SPLINTERING COMMUNICATIONS:
The Reality of Digital Practices among People Experiencing Homelessness in an Urban Ghetto

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This talk focuses on the precarious digital access and use among homeless people in Skid Row

Theory: Digital Divide & Splintering Urbanism

Ethnographic Fieldwork & Research Questions

The Digital Life of the Unstably Housed
FROM DIGITAL DIVIDE TO DIGITAL INEQUALITY

• *Digital divide* research saw technology access as a yes/no binary and emphasized the lack of access in non-Western & rural areas.

• Researchers have now used the language of *digital inequality* to consider internet temporary disconnections and digital access instability.

• Little is known about struggles in digital access among the poor in resourced urban societies.
Splintering Urbanism discusses roles of urban technology and infrastructure provision in fostering social-spatial inequality.
This study concerns telecommunications technology access in Skid Row using ethnographic methods.

Major approaches are field observation, community engagement, and in-depth interviews.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• RQ1: What are the patterns of technology ownership and access among the unstably housed people in Skid Row?
• RQ2: How do they navigate access to telecommunications technology amidst the challenging living environment?
• RQ3: What are the consequences of access instability on their lives and wellbeing?
My fieldwork reveals Skid Row residents’ precarious access and use of telecommunications technologies.
Digital instability affects the marginalized users’ daily communication, information seeking, & wellbeing
To conclude, this study suggests the need for better provision of telecommunications technology and infrastructure for the urban poor.

The urban poor have limited access to telecommunications technology

The digital struggle affects their wellbeing & quality of life
THANK YOU!

Questions?

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