In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio
Phillippe Bourgois

I selected this book because it is a valuable analysis of a segregated inner city community. Bourgois’ theoretical evaluation of life in East Harlem New York touches on themes discussed throughout this class. The following are points made in the introduction and chapter 1 that we will use for class discussion.

1. The subtitle of this book is Selling crack in el barrio. Is the main topic drug dealing? How so?
2. What strategies do the residents in El Barrio engage in to “make ends meet?”
3. What are the available statistics Bourgois uses to estimate the number of people involved in the underground (informal) economy?
4. What is negative stereotyping? Describe Bourgois’ fear in relation to negative stereotyping.
5. What methodology does Bourgois use to draw his conclusions? Are you convinced this method is appropriate for his purpose? What convinces you (use specific examples from your reading to make your point)?
6. What is “the culture of poverty?” In what way(s) is it sociological? In what way(s) does it fail to incorporate a sociological perspective?
7. In what way is the culture of poverty similar or different to Bourgois’ statement “This ‘street culture of resistance’ is not a coherent, conscious universe of political opposition but, rather, a spontaneous set of rebellious practices that in the long term have emerged as an oppositional style” (pg. 8)?
8. In ethnographic research, a “gatekeeper” is someone who gives a researcher access to a particular group of people. Describing each in a sentence or two, Who serve as gatekeepers for Phillippe?
9. Is Phillippe gay, bisexual, or heterosexual? How did this become a relevant theme? In other words, what does it say about how class and race potentially confuse communication?
10. What is internalized racism?
11. What disaster occurred that almost ended his success at gaining information in this segregated neighborhood?
12. Explain one theme not touched on in these questions which you found particularly appealing. Why?