risky behavior. One mother in New York sent her daughter to stay with an aunt after she was threatened by a local drug dealer who was friends with her boyfriend. At least one parent from the mover group felt that parenting would have been harder in the project neighborhood because of all the risky activity there and the "fast"

girls, but she still felt as if she needed to keep a watchful eye on her sixteen-year old daughter in the California valley where they live. The data did not reveal any particular pattern with regard to gender and monitoring. Some parents felt that raising girls was more difficult, others boys. However, the few mothers who clearly felt that they had lost control were mothers of boys who were already involved in delinquent behavior. Adolescent girls from both treatment groups were more likely than their parents to say that growing up was harder for boys because boys get caught up in selling drugs and gangs more often than girls. Not surprisingly, parents who monitor their kids closely did not have kids who were engaging in risky or delinquent behavior.

Although most of the parents were somewhere in the middle in terms of how much they tried to control their children's access to people and places they considered risky, the most restrictive parents in the ethnography were the movers and the least restrictive parents were in the projects. It is not clear from the data whether this is generalizable to all the MTO parents in the larger sample, although these families shared some characteristics beyond their family management strategies which might be instructive for further analyses. Of the handful of families in this category all work full time, in contrast to the least restrictive group, in which none of the mothers are formally employed at all. Whereas mothers who are not working should have the time to monitor their children more than working mothers the data shows that the reverse happens. Perhaps those mothers who are working take extra care to have their children supervised since they cannot be around themselves. Moving may in fact have necessitated some form of structure as mothers tried to balance their work life, or accommodate gaps in support which they lost when they relocated. Many of the mothers in the mover group spoke about the challenges of childcare. This may also explain why some mothers in the control group were less restrictive. Knowing their neighbors and surrounded by family these parents may assume that someone else in the neighborhood is watching out for their kids.

Kin Ties and Risk

For almost all the mothers in the ethnography kin were an important source for instrumental help such as childcare and car rides, or even just to provide them with a break from daily life. Two mothers in the mover group described how they like to send their kids to stay with their relatives sometimes so that they can have “me time.” Other mothers were on the receiving end of the childcare arrangement. Although this reciprocity is often beneficial my results emphasize that attachment to kin can also be burdensome, and in many cases can pose a direct risk to adolescents. Of all the stories from participants in the ethnography what stands out the most is the amount of risky and delinquent behavior that youth have been exposed to through their kin ties. Nearly every adolescent has a relative who is engaging in risky behavior and many have several who are more seriously delinquent. Every youth knows someone who has been in prison, and for at least one-third of the youth this includes their father. Their experiences range from isolated incidents of substance abuse to repeated domestic violence to one family in which the father of one sibling stabbed the father of another, causing this experimental family to lose their apartment. Not only are some of these activities dangerous in the abstract, they are ongoing in the lives of these adolescents through their frequent contact with kin.

In chapter seven I show that seventy-five percent of the youth who maintain contact with risky kin, are themselves engaged in risky behavior. In contrast, none of the adolescents who maintain contact with *non-risky* kin are involved in risky behavior themselves. Because youth in the control group are more likely to live closer to their relatives this increases the association, but it holds even for the mover youth. Two other findings offer strong supportive evidence for the risk that kin pose. When adolescents talk about the risky and delinquent behavior they are or have been involved in the narrative often features a relative. Among the handful of reasons that mothers gave for not maintaining contact with kin several mothers shared that they specifically limit their attachment with relatives because of their illegal activities and the risk that they pose to their children.

The results from this study show that parents mediate exposure to risk either through how they manage their social ties or by the parental practice of monitoring youth activities, which sometimes includes managing adolescents' social ties to friends. Why then are parents not more vigilant about risky kin? Overall parents seem much more aware of the risk that *peers* pose to adolescent involvement in risk. Adolescents themselves are much more likely to talk about avoiding risky places and risky peers than risky kin. One of the explanations why parents may not monitor their youth as carefully around kin is simply that social ties can be mixed – offering burdens and benefits (Aigner, Flora, and Hernandez 2001; Belle 1982 ; Campbell and Lee 1992; George 1990). Although many of the adults in the study gave examples of ways in which they felt their family was a burden they were also closer to them than to anyone else in their lives. They rely on them, even after moving, and are relied on in turn. Another reason for the lack of attention to the risk factor of kin may reflect the fact that risk is so prevalent among family that it has become normalized and accepted (Parker, Williams, and Aldridge 2002; Thornberry, Ireland, and Smith 2001). Several ethnographic accounts of the most violent project neighborhoods in Chicago, South Boston, and New York such as the ones that MTO targeted, have described how a climate of fear and embedded social networks have contributed to the collective level of social problems, especially when family members are reluctant to “rat out” one another (MacDonald 1999; Popkin et al. 2000; Venkatesh 2000).

Summary

As 3cMTO families changed neighborhood of residence, sometimes three or four times, their social ties traveled with them. In particular most MTO families who moved maintained ties with their kin, who continued to live in or near their old project neighborhoods. This was true even when relationships to kin were burdensome or

strained, or when their delinquency clearly poses a risk to the family. The findings show that more than sixty percent of the mover adolescents return to their old neighborhoods primarily for socializing, with friends and with kin. Of the teens who do maintain ties to the old neighborhood or another high-risk neighborhood where family live, sixty percent are involved in risky and delinquent behavior. The association between contact with risky kin and adolescents' own delinquency, holding the poverty level of the neighborhood of residence constant, is seventy-five percent. Moreover the explanation provided by youth themselves for their engagement in risky behavior, often includes a story about family members. This is true even when youth and parents explain a lack of involvement in risky behavior as independence, parenting, or lack of association with risky friends.

One difference between adolescents who go back to their old neighborhoods and get into trouble and those who go back but don't seem to depend on having a social world that is *centered* in old neighborhoods. Mover youth who are most seriously delinquent are those who actually moved back to the old neighborhood, and those that go back to visit family and peers. Furthermore, youth who have local friends in their residential *low-poverty* neighborhoods are those who have had time to develop friendships in the neighborhoods where they live and attend school there. And although having friends in the new neighborhood does not automatically limit youth' social networks in their old neighborhoods or in other locations where they continue to have friends, the data suggest that these youth are less likely to be involved in serious delinquency.

My analysis does suggest that parenting may be more challenging in an environment in which there is more danger. Even if parenting strategies did not deliberately change, most mothers who moved talk about the greater worry they had when living in the projects and express a sense of relief about not having those worries anymore. However, there is one way in which parenting may be more challenging in newer environments and that is in the support networks that some families lose when they move. Thinking about how to manage jobs and childcare is much more complicated when families relocate. One of the

important aspects of parenting to risky behavior outcomes is monitoring. With fewer relatives around to watch the children, this can become problematic. Yet, the circumstances vary from child to child as many kin members are associated with risky behavior themselves and while they can support the parents in one way they may be condoning risky behaviors at the same time. I demonstrate that parents may not always see kin risk in the same way that they see peer risk, and to the extent that risky kin are associated with risky places and parents mediate youth' social ties, parents may overlook an important source of neighborhood risk. The experiences of adolescents in the ethnography offer a reminder to pay attention to family structures as well as family practices, in considering how residential mobility will impact social outcomes.

Contributions to the MTO research

My work is situated in a decade of studies and research findings on MTO. The dissertation itself is a product of fieldwork completed by sixteen ethnographers and eight qualitative researchers in three cities. The research and data analysis behind this thesis has been extensively reviewed and debated by another group of researchers some of whom were instrumental in planning this housing mobility experiment in the early 1990s along with others who have followed it and written about it since its inception. In chapter 3 I describe the program's design and the mixed-method approach but mention only briefly the many analyses of MTO that precede my own. In the following sections I locate my contributions in this vast and interesting body of evolving work. To do this I remind the reader of the major findings of the earliest evaluations and the multi-site *Interim Impacts Evaluation* that informed the 3cMTO project. I then focus on a handful of studies which capture the range and depth of work on the subject of adolescent risky and delinquent behavior in MTO, and show how my findings contribute to, contest, or simply rest alongside this literature.

Short-term findings on Risky and Delinquent Behavior, Neighborhood Social Climate, and Social Ties⁵³ (one to three years after program implementation)

Initial findings on MTO measured impacts on participants at each of the five cities separately and cover the first three years of the program. Studies in Boston, Baltimore, and New York examined the short run effects of MTO on youth risky and delinquent behavior using quantitative analyses of data on all treatment group families (control, Section 8, and Experimental) from a baseline survey conducted at program enrollment and a follow-up survey administered 1 to 3.5 years after random assignment in the program (Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2000).⁵⁴ Studies conducted at the Chicago and Los Angeles sites primarily used qualitative analyses to examine perceptions of neighborhood safety and social order and the impact of relocation on movers' social networks (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit 2003). Overall the single site-based studies were consistent in their strongest finding that treatment group families moved to neighborhoods that were not only lower in poverty but in crime rates and level of social disorder and that this improvement in neighborhood safety translated into reduced levels of victimization and youth involvement in violent crime. Treatment effects on adolescent substance abuse, problem behavior, and delinquency were mixed; some sites found positive effects, others negative effects or no effects, and others showed mixed results. The results also suggested that concerns about social isolation as a result of relocation were premature. The effects of moving to lower poverty neighborhoods on social networks, mental health, and parenting capacity were either insignificant or positive for children and adults. This set of analyses concluded that in the *short-term* the MTO

⁵³ I report only those measures/findings from the studies which are relevant to the mechanisms I examine in this dissertation. More detail on the background of these studies is provided in chapters 2 and 3 and in the Appendix.

⁵⁴ This set of papers (which can be found at: <http://www.nber.org/~kling/mto/>) use a standard method for evaluating program impacts. Controlling for characteristics known prior to randomization, the authors estimate the effect of the Intent To Treat (ITT); that is, the average causal effects for those who took-up the treatment and those who did not. The effect of Treatment on the Treated (TOT) is then estimated by using treatment assignment as an instrumental variable, and imputing a "Control Complier Mean" (CCM), a counterfactual estimating what the effect of treatment would have been for control group members, had they received treatment.

program was having a positive impact on families and that the social costs of increased property crime for some groups, was outweighed by the reduction in youth violent crime, along with other positive changes in health and neighborhood safety.

Interim Impact findings (four to seven years after implementation)

To test *longer term* effects on the full MTO program sample a later set of studies on MTO used survey data from HUD's *Interim Impacts Evaluation* which measured program impacts across all five sites between four to seven years after random assignment. Arrest data gathered for the MTO population aged 15-25 was assessed along with survey data from 1,800 children of MTO families aged 15-20. Researchers found that relative to the control group, the number of lifetime arrests for girls in the experimental group was 33 percent lower, including a significant reduction in violent crime. However, boys in the experimental group were about 13 percent *more* likely than the controls to have ever been arrested, largely due to increases in property crime (Kling, Ludwig, Katz 2004; Kling, Liebman, Katz 2005), echoing the single site finding in Baltimore a few years earlier. Experimental boys also self-reported higher rates of substance abuse and problem behaviors, contradicting Boston's earlier results. The quantitative analyses of risky and delinquent behavior outcomes that followed these survey findings primarily aim to understand the role of gender in the MTO experimental group's experience and to explain why treatment effects for boys in the experimental group reversed direction – from positive to negative – after continued participation in the MTO program.

Alternative Explanations of Risky and Delinquent Behavior among MTO Youth

To make sense of the findings described above MTO research has advanced several hypotheses to explain gender differences in risky and delinquent behavior outcomes and the change of direction in the boys' outcomes. MTO's designers hypothesized that community as well as person/family level mediators would be the mechanisms for neighborhood effects. To date, the community level mediators that MTO research has explored in regards to the observed risky behavior outcomes include the physical neighborhood environment and social norms and values. The person/family level mediators include youth peer networks, peer behavior, and parental supervision of youth.⁵⁵ The analytic strategy in this dissertation focused on aspects of these mechanisms, including how friend, neighbor and family ties, neighborhood social climate, routines and neighborhood engagement impact risky behavior. Below I describe the framework and arguments of four analyses which have explored MTO's collective findings on youth risky and delinquent behavior. In each case I explore how the findings in this dissertation respond to these ideas and how they can contribute to this continuing body of work.

How Crime is not Contagious

In a re-analysis of MTO's Interim findings Ludwig and Kling (2007) focus on understanding why experimental boys fared worse than control group boys in the area of property crime. In "Is Crime Contagious?" the authors test a model of peer influence which is MTO's primary operating assumption of how neighborhoods affect a range of social outcomes, but delinquency in particular (Ludwig, Duncan, and Hirschfield 2001; Ludwig and Kling 2007). They find that crime is not "contagious" because the neighborhood crime rate (corresponding to "beat level" policing areas) in MTO

⁵⁵ MTO research has proposed additional mediators which have not yet been explored in the current range of published and unpublished work on outcomes in the area of risky and delinquent behavior, including how educational aspirations or achievement, aspects of housing mobility such as residential instability, parents social networks, parent and adult role modeling, and economic opportunities impact risky behavior outcomes.

participants' neighborhoods is not positively associated with the individual crime rates of MTO participants. Youth who moved to neighborhoods with relatively greater declines in beat-level violent crime did not experience relatively greater declines in their own violent crime arrest rates, and boys in lower poverty, low-crime areas had relatively higher rates of property offending.

My results corroborate their findings in part and their arguments support my findings in part, although I do not reject peer effects as a mechanism. Their claim that neighborhood violent or property crime rates do not affect property or violent offending by individuals is consistent with my suggestion that youth behavior is influenced by strong ties, which may or may not be located in adolescents' "residential" neighborhood. The finding that youth who spend more time with kin who are risky are also likely to engage in risky behavior themselves is consistent with a contagion theory. The hypothesized mechanism is that socialization with others who are also involved in risky behaviors makes some of those acts more likely. My data suggest that there is a "normalization" of delinquency as it applies to family members. Recall that the argument for contagion models is that prevalence of a given type of behavior may change the individual's propensity to engage in that same behavior by affecting the social stigma of that act or choice, perceived returns, or actual probability of arrest (Ludwig and Kling 2007).

The acceptance of risky behavior among families in the ethnography is suggested both by the numbers of youth who easily relate stories about relatives who are engaging in criminal activities without concern, as well as mothers who fail to monitor their children around delinquent kin. Ludwig and Kling (2007) describe the role of information in modeling – in which behavior by others causes people to consider activities which may not have occurred to him or her. One interesting aspect of my findings is the way in which some youth who never actually lived in the projects still identify with them, think of them as more exciting, or express interest in spending time in them. Their knowledge of the life of the projects comes from continued connections to family there. In this way

my findings illustrate how modeling may be taking place for MTO youth across neighborhoods.

There is another important way in which their analysis corroborates my claims. I have argued that youth may be committing crime in neighborhoods other than their residential neighborhood given their connections to risky kin, and through them, to risky neighborhoods. Unfortunately, although my contagion argument does not depend on it the 3cMTO ethnographic data does not allow me to state definitively where youth are committing crimes even with the evidence that youth who return to old neighborhoods are more likely to get into trouble than those who do not return. Ludwig and Kling's finding of a lack of association between neighborhood crime and individual arrests, could be explained by people committing crimes (and being arrested) somewhere else than home.

My interpretation of the ethnographic data is also supported by Ludwig et al. (2001) who note that the early property crime results in Baltimore may be explained by the location of youth social ties. They write that "of the 23 arrests of experimental teens whose families moved out of Baltimore City, two-fifths occurred within the city" (Ludwig et al. 2001, p676). In addition, larceny is a crime of opportunity so if adolescents are spending more time in their old neighborhoods it is more likely to occur there. This is the only study in the MTO collection to note the location of crime, however incidentally. However, my hypothesis that youth' risky behavior is taking place outside the neighborhood of residence is not consistent with the idea that youth are more likely to be picked up for property crime in lower-poverty, lower crime rate neighborhoods and the ethnographic data is not suited to answer questions about neighborhood policing practices in the areas where MTO participants moved to.

Overall my findings develop ideas about how contagion models work but do not outright reject them. Given the important role of family in both buffering youth from danger and conveying important social norms, peer effects among kin may be more influential than macro influences such as neighborhood level contextual factors, including the presence of adult role models (Wilson) or the willingness of adult neighbors to intervene to control youth behavior (Sampson). Furthermore collective efficacy as a resource for social control in low poverty experimental complier neighborhoods is less relevant if the neighborhood of influence is not the neighborhood of residence. On the other hand, if family factors are most influential in youth delinquency outcomes, research should account for the fact that kin and neighborhood (neighbors) are much more closely related in the projects.

The Rational Actor: Comparative Property Advantage

In “Neighborhood Effects on Crime for Female and Male Youth: Evidence from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment” Kling, Ludwig and Katz (2005) offer three hypotheses for risky behavior outcomes based on gender differences in adaptation to neighborhood moves: peer sorting; coping strategies; and comparative advantage in property offending (Kling, Ludwig, and Katz 2005). They conclude that their data support only claim idea that boys are taking advantage of opportunities in their new neighborhoods (which girls are not). The authors’ primary explanation for why boys take advantage of neighborhood affluence, whereas girls would not is that boys are more risk-taking to begin with. The ethnographic data, though a small sample, indicates that only boys are self-reporting property crimes.

Kling et al. hypothesize that girls may be more competitive than boys in school or have less parental supervision when not at home, both of which potentially affect boys’ tendency to engage in problem behavior. While my dissertation did not examine school-

based measures, I did not find striking gender differences in parental monitoring or knowledge of adolescents whereabouts and peers among families in the ethnography. Like the early findings from Los Angeles some parents in the study were very vigilant about monitoring, others were very relaxed about it, and most fell somewhere in between. In my analysis of the ethnographic data moving did not trigger a relaxation of parental monitoring based on the safer climate, rather all parents expressed concern that adolescence required stricter control regardless of age. To the extent that I have argued that some youth commit crimes outside their home neighborhood, my results do not corroborate their primary claims.

Kling et al. suggest that much of the beneficial effect for females and detrimental effect for males comes from neighborhood effects on the volume of arrests for those who are criminally involved. In other words, they suggest that increases in the incidents of arrest reflect a phenomenon in which delinquent individuals are increasing their illegal activity (and/or being arrested more often for it) rather than an increase in the number of people who are committing property crimes in new neighborhoods. From this they hypothesize that more affluent neighborhoods have more goods for already delinquent individuals to take, and the original motivation for the criminal activity is not coming from deviant neighborhood peers.

The ethnographic data can only address prospective versions of individual adolescent's history of risky behavior and friendship ties. My results suggest that youth in both treatment groups had risky friends and could identify risky peer groups in their neighborhoods – in both high and lower poverty areas –but the data is not detailed enough to address the timing of tie-formation and criminal activity. However, youth and parents who moved were more likely to distinguish between the severity of risk such that old neighborhoods were riskier and contained youth who were likely to be *more* delinquent in particular ways, than youth in the experimental complier neighborhoods. Furthermore, as I detail in chapter 5 several girls talked about changing friends in new

neighborhoods and avoiding risky behavior in that way – which could be an indication of how neighborhood moves relate to differences in risk for boys and girls. However because we did not collect sufficient data on male youth friendship networks this should be taken as speculation.

The ethnography offers a greater contribution by illustrating the range of circumstances associated with the same type of crime. Consider the example of John, a boy from the experimental group in Los Angeles who has been involved in one property crime – theft of a gameboy video– committed with a group of friends, and for which he was caught. It is evident from other data about his family life and aspirations (he is in college now) that his story is different from Saul. Saul is a boy in Boston, also from the experimental group. Saul has also been caught for property crime, including vandalism and theft. He says he breaks things "at school, only if the teachers get me pissed off. Then I break their windows, break anything in their classroom." He says that happens "once in a while" and he admits to shoplifting "cd players and cds--it depends on what store I'm in." He does this, he says, because of lack of money. Saul also engages in a lot of other risky and delinquent behavior, including fighting, carrying a weapon, and skipping school.

In addition to different risk profiles, John and Saul are different because of where they spend time. John moved to a low poverty neighborhood several hours from his original project neighborhood when he was eleven years old and never really returned. Saul is fifteen and moved from his project neighborhood when he was eight years old but he continues to spend a lot of time there because that is where his cousins and father live. Saul believes he spends time back in the old neighborhood because there isn't anything to do in his neighborhood, not because he feels he doesn't fit in. The ethnographer asked him to explain.

"I don't really hang out here--there's not much. There's nothing to do around here." When I brought up the idea of Saul feeling like he might not fit in, he shot back, apparently puzzled by the question, "whatchyou mean?" After describing situations where individuals feel out of place generally in a neighborhood, Saul clarified his puzzlement: "I don't know nobody [in the neighborhood]--I'm never here." Saul said he spends most of his time commuting back and forth from school, and when he is in the neighborhood, he puts himself on what he calls "lock-down," remaining in his room, listening to music or watching t.v. [Fieldnote]

Again, I have used cases that support my argument about the relationship between risk and where adolescents spend time. However even without this evidence for my claims, the data show that while comparative advantage may provide one description of MTO boys' negative risky behavior outcomes, the explanation is much more complex.

Safety for Girls

Although most of the research to date has focused on MTO's treatment effects on boys, an alternative way of approaching the puzzling gender findings is by concentrating on how girls benefited from lower poverty neighborhoods. In "Girls in the 'Hood: The Importance of Feeling Safe" Popkin et al. (2007) argue that girls face gender specific risks including harassment, the pressure to be sexually active at a young age, domestic violence, and sexual assault (Popkin, Leventhal, and Weismann 2007). Along with the gender differences in risky and delinquent behavior outcomes, the only other two statistically significant findings from the Interim Impact Evaluation point to the idea that MTO decreased threats in the environment which might have particular relevance to women.

First, experimental group girls reported less psychological distress, anxiety and substance abuse as compared to control group girls. Mothers who moved also reported positive changes in their own mental health. Second, all of the MTO research confirms that there was a major improvement in neighborhood safety – measured objectively by crime rates, observationally by fieldworkers noting physical conditions in the housing and neighborhoods families moved to, and by participant’s self reports in surveys, interviews, and ethnographic data. To make the argument that girls experienced a change in gender specific risks Popkin et al. use data from 3cMTO, some of which is included in this dissertation. Therefore, although my thesis focuses on other aspects of the way in which changes in neighborhood environments interact with youth routines and activities, there is consistency in regards to what the data show. How does the finding that attachment to risky kin serves as a mechanism of risk for MTO adolescents respond to the safety for girls’ thesis?

Most importantly my findings and the interpretation of the data on girls’ risk are both strongly advancing the idea that *getting out* of project neighborhoods is as meaningful as getting “into” neighborhoods with particular characteristics. I do not dispute that some neighborhoods are preferable to others; MTO movers are specific about what they like and want in a neighborhood environment including fewer “ghetto” neighbors, more working people, and more family types (Comey, Briggs, Weismann 2008). However, in the effort to understand how preferable neighborhoods improve social outcomes, the simple idea of how important it can be to move away from less preferable ones is sometimes overlooked.⁵⁶ In focusing on risky kin attachments my dissertation illustrates one aspect of what (or who) one is getting away from by leaving high poverty neighborhoods, where the study of girls safety illustrates other aspects that are also important.

⁵⁶ Providing further support for this argument the Section 8 group also saw a significant decline in the rate of violent crime, although they moved to neighborhoods more like their origin project neighborhood.

Empirical data from the field of criminology indicates that crimes involving women are much more likely to involve someone they know compared with crime involving men. The findings in my dissertation extend Popkin et al. by suggesting how those two aspects could be the same as when kin are also one's friend and neighbor – both female fear and kin attachments emphasize getting away from someone you most likely know. I argue in chapter 7 that moving away from risky neighborhoods can serve to buffer families from attachments to risky relatives. Several of the women in the ethnography report directly on the abusive relationships they wanted to escape from, primarily involving spouses and boyfriends, but also parents.

Looking just at the *types* of risky and delinquent behaviors that adolescents in the ethnography become involved in shows that girls are more often fighting, repeatedly, with the same other girls as compared to any other type of risky behavior besides substance abuse and risky sexual activity. As they get older, the habit of fighting when young could lead to increasingly violent forms of fighting. The ethnographic data also indicate that while girls in both lower and higher-poverty neighborhoods get into trouble, the relative severity and frequency of this activity is more pronounced among girls in the control group, and in those experimental group families who moved back to the projects. At least three of the girls in our study were injured enough in girl fights during the time that the ethnography was taking place to have to go to the hospital. All of these happened in higher poverty areas, although for one it was at school rather than in the neighborhood. One area to explore is whether the source of this fighting is also in some way attached to familial ties – do girls (and boys) explain the reason for their behavior in ways that relate to family (e.g. protecting my cousin) as opposed to just participating in risky behavior with kin... I claim that when moving to lower poverty neighborhoods, breaks ties with particular people in old neighborhoods, it might explain the decrease in violent crime for girls in the experimental group. Therefore my analysis offers some conditions to the thesis that girls' positive outcomes reflect participation in the experimental complier group. My findings imply that moving to lower poverty neighborhoods is not sufficient to benefit girls if they continue to be attached to risky kin.

Cultural Adaptation

The most recent contribution to this area of MTO research is a qualitative paper based on in-depth interviews with youth from Baltimore and Chicago in 2004. Of the MTO studies I describe above Clampet-Lundquist et al.'s study "Moving At-Risk Teenagers out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: Why Girls Fare Better than Boys" is the one most comparable to my dissertation in that we explore many of the same mechanisms of neighborhood effects, including youth social ties, routines, and perceptions of neighborhood social climate, and report the same findings in many content areas (Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan March 2006). It is also encouraging that our data on youth neighborhood engagement and peer networks is so closely matched, given that Baltimore and Chicago were not included in the 3cMTO study. This lends support for the external validity of the results. In some instances our conclusions conflict because we have used different conceptual measures and in other cases we differ in our interpretation of the results.

The models that Clampet-Lundquist et al. consider as an explanation for why there were negative outcomes for boys and not girls include relative deprivation, collective efficacy, and peer selection. However the authors find the most support for a variant of a 'cultural capital' model (Anderson 1991, Carter 2003, Dance 2002) in which mover boys adoption of non-mainstream language, style, dress, musical taste, and routines (such as 'hanging out' on the stoop) triggers attention from formal (police) and informal (neighbors) mechanisms of social control in lower poverty neighborhoods, and possibly serves as an invitation to other risky and delinquent peers in the neighborhood (the latter conflicts with Kling et al. (2004; 2005) who reject peer selection as described above). They find that girls spend more time alone, or in places with adult supervision, and have fewer friends in their neighborhood of residence. They conclude that the key difference between males and females overall which explains the difference in risky and delinquent

outcomes is not the neighborhood context, but differences in how boys and girls act in their free time.

Socializing and Peer networks

One of the reasons that we may arrive at different conclusions is the difference in how we consider social ties and socializing. Whereas Clampet-Lundquist et al. separate time which is spent with family and friends from “free” time, I consider time which is spent socializing versus some other structured activity, and analyze these categories of activities by whether they occur inside or outside an adolescent’s neighborhood of residence. In other words, the authors focus on what happens in their lower-poverty neighborhood of residence in youth’ free time and conclude that it is something different about activities primarily taking place IN the neighborhood of residence. In contrast I examine where youth are in their non-school time and ask what difference that makes, finding instead that the explanation may lie outside the neighborhood of residence. I chose my conceptual categories based on an inductive analysis which suggested that most adolescents’ social ties were outside of their residential neighborhood.

The authors do acknowledge that if experimental boys spend most of their free time in their origin neighborhoods, their peer networks might be identical to those of the control boys which they hypothesize would lead to more delinquent and risky behavior. My findings confer with the claim that 3cMTO adolescents spend significant time in their old neighborhoods. However, while they hypothesize that risky peer networks (in the old neighborhoods) would account for the delinquency, my analysis extends this account by suggesting that that it is also, and perhaps even primarily, kin relationships that connect youth to risk in the old ‘hood. Yet, like Kling Liebman and Katz (2005) I find no difference in the numbers of boys and girls who return to their old neighborhoods that would account for differences in gender outcomes.

Routines

Clampet-Lundquist et al.'s data on the differences between control and mover group's social ties is consistent with my findings, but they identify greater gender differences than I have. Recall however, the limited data that the 3cMTO study was able to gather on male youth friendship ties. As in my analysis they show that control group girls are well integrated into the peer networks of their neighborhoods and are twice as likely to spend time with friends in their neighborhood of residence as are experimental girls. They also find that the majority of both control males and females spend the bulk of their "leisure time" within their current neighborhoods, whereas experimental girls and boys were just as likely to talk about spending time hanging out in neighborhoods that were not their own – usually where their friends, grandmothers, and other family members live. Our analyses of where youth are spending time, and with whom, are therefore entirely consistent. My dissertation extends that logic in questioning how social ties to kin are different than other types of youth social ties and how this has structured youth connection to risk. Whereas Clampet-Lundquist et al. analyses subsequently focus on other aspects of how routines might be gendered, I have developed hypotheses and arguments based on the meaning of these findings about social ties.

They note that experimental complier and control group boys were equally as likely to have forged social connections with other teens in their neighborhood, and that experimental boys were more likely than experimental girls to spend time in their neighborhood of residence. They also find that the friends of experimental boys were more risky than girls. I did not find these gender differences in the ethnographic data and in my analysis their results would suggest that girls should be getting into more trouble than boys if they are spending the bulk of their time outside their neighborhood of residence as compared to boys. Interestingly they also find that experimental boys find new lower poverty neighborhoods boring whereas girls do not (some boys *and* girls in the

ethnography report that their neighborhoods are boring), although I would think that this perception would encourage boys to spend less time in their lower poverty neighborhoods, rather than more as Clampet-Lundquist et al. have indicated they do.

However, the main story in their study is that the key gender difference is not the neighborhood context in which youth spend time, but in *how* they hang out. This reasoning, based on data which is very consistent with mine, is clearly in conflict with my own conclusion that neighborhood context matters both on its own and because of *who* youth spend time with in that context. They explain that boys may get into more trouble than girls for two reasons one of which is experimental boys' inability to navigate neighborhood risk if they return to *live* in old higher-poverty neighborhoods (recall that they find that most experimental group boys spend time in their home neighborhood). Second, in lower-poverty neighborhoods the posturing and routines associated with a non-mainstream culture that is perceived as delinquent, calls attention to experimental complier boys, who are subsequently likely to be arrested. As evidence they describe how boys from the control group employ conscious strategies such as "staying to myself" and avoiding certain people in the neighborhood to keep out of trouble. In chapter 5 I describe the ways in which adolescents in the ethnography perceive risk in their neighborhoods, peers, and friends and the reasons that youth and parents give when asked how adolescents manage to avoid getting caught up in gangs, drugs, and other kinds of trouble. Adolescents in the ethnography describe the same strategies as the youth in their sample from Baltimore in Chicago, and they all draw many of the same distinctions about peer risk. However, in the context of what I learned about youth social ties overall, I interpret this data differently and find that one of the reasons for getting into trouble over time may be that these strategies for avoiding risk are not being "applied" in the context of kin relationships and neighborhoods. I also believe that the cultural model they pose needs to specify how *property* crime is related to gendered routines to work as an explanation. The authors do not suggest that boys are being falsely arrested therefore they must also be committing property crimes not just acting as if they are.

Collective Socialization

The author's reject the collective efficacy model in part and rely on it in part to describe how the findings about gender differences in risky behavior are best explained by a cultural model. At first they argue that the model cannot explain why girls should benefit more from exposure to "adult collective efficacy" as opposed to boys. Based on adolescents' reports on the level of social disorder in their neighborhoods they conclude that while there is some difference in social climate, risks remain in the neighborhoods that youth moved to. This finding is also consistent with the ethnographic data. The authors state that some youth in their study even found their new neighborhoods to be "no shit different" than their old neighborhoods. However it is both the police and presumably more mainstream local actors, including adult neighbors, who are calling attention to boys' different and culturally-based routines that stand out in lower poverty neighborhoods.

As in my study these observations point out a tension in the perceptions of experimental compliers. On the one hand the movers feel that their lower-poverty neighborhoods are socially different, calmer and safer, yet many movers also talk about the risk that remains in lower poverty neighborhoods – from drugs and fights to gangs. Our findings agree that adults and youth in the mover group have very few connections with their neighbors. This is qualitatively different from the control group and movers' recollections of experiences in high poverty neighborhoods, where many of our participants explained that people see a fight and just "ratchet it up" and where everyone "knows your business." It is possible that a closer analysis of MTO's full sample could discover whether perceptions of risk are relatively diminished in neighborhoods within a particular poverty range, or whether all neighborhoods are perceived by the MTO participants as containing both risky and non-risky elements.

In sum Clampet-Lundquist et al.'s finding that experimental complier group youth experienced minimal neighbor interactions, perceptions of improved social climate, and recognition of risk in lower poverty neighborhoods is consistent and similar to the ethnographic data. However, given these results it is unclear to what extent most boys' routines would really call significant attention from adult neighbors – enough to land them in court for property crime – even if they were different from girls' routines. Adding to this, the authors state that they find little support in their data for the relative deprivation hypothesis because youth in their study did not recognize feelings of being relatively different or deprived. While this does not disconfirm their thesis, a strong acknowledgment of difference, even if driven by class rather than culture, would have provided stronger support.

Parenting

One hypothesis suggested by MTO's outcomes contends that if boys are monitored less closely than girls, or if mover mothers relax their level of monitoring in lower poverty neighborhoods when they move, it would impact boys more strongly because of boys' greater degree of freedom compared to girls. As a result, boys might get into trouble more often. Yet, like me Clampet-Lundquist et al. find no gender differences in parental monitoring in their sample. However, a different way of thinking about how monitoring may lead to different gender outcomes is suggested, though not confirmed by my analysis. Adolescents in the ethnography return to old neighborhoods for a variety of reasons including kin, peers, and other activities. One distinction between the youth who return and do not get into trouble and those who do is whether or not they go back to neighborhoods alone. The Baltimore/Chicago sample includes teens age 14-19, whereas youth in the ethnography were aged 11-23. My data show that younger kids are less likely to be returning to the old neighborhood without their parents. Although it is not evident in my sample analysis of a larger sample might demonstrate that girls are less likely to return alone to their old neighborhoods.

While both our studies consider family structure, we differ on which aspects are most significant. They highlight the fact that boys may suffer from a lack of same-sex role models because nearly three-quarters of the MTO families at baseline were female-headed. However, they do not actually examine this influence in any detail in their analyses. My argument is again, that social ties to kin have mixed consequences – burdens and benefits – and most fathers are, at least at present, questionable role models given their own history of delinquency. Clearly, this does not provide any evidence that there is no difference in the level of struggle among boys lacking role models as compared to boys with father-figures. I think this is an important area of study for future analyses to follow up on although the MTO data that I am aware of is not suited for this purpose.

Summary

I did not explore cultural explanations in my dissertation but some of the findings from the ethnography suggest several factors that additional research might consider. For several reasons it is not clear to what degree 3cMTO youth experienced a shift in their cultural world that would lead to a behavioral adaptation. Although some youth did talk about having to make this adjustment, particularly in Los Angeles, many more did not change schools, and for others changes in the perceived riskiness, or “otherness” of their social climate was much subtler or non-existent. Most MTO youth did not move to racially integrated areas even when they moved to lower poverty neighborhoods, therefore the motivation for acting in such a way as to distinguish oneself culturally might be less strong. Like relative deprivation, the cultural difference model depends on perceived or felt difference from one’s neighbors. As the authors point out, the impacts of relative deprivation may be more strongly felt for those who socialize in their neighborhoods because there is more exposure to any “difference” among neighbors. If MTO teenagers are not socializing in their neighborhood of residence, as I have argued,

both collective efficacy and relative deprivation are less likely to encourage entry into a deviant subculture as a response.

The MTO studies by economists (Ludwig and Kling 2004; Kling et al. 2006) calls attention to the importance of considering the types of crime affected by MTO and their question about where crime is happening are consistent with my own consideration of why some youth who move to lower-poverty neighborhoods continue to get into trouble. My analysis, following a qualitative method, argues for a more complex explanation than comparative advantage or neighborhood characteristics. All of the articles described above abandon models of peer effects, for different reasons, as narrowly defined by friend or neighbor ties, or neighborhood crime rates. My results suggest that the socializing mechanism underlying theories of peer effects adequately describes the way in which adolescents and parents perceive their exposure to risk, but suggest that the model requires more elaboration. The ethnographic data explores family relationships more deeply than the qualitative or quantitative analyses described above. The study also paid close attention to adolescents' routines over an extended period of time. My findings, more than other MTO research on this subject, and based on a method which favors "getting the context right," emphasizes the critical role of social ties to *specific* people and places in understanding adolescent risky and delinquent behavior.

Limitations of the Study and Future Direction

While the association between risky relatives and risky youth outcomes is suggested by my analysis a more detailed examination of this subject would ask specific questions about the nature of risk, and how this impacts family life. For example, I report on the numbers of social ties that women found burdensome and draining. Although the

qualitative data help outline the shape of these draining relationships, there may be an important difference between a tie which mothers feel is a burden and one which is more detrimental to her children or her own health. A study might directly ask how family members' substance abuse, gang violence, or incarceration impacts their own response to drugs, alcohol and other types of risk. Another important finding from the ethnography, in regards to perceptions of safety and violence, is the difference between youth and adult perceptions. Recognizing these differences is a critical exercise for interpreting MTO's findings. For example, this difference in perception of safety may point towards an explanation of why some mothers in the ethnography appear to be unconcerned when their children are spending time with risky kin, but vigilant about risky peers. Future MTO research might consider a more in-depth focus on peer relationships and adult role models since explanations about how these neighborhood mechanisms function and their relevance to youth risky behavior outcomes is less established than conclusions about the role of parental monitoring.

Because risky relatives were not a topic of this study adolescents were not asked directly about the delinquent behavior of their kin and their interpretation of the impacts of that on their own behavior, unless this was one of the subjects which an ethnographer decided to follow up on while in the field. Likewise, because we did not separate kin from friends in this research it can be harder to make a strong case for the impact of kin networks as opposed to other types of relationships on risky behavior. As I have mentioned, a major limitation of this study for this dissertation's analysis was the limited data that was collected on youth' peers and the location of activities taking place with peers. On the other hand the ethnography's focus on routines and everyday life revealed the ways in which youth are shaped by multiple neighborhoods and the connection to risky relatives. A related and unanswerable question for me was about the location of crime and with whom exactly which types of crimes were committed. This seems critical to understanding the MTO outcomes in this subject domain. More specifically, future work would address aspects of the particular crime of interest – in this case property time

and violent crime. They are different kinds of offenses and an alternative view, one based more in criminology, might expand our understanding of the gender puzzle.

Recommendations

In this dissertation I have concentrated on the ways in which adolescents in the 3cMTO study stay connected to risk. More important to policy and practice is the question of when moving and living in a low poverty neighborhood limits youth involvement in risky and delinquent behavior. My analysis of the experience of adolescents in the 3cMTO study suggests several conditions that shape adolescent risky behavior. First, engagement in risky behavior may be limited when parents are aware of and able to monitor youth in all kinds of environmental contexts. Second, parental monitoring of youth appears to help prevent some risky behavior, regardless of neighborhood characteristics. The experience of youth in MTO show that this family management strategy has to continue in lower poverty areas. Even neighborhoods with different, calmer, or safer environments contain risks. Youth continue to feel peer pressure there, while drugs, gangs, and other risky kids all offer the opportunity to misbehave. Yet even though families have to be aware of the potential dangers when they move, youth living in lower-poverty neighborhoods do experience benefits that include relatively safer neighborhoods, more diverse social networks, and in this study, less involvement in risky and delinquent behavior.

Housing mobility programs like MTO may make the parental role in mediating risky environments both harder and easier to accomplish. Parents can try to stay in lower poverty neighborhoods, and being at a geographic distance creates social space between the calmer environment where they live and the risky environment of project neighborhoods and people there who may pose a threat. . It may also be harder because some families will find that the experience of moving and living in new neighborhoods is

difficult without the support they get from family or the closeness they feel to them. I describe in chapter four how some of the older adolescents in the ethnography return to old, riskier neighborhoods on their own to see friends, but more often they are visiting kin. Moreover most adolescents (non-school time) exposure to risk was mediated by their parents. Even the extent to which housing relocation altered peer ties was mediated principally by family ties to the old neighborhood and parent's decisions about school location. Therefore my recommendations respond to mothers' explanations for their social ties to family and the ways in which housing programs and family support can be better organized to help lower income families stay away from risk. This sometimes means staying out of high poverty project neighborhoods where families are burdened with multiple sources of risk and few options to shelter themselves and sometimes means receiving help to manage risk wherever they are living.

Formalize supports (reduce the need to rely on kin)

I believe that one consequence of ignoring the link between family characteristics and structure and social outcomes, while romanticizing supportive kin networks within communities, is a de-emphasis on the need for and role of formal, non-familial support systems (such as housing subsidies and childcare vouchers). Too often a vision of an informal network of women's social ties keeping families afloat serves as a substitution for forms of support offering legitimate economic independence. Empirically there is plenty of evidence that familial supports are often inadequate – not only in not bridging individuals to better jobs but in the “getting by” sense (cite). At the same time, my dissertation offers examples of how these social ties may be damaging if left unexamined.

A Boston Globe editorial on April 20, 2008 points out potential implications in child welfare policy of reexamining the role of kin networks in youth outcomes. The article begins “when an abused or neglected child is removed from parental custody, both state

policy and federal law favor placement with a close relative, often a grandparent. But so-called kinship care can breed dangers all its own.” About half of the 8,000 children receiving foster care in Massachusetts live with relatives, including grandmothers, aunts, and cousins. The article points out that DSS is also free to waive the ban on placing children with foster parents who have criminal records when dealing with relatives. The article concludes: “The need to protect children and the desire to keep them connected with relatives won't always align. When they don't, the state must be trusted to come down squarely on the side of child protection.” Similarly my results argue for safety over familiarity if the two are in conflict. Unfortunately because there are often few alternatives, safety is compromised. When economic strategies create other options, there is less need to blame kin who are themselves often struggling.

The findings from the 3cMTO study should also ameliorate some of the concerns of critics of housing mobility programs based on claims of lost support, and encourage additional focus on how to provide greater institutional and formal mechanisms of aid in order to encourage self-sufficiency. The qualitative work on MTO including the ethnographic fieldwork suggests that women have more ties to kin than to friends or neighbors, but that neither movers in lower poverty neighborhoods, nor control group families felt that they would turn to neighbors or friends for instrumental help. As other researchers have pointed out, moving to a lower poverty neighborhood does not often create new ‘leverage based’ social connections that help movers access employment or other types of monetary assistance (Briggs 1997; Kleit 2001) though moving away from violence and affiliated social problems may help support employment prospects in other ways (Rosenbaum, Reynolds, and Deluca 2002).

There is also consistent reporting from the qualitative data from MTO that most families did not feel that their moves were too isolating or that they wished they were closer to family members. On the contrary many mothers in MTO and other housing mobility programs say they feel good about getting away from troubled family ties (Curley

February 2006; Popkin, Levy, Harris, Comey, Cunningham, and Buron 2004; Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton 2003). Family housing preferences among the experimental group of MTO movers provide some support for this interpretation. After their initial move, two-thirds of the experimental group in the full MTO sample wished to remain in their own or a similar lower poverty neighborhood most of which were located at a distance from their original project neighborhoods and therefore from family (Orr et al. 2003). The ethnographic data also indicate that for some mover families kin ties are strained, but not broken, through relocation. Yet because most kin ties offer mixed blessings, both support and burden, many mothers are satisfied with the trade-off between what they perceive as a better neighborhood and loss of some support (Turner 1994). Moreover, many of the women in the 3cMTO study express their desire to be self-sufficient and acknowledge that one of the benefits of moving away has been the realization of that feeling. Prior research suggests that once low-income women have adequate resources, they are less likely to enter into such demanding exchange networks (Belle 1982 ; Dominguez and Watkins 2003; Hogan, Hao, and Parish 1990; Schieman 2005; Stack 1974).

This study demonstrates that the explanations for why most families maintain their ties to kin vary from emotional closeness to instrumental support to shared activities. The reasons for not maintaining contact similarly vary from distance to deliberate avoidance. The main types of support that mothers in the ethnography report that they received from their family members were help with childcare, transportation assistance, and sporadic financial contributions. Apart from these types of instrumental support, the main reasons mothers maintain contact with family members is that they live close by, and they are involved in organized activities together (mainly church). However, throughout the fieldwork the many ways in which mothers remain connected to family members include caring for someone in their extended family who is sick, providing temporary financial support and shelter, or caring for adopted and foster children of related kin. The main reasons for not maintaining contact involve living at a distance and/or deliberately maintaining a buffer from burdensome or risky family members. If the reason is

instrumental kinds of support, housing subsidies such as Section 8 are clearly an important step in the right direction, as they begin to provide a foundation for self-reliance. Given the degree of kin-embeddedness in this population this self-reliance should, over time, have a ripple effect on other members of the extended kin network. Given the types of assistance that mothers receive from their kin and other analyses of housing mobility patterns among families participating in programs such as MTO and Gautreaux, there need to be other types of everyday assistance supporting their moves along with improvements in housing readiness and housing counseling. This dissertation therefore reinforces that there are basic types of support that increase self-sufficiency, and it advocates policies recognized by other studies of housing mobility programs including the attachment of childcare and transportation vouchers to housing subsidies (Briggs and Turner 2006).

Residential stability in lower poverty neighborhoods

The findings also suggest that engagement in neighborhood social life is related to residential stability. While this is commonly accepted in regards to the embeddedness of lower income families in project neighborhoods, lower income families' ability or interest in socially integrating into higher income neighborhoods has not been as readily determined. Programs like Gautreaux and MTO, which follow families' social lives over decades, and residential moves, are among the few experiments that can assess these outcomes and the impact of social integration. Notwithstanding some initial challenges introducing MTO to receiving neighborhoods (Goering and Feins 2003), and evolving adjustment to new places and neighbors for MTO participants, social integration has largely been a success particularly for youth. While many families do stay connected to family members in old neighborhoods youth in mover families have more diverse social networks than youth in control group neighborhoods. They have their family neighborhood, their home neighborhood, and often a school neighborhood and friend neighborhood too. Most youth who move are able to make local friends if they stay in one place long enough. The ethnographic data, though representing a small sample, show

that youth who stayed in the same low poverty neighborhood between eight and ten years have not engaged in any risky or delinquent behavior.

Yet even if families want to stay out of high poverty areas, staying in lower-poverty neighborhoods presents a range of challenges. MTO mover families face many barriers from finding apartments in good neighborhoods that Section 8 will accept to living in apartments that are in worse condition than the ones they left behind (Comey, Briggs, Weismann 2008). One of the families I worked with in Boston managed to stay in the same suburban city but changed apartments four times between receiving the MTO voucher in 1994 and 2004 because the houses they lived in kept going up for sale. Among the full sample of MTO participants over two-thirds of the experimental group and Section 8-comparison families moved one to three times between leasing up and 2002 (Orr et al. 2003). As the late 1990s were a time of tight housing markets and escalating housing prices it is possible that families with housing vouchers will fare better in this decade now characterized by collapsing markets and a nationwide mortgage crisis. However housing markets are cyclical and sticky and the need for affordable housing is growing while federal resources shrink.

Because MTO participants in the experimental group received housing counseling assistance to specifically help them move into low-poverty neighborhoods they have been more successful than regular Section 8 voucher holders at staying out of high poverty ones over time. Many families in the Gautreaux program, which deliberately focused on moves to racially integrated areas, have also been able to continue living in lower-poverty more diverse neighborhoods over time and have socially integrated into these neighborhoods (Rosenbaum and DeLuca 2002). By the time of the Interim Evaluation in 2002 (four to seven years after enrollment) 60 percent of MTO's experimental movers lived in neighborhoods with less than 20 percent poverty, and 25 percent lived in neighborhoods with less than 10 percent poverty (Orr et al. 2003). By 2004, 27 percent of the Three-City Study experimental-mover families were living in neighborhoods with

less than 20 percent poverty, and only 17 percent were living in neighborhoods with less than 10 percent poverty (Comey et al. 2008). Despite this worsening housing trajectory MTO families are able to take advantage of tight housing markets given housing counseling and are able to stay out of high poverty neighborhoods with assistance. Overall, this study confirms that housing vouchers can be a successful means of improving families' lives by getting them away from immediate dangers in high poverty neighborhoods, by diversifying adolescents' social ties, and by providing a buffer from risky kin if they choose. The preconditions for these positive outcomes include extending housing counseling to families beyond first moves, targeting receiving neighborhoods for specific characteristics – such as safety, poverty level, racial integration, institutional resources – and increasing resources for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. In addressing the volatility of housing markets the Section 8 program has been moving in the right direction by allowing state voucher allocations to be attached to privately-developed projects, thus encouraging the development of new affordable housing and creating the possibility for longer-term and more stable residencies for voucher holders.

Recognizing and Managing Risk

Apart from linking childcare and transportation subsidies to housing vouchers there are several mothers from both groups who illustrate successful family management strategies. Tina, from the experimental group in New York City explains that her children determine “who to keep and not keep in her house.” As a result she had kicked out her youngest child’s father who she described as addicted to crack. During one of the ethnographer’s visits he was sleeping on the front stoop of the house and Tina subsequently drove him to a homeless shelter. Several more women explained how they ended relationships with men because they were drinkers, drug users or abusive. Jeanine the mom who cut ties to her family “with a big knife” is particularly blunt with regards to how she prioritizes her needs and deals with risk and obligation from kin in her life. She

explained that she did not keep in contact with her ex-husband and her daughter's father in prison, because "I am not here to ease your time." However, Jeanine has a good job and she can afford to distance herself in ways that other mothers can't.

What was surprising for this researcher if not for the 3cMTO participants was adolescents pervasive exposure to risky and delinquent behavior through connection with their extended family. Every single child in this study knows someone who has been in jail, and in many cases it is their father. In some ways this study points back towards the project neighborhoods and asks what can be accomplished there. Harm reduction models used primarily in the public health field provide a potential framework for this context, as it is unrealistic to expect mothers to abandon all ties to kin. This approach would instead ask how to reduce the harm caused by maintaining connections which are potentially risky. For example, some social service pilot programs currently operating in public housing developments in Massachusetts have begun to address the various needs of multiple family members at the same time and housing administrators report that these have had important benefits. Some research has demonstrated that the aspect of kin support that matters to limiting adolescent problem behavior is family organization, in the form of structure and routine (Taylor and Lopez 2005). Kin support without this is unrelated to positive youth outcomes. Programs that train parents and related family members in how to establish routines and encourage stability in the home may be effective. Parenting programs continue to be important as monitoring does seem to mediate neighborhood influence on youth— in both high and low poverty areas. For kids who are "bored," involvement in structured activities, where there is adult supervision also makes a difference. These types of programs appear to be accessible in both high and low poverty neighborhoods according to 3cMTO families but the Section 8 program could be more targeted during the housing counseling process about choosing neighborhoods based on important neighborhood resources for families.

Another practice called the Full Frame Approach (Fels Smyth 2007) focuses on providing community social services in a relational context. It is based on the idea that when people seek help for social problems such as domestic violence or drug addiction they are often

encouraged to separate from all relationships that are associated with that problem before establishing another relational context in which the problem can be assessed. The program's guide states:

A poor person's closest intimates are often assumed to be dysfunctional and deleterious, and therefore any ambivalence about cutting herself off from these people labeled as "problematic" or "damaging" may be equated with ambivalence about "getting better." Through the lens of a given specialty (e.g. domestic violence, addiction, etc.), this may make sense. However, through the lens of the context and meaning a person derives from relationships with family, friends and community members—what we call *relational context*—it may not. Indeed, ignoring or devaluing people's most meaningful connections may make their sustained progress untenable and therefore be a set up for failure, later ascribed to noncompliance, not to the system's inability to attend to context (Fels Smyth 2007).

Full Frame is not a new program rather it is a different approach that can be applied to the delivery of existing social services. It emphasizes available and not ideal options and encourages providers to enlist participants in thinking through and weighing their options without forcing them to abandon important relationships. An interesting component of the approach is the acknowledgment that communities, however dysfunctional, provide important sources of belonging and support. In this way the approach reaffirms the methods and principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, which has been an extremely successful program for more than 50 years. A potential application for housing mobility programs may be the creation of supportive communities among movers as part of their housing voucher. Although MTO participants' lives are already full, having a shared context and place where they could share practical information such as how to access childcare options or cope with landlord difficulties could alleviate some of the burden of going it alone. As part of their home lending program for high risk low-income families The Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA) requires all borrowers to

return to the organization to counsel new borrowers once they have secured their loan. NACA's repayment rate on home mortgages matches that of non-risky borrowers and the agency's director believes that part of the reason for this may be the role of connection to others with similar backgrounds facing the same challenges and obligations.

Most families include among their members someone suffering from what might be called a social problem – mental illness, addiction, etc...but those with more resources can pay for support or rehabilitation for problem kin, or can afford to distance themselves from their family. Before embarking on an ambitious social services program it is important to ask what MTO participants themselves want. In this I return to the finding that many of the mothers wanted to stay in their lower poverty neighborhoods, few felt “isolated,” and several expressed relief about being away from their problem kin. According to the MTO families it's not isolation from neighbors that is a problem rather it is neighborhood violence and crime that they care about.

Conclusion

One of the challenges of recognizing negative aspects of kin ties in this literature may be a concern that it will be used to support an argument which identifies a group's social culture as the reason for their economic class (Gans 1962; Lewis 1966). Though the notion of a ‘culture of poverty’ has been thoroughly exposed for decades (Gans 1997; Valentine 1968; Waquant 1997; Wilson 1987) the culture-class identification is renewed by suggesting a link between family characteristics and embedded criminal practices. In a review of the causes and consequences of persistent poverty James Jennings argues that the theory of dysfunctional family structure as the cause of poverty (Banfield 1958; Moynihan 1965) is still a popular explanation and reflects social policy (Jennings 1999). However, I hope that the findings in this study are interpreted not as an indictment of low-income families or as a cause of their poverty, rather I am suggesting that place poverty may contribute to family struggle. Neighborhood choices, and housing policies,

shape involvement in risky and delinquent behavior by controlling the geographic and social distance from networks made dysfunctional because they are embedded in poor places. In a study of male criminal careers Sampson and Laub find that involvement in illegal activities, even for long-term offenders, can be “knifed off” at any stage by institutional forces that provide structure, meaning and support (Sampson and Laub 1993). Schools, the military, and marriage all have the potential to offer a “new script.” I argue that, with investment, housing mobility programs can also offer families the same kind of new script, in addition to the important and basic ability to escape very poor neighborhoods.

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Appendix

Data Collection Guides

- A. Health and Risky Behavior
- B. Family Routines
- C. Social Relations (Networks)
- D. The Neighborhood: 2

- E. 3cMTO Coding Glossary**

Appendix A

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity

ETHNOGRAPHER DATA COLLECTION GUIDE #6.1

Xavier de Souza Briggs

Health + Risky Behavior

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Overview and Preparation

Thanks go to Carla and Maria for help pulling this guide together, along with Prof. Dolores Acevedo-Garcia of the Harvard School of Public Health, whose advice has been invaluable.

This guide includes *physical and mental health* as well as what the MTO interim evaluation treats as *youth delinquency and risky behavior*, which in fact includes delinquency, crime, and a variety of behaviors considered developmental risky for young people, including smoking, drinking, and substance use, as well as parents' reports of disobedience at home and school, getting into fights, etc.

Given early findings suggesting positive effects on asthma and depression, MTO has attracted growing interest from health researchers interested in neighborhood context and other “structural determinants” of health behaviors and health outcomes, as well as criminologists and others interested in context effects on crime and delinquency.

In brief, the interim survey found experimental benefits to adult obesity and mental health, as well as girls' mental health and crime. Boys show no robust benefits in these areas and in fact show some losses: Boys in the experimental group are more likely to be arrested for property crimes. This may owe to differences in detection rate in low poverty areas, and it may even reflect selection (behavior problems are follow-up were largely among those boys who showed such problems at baseline, so those parents may have been especially determined to remove their boys from the projects).

Based on the interim findings, *this guide includes the clearest and most robust experimental impacts of MTO on social outcomes so far*, but the mechanisms underlying those impacts are mostly a mystery, and the unevenness of the impacts also begs important questions. For example, girls seem to benefit far more than boys from the experimental treatment (whatever it is), and in some respects, boys show negative effects. Also, adults and youth alike show effects in some dimensions of a given thematic area but not others. Adult experimentals are less likely to be obese, for example, and there are some signs of better diet (more fresh fruit and vegetables) but not of greater exercise, despite notions that improved neighborhood safety might lead to greater physical activity. Girl experimentals are less likely than controls to have been arrested for *violent* crimes specifically, while boys are more likely than their counterparts to have been arrested for *property* crimes. Again, we don't know why.

Begin by reviewing Chapters Four (Adult and Child Health) and Five (Youth Delinquency and Risky Behavior) in the interim evaluation report, along with the linked Appendix E tables on potentially important mediating mechanisms (e.g., visiting friends in the old neighborhood, neighborhood cohesion, participation in after-school activities). The treatment-group differences are striking in some instances, but the absence of differences—on many measures—is also striking. And as the report notes, only some of the non-effects can be “explained away” by mobility and exposure patterns over time—the fact that many experimentals moved on, from their initial placements, to higher poverty neighborhoods, while some controls left the projects over

time and moved to better areas (so the two groups converged somewhat, in terms of neighborhood context, over the years).

Then review the interview transcripts for your subjects, focusing on sections that directly cover these domains, as well as relationships with parents. As the “connections” section below reminds you, every major theme we’ve covered so far helps lay a foundation for this stage of data collection. Every other area—routines, education, work, neighborhood, etc.—is relevant to understanding these phenomena better.

Some Causal Pathways

Our study proposal outlined some possible mechanisms for effects on youth, and the interim survey data support some of these, don’t support others, and are silent on others. For example, in the *physical and mental health* domain, we expected that a move to lower-poverty neighborhoods might come with:

- (Environment) Cleaner air, fewer allergens or toxins in the home or neighborhood. But the interim survey suggests that the evidence for this is mixed at best (on pollutants and vermin). Also, there were no detectable differences in the health outcomes most plausibly connected (e.g. asthma).
- (Norms) More positive peer groups, adult role models. The proverbial jury is still out on this one, which we are well-positioned to continue investigating.
- (Institutional resources) More or better healthcare facilities, access to jobs with health benefits. The interim found no differences either in overall access or holding a job with health coverage as a benefit.
- (Safety) Reduced crime and violence, less stressful surroundings. The interim finds strong support for this pathway, but we don’t know where it leads. Thus far, it helps explain reduced depression and distress among adults, and it may be connected to reduced obesity among adults too. But as for children, it isn’t as clear why only girls’ anxiety and distress drops significantly. Are girls escaping predatory behavior, including emotional and physical harassment, in the projects? Was a key risk factor removed, even if new resources in the new neighborhoods are limited? Why is the pattern so different for boys?

Where *youth delinquency and risky behavior* are concerned, we suggested these causal pathways:

- (Safety) Increased physical safety and feelings of safety, lower anxiety. Again, the reduction is there (on average), but gangs and fighting are reported throughout the experiment, as is seeing someone stabbed or shot (not high rates but also no important differences across treatment groups). Schools have their safety problems in all three treatment groups. And we still don’t know if girls and boys in the experimental group experience safety changes, such as they are, in different ways.
- (Family management) More positive family routines, more effective monitoring and discipline. The interim found no differences, but we need to keep learning about parenting strategies and

styles in various neighborhoods, including overall strictness, extent of monitoring behaviors (knowing where children are, who their friends are, how to reach them when they're out), and patterns of discipline for girls and boys. Is there some parenting/neighborhood interaction that helps explain the big boy-girl differences in this domain?

- (Peer influence) Access to more positive, higher-achieving peer groups. The story is mixed so far. The interim founds no experimental effects on having friends involved in school activities or friends who carry weapons to school. Boys in the experimental group were somewhat more likely than control-group counterparts to report having friends who use drugs, and this may parallel national patterns for kids in lower poverty areas. The survey has less to say about the socio-economic status of peers or their education and career plans and supports. Again, this is fertile ground for us.
- (Expectations and decision-making) Increased access and perceived returns to legitimate economic activity (employment) and education. Unclear. The interim found no differences on some general measures of expectation (such as feeling that the chances are high or very high that one would find a well-paid, stable as an adult). But it will be important to learn more about this and to connect economic expectations to problem behavior patterns if we can.
- (Self-esteem and self-efficacy) Feelings of inadequacy, inability to compete. Unclear.
- (Cultural identity) Feelings of isolation and stigma or development of cross-cultural skills, useful cultural capital. Unclear, fertile ground, though we won't cover it all in this guide.

Analytic Strategy and Key Dimensions

Our ethnographic fieldwork positions us to corroborate certain interim survey findings on the limits of key effects and to extend other findings, for example where complexities of parenting, peer life, and youth expectations might interact. Here's one way of framing the higher-order questions, by life stage:

Adult parents

1. (Corroboration) Is improved mental health the primary health benefit of moving to lower poverty neighborhoods for adults?
2. (Extension) Are there signs that improved mental health is affecting functioning or performance in education, work, parenting, or other areas of life? If (1) is true, then these consequences are hugely important—and will be of great interest to researchers and policymakers alike.
3. (Extension) Are there any signs of increased physical activity through MTO, or do modest improvements in diet and major ones in mental health probably explain the obesity reduction? Obesity—and not just among minorities or the urban poor—is now a hot topic, so understanding neighborhood and other determinants is key.

The UI depth interview included quite a few questions on general health, diet, and exercise, so it's especially important that ethnographers carefully review what was learned, how clear it is, what puzzles may remain.

Adolescents and young adults

4. Are positive effects on girls likely related to risk factors left behind or to specific resources gained in new neighborhoods, whether through more positive parenting, peers, or other channels?
5. Are negative effects on boys likely related to peers, feelings of deprivation or increased competition in new neighborhoods, less effective parenting, or other factors? What's going on for boys versus girls?
6. Do the signs point to these positive and negative youth effects, respectively, as transitional—reflecting adjustment in the medium run, as detected by the interim survey—or more persistent? That is, do we have a robust view of how girls and boys will age into adulthood in the experimental versus control groups, or are we still reading a certain amount of adjustment “noise”?

To help us answer these questions when we combine the field notes with depth interview data and other sources, below are the key dimensions of this guide, by life stage:

Adults: physical health (diet and exercise, if need be, to fill out the depth interviews); mental health (stress, depression, coping); parenting (monitoring and discipline, strategies for girls/boys by type of neighborhood); children's behavior (why's and wherefore's, what's hardest).

Adolescents and young adults: mental health (exposure to harassment, stress and anxiety); delinquency; crime; and risky behavior (especially drinking, smoking, and drugs). We will not be asking directly about physical health, given limited time and other resources and the absence of major findings in that area.

Our principal strategy for leveraging the young adults in our sample is to find out (a) whether MTO youth are aging out of certain behaviors or persisting in them and (b) what key consequences may be appearing for career development, family formation, and other adult tasks.

A final word about strategy and sample: Despite our best efforts, we may not have a very representative sample of the youth in terms of problem behavior, delinquency, and crime outcomes so far. If something about kids' problem behavior made parents harder for us to find or less likely to say “yes” to us, then we will have a youth sample skewed toward more obedient kids. Our ex post analyses will include a benchmarking of our subjects' reported interim data against the overall distribution. But for now, let's learn what we can, even we have more access, say, to kids who fight than kids who commit property crimes or kids who have been incarcerated. It's clear that we have at least a few kids with criminal records, and risky behavior aside for the moment, the mental health problems

associated with the projects--e.g., high rates of generalized anxiety and distress—are far more prevalent than the rate for committing crime.

Connections to other guides

Everything we've done so far lays a foundation for some aspect of this investigation. Several of the most important links are:

- **Routines:** Do patterns of exposure to certain behavioral contexts (home, school, relatives, service provider institutions, church, other) help explain the gender differences in MTO effects on health and risky behavior? To what extent are crime and delinquency routinized—a regular part of life—for experimental and control-group girls and boys? What aspects of parenting strategy—whether strict or not—are evident in the management of kids' routines?
- **Social relations (aid, obligation, influence):** Do key features of peer life, or perhaps differential access to role models, help explain the gender effects?
- **Neighborhood and institutions:** Does the higher neighborhood collective efficacy reported by experimentals—i.e. expectations of what adults in the neighborhood would tolerate or control—shape the behavior of MTO parents and kids? How do parents describe their parent strategies and why they make sense for their current neighborhoods (or prior neighborhoods of residence)?
- **Work and money:** Are youth attitudes toward work and money related to patterns of delinquency and crime evident in the sample?

Fieldnote Style

In terms of the two main kinds of visits:

1. **Hanging out and tag-along's:** Useful for observing food shopping, utilization of health care or related services, access to youth programs, and peer group hanging out. Rely on the usual mix of recorded but typically brief verbatim remarks by subjects, your summaries of the overall direction of conversation, and observational data on situations and settings
2. **Focused sit-down interviews:** Best for collecting sensitive data from kids on their own behaviors and their views of parental control and outlook, also for collecting data from parents on their own mental health (what they worry about, how they cope, etc). Jot notes as quickly as possible, jot on the guide if practical.

Guide Preview

The guide is organized in three sections, with guides for adult parent, young adults, and adolescent subjects. The young adult section is a brief supplement to the adolescent section (items of which also apply to young adults). See instructions below.

SECTION ONE: ADULT PARENTS

Compared to work and money, this material is not highly structured, but it is rich in probes meant to elicit parents' understandings and their strategies for handling the issues.

Physical health

The depth interview included quite a few questions on this area, including detailed items about parents' exercise patterns, influences on same, and family diet. Review and fill in only where answers were sketchy or unclear.

Intro: "I want to talk to you about your health and things you do to take care of yourself. You spoke to the interviewer last year about this—your own health and that of your kid(s)—and I just want to complete the picture so we know how life is affecting you ..."

If subject reported getting exercise, else skip to #3:

Exercise. When do normally get exercise? Can you remind me where that fits in your typical day or week?

Can you remember what made you decide to start exercising, what was it? (Probe: influences, when was that, what else going on in life at that time, where did she live)

Diet. Do you have a diet plan for yourself? How about your kids? (Probe: what is it, how easy to stick to it given what's available locally or elsewhere, given costs, how strict on the kids and what they eat.)

Mental health and coping

Intro: "I want to ask you more about stresses and challenges, because we're trying to learn how people deal with things and how to help families get ahead. You told the interviewer [or "me"] last year about your biggest worries."

Life Functioning. Over the past six months, did those worries keep you from doing what you wanted to do, whether for yourself or your kids? (Probe: specific examples/stories)

Note: You want to distinguish sources of stress (such as lacking money) acting as barriers from distress itself (feelings of worry or being anxious or depressed) becoming a barrier.

4. **Active and Passive Coping.** What are some things you did in the last six months to cope with stresses or worries in your life ...
 - a. Planning to do something about the situation you're in (examples?)
 - b. Taking steps to change your situation? (what steps specifically?)
 - c. Getting emotional support from others (examples? Who?)
 - d. Getting advice from other people?
 - e. Gave up trying to deal with it?
 - f. Told myself "this isn't really happening."
5. *Experimentals only:* All in all, do you feel more or less capable of confronting the worries in your life now, as compared to when you and your family lived in public housing? Why is that, explain?

Parenting and youth behavior

Intro: "I want to ask you about a specific kind of challenge—being a parent, raising kids given what they need and what's going on in the world around you."

7. **Neighborhood context and gender.** What's it like raising a girl/boy [use focal adolescent's gender] in this neighborhood? (Probe: What does it take? What's challenging? Has this changed as the child grows up? As the neighborhood changes?)
8. Is it tough growing up around here? Why/how?
9. **Child-specific.** What's been hardest about raising [focal adolescent]?
10. *If parent has girls as well as boys:* Is it different for [other child of opposite sex], I mean in terms of what it takes to raise a girl/boy?
11. **Monitoring.** Let's talk about [focal adolescent] some more. What are your rules for him/her in terms of being able to go out into the neighborhood? How about hanging out with friends after school or on the weekends?
12. Are there places s/he wants to go that you won't let him/her go?
13. How do you keep track of him/her when she's outside the home? (Probe: does she check in, mom assume she's on time, mom calls 3rd party, someone picks her up)

14. Who else helps you keep track of [focal adolescent] and watch their behavior, if anyone?
(Probe: Non-custodial parent, relative, friend, church staff or others)
15. I want to double check: Do you know [focal adolescent's] friends who he/she hangs out with?
Do you know their parents? Have you ever called their parents to check up on your child or discuss a problem? Could you?
16. **Delinquency and Problem Behavior.** You talked to the interviewers about the police and courts, whether your child had ever been arrested. I wanted to ask, beyond that, whether, as far as you know ...
 - a. He/she has been in fights over the past year, at school or somewhere else?
 - b. Has used drugs? How about alcohol?
 - c. Has skipped school or skipped classes at school?
 - d. Has destroyed any property?
 - e. Has stolen anything, even small items from a person or a store?
 - f. Has been with a gang or crew? (Probe: Became a part of one, has friends in one, has socialized with members of one)
 - g. Has been suspended or otherwise punished at school for bad behavior?

NOTE: Respondents reported on much more in the interim survey. The list above is a short list, mainly to give us something to which we can compare our current youth-reported data (below).

SECTION TWO: ADOLESCENTS

Intro. "I want to talk to you about what's been on your mind over the last few months, including worries and stress, and how you're dealing with them." (Offer reminder on your confidentiality promise, if need be.)

Mental health and coping

1. **Updating.** Back when you talked to the Urban Institute interviewer, you said your main worries were [x, y, z]. Is that still true? Are there other things you didn't talk about last time?

2. Did any of those things come up over the holidays, when you were out of school? (Examples?)
3. **Status and acceptance.** Do you ever feel like you don't fit in in your neighborhood? What makes you feel that way? How about feeling like you don't measure up? (Probe: who, why, is school the relevant context)
4. **Gender.** Do you think girls face different worries from boys? Why/how?
5. **Coping.** You talked to the interviewer about how you deal with worries, too, like [examples from interview, if available, or ask the "how-do-you-cope" question now]. How often did you do those things in the fall, I mean like over the last six months?
6. **Life functioning.** How does worrying or feeling anxious about those things affect your life? Can you give me some examples over the last six months? (Probes: specific activities or decisions).

Observational cues:

- Interactions with parents or others around rules, sanctions, do's and don'ts, worries and coping.
- Things child mentions as indicating status, being somebody, being accepted, being "down."
- Mentions of role models and right or good behavior, what merits respect.

Behavior and parents

NOTE: Answered in depth, the UI interview covers these topics quite thoroughly, but in most cases, we need to fill in—How often do things happen? What's changing in the kid's behavior pattern and why? Has the kid been candid about crime and delinquent behavior? In some cases, you may need to re-pose the questions from that interview slowly, giving kids a chance to flesh them out, feel comfortable with you.

"You talked to the interviewer about what young people around here do, about drugs and smoking and drinking, about what you think of the police, and other things. I want to make sure we understand your views on these things and your experiences, too."

Elaborating. What leads you to do [any mentions in the interview data, go one by one: drugs, smoking, drinking]? What do you get out of it? How did it start?

How about other things, such as ...

Fighting to protect yourself or protect your honor?

Skipping school or classes?

Tags, murals, or throw-ups (spraycan art)?

Breaking things sometimes or destroying property?

Taking things in stores, shoplifting to get something you want or need?

For items 7 AND 8, inclusive: How often is that? Has that changed in the past six months or stayed about the same? (Probe: influences, changes, attempts to stop, new activities and why they began)

Do your friends do those things?

NOTE: use “with a gang” rather than “in a gang” on these:

Unless detailed in the interview: Are there gangs in your school? How about in the neighborhood?

Have any of your friends been with a gang? When was that, what kinds of things did you do?

Have you ever been pressured by anyone to be with a gang? Ever joined a gang or a crew? How did that happen?

GIRLS only: Have you dated anyone in a gang? Would you? (why, why not)

Neighborhood. Is it tough growing up around here, I mean in this neighborhood? Why/why not? Gender. Do you think it's different for girls versus guys?

Norms and control. If you break the rules or break the law in this neighborhood, how likely is that someone will stop you or that you will get away with it? (Probe: examples, which rules, in what circumstances)

Parenting. Are their rules your mom/parent has about where you can or can't go? How about when you can leave the house and when you need to be back?

Does your mom know who your friends are, I mean the people you hang out with? Does she ever call their parents to check on you?

Are there things your mom/parent doesn't want you to do that you do sometimes anyway? What's that about? (what leads to that, how often)

How about people she doesn't want you to hang out with ... that you spend time with anyway? (If yes: Why?)

School safety. Let's talk about your school. Do kids carry weapons there? (many, some?) Do you ever carry a weapon or feel like maybe you should?

Police. What are the police like around here? How do young people deal with them? (Probe: examples? True of subject/his friends?)

Do you feel like you can go to them if you need help? Do you trust them?

Have you ever been stopped or searched by the police? (Probe: Where? How often? What happened?)

How about your friends from school and from the neighborhood, have any of them been stopped or searched? How about arrested? Why, what were they doing? (Get specifics, get a story)

If ever arrested. Can you explain what happened, I mean why you were arrested and how the cops treated you? So what were you thinking after all that?

Has anyone you know been arrested or charged in court? What was that about? (Probe: attitudes as to legitimacy, everyday event or extraordinary?)

SECTION THREE: YOUNG ADULTS

For young adults, drop age-inappropriate items above (such as on school conditions) and apply the other adolescent topics. Also use these:

Aging out. When you think of things you did that made you get into trouble when you were a teenager and how you're living your life now, are there things that you eventually stopped doing? That you kept on doing? Why? (Probe: behavior by behavior, getting into trouble at home versus with the police or at school, reasons for change)

If ever arrested: How did that affect you afterward?

Neighborhood recollected. What was toughest about growing up in the neighborhood(s) you grew up in? Why was that tough for you?

Has it been different for [younger sibling]? Why?

Parenting. Has your mom raised [younger sibling] differently, I mean like with different rules and expectations? (Probe: how, specific examples)

Appendix B

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity

ETHNOGRAPHER DATA COLLECTION GUIDE #1

Family routines

Overview

Thanks go to Gretchen for doing the background prep for this guide.

We're interested in how, where, and with whom our subject families get daily life accomplished—and, of course, in how much neighborhood context matters for that accomplishment. So the routines in focus here connect directly to social relations (including networks and interaction and exchange habits) and neighborhood engagement (how much, what kinds, with what attitudes and “mental maps” to make sense of the environment). While the who and where are included below, therefore, we'll do much more with those domains and cover them in greater depth in additional guides. Because the substance of routines constitute everything we care about in the way of social outcomes (education, health, work and money, etc.), there are natural connections to those as well.

We care about several dimensions of daily routines:

The volume and range of routines, e.g. child care, getting kids to school, school-related home activities (including homework), transportation to work or training or social services (including dealing with welfare offices and clinics), food shopping and meal prep, paying bills and dealing with money, cleaning and other household chores. The question guide below follows a “typical day” approach to eliciting data on these.

The manageability, stability, and seasonality of routines: How hectic, strained, stable or fluctuating, and why? How variable during the school year versus out-of-school time? Weekdays versus weekends?

Formal and informal resources: How much does the immediate (household-resident) family rely on its own material and nonmaterial resources to get routines accomplished, versus outside resources (kin, friends, lovers, etc.)?

Roles/scripts and stages: How differentiated and set are the roles and responsibilities of members within the family vis-à-vis accomplishing daily life? How are these changing as the kids mature? Highly defined gender roles have sometimes been referred to as “kinscripts,” which can loom particularly large in the lives of female youth entrusted with caregiving for younger siblings. For males and females, scripts can shape the range and character of peer time, too, and time available for pursuing jobs, special interests, etc.

The geography of routines: what gets done in the immediate neighborhood (as defined by the subject), what elsewhere, which elsewhere’s, and why.

Nonroutine activities – by definition beyond the bare necessities, but important for many reasons: socializing, worship or other religious activities, groups and activism (if any). Think of these as habits and attachments, which also tend to be very patterned even if they occur less than daily and are not as basic to family survival.

The guide is organized as follows:

The first section offers background on approaches to the study of time use and routines (some of which emphasize spatial factors and others not). We’re relying largely on subjects’ reports and your observational abilities not “experience sampling” (beeper or timer studies).

Next, I’ve included tips on fieldnote style for this domain. Assume that Emerson et al’s general directives always apply: Try for verbatim excerpts rather than mere summaries of what we said, be attentive to mood but avoid the temptation to “psychologize” your subjects at length in the fieldnotes (inferring motives and mental states beyond what you actually see and hear)—most of all in the early days of building rapport.

In the last section below, you have the tangible “guide” in this guide: the observational cues (what to watch for) and questions that will help you collect the data we need. Inevitably, these are only starting points. We will both focus and extend as we go and as your relationships in the field evolve. But the cues and questions, together with background on what we’re after, give you much to draw on.

Background on Methods

First, let’s distinguish studies of routines (what someone does, which has an obvious temporal dimension) from studies of time use per se (accounting for how someone spends given blocks of

time, such as after-school time). The former is our primary concern, but methods are most standardized for the latter, and this prior research is instructive.

There are several standard methods for understanding how an individual uses and experiences time including stylized (“S”) measures, experience sampling methods (ESM) which include beeper and timer studies, and time diaries (journaling). These strategies are variously designed to find out what, when, where, with whom and for how long a given activity is taking place in order to reveal routines and patterns.

For example, time use studies have been able to show that a steep increase in commuting time results from welfare to work programs and that children who spend time doing non-academic, but social activities show better academic performance than those that simply participate in academic activities alone. Structured family chores, while not schoolwork, can support school achievement in low-income families. “TV time” has less helpful effects for kids, it seems, particularly if it is very extensive and largely unsupervised.

In studies using stylized measures (S), respondents are asked to record or report on the time spent on a given activity. Details of a subject’s time use are aggregated into categories of activities to understand the variation and range in a sample population. Respondents may be given a list of activities that they check off in accordance with their behavior (how much time spent talking with neighbors, commuting to work, etc.). Some studies have demonstrated that S measures usually produce higher estimates than other time use measurements. The stylized approach has considerable advantages from our perspective: it demands less of the subjects outside of the time you spend with them; and it provides greater flexibility in collection of data on topics related to routines (“peripheral vision” while in the field, so to speak).

In time diaries (or journaling), respondents are asked for a non-directed chronology of events starting at a particular time and running for some specified time span—usually one 24-hour period. They are also asked who else was there, and where it happened. In journaling a decision must be made as to whether respondents should record all information (increasing detail, but time consuming) or just focus on specific activities prompted by research questions. There is also a question about whether entries will be more reliable if participants are asked to record at a prescribed time. Journals can take the form of oral history (recording), writing, or photos. The benefits of journal studies are that journals are non-intrusive; respondents can log at their convenience; the potential for detailed interpretive answers; and the non-random character suggests that respondents will report the most significant information to them. However in comparison to the beeper studies the limitations include a reliance on participants to remember detail; too much time may elapse; amount of detail will vary depending on motivation; and there is a potential to rationalize post-hoc.

Experience (or behavior) sampling studies use programmable watches or pagers to chart the course of daily life and experiences. In response to the pager respondents answer or fill out a report of their current activities, feelings, and locations. Beeper studies avoid the biases and distortions to which more global self-report measures are sometimes prone. In a study of teenagers' school life watches were coded to beep six times/day from Tuesday through Monday. Each time the watch beeped, students filled out a survey sheet in their beeper study booklet that took about 5 minutes. Beeper studies are derived from the field of psychology (thought sampling) and aim to uncover sensory information along with time use. With this method the researcher can ask very specific questions (attitudinal) that would be more difficult to recall in other types of sampling such as "how do you feel about x...?" They also have the advantage of allowing truly random samples and rely less on a respondent's recall. This may be better for busier schedules. Disadvantages include the awkwardness of reporting sensitive information at particular times and the potential cost of research in monitoring function. ESM generally provides the most detailed description and the greatest range of experience (which could be hard to standardize across the sample). It is the most intrusive and the advantages may not be significantly greater than the S method in terms of detail. Beeper studies seem to be a more familiar and effective tool for adolescents and students than for adults.

We will be using a form of stylized measurement, asking subjects to report on their typical day and working outward, from there, to nonroutine activities, variations on the typical day (weekends, summertime vs. school year, etc. as outlined in the Overview above). That is, subjects will report to you and enable you to directly observe certain routines. You should also see if you can accompany subjects for at least some routines that lead outside the home.

Using the measures. Let's put some distance between ourselves and all of the more formal data collecting that has dominated MTO to date—i.e., families' experience of the data collection process. Focus on getting to know your subjects, building rapport, making them comfortable with you. Draw on the measures, most of all in the first visit or two, in whatever way seems most accessible to your subjects. We'll give ourselves the option, in a few weeks, of doing a more structured exercise to clear up loose ends and round out the portrait you're about to build through a combination of informal interviewing and observation. In the a structured exercise, you could work on the matrix below with your subjects (directly). I'd much prefer this not be the character of your first visit or two, though.

Fieldnote Style

You will likely have two different kinds of visits that lend themselves to collecting data on routines, and your fieldnotes can be constructed accordingly:

Home visits, where most of what you learn is through interviewing, so focus notes on this (verbatim exchanges, being attentive to your specific questions/cues, directions of the conversation, subjects' unsolicited comments, etc.); and

Tag-along's outside the home, for example where you are able to participate in some routine, such as grocery shopping, visiting a social services or health program, or getting hair done or (in the case of a younger person perhaps) running errands for the family. Here, more observational detail, particularly about how the subject "navigates" (makes decisions, interacts with others) would likely be available, and your notes should reflect that. Interviewing might be more interrupted, on the fly, which is fine. Don't impose an artificial organization that the conversation didn't have, but do try, as always, to interview effectively, record actual words spoken, etc.

Questions and Observational Cues

Here, then, a guide with questions, a reference matrix and list, and some observational cues.

Questions: leads and probes

What's a typical day like, like on a weekday? How early does it start? What do you do first? What affects your ability to get that done? How long does that take usually?

Is anyone else in the family, or even outside the family involved in that? What are your expectations for your kids (roles, chores)/What are your parent's expectations in terms of your role in getting that done?

How about things you might not do every day, like shopping for groceries (when, where)? How about doctors or hospitals? (see "beyond the home" activity matrix below).

(If outside the home) Where does it take place? (Get specific locations, place names, store names, intersections if possible). (If not clear) What neighborhood is that?

What's the typical weekend day like? (Probe for any Sunday or other worship activities.) Is your day/routine different in the summertime or school vacation time as opposed to during the school year?

Has that changed in the past 6 months? Year? How about now as compared to five years ago?

How much does living in this neighborhood affect that? (How you get it done, where, how effectively, at what cost, with what help).

Lead-in's/recaps: How was last weekend? Is your routine pretty much the same these days as when we talked about it back in _____, or has it changed?

Youth-focused questions

What's your typical day like? (Weekday/weekend/holiday vs. school year). (If not clear) Are there things you have to do around the house?

See at-home activity list.

How often do you see friends? What things do you like to do with them? Where?

How about seeing a boy-girlfriend or dating? (When, where, how often, how is transportation handled.)

Repeat for kin.

What else do you do outside the house/apartment? (School, special programs, work, volunteering/service.) Are there other things you'd like do?

See adult list on changes over time, over neighborhoods.

We'll pick up more specifics later, for example on work, education, peer life. These are starting points.

In using the matrix below, try to get specific locations, family members or others who are either responsible for the activity or who participate/support. The table isn't meant to capture the detail—it's a reference—though you can copy and expand it on a separate sheet if helpful as a recording device.

This is an adult-focused matrix, but it's easily adapted for adolescents/young adults, who may participate in many of these activities and have more varied recreation, peer, and educational activities than heads of household.

See at-home activity list for adolescents below this matrix.

BEYOND THE HOME: ACTIVITY AND PARTICIPATION MATRIX (ADULT)

<i>ACTIVITY AREA</i>	<i>FAMILY MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATE</i>	<i>OTHERS WHO PARTICIPATE</i>	<i>WHERE ACTIVITY HAPPENS/GOES</i>
Grocery shopping (and eating out)			
Getting kids to school, attending events there			
Going to work or training			
Grooming/personal hygiene			
Dealing with the welfare office (if applicable)			
Getting medical care (clinics, ER, other)			
Providing support to kin			
Providing support to friends/others			
Socializing with kin			
Socializing with friends/others			
Recreation/fun (what kinds/habits? _____)			
More recreation: _____			
Worship or other faith activities			
Non-religious groups (clubs, assns) or activism			

Other _____			
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AT-HOME ACTIVITY LIST (Adolescent)

(For the list below) How much time on a typical day? School year versus out-of-school season?

- Cleaning up around the house
- Getting bathed and dressed, fixing hair (grooming)
- Caregiving: siblings
- Caregiving: elders or other kin
- Homework
- Other school-related
- Watching TV
- Playing videogames
- Talking with friends (in person, on the phone)
- Other play (Where? With whom?)
- Other (What else do you do? Are you expected to help out in around the house in other ways? _____)

Observational Cues

Many of the questions above, especially about at-home activities, encompass the what-to-watch for list around the home:

- Where, in and around the home, is the activity carried out? Is there a regular place for it? (for example a dedicated place for doing homework), or are things less structured?
- How do families interact as these routines are carried out? We care about parent-child interactions as well as child-child (sibling) ones.
- Do observed shifts from out-of-school season (summer or vacations) to the school year match what subjects report?
- What activities are combined (e.g. homework with the TV on, play while cleaning up)?

- Do visitors seem to affect family routines? Are people constantly coming in and out?

Other questions above focus **outside the home**, where, beyond posing questions, you can observe:

- How families deal with institutions and authority figures, market transactions, potential employers, others. How confident? How deferential? With what language/codes?
- What barriers, including unreported ones, appear as families try to accomplish key routines, how subjects respond.
- How stable routines outside the home are—if you are able to observe several over time.

Appendix C

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity

ETHNOGRAPHER DATA COLLECTION GUIDE #2

Social relations (networks)

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Overview

Thanks go to Joanie and Silvia for doing the background prep for this guide.

Along with routines, social relations are a defining feature of everyday life, and a number of the causal mechanisms we need to explore in MTO depend on the influences and exchanges that social relations encompass. Social relations have long been at the core of migration research, whether the migration is rural-to-urban within a nation or across national, regional, or other borders, because “social resources” lower the costs of migrating and help with migrants’ adjustment post-arrival.⁵⁷

What’s more, relations include the “with whom” of routines (i.e., with whom are the activities carried out or whose help matters), and while relations don’t require a physical location in quite the way that activities do, we often connect to important places or behavior settings in our lives through people that matter to us. So like routines, relations can be mapped in various ways, can be placed in space and in mobility patterns. This is another way in which relations are crucial to an experiment that is, in the end, mostly about the power and limits of place.

Social resources, housing mobility, and the poor: One important thing we’ve learned to pay attention to is the nature of aid coming from particular types of contacts: A poor family may have good access to everyday types of social support (for “getting by,” survival, or “coping”) but little access to social leverage (clout, information, and influence for getting ahead, mobility or “attainment”).⁵⁸ Higher-status people can often get both types of aid from friends who are socially similar, but low-SES people often need “bridging” ties to people who are often dissimilar in order to gain info, clout, and other advantages that act as leverage. One hope for programs, such as MTO, that expand the housing and neighborhood options of low-income people, is that exposure to new residential contexts and in some cases new schools will lead to broader social worlds and social contacts, which will enhance leverage. Conversely, a common assumption is that this will come at no loss of support. We know relatively little about the degree to which

⁵⁷ One of the classics of migration ethnography is also a classic of social network research: Clyde Mitchell, editor, *Social Networks in Urban Situations* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University, 1969). See, in particular, Mitchell’s chapter, “The concept and use of social networks.”

⁵⁸ Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Brown Kids in White Suburbs: Housing Mobility and the Multiple Faces of Social Capital,” *Housing Policy Debate* 9(1):177-221 (1998).

either is true (and whether there are trade-offs among the types of aid as one moves about and ages along the life course). The Gautreaux program once again shows some encouraging possibilities, as do studies of the long-run effects of school desegregation (on which more below).

First, let's get clear on terms:

In our discussions, I have often used “networks” as shorthand for this domain. But technically, networks refer to the structures of our social relations⁵⁹, including such dimensions as size, density, and composition (what kinds of people are in the network, how many “degrees” away are people who might be helpful, etc.). A key idea that emerges when one focuses on structure is that people we know are often valuable to us because of people they (our contacts) know. A favorite ethnography of mine, a study of “personalistic” island societies like the one where I grew up, captures this important idea in its title: *Friends of Friends* (Boissevain 1974).

“Social relations” is the broader and more accurate label for what we're after—not just the structure of MTO subjects' networks but the active exchanges, patterns of influence, and the time and space of our subjects' relating to other people.

Key Dimensions

We care about several aspects of social relations:

⁵⁹ Network analysis has boomed in recent decades—all the more since students of the internet discovered that cybernetworks have many of the properties of social networks (and can be studied in many of the same ways). Network analysis encompasses a great variety of specific methodologies, from graph theory and algebraic blockmodeling of large network structures to thick description of specific exchanges in specific relationships, from “the small-world phenomenon” (from which the expression “six degrees of separation” entered the popular lexicon) to studies of everyday assistance from one's immediate (“proximate”) social contacts. For an excellent, accessible introduction to these methods, plus some classic studies that generated or advanced them, see John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991). For a look at some cutting-edge modeling and the fascination with networks across fields of natural and social science, see a new book by a theoretical physicist-turned sociologist: Duncan Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (New York: WW Norton, 2003).

“Contents” of social relations, with a primary focus on aid and influence.

By “aid,” I really mean the two sides of the coin: help our subjects can get from other people and obligations that our subjects have to other people. So aid and obligations are the key concepts here. Paying attention to both is always important, but it’s all the more important in the lives of low-income people, who are often wary about committed exchange relationships because they associate them with other people’s neediness and/or nosiness (“people comin’ to me for things and bein’ in my business”). Most discussions of social capital—in simple terms, the usefulness in social connections—revolve around aid, whether formal or informal. People who lack any useful ties are social isolates, and some of our families will show this pattern.

By “influence,” I mean simply that—the nature of influence patterns that work through social relations, often through special individuals that a subject may respect, fear, want to emulate, be dependent on, etc. For MTO youth, this is centrally about parents and role models and/or mentors (if any), but it’s also about peer influences that may be powerful. Influence is often trickier to learn about reliably than is aid, and we care about both positive and negative influences.

Reciprocity and trust—or lack of the same—in our subjects’ social relations.

Structure: we’re going to do very little with this, at least formally. A key concept is density: Dense networks (in which many of the people you know also know each other) are great for mobilizing social support. They can also be gossipy, harrying, and otherwise burdensome. Dispersed networks are often great for access to information and influence, but they don’t bring you a cup of soup when you’re sick. Then there’s type of tie: kin, friends, acquaintances (and whether any of these are neighbors). Kin networks tend to be denser than friendship networks (for given reasons – kin grow up knowing each other), but youth peer networks are usually quite dense, and so too are some adults networks of neighborhood friends. Dense networks provide clues to social influence and “social set.”

Geography: As with routines, we care about where people’s social worlds are anchored, where their social contacts draw them, and where they avoid too (When asked why she doesn’t visit her old housing project, a Section 8 Comparison mom I recently met emphasized staying away from old social contacts and their demands).

Sources or contexts. The “sources” of ties are the institutional or other contexts in which particular relationships are formed. A longtime friend may be someone you met in your childhood neighborhood (but don’t see often). Conversely, you may visit much more often with someone who is a newly made co-worker friend. So the sources in these cases are childhood neighborhood and current workplace. People with more diverse exposure (exposure to a wider array of contexts) have more opportunities to form diverse relationships (see next item), and moving often shifts the contexts to which we have best access. It also, by definition, changes our neighbors (gives us a new neighborhood in which to “mine” social contacts if we choose to). Low-income folk often mine kin’s friendship networks, church, informal socializing spots (hair salons, for example, or bars), and neighborhood. Youth mine those—but school most of all, in

most cases. Kin ties themselves aren't "sourced," because we can't choose who we're related to (we can merely choose whether and how to actively relate to them).

Diversity: This is one dimension of the composition of people's networks, and the common measures are race, socio-economic status (income, level of education, employment status, social or occupational position, other), and sometimes gender. Relating diversity to the type-of-tie concept outlined above, one can also distinguish networks according to how much they are defined by kin versus nonkin relations (friends and acquaintances):

Low-income people are generally more kin-reliant (so one tries to find out how diverse the kin network is in terms of education, socio-economic status, etc.).

Higher income people tend to have more friends and acquaintances.

Why network diversity matters: In general, more diverse networks tend to have greater range and function—they bring richer and more varied information and possible influences into someone's life, and they can perform a greater range of functions that one may need over time. But the social networks of the persistently poor, particularly if they are residentially segregated people of color, are typically nondiverse or insular.

Change over time and residential location. We care about what our subjects' social relations are like now, but we care even more about how relations have evolved over time and may evolve into the future. In the end, our analyses will need to wrestle, on every issue, with the question "What did the MTO intervention do to affect this?" In general, the data on poor people's networks in existing research is very cross-sectional or, if longitudinal, emphasizes relatively insular networks of everyday support, as in Carol Stack's classic ethnographic study of survival by low-income black families: *All Our Kin* (1974).⁶⁰ Has moving exposed some MTO families to different social worlds, and if so, are there early signs of impact on their key social relations and social outcomes too? Long-run studies of school desegregation experiments emphasized the acquisition of more racially diverse personal networks as a key gain for inner-city black youth bused to suburban white schools (along with real strains, to be sure).⁶¹ The Interim Impact study of MTO suggested there may be small network differences among treatment groups, but we know little about what those differences are or how they came about.

Connections to other guides

⁶⁰ But there are notable exceptions: Cecilia Menjivar's work on "fragmented ties," and the dissolution of ties over time, in the lives of Latin American immigrants.

⁶¹ An excellent review and discussion is Robert L. Crain and Amy S. Wells, "Perpetuation theory and the long-term effects of school desegregation," *Review of educational research* 64(4):531–553 (1994).

I noted above, at least in general terms, how social relations connect to routines. For adolescents, this domain clearly connects to special topics such as dating and sexual behavior (which will have a guide), the development of a social identity and cultural repertoire (will also have a guide: habits of self-presentation, including dress and speech, plus a sense of how to navigate the world, deal with institutions), as well as the range of social outcomes for which social relations may matter and for which we will have guides, such as ...

Education. Defining educational goals, planning one's educational future (in connection with career planning, see next item), and getting help with access (from preparing an application to recommendations for scholarships).

Work and Money. Learning about the world of work, getting a job, getting a better job than one has now, and getting ahead on the job (advancing, gaining skills and valuable job contacts). Also, getting small cash loans, in-kind assistance, and other aid to make ends meet or even finance self-employment (Start a hair salon in one's living room? More?), plus the flip side—finding that one's money runs out because of needy relatives or friends one has tried to help. Social relations are often part of both the “sources” and “uses” sides of money.

Delinquency and Risky Behavior. With a focus on positive or negative influences in peer or role model relations, much of which we will establish through learning about these relations generally (using this guide).

Health. Beyond the health-relevant aspects of risky behavior (early sex and childbearing, substance use), it may be the case that shifting one's peer set influences health-related attitudes and behaviors, including those that drive diet and exercise (affecting obesity and more). We just don't know how much is social relations versus better health care versus structural context (e.g. safer neighborhoods allow walking to stay in shape; lower-poverty areas have healthier grocery options, etc.).

Neighborhoods and Institutions. First, in this guide, you'll see multiple references to the location of key ties, including specific questions about which are in the neighborhood and how the subject feels about neighbors. The Neighborhood and Institutions guide will enrich some of this by asking more about neighboring behaviors and attitudes toward social life in the neighborhood. Second, that guide will let us cross-check some things we learn about social relations grounded in specific institutions, such as church or school, that may be socially significant for our MTO families.

Preview

The guide is organized as follows:

The first section offers tips on fieldnote style for this domain. As before, and as always, try for verbatim excerpts rather than mere summaries of what is said in the field, be attentive to mood but avoid the temptation to “psychologize” your subjects at length in the fieldnotes (inferring motives and mental states beyond what you actually see and hear). The first section assumes those general guidelines and so begins with advice specific to gathering great data about social relations.

The second section is the guide for adult subjects, both parents and young adults. Some items are highlighted for parents (or parent-like figures) only, while others are appropriate to the older youth in our study as well as their parents.

The third and final section is the guide for adolescent subjects, with some additional guidance on how to adapt and focus questions and observational cues for the distinct developmental stages we have in our sample, from early adolescence (including pre-teens) up through late adolescence. For adolescents, the most accessible and frequently encountered social contacts are generally age-similar peers (including friends and girl/boyfriends), yet a variety of adults may be influential. The guide is designed to help you learn about both types of relationships—and others that may be important for your subjects.

Fieldnote Style

I believe that, as with routines, you will want to invest your energy and attention in the field in distinct ways, and your fieldnotes may take advantage of the differences:

Hanging out and tag-along’s: Best for learning about specific social relations (when did you meet, what do you do, has that changed over time, why do you think/feel that about that person, etc.) and the contexts in which they are active (where things are done with a social contact, such as kin or friend, where you may be a participant-observer). Especially important for younger youth, since you want firsthand exposure to their peer lives if possible—reports alone tend to be less rich and complete coming from kids. Not so great for structured data collection about a range of contacts and range of questions about each (see the tables below).

Focused sit-down interviews: Can still be informal or more formal and structured, with the table pulled out to help you record, for example at the proverbial kitchen-table interview. Best where time and privacy allow you to cover a range of social relations, ask about general patterns that affect them; ask for comparisons and trend analyses that require reflection by subjects, e.g. “You seem to spend a lot of time with relatives. Are there friends in your life, why or why not, what do you do with them or rely on them for (vs. your relatives), has that changed since you moved ...” In time, you’ll find that you can relate key life experiences, such as holding a job, to changing

networks in nuanced ways, e.g., “Did I hear you right ... You lost touch with X and Y and Z [contacts] after you moved? Was that all of your friends from the car wash job and the old neighborhood, then?”

For #1, you can rely on the usual mix of recorded but typically brief verbatim remarks by subjects, your summaries of the overall direction of conversation, and observational data on situations (e.g. peer interactions, how mom greets and jokes with a friend, the setting in which social interaction occurs).

For #2, I encourage you to jot notes on the network table as quickly as possible so that you can build more complex narratives from there, reliably depicting overall patterns in the subject’s network or in a particular social relationship where you have learned something about why the relation has been sustained or ended, what things subject typically does with that contact, etc (again, the more reflective as opposed to situational, life-being-lived kind of data). You may also choose to audio tape portions of some visits, to aid in recalling detail and words used to describe particular people and relationships. The table is something you can update over the study period, too, adding info, indicating change, referencing earlier data in shorthand form so as to make sense (quickly) of just-collected data.

SECTION TWO: ADULTS (Parents and Young Adult Children)

This section includes questions and probes (as usual), plus a network table (matrix) for outlining a range of social relations according to their key traits, and a modest set of observational cues.

The items here are varied, and this is the logic: Some things are easily learned through general questions that ask subjects to identify people that are particularly important to them. But we also need more global coverage of their networks, including people our subjects feel they could turn to for aid (or to whom they feel obliged) even if they don’t interact with those contacts often. So one learns one set of things asking “who matters most” and another set asking “is there anyone you could turn to for a ride somewhere, a small cash loan, advice on how to look for a job, etc.”

General questions and observational cues

Beyond the people who live here in your home, who are the most important people in your life? (For kin, clarify: How are you related?)

What things do you do together, and how often do you get together? Where does that happen? What other contact with them do you have (e.g. talk by phone)?

If only kin (relatives) are named above, ask: Are there friends, too, that are important to you ... even if you don't see them often? Where and how did you come to know that person? How long have you known each other, and what kinds of things do you do with them?

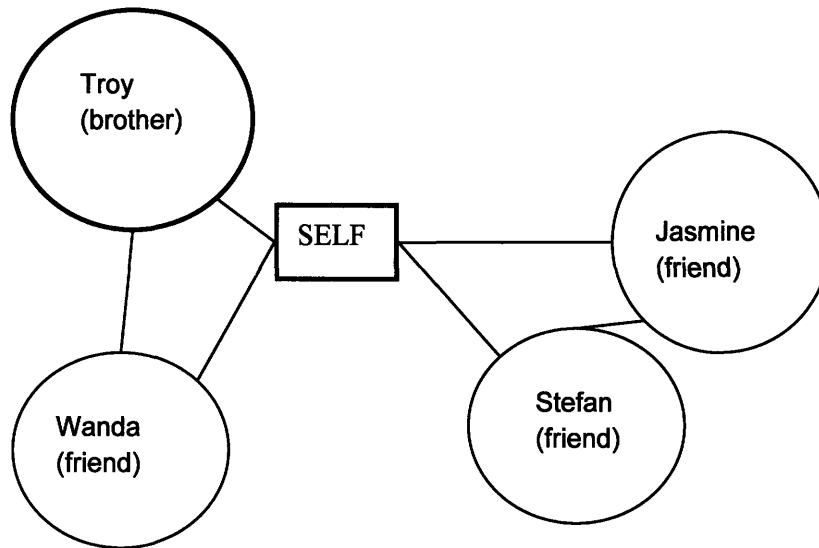
How about acquaintances? People who might not be friends but who you interact with, maybe to get information or to say "hello," including neighbors, co-workers, people you see in church, or other people you know?

Links. Which of your friends also know each other? How about your acquaintances? Plot inter-connections:

Here's an *example of a simple network plot* (sociogram), showing SELF and key inter-connected friends and kin.⁶² SELF and the key kin contact are in bold. Troy knows at least one of the respondent's other friends (Wanda), while Stefan and Jasmine know each other but not Wanda or

⁶² This is a sociogram for an "ego-centric" network, i.e. one in which the researchers prioritize a central or focal subject (ego) labeled as SELF and determine his/her social contacts. More global network studies try to map *all* social connections among individuals in a place or context—say, a village or a school or policy bureaucracy. Ours is a family-focused study, so it's natural for us to plot networks outward from focal parents and their kids.

Troy:



1. *Drops*. Are there people who used to be in your life, like part of your network, but who you've fallen out of touch with or chosen not to relate to anymore? Who, when, why? *Probe* for how moving around (residential mobility) affected this over time, if it did.
2. How does living in this neighborhood affect who you relate to or keep in your "social circle"? How about living in other neighborhoods, how was that different in terms of who was part of your circle?
3. *Experimentals only*: Are there new people that came into your life or (for parents) your children's lives, since you left the projects? How/when? Are any of them neighbors, or how did you come to know these people?
4. *Updating question (repeat use)*: What did you do last weekend ... with whom?
5. *Observational cues*: Socializing and other encounters with friends and kin, affect (emotion) and content of interaction.

Material and emotional aid

Who do you confide in? Who do you turn to when you need encouragement or to get a "boost," like say if you're feeling down or overwhelmed?

What about people you might turn to for other kinds of help, let's say like getting a ride somewhere, help if a car breaks down, getting a little money, (for parents) looking after your kids, or other kinds of favors. Who are those people? (Probe: May be different people for those different kinds of aid.) How often do you rely on people for those things or for other informal kinds of help? (This lets you distinguish actual use versus support subjects feel is available to them.)

How about people you might go to for other help, like applying for a job you want or figuring out what kind of training or education to get, applying for a loan, moving to a new neighborhood, or other things to create new opportunities for yourself and your family? Have you turned to people in your life for those kinds of help? Are there people you think you could turn to, even if you haven't? Why those people?

All in all, which relationships in your life would you say are the most supportive? (OK to name immediate family in-home, but probe for others.)

Which relationships would you say are most burdensome to you or most draining? Why?

Observational cues. Aid in observed social interactions or situations: Favors? Collaboration? Info sharing? Other? Indications of one-way versus reciprocal relationships. Expressed attitudes about sharing, giving, asking for help.

Social influence

Are there people in your life who have influenced important decisions you made? (Who, how)

(For young adults) Would you say those people, or other people you can think of, are role models or mentors for you? Why/why not?

(For young adults) Who are the people in your life who you look up to or want to be like?

(For parents) Are there people that influence(d) where you chose to move with your family? How about what school to send your kids to?

Plotting social relations

I want to go back over some people we've talked about, and maybe talk about other people too, so I can be sure I've got the whole picture, OK? I'm going to ask you about where they live, how often you talk to and see them (get together with them), their level of education, and other things about them.

[See grids, next few pages ...]

Optional:

Where kin relations are clearly important to a subject, construct a basic family tree to capture kin relations, beginning with respondent's parents above SELF, adding respondent's siblings (if any) to left and right of SELF, adding SELF's and siblings' children, others:

SELF (respondent)

Network Grids (begin next page)

RELATIVES (Kin relations). Outside of this household, who do you consider members of your family? Tell me about them ... Please list each relative in respondent's (R's) extended family, identifying age, gender, relationship to R, where the person lives and how far in driving time (if unclear), level of education, (highest attained), how often the respondent talks to and sees them, person's education, employment status and occupation.

Name	Age	Gender	Relationship to R	Where they live and how far (if unclear)	How often	Education	Working? Occupation?
<i>Example: John F.</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Brother</i>	<i>Baltimore, Maryland</i>	<i>Talk weekly, see every year or less often</i>	<i>HS Diploma</i>	<i>Part-time, plumber</i>
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
11.							

Friends. Who do you consider your friends? If you have many, let's start with your close friends, and then we can talk about other friends. Can you tell me about them ... (To the kin grid, this one adds Context in which relationship formed and Length of relationship).

Name	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	How long known?	CONTEXT: From where/how known?	Where they live and how far	How often talk and see? Help available?	Education & work
<i>Example: Rita</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Black, non- Hisp</i>	<i>9 years</i>	<i>The projects I used to live in</i>	<i>East Brooklyn, about 60 min drive from me</i>	<i>Talk every 2-3 days, visit some weekends, have borrowed and loaned \$, babysit for each other</i>	<i>HS? Supermarket cashier</i>
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								

ACQUAINTANCES. Are there other people you know who you might not consider friends but who you have contact with or might talk to—say, to get information or get help with something—including people right here in your neighborhood? Tell me a little about them ...

Name	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	How long known?	CONTEXT: From where/how known?	Where they live and how far	What do you do together? What kind of help can you get?	Education & work
<i>Example: Dolores.</i>	<i>40?</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Hisp</i>	<i>2 years</i>	<i>Co-worker</i>	<i>Across town, (Silverlake neighborhood)</i>	<i>Sometimes socialize after work. Can talk about our kids (she's a single mom like me).</i>	<i>College degree, assistant mgr</i>
<i>Example 2: Rita</i>	<i>30s</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Hisp</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>Neighbor</i>	<i>This block</i>	<i>Chat in the grocery store a block from here - often about the gangs and our kids (get information).</i>	<i>Don't know, think she works downtown.</i>
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								

Neighborhood social ties (confirmation and wrap-up)

21. How many people in your neighborhood would you say are friends? *For experimentals only:* How about in the projects where you used to live before moving through MTO?
22. How many in your neighborhood do you know well enough to say hello to? *For experimentals only:* How about in the projects where you used to live before moving through MTO?
23. *For experimentals only:* Were relationships you had with people in the projects (public housing), i.e. before you moved through MTO, more supportive or less supportive than the relationships you maintain with people in your neighborhood now?

SECTION THREE: ADOLESCENTS (INCLUDING PRE-TEENS)

This section includes questions and probes, plus a network table (matrix) for outlining a range of social relations according to their key traits, and a modest set of observational cues.

Thinking about social relations in the context of this stage of life. Our study includes quite an age range, not just the young adults on the upper end of the “MTO next generation” but pre-teens entering early adolescence, as well as those in middle and late adolescence. Some will have the blossoming peer lives that help define adolescence as a life stage, while others will be more socially isolated from peers—either because they are shy, are shielded or bounded by parents, must shoulder responsibilities more typically held by adults (adolescents that are “adultified”), or some combination of those factors. Some will have role models and mentors—whether friends, teachers, relatives, or others—and some not.

The early questions here are quite similar to the adult items, but these turn to questions of influence and peer ties fairly quickly. Also, I’ve split up types of aid so that you can more easily map out sources of help for young people.

General questions and observational cues

Intro script: I want to talk to you about some people who are in your life, like peers and friends you might hang out with, relatives you see or talk to on the phone, and also people you know who influence your life or whom you respect, even if you don’t see them often or think of them as “friends.”

Beyond the people who live here in your home, who are the most important people in your life? Probe if not clear: Do you have a boy/girlfriend?

What things do you do together, and how often do you get together? Where does that happen? What other contact with them do you have (e.g. talk by phone)?

If only kin (relatives) are named above, ask: Are there friends, too, that are important to you ... even if you don’t see them often? How did you come to know that person? How long have you known each other, and what kinds of things do you do with them?

[Note: Distinguish (age-similar) peers from other friends, including parent’s friends. We return to peers below.]

Are you in any groups or clubs, I mean where you meet with other people and do activities together, whether at school or in the community or somewhere else?

Are there people who used to be in your life, like part of your circle, but who you've fallen out of touch with or chosen not to relate to anymore? Why, when?

Did moving to this neighborhood affect who you relate to or stay in contact with?

Influences, including role models and mentors

Which people would you say are the most important influences on your life, and why? I mean people who help shape the way you think and make decisions and try to live your life. Where is that person(s), and how often do you see or talk to them?

Who are the people in your life that you admire or respect? Why?

Do you get advice, learn things, or get other kinds of support from any of those people? What kinds of help or advice? Probe: Do you think of them as mentors or role models for you?

If not clear: Are there people in your life that you think influence you in a negative way? I mean like bringing you down in school, getting you into fights, encouraging you to steal or do bad. Why, who? Probe: peers, relatives, others.

Material and emotional aid

Intro: I want to talk about whether you think there are people in your life who can help you in various ways. It's OK to name people in your family that live with you, but I also want you to think about relatives, friends, acquaintances, or others who don't live with you.

Who do you confide in—I mean like tell something private or secret to? Who do you turn to when you need encouragement or to get a “boost,” like say if you're feeling down, disappointed, or confused about something that's going on?

What about people you might turn to for other kinds of help, like (get specific social ties for each). Who could help you:

Get a ride somewhere: _____

In an emergency, like if you needed a place to stay: _____

Get a little money: _____

Get help with a homework assignment or school project: _____

How often do you rely on people for those things or for other informal kinds of help?

How about people you might go to for other help (get specific ties), such as:

Learning about a career or what it takes to do a particular job: _____

Preparing for college – how to get in, how to pay for college: _____

Figuring out whether it's safe to go somewhere in the neighborhood: _____

Have you turned to people in your life for those kinds of help? Are there people you think you could turn to, even if you haven't? Why those people?

All in all, which relationships in your life would you say are the most supportive? (OK to name immediate family in-home, but probe for others.)

How about you—do you provide help to friends or family or others in your life? If so, to whom, and what kinds of help?

Sometimes people can be a burden, even if we like or love them a lot, because they have many needs or make many demands of us. Which relationships would say are most burdensome to you or most draining? Why?

Observational cues. Aid to young person or provided by them in observed social interactions or situations.

Peers

If subject identified peers above: We've talked before about your routines, including socializing and structured stuff like school and chores at home. I want to ask you some more about things you do with your peers and who they are.

First, I want to make sure I'm clear on who your peers are. I mean other young people you talk to or hang out with, whether they are relatives or friends from school or from somewhere else. Even if you mentioned them to me already. We can talk about your boy/girlfriend, too, if you think of them as one of your peers.

Peer grid (next page)

PEERS AND OTHER FRIENDS. Who do you consider your peers? We can talk about other friends, too, but let's start with other

people you think of as your peers. I want to ask you how old they are, whether their parents are working and if so what they do

Other things about your peers and what you do together.

	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Parent Status	How long known?	CONTEXT: From where/how known?	Where they live and how far	What we do together, how often	Where we spend time
Example: Person	14	M	Black, non- Hispanic	Mother is cashier at dept store, father is disabled (nonworking)	3 years	School and neighborhood	Same neighborhood, 3 blocks away	Hang out (socialize), mostly on weekends, talk by phone every 3 days when we're not in school	Our neighborhood movies at Leroy and 125th
Example Person	17	M	Hisp	Mom is on welfare	4 years	Last neighborhood	Over there (get name or intersection)	Don't hang out as often since I left his school, sometimes play sports on weekends or summer	Old neighborhood basketball courts movies, some the Mall (where)

Peer Life

I want to ask you some more about your peers, and remember that everything you tell me is confidential. I can't even tell your parents about it—I'm not allowed.

[Note: Some of these questions may be best suited to tag-along visits where you can bring up sensitive topics and talk about peers while hanging out outside the home, not in a sit-down in which you try to "cover all the bases" at once—and possibly within earshot of mom or other family members. We will ask about subject's own education and career preparation in another guide. This series covers some basic things about peer risk and protective factors. It does include questions about subject's own fighting, dating, and sexual behavior, though we will return to those in greater depth elsewhere, too, along with gangs and other neighborhood risks.]

Thinking about the people you named as peers, do they plan to go to college? What kinds of things have they done to prepare for college? How about to prepare for a career? Do they have a set time to do homework or other school work? Do they read? Do any of them have a computer at home? How about access to the internet at home?

Do any of your peer work to make money, even part-time? If so, what kinds of jobs do they work at? Where is that?

Do any of them drink or smoke? How about use drugs, like marijuana, heroin, or cocaine (crack, X, smack, dope, weed)?

Have any of your peers participated in gangs? How about stolen things or gotten money in other ways that aren't legal?

How about you, have you ever been part of a gang or recruited by a gang? Have you ever stolen something or done something that wasn't legal, either for kicks or to make money or for other reasons?

Do any of them get into fights at school, in the neighborhood, or someplace else? Do they carry weapons?

How about you, do you get in fights or carry a weapon, even sometimes?

Are any of those peers having sex? How early did they start? Do you know if they use condoms or do other things to prevent pregnancy? How about dating—are your peers dating?

How about you, are you having sex? When did you start? Do you do things to prevent getting [pregnant or getting] a girl pregnant? If no boy/girlfriend reported: Are you dating?

Distance. Have you made any decisions about who to keep in your "circle," I mean like who to hang out with or not hang out with, based on how they (the other person) acted or thought about things?

Appendix D

Three-City Study of Moving to Opportunity

ETHNOGRAPHER DATA COLLECTION GUIDE #4.2

The Neighborhood (2)

Overview

Thanks go to Luis for helping to pull this guide together. It is largely parent-focused, though the section for adolescents and young adults probes on some key ideas. Building on *The Neighborhood: Part One* guide, which was youth-focused and included a mental mapping exercise and structured neighborhood observation, this guide covers two (2) additional dimensions of neighborhoods that are important to our study:

Engagement by MTO parents and youth in the social world of the neighborhood, whether formally or informally, including neighboring behaviors, block groups, and more; and

Knowledge and use of institutions, whether inside or outside the neighborhood, that may be key resources for MTO parents and their children, such as YWCA/YMCA, school-based services, church, local human service or health care providers, etc.

Each of these is potentially a huge area of inquiry, so why is the data collection portion of this guide relatively slim? Mainly because most of our subjects are probably engaged to a very limited degree in the social world right outside the door. Our aims, then, are to determine

Dimension A

Who is engaged socially in the neighborhood and who is not and why

What the engaged do to participate in the social world around them (what engagement consists of that may be meaningful or influential)

What perceptions of either group (engaged/not) are of the quality of social connection around them (neighborliness, trust, cooperation, etc.)

How these compare to prior neighborhoods in which subject has lived.

Dimension B

What institutional resources our subjects, younger and older, are aware of vs. what may actually be “out there” (your work will complement other data we collect, for example from administrative sources)

Whether and how our subjects make use of those institutions, both local (within the neighborhood) and non-local (elsewhere, including prior neighborhoods).

How these compare to prior neighborhoods in which subject has lived.

By those measures, we will find a range in our sample: families in which mom and kids are very isolated and perhaps anxious about what lies outside the door; families in which mom is isolated and unaware of what lies in the neighborhood, whereas kids (or some siblings but not others) are actively engaged; families wherein the latter involves only play/socializing versus others that include regular use of a local institution, such as after-school programs at the Y; and so on.

We will also find families that can draw sharp contrasts between what they know about and do in the current neighborhood versus prior ones versus other families who don't seem very intentional or strategic about using any neighborhood. We will find families who are new to a neighborhood and yet keenly aware of key resources available there and those who have lived in a place for years but lack such awareness.

Bottom line: We are interested in learning how the families evaluate the accessibility and relevance of neighbors and local institutions to their lives. For experimentals, for example, and for control-group families who have exited public housing, are there clear patterns of advantages to the current location, compared with their (origin) public housing neighborhoods?

Preview

Below, I make brief connections to other guides (more precisely, to your earlier visits, shaped by the guides), outline key concepts (mainly for your reference), define expectations about fieldnote style, and then detail the data collection material itself. The latter is in two sections—adult parents, adolescents and young adults (with items specifically for the last group highlighted, according to what's age/stage-appropriate).

Connections to other Guides

Review your fieldnotes on the parents' and/or kids' routines: How much is there already about activities in the neighborhood versus elsewhere? Is the geography of daily routines distinct from that of meeting nonroutine needs for particular services, say? Fieldwork grounded in this guide should build on those data.

Likewise, neighboring and neighborly ties were subtopics in the social relations guide: What did your subjects indicate about who they know in the neighborhood and what their neighboring activities, if any, consist of?

Finally, this guide assumes that you have used the mental mapping exercise (Neighborhoods, Part 1) with focal adolescents already but perhaps not with focal young adults and certainly not with parents. A modified version of the mental map technique is included here in the parent section.

Key Concepts

Engagement is a broad term encompassing things people do to draw on and invest in the social world around them, including:

Neighboring, broadly defined as socializing, favor trading, sharing information about safety or other issues, creating more formal groups to allow collective action, and more. A key concept we can pursue is collective efficacy, which refers to small-scale social organization built on trust and social ties among neighbors.⁶³ Collective efficacy can enable informal social control of a neighborhood's young people, but it isn't clear whether our MTO neighborhoods have much efficacy (in these terms) or whether our subjects do anything to contribute to the same;

For kids, "socializing" often boils down to play, from which most of us get early experience with forming friendships, organizing our own activities (rather than having adults organize them for us), and so on; and

Group participation, such as attending block group meetings or church or church-related activities (ministry, choir), which can, among other things, strengthen neighborhood social networks, trust, and patterns of cooperation—if the groups draw to a significant degree on the immediate neighborhood (i.e., are significantly "neighborhood-based").

⁶³ See especially the work of sociologist Robert Sampson and his colleagues, e.g. "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence," *Criminology*, 39, 3, 517-559 (2001); and "Beyond Social Capital: Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children," *American Sociological Review*, 64, October, 633-660 (1999).

Next, those groups or institutions come in many shapes, sizes, and functions, including

“Anchor” or formal institutions such as health, child care, community, education and job training centers, and churches;

Informal institutions and popular hang-outs such as barber shops, supermarkets, playgrounds and parking lots; and

Nonprofit or voluntary associations such as Parent-Teacher Associations, block clubs, neighborhood watch or community policing groups, and other organized groups.

From a policy and program design standpoint, consider the following definition of a neighborhood-based institutions:

Neighborhood-based institutions are locations from which people obtain services and satisfy physical, social, and/or economic needs. Their operations are based at particular locations (that may or may not be fixed—schools usually more fixed) and imply flows of staff and clients.

There are many ways to describe and assess neighborhood-based institutions, and while collecting data on these is mostly beyond your scope, here are three (3) key dimensions for reference:

Size and image: the number of service sites an organization has and how it is viewed by local residents both those eligible and not (e.g., “That’s a methadone or abortion clinic and you shouldn’t be seen going in there”);

Accessibility: Distance from the home, hours of operation, cost

Funding and effectiveness: Are the local services funded adequately and are they effective at their jobs

It may well prove that there is little difference in the minds of adults and teenagers about which formal or informal clubs/institutions are relevant in offering them advice or help. For policy purposes, however, these distinctions can be important. If agencies with an anti-poverty function are not used, for example, or if local ones are avoided in favor of non-local ones seen as more accessible, culturally competent, or otherwise attractive, knowing these things becomes quite important.

Fieldnote Style and Field Situations

Using our two modal field data collection styles, here some guidance:

Hanging out and tag-along’s: Best for being a participant-observer as subjects navigate and make use of the neighborhood, characterize it, and so on.

Focused sit-down interviews: Probably best for using a street map with parents, say, to clarify the boundaries of their self-defined neighborhood, also for covering a wide range of the topics in a single visit. Not a substitute for #1 above but certainly useful for covering bases.

For #1, you can rely on the usual mix of recorded but typically brief verbatim remarks by subjects, your summaries of the overall direction of conversation, and observational data on situations (e.g. peer interactions, how mom interacts with shop owners or neighborhood service providers).

For #2, you can jot notes obtrusively and pull out the guide itself, where the situation permits a more structured approach and/or you want to fill in gaps, or record data unobtrusively, relying on informal interviewing, lots of probing, and scribbling later—for example, to flesh out a key vignette or recollection that’s very emotional for a subject (Feeling betrayed by a neighbor? Being victimized? Experiencing harassment in a new community?).

I believe that the entire adult parent section below could be completed in one long, focused visit of type 2, the youth sections more briefly in visits with youth (in which type 1 or 2 or a mix would work well). Tag-along’s with parents would need to happen at other times.

Questions and Observational Cues

SECTION ONE: ADULT PARENTS

Prep: Bring your street map. We won’t ask parents to create a map, but you can use a map to check their knowledge of the area and have them indicate specific places they go to, avoid, use for services, etc.

Adapt this, use your own intro: “I’d like to talk to you [some more] about the neighborhood you live in and places you’ve lived before. For example, I want to go back to where you get services for your family and meet other needs and learn how much your immediate neighborhoods is part of all that.”

Boundaries and Zones

What is your neighborhood? What do you consider to be the boundaries of your neighborhood? Probe with: Which streets? Which places/landmarks? Is [name a landmark as a test] in your neighborhood?

Note: A mostly car-reliant family might have a walkable neighborhood and a wider “community” they want to define, including an entire suburban city perhaps. This is fine, get it clarified.)

Why those boundaries? Why not beyond those, for example?

Are there places in the neighborhood that you avoid? Where are they and why? How about places that you particularly like to spend time in?

Are there places that you think are dangerous? Where are they? How do you know?

Services and Associations (Organized Groups)

Did any community organizations or groups play a role in helping you settle into this neighborhood? What did they do, why was it important?

What kinds of services, including health, education, employment, childcare, and recreation, are offered in your neighborhood? Can you point on this map to where they are?

What are the names of the organizations that offer those services?

If not clear: Are there services in the neighborhood focused on young people, like to help them learn things or socialize in a safe place?

Do you or any members of your family get services at any of those places (item #6)? Why/why not? Clarify: Don't offer what family needs, don't feel treated well, hours of operation don't work, other?

Was it different in the last neighborhood you lived in, I mean in terms of getting services in the neighborhood as opposed to elsewhere, and being able to afford those services? Experimentals only: How about in the public housing neighborhood you lived in before MTO?

If not clear: Where do you go for the services you and your family need? How easy is it to get there?

Can you afford those services? Are there fees, for example? (Be sure subject specifies which services/where consumed)

On a different note, are there groups, such as churches, block clubs, community policing groups, ethnic groups, or parent-teacher associations in this neighborhood that you can name?

Are you involved in any of these groups or in groups outside the neighborhood? (A subject might report having gone to a meeting or seeking out help, even if participation is not ongoing.) If so, where do they meet, and what do they do?

If NO, i.e., if the subject is not involved in any groups or associations anywhere, skip to #17

What role do you play?

What does being a part of that group mean to you personally? To your family?

Was it different in the last neighborhood you lived in, I mean in terms of participating in groups organized in the neighborhood? Experimentals only: How about in the public housing neighborhood you lived in before MTO?

Neighboring, Trust, and Informal Engagement

How about other more informal spots, such as places to hang out—a hair salon, a favorite store, or someplace informal like that? Are there places like that in your neighborhood that you can identify?

Do you spend time in those places? Why? (Probe for what subject gets out of engaging—socializing, information, contacts?)

Don't settle for yes/no answers to these items below, which are adapted from surveys. You want subjects to explain what they think and why they think it.

Do you think people around here are willing to help their neighbors?

Do they get along with each other?

Do you think most people in this neighborhood can be trusted?

Was it different in the last neighborhood you lived in, I mean in terms of these things—willingness to help neighbors, getting along, neighbors being trustworthy? Experimentals only: How about in the public housing neighborhood you lived in before MTO?

I want to ask you about your perceptions of your neighbors and whether they would get involved. How likely would you say it is that your neighbors could be counted on to do something, to get involved, if:

Children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner?

Children were spray-painting graffiti on a building?

A fight broke out in front of your house?

You needed some temporary help with food or funds?

How about in the last neighborhood you lived in, I mean in terms of these things we just talked about (#24)? Experimentals only: How about in the public housing neighborhood you lived in before MTO?

SECTION TWO: ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

This section is much, much briefer. The mapping exercise covered the where of certain activities and interests for adolescents and some young adults in our sample.

These questions are for older adolescents and young adults only. Setting age boundaries can be tricky, since it is developmental maturity, not age per se, that determines whether you can get meaningful responses on these.

The logic is that we not only want to know where youth go but what the settings in their lives mean to them, also that some of the older adolescents and young adults are able to join groups on their own, not just to benefit through parents' engagement. This may be particularly important for young adult parents in our sample.

Prep: Bring a street map.

Are there services or programs in your neighborhood that focus on young people and what they need, like to help them learn things or socialize in a safe place? (Adapt this question if subject has already reported on this as part of the mapping: Are there any other places we didn't talk about but that you have heard of that ...)

Can you name them and show/tell me where they are?

If not clear from mapping: Do you or any members of your family (brothers, sisters) get services at any of those places? Why/why not? Clarify: Don't offer what family needs, don't feel treated well, hours of operation don't work, other?

Thinking about the programs you are a part of, what does participating in those programs mean to you or do for you? Probes: education and career, dealing with family issues, sexuality and health, being a parent.

Was it different in the last neighborhood you lived in, I mean in terms of having places to get services or be a part of programs focused on young people that were located right in your neighborhood? Were you a part of any programs that were important to you? If YES, tell me about those programs.

Do you think people around here are willing to help their neighbors, including young people?

Do they get along with each other? (Adults, young people)

Do you think most people in this neighborhood can be trusted? Do you trust other young people in this neighborhood, for example?

Do you think adults around here get involved to help keep young people on track, like if they're disrespecting someone or fighting or skipping school? Do people in this neighborhood get involved?

YOUNG ADULTS ONLY:

Have you tried to get assistance from any organizations, such as with planning for college or a career, getting your own place to live, or getting your life together? If a PARENT: For help managing your own family, being a parent?

Where did you look for that help? (In the neighborhood or elsewhere?) How easy was it to get there?

How did it go when you looked for help? Was it helpful? Why/why not?

How about groups, such as churches, block clubs, community policing groups, ethnic groups, or parent-teacher associations—are there any in this neighborhood that you can name?

Are you personally involved in any of these groups or in groups outside the neighborhood? (A subject might report having gone to a meeting or seeking out help, even if participation is not ongoing.) If so, where do they meet, and what do they do?

What's your role, what do you do in that group?

What does being a part of that group mean to you? What does it do for you?

Appendix E: Coding Glossary

Code	Code	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
1.1.1	1	Delinquency and Risky Behavior	
	1.2.1	Alcohol or other substance use	Use and abuse of alcohol, drugs, or other risk-related substances, including nicotine
	1.3.1	Gang participation	Issues related to gang life past, present or anticipated
	1.4.1	Fighting and violence	Issues related to fighting and other forms of violence, in or out of school
	1.5.1	Any illegal behavior	Issues related to any crime, including nonviolent and misdemeanors, such as shoplifting
	1.6.1	Justice system	Issues related to the criminal justice system
	1.7.1	Sexual activity and decisions	Issues related to own or peers' sexual decision-making and activity (but not dating)
2.1.1	2	Education	
	2.2.1	School achievement	Issues related to doing well or poorly in school
	2.3.1	School effort and progress	Issues related to ed attainment, attendance, studying, homework, enrichment
	2.4.1	Educational goals	Goals for educational attainment
	2.5.1	School effort/involvement by parent	Parents efforts to support child's education
3.1.1	3	Work & Money	
	3.2.1	Knowledge and attitudes	General/Overall: Subjective aspect of work, money, finances
	3.2.2		Burden and benefits of working
	3.2.3		Knowledge of the world of work, career, what it takes to succeed
	3.3.1	Employability: work barriers and enablers	General/Other: Things that prevent or enable getting a job, advancing
	3.3.2		Skills, credentials and training
	3.3.3		Physical or mental health
	3.3.4		Child care
	3.3.5		Transportation
	3.3.6		Discrimination
	3.3.7		Criminal record
	3.4.1	Income Generation & Employment	General/Other
	3.4.2		Work history and experiences
	3.4.3		Goals
	3.4.4		Search and advancement
	3.4.5		Informal income generation
	3.5.1	Managing money	Beyond work, issues related to consumption, bills, saving & investing, managing credit
	3.6.1	Public Assistance Income	Sources such as FS2ANF, WIC, food stamps, SSI
	3.7.1	Other Non-Employment Income	Income from sources other than formal or informal employment
4.1.1	4	Health	
	4.2.1	Physical health	Status: Issues related to own or family members' physical health and abilities
	4.2.2		Effects of (including impairment or betterment)
	4.3.1	Mental health	Status: Issues related to own or family members' mental health
	4.3.2		Effects of
	4.4.1	Health behaviors	Diet
	4.4.2		Exercise
	4.4.3		Smoking
	4.4.4		Goals
5.1.1	5	Institutional Resources	
	5.2.1	School	The school as a resource for the individual or family
	5.3.1	Health care and human services	Health care and human services needed by family members
	5.4.1	Housing assistance and quality	Housing assistance, MTO counseling, interactions with housing providers and landlords, adequacy of housing
	5.5.1	Church and community	Faith and community-based institutions to which family members relate
6.1.1	6	Home, Neighborhood & Metro Environment	
	6.2.1	Safety and crime	General/Other: Neighborhood safety (multiple dimensions) - current or other neighborhoods
	6.2.2		Feelings of fear or safety
	6.2.3		Being victimized or preyed upon (experiences of)
	6.3.1	Environmental health	Environmental health of housing and neighborhoods
	6.4.1	Location, access, and amenities	What one can get to in or from the neighborhood
	6.5.1	Knowledge, perceptions, comparisons, use	Familiarity with and use of neighborhood, perceptions and comparisons
	6.6.1	Moves and neighborhood history	History of moves and moving, plans to move
	6.7.1	Transportation	How family members get around
	6.8.1	Housekeeping	Orderliness of home environment, structured vs unstructured space
	6.9.1	Personal Setting	Personal effects, decoration, personal style in the home environment
7.1.1	7	Family Management	
	7.2.1	Discipline	Physical and non-physical sanctions or punishments
	7.3.1	Monitoring	Keeping track of family members' activities and social relations, including peers
	7.4.1	Emotional affect and support	Feelings of closeness within the nuclear family
	7.5.1	Roles and scripts	Defined roles and scripts within the family; within-family relationships
	7.6.1	Spouse or partner relations	Marriage or partnership relations important to head of household
8.1.1	8	Routines	
	8.2.1	Everyday	Daily life routines (basics, essentials)
	8.3.1	Services	Meeting family needs through consumption of services
	8.4.1	Socializing and recreation	Social activities and play by family members
	8.5.1	Worship and faith involvement	Churchgoing or other worship or faith-related activities
	8.6.1	Groups and activism	Other associational involvement, including community improvement, support groups, other
9.1.1	9	Social Relations	
	9.2.1	Type of social tie (who)	General/Other: Characterizes the type of social tie as defined by the subject, not the strength or impact of the relationship.
	9.2.2		Kin (relatives not residing in household)
	9.2.3		Friend
	9.2.4		Boy or girlfriend / fiancé
	9.2.5		Acquaintance
	9.2.6		Neighbor
	9.2.7		Caseworker/social worker
	9.3.1	Contents and exchanges (what the relationship contains/involves)	Material aid
	9.3.2		Emotional support
	9.3.3		Influence
	9.4.1	Context	The source of a social relation, the context in which it was established
10.1.1	10	Identity & Outlook	
	10.2.1	Disposition	Overall disposition to the challenges of life
	10.3.1	Self-concept and values	Identity, self-concept and belief systems
	10.4.1	Personal history	Sense of past, successes and failures, and pathway
11.1.1	11	Cultural Repertoire	
	11.2.1	Self-presentation	Dress, eye contact, demeanor, desired image or outward "style"
	11.3.1	Talk	Codes, vocabulary, attitudes toward same
	11.4.1	Managing social relations	Skills and attitudes related to forming and maintaining various kinds of relationships
	11.5.1	Navigating institutions	Skills and attitudes related to making institutions respond to one's needs and desires
12.1.1	12	Ethnographer Codes	
	12.2.1	Methodological notes	Instructions to self, reminders, critiques of tactics, notes on activities or plans
	12.3.1	Theoretical notes	Interpretations, conjectures about meaning
	12.4.1	Observer comments	Researcher thoughts, feelings "in the moment" about the visit