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Living the Drama: Community, Conflict, and Culture among Inner-City Boys. David J. Harding. Reviewed by Wilma Peebles-Wilkins.

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limiting the school year to 5 months. Her graphic description of their plight—her “facts of their lives”—captures the imprisonment and inveterate degradation experienced by African Americans. Decades of this unchanging, often terror-laden existence finally stimulated the mass exodus, as Emmett Scott states, “as if fleeing some curse.”

Wilkerson’s successful work helps correct the long-enduring characterization of the transplanted population. For too long they were depicted as “rabble,” seen by the likes of Daniel Patrick Moynihan as a “tangle of pathology” resulting from their past and their immersion in our welfare system. Actually, compared to native northerners, the migrants were more likely to be two-parent families, to be married, to have their children *not* out of wedlock, to be employed and to have avoided welfare-dependency. Wilkerson helps the reader see them as part of “the universal experience of responding to socio-economic disadvantage” and relocating to a more empowering existence.

Criticism of this work is tempered by the fact that Wilkerson is not an historian and, most basically, by the fact that the work is so masterful; the work is successful in filling a void and educating the reader in multiple, captivating ways. So, one easily forgives that she doesn’t do a historian’s due diligence in citing other major works on the migration, or if she cites the 15th amendment as being ratified in 1880 instead of 1870. These are minor flaws, easily dismissed. *Warmth of Other Suns* is a transfixing, involving work that adds immeasurably to our understanding of the African-American experience and constitutes essential social history.

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David J. Harding. *Living the Drama: Community, Conflict, and Culture among Inner-City Boys*. The University of Chicago Press, 2010. \$25.00, paperback.

The author places his work within the body of sociological research on neighborhood effects which includes the classical social research studies of W. E. B. DuBois on opportunities and economic conditions of African Americans in Philadelphia,

the Chicago School ecological studies represented by Park and Burgess and other classical sociological studies on disadvantaged urban communities.

Harding presents fieldwork research results based on in-depth, unstructured interviews with sixty African American and Latino Boston youth. About forty adolescent boys are from the lower-income neighborhoods of Roxbury Crossing and Franklin and approximately another twenty of them are from Lower Mills area of Dorchester, a more working class income Boston African American community with low poverty rates. I consider the Lower Mills interviews as a form of comparative analysis to tease out contextual issues associated with neighborhood effects, culture, and income levels.

This sociological representation of the cultural context of disadvantaged neighborhoods emphasizes social isolation and disorganization. From a social welfare policy perspective, this theoretical underpinning has a deficit focus which discounts the contemporary youth development movement from community organization analytical frameworks such as those from scholars such as Delgado and Staples. These youth development perspectives present a strengths basis for understanding how youth from inner-city Boston neighborhoods create social networks and empower themselves, influence factors which affect their lives and make contributions to their communities. Harding, himself, was a former community organizer in Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts as well as Jersey City. He is, therefore, familiar with this alternative framework for understanding urban youth culture. However, Harding's current work is still grounded in sociological theory that is well established.

Of special interest to social workers and social policy scholars is the chapter on education and cultural heterogeneity. This chapter provides anecdotal accounts from the interviews done in this social research. The positive aspirations associated with educational attainment are consistent with long-standing studies on low income African American families and youth from the strengths perspective. In his work from the 1960s, Dr. Robert Hill found that aspiration levels among African American families far exceeded realistic achievement possibilities given their situations. Harding's findings were very similar in that while the youth interviewed had high

aspirations to get education, they were not as clear how to succeed.

As noted by Harding in his preface, sociologists have studied poor communities for decades. The prevailing approach has viewed economically marginalized residents of inner cities as having different values and norms from mainstream culture. These values and norms in turn have caused violence, family dysfunction, and a range of other social phenomena considered pathological. It was very good to read Harding's acknowledgement that the culture of urban or inner city neighborhoods are not monolithic and not totally alien from mainstream American values. Overall, the research in this book would be considered "good sociology." The book is well-written and interesting reading. It is ethnographic research that is well-grounded in widely accepted theory about cultural and social isolation in poor, urban neighborhoods, but recognizes problems associated with access to resources and mainstream opportunities.

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Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan J. Popkin & John Goering,
*Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment
to Fight Ghetto Poverty*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
\$19.95, paperback.

Moving to Opportunity examines and evaluates the housing initiative by the same name [hereafter MTO] begun by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1994 (and still in progress at the time the book was written). It was designed to help families living in impoverished and distressed housing projects move to better neighborhoods, assess the interventions and measure the outcomes. Termed an "assisted housing mobility" program, the MTO experiment involved public housing residents in 5 cities (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York) and was loosely based on a desegregation plan developed to implement the 1976 Supreme Court decision, *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*, a successful class action suit that argued that Chicago public housing residents were owed assistance to move out of their substandard