Research Report

David J. Harding

Neighborhood Violence and the Age Structure of Peer Networks: Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Report 05-586
December 2005
Neighborhood Violence and the Age Structure of Peer Networks:
Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

David J. Harding
University of Michigan

December 5, 2005

PSC Research Report 05-586

The author can be contacted at Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, 426 Thompson St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248, dharding@umich.edu, 734-763-2378 (phone), or 734-763-1428 (fax). Funding for this research was provided by the National Science Foundation (SES-0326727), The William T. Grant Foundation, the American Educational Research Association/Institute of Education Sciences, the MacArthur Foundation Network on Inequality and Economic Performance, and by the Harvard Multidisciplinary Program on Inequality and Social Policy, which is funded by an NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship grant. An NICHD Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Population Studies Center at the University of Michigan provided additional support. Katherine Newman, Christopher Winship, Robert Sampson, Christopher Jencks, Jeff Morenoff, Al Young, Jr., Andrew Clarkwest, Brian Goesling, and audiences at the CUNY Graduate Center, Temple University, Harvard University, UCLA, UC-Berkeley, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, Cornell University, New York University, and the University of Chicago provided helpful comments on previous versions of this paper. Shutsu Chai, Johnathan Smith, and Stephen Rose provided excellent research assistance during the fieldwork, and Shutsu Chai, Stephen Rose, Kai Jenkins, Lauren Galarza, Aghogho Edevbie, and Meaghan Cotter worked tirelessly to code the data.
Neighborhood Violence and the Age Structure of Peer Networks:
Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Abstract

Though violence has long been studied as a consequence of neighborhood disadvantage, its effects on the social and cultural dynamics of neighborhoods have received less attention. This analysis proposes that neighborhood violence is a mechanism by which disadvantaged neighborhoods affect adolescents in seemingly unrelated domains such as schooling and fertility. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 60 adolescent boys in three neighborhoods in Boston, I argue that the organization of neighborhood-based violence affects the age structure of peer networks, and that interactions with older peers expose adolescents to local, unconventional cultural models. Implications for theories of neighborhood effects are discussed.
Neighborhood Violence and the Age Structure of Peer Networks:
Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

While sociologists have been concerned with urban residents and their neighborhoods since the birth of the discipline (e.g. DuBois 1899, Park and Burgess 1925, Shaw 1929), the publication of Wilson’s *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) and Massey and Denton’s *American Apartheid* (1993) sparked a renewed interest among scholars of urban inequality in the role of neighborhood context in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. These works reinvigorated the fields of urban sociology and social stratification with a new focus on concentrated poverty neighborhoods and spatial segregation, setting off a sustained effort to understand the effect of neighborhood context on fertility, health, educational, labor market, and crime/delinquency outcomes, particularly for children and adolescents. While there is still some disagreement about how and why the neighborhood concentration of poverty increased (Jargowsky 1997, Jargowsky and Bane 1991, Quillian 1999), the scholars involved tend to agree that this increase has had detrimental consequences for residents of high poverty neighborhoods. Although there is evidence that neighborhood effects on adolescent outcomes such as education and teenage pregnancy are not merely due to selection bias (see Harding 2003 for review and evidence on this issue), social scientists have only begun to uncover the social processes or mechanisms by which such effects operate.\(^1\)

One such mechanism that has not been fully investigated is the role of peers in neighborhood effects, especially for adolescents. As young people mature into adolescence, the focus of their social world shifts from family to peers, who have long been thought to influence adolescents. Though most recent work on peer effects focuses on delinquency and substance use (e.g. Matsueda and Anderson 1998, Haynie 2001, Maxwell 2002, Haynie and Osgood Forthcoming), Duncan, Boisjoly, and Harris (2001) find relatively large correlations among friends on developmental outcomes, in some cases almost as large as correlations among siblings. Peer effects are frequently invoked to understand delinquency (Sutherland 1947, Kornhauser 1978, Akers 1990, Akers et al. 1979, Matsueda 1992, Heimer and Matsueda 1994, Matsueda and Anderson 1998, Warr and Stafford 1991, Haynie 2001, Haynie and Osgood Forthcoming), but little recent work has addressed the role of peers in neighborhood effects, particularly with regard to outcomes other than delinquency. One exception is Anderson (1990, 1991, 1999), who shows how peer “street” cultures in disadvantaged neighborhoods promote teenage pregnancy. An “epidemic” model of peer effects proposes that young people imitate the behavior of their peers, and thus youth who are exposed to peers engaging in behavior that can lead to negative outcomes are more likely to engage in similar behavior themselves (see Jencks and Mayer 1990 for a review). Yet such a model does not explain how peer groups are formed, nor does it help us to understand the content of the messages that young people receive from their peers. In order to understand how neighborhood effects operate through peer influences, we need to know how different neighborhoods influence the dynamics of peer networks and how contact with different types of peers affects adolescent decision-making and behavior.

This paper shows one way in which disadvantaged neighborhoods structure peer contact and interaction. It links the level and pattern of violence in disadvantaged neighborhoods to the age structure of peer networks and argues that older peers are an important source of socialization in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Crime and violence have long been studied as the consequences of concentrated poverty, and recent research has explained the role of collective efficacy in mediating the relationship between neighborhood structural conditions and neighborhood crime and violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997, Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999, Sampson and Raudenbush 1999, Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001). However, the violence that is endemic to many poor neighborhoods has not been considered as a potential mechanism through which disadvantaged neighborhoods affect outcomes in other life domains such as education or fertility.

\(^1\) Many quantitative estimates of the effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent outcomes are provided in the literature. For example, Harding (2003) finds that growing up in a neighborhood where the poverty rate is greater than 20 percent approximately doubles the odds of both high school dropout and teenage pregnancy compared to growing up in a neighborhood in which the poverty rate is below 10 percent.
Drawing on in-depth, unstructured interviews of adolescent boys, their families, and community leaders in three neighborhoods in Boston, I argue that place-based conflicts reinforce neighborhood as a powerful form of social identity, restrict adolescent males’ pool of friends, and lead younger adolescents to greater interaction with older adolescents and young adults on the street. Older males thus become an important source of neighborhood socialization and have the power to influence decision making in other domains beyond safety and violence. In contrast, adolescents growing up in more advantaged neighborhoods that exist outside the system of neighborhood rivalries have fewer older friends and acquaintances and are less susceptible to such socialization. The role of this select group of older males in socializing youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods helps to explain how unconventional (or “oppositional”) cultural models regarding education and sexual behavior persist across generations, despite vocalized allegiance to mainstream cultural attitudes and values among poor parents.

I begin by reviewing past research on the organization of violence in inner city communities as well as work on the consequences of living in a social environment with high levels of violence. I then discuss the dominant theories of the effects of neighborhood context on adolescents, arguing that focusing on violence and peers has the potential to resolve unanswered questions about the mechanisms by which social isolation and social disorganization operate. Next, I describe the social organization of violence in two poor neighborhoods, contrasting the experiences of adolescent boys there with those of similar boys in a more advantaged neighborhood. I show how violence impacts youth peer groups, resulting in more interaction with older youth and young adults. Finally, I explore the consequences of these cross-age interactions for the cultural frameworks and understandings that adolescents bring to their decision-making in domains seemingly unrelated to violence and safety, such as romantic relationships and school.

Social Organization of Violence in Inner City Communities

Efforts to understand the organization of violence in inner city communities have generally involved either gangs or the interpersonal dynamics of reputation and its consequences for safety in violent environments. Researchers have frequently turned to two theoretical concepts to understand the organization of gang conflict: status contestation and age segmentation. According to Thrasher (1927), conflict with other gangs is a central element in gang life, and “gang warfare” erupts over status as well as over economic assets, territory, and the safety of members. Short and Strodtbeck (1965) argue that gang conflict is also a part of status management within the gang, as gang members and leaders use violence among gang members and between rival gangs to establish and maintain leadership roles.

Suttles (1968) and Horowitz (1983) have disputed the notion that poor neighborhoods are disorganized, preferring to frame them as differently organized. Suttles (1968) sees youth gangs as one of many groups composed of individuals of similar age, gender, ethnicity, and territory that make up the “ordered segmentation” of inner city communities. Conflict between these age-segmented groups is structured by a hierarchy of the organizing principles of gender, age, ethnicity, and territory. While fights among male groups of the same age and ethnicity are common, different age groups will also join forces to combat groups of other ethnicities, and groups of different ethnicities will collaborate in conflicts with other territories. While Horowitz (1983) also observed gender and age-segregated groups, she argues that such segmentation has cultural rather than structural roots, particularly the “code of honor” that governs respect and retribution.

Another strand of research attempts to describe the social and cultural dynamics of street violence in urban communities more broadly, beyond the dynamics of gangs. Based on research in Philadelphia, Anderson (1999) describes how youth “campaign for respect” on the streets. In an environment in which victimization is common, young people view a reputation for toughness or violence as a form of protection. Such a reputation is created and maintained by posturing and fighting. Running away from confrontation or failing to put in a respectable performance in a fight means grave damage to one’s reputation, and more importantly increases the chances of being robbed or assaulted. As in the gang literature, violence is a means by which status is achieved and maintained. Dance (2002) describes a similar dynamic among Boston youth. While only a small minority of youth are actually engaged in violence, Dance argues, all must perform as if they are tough in order to avoid victimization.
Below I build upon these theoretical concepts and categories – status contestation, age segmentation, defended territory, and respect, reputation, and honor through violence – to analyze the social organization of violence in Boston’s poor neighborhoods. Cross-neighborhood rivalries take on different forms and call for different responses than interpersonal conflicts or gang conflicts. By structuring social identities, use of space, and peer groups, neighborhood based violence impacts not just those directly involved in the conflict but all youth in the neighborhood.

Consequences of Neighborhood Violence

Sociological research has typically focused on the causes and organization of violence in disadvantaged neighborhoods. We know considerably less about the consequences of living in violent environments. Psychological research emphasizes individual-level consequences of witnessing violence or violent victimization, especially among children and adolescents (for a review, see Marglin and Gordis 2000). This research has linked community violence to post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and aggressive behavior, and violence is thought to disrupt the developmental trajectories of children. Heightened arousal or hyper vigilance may result from persistent exposure. The results of such exposure may be slowed cognitive development, poor academic achievement, or trouble forming relationships with peers and others (Marglin and Gordis 2000). The stress associated with violent and disorderly neighborhoods has also been shown to affect health outcomes (Morenoff 2003), and adolescent exposure to firearm violence is associated with large increases in the chances of future commission of violent acts (Bingenheimer, Brennan, and Earls 2005).

Violence and crime have also been found to affect a community’s capacity for cooperation in pursuit of public goods and common aims (Venkatesh 2000). In a violent neighborhood, individuals are often cautious about intervening in conflicts or monitoring other people’s children for fear of retribution. Residents keep to themselves rather than interacting with neighbors, resulting in thinner social networks and less capacity for cooperative behavior. Violence engulfs public spaces such as sidewalks, parks, or commercial areas, depriving residents of the chance to socialize with neighbors and build the networks needed to marshal resources in support of a common goal or public good. As a result, residents find it increasingly hard to monitor and control the behavior of community members, both adults and young people. One can read this research as implying that neighborhood violence is one of the mechanisms linking disadvantaged neighborhoods and adolescent outcomes, yet little empirical evidence has been brought to bear on this idea.

Mechanisms of Neighborhood Effects on Youth

Understanding the neighborhood effects catalyzed by violence requires grounding this inquiry in a more general discussion of how neighborhood context matters for individuals. As Small (2004) notes, two complementary theories have been offered to understand the impact of neighborhood context on individuals: social isolation theory and social disorganization theory. Social isolation theory argues that residents of concentrated poverty neighborhoods are more likely to be isolated from middle class or mainstream social groups, organizations, and institutions as a result of joblessness (Wilson 1987, 1996). Children in poor neighborhoods do not experience life as organized around work, and reliance on illegitimate sources of income reduces attachment to the labor market. In short, social interaction in isolated neighborhoods leads to the development of cultural repertoires that differ from the mainstream, and social problems such as school dropout, single parenthood, unemployment, and crime build upon themselves in a vicious cycle.

Social isolation theory assumes that neighborhood-based interactions provide the conduits through which young people are exposed to neighborhood-specific cultural models, particularly cultural models that differ from those common among the middle class. Yet research on attitudes and values among poor adults

---

2 I follow Quinn and Holland (1987) in my use of the term “cultural models,” which they define as “Presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it” (Quinn and Holland 1987: 4). In other words, cultural models contain organized information about how the world works. Below I discuss two particular cultural models which I refer to as frames (Goffman 1974, see also Benford and...
finds very strong support for conventional views about education, work, welfare, and marriage (Young 2004, Newman 1999, Edin and Kefalas 2005, Solarzano 1992, Goldenberg et al. 2001; Dohan 2003; Hayes 2003). Therefore the question remains how young people in disadvantaged neighborhoods are socialized into “oppositional” or unconventional cultural models and how these models are passed from generation to generation. A purely structural account, in which each succeeding generation faces the same structural barriers and therefore develops the same cultural models in response, does not suffice. Because different adolescents respond to structural limitations differently, as evidenced by considerable variation within neighborhoods in outcomes, a simple response to blocked opportunities cannot be the whole story. Even in the most distressed neighborhoods, high school dropout, joblessness, and teenage pregnancy are not universal.

While social isolation theory posits cultural consequences of neighborhood disadvantage, social disorganization theory emphasizes the diminished capacity for social control, arguing that neighborhood disadvantage leads to difficulties establishing and maintaining order. The classic Chicago School approach points to three structural characteristics that promote social order in neighborhoods: higher economic status, greater ethnic homogeneity, and greater population stability. In contrast, lack of resources, heterogeneity, and population turnover lead to fewer social ties and therefore diminish the capacity of a community to regulate the behavior of its members (Park and Burgess 1925, Shaw 1929, Shaw and McKay 1942). While the original work in this domain focused on crime and juvenile delinquency, the theory might also be used to explain other adolescent outcomes, such as sexual behavior or education. Neighborhoods with low levels of social organization may also have difficulty regulating adolescent behavior other than crime and delinquency.3

The work of Sampson and his colleagues on collective efficacy follows from this tradition. Collective efficacy, defined as “social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good,” mediates the relationship between concentrated structural disadvantages (residential instability, ethnic or racial heterogeneity, and poverty) and crime rates (Sampson et al. 1997). The concept of collective efficacy more clearly specifies how neighborhood social organization matters and takes into account both internal and external resources.

Social organization models of neighborhood effects have thus far almost exclusively been used to explain neighborhood differences in crime, violence, and delinquency outcomes (exceptions include Browning, Leventhal, and Brooks-Gunn 2004, 2005, on neighborhood collective efficacy and early sexual initiation). The question remains whether social organization theory can explain neighborhood effects in domains other than crime and delinquency. This paper shows how a community’s low capacity to control violence can lead to “spillover” effects in other domains such as education and sexual behavior.

Data and Methods

This study is based on in-depth, unstructured interviews with 60 adolescent boys ages 13 to 18 living in three predominantly black neighborhoods in Boston. The subjects were Black, Latino, or of mixed race, with Latinos being primarily of Puerto Rican or Dominican descent. The neighborhoods were selected to allow for explicit comparisons between similar youth in neighborhoods that vary on a key structural characteristic: neighborhood poverty. Two of the neighborhoods (“Roxbury Crossing” and “Franklin”) have high rates of family poverty (between 35 and 40 percent in the 2000 census). The third neighborhood (“Lower Mills”) has a

---

3 This classic Chicago School model has been criticized for overemphasizing the importance of structural factors like economic status, for failure to differentiate black neighborhoods from other ethnic neighborhoods, and for reliance on the over-simplified concentric zone model of the city (Sampson and Morenoff 1997). Bursik and Grasmick (1993) add an institutional component to the classic model. They suggest that local formal and informal institutions affect the ability of neighbors to maintain social control by influencing norms and expectations and providing contexts within which social ties are created and destroyed (see also Wilson 1987). External institutions, such as police, city government, and markets, affect the resources that are available for both formal and informal methods of social control. The notion of community organization and disorganization has also long been criticized for failing to distinguish between different forms of social organization (Whyte 1943).
low poverty rate (below ten percent). Each neighborhood consists of two contiguous census tracts. Selected neighborhood characteristics from the 2000 census are provided in the Appendix.

Each young man was interviewed multiple times, with at least two and sometimes as many as four sessions per subject. For 80 percent of the youth subjects, a single interview was also conducted with a family member, almost always the mother, to understand a caretaker’s perspective on the neighborhood and on the young man’s experiences. Interviews were also conducted with 50 community leaders, ministers, youth workers, social workers, and school officials who were knowledgeable about particular neighborhoods or about youth issues in the city in general. In total 233 interview sessions were conducted.

The youth interviews centered on three general topics, only some of which will be considered in this paper. First is the relationship between the young man’s geographic neighborhood and “social” neighborhood, including peer networks, use of neighborhood and non-neighborhood institutions and organizations, time use, and local and extended family. Second is the young man’s experience with school and work, including plans for the future. Third is the young man’s experience with girls, romantic and sexual relationships, contraception, and fatherhood, including plans for the future and views toward marriage and childrearing. The family member interview includes a brief life history, a discussion of the neighborhood, a discussion of parenting attitudes and strategies, and a discussion of the subject’s views of the boy’s educational, work, and relationship experiences as well as prospects for the future in those areas.

The three neighborhood research design overcomes an important weakness of much prior qualitative neighborhood effects research. Few qualitative studies are designed to compare neighborhoods that differ systematically on the characteristic of interest. For example, a study that examines a set of neighborhoods that are all characterized by high poverty rates but differ on their racial or ethnic composition is not informative about what is unique about the experiences and perspectives of residents of high poverty neighborhoods. Without a low poverty neighborhood for comparison, it is impossible to know whether social and cultural processes observed in a poor neighborhood are unique to poor neighborhoods and are therefore potential mechanisms of neighborhood effects. Across neighborhoods, it is important to compare adolescents from similar family backgrounds. I selected subjects so as to achieve an economically diverse group of subjects in each neighborhood. In the low poverty neighborhood, this meant taking particular care to locate youth from disadvantaged family backgrounds. In the high poverty neighborhoods, this meant looking for youth from more advantaged family backgrounds.

With the permission of the subjects, interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Transcripts were coded into categories using Atlas.ti based on a priori theoretical perspectives as well as preliminary findings generated during the fieldwork. This then allowed two complementary modes of analysis. Person-centered analysis was conducted by considering each subject individually to understand the relevance of various theoretical concepts to his perspectives and daily experiences. A neighborhood-centered analysis was conducted by comparing interview data in each category across neighborhoods. I now turn to the results of these analyses, beginning with the social organization of violence in Boston’s poor neighborhoods.

“The Drama:” The Social Organization of Violence in Boston Neighborhoods

The most striking difference between the two disadvantaged neighborhoods, Roxbury Crossing and Franklin, and the relatively advantaged neighborhood of Lower Mills is the level of violence. For the youth

---

4 The names I have selected for the three fieldwork neighborhoods are not official city designations nor are they names that denote areas with clear or consistent boundaries in the eyes of local residents. However, these names are recognizable to local residents as referring to the general areas of the city where the fieldwork neighborhoods are located.

5 Each interview session lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. Most interviews took place in the subjects’ homes, but interviews were also conducted in community centers and occasionally in a park or coffee shop. Each youth or parent was paid $20 per interview session. The family interviews were done in two stages. Fourteen pilot interviews were conducted in September, October, and November 2003. The remainder of the interviews were conducted between May and August 2004. Subjects were promised individual anonymity but were informed that the general locations of their neighborhoods would be disclosed. All names used below are pseudonyms.

6 Boston is divided into 12 police districts. The two police districts in which Roxbury Crossing and Franklin are located (B-2 and B-3) accounted for 38% of all homicides and 34% of all aggravated assaults in 2003 and 61% of all homicides and
living in Roxbury Crossing and Franklin, violence is an almost constant presence, and the threat of victimization or physical confrontation is a regular part of daily life. Shots are frequently heard, though mostly at night, confrontations are common, and the ability to fight is a necessary skill. Some young person, usually a male, is wounded or killed on a regular basis. In contrast, violence also occurs among the adolescents of Lower Mills, but it is not a regular fixture of neighborhood life.

Chris, a 14 year old African American resident of Franklin, understands that the ability to fight is critical to his safety, and he views defending the honor of his neighborhood as a social responsibility. His experiences illustrate important elements of the organization of youth violence in Boston. He described an incident that occurred over the weekend at Chez Vous, a roller rink and teen dance club about a mile or two down Blue Hill Avenue. “The Vous,” as Chris calls it, is a weekend gathering place for teenagers from Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and other sections of Boston, so there is always potential for neighborhood rivalries to flare. Soon after Chris and “his boys” arrived, they had an encounter with a group of youth from a nearby street who insulted a girl from Franklin Hill, the housing development where he lives.

Chris: We almost got into a fight. Some Lucerne [Street] kids was there... They were just making mad noise. Cause in the Vous they're like "Lucerne, Lucerne." I know the name is Lucerne. I don't know where it's at though. There was all kinds of kids there though. The Point was there and the Head was there. D Block was there. It was mad... They had a dance contest and the girl that was from [our neighborhood], she was dancing. And they was talking mad trash [about her] so we almost got in a fight with them. They was scared. They left... We was there like 20 deep. We was deep there, yeah.

INT: If those guys had stayed, would you guys have fought them?

Chris: Probably. But they were scared, they left. They want to be cool with us, they want to collaborate with us, but they punks so we won't collaborate with them.

INT: Why do you say they're punks?

Chris: Cause they scared. They be scared every time something happen. They just scared.

Consonant with previous work on the organization of street violence (Anderson 1990, 1999; Dance 2002) Chris’ account makes clear that youth attach great importance to standing and fighting when challenged. Openly displaying one’s reputation for toughness is a critical part of Chris’s street repertoire, and it is expected behavior from his “boys.” Chris looks down upon the youth from Lucerne Street for leaving rather than fighting, even though they were hopelessly outnumbered. They are “ punks,” people who will not defend themselves or their neighborhood.

Second, and more important, this account is an example of the role of neighborhood as a central organizing category in the daily lives of youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In mentioning “the Point,” “the Head,” and “D Block,” Chris is describing other youth using local slang terms for the neighborhoods where these young men live. Chris and the 20 other adolescents from his neighborhood are not being chivalrous in defending a girl from their neighborhood. Rather, they are defending their own neighborhood from insult. The youth from Lucerne Street announce their presence by chanting the name of their street. Then one of them challenges Chris’s neighborhood by insulting the girl. There is nothing particularly inevitable or “natural” about the centrality of neighborhood in this conflict. An outside observer may have expected an older brother, cousin, or boyfriend to challenge the insult to the girl, but here the conflict quickly became a conflict between neighborhoods rather than individuals.

“Beefs” between neighborhoods, ongoing disputes with escalating confrontations, are somewhat similar to the beefs between individuals described in the previous literature (Anderson 1999, Dance 2002). Beefs between neighborhoods are to some extent about a neighborhood’s reputation and the relative safety that comes from being known as a rough neighborhood (Anderson 1999). A youth who lives in a neighborhood that cannot lay claim to such a reputation is at greater risk of victimization when he ventures beyond its borders. When youth know that neighborhood-based retribution will be forthcoming if they attack or rob an individual, they are

34% of all aggravated assaults in 2004. (Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports as tabulated by Boston Police Department; see http://www.ci.boston.ma.us/police/crimeStats.asp).
likely to leave him alone. On the other hand, zones which are not well defended are understood to be targets for street crime. A substantial portion of the adolescents in Franklin and Roxbury Crossing believed that failing to stand up for their neighborhoods, control who could enter them, or control the activities within them would lead to drug dealing, car theft, or vandalism in the neighborhood. This in turn would attract unwanted police attention to the youth, as residents of a high crime area.

Beefs between neighborhoods are also about status. Youth in high poverty neighborhoods know that American culture measures status according to residential location, and that their neighborhoods, with dirty, unsafe streets and high poverty rates, are at the bottom. Yet among themselves, an even more fine-grained system of residential rankings exists. Neighborhoods filled with “ punks,” unwilling or unable to mount a defense, lose face. Defending one’s turf is an important end of its own, and not usually for the reasons typically assumed, such as the need to defend particular drug markets (though in some situations that is the case).

Neighborhood rivalries are the basis for much of the more serious violence that occurs in the city. Just as a “beef” can develop between individuals, it can also develop between neighborhoods. These conflicts often go back years, before today’s teens were even born, and their exact origins are almost always unknown by the current participants. In Roxbury Crossing, youth from the Lenox public housing development often “have beef” with those from Ruggles Street or from Mandela Homes or from “1850” (Washington Street), also known as Grant Manor.

In Franklin, an ongoing feud simmers below the surface between the Franklin Hill and Franklin Field public housing developments, located within sight of one another on opposite sides of Blue Hill Avenue. In the early 1990’s, when this conflict was at a peak, drive-by shootings, knife fights, shoot outs, and murders were commonplace. Efforts by community activists and police, in co-operation with the youth and young adults involved, managed to end the conflict. When I spoke with Chris in the fall of 2003, calm prevailed, but when I revisited him in the spring of 2004, “the drama,” as the neighborhood’s residents call it, seemed ready to explode again. As Chris remembers it, conflict began again at a party in February of 2004.

Chris: It was over some girls at this party. Me and my boys bagged these Franklin Field girls, and the guys from Franklin Field got mad.7 So they brought [the fight] to us. We beat them up a little bit. Then the older mens came, then we got our older mens, so that it looked like a go. But then the girls called us like, "We don't want drama." So I was like alright, forget it.

Chris’ account of what happened next is instructive of the role that territory and age play in organizing street violence. As he made his way home from the party, he was jumped by eight youth from Franklin Field riding in a car driven by one of the “older mens.” They were looking to settle the score and win back some pride for their neighborhood. As Chris tells it, he took a number of punches but never fell down and even managed to get in a few good blows himself. At this point, with “older mens” involved, there was considerable potential for the conflict to escalate. As it turned out, though, the cooler heads of the “older mens” prevailed, and the beef was “squashed,” at least for the time being.

Chris: Then [the youth from Franklin Field] started riding through here [Franklin Hill]. So me and my little niggas told our older niggas, and then they got involved. Once they got involved, [Franklin Field] didn't want it. Our OG's [original gangstas], they didn't even get involved. There was just me and the older niggas. It was just a couple of niggas from [Franklin Hill], and [Franklin Field] couldn't handle it. They said they didn't want it no more. Because if the whole [Franklin Hill] team came together, it would have been a problem. And they only had half their team fightin'.

According to Chris’ account, the youth from Franklin Field made a strategic decision: they brought the conflict to a halt, fearing that if it escalated, the Franklin Hill youth would call in more support from the older men in their neighborhood and easily gain the upper hand in any fight. Franklin Field youth would undoubtedly give a different account of this conflict, but Chris’s account illustrates another aspect of the social organization of neighborhood conflicts. As Thrasher (1927), Suttles (1968), and Horowitz (1983) would lead us to expect, age-segmented groups have merged for the purposes of a cross-neighborhood conflict. Three sets of neighborhood actors who differ in age and experience are involved in this story.

---

7 By “bagged”, Chris means that he got their phone numbers.
“Little mens” (or “little niggas”) are teenagers growing up in the neighborhood. “Older mens” are in their late teens or twenties and, as veterans of previous “beefs,” have honed their reputations based on past deeds. Currently, they may be hustling or dealing drugs or working legitimate jobs, but they are usually a continuous presence on the streets. “OG’s,” or “original gangsters,” are in their 30’s and 40’s, survivors of the worst days of violence in Boston. Many have been incarcerated. OG’s grew up in the neighborhood and were the leaders in their day. Their places at the top of the social hierarchy are cemented by their sometimes legendary reputations, but their daily connections to the neighborhood are often not as strong anymore, as many have moved away from the street life. Still, they are reliable in times of trouble. As we will see shortly, the “older mens”, and to some extent the OG’s, play a role in the neighborhood effects mechanism elaborated below.

To understand how Chris’s experiences in Franklin differ from similar youth from more advantaged neighborhoods, it is useful to draw an explicit comparison with an adolescent from Lower Mills, the low poverty neighborhood in this study. Darnell is Chris’s 13-year-old half brother. Neither Darnell nor Chris knew that his half-brother even existed until a week before I met Darnell and interviewed him, when a chance meeting of distant relatives brought the two together. Their mothers both dated their father during high school. Darnell lived in a suburban town before moving back into Boston, though he continues to attend school in the suburbs. Their father plays little role in either young man’s life, and their mothers both finished high school, did some post secondary schooling, and worked until recently.

Like most of the other adolescents whom I interviewed in Lower Mills, Darnell is familiar with the system of neighborhood rivalries. He recounts how youth from certain neighborhoods have beef with other neighborhoods and how those entering the wrong neighborhood risk a confrontation. Like other adolescents from Lower Mills, Darnell is subject to the “code of the streets” (Anderson 1999) when he ventures out of his own neighborhood, either into disadvantaged neighborhoods or into neutral territories. However, Chris and Darnell have very different experiences in their respective neighborhoods. While Chris has to contend with a nearly constant threat of violence, Darnell could only recall one fight in the three years he has lived in Lower Mills. Darnell and his friends see no need to defend their neighborhood from outsiders, mainly because Lower Mills exists largely outside the system of neighborhood rivalries. Youth from elsewhere do not recognize Lower Mills as a potential rival or as an area with a reputation and have little reason to visit or pass through.

I asked both Darnell and his half brother Chris what a “thug” is. 8 Almost all the adolescents from the two disadvantaged neighborhoods described a “thug” as someone who engages in violent or risky behavior without considering the consequences and often without provocation. Clothing and mannerisms are secondary markers of a thug, but not defining characteristics. When I asked Darnell the same question, he gave a different response. To him, being a thug is primarily a way of presenting oneself to others, rather than a description of one’s actions. Dress, style and fashion sense are key.

INT: What about when somebody calls somebody a thug?

P: That’s like when people say “gangsta.” The way you spell it is, - s – t – a. And it’s not exactly – it’s kind of like, what you do, and like stuff you wear. It’s not being in a group. It’s just like..

INT: It’s more of like a fashion sense?

P: Yes. Like a white tee. Some Air Force ones [a type of sneaker], pants and a hat. You’re like, oh, yeah, he’s gangsta, you know. Like that. It’s just the way he look. Somebody say you’re a thug, it’s the same thing, your fashion sense, and all that. It’s how they act, and, you know, how cool they are.

Violence is clearly less a part of the daily lives of the adolescents like Darnell in Lower Mills. When violence does occur, it is less serious and is based upon interpersonal disputes rather than ongoing neighborhood conflicts. If a young person from Lower Mills ventures outside his neighborhood, he must avoid encroaching on others’ turf, but he need not fear encountering someone with whom his neighborhood has beef, because Lower

---

8 As part of the interviews, I asked subjects to discuss their understandings of terms that are regularly used to categorize people, particularly teenage boys and girls.
Mills is outside the system of neighborhood beefs. This is reflected in and rooted in the different ways in which neighborhood figures in one’s social identity depending on the neighborhood in which one grows up.

**Neighborhood as Social Identity**

Neighborhood based violence is at once both structured by neighborhood identities and the primary way in which these identities are experienced, reified, and reinforced in daily life. Neighborhoods are categories that nearly all of the adolescent males I interviewed in Franklin and Roxbury Crossing use to distinguish insiders from outsiders. The power of neighborhood distinctions is illustrated by the behavior of Marcus, a 16 year old African-American who lives in a public housing development in Roxbury Crossing. Another youth from Marcus’s development owed him a small amount of money. Marcus wanted the money back, but did not want to fight this neighbor for it. Instead, he told the youth that if he did not give Marcus the money, Marcus would rob his friend from another neighborhood:

> Marcus: A kid owed me four dollars. I wanted my four dollars. He lives in this development, so I didn't want to do nothing to him, because I knew it would cause problems. And I said, I see you coming around here with a kid that you hang out with on a daily basis, and I really don't care for the kid, 'cause the kid's not from around here. So, I said it's either I get my money, or we're going to have problems, because that four dollars means something to me, 'cause my family does not have that much. I told him I'll rob your friend the next time I see him around here. If I don't have my four dollars in my hand, I'll rob your friend. So, he told me that I'd have my four dollars the next day, and I had my four dollars in my hand the next day. I don't know whether he was scared or whether it was his intentions to give it to me the next day, but I got my money the next day, and we just shook hands, and we left it at that. I seen him today, and we said what's up? How ya doin'? Where you goin'? We left it at that.

Conflicts among neighborhood insiders are often distinct from those between youth from different neighborhoods. Conflicts among neighbors are resolved quickly, though often with a physical fight. Third parties from the neighborhood take on a mediating role, attempting to resolve the dispute before it escalates into an ongoing interpersonal beef. There is often intense social pressure to resolve the dispute, shake hands, and “leave it at that.” When conflicts between youth from different neighborhoods emerge, however, more is at stake. Each youth becomes a representative of his home space, and therefore more than just the individual conflict is at issue: the neighborhood’s reputation is at stake. Others may become involved, either to seek retribution and redemption for the neighborhood or to protect its reputation.

With these social dynamics at work, neighborhoods become what Suttles (1972) terms “defended communities.” Neutral spaces such as schools, public transportation, or downtown or commercial areas also become sites of contestation and conflict. Confrontation between youth from different neighborhoods is always a possibility, and often youth will ask each other what neighborhood they are from as a challenge or physical threat.

One piece of evidence for how keenly neighborhood identities are felt is that lying about one’s provenance is a known ploy for avoiding a fight with a youth from a rival neighborhood. This strategy often elicits scorn from others, for it goes against the notion that neighborhood is a firm social category. It simultaneously suggests shame or abandonment of one’s own and disrespect for the other. Daniel, a 17 year old African American from Roxbury Crossing, referred derisively to this practice as “hood hopping”:

> Daniel: Dudes might be hood hopping "Oh I'm from Mission." But then 5 minutes later you ask the same dude that question, "Look, where you from?" "I'm from Brunswick." And you're like "How are you from Brunswick? You just said you're from Mission." That's how this dude was in my school. I'm like "How you from Brunswick, then you said you're from Mission. Then you said you're from Lennox." I'm like "So how do you do that?" He's like "Oh, no, it's not even like that." I'm like "You're hood hopping."

---

9 Whether neighborhood identities or cross-neighborhood rivalries came first cannot be determined from my data because the data primarily capture only a single point in time. However, this is largely irrelevant to the larger argument about the role of such identities in neighborhood violence and neighborhood social relations.
INT: So why do you think he's doing that?

Daniel: So people don't bother him.

INT: So he knows where somebody is from and he picks an area he says he's from, which they don't have a beef with, and then he doesn't have a problem?

Daniel: Yeah.

INT: But you don't think that's a good idea for him to do that?

Daniel: Yeah, cause hood hopping is not cool.

In the two poor neighborhoods, violence, neighborhood identity, and community membership are closely linked. Tyree, an African-American youth from Roxbury Crossing, describes how he experienced the obligations of community membership with regard to violence:

If you’re not willing to help in the neighborhood, you’re not willing to help when someone is in need then you really can’t be here. Like, we had a circle of people, if you wasn’t in that circle, you was outside that circle, that’s where you had to be… There’s people in the neighborhood that live on the same street and could see you getting jumped that wouldn’t care. They put it as, “Oh it’s not my problem.” But if you was really tight, grew up together, been through ups and downs and really been cool, know family members, then there’s always a chance of help. But I put it as, “I always got to help the people in my neighborhood because you never know when it’s going to come back to you.” I could be outside the neighborhood getting ready to get jumped, and he could walk by and [help me]… So that's why I always put it as, “oh I got to help the next man, just in case of the worst-case scenario.”

Those who do not help their friends in physical confrontations or defend the neighborhood, cannot rely on others for other forms of assistance. Though not all boys see things this way, for adolescents like Tyree, participating in this system of obligations defines membership in the community, including access to such benefits as mutual protection.

In contrast, the adolescents of Lower Mills, the more advantaged neighborhood, do not link identity and community membership to mutual obligations of protection. In other words, identity is conceived of differently in different spaces. Lower Mills teens tend to look to sources of membership other than the neighborhood to situate their identities in their social worlds. Small friendship groups, interests such as particular sports or music styles, and involvements in religion or ethnicity based groups are more important.

**Consequences of Beef Between Neighborhoods**

Only a small proportion of youth actively police neighborhood boundaries, defend territory from intrusion by others, confront youth from other neighborhoods in neutral territories, or carry out the retribution and revenge that keep beefs going. Nonetheless, beefs affect all the young people in Boston’s poor, minority neighborhoods. Venturing outside one’s own neighborhood to go to school, to the store, or downtown to see a movie means risking confrontation with youth from other neighborhoods just by passing near rival neighborhoods or through neutral territories. Most youth prefer to travel in a group to avoid being jumped or harassed when going outside their immediate neighborhood. Even those who *never* start fights with youth from other neighborhoods are enveloped in the system of place-based antagonisms.

---

10 Indeed, the community and policing strategies that were at the core of the “Boston Miracle,” which led to a dramatic decline in youth homicide during the late 1990’s, succeeded because of the relatively small number of central actors in the conflicts. By targeting “impact players” with both social services and law enforcement, police, community leaders, and religious leaders stemmed the tide of violence by “squashing” the beefs (Berrien and Winship 2002, Braga and Kennedy 2002, Braga and Winship 2005).
Manuel, a Latino Franklin resident, is 15 years old. He talks tough, but his short height and slim frame make him look at least two years younger. Manuel has only gotten into one fight in his life, with another boy from the neighborhood (over a conflict which started in school when the other boy became jealous of the attention Manuel was receiving from a girl). He describes himself as “not a troublemaker,” not someone who starts fights or “talks trash” to seem tough. However, Manuel is well aware of the conflicts between his development and Franklin Hill. A friend of his was beaten up by youth from “the Hill” in a nearby park.

Manuel: We still have problems with Franklin Hill because they started a lot of stuff. Like one day they jumped one of my friends. They were talking trash, and this time my friend said something back to them, and they beat him up. [This was] a couple of years back. He was walking home like late at night, because he had a basketball game, and was coming home off the bus, and he was crossing the park. And they used to like just like come down here [to our development] and just talk trash, and just like leave and stuff. Because we [my friends and I] really don’t try to like start trouble. They would just come down and start trouble with us and stuff.

INT: Why do you think they were starting trouble?

Manuel: I really don’t know because I do have some friends that live in Franklin Hill, but there’s like very few. And I think some of them moved out or something… The things I do to try to avoid it is like I’ll just like ignore them, or like don’t answer their questions. And I will just like walk away. Like just be the better man, and just like leave it be.

INT: And what happens when you do something like that?

Manuel: They’d just probably like talk trash, saying that I’m a wimp, or that I’m a little girl or something, which I really don’t care what they say, because they’re not hurting me and stuff. I just get mad, and hold in all my anger. And I just leave, walk away.

INT: So some people would say if someone kind of challenges you like that, and you walk away, then you’re going to get a reputation as someone who’s scared.

Manuel: Yeah, they do say that, but I really don’t care, because to me, I’ll fight a kid if I was really, really mad. But if I wasn’t like really that mad, I would just like leave it be. Because I really don’t care about what other people think. They could think whatever about me, but I know my real personality. By refusing to fight, Manuel is risking his reputation. It is a risk he is willing to take, but the need to make such a calculation is further evidence of what is at stake. Manuel avoids going near Franklin Hill, at least when he is not with an adult. He explained what would happen to him if he went there:

Manuel: Say if I was in front of Franklin Field, they’d be like, “You know where you’re at?” And I’d be like, “Yeah, I’m in front of Franklin Hill.” He’d be like, “Where you live?” I’d be like, “I live in Franklin Field.” He’s like, “You know this is my neighborhood?” I’ll be like, “And it’s not really your neighborhood because you don’t own it.” And they’d be like, “What? You gettin’ smart?” And they would just like talk more trash.

These confrontations, however, escalate quickly. Trash talking is often a prelude to some sort of physical altercation or at least is often designed to provoke one. Terrell, a 16 year old African American from Franklin, described an incident that occurred when he went to visit a friend who lived near the Bromley Heath public housing development in Jamaica Plain, a nearby section of the city. His development and Bromley Heath had beef at the time, but Terrell was never involved in any of the fights or other confrontations. He tries to avoid socializing with youth from his development.

Terrell: Just from us living around here, sometimes it’s a safety issue, because, we gotta watch our backs. [People from our development] step on a lot of people’s toes, and get a lot of people riled up against them. So they want revenge in any way. And they don’t care if you hang with them or you don’t hang with them, as long as you live around here, you’re a target to certain people.
I was actually with one of my friends, that doesn’t live around here, and we were going to Stop & Shop [a grocery store] in Jamaica Plain. We were walking up and some people asked me where I was from, so I told them. And then, you know what? They pulled out a hand gun on us. They was just trying to seem tough, so I didn’t like panic and overreact. I just walked away from it. It was broad daylight too. It had to be like three o’clock in the afternoon.

And it’s more than just trying to ignore it, you gotta watch your back too. You can’t just say, “Well yeah, I’m from around here, but I don’t mess with those guys [who are involved in neighborhood beefs].” [The kids from other neighborhoods], they’re gonna say, “So what!”

The consequences of neighborhood beefs can also persist over time, limiting where in the city a young man can go and still feel safe. Eduardo, age 17 and Latino, grew up in a public housing development in Roxbury Crossing, and “ran the streets” in his early teenage years, stealing cars, carrying a handgun, and selling drugs. He was eventually arrested and incarcerated at the Division of Youth Services (DYS), Massachusetts’ juvenile jail. He has since moved to a calmer neighborhood, earned his GED, and is set to apply to college. During the time when he “ran the streets,” his development had beef with two housing developments located in the nearby South End, Villa Victoria (featured in Small 2004) and Cathedral. Though it is now years later, he must still be careful where he goes.

Eduardo: Can’t go to the South End to this day. I can go around Back Bay. I can go around Newbury Street, but I can’t go towards the Villa Victoria [housing development], around that area - - towards Tremont Street.

INT: So, that was where there was beef?

Eduardo: Yup. Also more towards Cathedral [housing development], I can’t go around there. I would walk around this area, and nothing would happen to me, but if I were to go around the South End, near Cathedral, something would happen to me regardless whether I’m living that type of lifestyle of not.

INT: What would happen if you went, to say, near the Villa?

Eduardo: [That beef], it was over something serious. It’s not over a female. It’s over murder. It’s over something serious. I had nothing to do with that… Anybody, if you’re from that area, you can have nothing to do with it, and you have problems if you go around that area.

INT: I also could imagine you dress like that [in slacks and a tie] and say walk down Tremont Street, how would anybody even know that you weren’t on your way to the Prudential Center or working in an office? How would they know where you were from?

Eduardo: A lot of them recognize me. There’s a couple that actually have recognized me, have stared me down like they’re about to do something, but haven’t ‘cause they see I’m not living that type of lifestyle. I want nothing to do with you or [my old development]… I just want to live my life in peace.

INT: So what kinds of things do you do to avoid the kind of situation you’re just describing - - to make it so that situation doesn’t turn bad?

Eduardo: I take the train. If you get off at Back Bay Station on the Orange Line, you don’t have to necessarily go out into the street; you can go underneath the street and be right up in Copley [mall], and, then, walk all the way through [to the Prudential Center].

The consequences of neighborhood beefs and defended territory for a young man’s freedom of movement are amplified by the relatively small size of the neighborhoods involved. Boston’s relatively small public housing developments, usually not more than several hundred families and covering only a few blocks, are natural organizing units. Other natural geographic areas are large private or co-op housing developments. However, many of the geographic areas are single streets one to three blocks long, and it is not uncommon for parallel streets to have longstanding beefs.
Residential neighborhoods are not the only context in which neighborhood beefs can flare into open conflict. Riding public transportation is another. Boston’s public high schools all have attendance areas that cover the entire city. Thousands of students ride the buses, trains, and trolleys of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“the T”) to and from school every day. Between 6 and 7 am and 1:30 and 3 pm, major subway stations and bus lines near the schools and the city’s poor and minority neighborhoods are teeming with high school students, pressed against each other in train cars and buses as they travel to their schools. In an environment where holding a glance too long, stepping on someone’s toes, or brushing up against a shoulder can be interpreted as a sign of disrespect, these tight quarters can instill fear.11 The regularity with which youth from different neighborhoods come into contact in Boston’s schools and public transportation may help to explain why its neighborhood rivalries are so intense.

**Violence and the Age Structure of Peer Networks**

Thus far I have described the social organization of violence in which young people find themselves enmeshed as a result of their residence in Boston’s poor neighborhoods. Here I argue that the social dynamics of this violence structure the composition of the peer networks of the adolescent males who live in the two disadvantaged study neighborhoods, Franklin and Roxbury Crossing. Compared to their counterparts in Lower Mills, the youth in these two neighborhoods interact more often with both older adolescents and young adults from their own neighborhoods. Their peer networks include individuals who are considerably older, sometimes as close friends but more often as acquaintances. In contrast, the youth in Lower Mills rarely interacted with older adolescents and young adults. Apart from family members or friends of family members, they usually could not even name older adolescents or young adults, let alone describe meaningful interactions with them.

One reason for the relationship between neighborhood violence and the age structure of peer networks is the limited availability of same-age peers in a geographically constricted space. Because their neighborhoods are part of a larger system of neighborhood based violence, the youth in the disadvantaged neighborhoods stay inside their own neighborhoods to avoid confrontation or victimization, and they are more likely to see youth outside the neighborhood as potential enemies than potential friends.12 This leaves only those who live in the same neighborhood as potential friends. Since the social space in question is quite small, same age peers are often not abundant (especially considering that young people have a range of interests), and older peers often fill the gap. Marcus, the 16 year old African American from Roxbury Crossing, described how the lack of same age peers in his housing development led him to socialize with the “older guys” who are a fixture of the sidewalks and streets. These older guys dispense advice to Marcus and his friends and try to keep them out of trouble with the police or with youth from other neighborhoods.

Marcus: [My two friends and I are] considered the three younger individuals that live around here, so we're forced to be around nothing but older guys… We're put around older guys that done been through it, that tell you -- that tell you what to do, and what not to do, and how to do it, and when to do it, and when it's appropriate to confront somebody, or that you've got a problem with, and stuff like that…

All the older guys around here, they said don't stand in one place for too long, because that's how you end up getting harassed [by the police], so I just keep it moving. I don't stand in too many places for too long.

We just hang out, talk about the past, things that done happened -- laugh, joke with each other. One person might be fixing on their car; one person might be fixing on their bike, listening to music, and we all just go gather around there, and just talk… Maybe the older guys might be sitting down, and drinking beer, and hanging out playing cards, and everybody just gather around; they hang out. That's about it.

---

11 A survey of Boston high school students found that about one third felt unsafe riding the T (Boston Metro, “T Begins to Address Students’ Safety Fears,” September 3, 2003, p. 12). During the 2003-2004 school year, MBTA and school police and administrators patrolled T stations to prevent violence as part of “Operation Stopwatch.”

12 Two occasional exceptions are classmates from school or youth they come into contact with through family members.
This geographic constraint on potential friends is reinforced by the importance of neighborhood as a form of social identity. Peers from other neighborhoods, especially nearby neighborhoods with which conflicts are most common, are often viewed with suspicion or distrust. As discussed above, they are outsiders, while older peers from one’s own neighborhood are not just insiders but potential advisors and reinforcements in cross neighborhood conflicts.

Older peers also provide protection. Recall that the “little mens” called upon the “big mens” when the conflict between Franklin Hill and Franklin Field became heated. Older youth or young adults can be protectors or intervene in conflicts before they become fights. However, an association with older friends can also provide status and respect. This is an end in itself, but the respect that older friends provide translates into a measure of protection. Miguel, a 16 year old Latino who grew up in a housing development in Roxbury Crossing, describes his relationships with older youth, which started when he moved to the development at age 13:

Miguel: Most of my friends are a lot older than me. Probably like, maybe 20 [years old].

INT: The ones from around the neighborhood, how did you get to know them?

Miguel: Hanging out, you know, like in the summer time we go out you know, we just sit down on the steps and chill, we talk and stuff like that. People playing baseball you know, they just tend to come over and they start playing and you just get to know them.

INT: So why would someone who’s younger want to be friends with people who are older?

Miguel: Well probably a lot more people will respect the younger person, you know they wouldn’t mess with him because he has a lot of older friends.

However, younger adolescents’ need for protection does not help us to understand why older youth and young adults would befriend younger teens. In All Our Kin, Stack (1970) describes the cooperative survival strategies of the poor, African American residents of a ghetto neighborhood in a mid-western city. These strategies include swapping services such as child care as well as the development of “fictive kin” (non-kin taking on kin-like relationships). A similar dynamic is occurring in Franklin and Roxbury Crossing. The older adolescents and young adults see it as their duty to look out for the younger adolescents and children in the neighborhood. They have learned this behavior from adults and from those youth who have come before. They also see this guardian and friendship behavior as a way to keep the neighborhood safe, to keep the peace and prevent the “drama” that conflicts can create.

David, a 17 year old African American youth from the Franklin neighborhood, describes how he watches over younger adolescents as part of his role as a member of the community. Others who came before looked out for him, and the youth he looks out for will grow up to do the same.

David: If I look after somebody, then, they can probably grow up and look after somebody else - - that's basically what makes it a community - - everybody looking after somebody. So, if something happens in your neighborhood you can like stop it before it gets worser. Like somebody coming in here, doing - - selling drugs, shooting, he know before those folks moved in, there was none of that stuff going down, he could pinpoint it right now - - like none of that stuff came to our neighborhood - - take that out of here. And, basically, just watch out for your kids.

These caring behaviors are learned early. Younger adolescents take the example that is set for them by older adolescents and practice it with the children of the neighborhood. Jerome, a 13 year old African American growing up in Roxbury Crossing, describes how he cares for the children in his neighborhood.

Jerome: If the boys and the girls [are] fighting, you got to separate them, you got to go bring the boy to his mother and the girl to his mother.

INT: When did something like that happen?
Jerome: Four weeks ago. Cuz, the boy hit her too hard with the ball and she smacked him. And then he punched her and he didn’t want to let her go. I had to separate them and bring them home.

Caring for younger children and adolescents extends beyond simply keeping the peace. Older adolescents recount with pride how they help the younger ones by giving them a dollar or two when the ice cream truck comes around or when they want a snack from the corner store. As Stack (1970) and Newman (1999) have also described, those who have money or other resources are obliged to share it with others in the neighborhood. This set of norms extends to adolescents as well. For Marcus, who learned from his elders the importance of not standing in one place for too long, his relationships with younger adolescents have a particularly kin-like motivation. He is motivated by the lack of father figures in the lives of the youth in his neighborhood.

Marcus: Some kids don’t know who their father is. With me, I know who my father is, but… ever since I was little, me and him never was able to get along with each other. I never had a big brother, so I never had an older brother to look up to, to throw a football around with, because me and my father never really did that... So, like when a younger guy comes and asks me he want to run and play ball, I’ll be happy to play basketball with him; he want to throw a football around, yeah, I’ll throw a football around with him, because I want him to feel like he has an older person to hang out with. If he doesn’t have a father, or older brother, he knows that he can come outside and there’s a guy outside that would like to play ball with him.

INT: So what are some of the things that you try to impart on the younger kids?

Marcus: Just like the older guys tell me: Don’t hang out in a place for too long. So, I tell the little older dudes that are maybe like 13, 12, I was like don’t hang out in one spot for too long, because that’s going to make it look bad on you, and then now it’s going to make it look bad on us, because now they think that we have you all out here doin’ stuff, so now they’re goin’ to think that we’re trying to start up something.

As Marcus’s account suggests, an older adolescent’s relationships and interactions with younger adolescents are about more than a simple altruistic notion of community and collective responsibility for youth. By taking responsibility for their juniors, older adolescents and young men are also taking on adult roles and gaining the higher status that comes with such roles. Whether it is breaking up a fight, providing a dollar for the ice cream truck, offering instruction on how to shoot a basketball, giving a lesson on avoiding police harassment, or, as we will see, sharing knowledge about handling romantic relationships, Marcus gains the respect of the younger kids in the neighborhood as well as the respect of others who play the same role.

By contrast, Lower Mills youth tend to have age homogenous friendship groups. They are often willing to venture further to seek out same age peers, and they associate much less with older adolescents in the neighborhood. Their peer networks are more similar to those of middle class children in the bureaucratized and age-graded social settings described by Lareau (2003). When the youth of Lower Mills associate with older youth, their interactions are more often family based and take on a qualitatively different character. When age inappropriate discussions arise – for example, those about romantic relationships, sex, or drug or alcohol use – younger adolescents are pushed away.

**Consequences of Relationships with Older Peers**

Thus far I have argued that the social organization of cross neighborhood violence in disadvantage communities leads to interactions and relationships between younger adolescents and older adolescents or young adults. To complete the story about how these processes can help account for neighborhood effects, I now turn to the consequences of these relationships for socialization into local cultural models. The consequences of relationships with older peers depend on who these older peers are. The older peers who are both available and visible in high violence neighborhoods are seldom positive role models, though not for lack of good intentions.13

---

13 Due to high rates of incarceration in the 1990’s, Boston’s poor communities are now experiencing an influx of former prisoners (Winship 2002), making the available older role models an even more disadvantaged group.
Marcus, who tries to be an older brother figure to the boys in his neighborhood, is an occasional drug dealer, and at 16 already has two young women who claim they are pregnant by him. He says he tries to hide these activities from the younger boys in the neighborhood, but it is hard to see how that is really possible. While previous research has noted the role of older adolescents and young adults in teaching younger boys how to commit crime and in bringing them into criminal apprenticeships (Thrasher 1927, Cloward and Ohlin 1960), my focus here is on the impact of older peers on how adolescents make decisions about other matters, particularly school and sexual relationships.

Not every older adolescent and every young adult male in the neighborhood deals drugs, impregnates multiple partners, or has dropped out of high school and stands on the corner. But those who might serve as more positive role models are not as visible to youth because they spend more time working or in school. Even in neighborhoods with high male joblessness rates, many males are not jobless (Newman 1999). In Franklin and Roxbury Crossing, the male joblessness rates in the 2000 census were 50.3% and 55.4%, respectively (in contrast, the joblessness rate in Lower Mills was only 40.5%). But older peers who might provide protection or status are likely to be those who are present on the streets on a regular basis, not those who are in school or employed.

Miguel, now 16, described how he became friends with older teenagers when he first moved to his Roxbury Crossing housing development at the age of 13. These older friends spent a lot of time hanging out in the development, occasionally smoking marijuana. Miguel described how they almost led him to begin smoking as well.

Miguel: When I was younger and stupid I used to be with [troublemakers], while they were [smoking marijuana]. I never did it myself, smoking weed or stuff like that, I just used to be on the side.

INT: What age were you?

Miguel: Like maybe thirteen or fourteen. When I probably first moved around here. You know they were my friends and stuff, so if they wanted me to go with them somewhere, I would. I wasn't just going to let them go by themselves. I wasn't really into [smoking weed] but … I was like, I wonder how it works, and stuff like that. Cuz I've always been around it but never actually experienced it myself.

INT: And how old were these guys?

Miguel: About four or five years older.

INT: And how did you become friends with them?

Miguel: From hanging around the development.

Before Miguel got involved in drug use himself, one of these friends was arrested for selling marijuana to an undercover police officer, and Miguel decided to stay away from this group.

Eduardo, now 17, recalled how, at age 12, older friends in the neighborhood introduced him to drinking, smoking marijuana, and stealing cars. At about the same time, he became considerably less interested in education and stopped going to school for a time in the 8th grade.

Eduardo: I turned 13 in fall of '99. That summer of 2000 was ridiculous for me - - that's when everything went downhill. Everything. By the time eighth grade came around, I went to school for maybe about a week.

INT: If you could think back to that time, when you first started to lose interest in school, why do you think you weren't interested?

Eduardo: The peers around me. [We were] smoking [marijuana], drinking. We were always around girls. Those type of things. Stealing cars. Selling car parts.

---

14 Among those age 15 and over. These figures are averages of the two census tracts making up each of the study neighborhoods.
INT: How did you get into doing those kind of things?

Eduardo: The guys around me, the so-called friends around me, they knew how to steal cars. I just got into it. At first, I just started breaking car windows ‘cause I didn’t know how to steal a car; then, slowly, I learned how to steal a car.

INT: Were they your age or were they older?

Eduardo: Maybe a little older, but I considered them my age. Now, that I look back at it, though, they weren’t my age, but when I thought about it [at the time], they were my age. It’s confusing.

INT: You thought of them as, kind of, being in the same spot as you?

Eduardo: Same age. Exactly. But they really weren’t ‘cause my whole life I grew up around people older than me, a lot older than me, and that affected me a lot... The other guys that were 14 or 15 were still acting younger. At 12, I was into girls. I was into going out, partying, taking a girl out to a restaurant... I was around older people, older guys, my whole life... I just ended up acting mature, like, I didn’t act my age. The other 12-year-olds, they were thinking about, mommy, buy me some sneakers. At 12-years-old, I was thinking [about] how to get ‘em myself.

These two examples are instances in which younger adolescents attempted to imitate the behavior of older friends with whom they were spending time. Older friends and acquaintances can also have more subtle but just as potent influences on younger adolescents through their cultural power to frame or contextualize daily life in the neighborhood and beyond. Through both their words and their deeds, they expose younger adolescents to cultural models that often differ from those privileged in mainstream or middle class culture. The older adolescents and young adults who are respected in the neighborhood because of their mastery of the streets regularly dispense advice about girls, school, and staying out of trouble. While many of the younger adolescents talk about getting advice from these older friends, and older subjects talk about the advice they got when younger, the advice is rarely very specific. In particular, younger adolescents rarely approach older adolescents or young adults with specific problems on which they would like guidance. Nor do they often have one-on-one discussions about a particular problem with which the younger adolescent is grappling. Rather, the guidance comes in the form of general statements that can be interpreted and applied to future situations or from listening to older peers recounting experiences and interpretations of life in the neighborhood. Hanging out in a mixed age group (with older individuals at the center and younger at the periphery), usually on the street, older adolescents and young adults recount their experiences and dispense general advice, such as the importance of not standing in one place for too long lest the police think you are a drug dealer and how to avoid girls who are simply after money and gifts rather than a relationship.

Normally, we would assume that such general statements have little impact when they come from teachers or parents. But older males, especially those with status that has been earned on the streets, command the attention of their younger counterparts because they are seen as role models who have “been through” experiences similar to those their younger counterparts will soon face. By virtue of their reputations for toughness, their exploits in previous conflicts, and often their resources from dealings in the underground economy, these young adults sit atop a “street” status system that confers upon them great cultural power, particularly in the eyes of adolescent boys (see also Anderson 1999).

Through their discussions with older peers, younger adolescents are exposed to local ways of thinking about problems, solutions, and decisions. Though a full discussion of the nature of peer effects is beyond the scope of this paper, I provide two examples of the cultural influence of older neighborhood peers. One example is provided by Daniel, a 17 year old African American from Roxbury Crossing, who recounted advice he received from Reggie, an older friend from the neighborhood. Daniel first explained that Reggie is well respected in the neighborhood and that by his association with Reggie, Daniel gained the respect of other men Reggie’s age. He then explained the information Reggie gave him about romantic relationships and the history of the neighborhood.

Daniel: My man [Reggie] is pretty cool. And he’s an old guy with a lot of wisdom. [Reggie] is like 20 something. [Reggie], he be like "Stay out of trouble. Don’t go do things like that." Like don’t go start
any problems with anybody. He's like "Just chill out. Be cool. Just do you." He always tell us to like "Follow your dreams and be true" and stuff.

INT: And how did you get to know him?

Daniel: Just chillin outside one day and he came over and "What up you all?" We're like "What up [Reggie]?" We knew his name and everything cause people used to talk about him.

INT: And are there advantages to being friends with some older people like his age?

Daniel: Yeah. You get like a little bit of clout cause you know someone older than you, like way a lot older than you. And like most people really respect that, like "Oh he knows what's his name. He's cool." Like some older dude you might not know, but he know. Be like "This is my little mans right here, such and such." And you be like "Whaddup" and stuff and they start talking to you. So it's pretty cool.

INT: So what are the kind of things you talk about with him?

Daniel: How life is; girls and cars and everything and how the block is.

INT: So what kind of stuff does he tell you about girls?

Daniel: He's like "Don't mess with them sometimes. Girls have their days." He's like "If your woman starts yelling at you for nonsense, don't get mad about it." Like stuff that you need to know when you get older... [Also,] don't mess with a girl that has kids. Cause she might have you try to pay child support or just have you be attached to the kids and the kids like you, then up and leave one day cause she think you did something.... Like don't try to be a father figure to a kid that you know is not yours, cause if you have a kid going into a relationship with somebody else, but the girl already has a kid by another dude, the baby is like two and a half [years old] or something, he's like "Don't get too attached or nothing." ....

INT: And when you guys talk about the neighborhood or the block, what kind of stuff does he tell you?

Daniel: Like sometime how it changes. He used to tell us a lot of things about our block, how it used to be very known in history and stuff. How [a local store] stayed open during the riots. How like most all of them buildings are pretty old. He was telling us how certain things used to be places and how they're not there no more. It's like history class outside of school.

Space limitations prevent a full discussion of how adolescents like Daniel think about romantic and sexual relationships, but we see here how ideas about women using relationships with men for economic gain are passed from young adults to adolescent males in the neighborhood. Daniel recalls the advice he previously received from Reggie about how a woman may use a man to support her and her child, even when the child is not his. While there are certainly other reasons for Daniel’s views, when I spoke with Daniel two weeks later about romantic relationships, some of the same ideas framed his current thinking. He described how fully half of the young women he might meet are “gold diggers,” just out to get a man’s money, making it difficult to have a committed relationship.

INT: So how do you tell whether a girl is going to be a gold digger?

Daniel: When girls ask you for money all the time, like "Can I have $5?" You don't go out with them or you give them money sometimes. Like they ask for $5 and you have like $100 in your pocket and you be like "Here's $5, what's $5? I have $100, that's nothing." Or they always want something, like "You gonna buy me this? You gonna buy me this? You gonna buy me these? You gonna buy me this and that?" It's like, "I'm not a ATM card, nor a bank." It's like, "you have a job. Go pay for your own stuff."

Interactions with young adults also influence the frames that adolescents bring to their school experiences. One frame that adolescent boys from Franklin and Roxbury Crossing often use to interpret their school experiences involves the motivations of teachers. According to this frame, it is the rare teacher that actually cares about his or her students. The vast majority of teachers are merely there for the money – to
“collect that check” – or because of the pleasure teachers get from the power and authority that they wield over their students.

Simon, growing up in Franklin, was 16 and about to start his sophomore year at a public high school when we discussed his experiences during his freshman year at the school. Simon had struggled in middle school, and he and his mother had hoped that high school would mean a new beginning. Simon explained his view of the typical teacher in his high school:

You can tell they are just there for the check. They are like, they see a kid, they are like "I don't give a hell, I got my high school diploma." That's all they care about. That's the truth. They're getting their check at the end of the day, they got their high school diploma already, you know? But these kids don't. When they go home, that's a day less of education they just lost right there. So that's basically what I think about. And I know that's what the teachers think like.

When Simon observed students being suspended from school, and when he himself was suspended for fighting and missed several days of school, this frame informed his interpretation of these events. From this perspective, teachers do not care enough to create a school environment in which students feel safe, so fights break out as students jockey for status. Teachers are eager to remove students from the school because that makes their jobs easier; they have one less student to deal with. Notably absent from his interpretation is the alternative notion, held by most teachers and administrators and many parents, that students who use violence in school are a threat to other students and disrupt the learning environment for others.

Simon’s frame does not seem to come from his mother, who expressed considerable satisfaction with the school and its staff, nor does it likely come from the church run summer programs and community center in which Simon occasionally participates. When not at school or the church programs, Simon spends most of his time in the local neighborhood park, where boys his age play basketball, where the neighborhood’s unemployed young adults hang out to pass the time, and where, according to both Simon and his mother, some sell and use drugs. While Simon’s own experiences have certainly informed and reinforced the frame though which he views his teachers, the amount of time that Simon spends in the park with these young adults, most of whom themselves dropped out of high school, suggests their views and experiences in the Boston Public Schools are playing an important role as well. Simon himself implicitly recognizes the influence of older peers, “There’s generations at that park. I can’t help that I’m in it, but I’m also trying to go above it.”

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has proposed one mechanism by which neighborhood disadvantage affects adolescents. Neighborhood disadvantage leads to higher rates of violence which, due to the social organization of this violence, lead to greater interaction between younger adolescents and older adolescents and young adults, who socialize youth to local cultural models. In more violent neighborhoods in Boston, a significant portion of the most severe youth violence occurs between youth from rival neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are defended from outsiders, and beefs between neighborhoods have consequences for all youth in the neighborhoods, not just the minority who are actively involved in violence or neighborhood rivalries. Venturing outside one’s home turf always carries the risk of physical challenge or victimization, and youth from other areas are potential enemies rather than potential friends.

Because of these dynamics, the neighborhood becomes one of the only geographic spaces where a young man is safe from challenge or victimization at the hands of youth from rival neighborhoods, regardless of whether he is actively involved in neighborhood beefs. The result is a restricted set of peers who are candidates for friendship. With fewer options one’s own age, older peers become a more attractive choice. Older peers also become a source of protection, both indirectly through the reputational advantage that comes with having older friends and directly through their capacity to intervene in disputes. Notions of community based on the cooperative survival strategies employed among adults and the status benefits of caring for and protecting others provide the framework through which older adolescents understand their attachments to younger youth.

These attachments and interactions, however beneficial in the eyes of the participants when it comes to safety and status, have unintended consequences in other domains. Friendships and interactions between older and younger youth expose younger adolescents to local frameworks and understandings regarding not only
crime and violence but also school and romantic and sexual relationships. Because those older youth and young adults who are visible and available in disadvantaged neighborhoods often present models at odds with those of mainstream society, these relationships can adversely affect younger adolescents’ later decision-making regarding education, sex, and romantic relationships. However, despite the emphasis here on the cultural power of older adolescents and young adults on the streets, adolescents in disadvantaged communities are not exposed exclusively to the cultural models presented by older friends and acquaintances. Instead, the social processes I have described here explain how adolescents encounter – and why they take seriously – local cultural models that can be at odds with more mainstream models held by others in their communities and presented in the media. This analysis highlights the symbolic importance of neighborhood as a form of identity among youth in disadvantaged communities. For most youth in poor neighborhoods, one’s neighborhood of residence is a powerful social category that delineates insiders and outsiders and defines the community to which one belongs.

These social processes are contingent upon two other important characteristics that distinguish disadvantaged neighborhoods from their more advantaged counterparts. The first is the availability of older peers on the street who do not participate in mainstream institutions such as the educational system and the labor market. Without these older adolescents and adult men to serve as sources of protection, status, and socialization for younger adolescents, neighborhood violence could not have the consequences it does. Second, the mutual obligations that develop in poor neighborhoods as a survival reaction to material scarcity (Stack 1974) are closely connected to the obligations of mutual protection among youth that reinforce neighborhood as an important form of identity for adolescents and young men. These interlocking obligations create a framework in which adolescents and their older peers understand their interactions and friendships.

I have emphasized the importance of neighborhood violence in understanding the greater social interaction between younger and older adolescents and young adults in disadvantaged communities. However, one might imagine alternative explanations for the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and relationships that cross age lines. For example, Lareau (2003) has argued that among working class or lower class families there is a great deal of interaction with extended family members such as cousins or uncles. While the data from this study are consistent with her description of working class and lower class families, the data are not consistent with the idea that this accounts for the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and relationships with older males. When adolescents in Roxbury Crossing and Lower Mills described their interactions with older peers, these relationships were not typically brought about by family connections to these older peers, nor was there a difference between adolescents with large extended families in their neighborhood and those without such families. Another alternative explanation is age mixing in schools. Given the large numbers of students from disadvantaged communities who are held back in school, sometimes multiple times, classrooms rather than neighborhoods might provide the context in which such cross-age relationships are formed. However, because of the power of neighborhood as a form of social identity, the youth I studied tend not to form close relationships with classmates unless they were also from the neighborhood. Furthermore, when adolescents described older friends or acquaintances, these were never former schoolmates.

Previous work on the social organization of inner city neighborhoods has highlighted the age segmentation of street corner groups (Suttles 1968, Horowitz 1983). While Suttles (1968) and Horowitz (1983) disagree on the sources of age segmentation, they both argue that it is an important element of social life in these environments. Young people are described as associating primarily with others their own age, though occasionally combining across age groups when conflict with other territories demands it. In contrast to Suttles (1986) and Horowitz (1983), the account I have given here, while recognizing that some degree of age segmentation does occur, emphasizes that disadvantaged neighborhoods, in comparison to their more advantaged counterparts, have a more cross age social interaction, and that this interaction has important consequences for the young people of the neighborhood. Such a conclusion is only possible because of the explicitly comparative research design used in this study, illustrating the value of comparing the lives of adolescents in different neighborhoods for understanding neighborhood social processes and neighborhood effects.

This analysis also serves to elaborate some of the processes by which social isolation and social organization theories account for neighborhood effects on adolescents. An important question for social isolation theory is specifying how local cultural models regarding education, work, and relationships are transmitted within the neighborhood, especially given the high rates of support for conventional or mainstream
models among poor parents. This paper proposes one cultural conduit: the cross-age relationships and interactions between younger adolescents and older adolescents and young adults on the street. With respect to social organization theory, this paper shows how the failure of a community to control violence can have spillover effects in other domains of life through the effect of violence on the age-structure of peer networks.

Skeptics of neighborhood effects have questioned whether neighborhood effects are causal, based primarily on issues of selection bias in quantitative studies showing associations between neighborhood context and individual outcomes (Jencks and Mayer 1990, Furstenberg and Hughes 1997). While this study does not address selection bias, by demonstrating one mechanism by which neighborhoods have their effects on individuals, it also strengthens the argument for the existence of neighborhood contextual effects. When the actions of one’s neighbors with regard to cross neighborhood conflicts have consequences for one’s social life, irrespective of one’s own actions, neighborhood context is exerting an independent effect. In addition, while conventional wisdom holds that the technology and mobility of contemporary urban life has lead to a decline in community attachment, the finding that neighborhood is an important form of identity for adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods speaks to the continued importance of local communities for these youth.

The fieldwork on which this analysis is based is limited to adolescent boys and their parents, so it is not possible to say from these data whether girls are similarly affected by neighborhood violence or whether girls in disadvantaged neighborhoods have high levels of interaction with older peers. One the one hand, boys have higher rates of participation in violence than girls, and so they may be more affected by the cross-neighborhood violence. Furthermore, one might expect boys with absent fathers to be more susceptible to the influences of their older male peers on the street. On the other hand, gender differences in violence seem to be declining. Recent ethnographic research has documented violent behavior among girls in inner city neighborhoods (Ness 2004). In my own fieldwork, law enforcement personnel and youth workers noted that fighting among girls is an increasing problem. The adolescent boys I interviewed also described incidents of girls fighting. Only through further data collection can these potential gender differences and similarities be investigated.

Anderson (1990) writes about the decline of the cultural authority of the “old head,” older men who work hard and attempt to socialize younger men and adolescents to norms and values around work, responsibility, and respectability, and the rise of the “new” old heads, largely drug dealers whose flashy material success appeals to their younger neighbors and sends the message that work does not pay and that taking responsibility for one’s children is unnecessary. My account is similar to Anderson’s in that both highlight the importance of adult men in socializing adolescents in poor communities. However, there are important differences. First, Anderson locates the source of a drug dealer’s cultural power in the decline of the labor market for low skill men and the lure of the quick money of the drug trade, whereas I locate older peers’ cultural power in the social organization of violence in poor neighborhoods, in their role in navigating the dangers of street violence and protecting younger boys, and in the salience of neighborhood as a form of identity for adolescents in poor neighborhoods. Second, Anderson’s analysis has drug dealers role modeling from afar and primarily influencing younger peers through their modeling of success through participation in the underground economy rather than legitimate work. He employs a norms and values view of culture in which the drug dealer’s success undermines mainstream values around work and responsibility. In contrast, my account of the role of older peers in neighborhood socialization is based on a greater level of interaction, in which advice and experiences are passed from older to younger individuals through direct, repeated contact. In addition, I rely on a more cognitive theory of culture (see DiMaggio 1997) that leaves greater room for individual agency, in which older peers provide cultural frames through which younger adolescents interpret and understand their experiences and observations in the neighborhood and in outside social institutions such as schools.

Finally, this analysis highlights the importance of the social organization of violence in understanding the social processes underlying neighborhood effects. Though violence is one of the most spatially patterned social phenomena and has been much studied as a consequence of neighborhood disadvantage and blocked opportunity structures, little research has focused on the impact of violence on the social lives of those who must confront it on a daily basis. The role of violence in the social and cultural dynamics of life in urban communities is ripe for further investigation.
References


Appendix: Selected Characteristics of Fieldwork Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>% Poor</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
<th>% Foreign Born</th>
<th>% Owner Occupied Housing</th>
<th>Density (persons/sq mile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Franklin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 100100</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 092400</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roxbury Crossing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 080500</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>27,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 080600</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower Mills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 100900</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>11,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census tract 100400</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>21,783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2000 Census
The Population Studies Center (PSC) at the University of Michigan is one of the oldest population centers in the United States. Established in 1961 with a grant from the Ford Foundation, the Center has a rich history as the main workplace for an interdisciplinary community of scholars in the field of population studies. Currently the Center is supported by a Population Research Infrastructure Program Grant (R24) from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and by a Demography of Aging Center Grant (P30) from the National Institute on Aging, as well as by the University of Michigan, the Fogarty International Center, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

PSC Research Reports are prepublication working papers that report on current demographic research conducted by PSC-affiliated researchers. These papers are written for timely dissemination and are often later submitted for publication in scholarly journals. The PSC Research Report Series was begun in 1981.

Copyrights for all Reports are held by the authors. Readers may quote from this work as long as they properly acknowledge the authors and the Series and do not alter the original work.