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Friday, March 13, 2-4pm

ACAD 326

Reception Immediately Following

Forty Acres and a Wealth Gap: Tracing the Social Reproduction of Systemic Racial Inequality

Abstract: Conceptually, social reproduction refers to perpetuation of social systems; how societies are maintained and reproduced. Of particular concern is the role of "capital" (material, cultural, social, and symbolic) to this process. Despite attention to historical roots, few scholars have provided a comprehensive explanation of the social reproduction of contemporary racial inequality. Recent studies have examined intergenerational transmission of racial inequality in wealth and advantage, but are limited to single or bi-generational analyses of isolated forms of capital. Similarly, the impact of institutions in reproducing inequality has been considered historically and/or theoretically, but has not been linked with a multi-generational empirical analysis. Missing is a comprehensive investigation of how multiple intergenerational dynamics affect the social reproduction of racial inequality. This qualitative dissertation project employs extended case method to address these critical gaps by examining the intergenerational decision-making processes of families. By situating family histories regarding access to and use of capital (e.g., in housing, schooling), within the larger structural context (e.g. law, social programs), this research exposes racial group differences in intergenerational mobility paths. In particular, this research examines differences in white and black families □ access to and use of multiple forms of capital; the ways in which the socio-historical, institutional context has fostered or inhibited intergenerational transmission of family capital; and, finally, the role of symbolic capital in the ways families explain their successes and failures.