

Urban Community and Personality: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract: Urban Sociology is a troubled field, its doleful state epitomized by the common use of its name to cloak the study of multifarious social problems. This symbolic diffusion of identity is but a manifestation of more fundamental difficulties in definition and directions. It is the purpose of this study to address those difficulties. I deal here with basic theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues in the study of urban community and personality.

Key words: Urban community, personality, manifestation, rural-urban cantinuum, psychological attributes, Texas

INTRODUCTION

The social problems' burden of the field is partly an heritage of its early years. To the classical sociologists, the city was particularly intriguing because it was bold relief representation of modern society and that society's emerging ways of life. Simmel wrote: An inquiry into the inner meaning of specifically modern life must seek to solve the equation which structures like the metropolis set up between the individual and superindividual contexts of life. Thus, Park suggested making of the city a laboratory or clinic in which human nature and social processes may be conveniently and profitably studied. One consequence of defining the city for these studies as a microcosym of modern society was to help confuse the mission of urban sociology.

Construed as the study of phenomena which occurs in cities, to urban places or not, rather than as the study of city phenomena, urban sociology is indictable as a non-field, as being redundant with general sociology. This, i shall argue, need not be so; there are significant issues which are particularly the domain of urban sociology.

Historical background: Sociology evolved centrally around a concern for the consequences of the great transformation. The discipline's pivotal question was and largely still is: how can the moral order of a society be maintained and the integration of its members achieved within a highly differentiated and technological social structure? Since the city seemingly exemplified modern society, its study was viewed as an excellent vehicle for approaching sociology's central question. Thus, the agenda for urban sociology's founding fathers became the empirical investigation of the new society via the study of the city. Such considerations formed the

background of Simmel's and Park's statements (Abrahamson, 1994). Yet in the course of these investigation, interests naturally developed in the study of city qua city. In particular, maps produced by Burgess and his students of the territorial distribution of social phenomena helped generate an ecological school fundamentally interested in the effects of position (Kasarda and Janowitz, 2004). In 1938, wirth organized Park's assumptions and assertions about the unique features of urban behavior into a theory, thereby rendering them explicit and problematic. A sociology of cities had emerged.

The sociology was conceived with the interface of social life on the one hand and place, position, habitat, territory, what might be summarized as settlement pattern on the other. Within this broad charter, various sub discipline, for example, urban ecology and geography, arose and appropriated specific topics. In the process, however, it seems that a uniquely sociological focus was lost (which has, in turn, produced the identity problem mentioned earlier).

I submit that the proper central issue of urban sociology is that which initially concerned the entire discipline: the nature of the moral order (community) and of the individual within that order(personality). By assessing the consequences of variations in settlement of patterns, urban sociology advances the general understanding of the structural determinants of community and personality.

Indeed , such an urban sociology presents a rare opportunity to rigorously and empirically examine some of the processes thought to compare the great transformation. Changes in settlement patterns, particularly in terms of scale, dynamic density and differentiation are considered key elements in the historical transition. By analyzing the relationship of settlement to the theoretically significant consequences

of the great transformation, individualism, normlessness and the like, urban sociology informs general sociology's main concern. Note that urban research does so not by providing descriptions of social life in cities but rather by developing an analytical understanding of crucial processes. The question which follows immediately upon this declaration is what about settlement patterns which determines community and personality?

Orienting assumptions: To ascertain which if any, characteristics of settlements affect moral order and personality, it is necessary to make comparisons among and/or within those settlements. Precedent to any such analysis is the assumption that settlement for community is a meaningful object, a thing-in-itself. That is, it can be defined, distinguished from that which is non-settlement; one instance of settlement is a significant category with regard to that issue. This assumption underlies any comparison of communities, whether the dimensions of comparison are structural (such as economic differentiation) or individual (such as population traits).

A parallel assumption underlies intra-community comparisons. This assumption has been questioned in various ways. Some consider settlements to be samples, microcosms, of societal phenomena, with little autonomous significance. Consequently, comparative analysis is unnecessary. However, this approach exemplified in the community studies tradition, does not avoid the need for inter community research since investigators must describe the representativeness of their microcosms. Others consider settlements, particularly in modern society, to be derivative from the national social structure rather than to be individual entities.

They are differentiated subunits of society, integrated in functional relationships. From this perspective, the nation, rather than the city is the meaningful unit for analysis of urbanization (Anderson and Egeland, 2001; Arensberg, 2003). Still, others consider settlements to be epiphenomenal manifestation of organizational and communications technology. Place is not a fundamental dimension of social system, though the structure of places may evidence systemic processes. The currently most influential view is that while settlement may be a meaningful category for certain purposes (such as political science), it is not significant for social life, particularly if the dimension of comparison is ecological. Because social life is conducted in microscopic personal realms, the city is not the proper unit of comparison (Gans, 1962).

Evaluating the assumption that settlement is a meaningful thing-in-itself on a priori basis is difficult, for

while the precise definition of community is elusive, it is nevertheless the case that communities do have concrete reality, both as environments for individuals and as units in their own rights, manifested as political entities, for example.

Ultimately, whether one should assume that communities are significantly variable objects must be determined by the empirical utility of that assumption and with regard to specific phenomena. So, for example, settlements would probably not be meaningful units in an analysis of oligopolistic industries but would be in a study of crime victimization risks. The assumption that community is a significant thing-in-itself is to be evaluated by its empirical utility.

Proceeding on the assumption that settlement or community is a thing-in-itself, the next step is formulating a theory relating one or more attributes of community to one or more aspects of moral order and personality.

Theories: The dimensions of moral order and personality most concern urban theories are the classic ones-anomie versus solidarity, estrangement versus integration. The more difficult task is selecting the appropriate dimension (s) of communities. It is the major problem of this discipline that the most influential distinction, rural versus urban has been increasingly the source of disconnect but that no substantial alternative to it has been developed.

The rural-urban continuum: This dimension of communities has a formidable intellectual history, far older than sociology itself and a virtually universal cross-cultural recognition. Most societies ascribe different ways of life to city and to country (Barnes, 1994; Bell and Boat, 1997). The Chicago School developed out of the intellectual material generated by sociological theories of the great transformation, a theory of these rural-urban differences (Wirth, 1938; Burgess and Bogue, 1994). This theoretical statement involved two steps. First, proposing an empirical generalization that a number of physical, demographic, social and psychological that a number of physical, demographic, social and psychological attributes of communities and of their residents varied together-the rural-urban continuum, second, an explanation for that covariation.

This explanation for the most part transfers processes that the grand sociological theories used to explain modernization from the national to the settlement level: scale dynamic, density and differentiation produce a new community moral order (Boissevain, 1998). Many criticisms of the rural-urban continuum to assume that it was asserted as an empirical fact, rather than as a theoretical model. These critiques often take the form of

pointing out exceptions to the general patterns. If taken, however, as a theoretical statement, as it should be, then, notable facts are not the exceptions to but the frequent confirmations of rural-urban differences. One variant of this argument is the assertion that urban-rural or size of community differences may have once been significant but that in modern mass society they have been erased. Durkheim (1933) and Wirth (1938), among others, speculated along such lines.

Though certain urban-rural differences. Have been declining, others, particularly with regard to morality and deviance, persist even in contemporary American. In this nation and elsewhere, urban and rural communities continue to evidence consistent differences.

More crucial than occasional exceptions to patterns of rural-urban differences were systematic errors in attributing those differences to urbanism rather than to the frequently associated factors of individualism and westernization. These errors compromise a number of propositions in theories of the rural-urban continuum but do not nullify the theories themselves. They do not underline the necessity for making rural-urban comparisons within specified societies and historical periods.

Another serious difficulty in theories of the rural-urban continuum has been the definition of urban or put alternatively, the selection of which variable among those in the rural-urban configuration is primary. One standard seems to survive best the long and complex debate: population concentration size and density, perhaps best of all, population potential (Berger, 1990). This variable is essentially the only one which is found in virtually all definitions of urban. Population concentration can be considered as causally prior or predominant to other variables in the continuum and it is also particularly in keeping with the concern for scale in classical sociology. Therefore, theories of the rural-urban continuum are best understood as empirical hypotheses about and explanations for the correlates of population concentrations.

The most significant critique of the rural-urban continuum is that, as empirical fact, population concentration is unimportant that, the variables of number, density and heterogeneity as used by Wirth are not crucial determinants of social life or personality (Calhoun, 2005). Taking Wirth (1938)'s presentation as the most complete synthesis of rural-urban theories, the following conclusions can be drawn. Despite all the urban research of the nearly 70 years, the number of critical tests of the theory has been insufficient to permit drawing any firm conclusion, pro or con. The best assessment of the available evidence is that the Wirthian theory is correct

about the demographic and gross behavioral characteristics associated with urbanism such as structural differentiation and deviance. However, it seems incorrect about the cultural and social psychological process which mediate those associations.

In particular, there is little to support Wirth's or Simmel's speculations about psychological effects in the direction of urban alienation, disorganization or apathy. Yet, Wirth's presentation remains the most explicit, seminal and comprehensive theory of the rural-urban continuum and still provides the pre-eminent framework for the study of community and personality. Though urbanism as a way of life has been extensively criticized, no other theory comprehending the nature of urban life has been advanced which is as significant, as compelling and as consonant with both western thought and classical sociology.

Alternative construct: Dissatisfaction with the rural-urban continuum has impelled efforts to develop alternative classifications and dimensions of communities. The following list is but a sampler of suggestions: classifying communities by cultural criteria-dominant values, atmosphere, cultural region, degree of orthogeneticism, institutional categories- legal charter, political structure, nature of the elite; technology and economics-degree of industrialization, economic function, presence of a market, extent of diversification and characteristics of the resident population-degree of community segmentation, population transiency, role density or interactional density.

Some of these constructs are intended to redefine or replace the rural-urban continuum, others to provide a cross-cutting dimension. The difficulty here is that none of these schemes has had any extensive theoretical or empirical development. Often, the formulations lack a direct and unique relevance to the community as a thing-in itself (such as typologies based on rational values). They usually lack a full and systematic analysis linking characteristics of the community to characteristics of moral order and personality.

Compared to the older tradition they often seem unconnected to major sociological themes. Most crucially they have yet to generate theories and research of much import. As a reviewer of urban anthropology remarks, critics of rural-urban continuum have not yet been able to work out a sufficiently comprehensive substitute model that has equal appeal (Cohen, 1969; Craven and Wellman, 2004). Another response to dissatisfaction with the traditional paradigm has been to eschew deductive approaches. Duncan (1997)'s general position is that careful inductive classifications of communities are of

greater scientific value than hypothetical constructs like the rural-urban continuum. The major research endeavor along these lines is the factorial classification of cities.

Theory in urban sociology is at an impasse. There stands the rural-urban continuum, a conceptually and historically momentous theoretical approach, one which connects sociology's concern with moral order and individuality to equally significant structural dimensions of community. Yet, this approach is increasingly dismissed because of empirical contradictions. It is dismissed but no alternative approach—save the simple denial of community's importance—is sufficiently developed to replace it as an organizing paradigm.

The sources of this predicament appear to be three. One is that theories of the rural-urban continuum have not been adequately, much less exhaustively, tested. Second, Suttles (2002) (personal communications) has pointed out that sociologists have tended to either wholly accept or reject the analyses of Wirth instead of capitalizing on the latter's insights by modifying those theories. Third, no extended, comprehensive efforts have been made to develop distinctive alternative approaches treating the same central issues: the relationship between settlements and the moral order. These three causes of the field's plight also represent three items for its agenda.

Variations within communities: The Communities, in contrast to variability between communities, the topic of variability within communities has a relatively brief intellectual history. Yet, the study of internal differentiation is the best known contribution of the Chicago school. As Burgess and Bogue (1994) recounts, the early urbanists assumed that like rural communities, the city was composed of natural areas, each having a particular function in the whole economy and life of the city, each area having its distinctive institutions, groups and personalities. We early decided that the natural areas could be significantly studied in two aspects; first, their spatial pattern, second, their cultural life. The first aspect has been well developed by urban ecology and geography.

The second, restated more generally as the study of sub-areal moral orders has been far less developed theoretically or empirically. The basic unit of theoretical, though rarely of empirical concern is the neighborhood. It is assumed to be a meaningful subdivision of a settlement, a thing-in-itself and a unit of potential if not actual, community and personality. Arguments similar to those pressed against the use of communities as objects of analysis can be presented against the use of neighborhoods and with greater force. A distribution is to be made. Construed as a spatially defined environment, neighborhood has a sovereign reality. It is, as is

community, a setting of human action (though of briefer portions of most individuals' lives than is the community whole). Confusion arises when a social dimension is presumed to be an inherent element of neighborhood when the definition of neighborhood assumes the existence of a moral order binding its inhabitants. Such a presumption both confounds theoretical analysis and is inherently questionable. Fundamentally, the neighborhood is best understood, in social terms, as an aggregate of proximal residents, whose only necessary moral order if there is one is the set of quite meager mutual obligations of proximate. One could on such grounds dismiss the neighborhood as relatively inconsequential. However, as Suttles (2002) has argued, the issue is not whether primordial sentiments and moral cohesion are inherent properties of natural neighborhoods but determining the conditions under which a neighborhood does become a meaningful social group. Some minimal conditions are almost always present: interaction engendered by proximity, a degree of interdependency and some need to unite against external forces. The question then becomes two folds:

- What conditions make a neighborhood a significant social unit, one for which the problem of moral order is relevant?
- What conditions facilitate or inhibit achieving a cohesive moral order? (The methodological question of how to find and bound neighborhoods is another major one)

Thus, the extent to which the issue of moral order and individuality arises at the level of neighborhood depends on the importance of the vicinage to its population. When it does, one is presented with questions similar to those posed at the community level (Donaldson, 2009; Greer, 2002).

Theories of Intra-community variation: The subareas of a metropolis differ in terms of ways of life, personality and moral order seems clear but the significance and explanation of those differences remain problematic. While the rural-urban continuum provides a dominant framework for organizing and interpreting variations among communities, no equivalent paradigm exists for examining the relationship between intra-settlement variation and moral order.

One approach is to adapt rural-urban theory by using the variable of population density to explain deviance and disorganization. Crowded neighborhoods presumably spawn anomie in a manner similar to that of large communities. There is a version of this analysis which draws upon the research in animal ethology to account

for urban pathologies by the degree of interpersonal crowding in metropolitan subareas. This literature is as yet so faddish and often of such low quality that it cannot yet be treated as a significant contribution.

An older and more extensive tradition is that dealing with suburbia. The distinction between metropolitan center and suburb has some historical base but its precise definition is even more elusive than that of community. During the last 50 years or so, a debate has been conducted on whether residents of suburbia (however it is defined) differ in personality and/or ways of life from residents of the city. Where such differences are observed, the controversy has been over which of suburbia's defining traits.

The most influential position currently, best expressed by Gans (1962) is that no such ecological or contextual features determine suburban differences, like other intra-settlement differences, are due to self-selection, for example, the fact families seek detached houses and single people seek apartments. The significance of ecology is restricted, by this analysis, to shaping the housing market and the trade-offs incurred in given residential choices. In fact, in this view, the city suburb distinction is useless. While this non-ecological position currently prevails, it, no less than theories of the rural-urban continuum, lack conclusive empirical test.

An inductive, empirical approach to intra-community differences is quite consonant with the Gans emphasis on population traits (as opposed to ecological variables), because the data which have entered into those inductive analyses have usually been restricted to population characteristics. Such areas analysis and factorial ecology have classified subareas largely on the basis of population composition while giving relatively little attention to linking such compositional variables to prior ecological features.

Neighborhood classifications based on such compositional variables have shown meaningful relationships to the nature of the personal and social life in those neighborhoods and thereby suggest that there are contextual influences of neighborhood on individuals. However, it is unclear whether those effects simply reduce to the consequences of social context or whether there are consequences of local ecological factors. What is missing in the study of intra-community variation, are compelling theories which connect settlement pattern, in terms of ecological variables to community and personality. Furthermore, the existing partial models lack full empirical tests. As in the study of communities, the study of neighborhoods is hindered by old theories inadequately explored and the lack of adequate alternatives.

Concepts: This section is addressed to the state of the field's concepts-the definitions (or prescriptions) of what is to be observed, the variables between which empirical relationships are to be sought (Hanna and Hanna, 1991). In particular, study is concerned with concepts used in middle range models which link the large scale structural attributes of communities to individual behavior.

The concept of city itself warrants a few comments. The simple definition of an earlier time, when a fortress wall demarcated dense construction from open fields, has succumbed to increasing vagueness. The clean town borders have yielded to the fuzzy shadings of the urban-rural fringe. City is distinguished from country, if at all, only by a gradual decline in dwellings and density. Consequently, some have sought to abandon the concept of city for that of urban area, metropolis, megalopolis, or urban field. Others have declared that the city is dead; it has no meaning and perhaps never did (Kasarda and Janowitz, 2004; Mitchell, 2009).

Dead with it, of course would be the study of cities. However, these attacks which form serious challenges to the validity of an urban sociology assume a far more reified meaning of the term city than did traditional sociological theories. The important concept is urban-defined, as argued above, in terms of the population concentration. From this perspective, the plowing-under of city walls by commercial strip-highways is not a great threat to the major concern of urban sociology, the study of population concentration and community. Probably the greatest need for clarification has been the realm of urban social psychology: conceiving the nature of the individual's place in and interaction with the urban structure. Simmel's description of a metropolitan type of person as one who reacts with his head instead of his heart and Park's use of temperament are unsatisfactory formulations. These loose constructions, combined with Durkheim's explicit rejection of psychology, leave the urban field with an inadequate comprehension of how individuals and individual action are to be integrated with theories of moral order (Sjoberg, 1960; Suttles, 2002).

Human ethology: Currently the rage, more so in the popular than in the professional press, are ideas drawn from animal ethology and applied to human behavior. The introduction of biological metaphors to urban studies is hardly new but, unlike systemic theories of neighborhood succession, these applications involve models of individuals. Most notable are the concepts of territoriality (with its associated notions of dominance, aggression, and withdrawal) and of wired-in reactions of population density. These concepts have been inserted

into older models of urban life, providing explications of the mediating processes by which urbanism presumably disorganizes personality and social interaction. One consequence of the introduction of these concepts has been a series of studies, ranging from laboratory experiment on crowding to ecological correlation research, directed toward demonstrating human and urban, parallel to animal density. The value of these concepts and of these studies has yet to be demonstrated—either in their own terms or in their utility for urban sociology. It is uncertain whether concepts of territoriality or of instinctive population control are usefully applicable to humans. Further, uncertainty rests in the largely unexamined assumption that urban or center-city residence is a valid index of experiences of micro-level density or spatial invasions. Until such time as those connections are made, concepts drawn from ethology will serve if they serve at all, studies of small scale environments rather than of communities.

Information theory: In 1905, Simmel wrote: the psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli (Simmel, 1969). Thus the metropolitan type of man develops an organ protecting currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him. This insight, although primitive hypothesis has been recently restated in concepts and terminology borrowed from information and systems theory. The model of man is that of an information-processing system with limited channel capacity. The model of the city is that of an information generating system with high and largely uncontrollable amounts of output. An individual in the city is subject to sensory inputs at levels which threaten overload and system collapse. Consequently, adaptive mechanisms are developed to divert or filter information, mechanisms which amount to metropolitan man's protective organ, and which estrange him from others.

Though based on electronic rather than organic metaphors, this conceptual approach is similar to the ethological one in theoretical implications and in difficulties. Though, processes in human analogous to overload can be demonstrated, the general utility of the model has hardly been explored nor whether an individual's relationship to his environment is best captured by the image of a passive sensor rather than for example, the image of an active agent and manipulator. Furthermore, whether to what degree and to what import, a city locale is actually more productive of sensations and information-bits is unknown.

Network analysis: Probably the most promising conceptual tool for joining individual behavior to theories of community is network analysis. The commonly cited definition of social network is Mitchell (2009)'s: a specific set of linkages among a defined set of persons, with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behavior of the persons involved.

In distinction to approaches which emphasize institutional or aggregate phenomena and to those which concern intrapersonal processes, network analysis focuses on relationships among individuals (or in more abstract versions, roles).

Examination of the structures and contents of personal networks is intended to reveal both the processes by which social environments influence people and those by which individuals in turn act upon their social world. For urban sociology, it promises to provide the conceptual link between individual and community.

Though, its current imagery and advanced mathematical paraphernalia are drawn from graph theory people are points, relationships are connecting lines, the origins of network analysis are firmly sociological. They are to be found in sociometry, exchange theory, personal influence studies, research on kinship and friendship, the literature on diffusion and elsewhere. In that sense, conceiving of individuals' relationships as networks is hardly novel. What is novel is the recent convergence from many disciplines around a core conceptual scheme, together with a self-conscious effort to elaborate this scheme and to apply it to new topics (Thernstrom, 2007; Sjöberg, 1960).

It is relevant to note that the recent impetus to this convergence was provided by anthropologists, particularly Africanists who confronted the inadequacies of older schemes when they followed their tribes to the cities. Structural and institutional concepts, such as lineage, alone did not capture the complexity of urban life. Networks provided a more accurate representation of actual social ties and insight into how individuals consciously construct, rather than simply inherit those ties. Reconsideration of rural communities showed that the utility of network analysis was not confined to the city. The consequences for anthropology of these developments seem to have been two excellent ethnographies which describe sub-communities using network concepts and a series of discursive essays on illustrations, definitions, dimensions and measurements of networks. It appears to this outsider that network analysis in anthropology, as represented by these essays has been mired in a wheel-spinning stage. Debates over proper

definitions, sampling procedures and measurements seem to have largely produced lists of network attributes, rarely related to one another or to meaningful exogenous variables. One anthropologist explains, most of African network literature seems completely bogged down in methodology because it has failed to attack important questions of broader substantive theory (Sjoberg, 1960).

However, sociologists have made advances in applying network analysis to various topics (in part by acknowledging and ignoring the complications perplexing anthropologists): how individuals obtain important services, diffusion of innovation, ethnic and occupational differentiation, political structure and influence, the structure of the economy and others. These studies demonstrate the widespread utility of a network approach. For the study of community and personality, a network conception permits fairly rapid movement from aggregate characteristics of the community to features of interpersonal relations on the small scale and back again (Tomah, 2004). The settlement is conceived of as a ramified social network of its residents, some of whom are not linked, some linked in various ways, some linked to outsiders.

Attributes of this network define the community's social order. For example, highly intertwined (dense) and multidimensional (multiplex or redundant) relationships are re-characteristic of cohesion; clustering with few cross-cluster ties denotes community schisms.

The major theoretical application of network analysis to urban studies so far has been a more precise and formal restatement of traditional theory. The structural differentiation of urban places is translated via greater interactional density, into less multiplexity of ties which is essentially equivalent to Wirth's notion of segmental relationships and Park's idea that urbanites are simultaneously members of widely separate worlds. However, such formulations do not foreclose alternative theories of community and personality constructed from the same conceptual material. While useful in theory building, network analysis is just as important in clarifying empirical findings. Consider three examples:

- The experiences of the urban migrant are difficult to interpret from a perspective which views him as an individual transplanted from the familiar and primary corporate units of rural society to the strange, impersonal, secondary ones of cities. He should be isolated and disoriented. But he is not (Nelson, 2009). A network approach sensitizes the observer to the interpersonal links which constitute both rural and urban environments and which connect the two. The migrant moves along these networks and uses them to find housing, jobs, guidance and construct his personal social world

- Who supports and restraints, both materially and socially, the urban individuals? From an institutional perspective, the answers are plainly visible in the small community: physically proximate, nameable, corporate groups (such as neighbors, clan, kin, church). In the city they are not so concretely visible, suggesting their absence or their supersession by large, formal institutions. However, a network approach depicts all social bonds as invisible lines, extendable and divisible (that is, specializable) to great degrees. Their greater apparent concreteness in the small community is not a central feature but an incidental one. Thus, it becomes easier to comprehend how it is that urbanites as well as ruralites possess social supports and restraints
- If one comprehends the component elements of social structure as discrete, bounded, categoric, institutional or corporate units (kin, community), the urban social system is puzzling. Kin are dispersed, neighborhoods are nominal groups and community is amorphous. It would be logical, then, to describe urban society as atomistic, held together only by large scale units such as publics and professions. However, if all social structure is understood to be composed of the network of interconnected personal networks, then a different analysis follows. Individuals can be seen constructing personal social worlds by recruiting people from categoric pools, as in choosing which co-workers or neighbors to befriend. These networks ramify into a social structure, in both large and small communities, with differences of degree (perhaps), not of kind (for instance, urban dwellers may have more pools). Thus, one need not be bound to the largely inaccurate conception of an atomistic city

This last example brings us full circle, for these social networks, the internal fabric of the social structure are with their associated customs and values, the social worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate (Park, 1969). The worlds or subcultures, are personal social networks which are linked but do not coalesce.

That side of the Chicago School which described the diversity and vitality of small moral orders (a perspective which co-existed with the theories of urban anomie) finds conceptual clarification and elaboration in a network approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The credibility of any theory of community depends, as do all theories, upon: determining the external

manifestations of its concepts, observing the predicted concomitant variation among those phenomena, repeating this observation in different situations and refuting alternative, third-factor, explanations must contend, as do other theories of structural determinism, with particularly difficult third-factors-self-selection and contextual effects. Self-selection can inflate or deflate co-variation. (An example of inflation is criminal drift to cities which increases the urbanism-crime correlation. An example of deflation is the differential movement to the suburbs of automobile owners which decreases the association between distance and access).

The latter, deflation is likely to be more common, reducing the observed effects of environmental factors. Contextual effects, particularly climates of opinion, as likely to accentuate inter- or intra-settlement attitudinal and behavioral differences.

These criteria and problems present great hurdles for those attempting to establish what, if any, effects urban environments have on individuals. An example of the rare study which succeeds rather well is one conducted by Mitchell (2009). By interviewing residential movers before and after their moves to new environments (city versus suburb, house versus apartment), Michelson is able to allocate observed differences separately to environment and to individual traits.

This quasi experimental design is unusual (and no doubt difficult and costly). More often, the best that can be done to manage the requirements of theory testing is to employ standardization techniques, usually drawn from econometrics, to simulate the causal logic and third-factor controls of the classical experiment. Yet even such procedures are uncommon in the urban research literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Difficulties in older research procedures: Of the hundreds of published studies relevant to urban community and personality, relatively few meet to any substantial degree the logical requirements outlined above. While they often contribute excellent data necessary for drawing theoretical conclusions, rarely are they able to deliver those conclusions themselves. The bulk of urban research is composed of ethnographic studies of single communities. There are occasional allusions to ideal-type comparisons or to studies conducted by others. The first is obviously inadequate, the second only slightly less so. Because this research does not examine covariation, it is insufficient for drawing conclusions about urban theories. It is invalid, therefore,

to assert as some done that Wirth has been disproven by notable urban ethnographers such as Gans (1962), Suttles (2002) or to declare that city-suburban differences are negligible on the basis of similar research such as Gans (1962) and Berger (1990).

These excellent studies are necessary but not sufficient. Similarly, most small surveys done in urban areas are also only single-place studies. Occasionally, inter-neighborhood contrasts are made such as Greer (2002) and Bell and Boat (1997) but rarely do they actually provide systematic and intra-settlement comparisons.

These two research traditions comprise most of the existing literature; yet, neither adequately meets the theory testing requirements of the comparative method. The great part of the urban Community and personality research also fails to meet the criteria of generalizability. This results to some extent from the predominance of English language work. It also results from an inclination to study non-representative groups. We know, for example, more about Italian-Americans in northeastern cities than we do about the masses of middle-American ribbon clerks and clock punchers, not to mention urbanites in other areas of the world. Finally, only a small number of the accumulated studies are able to exclude third-factor explanations for their findings, even such important and obvious ones as social class, much less complex ones such as self-selection.

When one discovers a few key examples of research which substantially meet these various criteria they are invariably small scale studies. It is for reasons such as this, the dearth of critical tests in the urban literature that I argue that theories of the rural-urban continuum while having been severely questioned have not yet been adequately tested in ways sufficient either to confirm or to discount them. Some developments in research which promises to fill some of the gaps are secondary survey analysis, experiments and urban anthropology even though they too have their limitations.

CONCLUSION

None of these new methodologies can singly meet the criteria of methodological adequacy for critical theory testing whether the theory be Wirthian or any other of inter-or intra-community differences. Together, however and combined with improvement of old methodologies they provide masses of novel data and promise advancements in the ability to treat those data in analytical, theory testing ways. Yet, as the last discussion illustrates. No methodological improvement for unearthing new facts can advance us far in the absence of theoretical statements which direct and make meaningful the discovery of such facts. Also making explicit the field's difficulties should make more likely their solutions and

permit subsequent progress in the study of an important issue, one drawn directly from sociology's focal interests, the relationship between the environments men construct and the social orders which ensue.

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