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**Review of *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Robert Sampson. Reviewed by Gwendolyn Y. Purifoye.**

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identity, she likewise documents the struggle with race and culture that ensued after Fort Ord's closure.

The author's carefully crafted history of Seaside offers a glimpse into an untold story of racial integration and harmony on nearly all levels of this unique community. The strength of the work is in the careful historical analysis and use of a variety of sources to bring to life this hidden coastal town that represented great racial progress in practice. On the other hand, the idealism invoked by this account of Seaside leaves the reader to wonder at times if this sense of racial integration was experienced by all groups and parties involved. With such diversity as Southern African Americans, West Coast Whites, and Mexican migrants, it would make sense that there would be several layers of cultural and racial misunderstandings or missteps. Nevertheless, by placing the developments of this community within a larger social and political context, the author most certainly contributes to a greater understanding of race relations in the twentieth century and the role of the military in facilitating racial integration.

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Robert Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (2012). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. \$27.50 (hardcover).

Chicago, according to Robert Sampson, is "arguably the quintessential American city" that "captures the full range and intensity of American passions" (p. 76). In *Great American City*, Sampson, currently a member of Harvard's sociology department and formerly at the University of Chicago, shows how Chicago embodies important components of political, social, economic and cultural histories and continues to serve as a great laboratory for urban research. His 'interrogation' of Chicago's neighborhoods and communities advances our knowledge of how social space and place are intertwined with physical space. Early on, he argues that "differentiation by neighborhood is not only everywhere to be seen, but that it has durable properties—with cultural and social mechanisms

of reproduction—and with effects that span a wide variety of social phenomena” (p. 6). In arguing for a holistic approach to urban research he abandons a reductionist, individually-focused perspective, promoting a structural and cultural analysis instead. He admits to being a structural determinist (p. 63) but argues that individuals matter, too. By discussing how structural forces, including urban planning and politics, affect and shape Chicago’s neighborhoods, Sampson advances the field of urban sociology.

Sampson’s findings are based on research spanning eight years (1994-2002). His Chicago Project grew from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN). The methodology included thousands of extensive home interviews, a Community Survey, ethnographic observations (Systematic Social Observations) in sample neighborhoods clustered from 77 Chicago community areas, a Key Informant Study, and an analysis of a Longitudinal Cohort Study.

Chapters 1-4 of the book provide a detailed history of how the study grew out of an in-depth study on crime in Chicago, the challenges (financial, size), and some of his personal biases towards the subject. In Chapter 4, Sampson skillfully uses data to argue that places are meaningful and are imbued with social, political, economic and human histories that are durable.

Chapters 5-6 focus on various phenomena associated with poverty, such as inequality and crime, while making the case that “disadvantage is not encompassed in a single characteristic but rather is a synergistic composite of social factors” (p. 100). In chapters 7-8, the author argues that collective efficacy, described as “social cohesion combined with shared expectations of social control” (p. 27) can help us understand and predict neighborhood cohesiveness and civic engagement, as well as crime and violence.

Chapters 10-14 provide solid analyses of structures, locations, boundaries, and the redistribution of poverty as poor residents moved and various public housing projects were demolished, and discuss why some places prosper over others. The final chapters discuss changes in Chicago’s neighborhoods, including how neighborhood effects have remained durable.

Sampson supports previous urban studies, such as those

of Wilson, Massey and Denton, and Pattillo. He highlights the consequences of racial residential segregation on neighborhood change and their impact on residents and shows that social isolation, regardless of the source, reproduces conflict and stratification in Chicago. Social differences are "pervasive, strong, cross-cutting, and paradoxically stable even as they are changing in a manifest form" (p. 6). Place and place boundaries, he shows, are meaningful and purposeful.

Given the book's strengths, some of Sampson's research, language and discussion are problematic. Sampson is a criminologist, and his professional interests shape many of his analyses and descriptions. Throughout the book, he judges Chicago's neighborhoods through a criminologist's lens, and suggests that life in these places is mainly about survival and not living. Sampson's repeated mentions of crime and violence situates Chicago neighborhoods along a crime-violence continuum. Although he proclaims to support a holistic approach and focuses on structure while also acknowledging various resource deficits in many of the neighborhoods, Sampson portrays Chicago neighborhoods as being dominated by crime and dysfunction. Although the author acknowledges institutional violence and its impact on the children and neighborhood well-being, his book falters as he repeatedly frames urban blackness alongside "disorganization," "disadvantage," "violence" and "crime." Almost as an aside, Sampson suggests that this is not his goal or intention. It would have proved useful had he shared the characteristics of the neighborhoods he studied beyond this deficit-focused framework. Additionally, Sampson builds much of his argument around the theory of collective efficacy, but factors such as resources, nutrition, the physical environments of schools, and racial social histories, were too little discussed. These factors have significant imprints on space and place. We must be mindful of Mills' admonishment that we not lose sight of, but fully engage, biography, history, and social structures in understanding our social world.

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