Cascading Overview, 10.25.18:

Intellectual Questions of Project

Collaboration across campus, knitting centers and institutes to faculty and graduate students

Principle Interdisciplinarity

Workshop has strong representation from social sciences. Fewer in history, humanities and arts. Not a full seminar – only 3 or 4 meetings per semester. Limited time together. But time enough to teach and learn.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. Get to know the literatures on downward mobilities and inequalities, intersecting across fields. What can we learn from good work by scholars across the country?
2. What questions are not being asked? What needs to be investigated that could contribute to the conversation? Identify urgent, unanswered questions, particularly starting from the social location of women and people of color, using an intersectional frame. [Gender and race-ethnicity become key analytic axes.]

I am defining Cascading as the process of falling from a particular status in ways that trigger additional declines. While fundamentally driven by an economic drop, cascading coexists with and provokes multiple losses, which can in turn become a constellation of descents—social, interpersonal, aspirational. Is it a useful concept?

Year-End Objectives

Identify compelling research questions around which we want to design a project and apply for funding. Participating in this workshop does not obligate you to be a part of that fundraising collaboration, but it does allow you to explore the possibility. What would be compelling to you? What would advance your research agenda? What study can we design that begins with intersectional questions and locates inquiry in gendered and racialized experiences and practices. Identify funding agencies and begin applying.

Questions about Downward Mobility and Inequality

1. How do we understand the multiple, related causes of economic descent in this historical moment? Historically?
2. What are the consequences?
3. How do gender and race/ethnicity shape the consequences and experiences of downward mobility?
4. In the context of gender and racial inequality, how does the precariousness of employment and contraction of safety nets undermine wage and wealth equality and general well-being?

Is Cascading a useful concept?

5. Under what conditions do an economic drop NOT trigger a cascade? Vs when it does?
6. What are the social, economic, and status dynamics within the cascading phenomenon?
7. What meanings do people assign to constellations of decline?