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<td>A Social Relations Approach to Neighborhood Selection: Evidence from a Mixed-Method Study of Hurricane Katrina Survivors</td>
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Asad L. Asad | asad@fas.harvard.edu | http://scholar.harvard.edu/asad

Abstract: Why, when given the opportunity to move from high- to low-poverty neighborhoods, do some low-income families return to disadvantaged contexts? Drawing on a longitudinal dataset of low-income Hurricane Katrina survivors, I leverage the storm as an exogenous shock to study neighborhood selection processes directly. In contrast to extant literature that relegates social networks to the periphery, I highlight the centrality of social relationships for neighborhood sorting. More than focusing on the presence, absence, or location of a social tie, my iterative and mixed-method analysis reveals that the nature of distinct social relationships induces divergent neighborhood poverty outcomes for this sample. When social relations provide useful information or help that reduces the costs, or increases the expected benefits, associated with moving to opportunity, reductions in neighborhood poverty are possible. When social relations impose normative pressures to discourage families’ moves to opportunity neighborhoods, increases in tract-level poverty are likely. This analysis urges scholars and policymakers to reassess the social processes underlying low-income families’ neighborhood attainment.

Informal Discussion of Thematic Session Schedule

February 19th

Informal Discussion Session: Where has the study of urban politics gone, and how can urban sociology revive it?

Jeremy Levine | jtlevine@fas.harvard.edu | http://scholar.harvard.edu/jeremylevine/

Description: In the mid-2000s, three articles were published in political science journals bemoaning the decline in research on urban politics. What was once mainstream in political science had quickly become marginal. Sociologists, too, lost interest in urban politics. The first part of our discussion could offer explanations. When did sociologists stopped researching "urban politics" in its own right? And what sorts of questions took precedence and remain the dominant questions in the subfield?

But the most engaging part of the conversation could be a discussion about what the next generation of urban sociology can do to bring questions of politics and/or governance back to the mainstream in the subfield. Should it be questions of politics of an outcome, like the study of power (i.e. Who rules, and how?)? Or politics as an independent variable, like how governance regulations affect inequality across cities? Should it be a unified body of scholarship, engaging with itself, or should it bleed into sub-topics, like
crime or health or education or redevelopment?

It seems like there might be a latent desire for more scholarship on "urban politics", at least among younger scholars. But what should and can this look like in practice? Do urban sociologists really want to revive the study of urban politics? What does studying urban politics bring to the table that we don't already have in the subfield? Which questions can it help us answer?

Readings


Additional Recommended Readings


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Happy Hour with the Harvard Graduate School Design

6:30 p.m. in the Queen’s Head Pub

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March 5th  Analysis of Activity Space Segregation Using Cell Phone Data

Robert Manduca | rmanduca@g.harvard.edu | www.robertmanduca.com

Abstract: Few topics in sociology are as well-studied as segregation. But most research has focused on residential segregation, looking at where people live rather than where they spend time during the day. In this paper we use a dataset of cell phone call records to investigate segregation in "activity spaces,” the set of locations that individuals routinely visit. Preliminary results suggest that activity spaces are indeed segregated, with census tracts whose residents' activity spaces overlap being much more similar on a host of demographic and economic characteristics than would be expected due to chance or even based on physical proximity.

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Informal Discussion Session: What are the promises and limitations of the “activity space” construct? How can routine activity theory help us understand the social organization of the city and help us conceptualize exposure to ‘neighborhood effects’?
**March 26**

**Extending Social Network Theory Outside of the City: Substance Abuse, Joblessness, and Social Isolation on Two Tribal Reservations**

Blythe George | blythegeorge@fas.harvard.edu

Abstract: Native American reservations remain one of the most under-studied communities in academia today, yet these areas provide fruitful possibilities for extending theories of concentrated disadvantage outside of their traditional urban context. I use a mixed methods approach, including a spatial analysis, in-depth interviews, and ethnography to study two reservations home to the Yurok and Hupa tribes of Northern California. Drawing on urban sociology, specifically the effect of social networks and spatial mismatch on employment outcomes, I will adapt this framework to reflect the experiences of job seekers on rural Native reservations. Preliminary findings show that the concentration of poverty and joblessness on each reservation is exacerbated by few employment opportunities outside of tribal employment, and a high rate of methamphetamine addiction. Additionally, gender and age create divergent employment outcomes for low-skill male and female job seekers. I see this project as a way of building a more comprehensive theory of concentrated disadvantage for informing poverty reduction policies that are effective in both urban and rural places.

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**Informal Discussion Session:** What is a city? Can urban social theory be applied to other spatial contexts? And, can you understand the city without also looking at rural and suburban contexts?

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**Readings**


**Additional Readings**


Gentrification in a Diversifying City: Race and Renewal in Seattle Neighborhoods
Jackie Hwang | jihwang@fas.harvard.edu

Abstract: Existing understandings of the relationship between race and gentrification are based on evidence from contexts of high levels of racial segregation. This article examines the relationship between race and ethnicity and gentrification in Seattle—a city with relatively low levels of segregation and a substantial Asian minority population. I integrate prior gentrification field surveys, new measures of gentrification using Google Street View, US Census and American Community Survey data, crime records, and neighborhood survey data to examine this relationship in Seattle neighborhoods. After accounting for socioeconomic and residential characteristics of neighborhoods, neighborhoods with more Asians or with more diversity were less likely to experience early gentrification or upward trajectories of gentrification; Hispanics and blacks were not associated with gentrification or the degree of gentrification in a neighborhood. The findings demonstrate that the context of immigration and race is an important factor to consider for understanding racial inequality in the process of gentrification.

For Whom Does a Neighborhood Effect Matter? Neighborhood Trajectories of a Cohort of Released Prisoners
Jessica Simes | jsimes@fas.harvard.edu | http://scholar.harvard.edu/jsimes/home

Abstract: Each year nearly 700,000 people leave prison and become residents of neighborhoods across the United States. The invisibility of incarcerated people from official statistics has masked inequalities in labor and voting patterns, but people leaving prison are also marginalized from neighborhood effects research. Due to attrition in observational studies of the formerly incarcerated, when a person's residence cannot be observed, they are removed from the analysis. Research using nationally representative surveys or administrative records can identify neighborhood context during the period of reentry, but assume when address is reported, an individual actually lives there. These issues pose methodological and conceptual limitations to understanding the neighborhood selection of people who are severely disconnected from neighborhoods and households. The current study uses a mixed methods approach and identifies distinct residential trajectories characterized by stability, extreme residential mobility, and institutionalization. Taking missing data as a substantive data point, three main findings arise. First, individuals who rely on kin networks to obtain housing experience the greatest residential stability but are most likely to live in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods. Second, those that experience intense residential mobility or institutionalization are somewhat buffered from concentrated disadvantage. Third, 40 percent of respondents consistently resided in a household during the one-year release period, while the other 60 percent were living in extremely unstable or institutional environments. Models predicting these trajectories show significant variation by race, age, and pre-prison neighborhood context. These findings call into question previous estimates of exposure to urban inequality and overlooked mechanisms explaining
pathways to neighborhoods.

**April 23**

“Urban Charter Schools and The Transition to College: A Research Proposal”

Tom Wooten | twooten@fas.harvard.edu | http://tomwooten.com/

Abstract: Education reforms in US cities are pushing many low-income students to attend college. These students face long odds; just 11% of low-income, first-generation college students graduate within six years. "No Excuses" charter schools opening in many cities aim to improve these odds by combining rigorous-but-peppy pedagogy, strict discipline, and "character education." I propose a research project that will probe whether and how high school culture lastingly shapes students and will shed light on the experiences of low-income, first-generation college students. In the first year of my research, I will conduct ethnographic observations on two small matched cohorts of seniors enrolled at two academically and demographically similar but culturally distinct New Orleans high schools. In the second year, I will follow them to college. In this presentation, I seek feedback on my research design, especially related to matching my cohorts and to outcomes I might measure.

**Informal Idea Session**

1. Laura Adler, Harvard Department of Sociology: “Making Regulation: How Boston Officials Legalize the Sharing Economy”

**April 30**

Special Event with Photographer Camilo José Vergara

Camilo José Vergara is a sociologically trained writer, photographer and documentarian whose work on low-income, segregated communities in urban America has won numerous accolades. He was a 2002 MacArthur fellow and was the first photographer to receive the National Humanities Medal from President Obama in 2013. His books include Harlem: The Unmaking of a Ghetto (2013), How the Other Half Worships (2005), Subway Memories (2004), American Ruins (1999), and New American Ghetto (1995), which received the American Sociological Association Robert E. Park Award. His most recent book, Tracking Time (2015), documents entire neighborhoods over time in New York, Camden and Newark, Los Angeles, and Chicago, among other cities. By combining visual exploration and presentation with historical and sociological analysis, his work provides not only a lens into these communities, but a new way of seeing.

After a discussion in William James Hall #450 between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m., please join us for a reception on the fourth floor of William James Hall.
