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GEOG 640
Class Notes Overview
The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wildfire

The intention behind this article is to daylight the heightened vulnerability of marginalized populations to wildfire and for the intersection of diverse social risks to be considered in disaster planning and management. Davies et al (2018) provides a framework that visually combines components of a Social-Ecological perspective, synthesizing physical risk factors with social-economic conditions that decrease a census group's resilience to hazard. The methodology for assessment utilizes secondary data from the United States Forest Service for physical risk of census blocks, and US census beau for demographics of census block groups. The article scope provides a broad overview of national trends that culminate in increased vulnerability of multiple racial minorities drawn from the US Census beau.

While hazard is the physical risk, marginalization and invisibility is what escalates the hazard to become a disaster with increased loss of life, property, and assets. This ties into issues of race-class, where as the United States have a long history of the correlation between the two. Adaptive capacity of census tracks, the listed criteria are factors that diminish resiliency, include lack of English language proficiency, housing, and economic status, in addition to the physical wildfire risks. Quantile regression is used assess the increased vulnerability of racial groups based on the physical and social data. In the study, Native Americans were shown especially to wildfire disaster, with Asian census blocks showing least vulnerability amongst the people of color. Reasons for social risk will vary and produce nuance amongst race-ethnicity, that a national broad overview may perpetuate a tendency to overlook multiple at risk populations within these racial categories.

If an objective of this research is to address invisibility, class differences and varying levels of vulnerability within historically disenfranchised white population, or acknowledgement of the category "other" may bring additional depth and solutions to systematic problems. Specific socio-economic and physical conditions that affect the focus groups within at risk census blocks is inclusively addressed in the Arizona case study, Situating Hazard Vulnerability. This paints a more clear socio-economic and historical context amongst multiple demographics in a fire prone landscape, especially of undocumented populations, such as migrants more fully into the discussion of wildfire vulnerability.

Additional ethnographic research may fill gaps of the broad national overview of the relationship between race and socio-economic vulnerability with additional perspective that although patterns exist, populations are internally diverse and dynamic. Perhaps this will allow disaster management agencies to address long-term underlying systematic causes of social vulnerability on a local scale. The consequences of not looking are to turn a wildfire hazard into a 'disaster'.