

imperative towards the prevention of homelessness, for example through family mediation and eviction prevention. Yet progressive policies to support routes out of homelessness, and to address aspects of early childhood disadvantage (including the role of state protection of children) which precipitate youth homelessness, may be undermined by further neoliberal welfare reform imposed by the UK government. The depressing conclusion seems to be that the role of the outreach worker will remain a critical link in the process of reestablishing bonds between street kids and the rest of society—and Gibson’s book provides a powerful insight into the longstanding constraints and new opportunities facing that profession.

Isobel Anderson
University of Stirling

Ray Hutchison and Bruce D. Haynes (Eds.), *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and Controversies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012).

What’s in a word? Quite a lot, apparently, if the word is *ghetto* and the question is being asked of urban sociologists. Debate has raged for decades over the domain of the term, the implications of referring to a place as a ghetto, and the relationship between American ghettos and analogous neighborhoods in the rest of the world. *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and Controversies*, edited by Ray Hutchison and Bruce D. Haynes, is a useful attempt to collect a variety of perspectives on the conceptual content and usefulness of the term within urban sociology. Hutchison describes the evolution of the term from its origins in Europe to its use in contemporary urban scholarship.

In dealing with complex and nuanced social and class relations, social scientists necessarily try to move towards conceptual clarity by defining terms. Definitions are necessary to ground any analysis, whether conceptual or empirical, but the inevitable debates over definitions sometimes consume academic discourse rather than informing it. In the North American context, the term *ghetto* has come to refer to neighborhoods that are predominantly African American and poor. Not surprisingly, one of the longest running threads of the debate over the meaning of ghetto concerns the relative roles of race and poverty. Is a ghetto any nearly all black neighborhood, many of which only happen to be poor due to the relatively low income of that group? Or is some degree of impoverishment, social disorganization, or social isolation an integral part of the term’s definition? Or, dropping race altogether, is a ghetto simply any high-poverty neighborhood?

In the book’s first chapter, Loïc Wacquant begins by noting that “while the social sciences have made extensive use of ‘ghetto’ as a *descriptive term*, they have failed to forge a robust *analytical concept* of the same” (emphasis in the original). Wacquant’s attempt to do so draws heavily on the term’s historical origin as the legally enforced neighborhood for the Jewish population first in Venice and later in other European cities. His conception of ghetto contains four constituent elements that defined these areas: stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional parallelism, resulting in a definition of ghetto as “socio-spatial mechanism of ethno-racial closure” (p.12).

Poverty, in Wacquant’s view, is not a defining characteristic of ghettos. Ghettos, by virtue of containing all social levels of the confined group and parallel institutions, can become places of wealth for at least some residents. Segregation is a necessary condition, he argues, but not voluntary and elective segregation such as the clustering of rich families in gated communities.

Rather, he argues that the spatial confinement must be “imposed and all-encompassing” and it must be accompanied by a “duplicative set of institutions enabling the population thus cloistered to reproduce itself within its assigned perimeter.” Wacquant gives the example of Chicago’s Bronzeville, which in 1930 contained 92 percent of the city’s black population. He distinguishes ghettos from ethnic clusters or enclaves, which are voluntary and supportive, have fluid borders, and contain a concentration of the group’s members but far from all. Moreover, ethnic enclaves have a disproportionate share of one ethnic group, but are rarely exclusive to that group.

The problem with Wacquant’s narrow conception of ghettos is that it leaves you with very little to study. Not that many neighborhoods in the United States ever fully conformed to all elements of Wacquant’s definition, even the oft-cited paradigmatic neighborhoods of Bronzeville and Harlem. If they ever did, they do not now. Outside the five or ten largest cities, there are hundreds of medium-size cities from Seattle to Portland and Toledo to Jackson that never had a neighborhood that fully embodied forcible segregation, total containment, and a complete set of parallel institutions. Indeed, other chapters in *The Ghetto* are quite valuable for pointing out the diversity of the areas we call ghettos. For example, in his chapter Bruce D. Haynes recounts his experiences growing up in Harlem and provides a rich set of reflections on the diversity of people and lived experiences within that neighborhood.

A final and personal point about Chapter 1. On page 5, Wacquant asserts that I deracialize the ghetto by focusing on a poverty criterion. In fact, in my *Poverty and Place* (1997), I identified ghettos as areas that were high-poverty and predominantly African American. Barrios were high-poverty and predominantly Hispanic. My definition of ghetto located the term at the intersection of race and poverty, consistent with common understanding and a great deal of the recent literature on urban poverty, including Wilson (1987, 1996).

In contrast to Wacquant, Peter Marcuse adopts a more fluid approach to “what is generically called the ghetto” (p. 33). He asserts that “the term ghetto can be used in many different ways, and no one of them is correct” (p. 39). He identifies a range of variation in those neighborhoods that are commonly referred to as ghettos. The “hard ghetto,” maintained by force and government action, corresponds most closely to the original Venetian case. The “weak ghetto” is a remnant of a former hard ghetto, still racially concentrated but now more fluid and perhaps ripe for gentrification. The “dispersed ghetto,” less centrally located and less racially and economically concentrated, is becoming more frequent as older ghettos are dispersed through gentrification and public housing removal. These and other variations are all generally identified as ghettos by residents and nonresidents alike, although they differ substantially in their causes and perhaps consequences.

A theme of Marcuse’s chapter is the increasing role of market forces in the evolution of ghetto neighborhoods—high levels of poverty and inequality interacting with increasing central city land values and decline in the older housing stock of central cities (outside gentrifying areas) and inner-ring suburbs. Similarly, Sharon Zukin’s chapter details the pervasive changes taking place in Bedford-Stuyvesant, creating a far more ethnically and economically complex set of diverse neighborhoods within the confines of the once prototypical “dark ghetto.”

Elijah Anderson’s contribution to the volume brings us back to one of the fundamental reasons sociologists are concerned with ghettos in the first place. He describes how the iconic black ghetto acts to shape the modes of behavior, aspirations, and life trajectories of the neighborhood’s residents, particularly young men. The effects stem from the concurrence in ghetto neighborhoods of severe economic deprivation, social isolation due to economic and racial segregation, and the withholding of public services taken for granted in the larger society, including public safety and quality education. Anderson, as well as Nikki Jones and Christina Jackson in their chapter on the San Francisco ghetto, note that black people are also identified as *ghetto* and carry that stigma

with them, even if they never lived there. To some extent, racist stereotypes of whites about blacks are fueled by the pervasive portrayals of ghetto neighborhoods in the media.

Several chapters in the volume tackle the issue of whether seemingly similar areas in other countries—French *banlieues*, Brazilian *favelas*, and others—should be regarded as those countries' equivalent of ghettos. Ernesto Castañeda, who contrasts *places of stigma*—ghettos, *barrios*, and *banlieues*—argues that the term *ghetto* is less important than the historical mechanisms that created the areas: “the boundary-making processes and historical legacies” that shaped the areas and create their social meaning in the context of their societies. Thus, *banlieues* are the historical legacies of a development paradigm in which unprotected neighborhoods outside the walls of older European cities were undesirable and therefore less expensive. *Favelas*, argue Brasilmar Nunes and Leticia Veloso, were jerry-built by emigrating Brazilians of various racial and ethnic groups to access urban labor markets. This contrasts sharply with the typical U.S. ghetto, often centered on public housing, and maintained by a process of disinvestment and selective outmigration.

Alan Gilbert, in a very informative chapter, argues that Latin American countries do not contain ghettos akin to those in the United States. In many Latin American cities, black and mixed race people represent a majority of the population, so a term that represents the neighborhood of a stigmatized and spatially contained minority group is not applicable. Moreover, even when blacks are not the majority, they rarely live in the kind of extremely segregated neighborhoods found in the United States. Latin American high-poverty neighborhoods, far from being stagnant places of racial containment, are ethnically diverse and in a rapid state of flux. The contrast to the U.S. case provides an opportunity to investigate the different functions of these two different types of neighborhoods within the social and economic systems of their respective countries.

The chapters in this volume help to refocus the debate about the complexity and variation in ghetto neighborhoods and the connections between black ghettos and Hispanic *barrios* in the U.S. and urban spatial concentrations of economically and socially marginalized groups in other nations. A number of the chapters raise and illuminate sociologically interesting questions about such neighborhoods, such as: How do they form? What forces maintain them? What role do they play in the politics and economics of their societies? And, most importantly, what are the consequences for residents, especially children, of living and growing up amidst the poverty and isolation of these neighborhoods? The impression I take away from reading this volume is that it makes more sense to address these questions empirically, and to accept that the answers may vary from place to place and time to time, rather than building assumptions about the answers into the very definition of the phenomenon. By airing the controversies and providing rich empirical evidence to evaluate them, *The Ghetto* stands as a valuable contribution to one of the central issues in urban sociology.

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Paul A. Jargowsky
Rutgers University–Camden
