FROM THE CHAIR...

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING AHEAD

As I write these words, we have just passed the halfway point between last year’s ASA meeting in Philadelphia and next summer’s meeting in Montreal. This is appropriate, for I want to look both back at the past and ahead to the future.

SREM’s sessions in Philadelphia were successful, despite our placement on the last day of the meeting program. All of our sessions were lively and reasonably well-attended, while presenters explored important new ground in the study of race and ethnic relations. Special thanks to past Chair Rodney Coates, Melanie Bush, Annegret Staiger, and Scott Leon Washington, all of whom organized excellent sessions and made my task of overseeing the program immeasurably easier. We also gave out our awards: the Oliver C. Cox Book Award to Judith Blau (University of North Carolina) for her book Race in the Schools: Perpetuating White Dominance; the James E. Blackwell Graduate Student Award to Jeffrey C. Dixon (Indiana University); and the Joe Feagin Undergraduate Paper Award to HyeJin Kim (University of Notre Dame). Congratulations to the recipients and thank you to all who served on the committees for these awards.

Although it is midwinter, section activities are continuing as we work towards the future. Chair-Elect Chip Gallagher has overseen the development of some very interesting session themes. Submissions have now been closed and he and the other session organizers will soon be hard at work selecting papers and putting together the sessions and the roundtables. I will be working on organizing our section reception and business meeting. Most of our section activities will be on the first day of this year’s meeting, which should lead to even better attendance.

Nominations Co-Chairs Dee Royster
and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz have worked hard to put together an outstanding slate of candidates for Chair and Council. I am confident that the future of the section will be in good hands. The ASA Office is currently putting together the ballots and election information will be sent to all section members in the spring. Please be sure to vote when you receive your ballot. Thank you to all who agreed to run and to Dee and Salvador for their work in coordinating the process.

Our section awards committees are in the final stages of receiving submissions. The Cox, Blackwell, and Feagin Award Committees will soon be hard at work reviewing submissions and selecting the respective award recipients. Deadlines are in March, so there is still time for section members to nominate themselves or a deserving colleague or student for one of the awards (award information is available elsewhere in this newsletter). Your contribution will ensure that these awards continue to recognize outstanding work in the areas of race and ethnic relations.

Finally, I would like to solicit everyone’s ideas on how we can make the section better serve its members. I would encourage everyone to make more use of the announcement listserv to announce new books, publicize job openings, and solicit papers, articles, and chapters for future conferences and publications. Please send material to me (doane@hartford.edu) and I will see that it is posted. The listserv is an effective way to reach hundreds of sociologists with an interest in race and ethnic relations. I would also like to consider other possibilities: should the section consider sponsoring a journal or book series? Are there ways in which we can work together to play a greater role in public discussions of racial issues? Could we create a website to enable the media and members of the general public to connect with the expertise of section members? I would like to hear from you on these issues—and any other way in which you think the section can play a greater role. Please contact me at doane@hartford.edu. I will share all of the responses on the announcement listserv and at the section business meeting.

Woody A. Doane
Chair SREM

FROM THE CHAIR ELECT...

Dear Friends,

This newsletter is a meant to showcase some of the achievements of our members, provide updates of events and provide a forum for reflections on Hurricane Katrina.

In rather depressing reflection on the rebuilding efforts currently underway on the Gulf Coast, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco complained that “The harsh reality is that for many people in Washington, Katrina is yesterday’s problem.” The SREM section and the ASA do not share that observation. Both the SREM and the ASA will be running a number of sessions on the role race, class and politics played in the circumstances leading up to and the actions taken by officials after Katrina struck.

Thank you to our SREM Newsletter contributors.
The final count of SREM membership is 820 up from 689 last year. The goal this year is to get our membership over 1000, which would qualify us for six rather than five sessions at our annual meeting. Please encourage your colleagues to join our section. I will buy a (medium) cup of coffee for each member who gets a friend to join our section!!!

For planning purposes know that the SREM sessions will meet the first day of the meeting on Friday August 11, 2006. See you all in Montreal.

Charles A. Gallagher
Chair Elect SREM

REFLECTIONS ON KATRINA

Why the Need for Reflections
Francesca Coin
Georgia State University

It was almost six months ago that Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. Six months have gone with despair, disbelief and disillusionment for the people that have been displaced. Six months have gone with words, broken promises and denials of responsibility from the federal government. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina hit hundreds of thousands of people. Many of them lost their lives. Many of them lost their homes. Many of them lost families. And many more lost their trust in the institutions of this country.

As we write, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is ending its “Hotel and Motel Housing Program” for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. In about one week, several thousands more evacuees that were given temporary housing in hotels and motels paid for by FEMA will become officially homeless. One more week, and the Federal Government will have made one more step towards its final goal of putting the “end word” to the recovery efforts for the Katrina disaster. But no “end word” can be placed upon the on-going institutional racism of this country. Katrina was not just a storm. Katrina was the clearest representation of our policies against the poor majorities of this country. Katrina has unburied from our memory centuries of discrimination, poverty and oppression. Overnight, the American dream was gone, and there again was the desperate face of poverty, the reality of homelessness for black America, the American nightmare of the poor, ready for us to see.

More then two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson said:

“I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice can not sleep forever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference!” (Thomas Jefferson, 1782:144).

On August 29th, the whole world was trembling. A catastrophe of unprecedented proportions was urging us to end our reckless foreign and interior policies. Yet, since Katrina hit, the federal government has turned a blind eye to the people’s needs. It has played the blame-game with the state government. Finally, when it did respond, its recovery effort was worse than the hurricane. Now it’s our turn to respond to this tragedy.

In this newsletter, we have solicited a few responses to Katrina. We know it’s little, but we wanted to give our solidarity to the people that have endured such hardship. We wanted to make clear that we won’t stand idle watching our world go into ruins. And we wanted to remind ourselves to speak out, for no injustice should ever be bared, or forgotten.

“I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice can not sleep forever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference!” (Thomas Jefferson, 1782:144).
From New Orleans to Port-au-Prince: The Real Blame Game
Ann Morning
New York University
October 30, 2005

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, press reports repeatedly likened the devastated city of New Orleans to a “third-World” country or developing nation. But amidst the media analogies to Iraq, Somalia and Rwanda, it was Haiti in particular that seemed to resonate most deeply as a site for comparison. Jimmy Breslin wrote, “This was the week when we turned a major American city into Haiti,” and Alessandra Stanley described scenes “so woeful they looked as if they could have been filmed in a former Soviet republic or Haiti.” A guest on Amy Goodman’s “Democracy Now” lamented, “I had always hoped that Haiti would become more like New Orleans, but what’s happened is New Orleans has become more like Haiti here recently.”

Why Haiti? Why didn’t the gunfire and civilian casualties in the Crescent City evoke Kosovo or Belfast? Why didn’t the refusal of some Louisianans to evacuate their homes recall the recent holdouts among Jewish settlers of the Gaza Strip? Because an essential key to our interpretation of this catastrophe is that it is about blackness. New Orleans is like Haiti because both conjured up incendiary and frightening stereotypes of poor black people who live in violent squalor. Seeing Katrina through the lens of race was what transformed the story of American survivors into one of resilient white foragers versus criminal black looters.

The irony of the New Orleans/Haiti analogy is that it is not New Orleans that has become like Haiti, but rather, it is Haiti that helped make New Orleans what it is. Haiti has a proud history of becoming the world’s first black republic in 1804 after defeating its French colonial masters, and of being the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery. The Haitian battle for liberty is often portrayed as relevant to our own history solely because it persuaded France to largely retreat from the Americas and sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States. But the political upheaval in Haiti also left a lasting imprint on our young republic when it unleashed an exodus of emigrants who eventually found their way to New Orleans. White landowners fled the island, often taking slaves with them, as did free people of color and former slaves. Their settlement in Louisiana between 1790 and 1810 remade the face of New Orleans; in 1809 alone, an influx of over 9,000 refugees doubled the city’s population. A fitting symbol of the reach of the Haitian Revolution is that 200 years ago, a white émigré from Haiti, James Pitot, was the mayor of New Orleans.

Americans’ 19th-century reading of the events in Haiti contributed to a national myth about the violence of African-Americans that influenced both media coverage of and public reactions to black Katrina victims today. Although the Haiti of the early 1800s might be counted a shining ideal of what President Bush has called the nations that “love liberty,” white slave-owners throughout the Caribbean and the United States did not see things that way at the time. The specter of black rebellion against white enslavement haunted many Americans, propertied or not, particularly as it played on fears of whites being swamped by the black population (on the eve of the Haitian Revolution, enslaved blacks outnumbered white planters 15 to 1). Press coverage of the struggle chronicled murderous attacks by slaves on besieged whites, leading American southern elites to press for restrictions on the
importation of Caribbean slaves (whose rebelliousness might prove contagious) and on the movements of slaves already in the U.S.

What these 19th-century accounts of black violence obscured, however, was the violence of the slave regime itself. The brutality of a Haiti where 30,000 whites held 450,000 blacks in bondage did not figure in our picture of what criminality looked like. In the same way, today's depictions of the lawlessness of black New Orleanians overlooked the lawlessness of the city in which they found themselves: a city with no functioning government, police, economy or social services. Rather than being the effect of a total breakdown in political and social institutions, the absence of law in flooded New Orleans was all too often interpreted as the result of deficient, criminal individuals. In short, we have a tremendous ability to project the ugly characteristics of societies onto the people most victimized by them. That's the real lesson that Haiti holds for our understanding of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Katrina’s Race and Class Effects Were Planned
Gregory D. Squires, Chair, Department of Sociology, Public Policy, and Public Administration at George Washington University

The race and class effects of Katrina were by design. The fact that poor people and racial minorities suffered by far the greatest harm from Katrina was guaranteed by decades of public policy and private practice. If the hurricane was a natural disaster, allocation of its costs were determined by political decisions grounded in longstanding social and economic inequalities.

The most obvious race and class implication, of course, is that those with the means to do so left. They had cars or money for places and trains along with friends and contacts who could provide them shelter in other locales. Guests trapped in one luxury New Orleans hotel were saved when that chain hired a fleet of buses to get them out. Patients in one hospital were saved when a doctor who knew Al Gore contacted the former Vice President who was able to cut through government red tape and charter two planes that flew them to safety.

More importantly, the conditions shaping the race and class effects have been building for decades. In New Orleans as in virtually all other communities, various processes of racial segregation have resulted in middle income whites being concentrated in the outlying (and in New Orleans literally higher) suburban communities while blacks have been concentrated in the central city.

Racial steering by real estate agents, exclusionary zoning in suburban municipalities, federally subsidized highways to help suburban commuters get to their jobs, tax breaks to subsidize suburban business development, and the concentration of poor people in inner city public housing projects are just some of the forces in New Orleans and elsewhere that led to the racial segregation and concentration of poverty. The sprawl machine has been operating in New Orleans to spread wealth outward and concentrate poverty in the central city.

Douglas Massey, co-author of the classic book American Apartheid, has long warned of the catastrophic consequences of racial segregation and concentrated poverty. He observed that “any process that concentrates poverty within racially isolated neighborhoods will simultaneously increase the odds of socioeconomic failure.” The disproportionate suffering in New Orleans is illustrative of that failure.

Neglect of critical infrastructure needs also shaped the inequitable consequences of Katrina. As has now
been widely reported, officials long knew the protective levees surrounding the city were inadequate leaving it vulnerable to precisely this type of disaster. But New Orleans is hardly the only city that failed to maintain its infrastructure.

Whether it is the deteriorating subway system in New York, inadequate earthquake protection in San Francisco, the aging water mains in Chicago and Washington, DC (and no doubt elsewhere), cracking roads and bridges in all regions of the country, and other declining public services, we have not maintained vital systems. Most cities are disasters waiting to happen.

In its 2005 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure the American Society of Civil Engineers concluded “Congested highways, overflowing sewers and corroding bridges are constant reminders of the looming crisis that jeopardizes our nation’s prosperity and quality of life.” Assessing 12 infrastructure categories the Society gave the nation a D for its maintenance efforts, noting there had been little improvement in recent years and asserting an as yet unfunded $1.6 trillion investment need over the next five years. The consequences have not been and will not be race or class neutral. As James Carr, Senior Vice President of Research for the Fannie Mae Foundation, observed if the City of New Orleans had been a more diverse community it may well have had the political clout to secure the levees long ago.

Yet we persist in treating government services as costs to be reduced rather than vital services in which we should invest. Low-income people and people of color are more dependent on public services, so they are disproportionately affected by these developments. They are more dependent on public transportation to get to work, local police to keep their neighborhoods safe, and emergency services of all sorts. And they have fewer private resources to serve as cushions in times of street including periods of unemployment, unexpected illness, or natural disasters like hurricanes.

But all of us pay (though in varying degrees) when public transit systems come to a halt, earthquakes destroy bridges, and floods destroy entire neighborhoods if not cities. Even suburban employers and homeowners lose when they cannot get the workers or services they need. A combination of tax cuts for the wealthy and an expensive war in Iraq do not help the situation. But the race and class effects undermining the quality of life for all are not the outcomes of any particular Presidential administration, and it is not just the poor or racial minorities who lose. In connecting the plantation mentality that has long shaped race relations in New Orleans with the devastation that wrecked the entire region, historian Christopher Morris concluded, “If the city never recovers, it won’t be just because of the natural environment. It will be because long ago the whites of New Orleans, and whites in Washington and around the nation, made a bargain with the devil of white supremacy, and now they, we, will have now lost it all.”

Some of this reflects overt racial prejudice. But it is a deeper reflection of what has become known as “color blind racism” whereby we convince ourselves that current inequalities result from the failures of those who suffer rather than the continuing effects of historical and contemporary forms of institutionalized privilege. To illustrate, then FEMA Director Michael Brown said the human suffering following Katrina could be explained by “people who did not heed evacuation warnings.” Images of black looters, of course, reinforce traditional stereotypes and do little to encourage a broader, sociological understanding of these events. But that is the challenge we must confront, in New Orleans and
elsewhere.

This hardly suggests a vast conspiracy against poor people or racial minorities. But it is evident that a series of decades-long public policies and private practices that clearly privilege middle and upper income, and predominantly white communities have made the inequitable effects of natural disasters like Katrina inevitable.

The race and class effects of Katrina should come as no surprise. We have been planning them for decades.

Revised versus Action
Melinda Mills
Georgia State University

Having grown up in a hurricane-prone region (the Caribbean) and survived several hurricanes, including ones that I vividly remember and others I experienced most clearly through the stories my mother tells, upon my request, of each storm’s physical strength and social impact. No stranger to the destruction that the winds cause and the consequent devastation to people’s lives, I found the events that surrounded Katrina (from the tepid warning, the lack of resources made available to enable evacuation, and the eventual lackadaisical response to those remaining in the storm’s wake) unsurprising and even eerily predicted that the sobering series of events would unfold much the way they did. In a recent conversation, my mother suggested that the if the federal government did not know how bad Katrina was, they should have contacted anyone who has ever endured nature’s wrath in the form of a hurricane. She remained convinced that she certainly would have known how damaging strong winds and a deluge of rain can be. How could the leadership of emergency management operations not know this? With her I would concur.

Throughout the 17 years I lived on St. Thomas, I learned very quickly and corporeally to fear hurricanes, not only because of the potential property damages or demolition they could create but because, with St. Thomas a veritable speck on a world map, we’d likely not receive immediate federal government attention. We’d more likely have to patiently endure a sluggish response, painfully long lines to acquire supplies, basic necessities, or other forms of support/assistance, and try to maintain some semblance of normalcy while we waited for several weeks for electricity and running water to be restored and life to return to what we once knew. So when I was confronted by similar, but much more intense and horrifying hurricane images than that which I experienced, I felt overwhelmed and empathic.

Shortly after Katrina hit, I asked my class if they wanted to talk about what had happened in the Gulf Coast. With furrowed brows, they peered at me quizinally, as if I were asking them to manufacture care or generate emotions for a fabricated, fictitious cause. Their neutral and uninformed countenances motivated me to abandon my attempt to ensure they had the space to express emotions of hurt, rage, sadness, whatever. Two days later, and much media (misrepresentation later, my students urged me to let them talk about what they were consuming from various media. Some were upset by what they agreed was a decidedly but unsurprisingly skewed portrayal of people trying to survive, particularly poor people of color depicted in stereotypically racist, classist ways without the benefit of context (that “stealing” shoes after a Hurricane should not be vilified or scrutinized if people are wading through unsafe flood waters). Other students, with arms crossed in visible opposition, sat quietly but defiantly in disagreement with this prior position. Still others had not drawn any definite conclusions and...
readily admitted their ambivalence about the media, the response/non-response of the government, and the various accounts circulating about the conditions created by Hurricane Katrina (i.e. the extent of the violence, etc.).

While we never came to any neat conclusions about the Hurricane coverage and the government’s response, we did collectively agree that we all needed to do something. With the urge to translate our disparate reactions into action, we decided that we should all find some way to participate in the process of recovery and rebuilding. Some students suggested making various donations of time, energy, and other resources, offering temporary housing if possible, or finding some other personal way to reach out to those in need. What slowly emerged from the conversation related the extent to which individuals so eagerly and enthusiastically wanted to help, while the federal government seemed unresolved about its role in the process of providing aid and assistance. Why should the individual assume responsibility for ameliorating the conditions created by Katrina? What should the government have done and how much of a role should they have played in advance of the Hurricane and after it struck?

In the months since Katrina, conversations similar to the one that took place in my classroom have been sustained by the public, the media, and others. While important and necessary, many of these discussions have only fueled further dialog rather than inspiring people to transform their talk into action. Instead, people have heatedly engaged in seemingly circuitous semantic debates about the use of certain words to describe the populations perceived to be most affected by Katrina. While many people attempted to communicate the differential value attached to groups in the use of “refugees,” “victims,” etc., others simply refused to see that these distinctions were necessary or simply in need of clarification or qualification. The deluge of debates stemming from these semantic disagreements managed mostly to breed more misunderstanding and less compassion while simultaneously distracting us from the fact that very little was being or has yet to be done to help those directly impacted by the Hurricane. What remains imperative includes not allowing the images of despair and destruction slip from our memories; not forgetting the painful realities of people piecing their lives together; but rather finding the focus to begin changing emotions into involvement, and transforming reactions into actions that work towards remedying, recuperating, recovering, and rebuilding.

**Beyond New Orleans: The Social and Economic Isolation of Urban African Americans**

by Rogelio Saenz

(October 2005) Hurricane Katrina’s devastation in late August of much of the northern Gulf Coast followed by the slow institutional response to the crisis exposed the impoverishment and disempowerment of many African Americans. The media images of a predominantly African American population left to fend for itself in New Orleans demonstrated to many surprised observers the enduring color line in that city.

But striking disparities between urban blacks and whites in the United States are hardly unique to New Orleans. In large cities across the nation, African Americans are much more likely than whites to be living in communities that are geographically and economically isolated from the economic opportunities, services, and institutions that families need to succeed. These disparities have left African Americans disproportionately vulnerable to the next
urban calamity, be it from terrorism or another natural disaster.

No Job, No Car, No Phone: An Entrapping Lack of Basic Resources

Of the 15 U.S. metropolitan areas with the most African Americans in absolute numbers in 2000, New Orleans had the highest black poverty rate, at 33 percent. But racial differences in poverty were stark in each of these metropolitan areas except New York. In Chicago, Newark, Memphis, and St. Louis, African Americans were about five times more likely than whites to be impoverished. Higher poverty rates for African Americans are also linked to lower levels of education and employment—key elements in attaining economic well-being. In 2000, blacks in these large cities were also far less likely to own a car or a phone, and they were on average younger and more often female than their white counterparts.

Education. Nationwide, about 75 percent of African Americans age 25 or older do not have a college diploma, and 80 percent lacked college degrees in all but two of the 15 largest U.S. metropolitan areas—Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. Whites were more than twice as likely to be college graduates in a dozen of these cities, with the largest disparities (2.5 times) in Memphis, New York City, and Philadelphia.

Employment. One-third to one-half of African American males age 16 or older in the largest 15 U.S. cities were not employed in 2000. Some of these were "discouraged" workers who have left the labor force after numerous unsuccessful attempts to secure a job. In Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles-Long Beach, New Orleans, and St. Louis, only about one-half of African American males were employed (see table). Blacks in these cities were three-quarters as likely as whites to have a job.

Cars and phones. African Americans are also much more likely than whites to lack basic amenities—such as an automobile or a telephone—that facilitate economic mobility and that many Americans take for granted (see table). In each of the 15 largest U.S. metropolitan areas except New York (where many residents do not have personal transportation), African Americans were about three times as likely as whites to not have an automobile in 2000. In a dozen of these areas, African Americans were at least three times more likely than whites to not have a telephone, with the racial gap in telephone ownership being eight-fold in Newark and Chicago.

Age and sex ratio. African Americans in major U.S. cities are often younger and more likely to be female than their white urban counterparts. Sex ratios (the number of males per 100 females) as of 2000 were approximately 95 or higher among whites in 11 of the 15 largest metropolitan areas, while they were about 85 or lower among African Americans in 10 of the 15 localities. The relative absence of African American males in U.S. cities reflects their high mortality and incarceration rates—factors that weigh heavily in their social and economic entrapment.

The Extreme Isolation of the African American Poor

Not surprising, poor urban African Americans exhibit even greater levels of social and economic isolation in the United States than the general black population, even when compared with poor urban whites:

- In all but two of the 15 largest U.S. metropolitan areas as of 2000, the presence of African Americans in the poverty population was 1.5 times greater than their representation in the
New Orleans residents wait to be rescued from the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina.

In six of the cities—St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Newark—African Americans were twice as likely to be part of the poverty population relative to their percentage of the total population of these areas.

- Vulnerable populations such as African American children and the elderly were similarly overrepresented among the poor in major U.S. cities in 2000. In all but two of the 15 largest U.S. metro areas, the percentage of African American elderly who were poor was twice their percentage of the city's total elderly population. The faces behind these percentages were made vivid by the stories and numbers of elderly blacks trapped in houses and nursing homes as the floodwaters from Katrina rose in New Orleans.

- In all but two of the 15 largest African American metro areas, at least 40 percent of poor blacks did not own a car in 2000, with upwards of 60 percent lacking a vehicle in New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Newark. And poor blacks were often twice as likely as poor whites to lack a telephone in these cities.

- White poor people were more than three times as likely as the African American poor to be college graduates in every city studied except Atlanta. Only 25 percent of the cities’ poor African Americans had less than a high school education, compared with 38 percent of whites.

Selected Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Among African Americans and Whites in Selected U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2000

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Metropolitan area</th>
<th>Percent civilian males 16+ employed</th>
<th>Percent no automobile</th>
<th>Percent no phone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
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<td>19.5</td>
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<td>Los Angeles-Long Beach</td>
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<td>Newark</td>
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<td>New Orleans</td>
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<td>50.7</td>
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<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).
American males on average had a job.

Reducing the Risk of Future Disasters for Urban African Americans

African Americans not only have the highest levels of poverty in the country, but they are also the group that is most residentially segregated from and least likely to intermarry with whites. Surveys also continue to reveal that many nonblack Americans express high levels of social distance (the degree to which people desire close or remote social relations with members of other groups) from African Americans. Given their limited social and economic resources along with their geographic isolation, poor urban African Americans—especially children and the elderly—are disproportionately vulnerable to being left behind during a crisis situation.

What measures need to be taken to improve the social and economic position of African Americans and to avoid future disasters such as the recent one in New Orleans?

- Skills-development, employment, and health-maintenance programs need to be targeted to and strengthened for African Americans.
- Funding and access to education—including Head Start—should be increased for African Americans in order to bolster their social and economic well-being and competitiveness in the labor market.
- Additional policies, resources, and investment are needed to promote the development and relocation of businesses (and thus jobs) to African American urban neighborhoods.
- Government agencies responsible for responding to natural disasters need to factor into their planning the economic and geographic isolation of African Americans—especially the African American urban poor.

Aggressive actions are needed to erase the marginalization of African Americans that Hurricane Katrina exposed. The failure to take such actions will have enormous economic and social costs—not just for African-Americans, but for a society living with a disjuncture between its ideals and the reality of continued stratification along the color line.


References
1. Data from the Census 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) are used to examine the standing of African Americans (relative to whites) in the 15 most populous African American Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). The statistics are based on the populations of the central cities and the suburbs comprising each PMSA and MSA.
3. I acknowledge the helpful comments of Karen Manges Douglas and David Geronimo Embrick on an earlier draft of this report.
Bennett on Crime and Race: “A Different Dance But the Same Song”

By Matthew Hughey

“...if you wanted to reduce crime, you could—if that were your sole purpose, you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down. That would be an impossible, ridiculous thing to do, but your crime rate would go down.”


“There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of white Americans desire that there be as few Negroes as possible in America. If the Negroes could be eliminated from America or greatly decreased in numbers, this would meet the whites' approval—provided that it could be accomplished by means which are also approved.”

— Gunnar Myrdal. An American Dilemma. 1944.

William Bennett, the former Reagan administration secretary of education, showed the continued logic of race and crime as dance partners—reducing the cultural facets, structural analysis, and historical context to unnecessary tangential factors—which ultimately betray his contradictory logic.

First, Oscar Lewis’ now famous “culture of poverty” thesis continues to be applied to the “social pathologies” of people of color. By ascribing a particular subculture crime-laden value system to African Americans, Bennett delimits a cultural explanation for why whites commit crime. Bennett also ignores reports that have consistently found blacks more likely to be suspected, arrested, and convicted than any other racial group even when controlling for existence of evidence or actual crime having been committed.

Secondly, in trying to foreclose on a probability argument about the next generation of African Americans’ predestined propensity to produce crime, Bennett ignores the data that shows the worst of black violent crime—homicide—to have fallen from 46.5 in 1976 to 24.9 in 2002 (per 100,000), which is just shy of a 50% reduction. Bennett’s take on race as a key determinant of criminal behavior is unsettling because it reveals in such stark terms the conflation of poverty and race in the black-phobia logic of the U.S.

Third, and most ghastly, is that even as I write this missive from Charlottesville, VA (the site of the most famous eugenics sterilization case on record—Carrie Buck), a massive black genocide is unfolding in the Sudan. To even suggest a eugenics-like mass abortion plan is to embrace, on some level of cognition, of that which the Swiss economist Myrdal warned over 60 years ago. If we could find a way to rationalize it, we would do it, and U.S. eugenicist leader Charles Davenport did.

Ignoring the cultural, structure, and history of genocide places Bennett’s comments within the draconian, color-coded logic of race and crime. In popular discourse, this demonstrates our continuing dance around the relationship of crime and race, and we might be dancing differently than in 1944, but it’s still to a minstrel-esque tune.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS—SECTION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES (SREM)

Oliver Cromwell Cox Award
This annual award honors the memory of Oliver Cromwell Cox. The award recognizes sociologically related books or articles published in the last two years that make a distinguished and significant contribution to the eradication of racism. The winner will be announced at the
section reception at the 2006 ASA meeting in Montreal. The committee encourages self-nominations and nominations of work by others. Nominations should include a statement, no longer than one page, explaining the book or article’s contribution to the eradication of racism. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2006. Send nominations and three copies of the nominated book or article to:
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James E. Blackwell Distinguished Graduate Student Paper Award
This award recognizes the best graduate student paper that focuses on the relation between or issues relevant to socially divided racial and ethnic groups. Eligible papers should demonstrate an integrative race, class, gender analysis, and/or make an important theoretical, methodological, or empirical contribution in the field of Race/Racism/Race Relations Studies. Race critical or innovative scholarship are encouraged, as well as scholarship that focuses on and contributes to the welfare of all, rather than the promotion of any one particular group of color’s social or political interests. The winner will be announced at the section reception at the 2006 ASA meeting in Montreal. The award includes a cash prize of $300. Papers (with a maximum length of 25 pages) submitted for this award must be entirely student-authored and written while the author was a graduate student. Current graduate students and those who have completed their degree no earlier than January 2006 are eligible. Self-nominations and nominations by faculty advisors or other faculty members are welcome. The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2006.

Joe R. Feagin Distinguished Undergraduate Student Paper Award
This paper recognizes the best undergraduate student paper that focuses specifically on the relation between or issues relevant to socially divided racial and ethnic groups, uses an integrative race, class, gender analysis, and/or make an important theoretical, methodological, or empirical contribution in the field of Race/Racism/Race Relations Studies. We encourage race critical or innovative scholarship as well as scholarship that focuses on and contributes to the welfare of all, rather than the promotion of any one particular group of color’s social or political interests. The winner will be announced at the section reception at the 2006 ASA meetings in Montreal. Papers (with a maximum length of 25 pages) submitted for this award must be entirely student-authored and written while the author was an undergraduate student. Current undergraduate students and those who have completed their undergraduate degree no earlier than January 2006 are eligible. Self-nominations and nominations by faculty advisors or other faculty members are welcome. The award includes $300. The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2006.
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Feagin Distinguished Award Committee
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NEW BOOKS


This book, a case study of Jewish life in Germany today, portrays the families of four siblings who survived concentration camps and resettled after WWII in Germany. In interviews, the ten children who were born in Germany, reflect on their lives in Germany, their relationship to the Jewish community, anti-Semitism, Israel and on the holocaust. The book addresses intergenerational relations, transnationalism and the embeddedness, or lack thereof, of diasporic individuals in ethnic networks and institutions.


Prudence Carter, an associate professor of sociology at Harvard University, has a new book entitled Keepin’ It Real: School Success beyond Black and White, published by Oxford University Press (2005). Common wisdom holds that racial stratification leads African American and Latino students to rebel against “acting white,” thus dooming themselves to lower levels of scholastic, economic, and social achievement. Capturing the diversity of low-income African American and Latino youths’ cultural identities, Keepin’ It Real refutes facile, convenient assumptions about students’ academic engagement and racial difference. Carter challenges the prevalent oppositional culture framework and maintains that for African-American and Latino students, utterances of “acting white” are not assertions of anti-achievement identities. Rather, resistance to “acting white” indicates a rejection of the generic “American,” “white,” middle-class styles of interaction, speech, dress, music and other practices. Carter further demonstrates why some African American and Latino students thrive academically, and others do not. The most successful negotiators of our school systems are not necessarily those who acculturate but rather those most adept at participation in multiple cultural spheres. Keepin’ It Real maintains that intercultural communication, rather than acculturation, can help increase students’ academic engagement and concludes with positive steps that both teachers and students can take to ensure that school success has no color.


In academic research on interracial relationships, as well as popular discourses such as film and television, Black women are often characterized as angry and opposed to interracial relationships. Yet the voices of Black women have been largely neglected. Drawing from focus group interviews with Black college women and in-depth interviews with Black women who are married interracially, the author explores Black women’s views on Black-white heterosexual relationships. Black women’s opposition to interracial dating is not simply rooted in jealousy and anger toward white women but is based on white racism, Black internalization of racism, and what interracial relationships represent to Black women and signify about Black women’s worth. The impact
of racism and sexism are clear, with Black women devalued by white standards of beauty and faced with a shortage of available Black men and a lack of "substantive opportunities" to date interracially.


This engaging reader consists of 57 edited articles, divided into seven parts. Part I establishes the importance of examining race as a contemporary social issue. Part II establishes the analytical frameworks that are now being used to think about race in society. Part III examines the most immediately experienced dimensions of race: beliefs and ideology. Part IV examines racial identity and interracial relationships, topics that are especially interesting to students. Part V analyzes the importance of the political economy of race, showing how the economic exploitation of racial groups is buttressed by political arrangements in the state. In particular, the racial division of labor is supported by concepts of citizenship that deny full rights of citizenship to certain groups. Part VI details the consequences of race and racism as manifested in different social institutions, including work, family, health, housing, education, and social justice. Each section includes articles examining the outcomes within social institutions that stem from the reality of racial inequality in society. Part VII focuses on social movements and social change.


Societies today are increasingly characterized by their ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. One key question raised by the global migration of people is how they do or do not come to be incorporated into their new social environments. For over a century, assimilation has been the concept used in explaining the processes of immigrant incorporation into a new society. It has also been applied to indigenous peoples, to refugees, and to involuntary migrants caught up in the slave trade. Assimilation has confronted many scholarly challenges which were often intermeshed with particular political agendas. Societies today are increasingly characterized by their ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. One key question raised by the global migration of people is how they do or do not come to be incorporated into their new social environments. For over a century, assimilation has been the concept used in explaining the processes of immigrant incorporation into a new society. It has also been applied to indigenous peoples, to refugees, and to involuntary migrants caught up in the slave trade. Assimilation has confronted many scholarly challenges which were often intermeshed with particular political agendas.


The Second Edition of Peter Kivisto's and new coauthor Wendy Ng's *AMERICANS ALL* introduces foundational ideas and concepts about race and ethnic groups and applies them to issues and events relevant to today's college student population. The text combines both empirical and theoretical material and is designed to help students better understand our highly diverse society. It illustrates the importance of using sociology to identify and assess both the dynamics of ethnic conflicts and the forces that might serve to create a more harmonious society.


"Mosaic" in Southern California is one of the largest multiethnic congregations in America, and also one of the most
innovative. This book takes us inside this unusual church. It shows how the church has achieved multiethnicity, not by targeting ethnic groups, but by providing multiple havens of inclusion and commonality that render ethnic differences moot. These havens are arenas for multiethnic companionship, cooperation, and camaraderie that arise out of a union of creative volunteer resources and the ambitious global mission of the church. A Mosaic of Believers examines the structure of the church and the innovative aspects of its mission. It reveals a congregation aiming to reconstruct evangelical theology, personal identity, member involvement, and church governance in an attempt to create an institution with greater relevance to the social reality of a new generation. Based on interviews and participation with the congregation and grounded in contemporary sociological theory, the book presents a rich portrait of an emerging religious community.


"The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities" is a first-rate collection of social science scholarship on inequalities, emphasizing race, ethnicity, class and gender sexuality, age, and nationality. The volume highlights themes that represent the scope and range of theoretical orientations, contemporary emphases, and emerging topics in the field of social inequalities. An international group of leading scholars gives special attention to debates in the field, developing trends and directions, and interdisciplinary influences in the study of social inequalities. An editorial introduction and suggestions for further reading round out the collection, making this a one-of-a-kind reference to the field.


The pimp's ubiquity in popular and youth culture belies its divergent interpretations along racial lines. This article is an ethnographic study of how adolescents at a multiracial urban high school vary in their performance and interpretation of the pimp and how they create racialized identities through these variations. All peer groups studied understood the pimp as representing sexual prowess, but for the African American peer group, the pimp more importantly represented manipulation and generalized power. Departing from Goffman's concepts of performance and stigma, the study illustrates the limitations of both in capturing the racializing and empowering aspects of the pimp persona for the African American students who enacted it. Merging symbolic interaction with the poststructuralist concepts of identity as lodged in discourse and with performance as transgression, this article explains how adolescents' pimp performances produced identities that were informed by white supremacist logic but also subverted this logic in their construction of racial differences.


Confessions...is an in-depth ethnography of the social world of a longtime thief and quasi-legitimate businessman based on continuous contact with him for many years including “deathbed” interviews shortly before he died of lung cancer. Drawing from extensive contacts with a longtime thief-businessman (including deathbed interviews) and his associate, the book combines the thief’s narrative with the author’s commentary to provide a vivid understanding of the social organization of criminal enterprise and the dynamics of criminal careers, including racial and ethnic stratification in the criminal underworld.

From poets to sociologists, many people who write about life on the U.S.-Mexico border use terms such as "border crossing" and "hybridity" which suggest that a unified culture—neither Mexican nor American, but an amalgamation of both—has arisen in the borderlands. But talking to people who actually live on either side of the border reveals no single commonly shared sense of identity, as Pablo Vila demonstrated in his book Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier. Instead, people living near the border, like people everywhere, base their sense of identity on a constellation of interacting factors that includes regional identity, but also nationality, ethnicity, and race. In this book, Vila continues the exploration of identities he began in Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders by looking at how religion, gender, and class also affect people's identifications of self and "others" among Mexican nationals, Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans, Anglos, and African Americans in the Cuidad Juárez-El Paso area. Among the many fascinating issues he raises are how the perception that "all Mexicans are Catholic" affects Mexican Protestants and Pentecostals; how the discourse about proper gender roles may feed the violence against women that has made Juárez the "women's murder capital of the world"; and why class consciousness is paradoxically absent in a region with great disparities of wealth. His research underscores the complexity of the process of social identification and confirms that the idealized notion of "hybridity" is only partially adequate to define people's identity on the U.S.-Mexico border.


As the numbers of women in prison have increased, so have the number of older women behind bars. These older women present unique problems for institutions trying to meet their health care needs. We report findings from our national pilot study of federal and state prisons for women. Prisons report basic services for physical and mental health care, and most report having hospice services. However, those that house larger percentages or that expect to house larger percentages of older prisoners do not significantly differ in their approaches to assessing and providing health care from their counterparts. By failing to anticipate the increase in older women, prisons may be failing to provide for many of the health needs of this vulnerable population.

2006 SREM SESSIONS

1. Session Title: "Racialized Sexual Identities."

2. Session Title: "Hurricane Katrina: Racism and the Effects of Historical Neglect" (Co-Sponsored with the Comparative Historical Section).

3. Session Title: "The Politics of Race, Class and Gender in the Academy." (Co-sponsored with Sex and Gender Section).

4. Session Title: "Transgressing Boundaries: Hurricane Katrina as a Metaphor for America's Racial Divide." Invited Session.

5. Session Title: "Racial and Ethnic Minorities Section Roundtables."