

Amy Traver
Introduction to Sociology

Class Topic Course synthesis and visual sociology through a case study of unlicensed immigrant Latin@ street vendors in Los Angeles

Description This lesson is part of a late-semester module that will unfold in an Introduction to Sociology course organized around the exploration of paid work. At this point in the semester students will have: learned about the sociological perspective; engaged a variety of sociological concepts (including, but not limited to, globalization, formal/informal economies, race and ethnicity, immigration, culture, social networks, social exclusion, and agency); read a number of sociological studies of work; and come to understand the research methods (and ethical standards) employed by sociologists. The goals of this particular module are to encourage students' active synthesis and application of these concepts as well as to introduce students to an additional sociological research method, visual sociology. To best achieve these goals, this module will engage the growing sociological literature on unlicensed immigrant Latin@ street vendors in Los Angeles, California. While sociologists like Duneier (1999) have studied other economically-marginalized and racialized urban street vendors in the United States, a case study of unlicensed immigrant Latin@ street vendors in Los Angeles best aligns with the global orientation of the course, contemporary media conversations, and the use of visual sociology. To initiate the module, this lesson will ask students to examine photographs of urban street vendors from various moments in American history.

Lesson Goals This lesson marks the start of a late semester course module that encourages students' synthesis of various course concepts through a case study of unlicensed immigrant Latin@ street vendors in Los Angeles, CA. This module also introduces students to the research method of visual sociology. There are two goals: to encourage students' organic use of the concepts in the module, and to facilitate students' consideration of photography as a data collection method.

Step One: Explain to students that we are initiating the last course module, which will tie together many of our course concepts. State that the module will also feature an additional sociological research method, visual sociology. Introduce the day's class activity: an analysis of photographs of urban street vendors from various moments in American history. (5 minutes)

Step Two: Divide students into pairs. Distribute to each dyad a packet of photographs of urban street vendors from various moments in American history. Photographs will be downloaded/photocopied from the digital collections of the New York Public Library (<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>; search: street vendors); the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times (<http://www.nytimes.com> & <http://www.latimes.com/>; search: street vendors; park vendors); the relevant archives of organizations like the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center (<http://streetvendor.org/>) and Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (<http://www.arch.columbia.edu/>), and the published

works of sociologists like Duneier (1999) and Muñoz (2012). Each photograph will be labeled with the following descriptive information: location, date, photographer, source, and any available material on the scene/subjects. (5 minutes)

Step Three: Ask students to examine the individual photographs of street vendors according to the principles of observational or field research, which were discussed in previous class sessions. Ask them to write down everything that they see in each photograph. (10 minutes)

Step Four: Ask students to examine the photographs of street vendors as an aggregate dataset. Encourage them to look across the photographs (and their descriptive information) for visual, experiential, and/or narrative similarities or differences. Ask them to write down these similarities/differences. (10minutes)

Step Five: Ask for student volunteers to share their observations and these similarities/differences aloud with the class. Record on the whiteboard. (15 minutes)

Step Six: Ask students to infer whether and how any course concepts might be relevant to their observations and these similarities/differences. Record on the whiteboard. (5 minutes)

Step Seven: Ask students to examine the photographs as artifacts of a particular lens or perspective on street vendors: explain that some of the photographers employed a journalistic lens or perspective, while others employed a sociological lens or perspective. (Instructors might consider using a rubric, handout, or conversations from previous class sessions to structure this brief activity.) Ask students to individually select and share which photos they think were taken from the two different lenses or perspectives. (5 minutes)

Step Eight: Indicate the relevant photographs to students; pointing out the photographs from the news outlets, those taken by photojournalist Ovie Carter for Duneier's (1999) sociological text, and those used by Muñoz (2012) in her visual sociology research. Ask students to consider the source of the "difference in lenses or perspectives:" is it the photographs, themselves, or how the photographs are used (to capture a moment vs. to evidence a phenomenon) and analyzed? (5 minutes)

Step Nine: Use Muñoz's (2012) images to introduce the module to students. State that Muñoz (2012) uses visual sociology to study unlicensed immigrant Latin@ street vendors in Los Angeles. Connect this research interest to many of the comments that students made in step six (it is likely that students will have referenced immigration, globalization, informal economy, race/ethnicity, and gender). Ask students to consider the "unlicensed" designation: what does it mean? Were earlier American street vendors also considered "unlicensed"? From where/when does this designation arise? Ask students about the importance of state and city context in studies of street vendors. Why focus on Los Angeles, on California? Finally, tell students about the demographics of street vendors. Ask them to consider why the vast majority of street vendors,

across cities and states in the U.S., are immigrants and/or people of color. (In addition to the work of Duneier (1999), Muñoz (2012), and Rosales' (2013), good websites to consult for this data include <http://streetvendor.org/publications/> and http://www.arch.columbia.edu/files/gsappp/imceshared/StreetVendorReport_Final.pdf). (10 minutes)

Step Ten: Distribute the week's reading, Rosales' (2013) "Survival, Economic Mobility and Community among Los Angeles Fruit Vendors" (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39.5: 697-717). Describe how this article makes explicit many of the aforementioned connections to course concepts. Note that we will discuss the article at length during the next class meeting, and that students will learn more about the strengths and implications of visual sociology later in the week. (5 minutes)

List of Materials

1. A packet of photographs of urban street vendors from various moments in American history. Photographs will be downloaded/photocopied from the digital collections of the New York Public Library (<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>; search: street vendors); the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times (<http://www.nytimes.com> & <http://www.latimes.com/>; search: street vendors; park vendors); the relevant archives of organizations like the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center (<http://streetvendor.org/>) and Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (<http://www.arch.columbia.edu/>), and the published works of sociologists like Duneier (1999) and Muñoz (2012).
2. A whiteboard
3. Rosales' (2013) "Survival, Economic Mobility and Community among Los Angeles Fruit Vendors" (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39.5: 697-717)