Moving Teenagers Out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: How Girls Fare Better than Boys[1]

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Moving to Opportunity (MTO) offered public housing residents the opportunity to move to low-poverty neighborhoods. Several years later, boys in the experimental group fared no better on measures of risk behavior than their control group counterparts, whereas girls in the experimental group engaged in lower-risk behavior than control group girls. The authors explore these differences by analyzing data from in-depth interviews conducted with 86 teens in Baltimore and Chicago. They find that daily routines, fitting in with neighborhood norms, neighborhood navigation strategies, interactions with peers, friendship making, and distance from father figures may contribute to how girls who moved via MTO benefited more than boys.

INTRODUCTION

Young people who grow up in high-poverty urban neighborhoods experience crime and violence, resource-poor schools, restricted labor markets,

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and other forms of deprivation at a much higher level than those who are raised in middle-income or affluent neighborhoods. In addition to individual and family characteristics, these neighborhood contexts can place teens at risk. Numerous studies have documented a correlation between socioeconomic neighborhood-level variables and adolescent sexual behaviors (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985; Crane 1991; Billy and Moore 1992; Coulton and Pandey 1992; Brewster, Billy, and Grady 1993; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993; Ku, Sonenstein, and Pleck 1993; Billy, Brewster, and Grady 1994), the home environment (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, and Duncan 1994), child maltreatment (Coulton et al. 1995), crime (Sampson and Groves 1989), dropping out of school (Crane 1991; Coulton and Pandey 1992; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993), and delinquent and risk behavior (Johnstone 1978; Kowaleski-Jones 2000; Wikstrom and Loeber 2000). Children who grow up in public housing developments may be at particular risk for these adverse outcomes, since families who live in public housing are typically in neighborhoods with higher poverty than families who are similarly poor but have no housing subsidy (Newman and Schnare 1997).

Beginning in 1994, a large federally operated housing mobility demonstration, Moving to Opportunity (MTO), used a special Section 8 voucher to help relocate a randomly selected group of program applicants living in highly distressed public housing projects in five U.S. cities into communities in which fewer than 10% of their neighbors were poor.[2] Over 4,000 families signed up for the program, and roughly one-third received a voucher to relocate to a low-poverty neighborhood. Several years after random assignment, survey data showed that teen girls appeared to benefit more from the treatment than teen boys (Kling, Liebman, and Katz 2007). We use in-depth interviews with a subset of MTO teens in Baltimore and Chicago to explore how boys may have been less able to take advantage of this type of housing mobility policy than girls. We find six underlying factors that may contribute to the differences in outcomes for boys and girls: daily routines, fitting in with neighborhood norms, neighborhood navigation strategies, interactions with neighborhood peers, delinquency among friends, and involvement with father figures.

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[2] Public housing developments provide units to income-eligible families in a development managed by the local housing authority. Section 8 (also called Housing Choice) vouchers are used by income-eligible families to rent a unit in the private housing market.

POLICY BACKGROUND

If neighborhood context matters, as sociologists have argued since the beginning of the Chicago school, then what happens when a program offers families from a poor neighborhood—in this case a highly distressed public housing development—the opportunity to move to a more affluent neighborhood? This is essentially what the MTO demonstration examines. MTO was inspired in part by the apparent success of the Gautreaux housing mobility program launched in Chicago two decades earlier (see Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum [2000] for a detailed history of this program). Created by a court-ordered legal settlement to redress past racial discrimination in the location of public housing, a key part of Gautreaux was providing African-American families with a voucher to move to largely white, suburban neighborhoods. Between 1976 and 1998, the Gautreaux program moved over 7,000 low-income families into subsidized private housing in the city and its suburbs (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). Gautreaux suburban movers relocated to places that were predominantly middle class and nearly all white. Gautreaux applicants moving within the Chicago city limits leased apartments in a diverse range of neighborhoods, some affluent and predominantly white but some poorer and largely African-American.

Seven to eight years after relocation, a survey of Gautreaux participants found that teenagers who remained in the city were four times more likely to have dropped out of high school than those who moved to the suburbs. Those who made a suburban move when they were 10 and older were more than twice as likely to enroll in college and had almost double the employment rate of those who remained in the city (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). Mortality rates were substantially lower among male youths in Gautreaux families who had relocated an average of eight years earlier to census tracts with higher fractions of residents with college degrees, which suggests that relocating to more advantaged neighborhoods can ameliorate the mortality risks faced by this population (Votruba and Kling 2009). A longer-run examination of the fates of Gautreaux movers based on administrative data found that both mothers and their now-grown children continued to live in neighborhoods that were every bit as prosperous as their placement neighborhoods, albeit with a higher percentage of African-Americans, but no city/suburban differences in employment were found (Deluca et al. 2010). Nonetheless, Gautreaux's apparent success has been a driving force behind other mobility initiatives like MTO.

MTO incorporates some but not all elements of Gautreaux. Like many of the Gautreaux households, low-income residents in public housing located in extremely poor neighborhoods voluntarily applied to participate

in MTO (MTO sites included Chicago but also Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles, and New York). MTO participants in Baltimore and Chicago were almost all African-American, like Gautreaux participants. Neighborhood racial composition was a criterion for Gautreaux placements, whereas MTO used tract-level poverty rates to define eligible neighborhoods.[3] Furthermore, the Gautreaux program was a court-ordered remedy to discriminatory practices on the part of Chicago's public housing authority, whereas MTO was designed as an experiment.[4]

MTO offered the experimental group housing counseling and a special voucher that could be used only in census tracts with 1990 poverty rates of less than 10%. A second treatment group—one that will not be considered here—received a regular Section 8 voucher with no geographic restrictions. The control group received no voucher through MTO, though the participants were permitted to remain in their public housing units or to apply for other housing assistance that became available to them outside of the MTO demonstration (such as a regular Section 8 voucher). Most controls subsequently moved out of their baseline neighborhoods, in part because of large-scale demolition of public housing in many U.S. cities. However, their moves were typically to other high-poverty neighborhoods.

MTO was designed to test what happens when poor families are offered the opportunity to move into low-poverty neighborhoods through a restricted housing voucher, and the demonstration's design offers a strong test of this policy effect. Some researchers have questioned whether MTO can be used to measure the effect of neighborhoods on individual outcomes (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Sobel 2006; Clampet-Lundquist and Massey 2008), whereas others have argued that MTO is quite informative about the impact of residential context on outcomes (Goering and Feins 2003; Kling et al. 2007; Ludwig et al. 2008). Despite these contrasting views, the MTO in-depth interview data offer a unique opportunity for scholars to understand the social processes operating within the variety of neighborhoods that the MTO teens have moved through and how their experiences may vary by gender.

In 2002, the MTO Interim Survey attempted to interview all household

[3] Of those who used an MTO experimental voucher, only about one-quarter used it to move to a neighborhood that was less than 30% minority. On average, these neighborhoods were more resource rich (measured by community indicators) than higher-minority neighborhoods even within a similar poverty range because of the legacy of residential segregation (Clampet-Lundquist and Massey 2008).

[4] MTO applicants who were deemed eligible for the program were a more economically disadvantagd population than the remaining public housing families in the five cities, so the "creaming" that may have taken place in the Gautreaux program does not appear to have happened in MTO (Goering, Feins, and Richardson 2002).

heads in the MTO experiment, as well as their school-age children and teens, to determine what effect the treatment had on a variety of adult and youth outcomes. Five to seven years after random assignment, the survey found that experimental group families were still living in significantly less poor neighborhoods, on average, than families in the control group. Thus MTO achieved its main policy goal. In addition, survey findings reveal that the intervention had a significant and positive effect on a number of other important outcomes. For example, adults in the experimental group felt safer and perceived less neighborhood disorder than those in the control group (Kling et al. 2007). Moreover, experimental adults reaped substantial positive mental health benefits relative to controls. Yet contrary to expectation, the survey did not detect beneficial effects on other important adult outcomes such as employment or welfare receipt.

The most surprising results of the MTO demonstration, however, were the sharply divergent treatment effects for adolescent boys and girls. While there were significant mental health gains for experimental girls, who scored much lower than control girls on psychological distress and generalized anxiety, the survey found no effect on boys' mental health (Kling et al. 2007). Findings from a qualitative study conducted in three MTO cities—New York, Los Angeles, and Boston—suggest that sexual predation of young women may be less frequent in low-poverty neighborhoods than in high-poverty environments and that a decline in girls' experiences of sexual harassment may have been key in improving the mental health of girls, but not of boys (Briggs, Popkin, and Goering 2010). However, the survey did not ask about sexual predation.

Striking gender differences in teens' risk behaviors—the focus of our analysis—were evident as well (Kling et al. 2007). Experimental girls were less likely to report smoking marijuana in the past month than control girls, but experimental boys were significantly more likely to report smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol in the past month than their control group counterparts. Experimental boys were also more likely to self-report behavior problems relative to controls. Furthermore, administrative records revealed that MTO experimental males 15–25 years old had been arrested more often for property crime than controls had (Kling, Ludwig, and Katz 2005).[5]

Since, owing to funding constraints, our qualitative study was limited to only two of the five MTO cities, Baltimore and Chicago, we investigated

[5] The administrative arrest data, as well as earlier studies of MTO in Baltimore (Ludwig, Ladd, and Duncan 2001) and Boston (Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001), indicated that these gender differences in effects were not evident during the first two years after random assignment.

whether these gender differences in risk behaviors were apparent among Baltimore and Chicago survey sample youths ages 15–19 (app. table A1).[6] Consistent with the five-city results, we found that experimental girls in Baltimore and Chicago were significantly less likely than controls to report problem and risky behaviors. However, experimental males were more likely than controls to report problem behaviors and risky activities.

Thus, both overall and in Chicago and Baltimore, the MTO intervention had a sharply different effect by gender. However, we know little from the survey data about the social processes that may have been responsible for these differences. Our article uses in-depth interview data from a stratified random subsample of MTO families with teen girls and boys in Baltimore and Chicago to explore potential processes that may be at work to create this interaction between treatment group and gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The teens in our sample were part of a housing mobility demonstration that offered some of their families the chance to move to a low-poverty neighborhood while making no such offer to others. Most of the control group teens changed residences as well but typically remained in high-poverty neighborhoods. Their experiences, and the gender differences in impacts the survey revealed, arose at least in part from the neighborhood environments to which each group was subsequently exposed.

The belief that neighborhoods matter and are an important locus of study was the basis of the Chicago school and other foundational sociological work (Park, Burgess, and Mackenzie 1925; Zorbaugh 1929; Drake and Cayton 1945; Suttles 1968; Hannerz 1969; Rainwater 1970). The emphasis on neighborhoods was reinvigorated by Wilson (1987), who hypothesized that the extreme social isolation, concentrated poverty, and joblessness that characterized many urban neighborhoods were especially deleterious to children. Scholars have documented that such neighborhoods have sharply elevated rates of infant mortality, child maltreatment, and social and physical disorder and that the teenagers living in them are more prone to school dropout, delinquent behavior, and adolescent childbearing (see reviews by Ellen and Turner [1997], Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn [2000], and Sampson et al. [2002]).

A number of intriguing hypotheses have been advanced to explain how neighborhood context may affect adolescent behavior (Jencks and Mayer 1990), and each has produced a body of empirical results. These include

[6] Concurrent with our study, researchers conducted a mixed-methods study in the three other MTO cities: Boston, New York, and Los Angeles (Briggs et al. 2010).

neighborhood collective efficacy (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Sampson et al. 2002; Cohen, Farley, and Mason 2003; Duncan et al. 2003; Blaney et al. 2004; Browning, Leventhal, and Brooks-Gunn 2004; Cagney and Browning 2004), peer effects (Johnstone 1978; Case and Katz 1991; Kowaleski-Jones 2000; Wikstrom and Loeber 2000; but see Ludwig and Kling 2007), adult role models both distal (e.g., neighbors) (Wilson 1987) and proximal (i.e., parents) (see the review by Burton and Jarrett [2000]), and relative deprivation (Turley 2002; Luttmer 2005). Most predict positive outcomes for low-income teens moving to lower-poverty neighborhoods, though notions of relative deprivation anticipate the opposite. However, this literature has limited utility for the surprising pattern of empirical results explored here, since none of these models predict differences in outcomes by gender.

A small body of recent qualitative work offers some insight into the social processes that might underlie these gender differences. In her interviews with low-income African-American students in a high school in Yonkers, New York, Prudence Carter (2003) describes how teens use both dominant and "nondominant" cultural capital as they navigate the worlds of school and work. This nondominant cultural capital collectively represents the adoption of language styles, dress, and music tastes her subjects deploy in an effort to differentiate themselves from teenagers in the dominant group (whites) and to assert their own group membership. In Carter's study, boys were not as adept as girls at strategically employing dominant cultural capital in beneficial ways as they interacted with school officials or employers. In her ethnographic study of Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian American young adults, Lopez (2003, p. 110) argues that males and females from the same family backgrounds and neighborhood contexts have "fundamentally different cumulative experiences" in the school setting and in the work world. In her study, some of these differences were rooted in others' expectations and perceptions, including gender-biased roles within the family and outsiders' racist stereotypes of black males as criminals and black females as sexual objects.

Of course, the extant literature reveals any number of gender differences across a wide array of adolescent behaviors, especially delinquency. This is not our focus here. Rather, we are interested in how a residential mobility program interacts with these gender differences to produce different impacts for girls and boys. The potential utility of Carter's and Lopez's work becomes evident when we consider the ethnographic work of Elijah Anderson (1990) and Janelle Dance (2002), who observed the behaviors of low-income African-American male youths in Philadelphia and Boston, respectively. To ensure their survival, the male teens Dance studied strategically adopted "gangsterlike posturing" (p. 7), whereas the young men Anderson observed found it necessary to adopt a certain street posture—

whether they were law-abiding or not—to create the impression that they were not to be messed with. In Anderson's study, male teens persisted in this self-presentation as they traversed adjacent low-poverty neighborhoods, and this produced cultural conflict: specifically, residents and police treated these boys with a high degree of suspicion and mistrust.

If the "tough" self-presentation these scholars document is more common among boys than among girls and if, as Carter and Anderson suggest, boys have more difficulty deploying dominant cultural capital in environments that demand it, such as lower-poverty neighborhoods, the cultural conflict that results may limit low-income boys' ability to benefit from exposure to neighborhoods with more resources. In fact, cultural conflict might feed into preexisting stereotypes of low-income black males, leading to increased monitoring by neighborhood adults, school officials, and police, with the possible result of increased behavior problems and/or higher arrest rates.

DATA AND METHODS

Our analysis uses data from teens in the control group to explore gender differences in behavior in the absence of the MTO intervention. We then turn to experimental "complier" teens—those who "complied" by moving with an MTO voucher—to understand how the MTO treatment might have affected boys differently than girls. In Baltimore, 58% of those in the experimental group offered vouchers used them to move to a low-poverty neighborhood. Almost all had since moved on to other neighborhoods that, while poorer than their placement neighborhoods, were still, on average, considerably more affluent than their origin neighborhoods. In Chicago, only 34% of those in the experimental group used their voucher.[7] Because of this low take-up rate, we interviewed only experimental compliers in Chicago. Therefore, in this article, we analyze the interview data from the teens in the experimental complier group and in the control group for both cities, as shown in figure 1. While there are differences among experimental compliers and noncompliers in terms of parental characteristics, there were no significant differences in child behaviors at baseline that would predispose the youths in the complier group to have more difficulties than youths in the noncomplier or control groups (Shroder 2002; Snell 2010).

We have combined the Chicago and Baltimore data in this analysis for two reasons. First, the gender differences observed in the MTO Interim

[7] We have not included the Section 8 treatment group in the analysis since we wanted to keep the focus on the sharp policy difference between the experimental low-poverty voucher group and the control group.

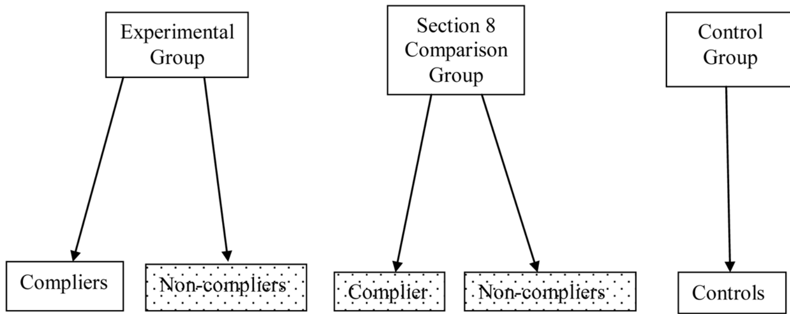

FIG. 1.—Groups included in the analysis

Survey were present in all five sites pooled together, as well as when we combined Baltimore and Chicago (see app. table A1). In addition, combining both sites provides us with a larger group of male and female youths. As such, we did not systematically explore city differences in the analysis in this article, though certainly they are cities that provide different social and economic contexts. For example, when we conducted our fieldwork, Baltimore had a lower median household income compared with Chicago; Baltimore also had a slightly higher poverty rate and a higher share of African-Americans in the city. While these site differences are important to note, the MTO youths and their families in both cities were quite similar demographically.

Ideally, we would like to examine gender differences among experimental teens whose families moved in conjunction with the program in comparison to control group teens whose families would have made a program move had they been offered the chance. Since we do not observe this hypothetical behavior, we use information gathered from all of the control group teens. Other research using the entire MTO survey sample found few average differences between likely compliers and noncompliers in the control group (Kling et al. 2007). When the overall control means by gender are similar (say, as they are for smoking marijuana in the past 30 days), then the estimated control complier means tend to be more beneficial for boys (lower marijuana use) and more adverse for girls (higher marijuana use). These results imply that our qualitative analysis in this article, where we use the full control group, tends to understate gender differences relative to those among the likely compliers in the control group. Meanwhile, the experimental complier means for an outcome like marijuana use are more adverse for boys and more beneficial for girls in survey data, which is directly reflected in our qualitative analysis. On the basis of this pattern of results, we believe that the gender differences in

experimental outcomes we analyze here would be even more pronounced if we were able to contrast experimental compliers with likely control compliers.

Interviews took place between July 2003 and June 2004. We contacted a total of 184 youths from households selected at random from the three groups at the outset of the study and ultimately interviewed 131, for a response rate of 71%.[8] All of the teens were African-American, and the median length of time at their current residence ranged from one and a half years (experimental girls) to three years (control boys). Control girls were slightly older than teens in the other three groups (median age is 17 vs. 16), were the least likely to be enrolled in school, and were nearly twice as likely to have been pregnant or had a baby as experimental girls. The control boys were more likely to be living in public housing than the other three groups. The experimental girls were the most likely to be currently employed (32%). However, proportionally more experimental boys were employed (27%) than control boys (4%). Though the percentage employed was similar between the experimental boys and girls, girls were more likely to be employed full-time, whereas only one boy in the experimental group had a full-time job.

Most (just over 80%) of the experimental teens in this analysis had moved at some point since relocating to their MTO placement neighborhoods. Many control girls and boys had also moved from their original public housing after random assignment. Consequently, controls moved to, and continued to live in, neighborhoods that, while less impoverished than the housing projects they resided in at baseline, were still quite poor, with average tract poverty rates of 30% for control males and 39% for control females. Since families in the experimental group were required to live at their low-poverty address for only one year to continue to be eligible for their voucher-based rent subsidy and since the low end of the private rental market is inherently unstable, the subsequent mobility for these families meant that most teens did not experience a sustained exposure to a very low-poverty environment. In fact, at the time that we interviewed them (six to nine years after random assignment), the experimental teens in this analysis lived, on average, in neighborhoods with twice the poverty rate, which was the neighborhood eligibility cutoff for

[8] In households containing at least one teenager between 14 and 19, we attempted to interview the teen as well as the adult. For households with more than one teen, we randomly selected a "focal youth." Among households with children ages 14–19, we sampled evenly among households that did and did not have children ages 8–13, as part of a parallel study on younger children. The reasons for nonresponse include inability to locate the family at all, foster care placement, death of the adult respondent with no valid contact information for the youth's current caregiver, and death of the youth.

MTO placement neighborhoods (19% for girls, 21% for boys). However, during the years prior to our interviews, those in the experimental group had lived in neighborhoods with significantly lower poverty, on average, compared to their control counterparts. It is important to remember that, in general, experimental households in Baltimore and Chicago moved to neighborhoods that were overwhelmingly African-American. Thus, in contrast to Gautreaux, the main demographic change they experienced was economic rather than racial.

Our interviews were organized around six themes: teens' views and experiences of their neighborhoods, their perceptions of their relative social status (to measure relative deprivation), their experiences at school, their daily routines, their adult and peer networks, and their mental and physical health. Research literature on neighborhoods and teens, as well as findings from the MTO Interim Survey, indicates the salience of these themes. In these semistructured interviews, our goal was to elicit the "whole story" on a given topic, probing for detailed, specific examples. Though consistent data were collected across all research subjects, interviewers were trained to alter the order and wording of the questions to fit with the flow of the interview and the particulars of the person's story. Typical questions included "Where do you hang out in the neighborhood?" and "What do you like best/least in your neighborhood?" Each question was followed up with probes, both those indicated in the interview guide and additional probes at the interviewer's discretion. Interviews were taped and usually took one and a half to two hours to complete. Each adolescent was paid $35 for participating in the study. To protect confidentiality, teens were asked to choose a pseudonym.

Interview transcripts were coded by topic and entered into an electronic database using Microsoft Access. Initial coding was primarily descriptive rather than analytic. Coders met weekly to ensure the reliability of the coding process. We then imported interview material from these topical fields into NVivo for more detailed analytic coding. At this stage, one analyst read through the data and coded for themes and subthemes and systematically analyzed the coded material for patterns by gender and program group. These patterns were not derived from highly structured items, but rather from material across the narratives. Information about daily routines or friends, for example, often was spread out across the interview, since we intentionally asked about topics in a variety of ways so as to be comprehensive.

Since we focus this analysis only on experimental compliers and controls, our sample size here is 86: 34 experimental compliers and 52 controls (see table 1). We compared four groups of youths: female and male control group members and female and male experimental complier group members. In order to make systematic comparisons between girls and boys

TABLE 1
SUBSAMPLE OF YOUTH RESPONDENTS IN BALTIMORE AND CHICAGO USED IN ANALYSIS

	Males	Females	Totals
Baltimore:			
Experimental compliers	7	11	18
Control	19	17	36
Chicago:			
Experimental compliers	8	8	16
Control	5	11	16
Total	39	47	86

NOTE.—Experimental "compliers" moved using an MTO program voucher.

and between experimentals and controls, we handle the qualitative data in a somewhat "quantitative" way in the text. However, while we provide counts or proportions of patterns we find, we also use these data to do what qualitative data do best—offer a window into the worldviews, experiences, daily lives, and social contexts of these youths.

RESULTS

We organize our presentation of results on the basis of our inductive analyses of the in-depth interview data, focusing on several primary ways in which underlying differences between girls' and boys' behaviors were associated with variation in their responses to the MTO treatment. Rather than attempt a causal analysis, the primary utility of this article is to generate hypotheses about the set of social processes that might underlie the surprising pattern of findings described in the introduction: that boys in the experimental group did no better in terms of delinquency and risk behavior and, on some measures, performed even worse than control boys, whereas experimental girls showed significant gains in these domains relative to controls. Hypothesis generation is especially useful for our topic, since none of the dominant explanations in the neighborhood effects literature predict the observed gender differences. In the conclusion, we discuss how these findings relate to and move beyond the extant literature.

Daily Routines

We asked teens to describe in detail how they spent their time after school, on the weekends, and during the summer. We were interested not only in what they were doing and with whom, but also where they were doing it. Teens in all four groups were equally likely to talk about spending time hanging out in other neighborhoods. Usually, these other neighbor-

hoods were where their friends, grandmothers, and other family members were currently living, and through years of visiting, these teenagers had created networks of friends in these neighborhoods.

Most of the control boys and girls spent the bulk of their after-school and weekend time locally, within their current neighborhoods. While there were no substantial gender differences among the controls as to where the teens spent their free time, experimental girls were significantly more likely to spend time in the neighborhoods of school or work friends or relatives than any other program group. Only one-third of experimental girls spent the bulk of their leisure time locally, a proportion substantially lower than any of the other groups, yet a higher proportion of experimental boys did so than any other group (79% compared to two-thirds of both control groups).[9]

In their current neighborhoods and in other neighborhoods, boys hung out by playing football or basketball at a local school, park, alley, inner courtyard, or vacant lot or loitering on street corners in front of bars and convenience stores. Even on school nights, they sometimes stayed out for three or four hours. Girls only rarely hung out in this way. Instead, they spent their time inside the house or on the front stoop, talking and playing cards. Likewise, when girls visited friends or family in other neighborhoods, they usually spent their time inside or on their friends' stoops or porches. This is not to say that girls never played ball or hung out on the corner. They were, however, less likely than boys to use these as their main venues for spending leisure time, and many more girls than boys emphasized that they spent most of their free time close to, if not inside, the home.

Kelly, a 15-year-old girl in the experimental group, described a pattern of hanging out that was fairly typical of the girls in the sample. After moving through two other neighborhoods, she and her family currently lived on a Baltimore block with a number of abandoned houses in a high-poverty neighborhood, though most of the drug activity was a few blocks away. Kelly did not approve of the behavior of teens in the neighborhood: the boys "have bad words to say out their mouth about females," and as for the girls, "some of them like to start a lot of trouble, lot of confusion. Some of them run around here buck wild." Kelly, though, maintained a fairly quiet routine: "Sometimes [I hang out] at [my friend's] house. . . . Uh, sometimes we go to some of her friends' houses sometimes. Sometimes we just sit down in the front [stoop], just play cards or whatever." Kelly also stayed at her aunt's house in the suburbs and liked it since "it's quiet."

[9] These options of where teens hang out were not mutually exclusive; teens could report on a number of different neighborhoods they spend time in.

Girls in both program groups were also more likely than boys to make a point of visiting public places such as the downtown area, movies, and malls. Most of the boys and girls went to the mall, to the movies, or downtown, but the girls were more likely to use these spaces as alternatives to hanging out in a neighborhood rather than in combination. Fourteen-year-old Bella, a control, moved out to a near suburb of Baltimore two years before our interview. There, she was involved in a number of after-school cultural and sports activities and kept herself busy in the evenings by staying at school. She had a number of friends from school, and when they were not engaged in school-related activities, they had a number of favorite pastimes: “We go to the mall, we go skating and stuff like that.” Otherwise, she emphasized, “I don’t go outside a lot. I like to go *places*.” The “places” that girls could travel to depended on what the city had to offer. For the Baltimore girls, these consisted of the Inner Harbor or suburban shopping malls, whereas Chicago girls traveled “downtown” to the State Street shopping district or to malls. Leaving the neighborhood to hang out in these spaces, or leaving the neighborhood in order to go to work, provided an exit strategy for girls who wanted to avoid neighborhood peers.

Some experimental girls discussed how they were just “too busy” to hang out in the neighborhood or how they would breeze past the kids on the corner as they were on their way out to work or another venture. Eighteen-year-old Isa, an experimental in Chicago, had worked full-time as a cashier at a grocery store for the last year, while also going to school to earn certification as a nurse’s assistant. She went to high school with some of the neighborhood teens but did not associate with them. She was anything but impressed with the neighborhood boys’ activities: “You ain’t doing nothing but sucking up atmosphere, you want to sell drugs and run from the police all day you might as well just get yourself, go down there to the police station and turn yourself in.” As for the girls in the neighborhood, she recognized more variation: “Girls around here around my age, you got the ones that’s going to school or going to work, [but] then you got the ones that’s popping out babies left and right.” Isa put herself firmly in the former camp and stayed busy: “I walk past [the boys on the corner], so they call me stuck up because I don’t talk to them. [But] when I’m going to work, I’m going to work, when I’m going in the house, I’m going in the house, when I’m going out the neighborhood, I’m out of the neighborhood. I don’t talk to none of them people out there.”

Sports were not nearly as central in the lives of girls as they were for boys. Nearly every boy spent at least some time each week playing basketball, football, and, to a lesser degree, baseball. Often, boys pursued sports activities nearly every day. However, only a handful of boys across the experimental and control groups spent any of their time in an orga-

nized sports league or school team. Boys in the control and experimental groups in Baltimore usually played basketball out of doors in a park or put up a hoop in an alley or vacant lot, whereas Chicago boys often played in each other's backyards.

The penchant of boys for hanging out in noninstitutional venues could have also put them at more risk. For example, they sometimes played sports in places where others were engaged in buying and selling drugs. Jay, a 16-year-old in the control group who lived in a Northwest Baltimore neighborhood after moving from public housing, liked to play basketball at a local outdoor court and in a nearby alley where someone had mounted a hoop. Usually he and his friends played pickup games with adults they did not know. Just a block away is a major thoroughfare where, according to Jay, "You can't find a block . . . without drug dealers." To avoid having evidence on them in case the police came by, sellers stashed their drugs in vacant houses. Jay had recently witnessed a man secreting his drugs in a house off the alley where they played ball: "There's another place right here, we play basketball in this alley . . . and a man, when people pass by he'll go—right where we play basketball, there's a big house—he'll go right in there to get [his stash] and all that stuff."

Interestingly, when girls played ball, it was more often in a court attached to, or inside of, a recreation center, where adults were also present. Girls also described other activities as well—pastimes that were nearly absent in boys' lives, including playing in the marching band, practicing at a dance studio, or roller skating at a rink with friends. What is notable here is that girls' activities frequently occurred in a setting where there was adult supervision.

Neighborhood Norms and Social Control

We hypothesize that the underlying differences in where and how girls and boys hung out both put girls at less risk overall and had a significant effect on how boys and girls adapted when they moved via MTO from a high-poverty to a low-poverty neighborhood and beyond. The neighborhoods where experimental families moved were generally predominantly African-American, at least in Baltimore and Chicago, but they differed substantially in terms of social class. These neighborhoods had different norms for acceptable neighborhood behavior and the collective efficacy to enforce them. This variation in norms around public behavior is described by Pattillo (2007), who studied a mixed-income African-American neighborhood in Chicago.

We asked teens to describe both the neighborhoods they resided in at present and the low-poverty neighborhoods they originally moved to as part of the MTO demonstration. Especially in Baltimore, the experimental

boys were more likely to describe their placement neighborhoods negatively. When an interviewer asked Bart, a 16-year-old who had moved back to a poor East Baltimore neighborhood, what his experimental move neighborhood in the suburbs was like, he said, "It was just too quiet. I don't like a lot of quiet. I don't like that. It was too quiet." In contrast, most of the girls described their program move neighborhoods in positive—sometimes glowing—terms, usually noting how quiet they were (boys typically equated quiet with boring). Eighteen-year-old Naomi, in the experimental group, currently attended community college and worked part-time. She lived in a leafy well-kept neighborhood on the edge of Baltimore. She explained, "See, at first I couldn't get used to the quietness because I was used to like noise because we was like on the street side [in the projects]. I've gotten used to it now." Naomi enjoyed feeling safe on her quiet street.

We found some evidence that the less poor yet still largely African-American neighborhoods to which the experimentals moved were far less accepting of the male newcomers than of the female teens in our study, or at least the experimental boys believed that this was so. One concrete indicator of acceptance on the part of the receiving neighborhoods is police surveillance. There were minimal differences in reports of hassles by police between experimental and control girls, yet while boys in both groups complained much more about police harassment than girls,[10] experimental boys were more likely than any other group (73% vs. 58% for control boys) to describe being questioned or hassled by the police. In fact, some of the experimental boys who lived or had lived in the suburbs associated the suburbs with increased police surveillance, a theme that was rare in the experimental girls' accounts. Ron was an 18-year-old who lived in the Baltimore suburb where his family initially moved with the low-poverty voucher. He had just graduated from high school and was working full-time as a stock boy for a large retail store. While he admitted he was involved in delinquent behavior (more below), he claimed that his neighbors called the police nearly every time he and his friends chose to congregate publicly:

> You can't really [hang out in the neighborhood] because it's like mixed [in this area] with like white and black. . . . So if you see a group of black people and then like white people look out the window and call the police and they just say, "You gotta leave," and there's nowhere to go. Like they don't want us to be together, like if we're together they say, "You gotta go." Like if you don't live around here you have to leave. But nobody lives in

[10] Instances of telling youths to move on from loitering or picking them up for loitering, for mistaken identity, and for curfew violations were included in this measure. Not included were arrests for actual crimes.

> the same neighborhood so it's like it's . . . gonna be just you by yourself on your steps.

Tiah, a 15-year-old experimental, also lived in a racially mixed suburb just outside of Baltimore. Similarly to Ron, she complained that her neighbors called the police "all the time" over "stupid stuff," including a time when she and her friend were merely "play fighting." She believed that the reason was that white neighbors were concerned about African-Americans like her moving into "their" space: "Out here we have a lot of white people and they're concerned about their safety which I understand because . . . they think that we are the cause of everything. . . . When too many black people move into an area, the white people move out."

One might presume, on the basis of these two accounts, that only male experimentals in mixed or mostly white neighborhoods reported such problems, but most experimental boys lived in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, and several of them reported this kind of surveillance as well. For experimental boys, such surveillance stemmed, in their view, from the main social activity they had become accustomed to in their origin neighborhoods—hanging out in groups on street corners, basketball courts, or vacant lots. Because of this, some felt it was difficult to have any social life in the suburbs, thus rendering these environments boring. Roger, a 16-year-old Chicago experimental who was initially placed in a mostly black suburb, told us, "I was in the suburbs. There wasn't nothing to do at all. Police always messing with you. Talking about you doing this, you're doing that." He was now living back in Chicago, in a neighborhood where he had been shot a little over a year prior to our interview. Roger had also served time in the juvenile detention center and was still on probation when we spoke with him.

Ed experienced several instances of police harassment in his relatively low-poverty and largely African-American neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, where he had relocated six years ago when his family moved on from their MTO placement neighborhood after two years. Ed described two particularly aggressive police officers in his current neighborhood who, he claimed, had arrested every male except for him and were prone to do so no matter what the boys were doing, just so that they could be promoted. Though he had not been arrested yet, he maintained he was stopped at least once every three weeks. Ed was unusual for our sample, as he spent six days out of the week at his church, participating in various youth activities. But according to Ed, even leaving church could be an occasion for getting stopped by the police:

> Everywhere we go, we going to get stopped by the police because . . . they can always say we look suspicious and stuff. . . . We got stopped, me and my friend, coming out of the church gate before, by the detectives. . . . They talking about there was gunshots on the next block and we match the de-

> scription or whatever. . . . They was like, "Do y'all got guns?" or something. "We heard shooting on the next block. Y'all match the description. Where y'all just come from?" We like, "We just came out the church. Y'all done seen it." You know, just, they stopping us for no reason.

Our in-depth interviews with control group youths indicate that—without participation in the MTO intervention—teens in low-income neighborhoods in Baltimore and Chicago engaged in patterns of hanging out that were highly shaped by gender. These differences were apparent for the experimentals as well. However, the girls' pattern of leisure activity "fit" far better with what was expected in the low-poverty neighborhoods. It certainly drew less negative attention from neighbors or the police. In addition, since girls were less likely to venture beyond their living rooms and stoops and more likely to go to the mall, downtown, or the movies rather than hang out locally, they had to make fewer adjustments to the norms and restrictions in their new environments. However, Ron's and Ed's accounts are filled with stories about getting in trouble with the police merely by hanging out with friends on the corner or in the parking lot of the school, leaving church, or just walking down the street in a group. In the MTO Interim Survey, adults in the experimental group were more likely than those in the control group to report that neighbors would intervene with youths hanging out on street corners (Orr et al. 2003). A negative side of neighborhood collective efficacy is revealed in the teens' narratives here, as neighborhood monitoring interacted with highly gendered daily routines in ways that may have led to divergent outcomes for both boys and girls.

Neighborhood Navigational Strategies

If teen males who move from high-poverty public housing into low-poverty neighborhoods encounter difficulties fitting in with the norms of those neighborhoods, then what happens when they move back to poorer neighborhoods? The stories from the control boys, who largely stayed within moderate to high-poverty neighborhoods, and the experimental boys suggest that the experimental boys seem to encounter a different problem—how to navigate these poorer neighborhoods. Detailed descriptions of their daily routines indicated that a significant minority of controls did not hang out in their current neighborhoods at all. This choice may have been part of a larger strategy to avoid trouble, and evidence of navigational skills. John, a control group male, was 16 years old and had lived in the same Baltimore public housing development his entire life. He characterized the drug problem in his neighborhood as "out in the open a lot, like you like walking around here, you'll see like little drug vials and stuff on the ground." The neighborhood was also plagued by

teen violence. To avoid it, John stopped hanging around his neighborhood and began hanging out in his grandmother's neighborhood after school and on weekends: "I used to hang out around here a lot but then that's when I . . . started fighting a lot. Like when people just start, be fighting [I] sort of got in a fight a lot, and I started going around another neighborhood."

Particularly in high-crime Baltimore, control boys were much more likely than experimentals to have developed a complex set of neighborhood navigational skills: conscious strategies for avoiding unwanted neighborhood trouble. These were far less frequently deployed by experimental boys despite the fact that by the time that we interviewed them, most had made subsequent moves to higher-poverty neighborhoods than their placement addresses (though still significantly less poor on average than those of the controls). Many of the control boys offered detailed descriptions of the blocks or street corners where dangerous activities typically occurred, as well as the times of day that were most hazardous. Such intimate knowledge of neighborhood "hot spots" may be quite consequential as recent research in Boston shows that over a 29-year period, 74% of nonfatal shootings occurred in only 5% of the city's street corners and face blocks (Braga, Papachristos, and Hureau 2010). Few of these boys were exemplary in their behavior; they still got in plenty of trouble. However, when they wanted to avoid "the bad element," many felt they had strategies that would allow them to do so, including consciously altering their routines, especially their routes to and from school, or choosing to spend their time in another, less dangerous neighborhood, often where a grandmother or cousin lived. Fifteen-year-old Lincoln, in the control group, had moved from public housing to a high-poverty Chicago neighborhood five years prior. At the time of the interview, he was repeating ninth grade since he had missed so much school from suspensions earned from such actions as throwing desks at other students and teachers and assaulting school security guards. Although Lincoln believed that his reputation as a fighter offered him some protection from bullying by other boys, he specifically avoided certain areas in his neighborhood because "that's just begging to get into a fight."

Sixteen-year-old Scott, a control, had lived in a low-rise public housing development in Baltimore his entire life. The development was divided by the buildings into inner courtyards, and both the outside and inside of Scott's row house were kept neat and organized by his mother. He had a rich sense of the geography of danger within the courtyards and on the corners of the project and, encouraged by his strict mother, tried hard to steer clear of these areas. "I know [the guys on those corners] but they ain't my friends. They [are into] drugs and loitering and stuff like I don't really [do]. I mind my business." Scott's narrative is one illustration of

how control boys, especially in Baltimore, are more likely than the experimental boys to have reported deploying a related strategy—often referred to as “staying to myself”; here boys specifically avoided associating with others so as to circumvent trouble. However, having to maintain this level of caution was not without consequences, as Scott explains: “I don’t want to get caught up in nothing I don’t got nothing to do with. I just stay in the house. I be wanting to go around there but I don’t. It be pressure on me. [Interviewer: Is there any place that you can go to try and get away from that pressure?] I go to the library sometimes [and] get on the computer or read a book or something.”

Both the in-depth neighborhood knowledge and the formulation and use of these navigational skills were notably absent in the accounts of experimental boys. To understand how this differentiation may have occurred, recall that the experimental boys moved from their housing projects to neighborhoods that were less than 10% poor when they were between the ages of 5 and 13. Though subsequent moves have placed them in neighborhoods that were significantly poorer than their placement neighborhoods, many spent several of their formative years in neighborhood environments with considerable social, as well as geographic, distance from their origin neighborhoods. Moving to a low-poverty neighborhood, if only for a time, may have robbed some of the experimental boys of the opportunity to develop knowledge and key skills that would later have proven protective for those who, through subsequent moves, had to adapt to new, poorer neighborhoods later on. Development of these skills does not occur in a social vacuum: peers and older role models contribute to a youth’s knowledge of how to navigate a neighborhood (Harding 2009). Same-age and somewhat older peers were lacking in some of the low-poverty placement neighborhoods. A handful of the experimental boys described their placement neighborhoods as very quiet or without children their age.

Here is how Tony, a 15-year-old experimental, described one of the low-poverty neighborhoods he moved through: “There were like no kids on [Hamilton] Street. . . . [We] ain’t never be out.” Tony complained that there was no place to play around there, and he would mainly stay in the house. He has since moved back to a high-poverty neighborhood and lives adjacent to a public housing development. While the absence of adolescents in his MTO placement neighborhood may have boded well for a reduction in delinquency in that particular neighborhood, it may also have laid a shaky foundation for boys who moved back to poorer neighborhoods with more corner activity if they did not have as much experience of learning whom to avoid. Other research has shown how developing a clear sense of neighborhood-specific norms and knowledge of others in the neighborhood may be critical for young males as they

cope with the dangers of high-poverty communities (Anderson 1990; Young 1999).

As a result of large-scale destruction of the highly distressed public housing complexes our sample lived in at baseline, control boys had frequently moved through an unrestricted Section 8 voucher. Nevertheless, their moves were far more proximate, both geographically and socially. The homogeneous nature of their residential experiences, we hypothesize, induced more of the control boys to formulate the necessary knowledge and navigation skills to avoid the more dangerous aspects of the neighborhood if they wished. Experimental boys, by contrast, moved initially to neighborhoods where “corner activity” and “street drama” were less common and such skills were less necessary. Over time, however, as they had to adapt to other, more risky environments, they were at a disadvantage. While the heterogeneity of their residential experiences could have broadened their “cultural tool kit” (Swidler 1986) and might have made it possible for the experimental boys to develop the ability to strategically deploy cultural capital in their new neighborhoods, which were more likely to demand this (Carter 2003), we did not find evidence that this occurred. Instead, most of these boys seemed caught in between competing sets of neighborhood norms—too “project” for the low-poverty neighborhoods they were placed in but too “naïve” for the higher-poverty neighborhoods many subsequently faced over time.

Interaction with Neighborhood Peers

Part of navigating neighborhoods includes discerning whom to hang out with. In in-depth interviews, we asked teens to describe in detail their social connections with peers in their current neighborhood.[11] The control girls were much more engaged in their current locales and thus more likely to associate with their neighborhood peers than the experimental girls. Experimental girls, by contrast, were quite disengaged from their current neighborhoods. Aja, a 14-year-old Chicago experimental who still lived at her program destination address when interviewed, told the in-

[11] We also conducted a direct test of the relative deprivation hypothesis mentioned above using a scale (mainly deployed in health research) that assesses subjective social status (Goodman et al. 2001; Singh-Manoux, Adler, and Marmot 2003). We asked teens to place their families and themselves on a social status ladder relative to individuals in their schools and neighborhoods. Interestingly, there were no gender or program group differences in where these teens placed themselves. We also asked them to talk more in depth about why they placed themselves where they did. If relative deprivation were at work (at least in a conscious way) to generate the gender-treatment interaction outcomes in the survey data, we would expect that the experimental boys would say that they felt isolated because they measured themselves unfavorably against their more affluent neighbors or schoolmates. However, they did not.

terviewer that she "fell in with the wrong crowd" in eighth grade but had since focused more on school. For much of her childhood, she lived with her aunt and then grandmother in a public housing apartment, and she was now living with her mother and long-time family friend who also helped to raise her. There were mainly older people in her neighborhood, and the few teens are older than she. Despite her neighborhood's relatively low poverty rate, Aja's mother instructed her to avoid social interaction with these teens, many of whom she considered "bad" or "wild." "[They're] bad influence kids, basically. And I'm not allowed to hang [in the neighborhood] because I don't want to be caught on it 'cause that stuff's bad. I mean that puts me off track, and I don't even like that."

Tiah, in the Baltimore experimental group, lived in a low-poverty, racially mixed suburb. Despite her suburban neighborhood's relative advantages, she viewed the local peer network with suspicion and shielded herself accordingly: "The girls in my neighborhood is about one thing: smoking marijuana, which is not good for you. And they think that's the only thing that they can do. . . . And the girls I know are very addicted and . . . they only 15—15, 16 years old, you know, and they been doing it for a while. And the guys are the same way." Tiah employed the following strategy to stay safe and out of trouble: "Stay to yourself, mind your own business. Don't be in Mary, Harry, Dick and them, don't be in their business, it's not good. Be in your own business. You know you do, [if] you in everybody else's business, your name gonna pop up." Tiah spent time with only one neighborhood friend, whom she met at work, and they did not hang out in the neighborhood. Instead, they chose to go to the movies and the mall: "That's why I really don't associate with anyone in this area except for my one friend. . . . We're very cool. That's the only person I do associate with, 'cause we work together and I knew her for a while. . . . And we don't really be around here like that."

Like Aja and Tiah, many experimental girls sought friends at school or at work, not in the immediate community. They spent weeknights at home completing homework and talking with friends on the phone. Control girls also remained close to home, limiting their scope of activity to the front rooms of their homes, their front stoops, or a supervised afterschool activity. They were far more engaged with neighborhood peers but still exercised care in their friendship selections.

Experimental and control group boys were equally likely to have ties to neighborhood teens, but a close reading of their narratives reveals important differences in the level of selectivity boys in each group exercised when choosing which neighborhood peers to associate with. Experimental boys were less discriminating in their friendship choices than controls. After several years, the family of 14-year-old Ralph moved back from their low-poverty Baltimore neighborhood to a significantly poorer

one. Ralph's description of his new neighborhood peers was far from glowing: "People I know [around here], they probably go to school half of the time and just be on the streets most of the time." Yet Ralph did not see this as a reason to avoid certain peers. He bragged that one close friend routinely carried around a pellet gun and threatened people with it, while another had recently kicked out windows on the city bus on the way to school. Moreover, Ralph saw little risk in associating with the older teens and young adult males in his neighborhood. One, a local drug dealer, had just been talking to Ralph about how he could get some new "Jordans" if he was willing to "hold something" for the dealer.

Fifteen-year-old Jamison first moved to a suburb when his family received the MTO voucher, but after one year, he too moved with his family to a somewhat higher-poverty neighborhood in Chicago. Currently, he was suspended from school, as had become common, for fighting, including fighting with school security guards. His account offers an example of how experimental boys made friends in their new neighborhoods: "I was playing on the side of the house with a yo-yo and they just came up like, 'What's your name?' Like, 'You want to go to the park?'" He and his friends had been engaging in taunts and fights with boys from another neighborhood—so much so that Jamison had to be careful not to cross his neighborhood's boundaries. They also held parties regularly with older teens in the neighborhood, consuming alcohol. In a volatile mix, they would sometimes invite the boys from the rival neighborhood to these parties because "[we want] more people to come, that's all. Just make our party be more wild."

In contrast, control boys typically held a more cautious view of the peers in their local communities. They routinely distinguished between neighborhood peers who were involved in "street drama" such as fighting and selling drugs and those who were not. Marcus was a 16-year-old in the control group and lived in a three-story row house in a high-poverty West Baltimore neighborhood littered with vacant, boarded-up homes. Drugs and violence were common in his neighborhood, and recently, a friend had been killed while making a visit to the corner store. When we asked Marcus what people in the neighborhood were like, he replied, "It all depends who you hang with. To me, you got people that you do hang with and you don't hang with. The ones I hang with like be motivated and we keep ourself going. And other people like do drugs and stuff like that. I try not to go on that page."

In sum, girls and boys in the control group showed considerable discernment in how they choose neighborhood friends, and experimental girls often withdrew from their neighborhood peers altogether, choosing instead to forge friendships at school or at work. Boys in the experimental group did not generally adopt either of these approaches.

Delinquency among Friends

Friends are drawn not just from current neighborhoods but from school, family, and previous neighborhoods. We asked teens to describe each of their close friends in detail, including any form of delinquent activity these friends were engaged in. In analyzing these narratives, we paid special attention to substance use and criminal activity among friends and how these associations may have affected the behaviors of our teens.[12] One concrete example of the "price" experimental boys might have paid for their more varied residential histories, and the lack of peer discernment, neighborhood knowledge, and navigational skills that seemed to result, was a greater likelihood of forming friendships with delinquent peers than any other program group.

Slightly over half of the control girls and nearly three-quarters of the control boys regularly associated with friends who smoked marijuana or cigarettes or drank alcohol. There was a similar gender difference among the experimentals, where only 39% of the girls but two-thirds of the boys associated with friends who smoked or drank. Smoking weed and drinking alcohol—hard liquor such as Hennessy or beer—were much more common among the teens' friends than cigarette smoking.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the higher rate of crime among boys than among girls in general, control girls and boys were equally likely (56% vs. 59%) to describe friends who were involved in illegal activities (ranging from bringing a weapon to school to being incarcerated for murder) or who had been recently killed, almost always as a consequence of illegal activity.[13] Haylee, a 17-year-old Chicago teen in the control group, had moved out of public housing to a high-poverty neighborhood five years prior to our interview. When asked what boys her age did in her neighborhood, she replied, "kill each other, sell drugs." She avoided hanging out in the neighborhood and had recently dropped out of school, in part because of frequent gang-related fights. She had also witnessed violence in a very personal way. Haylee described how she stood by, horrified, as her friend killed her sister's friend. "All I seen my sister['s] best friend like this like gaspin' for air. Just gaspin' for air like anything. Blood start comin' out of her mouth and that's like all I seen. And I'm lookin' 'cause

[12] Among our teens, most boys reported fighting on a fairly regular basis, and some of these fights were serious enough to result in an arrest. Both groups of boys reported a variety of delinquent activities such as selling drugs, stealing cars, and assault. Not surprisingly, given the large gender difference in delinquency for the population as a whole, girls in both groups were much less likely to be arrested than the boys. Girls in the control group were much more likely to be involved in fights at school or in the neighborhood than those in the experimental group.

[13] This does not include smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol. Fights were included only if they resulted in an arrest.

it was crazy. . . . Then she just died. I couldn't do nothin' but just look at her."

The lack of a gender difference among controls is strikingly different from the pattern for experimentals, where the males were over three times as likely as females (92% vs. 27%) to describe friends who were deeply involved in illegal activities or who had been killed as a result. Eighteen-year-old Ron, living in a Baltimore suburb, had a group of friends whom he had landed in trouble with over and over. Currently on probation, Ron and his friends had, in the past, stolen cars and set a dumpster on fire. Ross, 19 years old, had also made a move to another neighborhood in Baltimore with an experimental voucher but was currently incarcerated, serving a lengthy sentence. He learned the tricks of the drug trade from older teens while living in public housing but did not start selling in earnest until he moved to the new MTO neighborhood, which was in an area that was rapidly becoming poorer. He told the interviewers that all of his close friends were either locked up or dead. Jamison, described earlier, had become involved, along with his friends, in a violent turf war over gang boundaries in his Chicago neighborhood:

> If they come on our side, we just will have to show them they can't come back over here, that's all. We stick, me and my friends we stick together. That's all it is, and if they—the only time they come over here [is] when they ask for trouble. [Two days ago] they came over, they came over on [DeKalb], the next block over, and we were standing out there. And they said, "What y'all looking at?" And you know me, I got a big mouth, I said, "What Y'ALL looking at?" They said [to] come down there. I came down there, we got to fightin'. But then police came, they locked about three, four people up.

According to both boys and girls in the experimental group, drug trafficking and violence were still present in their current neighborhoods, though these threats were less intense in their neighborhood descriptions than those of the control teens.[14] In all of these neighborhoods, the drug trade was heavily male dominated (only one individual knew of a girl who sold drugs). Thus, even for boys and girls living in similar neighborhoods, forging same-sex friendships with peers who hung out in the neighborhood presented far more risks to boys, at least in terms of activities relating to drugs. However, our analysis points to other patterns that may explain why girls were more able to take advantage of the MTO experience.

Experimental teenagers' narratives about friends point to a consistent

[14] In each group except for the control females, the Baltimore teens were much more likely to describe drugs as a prevalent problem in their neighborhoods than the Chicago teens were.

theme: girls who made a low-poverty move were far less likely to have friends who got into serious trouble than any other program group. Furthermore, as we indicated above, patterns of hanging out learned in public housing not only brought unwanted neighbor and police surveillance for experimental boys but also seemed to bring these boys into contact with the most troubled youths in their communities. Because such behavior was less normative in the experimental teens' neighborhoods than in those of the controls, a process of negative selection may have been operating, with more troubled boys available for socializing on street corners, basketball courts, and other public venues. Highly gendered approaches to engaging their new neighborhoods, we argue, exposed experimental boys, but not girls, to the more deviant of their possible neighborhood peers.

Involvement of Social Fathers

Young people's behavior at home, around the neighborhood, and in school is shaped, in part, by the adult role models in their lives. Teens talked little about distal adult relationships with, for example, people in their neighborhood they could look up to. Instead, their narratives revealed that the most salient adult role models were adults (usually same-sex) who lived inside the household or visited frequently. Most of the MTO households in Baltimore and Chicago were female-headed, which means that girls were much more likely to have a same-sex parent in their household than boys. Other researchers have hypothesized that part of the gender difference in outcomes for teens in the MTO treatment may occur because boys were less likely than girls to have a same-sex parent involved in the family, whether coresiding or visiting regularly (Kling et al. 2007). Yet across the four groups, there were no differences among our teens in the proportion of respondents who described having regular contact with their biological fathers; about one-third in all groups did so. The quality of that contact did not vary in any discernible way either.

We then looked at teens' descriptions of father figures. There was no difference between experimental and control girls in the likelihood that they had a father figure in their lives, and about a quarter in each group described such a relationship, usually their stepfather or their mother's boyfriend. However, among the boys, there was a dramatic difference by program group in this domain. Control boys were nearly twice as likely as experimental boys (63% vs. 33%) to describe a meaningful relationship with a close, caring male other than a biological father or, at the very least, that they had such a figure present in their lives. Only rarely did mothers' current or past boyfriends play a social father role for boys; this function was usually fulfilled by maternal uncles. Closer proximity between control group boys and their kin seemed to afford more opportunity

for these men to engage their nephews in meaningful mentoring. Moving via an MTO voucher to a low-poverty neighborhood created social, as well as geographical, distance from father figures. When geographic and social proximity to such men was decreased, the difficulties of maintaining a relationship increased, in part because casual encounters on the street (where boys tended to hang out) were less frequent.

For several of our control boys, the presence of a father figure contributed directly to their ability to avoid delinquent behavior. Howard, a Chicago control, spent the year before our interview learning the trade of pouring concrete with Job Corps. His current lifestyle was a dramatic change from his childhood and teen years, where he was "always" engaged in fighting. This pattern of behavior began in elementary school, when he threatened his teacher with a knife. His family had to move from Chicago to another state after his mother and brother got in a fight with gang members because his brother was wearing the "wrong" colors. Throughout this time, his family, particularly his maternal uncle and aunt, continued to advise him to take a different path and urged him repeatedly to stay in high school: "Everybody saying, telling me that if you keep fightin' more and more and keep getting in trouble, you'll get locked up, and then you get locked up man, you just threw your *life* away. . . . And then my friend [got] shot and I seen all that." He attributed his turnaround from running the streets to stable employment to his friend's death and to this uncle and aunt, who lived close to his mother in Chicago: "They the one that told me about Job Corps, you know. They proud of me that I made it through high school too, because they thought I wasn't gonna make it through high school. . . . If it weren't for my aunt and my uncle, I'd be still on the streets, [coming] in the house late every day, being out there, doing whatever."

Greg was a 17-year-old in the control group whose mother's younger brother—older than he by just a few years—had also been very involved in his life. Sometimes, the value of this man's influence was questionable. When Greg was 11, his uncle bullied him into beating up other boys in the neighborhood because "if I don't beat them up, he beat me up." Lately, though, his uncle had tried hard to keep him out of trouble. Over the past summer, Greg had been heavily involved in selling drugs and stealing cars. His mother was unaware of these activities because Greg was living with his grandmother at the time, but his uncle intervened by reporting his criminal activity to Greg's mother. Greg responded in the way his uncle had taught him: "I fought him . . . 'cause he was telling my mother that I was out there doing bad stuff and I ain't like that. I ain't like him snitching on me. It's for my own good but I didn't like that."

Interestingly, the few experimental boys whose narratives did include descriptions of relationships with a father figure were, with one exception,

no longer living in low-poverty neighborhoods. For example, Bart had moved out to the Baltimore suburbs and then moved on to a high-poverty neighborhood in East Baltimore, not far from where his uncle lived. Bart had not attended high school regularly in the year and a half prior to the interview since he was expelled for fighting. When we interviewed him, he had just been released from jail after being arrested for robbing someone. Though he insisted it was a case of mistaken identity and the charges were dropped, his mother could not come up with the bail money, so he remained locked up for a month. In addition, Bart's mother told us he had been suffering emotionally from the loss of his father, a man who had been heavily involved with Bart but had recently disappeared from their lives. However, Bart regularly spent time at his uncle's home nearby. From Bart's description, his uncle represented a stable adult male role model in his life, and Bart credited this uncle throughout the interview as someone who taught him valuable skills, such as electronics repair—a vocation that captured Bart's interest and motivated him to return to high school:

> That's why I want to go to school for [electronics repair], too. I don't know what I am touching but I just know how to do it when I look at it. I know how to fix a lot of stuff. The only thing I got to do is look at it. . . . My uncle told me that [I could make a lot of money doing that]. And he taught me, you might as well say. Now I do a lot of stuff—[points out a stereo speaker] I can make one of these!

Fifteen-year-old Frederick, a Chicago experimental, moved out to the suburbs for three years, moved to another neighborhood for a few years, and recently moved again to a moderate poverty neighborhood. He was currently working at his uncle's corner store on weekends but was still nostalgic for his time in public housing, where he was in close proximity to any number of kin: "You know, it was the projects but it still felt like home. I ain't got no problems because all the people that were around, it was like my uncles and stuff. And they always looked out for me, gave me some money when I needed it."

In sum, we do not find distinct differences in contact with biological fathers that would explain the gender differences in the MTO demonstration, but we do find substantial differences with father figures. The control boys often described the significant role uncles, and sometimes other men, played in their lives. For boys, opportunities to forge relationships with father figures such as uncles were attenuated by geographical and social distance. We know from previous literature that extended kin can help mothers with monitoring and parenting, and there is some indication that a connection to a male family member is associated with less aggression and delinquency among boys (Taylor, Casten, and Flickinger 1993; Taylor and Roberts 1995; Florsheim, Tolan, and Gorman-

Smith 1998). In our study, the experimental boys appeared to have lost out on the potential benefits of this influence.

CONCLUSION

Neighborhood effects research offers little insight into why moving families from high-poverty neighborhoods into lower-poverty neighborhoods may help to reduce risk behaviors for female adolescents but increase them among male adolescents. As shown in previous studies, the MTO intervention had a differential impact by gender on several key outcomes for teens, including substance use and risk behavior. These indicators all point to a similar pattern: low-income girls were able to take advantage of a move to a low-poverty area in a way that low-income boys were not. To develop hypotheses about what social processes may underlie this treatment group by gender interaction, we analyzed in-depth interviews of a subsample of Baltimore and Chicago MTO teens from experimental families who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods, as well as teens from control families.

Owing to their distinctive patterns of leisure activity (where and how they "hang out"), boys who relocate from high-poverty to low-poverty neighborhoods seem to require more support than the extant neighborhood effects literature would suggest, especially when there is subsequent exposure to higher-poverty neighborhoods over time. A less delinquent collection of possible peers, a higher degree of neighborhood collective efficacy, or more exposure to distal adult role models (i.e., neighbors who set a good example) may not be sufficient to help boys avoid risk. To navigate their neighborhood environments, they require a set of concrete skills and survival strategies, skills and strategies that are often forged in the face of consistent exposure to high-poverty environments in childhood. Boys who are removed from such environments during these critical years may lose an important opportunity to develop such knowledge and skills. This may be beneficial for boys who remain in very low-poverty areas, but if subsequently exposed to higher-poverty and riskier neighborhoods, as was often the case with MTO, these boys may be especially vulnerable. Meanwhile, as the cultural conflict literature would predict, their penchant for importing patterns of hanging out they learned in their origin neighborhoods into these lower-poverty environments, where such behavior is less normative, leads to high levels of monitoring by agents of social control and a disproportionate exposure to these neighborhoods' delinquents. Both factors may increase their marginalization and may lead to increased rates of delinquency and arrest.

Girls' differential exposure to risk behaviors and pattern of leisure

activity (staying indoors, staying on the stoop, or leaving the neighborhood altogether to socialize) render such neighborhood knowledge and navigational skills less necessary. While girls in high-poverty urban neighborhoods must manage an increasingly violent landscape (see Jones 2009), on a very basic level of threat, African-American boys face much higher odds of being injured or killed than African-American girls do. Moreover, the content of the teens' interview narratives illustrates very different risk environments that boys and girls in moderate and high-poverty neighborhoods have to negotiate. For example, researchers in the other three MTO cities found evidence that suggests that girls in high-poverty neighborhoods may face a high risk of sexual harassment and even assault than those in low-poverty neighborhoods (Briggs et al. 2010).[15] In addition to the differential risks girls and boys face, girls' daily routines did not appear to violate norms in either high-poverty or low-poverty neighborhood contexts. Thus, they did not prompt negative reactions from neighbors or police. Nor did their style of hanging out provide any unique exposure to the more risky peers in these neighborhoods.

Father figures also played a role, reducing the potential benefits of an MTO move for boys relative to girls. Residing in a more proximate social and physical space supports the familial pattern of frequent visiting and the casual street encounters that living close by allows. For boys in particular, this afforded uncles the opportunity to take their young nephews under their wing, to reinforce high expectations, and to offer expressions of support and warning. In this way, these men fulfilled some of the functions of the neighborhood "old head," a role some argue is disappearing from low-income neighborhoods (Anderson 1990). Sometimes, these men steered their young nephews away from delinquent activity and toward prosocial behaviors. More commonly, though, these men's chief function was to offer social support ("he believes in me") and to join in the chorus of voices cautioning male teens to stay out of trouble and make it through high school.

It should be noted, however, that consistent exposure to high-poverty neighborhoods had left at least one harmful mark on the control boys in our study. These boys' narratives contain vivid accounts of repeated exposure to violence and struggles with bouts of uncontrollable anger. Another analysis of the possible sources of differential mental health outcomes for male and female teens, using these data, reveals that experimental boys do not appear to struggle with angry impulses in the way that is common among control boys (Clampet-Lundquist 2010). Therefore, it could be that the advantages enjoyed by the control boys in mid ad-

[15] We did not systematically ask about this in our study, and few girls in either program group volunteered such experiences.

olescence relative to experimental boys might be temporary and may fade or reverse as the longer-run manifestations of exposure to constant risk begin to manifest themselves.

The MTO demonstration was designed with the assumption that moving to a low-poverty neighborhood could benefit individuals above and beyond what their individual or family characteristics might predict. Yet the survey findings point to benefits to girls rather than to boys. Though neighborhood effects research offers few clues to this mystery, it does provide concepts that have proved useful in this analysis. For example, peer effects are clearly in operation, as experimental boys were less selective in forging friendships with neighborhood peers and more likely to interact with seriously delinquent peers, and there is evidence that associations influenced their own delinquent behavior. The salience of collective efficacy was evident in the experimental families' neighborhoods as boys, whose main forms of leisure—congregating on street corners or playing sports in unsupervised settings—seemed to draw intense monitoring from neighbors and police. Adult role models mattered too, but not the neighbors down the street. Instead, those who made the difference were the same-sex adults usually related through family or marriage, with whom one has frequent and meaningful involvement. The MTO intervention appears to have limited experimental boys' access to these potentially significant and protective relationships. Finally, as indicated above, our findings are very consistent with the small body of qualitative literature on what we have termed cultural conflict, as low-income boys in our study imported nondominant (Carter 2003) patterns of hanging out into lower-poverty neighborhoods and were greeted with sharply negative reactions.

But the primary lesson to draw from these results is that boys and girls from similar backgrounds—indeed, even from the same families—simply live in different social worlds. In the face of an intervention like MTO, these underlying differences may create dramatically varied risks and opportunities. We have identified several such differences and hypothesize that they are what led to the surprising pattern of results in youth outcomes observed in the MTO experiment. This is a critical deficit in much of the neighborhood effects literature.

When these data were collected, many of the teenagers interviewed were still in middle adolescence, so a fuller range of important young adult outcomes and the social processes leading to them, such as high school completion, teen pregnancy, incarceration, and the transition to employment, could not be fully observed. Survey and qualitative data 12–15 years after the program's baseline are currently being collected and will show longer-run outcomes for these young people in these important domains.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1
EFFECTS ON RISK BEHAVIORS FOR BALTIMORE AND CHICAGO YOUTHS

	FEMALES		MALES		
	Control Mean	E-C	Control Mean	E-C	MALE-FEMALE E-C
Ever used marijuana	.299	−.130^{+}	.395	.125	.255*
		(.075)		(.078)	(.106)
Ever drank alcohol	.369	−.069	.391	.127^{+}	.196^{+}
		(.076)		(.073)	(.103)
Ever smoked cigarettes	.284	−.088	.270	.157*	.245*
		(.068)		(.069)	(.095)
Ever been arrested	.184	.025	.332	.105	.080
		(.062)		(.082)	(.098)
Problem behavior index	.371	−.074^{+}	.315	.097*	.171*
		(.040)		(.043)	(.058)
Delinquent behavior index	.072	.008	.132	.032	.023
		(.024)		(.039)	(.039)
Risk behavior index	.421	−.084^{+}	.456	.099*	.193*
		(.049)		(.044)	(.063)

NOTE.—E-C = experimental-control intent-to-treat estimate. Robust SEs are in parentheses. Sample sizes for each row are 440, 441, 440, 437, 439, 440, and 441, respectively. Youths are ages 15–19 on May 31, 2001. The *problem behavior index* is the fraction of 11 problem behaviors reported by youths: difficulty concentrating, cheating or lying, teasing others, disobedient at home, difficulty in getting along with other children, trouble sitting still, hot temper, would rather be alone than with others, hanging around with kids who get into trouble, disobedient at school, and trouble getting along with teachers. The *delinquent behavior index* is the fraction of 9 delinquent behaviors that youths reported ever being engaged in: carrying a handgun, belonging to a gang, purposefully damaging or destroying property, stealing something worth less than $50, stealing something worth $50 or more, other property crimes, attacking someone with intention to hurt, selling drugs, and getting arrested. The *risk behavior index* is the fraction of 4 behaviors: ever smoking marijuana, ever smoking cigarettes, ever drinking alcohol, and ever having sex.

$^{+}$ $P < .10$.

* $P < .05$.

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