Between a (Global) Rock and a Hard Place
“Butterfly effect”
Sociological Imagination

Plausible in Theory, Arduous in Practice
Cornell's Flash Mob
Ho Plaza,
Sept. 2012

Most Viewed YouTube Video
Why?

Fall in birth rates

Gains in education

Hyper-competition

Spillover of talent into non-classic jobs

Better performance in music industry (KPop)

International migration and strong diaspora

Fall in birth rates

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Why?
“Global” Illusion
Ecological fallacy

Tyranny of averages

Methodological individualism

Tyranny of expertise
Aggregation bias
The ‘Global’ Illusion

• No such thing as a global problem

• Global situation = statistical average of diverse/divergent experiences
Ecological Fallacy

Prevalence of Obesity by Income
Percentage of U.S. adults ages 20 years and older who are obese

- Income equal to or more than 350% of poverty level
- Income 130%-349% of poverty level
- Income less than 130% of poverty level

Chart 2: Prevalence of obesity world-wide

Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Mexican-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.0%*</td>
<td>27.5%*</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>39.2%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*race and ethnicity included in total.
Survey, 2005–2008

Source: BofA Merrill Lynch Global Research, WHO
Tyranny of averages
Tyranny of Averages

- People & communities are unevenly affected by global forces
Meth. Individualism
Methodological Individualism

- Study individual behavior to understanding social problems
- Individual behavior can be studied more rigorously ...
- But it is at times not the bottom line
Tyranny of experts
Tyranny of Experts

- Experts speaking for the poor
- Possible distortions
- Conflict of interest
Chasing the Elusive “Butterfly Effect”