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ON URBAN ALIENATIONS AND ANOMIE: POWERLESSNESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION *

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We tested the hypothesis derived from Louis Wirth (1938) that urban life, all else equal, leads to alienation by secondary analysis of three large surveys. We examined two dimensions: powerlessness, operationalized with a sense of personal competence scale, and social isolation, operationalized by scales and items reflecting a distrust of others (and interpretable as a sense of anomie). Results (1) show no association of size of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area with powerlessness. (2) Felt social isolation (i.e., distrust) was weakly but consistently ($r \approx .07$) associated. We explore explanations for this relationship and favor one based on the social composition of the community. Also, we found that knowing one's neighbors was substantially negatively related to community size. This we attribute to the relative unimportance of proximity in the urban setting which reduces neighborhood contacts in favor of trans-local ones.

THE themes of alienation and of urban life have long been intertwined in social philosophical and sociological thought. Alienation—in all its meanings—has been tied to industrialization (Marx, 1961), “mass society” (Reisman, 1953), and the “decline of community” (Stein, 1964), all forces seemingly epitomized by the city. In keeping with this history, a recent discussion of alienation “from Marx to Marcuse” was entitled, “The Urban Alienations” (Seeman, 1971; cf. Schacht, 1971, and Israel, 1971, for extended reviews of alienation).

In urban sociology, the definitive contribution to this literature is Louis Wirth's (1938) paper, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” which partly built on the earlier work of Simmel (1905) and Park (1925). Accord-

ing to this analysis, the aggregation of great numbers of diverse people creates both the reality and the perception of individual impotence. At the same time, the protective withdrawal this environment forces the individual into and the destruction it causes to social bonds renders man isolated from, fearful of, hostile to, and manipulative of his fellow man (cf. review in Fischer, 1972).

This paper reports a preliminary empirical test of the proposition that urban life is associated with alienation. We shall deal with only two dimensions of this multifaceted phenomena: powerlessness and social isolation. Powerlessness was defined by Seeman (1959, 1972), as “the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of outcomes . . . he seeks” (1959). Social isolation was defined as “the individual's low expectancy for inclusion and social acceptance, expressed typically in feelings of loneliness or feelings of rejection or repudiation” (1972).

A reviewer's comments have brought to our attention the possibility that the measure of social isolation which we use (see below) might better be interpreted as tapping a subjective sense of anomie—a feeling that normative consensus is too weak to allow one to trust other people. The reader may prefer this interpretation to our use of social isolation. The two concepts are, of course, logically linked—a social condition of anomie

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is presumably marked by the weakening of intimate social bonds. In either case, we are testing Wirth's prediction that urbanism estranges the individual. For ease of presentation, we shall use the term social isolation.

Urbanism is defined here as population concentration and is measured by the size of the individual's town or metropolitan area. This procedure inevitably submerges finer ecological distinctions among communities of the same size and within communities. However, we read Wirth's theory as dealing with the impact of precisely such macroscopic environmental variables on individuals (further discussion of this point appears in Fischer, 1972).

The specific hypotheses we shall examine are (1) the more urban (larger) a person's community of residence, the greater his sense of powerlessness, and (2) the greater his sense of social isolation (or anomie). The analysis will try to establish what *independent* effect urban life might have when associated individual-level correlates are controlled.

THE LITERATURE

Powerlessness. The behavioral impact of subjective powerlessness has been established by correlational, laboratory experimental and field experimental studies. Expectations of failure lead to inaction (cf. reviews in Rotter, 1966; Seeman, 1972).

For all this work, we know little about the distribution of this perception across the population other than that it is more frequent among those who are objectively powerless: the poor and the black. A quick examination of an extensive bibliography on Internal versus External Locus of Control, the psychologists' version of powerlessness (MacDonald and Throop, 1971, plus updates supplied by MacDonald), as well as one on alienation in general (Lystad, 1969), failed to uncover works specifically treating an urban-powerlessness association. This academic silence may indicate repeated null results. Such was the case in one limited study of small businessmen in Minnesota (Photiadis, 1967).¹

¹ Dean (1961) reports that powerlessness was

Social Isolation. Much more relevant work has been done on this alienation. It can be divided, as our data will be, into two parts: subjective perceptions of isolation and behavioral manifestations of isolation.

Regarding subjective perceptions, we note ethnographic descriptions of urban life which, contrary to the hypothesis, emphasize close, personalistic attitudes on the part of the people studied (e.g., Gans, 1962; Whyte, 1955; Young and Willmott, 1957; Epstein, 1967). At the same time, many ethnographies of rural, or, at least peasant, societies report great interpersonal distance and hostility (e.g., Foster, 1967, 1960-61; Banfield, 1958; Wylie, 1964).

On a more quantitative level, Seeman et al. (1971) found a low degree of expressed isolation in metropolitan Los Angeles; and Christie and Geis (1970:318) failed to associate urban residence with an exploitative orientation toward others. These studies fail to support the hypothesis.²

With respect to behavior or reported behavior, we mark first a demographic fact: In the United States at least, the proportion of isolated persons—those living as "primary individuals" (alone or with nonrelatives)—increases with the size of the city.³ However,

slightly lower among rural migrants than among the city-born in a sample taken in Columbus, Ohio ($r = .1$).

² The Srole (1956) anomia scale is another candidate for inclusion in this review. However, though it contains an item or two relevant to social isolation, more of the items deal with feelings of futility, meaninglessness and despair. One attempt to associate it with social involvement (Bell, 1957) showed only a weak relationship. In any case, studies with this scale have had mixed and largely negative results in correlating it to urbanism (e.g., Nelsen and Witt, 1972; Mizruchi, 1969; Killian and Grigg, 1962; Nelsen and Frost, 1971).

³ The author's analysis of the 1960 Census One-in-a-thousand sample showed that this pattern was not a function of size of metropolitan area, but solely a function of the size of the central city. A one-fourth subset of heads of households under the age of sixty-three had the following distribution of persons living alone or with a non-relative:

	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A. of 1,000,000+
Ring of center city	5.2% (N = 1,651)	6.5 (1,425)	6.2 (1,925)
Center city	10.1 (1,915)	13.9 (1,734)	18.7 (1,976)

the bulk of ethnographic and survey research on urban samples, emphasizes the deep involvement of city residents with family and friends (e.g., Axelrod, 1956; Gans, 1962; Gutkind, 1965; Greer, 1962; Bell and Boat, 1957). Comparative studies are rare but generally report few urban-rural differences in social involvement (Reiss, 1959; Sutcliffe and Crabbe, 1963; Bultena, 1969; Wright and Hyman, 1958; Curtis, 1971). Two exceptions are noted: Key (1968) found participation to be curvilinearly related to community size in a manner interacting with type of participation. Guterman (1969) discovered New York hotel employees to report less depth in their personal ties than did hotel workers in smaller cities.

Though urban-rural differences are weak if existent, strong effects of residence have been found in one type of comparison: city versus suburb. Neighboring is greater in suburbs, even when controls for other variables are applied (Tallman and Morgner, 1970; Tomeh, 1964; Fava, 1959).

Our review suggests that these hypotheses have yet to be tested in large-scale samples. This paper begins that task by examining previously collected survey data.

DATA AND MEASURES

Three surveys were used: (1) the 1968 Survey Research Center Election Poll, including a double-sample of black respondents; (2) the 1971 wave of the "Income Dynamics" survey. This pool was taken of heads of households under sixty and includes a heavy over-sample (by about 50%) of poor families, especially the urban poor (I.S.R., 1971); (3) the Almond and Verba (1963) Five-Nation Study, of which only the United States and United Kingdom samples were used.⁴

The dimensions of alienation were operationalized in the following way:

(A) *Powerlessness*. Two reversed versions of the Institute for Social Research "Personal Competence" scale (Robinson and

Shaver, 1968:102-5) were used. The S.R.C. survey included the following items:

(1) "Do you think it is better to plan your life a good way ahead, or would you say life is too much a matter of luck to plan ahead very far?"

(2) "When you do make plans ahead do you usually get to carry out things the way you expected, or do things usually come up to change your plans?"

(3) "Have you usually felt pretty sure your life would work out the way you want it to, or have there been times when you haven't been sure about it?"

(4) "Some people feel they can run their lives pretty much the way they want to; others feel that the problems of life are sometimes too big for them. Which one are you most like?"

The items were scored with the efficacious response low, the powerless one high and the others in the middle. The proportion of powerless responses ranged from 27% to 61% in this sample, an average of 42%. The items were standardized and summed to form a scale. Interitem correlations yielded a reliability coefficient (Chronbach α) of .64.

The Income Dynamics survey included items 2 and 3, plus

(5) "Are you the kind of person that plans his life ahead all the time or do you live more from day to day?"

(6) "Do you think a lot about things that might happen in the future, or do you usually just take things as they come?"

In this sample, inefficacious responses ranged from 36% to 57%, an average of 46%. Scale α was .52.

(B) *Social Isolation (Anomie)*. Subjective sense of isolation was measured by variations of the Rosenberg (1956) "Misanthropy" Scale—termed "Trust" and "Faith in People" scales by Robinson and Shaver (1969:529-630). The S.R.C. data include:

(1) "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?"

(2) "Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance or would they try to be fair?"

(3) "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"

The items were scored from trustful to "depends, don't know" to distrustful. The proportion of distrustful responses were

⁴ The S.R.C. Election Poll and the Five Nation Study were obtained from the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research. The Income Dynamics survey was obtained from the Institute for Social Research by Professor Lee Rainwater on a grant from the Public Health Service, MH-18625.

40%, 32% and 45%, respectively. Scale α was .74.

Variations on these three questions, plus two more, appeared in the Five-Nation Study:

(1) "Would you say that most of the time people are more inclined to help others, or are more inclined to look out for themselves?"

(2) "If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you. Do you agree or disagree with that?"

(3) "Some people say most people can be trusted. Others say that you can't be too careful in your dealing with people. How do you feel about that?"

(4) "No one is going to care much what happens to you when you get right down to it (agree-disagree)."

(5) "Human nature is fundamentally cooperative (agree-disagree)."

The questions were scored, standardized and summed as in the previous scales. Reliabilities were low, especially for Germany ($\alpha = .42$), Italy (.27) and Mexico (.26). Only the United States and United Kingdom had minimally acceptable α 's (.60 and .53).⁵ Isolated answers ranged from about 40% to 75% for both nations, except for item 5 which was about 13% (U.S. average, 45%; U.K. average, 46%).

The sense of incompetence and the distrust scales appear together in the S.R.C. survey. They correlate at .32—an association common in the literature (e.g., Dean, 1961).

A few additional single items on social involvement were used and will be introduced in the discussion of results.

Statistical analyses were performed with the DATA-TEXT package (Armor and Couch, 1972).

RESULTS

Powerlessness. An unweighted means analysis of covariance was performed on the reversed S.R.C. Personal Competence Scale. Two factors were crossed: Size of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area X Center/

Ring—whether the individual lived in the center city or in the suburbs. (For persons outside an S.M.S.A. this meant living in a town—center—versus a rural area—ring.) The results of this analysis are shown in Table 1, Part A.

The data indicate essentially no effect of place of residence on sense of competence. However, to test the Wirthian hypothesis adequately, we should take into account variables such as class which might be masking an urban-powerlessness association. In fact, since the Wirthian theory explains alienation in terms of the direct experience of urban life per se (Fischer, 1972), all individual attributes other than the alienations themselves should be held constant. Part B of Table 1 reports the results of adjusting the data for a set of covariates. These controls were age, sex, race, class, religion, stage in the life-cycle and Southern residence.⁶ The outcome was that size of S.M.S.A. as an independent effect missed statistical significance. People outside S.M.S.A.'s were only slightly less powerless than were others. Substantive significance was lacking as well. S.M.S.A. accounted for only 0.36% of the total variance and 2.4% of the explained variance. The S.R.C. data do not support the hypothesis.

We replicated the analysis with the Income Dynamics data. Here, S.M.S.A. size was crossed by a factor representing the family's relative national rank on net income. Since the unweighted means analysis of variance equalized cell N 's, we were thereby partly adjusting the data for the large sample of poor families. The results are shown in Table 2.

The results were, again, essentially negative. The S.M.S.A. effect was significant in the predicted powerless direction, but accounted for less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the total variance and only 2.7% of the explained

⁵ A great problem in the scale is acquiescence. When, for example, item #5 is removed, the α 's for Italy and Mexico jump to .41 and .36. Analysis of the scale suggests that despite its problems, it probably provides an unbiased estimate of the construct (author, unpublished paper). However, the low reliabilities in the non-English-speaking nations could make results difficult to interpret. So, they were dropped.

⁶ These controls are straight-forward, except perhaps for Southern residence; for it could be argued that regional differences are a function of urban-rural differences. Southernness was controlled because, consistent with the canons of conservative hypothesis-testing, it subjects the urban variable to the more stringent test; and because the autonomy of regional differences seems historically supported. In any case, further analysis revealed that the overall conclusions would not have been changed even if Southernness has not been controlled.

Table 1. Powerlessness: Reversed Personal Competence Scale (S.R.C. 1968) by Size of S.M.S.A., by Ring/Center--Before and After Adjustment for Covariates (Unweighted Means Analysis of Covariance)

A. Before Adjustment				
Place in S.M.S.A.	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Ring	M = 2.78 SD = (1.37) N = (349)	2.78 (1.19) (213)	2.70 (1.24) (200)	2.76
Center	2.67 (1.32) (278)	2.87 (1.36) (244)	2.94 (1.21) (157)	2.83
Unweighted Mean	2.73	2.83	2.82	2.79
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	0.82	.439	0.11
B. Ring/Center	1	1.01	.315	0.07
A X B	2	2.08	.126	0.29
Total	1440			
B. After Adjustment				
Place in S.M.S.A.	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Ring	M = 2.67	2.85	2.94	2.82
Center	2.66	2.82	2.80	2.76
Unweighted Mean	2.67	2.84	2.82	2.79
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	3.00	.051	0.36
B. Ring/Center	1	0.86	.355	0.05
A X B	2	0.36	>.500	0.04
Covariates ^a	11	21.88	<.001	14.39
Total	1440			

^aRace, sex, age, Protestantism, social class (a scale composed of education, occupation and income), Southern residence, life-cycle stage (five dummy variables).

variance. After covariates were controlled, no S.M.S.A. effect was left.

Regression analyses were also performed on this data, the results of which are summarized in Table 3. The table displays the zero-order *r*, the partial *r* after controlling for many individual-level attributes and the contribution of community size to the explained variance. The findings are strikingly parallel in the two surveys and suggest that

there was no association between powerlessness and urbanism as measured here.⁷

Social Isolation. Versions of the Rosenberg Misanthropy Scale were used to measure the individual's sense of isolation from others (sense of anomie, perhaps). The results of analyses of covariance on the scale

⁷ The reader may be curious about the effect of low scale reliability on the results. It was to check on that problem that we calculated proportion of

Table 2. Powerlessness: Reversed Personal Competence Scale (Income Dynamics, 1971)^a by Size of S.M.S.A., by Income^b--Before and After Adjustment for Covariates (Unweighted Means Analysis of Covariance)

A. Before Adjustment				
Net Income	Community Size			Unweighted Mean
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	
Lowest 30% of Nation	M = 3.36 SD = (1.17) N = (649)	3.30 (1.18) (598)	3.41 (1.18) (921)	3.36
Middle 40%	2.77 (1.16) (526)	2.77 (1.12) (503)	2.95 (1.22) (651)	2.83
Highest 30%	2.40 (1.06) (261)	2.40 (1.10) (332)	2.53 (1.09) (393)	2.44
Unweighted Mean	2.84	2.82	2.96	2.88
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	6.07	.003	0.23
B. Income	2	221.98	<.001	8.40
A X B	4	0.50	>.500	0.03
Total	4833			
B. After Adjustment				
Net Income	Community Size			Unweighted Mean
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	
Lowest 30%	M = 3.34	3.25	3.25	3.28
Middle 40%	2.82	2.86	2.94	2.87
Highest 30%	2.41	2.45	2.57	2.48
Unweighted Mean	2.86	2.85	2.92	2.88
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	1.41	.244	0.05
B. Income	2	128.35	<.001	4.66
A X B	4	1.56	.181	1.13
Covariates ^c	8	26.79	<.001	3.89
Total	4833			

^aThis sample is heavily weighted with the urban poor and is composed of heads of households under 60 years of age.

^bThe measure used for income was termed "well-offness" (I.S.R., 1971). It reflects the family's net income as a ratio of its needs and includes the leisure time taken by family adults. The categories are calculated on the basis of weighting so that they are representative, unlike the sample itself.

^cAge, sex, minority status (black or Latin), South, life-cycle stage (four dummy variables).

Table 3. Powerlessness: Reversed Personal Competence Scale--Zero-Order and Partial Correlations with Community Size,^a by Survey

Community Size	Zero-Order r	Partial ^b r	% of Explained Variance ^c
S.R.C., 1968 (N=1440)	.023	.039	1.0
Income Dynamics (N=4833)	.027	.037*	0.9

*p < .05.

^aCommunity Size was measured, for the S.R.C. survey, by a ten-point scale representing city size nested within size of S.M.S.A.; for Income Dynamics, by a six-point scale representing the largest city in the respondent's area: under 10,000/10-25,000/25-50,000/50-100,000/100-500,000/500,000+.

^bControls for S.R.C. were: race, sex, age, Protestant, Jewish, father's occupation, education, occupation, income, life-cycle stage (five dummy variables), raised in South, residing in South.

Controls for Income Dynamics were: age, minority status, education, income, occupation, Protestant, life-cycle stage (four dummy variables), size of family, residing in South.

^cProportion of the explained variance which community size provides when entered into the regression equation with control variables.

are presented in Table 4 for the S.R.C. survey, and in Table 5 for the Almond and Verba Survey.

These data show a mild association in the predicted direction once confounding variables are controlled. The zero-order figures, before adjustment, indicate curvilinearity and complexity, particularly in the Center/Ring X S.M.S.A. interaction (Table 4, Part A). Both these effects were probably due to affluent suburbanites; and, consistent with this suggestion, when covariance adjustments were made (Part B of Tables 4 and 5), they disappeared. In their place appeared significant effects of community size. The major difference in the community sizes appears to have been between non-metropolitan and metropolitan places, with people in the latter slightly more distrustful.

Two individual questions from the Income Dynamics Survey were also examined: (1) "Do you trust most other people, some, or very few?"; (2) "How much does it matter

what other people think about you?" (scored from "a lot" to "it doesn't matter"). These items were also mildly related to urbanism. Analyses of covariance not shown here revealed, after adjustment, significant monotonic effects of S.M.S.A. size—i.e., regular though quite small increases in an isolated direction (0.17% and 0.15% of the total variances, respectively).

As before, regressions were run in which a greater number of controls were used. The results are indicated in Table 6. And, as before, the partial r's showed a good deal of consistency. They indicate, as did the analyses of variance, that there was an association with community size, though a very small one (on the average, independently explaining about ½ of 1% of the variance).⁸

No striking or meaningful interactions were found—including one predicted by the urban sociology literature: that formal organizational membership in cities counteracts alienation.

Social Involvement. One would expect there to be behavioral concomitants of a sense of social isolation; and, if the present

explained variance. Beyond that, we ran some regression analyses in the S.R.C. data, correcting for attenuation. The correction raised the zero-order r from .023 to .029 and had comparable positive but small effects on the partial results. In the Income Dynamics data, we examined each item separately. For no item was the zero-order r greater than .067, the partial greater than .037 or the proportion of explained variance greater than 1.4%.

⁸ Correcting for attenuation in the S.R.C., 1968, survey, raised the zero-order r to .04, the sixteenth-order partial to .08 and the urbanism contribution to 4.0%.

Table 4. Social Isolation: Misanthropy Scale (S.R.C., 1968) by Size of S.M.S.A.--Before and After Adjustment for Covariates

A. Before Adjustment				
Place in S.M.S.A.	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Ring	M = 2.57 SD = (1.55) N = (348)	2.81 (1.61) (213)	2.30 (1.53) (200)	2.56
Center	2.33 (1.50) (278)	2.85 (1.57) (244)	2.93 (1.64) (157)	2.70
Unweighted Mean	2.45	2.83	2.62	2.63
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	6.85	.002	0.93
B. Ring/Center	1	2.84	.093	0.19
A X B	2	9.11	<.001	1.24
Total	1439			
B. After Adjustment				
Place in S.M.S.A.	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Ring	2.42	2.84	2.67	2.64
Center	2.28	2.76	2.83	2.62
Unweighted Mean	2.35	2.80	2.75	2.63
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	11.28	<.001	1.34
B. Ring/Center	1	0.06	>.500	0.00
A X B	2	1.24	.289	0.14
Covariates ^a	11	20.44	<.001	13.32
Total	1439			

^aCovariates were race, age, sex, Protestant, social class (education, occupation, and income), region, and life-cycle (five dummy variables).

hypotheses be true, those behaviors should be affected by urban residence.

The Almond and Verba data include information on the number of organizations to which respondents belonged. In analysis of this survey and a review of other studies, Curtis (1971) concluded that there was no relationship between community size and membership in voluntary associations. Our examination of this material also showed no

significant effects, before or after covariance adjustment. The partial r was, in the United States, $-.067$ ($p < .05$; 1.9% of the explained variance) and $-.019$ (N.S.) in the United Kingdom.⁹

⁹ Formal associations are ambiguous phenomena for the Wirthian model. On the one hand, they reflect social involvement—non-alienation. On the other, they are formal means of integration, presumably outgrowths of anomie.

Table 5. Social Isolation: Misanthropy Scale (Almond and Verba Survey) by Size of Town--Before and After Adjustment for Covariates

A. Before Adjustment				
Nation	Size of Town			Unweighted Mean
	Under 5,000	5,000-100,000	Over 100,000	
United Kingdom	M = 2.57 SD = (.56) N = (240)	2.52 (.56) (299)	2.63 (.62) (424)	2.58
United States	2.64 (.62) (296)	2.59 (.63) (243)	2.63 (.61) (422)	2.62
Unweighted Mean	2.61	2.56	2.63	2.60
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. Town Size	2	2.45	.086	0.25
B. Nation	1	2.16	.142	0.11
A X B	2	0.71	.490	0.07
Total	1932			
B. After Adjustment				
Nation	Size of Town			Unweighted Mean
	Under 5,000	5,000-100,000	Over 100,000	
United Kingdom	2.50	2.48	2.60	2.52
United States	2.64	2.65	2.71	2.67
Unweighted Mean	2.57	2.57	2.65	2.60
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. Town Size	2	4.59	.011	0.42
B. Nation	1	25.29	<.001	1.17
A X B	2	0.43	>.500	0.04
Covariates ^a	11	21.79	<.001	11.07
Total	1932			

^a Covariates were status (scale composed of education, spouse's education, income, interviewer rating), occupation, age, sex, region (poor versus rich), Protestant, life-cycle (five dummy variables).

A better test of the hypothesis would be the degree to which the individual actually participated in organizations. Such a question was asked in the Income Dynamics Survey: "How often do you go to social clubs or organizations" (Scored never/less than once per week/once per week or more; 66% reported "never"). The following question was also asked: "About how many peo-

ple in this neighborhood do you know by name?" (Scored, 0-2/3-5/6-9/10-19/20+ or "All"; 42% fell into the last category.) These two probes are, on a prima facie basis, indications of social involvement. (They also correlate, though at a low level, with the distrust item on the survey, at -.129 and -.166 respectively.)

Table 6. Social Isolation: Misanthropy Scales and Other Items: Zero-Order and Partial Correlations with Community Size,^a by Survey

Community Size	Zero-Order r	Partial ^b r	% of Explained Variance
A. S.R.C., 1968 "Misanthropy"	.037	.079**	3.9
B. Almond and Verba "Misanthropy"			
United Kingdom	.073*	.074*	5.9
United States	-.012	.053	1.7
C. Income Dynamics			
"Distrust" Item	.136***	.064***	1.7
"What Others Think" Item	.063***	.033*	1.4

*p < .05; ** p < .01; ***p < .001.

^aFor community size scales in the S.R.C. and Income Dynamics Surveys, see Table 3. In the Almond and Verba Survey: a five-point scale for size of town--under 5,000/5-20,000/20-50,000/50-100,000/100,000+.

^bControls were the same as in Table 3 for S.R.C. and Income Dynamics. For Almond and Verba: race (in the U.S.), age, sex, Protestant, social status (scale composed of education, spouse's education, income and interviewer rating), occupation, life-cycle stage (five dummy variables) and region of nation (rich versus poor).

Analyses of variance are presented in Table 7 for these two items. The covariance adjustments are not presented because they left the patterns essentially unchanged.

The social club results are not as predicted. The item has no overall association with S.M.S.A. But, it did show an interesting interaction: low income persons outside S.M.S.A.'s had the lowest attendance (the r between S.M.S.A. and attendance for low income people is +.108, p < .001). At the same time, high income non-S.M.A. persons had the highest attendance (the r for the high income group is -.082, p < .05). A plausible explanation exists for why non-urban poor people attended meetings less than the urban poor—distances and lack of resources to overcome them. At the same time, the negative association among the well-to-do might reflect urban alienation. However, the correlation is weak and there remains the absence of correlation among the middle income group (r = .042, N.S.). On the whole, this item provides little support for the hypothesis (overall r = .034, partial r = .001).

That is not the case, however, for the "neighbors" item (Table 7, Part B). There is a strong relationship such that the larger the metropolitan area, the fewer neighbors a respondent claimed to know (overall r = -.282; partial r = -.206; percent of ex-

plained variance = 29.2). This was true within all subgroups examined. For example, in the white, middle-income group, the proportion claiming to know only 0, 1, or 2 neighbors increased from 6.9% in non-S.M.S.A. areas to 12.7% in large S.M.S.A.'s; and those reporting 20+ or all neighbors decreased from 58.8 to 38.8%. Among low-income Southerners, the percentages are 3.6 to 16.6 and 70.6 to 31.4%. Further examination of the data indicated that the effects would have been even stronger had the suburbs, which as previous research suggests are more neighborly, been separated out. (The reader will note that the standard deviations of the item increase with S.M.S.A. size. This is perhaps testimony to the residential heterogeneity of metropolitan areas.) The strongest association in this paper is, then, that the larger the metropolitan area, the fewer neighbors an individual claimed to know. This finding is consistent with one reported by Key (1968) that "neighboring" declined from the rural to the more urban places in his Midwestern sample and also with results of a Swedish study comparing town residents to those in its rural hinterland (Swedner, 1960).

A similar pattern of results was obtained with an item asking whether or not the respondent had family within walking distance of home. The larger the S.M.S.A., the

Table 7. Social Involvement: Social Club Attendance and Number of Neighbors Known (Income Dynamics Survey) by S.M.S.A., by Income

A. Frequency of Club Attendance ^a				
Net Income ^b	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Lowest 30% of Nation	M = 1.23 SD = (0.51) N = (642)	1.33 (0.60) (587)	1.33 (0.60) (901)	1.30
Middle 40%	1.44 (0.64) (517)	1.46 (0.64) (500)	1.47 (0.67) (638)	1.46
Highest 30%	1.82 (0.82) (256)	1.68 (0.74) (327)	1.66 (0.72) (386)	1.72
Unweighted Mean	1.50	1.49	1.49	1.49
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	0.07	>.500	0.00
B. Income	2	152.13	<.001	5.99
A X B	4	6.48	<.001	0.51
Total	4753			
B. Number of Neighbors Known Scale ^a				
Net Income ^b	Community Size			
	Outside S.M.S.A.	S.M.S.A.	Large S.M.S.A.	Unweighted Mean
Lowest 30%	M = 4.27 SD = (1.19) N = (642)	3.46 (1.47) (590)	3.08 (1.52) (913)	3.61
Middle 40%	4.13 (1.27) (524)	3.54 (1.43) (500)	3.24 (1.52) (650)	3.64
Highest 30%	4.23 (1.18) (259)	3.90 (1.22) (331)	3.69 (1.34) (391)	3.94
Unweighted Mean	4.21	3.63	3.34	3.73
Factor	Analysis of Variance Table			
	df	F	Significance	% of Variance
A. S.M.S.A.	2	143.97	<.001	5.58
B. Income	2	47.83	<.001	0.97
A X B	4	13.12	<.001	.53
Total	4799			

^aFor scoring on scales, see text.^b"Income" defined in Table 2.

less likely this was to be the case (ANOVA: Regression: $r = -.118$; partial $r = -.115$; $F = 30.97$, $p < .001$, 1.24% of total variance. 17.1% of explained variance). This effect

was somewhat inflated by suburbanites who, while knowing their neighbors more, were less likely to include relatives among them. The finding is similar to one reported by Klatzky (n.d.:55), that men in small communities were more likely to live near their parents than were men in large cities.

At this point, we recapitulate the basic results:

(1) Community size and powerlessness were not associated.

(2) There was a very small association between community size and sense of social isolation.

(3) With respect to social involvement, presumably both cause and effect of social-psychological isolation, the findings were contradictory: Attendance at social meetings was unrelated, but knowing one's neighbors was strongly related to urbanism—as was having relatives among those neighbors. The more metropolitan, the fewer know neighbors and the fewer have relatives nearby.

DISCUSSION

The negative findings on powerlessness call for little discussion. This fundamental dimension of personality, in all its names—sense of efficacy, internal locus of control, fate control—seems unaffected by urbanism. Two cautions should be noted: (1) This conclusion rests on two surveys, but on one scale measuring sense of competence. Replication with other measures is necessary. (2) This finding pertains to America, circa 1970. There are sound theoretical arguments (e.g., Sjoberg, 1964; Greer, 1962) to suggest that urban-rural differences—though intrinsically real—are erased in modern, mass societies. These arguments are challenged by findings that such differences persist (e.g., Nelsen, Yokely and Madron, 1971), but the arguments call for cross-cultural replication.

We will deal here with two questions: (1) Given the tenuous association of urbanism with social psychological isolation (partial $r = .064$, 1.7% of explained variance, Income Dynamics Survey)—and the lack of an urbanism-isolation finding in the literature—how is it that knowing one's neighbors was highly related (partial $r = -.206$, 29% of explained variance)? (2) How can the small urbanism-sense of isolation association be explained?

Two ready answers exist for the first

question: (a) that the neighbors finding was in only one survey with an unusual sample. However, it does replicate Key (1968) and the strength of the correlation makes this a weak response; (b) that subjective psychological scales are simply too unreliable and invalid (cf. Phillips and Clancy, 1972); that the neighbor item is the one to be believed, the scale to be ignored.

The interpretation we favor is a third: that both the results are valid—sense of isolation is only marginally associated with urbanism, but non-neighboring is much more so. The argument forwarded is that the results reflect the relative freedom from spatial constraints available in the urban environment—that people in the city can choose their friends and associates from within or without the neighborhood as they wish, making of the locality a “community of limited liability” (Janowitz, 1967). One can choose to be locally anonymous, and yet still *not be isolated* because of the availability and ease of contacts outside the immediate area. On the other hand, the rural situation implies that, through lack of alternatives, neighbors are associates; and through absence of anonymity, one knows one's neighbors—willing or not. “The sociology of village life makes neighboring mandatory. In cities this type of neighboring . . . is mandatory no longer” (Keller, 1968:48). The conclusion of this argument is that there may be a rural-urban difference in neighboring, but little, if any, in total real and felt social isolation.

What evidence is there for this explanation? (1) When physical distance is controlled, city size does not affect frequency of contact with kin (Klatzky, n.d.), and even physical distance is unrelated to emotional ties to kin (Litwak, 1960)—evidence of the nil effect of urbanism and of the possibility of transcending space. (2) Studies of social ties among urban residents find that such bonds do exist, but mostly outside the local area (e.g., Lansing: Smith et al., 1954; San Francisco: Bell and Boat, 1957; Los Angeles: Reimer and McNamara, 1957; Cairo: Petersen, 1971; Toronto: Wellman et al., in press; cf. review in Greer, 1962:89 ff.). (3) Key (1968) found, that even as neighboring declined from rural to urban places, other forms of social contact, including “informal groups,” increased (cf. Swedner,

1960). (4) We can point to some evidence in the present data, as well:

(a) The lack of association between S.M.S.A. and the social club item is similar to the distinction Key and Swedner found between neighboring and other social involvements. With increasing urbanism, the first can drop and the latter still remain constant (see discussion in Keller, 1968:Ch. 1).

(b) If neighboring does become more a matter of free choice in the urban setting, then one should expect to find a higher association between psychological dispositions and neighboring in urban than in rural places. In terms of our data, the correlation between social psychological isolation (the "how many people do you trust" item) and neighboring should increase with community size, because in the larger communities the distrustful are freer to stay aloof.¹⁰

This was indeed the case: The relationship between the two items increased with increases in urbanism. The correlation between distrust and neighboring was $-.06$ among non-S.M.S.A. persons ($b = -.09$), $-.14$ and $-.17$ among S.M.S.A. and large S.M.S.A. respondents ($b = -.23$, $-.30$). The latter two slopes are greater than the first one at $p < .002$ and $p < .001$. (This interaction did not exist among low-income persons, and was strongest among middle-income respondents.) These results reflect the following pattern, for example: In the middle-income group living outside S.M.S.A.'s, there was little difference in the proportion "locally-isolated" (knowing less than three neighbors) by their level of trust. 5.4% of the most trusting were "locally isolated"; 7.6% of the least trusting were. In large S.M.A.S.'s, differences appeared. Among the most trusting 11.5% were "locally isolated"; among the least trusting, 26.1% were. Seemingly, the larger the metropolis, the freer are the misanthropic to ignore their neighbors.¹¹

¹⁰ We make here a causal assumption that psychological orientation leads to involvement, an assumption that seems justified by the alienation research (Seeman, 1972). Obviously, though, experience with involvement reciprocally affects feelings—an assumption that our previous analysis was based on.

¹¹ Consistent with this analysis is the finding that no such S.M.S.A. interaction appeared in the distrust-social club attendance correlations. (Attendance is equally voluntary everywhere.) Also, there was such an interaction in the club attendance-neighboring correlations, because, we argue, the

(c) Consistent with this hypothesis of freedom from proximity, the likelihood of having family within walking distance declined with urbanism. Previous studies (e.g., Reiss, 1959; Bell and Boat, 1954; Key, 1968; Bultena, 1969) indicate that family contacts are at least as common in cities as in the countryside. The present results suggest that those contacts are translocal. Furthermore, if it is true that both friends and family are equally present but are more dispersed over space in cities, then one should expect the overlap of relative and neighbor to be smaller in cities. This was the case. The correlation between having relatives nearby and number of neighbors known was $.22$ in non-S.M.S.A. places, $.12$ in large S.M.S.A. areas. (The difference in slopes, $.53$ versus $.37$, was significant at $p < .01$.) Both relatives and friends are dispersed in the urban setting (cf. Wellman et al, in press).

We conclude on the basis of these arguments that total social isolation is only weakly if at all associated with urbanism, but that the contacts people have, become freer of the locality the more urban the place.

(These findings also support some theoretical arguments [e.g., Frankenburg, 1965] that role differentiation increases with urbanism. In this case, the concordances of friend-neighbor and relative-neighbor decrease with increases in community size.)

The second finding to be discussed is that felt social isolation (as measured by items reflecting suspicion and distrust) was related to urban residence. This result is, to be sure, quite marginal, with the independent effect running at about $.07$ ($R^2 = .005$; percent of explained variance = 3–5%). To change feelings of isolation, adjusting population concentration would be a crudely inefficient procedure. However, with respect to our theoretical concerns, explanations of even this small effect deserves attention.

The simplest explanation is that it reflects the contemporary "urban crisis" of crime; it may be a transient effect. But, if we choose to consider the findings as more generalizable than that, we can examine at least three explanations, the first two drawn from Wirthian theory (Wirth, 1938; Fischer, 1972).

voluntarism of local interaction increases with S.M.S.A. size.

(1) The intense demands of urban life which result from the activity of densely-packed multitudes lead the individual to withdraw from contact to protect himself (Simmel, 1905; Milgram, 1970). Social distance and anti-social attitudes could be such defensive mechanisms. This explanation posits no mediation between the city environment and individual psychology.

(2) Urban life is anomic. That is, social ties (such as kinship) are weakened and, with them, social norms. In this environment, where the rules of behavior have broken down, a sense of distrust and isolation is both realistic and inevitable. This explanation posits the breakdown of institutions as the mediating variable between urbanism and alienation. (However, the studies we cited in discussing dispersal cast doubt on the assumption that there is such an anomic state in urban life.)

(3) Another explanation focuses on the social context of the urban environment. The argument is that cities are disproportionately the site of social groups whose lifestyles are strange to each other. Their presence may generate a sense of distrust for "most people" even while the individual may be comfortably and fully a member of his own networks (Fischer, 1973). This point is somewhat like Wilson's (1970) argument that the source of "urban unease" is the public misbehavior (serious or otherwise) of other people.

Evidence for this last argument would be that attributes of the individual's social environment (i.e., characteristics of the surrounding population) explain the urbanism-distrust correlation. Some data from the S.R.C. 1968 survey hint that this might be the case. When a factor scale measuring the S.E.S. level of the person's county¹² was entered into the regression equation—with all individual attributes held constant—the partial r between community size and the misanthropy scale dropped from .079 to .041. (County S.E.S. was *positively* correlated with misanthropy after sixteen individual-level controls. Why this is so is unclear.) Then, entry of a factor scale reflecting the presence of "primary individuals"¹³ reduced

it to .027, and entry of the county's homicide rate (in 1967) reduced it further to .008. (The multiple partial R for the three county variables is .12, $p < .001$). This mildly substantiates the thesis that the social composition of the urban environment, rather than the environment directly, shapes alienation.

At least two objections can be made to this analysis. (1) These "contextual" variables are simply urbanism measured in different form. However, when community size was controlled, the multiple partial R for the three are still .09 ($p = .01$), indicating that they represent more than dummies for size and are more effective as predictors than size. (2) The effects of controlling for "isolates" and the homicide rate are testimony to the anomie explanation above. Cities isolate people, increase crime, and thereby generate a sense of estrangement. This reply ignores the major effect of the county S.E.S. control, but is otherwise consistent with the findings. It pushes the issue back to explaining the source of the correlation between urbanism and the proportion of primary individuals (does urbanism cause their increase, or is it self-selection?) and the urbanism-homicide correlation (does urbanism cause it, or is it an accident of population distribution?). These issues are beyond the present data.

CONCLUSIONS

Survey data examined here indicate that no association exists between size of community and sense of personal incompetence. A real but small association was found between urbanism and a sense of social isolation, as indicated by distrust of "most people." Three explanations for this finding were proposed, two of which seem plausible—that urban anomie or that social composition generates distrust. We favor the latter explanation. Finally, some of the data indicate that, while urbanism may not isolate individuals from social contact, it may incline them to shift that contact away from the locality.

These conclusions call into question the intellectual folk-myths concerning the alienation of urban life. Fundamental personality

percent unmarried females, number of people per household, and number of rooms per house (the latter two negatively weighted). ($\alpha = .78$.)

¹² Composed of median education (1960), median rent (1970), percent of housing units without plumbing (1970). The reliability was .85.

¹³ Composed of percent of population over 65,

dimensions—such as sense of control—are not affected directly by the gross ecological differences of town and country. Personalities are shaped in smaller social contexts than that. The marginally greater distrust in cities may testify to contemporary urban problems. Or, perhaps it may reflect the plurality of social contexts in urban life, each of which—while fully integrating its own members—appears foreign to the others about it. In any event, the attribution of alienation to “urbanism as a way of life” seems incorrect.

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