Socio-Spatial Inequality –
What to Focus Research On and Why?

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Preamble: Methodology Issues

Data limitations now that reliable information from Census long form not available

- **Past and present**
    - Limitations on go-forward basis
    - Can dip into well again for research up to 2006

- **Public and private alternatives, both imply additional cost or partnership with others**
    - Alternative public sources:
        - administrative data (ex. tax files, school boards, universities, health data, registrations at community centres, social assistance or EI benefits, CPP, etc.)
        - other para-public private sources (various housing sources including CMHC, TCHC; City of Toronto census of employers, etc.)
        - implies partnerships with data holders
    - Alternative private sources:
        - Administrative data (ex. banks, credit issuers, MLS, CREA)
        - Polling and marketing data
        - Primary surveys conducted by others, ex. Wealth management and investment funds, clinical trials, United Way, Food Banks, etc.

- **What is lost:** ethnicity, vis min, aboriginal, newcomers, disabled, comparable tenure of immigrants, comparable small area data (exception: LAD, large area data, and SAAD, small area administrative data, from tax file 20% sample)

What should be the focus of research

(building on John Myles, "why I should care, why it matters")

Why should people (and not just academics, or policy makers) **care** about your research? Because it matters to them. It speaks to issues that affect them. To make this research relevant to a broader audience, speak to current context and focus on/disentangle issues of concern:

1) Immediate concern (next 5 years): fragile recovery, household debt, slow economic growth (#1 policy priority is economic growth, political fetish – permits promise of prosperity, hasn't delivered, but if you don't think growth works, without growth things get worse pretty quick)

2) Next pre-occupation (5-10 years): tight labour markets

3) Future Shock (10-20 years, maybe sooner): health

4) Hope (perennial): Mobility

Some ideas for how the neighbourhood change "Three Cities" research can explore these themes

1. **Fragile recovery**

    a. **Income hot spots** – where is high % of income going to housing, and what are incomes of these people (low, middle, high income? Changing over time?). This is a proxy for low purchasing power so is high incidence of high % of spending on housing connected with slower/smaller local economy? Less retail activity or jobs?

    b. **Housing related** – where is "overcrowding"? Is its incidence changing over time? By location?

c. **Still a magnet for immigrants** – where are immigrants settling? Are they moving around more than in the past? (Can we tell from census data? From other sources, like settlement service agencies?) Are they coming with families? On their own? Growth of temporary foreign workers in large urban centres too? With/without families?

d. **Joblessness** – where are areas with high % of joblessness, high % of long term joblessness (are the three cities sites – or future six cities – of lower unemployment or higher unemployment than provincial averages? Longer duration of unemployment or shorter?

e. **Working Poor** – where is high incidence of households with low income but working; living in same places as those without jobs but poor? Different neighbourhoods?

2. **Tight Labour markets**

a. **Aging populations** – are these cities higher or lower % of the elderly compared to other jurisdictions (more job opportunities, but also more access to health services); dependency ratios (for elderly as share of working age population or, more classically, for elderly and children as share of working age population)

b. **Who will we rely on in future to maintain standard of living?** – socio-economic/income fate of newcomers and aboriginal populations; % of immigrants, vis min. Etc. Also % of children, overall and in these groups (rates of poverty, consider LIM rather than LICO)

c. **Job growth** – what kinds of jobs are these groups getting – permanent versus temporary, occupation, education, income; hours; commuting time – all by age, gender, race. Labour force participation rates of women over time in these different groups. Have we maxed out the ability to sustain household income by having women work more?

d. **Education x 2** – by attainment, and by requirement of job (ex census of employers in Toronto, or board of trade job fairs, etc)

e. **Education again** – variation in learning readiness/educational outcomes by household income of kids in schools. Neighbourhoods are ghettoizing by income, are the schools themselves becoming ghettoized (rich schools, poor schools, in rich and poor neighbourhoods) ? Are there some schools that are located in poor neighbourhoods with a mix of students from different income classes? Is it the same in rich neighbourhoods? Do you get different results for poor kids going to school in neighbourhoods with mixed incomes?

3. **Health**

   a. **Not about health care but health outcomes.** Intertwined with tight labour markets and fate of children (itself a function of investments made in early life)

   b. **Social Determinants of Health** – replicate Code Red methodology (Hamilton Spectator); socio-economic gradients of health; showing how life expectancy can be staggeringly different by neighbourhood, linked to average household income (of neighbourhoods)

   c. **Pathways [to health] research** (Nancy Ross) – replicate at neighbourhood level, what part of health outcome is attributable from "built" environment (includes social institutions), helps assess what is preventable; how much of this is place based versus the variations to the socio-economic gradient of health based on gender, age, and other characteristics (working poor, versus no-earned-income poor among working aged).

   d. **Education outcomes**: attainment of PSE, test scores in elementary and secondary (EQAO test results show, time and again, that children from low income backgrounds and in low-income neighbourhoods systematically fare worse than those who are better off – so what should we do about this??) Are score results systemically better in mixed income neighbourhoods (any improvement by "mixing it up", the track we are on for social housing redevelopment?)

   e. **Role of parenting/mentoring/opportunities.** Healthy behaviours established early on, related to degree to which children feel like they belong, that their development is valued/a priority. Determinants of health could be – incidence of two-parent families, single parent families; incidence of both parents working; incidence of adult male presence; incidence of volunteering, particularly with children; access to extracurricular activities (for free, for cheap) for kids....all by different types of neighbourhoods. [Goal of Middle Childhood Matters working group, dealing with children aged 8 to 14, the latch-key cohort: one more adult in these kids lives between 3:30 and 6 p.m.]

   f. **Absence/presence of "middle class" opportunities** – joblessness, manufacturing jobs, public sector jobs, other "middle class engine" jobs. Average number of jobs held/hours worked by working age adults. % of jobs with pensions, benefits.

4. **Mobility**

   a. **Often offered as the answer to growing inequality, poverty.** You'll move out of it, eventually. At least two elements to this idea: intergenerational and lifecycle mobility.

b. **This is about hope, opportunity.** To the extent that neighbourhoods are polarizing according to income, to what extent is opportunity getting hardwired? Are kids meeting kids from other income/experience groups? Are there lots of/few opportunities to develop potential re extracurricular activities in neighbourhood? What's the relationship between networking and mobility? How to grow our exposure to the "other" who can be a bridge to another world. (Same for upward and downward mobility?)

c. **Is mobility occurring?** Of course! For whom? Is it slowing?

d. **Is income mobility (up or down) different in different neighbourhood/income settin**gs? Does incidence, duration, depth of poverty change depending on where you live? Is it harder to move out of poverty in some places? How far out of poverty do you get? To middle class? Or to working poor? How much does middle class move to upper class? How much downward mobility/volatility of highest income group?

e. **Does mobility depend on mating, or at least networking?** (Who you marry/get a job with is primarily a result of who you hang out with, see point b) Do you only attain mobility if you meet people from outside your class? (And does downward mobility operate on the same rules, or is it an asymmetrical process?)

f. **Is mobility accelerated or impeded for people living with someone.** The social safety net is getting real personal, it takes two to get and stay in the middle. Do single people fare worse or better re mobility? Higher poverty rates but also higher mobility? (African saying: if you want to go fast, travel alone. If you want to go far, travel together.)

g. **Is mobility dependent on or associated with physically/geographically moving**? If so, how far, on average? Within a city? Between cities? Between provinces? (Reference is income mobility in Canada, may want to control for period of time in Canada)

h. **There is more "mobility" /churn in lower income neigh**bourhoods, partly because people don't want to live with people who don't care. Does higher volatility of resident population in a neighbourhood contribute to low income segregation? Or is it the low income that leads to higher volatility?

i. **Do low income seniors stay put** if they don't own a home?

j. **Do younger low income households try** to save money by moving, or by staying put?

k. **Is mobility increasingly just a demographic phenomenon**? (churn as boomers sell their single detached dwellings and downsize to condos)