

**Tom Wooten**

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Department of Sociology  
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**Employment:**

*Louisiana State University*  
Assistant Professor of Sociology 2024-

*Harvard University*  
College Fellow, Department of Sociology 2022-2024

**Education:**

Ph.D. in Sociology, Harvard University, 2022  
Dissertation Committee: Mary C. Waters (Chair), Mario Small, Jocelyn Viterna

M.A. in Sociology, Harvard University, 2015

B.A. in Social Studies, Harvard College, 2008, *Magna Cum Laude*

**Papers:**

Wooten, Tom. 2024. "Effort Traps: Socially Structured Striving and the Reproduction of Disadvantage." *American Journal of Sociology* 130(2): 344-383.

Wooten, Tom. 2022. "'If it don't kill you, it'll take away your life': survival strategies and isolation in a long-running gun conflict." *Criminology* 60(4): 1-25.

**Books:**

*Effort Traps: Poverty, College, and the Elusive American Dream* (book manuscript in progress)

- Ethnographic study that follows eight young Black men from low-income families in New Orleans through their senior year of high school and attempted first year of college
- Book combines vivid narration with careful sociological analysis, describing previously unidentified mechanisms of social reproduction
- Under advance contract at The University of Chicago Press

Wooten, Tom. 2012. *We Shall Not Be Moved: Rebuilding Home in the Wake of Katrina*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Reviewed or profiled in: *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio's *The Reading Life*, *The Times-Picayune*, *Booklist* (starred review), *YES! Magazine*, *ForeWord Reviews*, *Prism Magazine*, *New Orleans Offbeat Podcast*

- Nonfiction Book of the Year for 2013, New Orleans Library Foundation
- 2014 Japanese language translation published by Akashi Shoten

Sandesara, Utpal and Tom Wooten. 2011. *No One Had a Tongue to Speak: The Untold Story of One of History's Deadliest Floods*. New York: Prometheus Books.

- Reviewed or profiled in: *Times of India, Indian Express, New Jersey Star Ledger, Businessworld, The Sunday Indian, Business Standard, Time Out Mumbai, OPEN Magazine, Outlook India, Caravan Magazine, Sandesh, Dinya Bhaskar, Phulchhab, Akila, Gujarat Samachar, Harvard Magazine, Penn Medicine Magazine*
- 2012 English language Indian edition by Rupa Publications
- 2015 Gujarati language translation published by Pravin Prakashan
- Inspired the 2023 Gujarati-language movie *Machhbhu*

### **Fellowships, Grants, and Awards:**

2017 - National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant  
 2016 - Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies Student Research Support Program Grant  
 2016 - Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Merit Term-Time Fellowship  
 2015 - Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Summer Predissertation Fellowship  
 2014 - Invited as a “Leader of Tomorrow” to the 44<sup>th</sup> St. Gallen Symposium in Switzerland  
 2013 - Harvard Inequality & Social Policy Doctoral Fellowship  
 2013 - National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Honorable Mention  
 2012 - Forbes Magazine “30 Under 30,” Law and Policy list  
 2008 - Neighborhood Recovery Research Fellowship, Harvard Kennedy School  
 2007 - New Orleans Service Grant, Edward M. Lamont Public Service Fellowship at Harvard College  
 2006 - South Asia Research Fellowship, Harvard Asia Center & South Asia Initiative  
 2005 - World Teach South Africa Service Fellowship, Harvard Center for International Development,  
 2004 - Public Service Fellowship, Rotary Club of Winchester, MA

### **Invited Lectures and Panels**

“Social Causes and Social Consequences of Engineering Failures: The Case of the Machhu Dam-II Disaster”

- Professional Development Webinar, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, 2020
- Keynote Address, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, 2019

“Pushed Out: Residents Displaced by Gentrification in Post-Katrina New Orleans”

- Keynote Panel, Walk / Bike / Places Conference, New Orleans, 2018

“University-Community Partnerships in Disaster Recovery”

- West Virginia Recovery Conference, Marshall University, 2017

“Life After Hurricane Katrina: The Resilience in Survivors of Katrina (RISK) Project”

- Katrina@10 Conference, Tulane School of Public Health, 2015

“Neighborhood-Based Recovery in New Orleans”

- University of Delaware Disaster Research Center, 2013

- Hampshire College, 2012
- Broadmoor Neighborhood, New Orleans, 2012

“Post-Katrina Recovery in Perspective: Lessons for Future Disasters”

- National Homeland Security Conference, Los Angeles, 2013

“The Machhu Dam Disaster: Social Origins and Social Consequences”

- Morbi City Hall, Gujarat, India, 2015
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 2012
- South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers, and People, Delhi, 2012
- University of Pennsylvania Preceptorial, 2012

“Writing Narrative Nonfiction”

- University of the Sciences, Philadelphia, 2012

### **Workshop and Conference Presentations**

“The Effort Trap: An Ethnography of Trying and Failing to Get Ahead”

- “Money Matters: Low-Income Students, Financial Aid, and Work” Session, American Education Research Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, 2023
- “Education Policy and Reform: Strategies and Shortcomings” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 2022
- Harvard Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, 2019
- Harvard Sociology Out of Town Grad Student Symposium, 2019

“Social Amputation: Staying Alive in Long-Running Gun Conflicts”

- “Research on Deviance and Social Control” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, New York, NY, 2019

“Walking the Tightrope: Structure, Agency, and the Precariousness of Attempted Upward Mobility”

- Eastern Sociological Society Conference, 2019
- Sociology of Education Workshop, University of Pennsylvania, 2018

“Gun Violence and Social Isolation in New Orleans”

- Urban Sociology Round Table, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, 2018
- Harvard Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, 2018

“Extracurriculars and the Construction of Personal Authenticity”

- “Culture and Inequality” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, 2017
- Mixed Methods Workshop, Harvard University, 2016

“An Ethnography of the Transition to College for Low-Income Students”

- Workshop on Urban Social Processes, Harvard University, 2015

“Economic Conditions and Status Salience” with Nathan Wilmers

- Quantitative Methods Workshop, Harvard University, 2014

“Extracurricular Life at an Elite College”

- Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, Harvard University, 2014

“What Makes a Successful Recovery Effort?”

- Harvard-MIT Economic Sociology Workshop, 2013

### **Teaching and Advising**

2024- Courses Taught at LSU

- Sociology 4462: Youth and Crime
- Sociology 7903: Graduate Proseminar

2020-2024 Courses Taught at Harvard

- Sociology 1107: Contemporary Ethnography
- Sociology 1197: Poverty in the United States
- Sociology 98we, Sociology 98wf: small research seminars for juniors
- Sociology 3305: Graduate Teaching Practicum

2017-2024 Senior Thesis Adviser at Harvard

- Charlotte Baker (Social Studies, Class of 2024) – “Judges, Loved Ones, and Bondsmen: An Ethnography of Cash Bail in a Southern U.S. City.” Won the Captain Jonathan Fay Prize, awarded to the top three undergraduate theses at Harvard College. Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.
- Elise Collin (Social Studies, Class of 2022) – “The Dawn of a New Curriculum: Obstacles to the Implementation of Ethnic Studies.”
- Maison Jobe (Social Studies, Class of 2022) – “Out in the Cold: Making Ends Meet in Rural Minnesota.”
- Yifan Chen (Sociology, Class of 2021) – Project about experiences of young adult immigrants in the United States.
- Trevor Ladner (Sociology, Class of 2020) – “Blackness on the Whiteboard: Teaching Race and Racism in Mississippi Social Studies Education.” Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.
- Nicholas Albert (Social Studies, Class of 2020) – “If Not for Us, Then for Whom? How Gentrification Shapes Perceptions of Recovery in Post-Katrina New Orleans.”
- Quinn Mulholland (Sociology, Class of 2018) – “Solitary in Suburbia: The Social Networks of Suburban Voucher Holders in Atlanta.” Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.

2014-2015 Teaching Fellow at Harvard

- Sociology 177: Poverty in America with Matthew Desmond
- United States and the World 31: American Society and Public Policy with Mary Waters and Theda Skocpol
- SUP 606 Disaster Recovery Management: Rebuilding Cities After Disaster, Harvard Kennedy School with Doug Ahlers

2012-2015; 2019-2021 Resident Tutor in Quincy House, Harvard College

- As fellowships tutor, advised winners of Rhodes Scholarship, Marshall Scholarship, Mitchell Scholarship, Fulbright Scholarship, Truman Scholarship, Schwarzman Scholarship, and numerous Harvard-specific fellowships.
- 2014 winner of the Harvard Foundation's Race Relations Advisor Award, "for outstanding contributions to intercultural and race relations at Harvard College."
- Nominated for the Marquand Award for excellence in undergraduate advising for the 2012-2013 school year.

2009-2011 Middle School Writing Teacher, KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts

- Teach for America Greater New Orleans Corps Member

### **Academic Service**

Reviewer, *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Sociology of Education*, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*

2019 Founder, Harvard Sociology Out-of-Town Graduate Student Working Group

2018 Graduate Student Research Team Leader, Forward Together New Orleans

- Helped support a resident-led effort to advise incoming mayor LaToya Cantrell on her first-term priorities.
- Recruited students from Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard Graduate School of Design with needed subject matter expertise to conduct research for resident-led committees.

2014-2015 Co-Coordinator, Harvard Migration and Immigrant Incorporation Workshop

### **Public Sociology**

"The Long Homecoming: Ten Years After Hurricane Katrina"

- *Beacon Broadside*. August 29, 2015. (<http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2015/08/the-long-homecoming-ten-years-after-hurricane-katrina.html>)

"Rebuilding After Sandy: Lessons from the Gulf Coast"

- *GOOD*. December 12, 2012. (<http://www.good.is/posts/sandy-refugees-the-world-s-leading-experts-on-rebuilding-their-homes>)

"Jungleland or Grassroots Recovery? The Lower Ninth Ward as a Symbol of Hope"

- *Beacon Broadside*. March 28, 2012. (<http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2012/03/jungleland-or-grassroots-recovery.html>)

"Three Lessons in Emergency Management from Someone Who Did It Well"

- *History News Network*. August 29, 2011. (<http://hnn.us/article/141433>)