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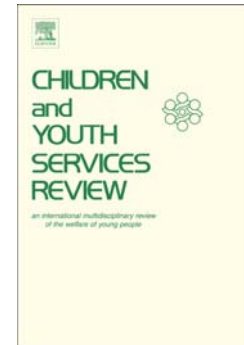
Good kids with ties to “deviant” peers: network strategies used by African American and Latino young men in violent neighborhoods

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a complicated time for any young male, but particularly precarious for young men of color growing up in low-income neighborhoods with high rates of violence (Borofky and Kellerman et al, 2013). In such neighborhoods, youth must be hypervigilant of the “code of the street” as they develop strategies for safely navigating the neighborhood (Anderson, 1999). These strategies have behavioral, geographic, and temporal expressions that affect how youth walk, which streets they take to school and when they return home. The success of these strategies has significant developmental implications, including for whether and to what extent young men remain engaged in school (Harding, 2010).

One such strategy concerns the types of social ties that young men develop in the neighborhoods where they live. On the one hand, neighborhood-based social ties can create opportunities to develop positive ties to peers and adults. On the other hand, neighborhood context can be a medium through which youth develop negative social ties to individuals—such as gang members—who are socially “deviant.” Depending on the valence of these social ties, scholarship suggests that they will positively or negatively influence youth development. Positive ties can offer youth access to social capital, tangible resources, and information useful for social mobility. Negative ties, by contrast, exert a “downward” force on social mobility through activities such as gang involvement and a disillusioned view of education as a vehicle for getting ahead (Portes, 1998). Much research on youth development and social networks is premised on the assumption that “negative” social capital is embedded in social ties to “deviant” peers (Portes, 1998). However, there is some evidence that, in some circumstances, social ties to “deviant” peers may have a positive

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