Neighborhood Inequality in America: Continuity and Change @ 50

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University of California, Berkeley. February 27-March 1, 2018.
General Patterns

• Neighborhood concentration
  – Spatial foundations of inequality

• Across diverse phenomena
  – Compounded adversity

• Persistence despite change
  – The social order of the city
The Social Transformation of the City @50

“Inner-city” as anachronism?
- Suburbanization of poverty
- Public housing revolution (“Tear Down”)
- Gentrification; Return to city
- Contra Kerner: Only 12% of 50 largest cities are majority black

Immigration Boom (1990-present)
- “Smashing the black-white frame”?
- Cause of urban revitalization and crime decline?
Three Eras of Crime and Criminalization in the Last Half Century

Era I                                Era II                                      Era III

Violent Crime Rate per 100,000

Imprisonment Rate per 100,000

Data Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting System.
Large Reductions In Violence by Race and Beneficial Increases in Life Expectancy Among African Americans

*Source: National Crime Victimization Survey; Patrick Sharkey, Uneasy Peace (2018)*
Yet, Enduring Neighborhood Effect: Violence and Child Health in 21st Century Chicago

Source: Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect
The highest-ranked black community has an imprisonment rate over **40 times higher** than the highest-ranked white community (4,226 vs. 103 per 100,000).

Legacies of Inequality Across 50 Years

Concentrated foreclosures, 2010

Good News, Bad News: Paradoxes of Racial Inequality

- Disparities in Crime and Criminalization
  - Persistence vs. change

- Compounded Deprivation
  - Poisoned Development

- New Form of Social Isolation?
Reassessing “Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality”:

Enduring and New Challenges in 21st Century America

Robert J. Sampson and William Julius Wilson

*Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*

Special volume on “Color Matters: Race, Ethnicity, Crime, and Justice in Uncertain Times.” Forthcoming, Spring 2018
The Racially Stratified Life Course of Compounded Poverty: Recent Evidence

- Bottom Fifth of Individual Income

and

- Living in Neighborhood > 30% Poverty
Project on Human Development Chicago in Neighborhoods

Longitudinal study of 1,052 children

- 4 Waves, 1995 – 2013
- Birth Cohort
- Age 9, 12, 15 Cohorts
Accounting for Alternatives: Family Background and Individual Differences

- Self-Control (so called “Grit”) (CBCL)
- Anxiety/Depression (CBCL)
- Aggression/Antisocial Behavior (CBCL; self report)
- “IQ” (WISC/WRAT Ability Tests)
- Exposure to Violence
- Family Criminality, Parent SES, Mobility, Immigrant
Predicted Probability of Compounded Poverty, Conditional on Individual Differences and Family Background

Large Black-White Disparities in Compounded Poverty Endure During the Transition to Young Adulthood

Poisoned Development

DO NOT
PLAY IN THE DIRT OR
AROUND THE MULCH

EPA
Pilsen, Chicago (2012): Contaminated Soil at the Former Loewenthal Metals Site
The Racial Ecology of Lead Poisoning

Lead toxicity is a pathway through which racial inequality literally gets into the body.

Good News: Large Declines for all Race/Ethnic Groups

(Average Block-Group Prevalence Rates of Elevated Lead Levels, By Racial Composition of Block Groups, 1995-2013)
But Enduring Racial Inequality
(Proportion of Block Groups in Top Quintile of Elevated Lead Levels, by Race/Ethnic Composition and Year)
Final Paradox

Increasing Ethnic Diversity of the City
Declining Racial Segregation
Black Middle Class

Yet: A New Form of Separation?

“Urban Mobility and Neighborhood Isolation in America’s 50 Largest Cities

Ryan Wang, Nolan Phillips, Mario Small, Robert Sampson
Use Machine Learning to Estimate the Home Neighborhood and Daily Rounds (e.g., Shopping, Entertainment, Visiting Friends, Work) in Larger Commuting Zone

50
Largest Cities in the U.S.

653 Million
Geo-tagged tweets

~400,000
Twitter users

Connected and relatively youthful, educated population
Similar Patterns by Race and Class in Distance Traveled (Mean Radii) & Number of Neighborhoods Visited ("Spread")

BUT: Race Trumps Class in Exposure to White Nonpoor or Middle-Class Neighborhoods ("Mainstream")
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Policy Implications: “Third Way” of Kerner Commission

- Law and Governmental Action
  - “Ghetto Enrichment” (Place-Based)
  - “Encourage Integration” (Person-Based)

- Why Still Needed?
  - Cumulative and Compounded Deprivation
  - “Counterfactual” Dilemma that Black Children Face

- Affirmative Action for Neighborhoods?
  - Combine person- and placed-based interventions:
  - Formal support to poor persons in poor neighborhoods
Chicago’s Abandoned City: Where the Robert Taylor Homes Once Stood
“Dantrel Davis Way” in Chicago, site of the former Cabrini Green Homes
To Also Get There: Collective Efficacy

- **Criminal Justice Reform**
  - “Black Lives Matter;” Prison Decarceration

- **Continued Violence Reduction**
  - Power of Community-Based Efforts (Unsung Heroes)

- **Environmental Reform**
  - Demand Regulatory Action (e.g., EPA)

- **Inequality by Design can be Re-Designed!**