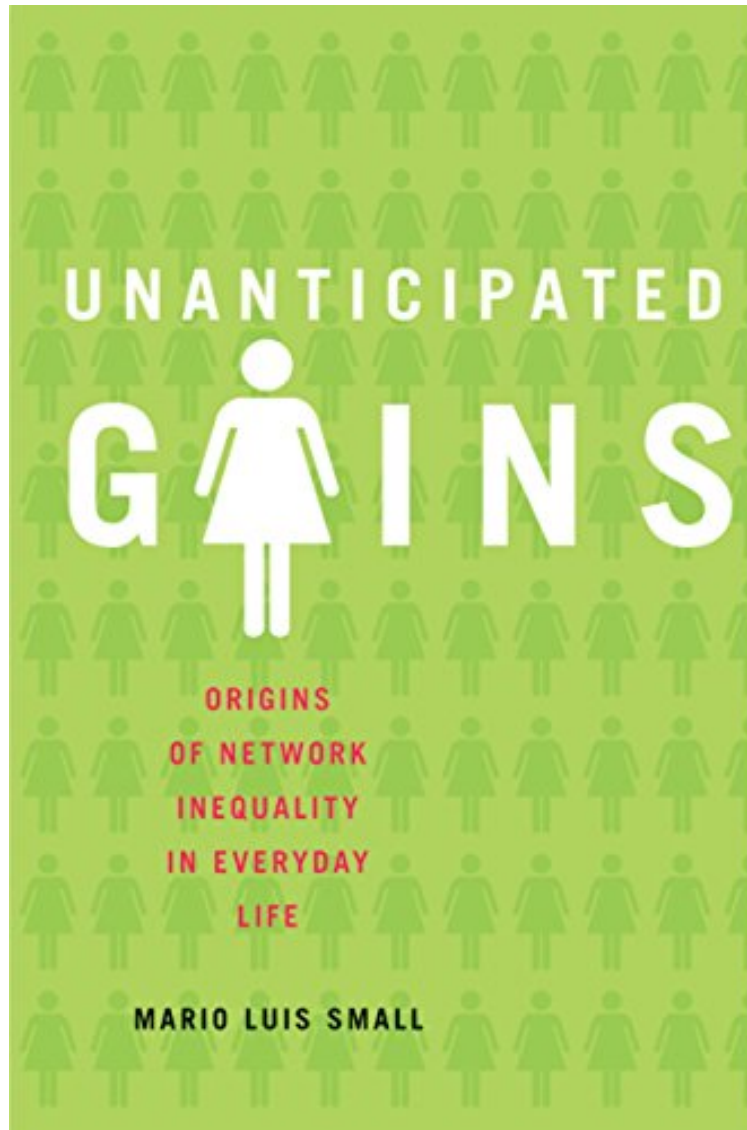


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Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life

Mario Luis Small

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Mario Luis Small : Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Well written, insightful studyBy Meredith KnightUnanticipated Gains is an excellent example of top notch social science research that is actually enjoyable to read. Mario Small investigates the influence of child care centers on the well being and social networks of urban families, with a special

focus on mothers. Small easily transitions from analysis of large scale surveys to observations, interviews, and focus groups of parents, center directors, and key administrators in the system. In this analysis, Small challenges some key notions about social theory. In particular, Small describes how participation in child care centers creates "compartmentalized intimates", in which mothers form surprisingly trusting relationships with other mothers based on their similar situations. Small also suggests that going to a child care center in a very poor neighborhood can actually create a more helpful network for participants than child care centers in more affluent neighborhoods. Small's keen ability to develop thoughtful mixed methods research is a valuable resource to the research community and to those interested in social issues. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Mario Small's book may appeal to at least two different ...By Ronald Hallett Mario Small's book may appeal to at least two different audiences. First, the main topic of the book explores how parents (particularly mothers) develop relationships as a result of the structure of childcare centers. These institutions rarely understand how their structure (e.g., waiting spaces, schedules) influence how the parents interact with the staff and each other. Small provides a detailed account of these institutions and engages in a discussion of how to use this information. Second, he uses these data to engage in a broader conversation of network connections. I found this to be the most compelling part of the book. He argues that most scholars understand the importance of building a robust social network; however, few scholars have embarked upon understanding and building theory around how these networks form. How do initial connections occur? And what role do institutions play in encouraging these connections? Even if the topic of childcare is not of specific interest, this network conversation may be of interest. Given Small's previous research, it will not be a surprise that a social justice critique of the status quo is interwoven into the manuscript. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Considerations for organizers and organizations By Customer Mario Luis Small provides a close look at organizations' ability to mobilize resources and supports purposefully and non-purposefully for individuals, as well as the structures that make effective mobilization more likely. Those interested in which levers to pull that may improve the lives of disadvantaged youth will especially appreciate Small's contributions in this book.

Social capital theorists have shown that some people do better than others in part because they enjoy larger, more supportive, or otherwise more useful networks. But why do some people have better networks than others? *Unanticipated Gains* argues that the practice and structure of the churches, colleges, firms, gyms, childcare centers, and schools in which people happen to participate routinely matter more than their deliberate "networking." Exploring the experiences of New York City mothers whose children were enrolled in childcare centers, this book examines why a great deal of these mothers, after enrolling their children, dramatically expanded both the size and usefulness of their personal networks. Whether, how, and how much the mother's networks were altered--and how useful these networks were--depended on the apparently trivial, but remarkably consequential, practices and regulations of the centers. The structure of parent-teacher organizations, the frequency of fieldtrips, and the rules regarding drop-off and pick-up times all affected the mothers' networks. Relying on scores of in-depth interviews with mothers, quantitative data on both mothers and centers, and detailed case studies of other routine organizations, Small shows that how much people gain from their connections depends substantially on institutional conditions they often do not control, and through everyday processes they may not even be aware of. Emphasizing not the connections that people make, but the context in which they are made, *Unanticipated Gains* presents a major new perspective on social capital and on the mechanisms producing social inequality.

"Child care centers are not just about caring for children. Rather, under the right circumstances, they also foster invaluable community ties among moms. That was a crucial fact about the first kindergartens a century ago, and it is the central lesson of Mario Small's important new book. *Unanticipated Gains* has important implications for anyone concerned about how to reweave the fabric of American communities."--Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* "In this supreme work, Mario Luis Small does nothing less than transform the way that we understand social capital. With meticulous ethnographic fieldwork and a large body of data, he argues that social capital should no longer be conceptualized as individual action divorced from organizational context. To say that this multi-method case study is necessary reading alongside Coleman, Bourdieu, and Wilson is an understatement. *Unanticipated Gains* provides enormous leverage in explaining social inequality. Small provides a bold new agenda for sociology."--Mitchell Duneier, Professor of Sociology, Princeton University "Unanticipated Gains is a major contribution to the growing literature on social capital. Mario Small's original model of how social capital is influenced by organizational conditions is brilliantly applied to a case study of the experiences of mothers whose children were enrolled in childcare centers in New York. In the process he uncovered mechanisms that produce and perpetuate inequality in personal networks, and thereby provides direction for future research. Indeed, his notion of the 'organizational isolate' will become a key concept in future studies of formal organizations."--William Julius Wilson, University Professor and Director of Joblessness and Urban Poverty Research Program, Harvard University "In *Unanticipated Gains*, Small suggests an entirely new way to think about our social relationships, situating them within the organizations that we work for, join, and patronize. Small keenly uncovers how these organizations set the parameters of our social worlds,

and with an impressive variety of data, he shows that differences in organizations' brokering power is an overlooked source of inequality. This is a supremely smart book that makes it impossible to go back to the old ways of studying individuals outside of the groups within which they live their lives."--Mary Pattillo, Professor of Sociology and African-American Studies, Northwestern University

"In his compelling new book, *Unanticipated Gains*, Mario Small joins sociological theory with detailed empirical evidence to show us how childcare centers generate much-needed social capital in low-income communities. I'll never enter a childcare center again without thinking about this book!"--Sara McLanahan, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University

"Mixing focused interviews with observations both quantitative and qualitative, Small identifies in exquisite detail the mechanisms by which the simple acts of everyday life--enrolling a child in day care--enmesh moms in networks of opportunity and obligation, strengthening their social ties with neighbors and others, thereby weaving the dense matrix of the urban landscape. A beautiful and richly conceived study."--Peter Bearman, Professor of the Social Sciences, Columbia University

"Essential.... A great contribution to the burgeoning literature on social capital.... Not only does Small raise an interesting and important question, his book is an exemplary combination of quantitative analyses of survey data with ethnographic fieldwork in child-care centers in New York City.... Small has a masterful writing style; it was difficult to put down the book. Not only will this book be widely read by researchers of social capital and social networks, students will welcome it as well."--Social Behavioral Sciences

About the Author Mario Luis Small is Grafstein Family Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. He is author of *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in Boston Barrio* (Chicago 2004) which was awarded the 2004 C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems and the 2005 Robert E. Park Award for Best Book from the Community and Urban Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association.