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Review of *Invisible in Austin: Life and Labor in an American City*. Javier Auyero. Reviewed by Danielle Docka-Filipek

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Sullivan's work in this book, as well as that of upcoming colloquia and consultations in this new area of cultural existential psychology, should be of great interest and importance to social work theorists and educators. It will yield valuable insights into the lives of families, communities, and individuals who seek social work services in situations of threat and suffering. Furthermore, it will soon become (or at least I hope so) a central discipline in the social work knowledge base. I would expect that future social work doctoral studies will begin to fill out the literature in this new approach. This book is like an initial starting pistol shot that I hope is heard widely through our field.

Daniel Liechty, Illinois State University

Javier Auyero (Ed.), *Invisible in Austin: Life and Labor in an American City*. University of Texas Press (2015), 280 pages, \$24.95 (paperback).

In the tradition of Burawoy's *Global Ethnography* (2000) and Bourdieu's *The Weight of the World* (1993), Auyero and his student ethnographers collectively embark on the task of mapping the social and institutional landscapes of the lives of marginalized workers living in Austin, Texas, the now-booming, rapidly gentrifying, 'liberal oasis.' As the contributors to the volume deftly demonstrate, capital flows into the city from ventures in creative and digital technology, new construction, corporate headquartering, and energy production, aided in part by a low tax burden, but also by the growth of the service sector and a two-tiered labor market. As Austin grows increasingly 'hip,' living in the city grows increasingly inaccessible for people working in the marginalized segment of the bifurcated labor market, as they are increasingly pushed to the periphery of urban life, while simultaneously facilitating and maintaining the lifestyles of those who make up the 'core.'

Each chapter is the result of ongoing participant observation and a series of life history interviews conducted with a single respondent, all of whom were selected to represent various facets of the processes of urban change described above. Following a chapter that provides an historical

introduction to the political economy of the city, the book is populated with the stories of workers from varied demographics who share a common thread—they have been pushed to the city's sidelines by the pace of gentrification and the stagnation of wages, and they therefore find their place in the city increasingly tenuous.

Here we meet close up a migrant worker who must keep producing despite the aging body that now betrays him, a homeless and downwardly mobile woman of middle-class origins, the mother of a labeled 'at-risk' teen, a Xerox maintenance man, a stripper who reluctantly transitions into (and out of) sex work, a Nepalese academic turned cab driver, a hotel clerk with a problematic taste for the 'finer things,' a country musician struggling to pry a living from his trade, an entrepreneurial domestic worker, a community organizer from a historically African-American neighborhood, and an undocumented student attending UT-Austin. These are the people who together populate the pages of this text. Throughout, the authors maintain a keen eye for the impact of institutions and social forces in the lives of their respondents, narrating the lives of their subjects while deploying the main analytic lens of C. Wright Mills' "sociological imagination," as they discern the interconnectedness of history and biography and the relations between the two within society.

The text will be useful for other researchers (especially ethnographers) collecting data in the city of Austin, or perhaps other increasingly inaccessible urban locales known for experiencing similar processes of gentrification, marginalization, labor market bifurcation, and serving as historic havens for cultural innovators, artists, and 'weirdos' (Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and New York come to mind). The collection may also be useful for those teaching qualitative methods seminars, as individual chapters serve as exemplars of vivid life history interviews, "thick description," and a rich sense of the import of context provided by a deep understanding of place and space. Additionally, those with an interest in developing a richly contextualized understanding of the simultaneously unique and increasingly generalizable trends in Austin may find satisfaction of their interests, as well as greater empathy for those subject to the institutional forces described in the text.

These applications aside, however, it must be said that the book would have benefitted greatly from more consistent application of core concepts in urban studies/ethnography, the study of institutional inequality, or reflexive methodological musings. Greater inclusion of these elements would have significantly increased the potential audience for this book (for example, in undergraduate courses). Nonetheless, the work serves as a testament to the value, continued relevance, and vital results of the application of the sociological imagination in efforts to better understand in context the diverse array of human lives that keep a metropolis humming, as well as a reminder of the costs to those who are pushed to the side as cities pursue economic development and experience rapid change.

Danielle Docka-Filipek, Christopher Newport University

Mathew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown Publishers (2016), 432 pages, \$28.00 (hardcover).

Using an ethnographic approach, Desmond gives readers a comprehensive and vivid description of the everyday struggles of eight families in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While each family has its own unique circumstances, each has suffered from being marginally housed. They either move from place to place with minimum housing stability or reside in trailer parks, where the quality of life is hugely compromised. Using novelistic language, this book is by no means an obscure reading, yet it provokes tremendous empathy toward those in our society who try everything to survive their lives. By the end of the book, readers may start to wonder why it is that these things are happening.

While the answer to this question may not have been explicitly pointed out in the book, readers will find themselves struck by the wide range of problems interfering with homelessness throughout the stories: poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, lack of education, domestic violence, discrimination, and legal issues, to name a few. In fact, there have been vigorous debates around the causes of homelessness in the United States. A traditional perspective ascribes homelessness