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Does growing up amid a concentration of disadvantage make it significantly more likely that children will end up disadvantaged adults?

If so, is US subsidized housing policy working to concentrate or deconcentrate disadvantage?
OVERVIEW OF STUDY: DENVER NATURAL EXPERIMENT “TREATMENT – RESPONSE”

Denver Housing Authority (DHA) quasi-randomly offers “treatments” to low-income Latino & African American families = bundle of neighborhood attributes. Our study uses:

offered neighborhood attributes as IVs for adolescent context experienced

control function logistic analyses to discern “responses” as young adults to the treatment attributes received during adolescence

→ allows causal inferences of neigh’d effects
OUR RESEARCH QUESTION

Are the odds of low-income Latino and African American young adults:

-- obtaining post-secondary education (13%)
-- receiving public assistance (14%)
-- being idle (neither primarily working nor attending school) (17%)

Affected by neighborhood context they experienced as adolescents?
OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDING #1

Neighborhood occupational prestige lowers odds of young adults (especially Blacks) receiving public assistance and idleness (neither working nor attending school).
Neighborhood social vulnerability increases odds of young Latino adults receiving public assistance.
Denver Housing Authority (DHA) Operated scattered-site public housing since 1968; now over 1,500 units in most neighborhoods across Denver County

Quasi-random assignment for thousands of dwelling allocations (both conventional & scattered) in WIDE variety of neighborhoods since 1987

→ Overcomes geographic selection bias challenge
Sampling Frame: African American or Latino, current + former DHA residents w/: (1) children in home ages 0 - 18 when moved into DHA; (2) in DHA housing 2+ years; and (3) first entered DHA in 1987+

90-minute phone interviews: residential / family / child retrospective histories; April ‘06 – Feb ‘08

N = 710 families (360 children age 18+)

Geo-coded address history merged w/ Census tract neighborhood indicators
ADOLESCENT NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT VARIABLES

census tract (4,000 population):
% Poverty
% Female Household Heads
% Dwellings Renter-Occupied
% Unemployed

→ SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX

% Black
% Foreign Born
Occupational Prestige Scale
RESULTS: STANDARD DEVIATION DIFFERENCE IN NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXTS

LOWER Occupational Prestige →
↑ odds public assistance 96% (147% BI)
↑ odds idleness 51%

HIGHER Social Vulnerability →
↑ odds public assistance 145% (Latinos)
Goal should be enhancement of low-income minority adolescents’ neigh’d SES diversity. Policy should:

(1) Improve economic diversity in neighborhoods where poor minorities now live and / or

(2) Expand opportunities for poor minorities to move to higher-quality neighborhoods via subsidized housing
THANK YOU! YOUR QUESTIONS WELCOMED