

PPAI 2200: Political Economy of Punishment
Lecture Outline: The 'Moral Ecology' of Urban Ghettos

Prof. Glenn C. Loury
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A. What are Ghettos and Why Focus on Them? And, what is the so-called "Underclass"?"

1. Race and class aspects
 - a. Ghettos = concentrated spatial distribution of urban populations by race/income; physical place matters ("ghetto= urban condom": L. Wacquant)
 - b. Geography matters because of *externalities* and *transportation costs*
 - c. A key question: is spatial concentration is *voluntary* or is it *forced*.
 - d. If people are free to move, location choice implies "selection effects."
 1. Gautreaux experiment; and Move-To-Opportunity demonstration project
 2. *Some isolation* due to selective out-migration of upwardly mobile blacks
 3. *Tipping* (Schelling) – individual choices vs. aggregate outcomes
2. Race segregation in American cities dates from early 20th century, tracks large black migration from rural South (see Cutler, Glaeser and Vigdor figure next page; also Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; Sugrue, *Origins...*)
 - a. sharp rise in urban racial segregation from 1900 through 1970, decline since
 - b. large cities, and those in North/Midwest most segregated
 - c. initially segregation enforced through exclusion of Bs; recently through avoidance by Ws
 - d. government has played critical role in creation/maintenance of ghettos
 1. redlining in mortgages, including federal (Harmon/Levine on Boston)
 2. urban renewal, public housing, and highway construction decisions
 3. zoning laws; restrictive covenants
3. Social capital/peer effects make geography matter for understanding inequality
 - a. General issue of environmental influences (hard to measure causal effects)
 - b. one implication: need to re-think true meaning of "equal opportunity";
 - c. conflict between *equal opportunity* and *family/community autonomy* (zoning laws; siting low-income housing; *Milliken v. Bradley*: limits school integration)

B. Work of sociologist William J. Wilson relevant to the issues here:

1. Wilson: *The Declining Significance of Race* ('78); *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987); *When Work Disappears* ('96)
2. Research methods: ethnographic vs. representative sample/statistical analysis
3. *Structuralist* as distinct from a. *incentive*-based or b. *cultural* arguments
 - a. Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*: "Fought war on poverty and poverty won!"
 - b. The *culture of poverty* hypothesis (Moynihan, Banfield)
 - c. Versus *structural* arguments: Wilson's "marriageable pool" and "spatial mismatch" hypotheses
4. Difficulties inferring causality in this kind of work

C. Work of ethnographer Elijah Anderson (*Code of the Streets*) also relevant:

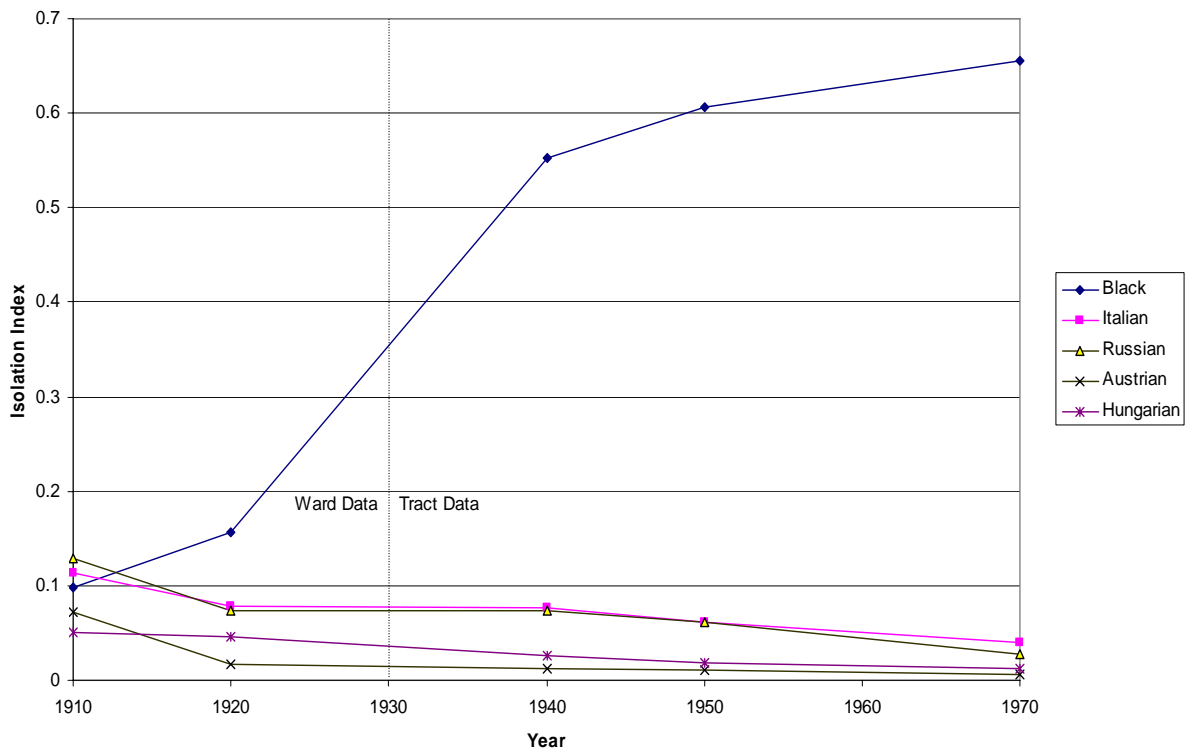
1. L. Wacquant's Indictment of Anderson (shared to some extent by Venkatesh):

- a. “Decent vs. Street” = reification of cultural orientations into groups. Folk notions become mutually exclusive populations
- b. Assumes morality and not structure is basis of difference (Are they *destitute* because they’re morally *dissolute*, or other way around?)
- c. EA takes sides rather than analyzes interplay between decent/street.
- d. Are they agents of own moral dereliction clinging to a “bad” code, or hapless victims of structural change?

The Social Integration Gap

Figure 1: Isolation of Blacks and New Immigrant Groups

Average weighted by group population for a constant set of cities.



Source: David Cutler, Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor, “Ghettos and the Transmission of Ethnic Capital.” In *Ethnicity, Social Mobility and Public Policy: Comparing the US and US*, G. Loury, T. Modood and S. Teles, Eds. Cambridge UP, 2005 (Fig. 7.1, p. 205)