

Rhetoric and Social Science in a Polarized Society



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Context



- “Fake news”
- Politicized news
- Political gaslighting

New Yorker, 2019



Context



- “Fake news”
- Politicized news
- Political gaslighting

- Bias in traditional media
- Failure to see Trump win
- Mueller report?

Context



- Need for—sober discourse, social science
- Not just findings—habit of thought and reasoning
- Something needed

Context



Qualitative literacy

The ability to understand, handle, and properly interpret qualitative evidence—specifically, **ethnographic** and **interview** evidence or data

Context



- Last two decades

Context



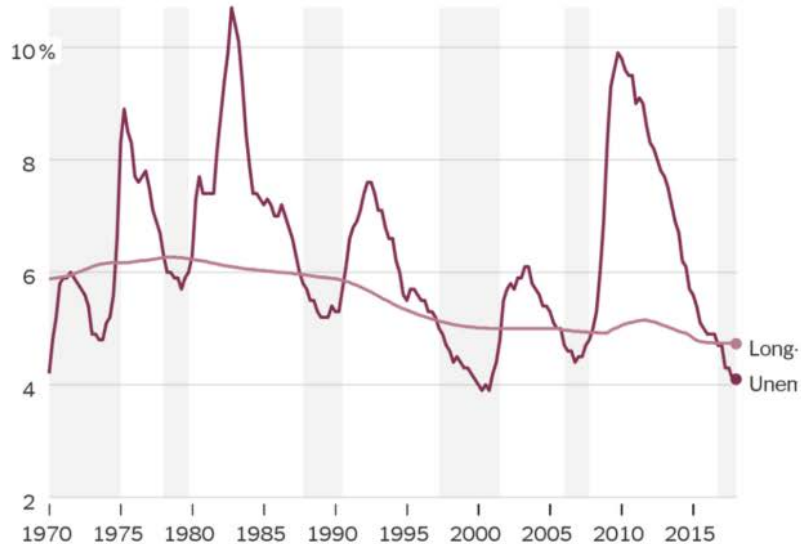
- Remarkable rise in quantitative literacy

TheUpshot

How Low Can Unemployment Really Go? Economists Have No Idea

It's an uncertainty that has huge economic consequences.

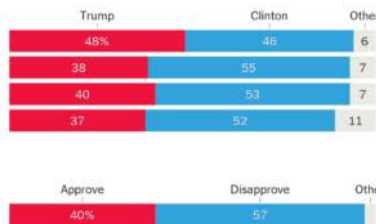
1d ago · By NEIL IRWIN



DAVID McNEW/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

A Big Divergence Is Coming in Health Care Among States

As the Trump administration chips away at Obamacare, some states are building it back up.



Trump Losing College-Educated Whites? He Never Won Them in the First Place

New evidence that exit polls are a very flawed vehicle



KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

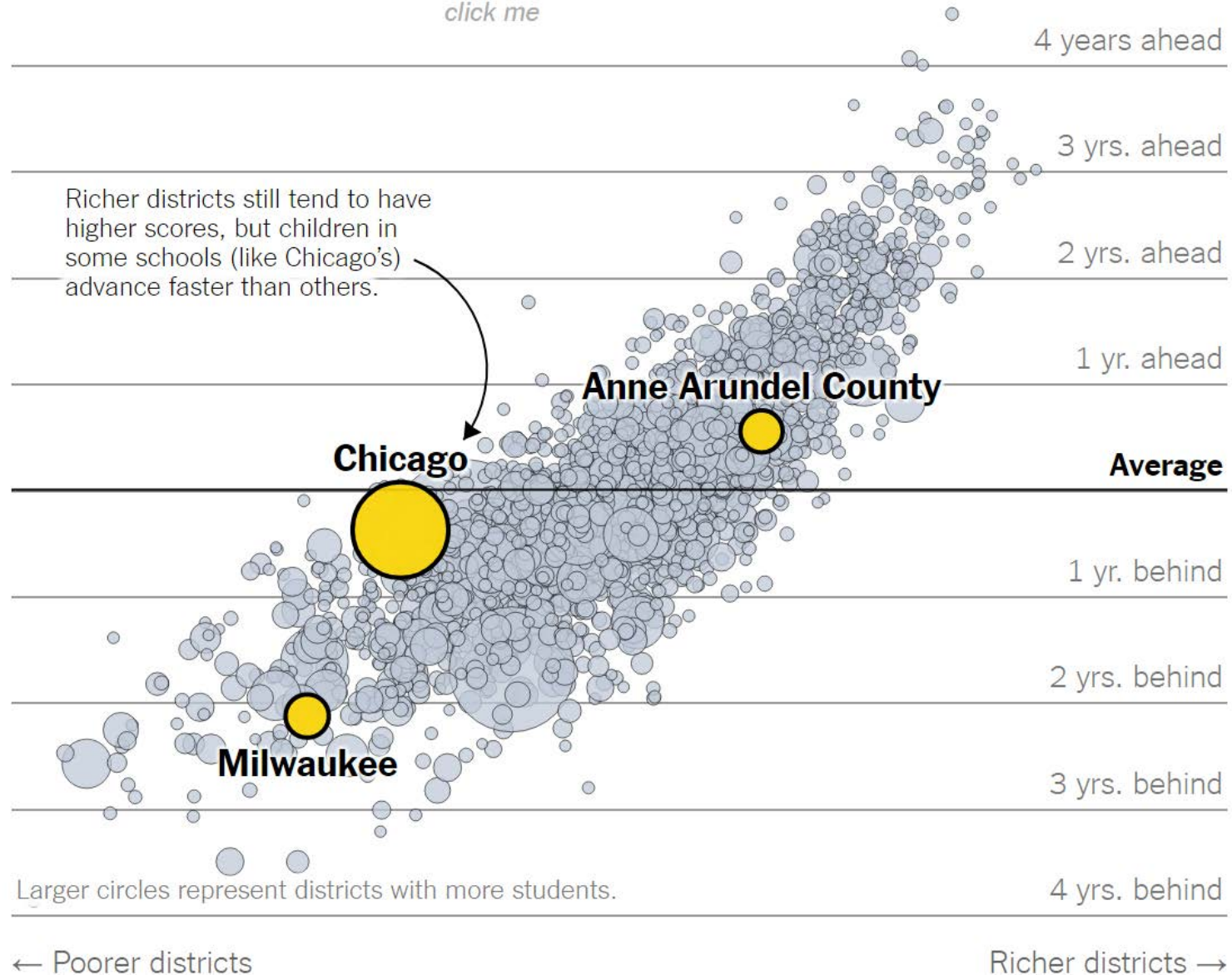
THE NEW HEALTH CARE

What Happens When You Let Babies Feed Themselves?

The hope was that they would naturally eat the right

Test scores for 8th graders in 2,000 large school districts.

click me



Residential Real Estate; Manhattan Rents Go Ever Upward

By DENNIS HEVESI NOV. 10, 2000

The average rent for apartments in Manhattan below 96th Street jumped 10.7 percent to nearly \$3,000 during the first six months of this year, according to one survey of the market, topping off a six-year period during which rents increased by nearly 46 percent.

At the end of June, the report said, the average rent for apartments of all sizes was \$2,984, compared with \$2,696 at the end of 1999. In December 1994, the average was \$2,046.

REAL ESTATE

Where Did Rents Rise the Most in 2017?

Calculator

By MICHAEL KOLOMATSKY FEB. 8, 2018

Most everywhere in the United States, rents stayed the same or went up last year. But not as much as in previous years: In 2017, median rents across the country rose an estimated 3.1 percent, continuing the steady trend of slowing increases that has been going on since 2012, according to a [study by Trulia](#).

Context



- Remarkable rise in quantitative literacy
- No parallel rise in *qualitative literacy*

Argument

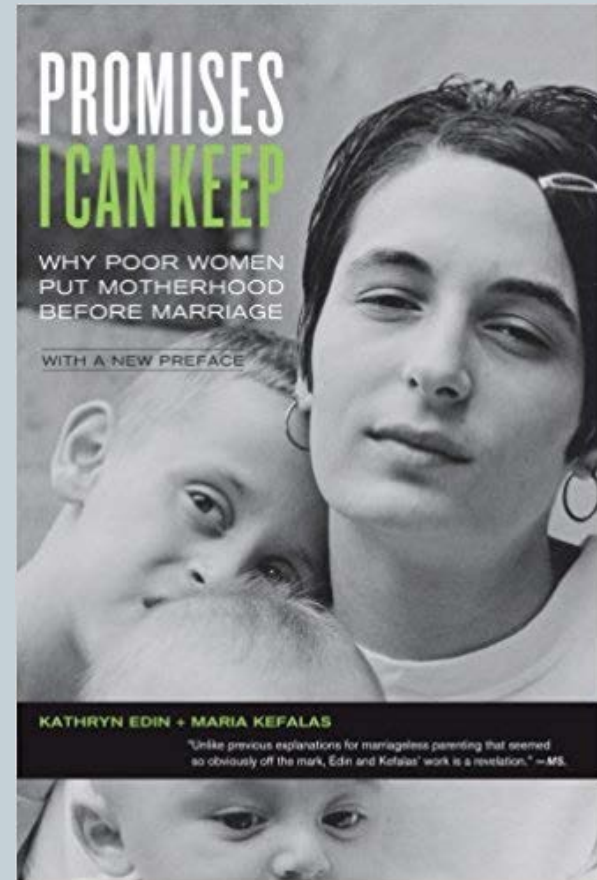
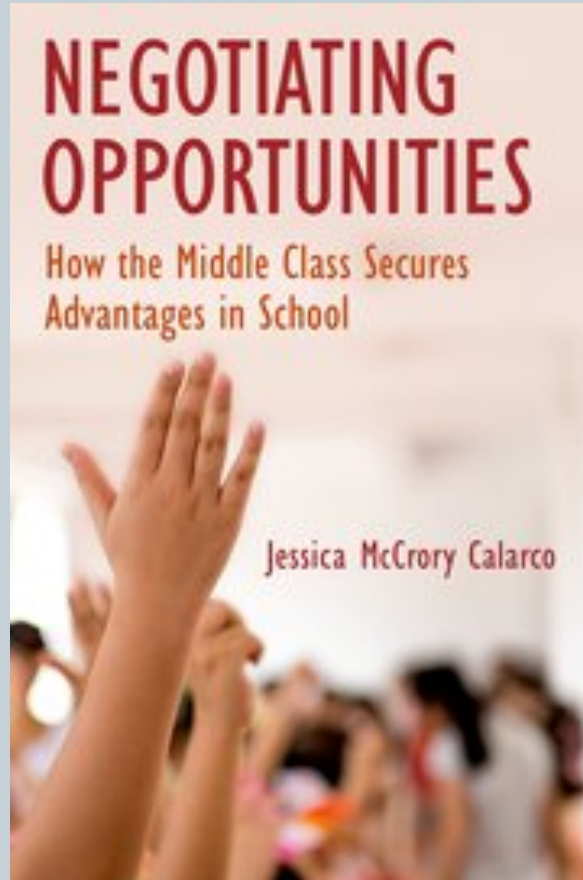


Our political discourse has often shown lack of
qualitative literacy

To the detriment of our discourse

Our job as social scientists
to clarify, cultivate, and teach it

Qualitative literacy



Qualitative literacy



Thought experiment

Qualitative literacy



Difference between
an empirically convincing ethnography and
an ethnography that is empirically weak
but well-written?

Qualitative literacy



- One—many answers
- Two—some resort to *quantitative* indicators (e.g., number of interviews)
- Three—some, “I don’t know”

Qualitative literacy



- Basic competence—social scientists *and* journalists
 - E.g., what is a regression, correlation \sim causation, etc.
 - *Parallel?*

Qualitative literacy

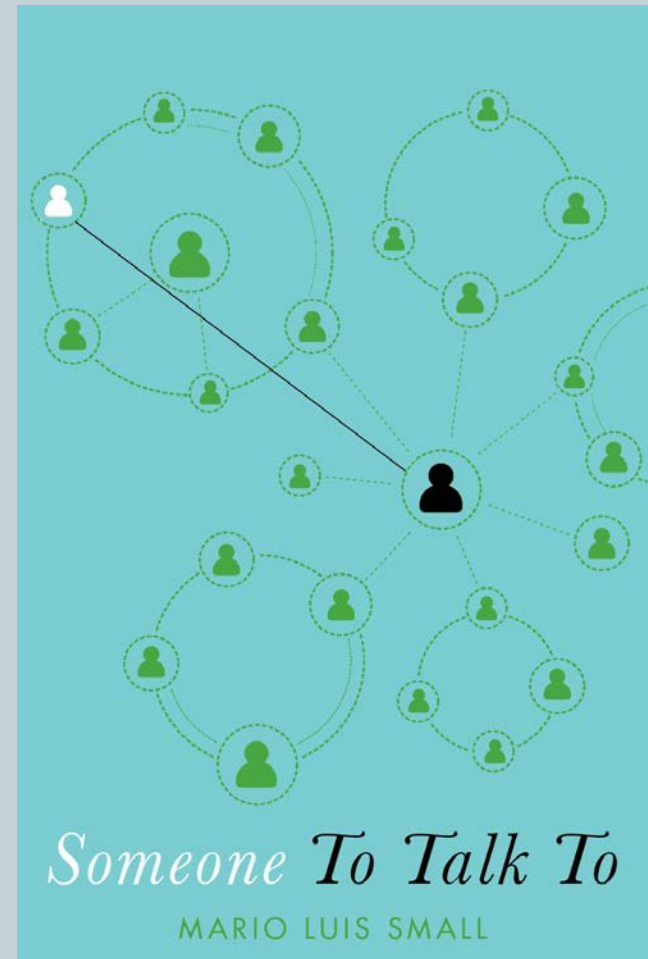


Rest of the talk
How I answer---
just 3 (of many) indicators

First indicator



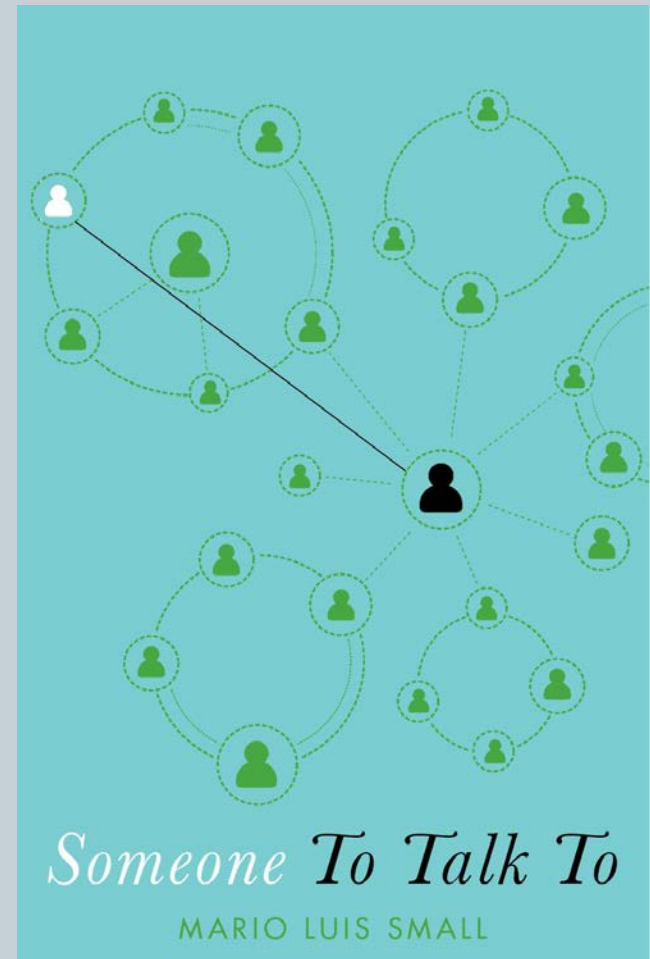
Evidence of **cognitive empathy**: ability to understand another person's predicament as they understand it



First indicator



A good qual study:
reader understands
studied as they see
themselves---not as
author saw them ahead
of time, not as author
wished they were

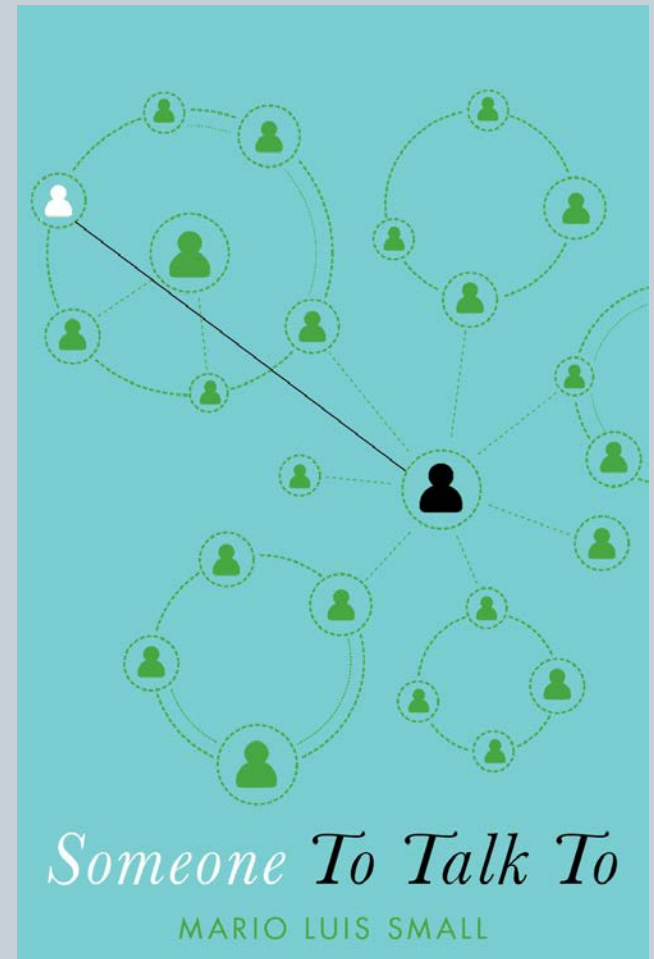


First indicator



Cognitive **empathy** is not **sympathy**

Cognitive empathy is not **emotional** empathy (Paul Bloom)





Scared but Resilient,
Stoneman Douglas
Students Return to Class



Georgia Teacher Fired Gun
While Barricaded in
Classroom, Police Say



Immigration Agency Rails
Against Oakland Mayor's
Warning of Raids



Judge Orders Tarps
Removed From
Confederate Statues in
Charlottesville



Ben Carson's HUD Spends
\$31,000 on Dining Set for
His Office



RACE/RELATED
A Coda to Black History
Month



Gun Includ
Teach Flori

A Voice of Hate in America's Heartland

By RICHARD FAUSSET NOV. 25, 2017



Tony Hovater at his home in New Carlisle, Ohio. George Etheredge for The New York Times

First indicator



- “Why did this man—intelligent, socially adroit and raised middle class amid the relatively well-integrated environments of United States military bases—gravitate toward the furthest extremes of American political discourse?”

First indicator



- Skilled journalist
- Eschewed easy explanations
 - Bad childhood experience (pop psychology)
 - Poverty background (pop sociology)
- Lots of time with the interviewee

First indicator



- “Tony and Maria Hovater were married this fall. They **registered at Target**. On their list was a **muffin pan**, a **four-drawer dresser** and a pineapple slicer.... [H]is tattoos are **innocuous pop-culture references**: a slice of **cherry pie** adorns one arm, a homage to the TV show ‘**Twin Peaks**’. ...He is a big ‘Seinfeld’ fan.” (Fausset 2017)

First indicator



- “**The pasta was ready.** Ms. Hovater talked about how frightening it was this summer to watch from home as the Charlottesville rally spun out of control. Mr. Hovater said **he was glad the movement had grown.** They spoke about their **future**—about moving to a **bigger place**, about their **honeymoon**, about **having kids.**” (Fausset 2017)

First indicator



- Outrage

- “‘How to normalize Nazis 101!’ one reader wrote on Twitter. ‘I’m both shocked and disgusted by this article’.”
- “‘You know who had nice manners?’ Bess Kalb... said on Twitter. ‘The Nazi who shaved my uncle Willie’s head before escorting him into a cement chamber...’.”
- Et cetera

First indicator

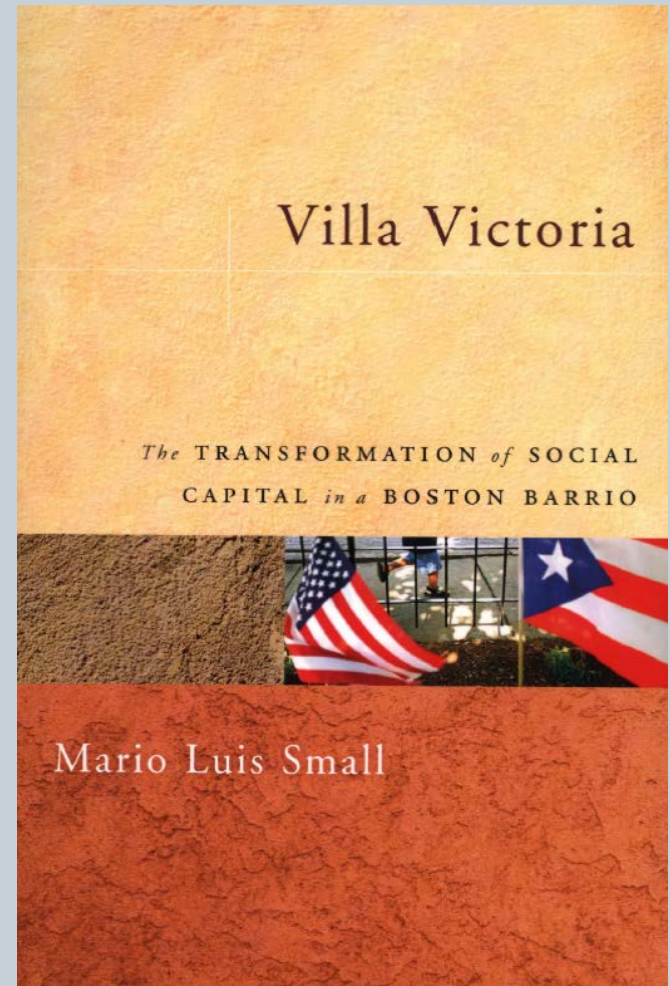


- “He mentioned books by **Charles Murray and Pat Buchanan**. He talked about his presence on **4chan**, the online message board and alright breeding ground (‘That’s where the **scary memes** come from,’ he deadpanned). He spoke dispassionately about **the injustice of affirmative action**, about the ‘**malice directed toward white people**’ in popular **media**, about how the cartoon comedy ‘**King of the Hill**’ was the last TV show to portray ‘a straight white male patriarch’ in **a positive light**.” (Fausset 2017)

Second indicator



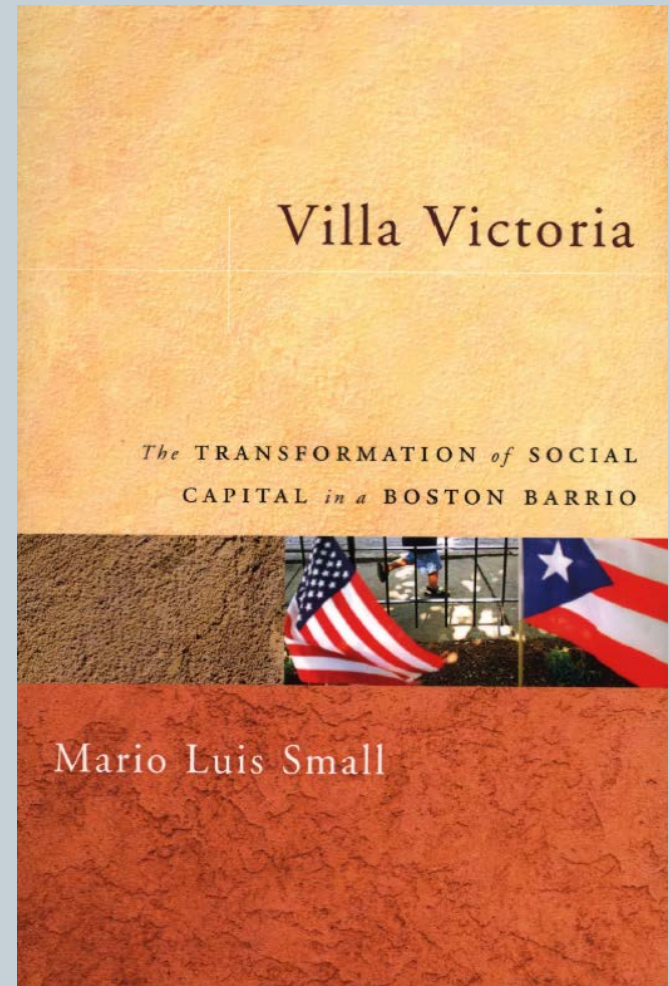
Attentiveness to **outgroup
homogeneity bias**:
the tendency to think of
one's own group as
diverse and other groups
as homogeneous



Second indicator



Other individuals as
homogeneous; other
neighborhoods as
homogeneous



Second indicator



Other individuals as
homogeneous; other
neighborhoods as
homogeneous

City
& Community



Ethnography, Neighborhood Effects, and the Rising Heterogeneity of Poor Neighborhoods across Cities

Mario L. Small*
Harvard University

Robert A. Manduca
Harvard University

William R. Johnston
RAND Corporation

In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers came to understand poor urban neighborhoods as blighted, depopulated areas, based on important ethnographic observations in a handful of cities. This image helped inform influential theories of social isolation and de-institutionalization. However, few scholars have examined whether those observations were representative of poor neighborhoods nationwide—and whether they are representative today. Based on a descriptive analysis of the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas using normalized census tract boundaries, we document an important transformation in the conditions of poor neighborhoods. We find that the depopulation in poor neighborhoods often reported in cities such as Chicago and Baltimore was, in fact, typical across cities in 1990. Today, it is not. Moreover, heterogeneity across cities has increased: The experience of neighborhood poverty is likely to depend more today than in 1990 on the city in question. In fact, the most typically studied cities, such as Chicago, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee, are increasingly atypical in this respect. Addressing today's core questions about neighborhood effects, how and why they matter, requires paying far greater attention to heterogeneity, conducting more ethnographic observation in ostensibly unconventional cities, and addressing the historically extreme conditions in a newly unique subset of cities.









East St. Louis, IL <http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/6282/2506/1600/esl28.jpg>

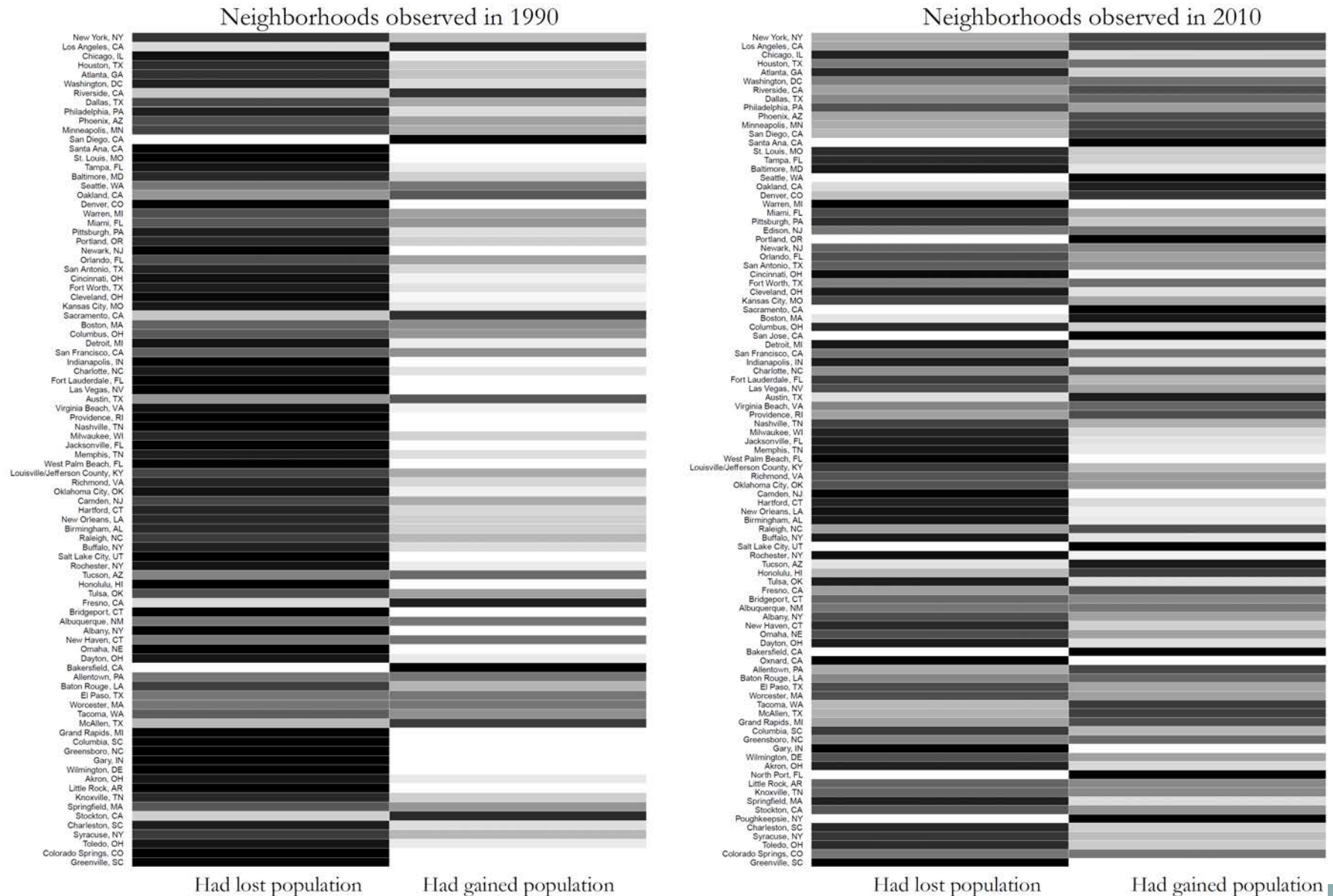




Figure 1. Proportion of poor tracts that had experienced population loss or gain when compared to the tract's population two decades earlier, 100 largest cities, 1990 and 2010.



Figure 1. Proportion of poor tracts that had experienced population loss or gain when compared to the tract's population two decades earlier, 100 largest cities, 1990 and 2010.



Second indicator



- The “Trump voter”

Second indicator



- The “Trump voter”
 - White
 - Racist
 - Poor or working class
 - Voting against own interest
 - Voting reaction against black president
 - Voting against immigrants
- Becomes filter through which evidence read

The New York Times

The Women Who Helped Donald Trump to Victory



Debbie Biro said it was difficult to talk to female friends about voting for Donald J. Trump. Mark Makela for The New York Times

Second indicator



- “Daphne Goggins, 53, an African-American community activist and ardent Republican... said **she believed decades of Democratic efforts had done little for black people**. When Mr. Trump invited her to a minority outreach meeting, she told him tearfully that **‘for the first time in my life, I feel like my vote is going to count.’”**



Second indicator



- “‘I’ve seen America fall down,’ [Ostendorf] said, ‘and **a big part of Trump that appealed to me was his business plan**’.”
- “‘I think that women see the big picture — women are smart,’ Mrs. Gauta said. ‘**The fact that he said something crude,**’ she said ‘**is not going to change my mind about the good he can do for our country.** Did I like that, no,’ she went on. ‘But do I think he can do a better job than Hillary? Absolutely’.”

Second indicator



- In 2016 paucity
- Scholars, pundits caught unaware
- Where does bias play a role now?

Third indicator

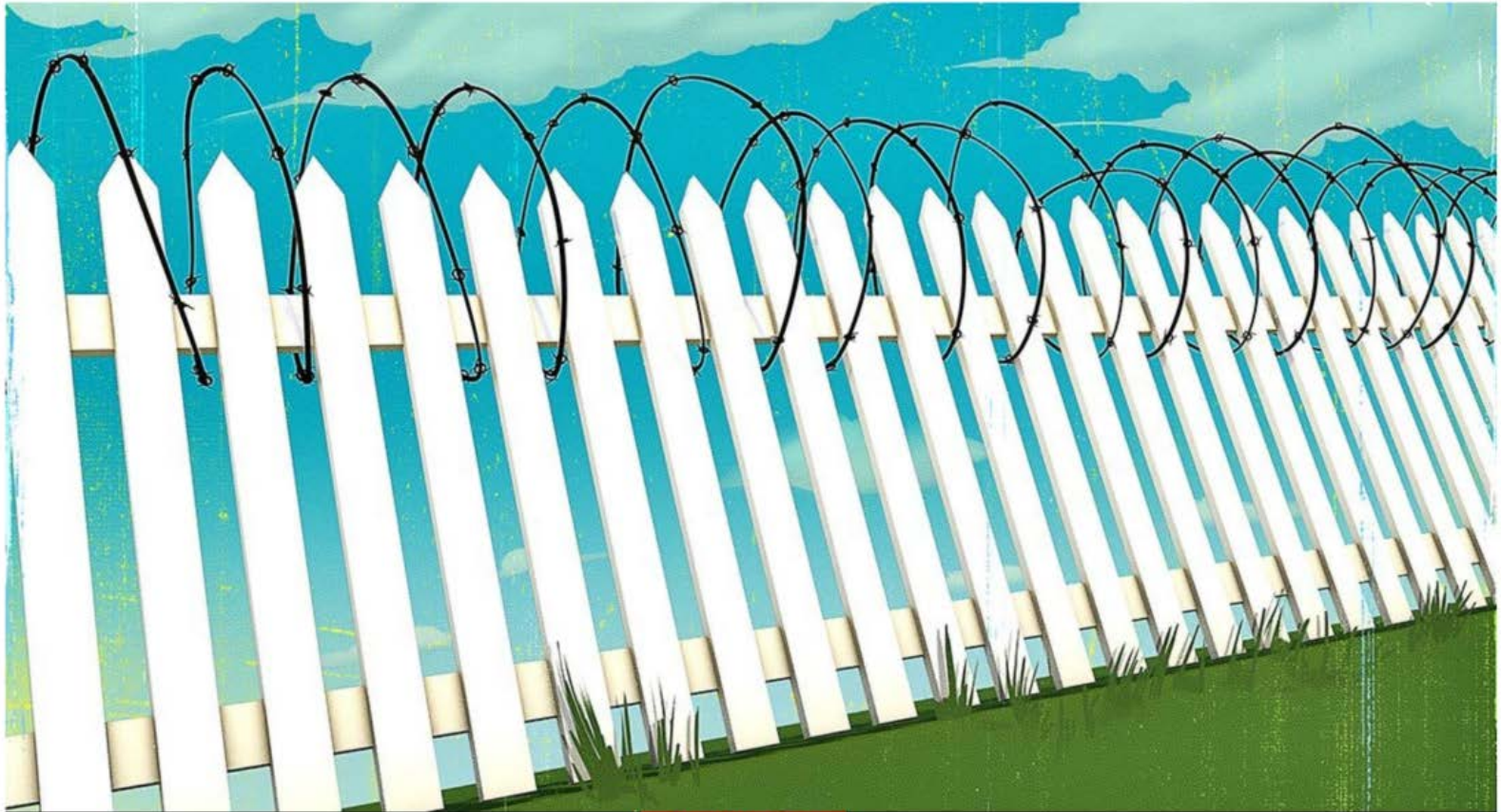


Acute sensitivity to which **kinds of argument**
require qualitative data—and what precise types
of qualitative data

Third indicator



- Context
- Economists, demographers, psychologists
Vs
- Qualitative researchers (in education, inequality, poverty, immigration, organizational analysis)



HISTORY DEPT.

Does the White Working Class Really Vote Against Its Own Interests?

Trump's first year in office revived an age-old debate about why some people choose race over class—and how far they will go to protect the system.

By JOSHUA ZEITZ | December 31, 2017

| Illustration by Daniel Downey, Jr.

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/31/trump-white-working-class-history-216200>

First indicator



- Thoughtful researcher
- Properly traced idea to W.E.B. DuBois (plantation owners, wages low)
- Traces history of idea

Third indicator



- “[W]orking-class whites historically derived both psychological and citizenship wages by privileging race over class.” (Zeitz 2017)

Third indicator



- Author thesis: They vote against their interests (e.g, for Trump) because they get psychological benefits from doing so

Third indicator



- Author thesis: They vote against their interests (e.g, for Trump) because they get psychological benefits from doing so
- In 4,000 word piece, not a **single** interview with a white working class person about what motivated their voting

Third indicator



- “~~Does the White Working Class Really Vote against Its Own Interests?~~”
- “What Theorists Have Proposed about How the Working Class Votes”

In sum



In sum



For qualitative literacy

Clarify, cultivate, teach

Fundamental to evidence-based reasoning

Critical for democratic discourse