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THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WORLDS OF CITY LIFE*

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The classical theory that urbanism produces interpersonal estrangement is supported by evidence that urbanism is associated with less public helpfulness and more social conflict. This theory is challenged, however, by evidence that urbanism is not associated with residents' having any fewer social ties or suffering higher psychological stress. An alternative theory contends that urbanism produces fear and distrust of "foreign" groups in the public sphere, but does not affect private social worlds. This new survey study supports the latter explanation by reconfirming earlier findings and showing that urbanism is not correlated with distrust of neighbors but is correlated with distrust of "other people" in the wider community.

There has been a resurgence of interest among sociologists and psychologists in the question, formulated by Simmel, Park, and Wirth, of whether urban life is inherently alienating (see, for example, Milgram, 1970; Lofland, 1973; Baum et al., 1978; Fischer, 1976; Karp et al., 1977). Some research suggests that urban residence does foster interpersonal estrangement, but other research challenges that claim. I explain these conflicting sets of findings by focusing on the distinction between the public and private realms of social behavior and briefly summarizing some findings from a recent survey that was explicitly designed to answer the Wirthian question. The key result suggests that urban estrangement is specific to the public sphere, to what Lyn Lofland

(1973) has called the "world of strangers." A fuller explication of the literature on urban alienation can be found in Fischer (1976) and a complete description of the study from which this article was abstracted can be found in Fischer (1981).

THE ARGUMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The basic urban alienation thesis is that the urban environment—its overstimulation, density, and complexity—strains individual psyches and social relations. Individual and societal adaptations to moderate these stresses essentially take the form of interpersonal estrangement. Social contacts evolve into ones that are "impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental;" urbanites adopt "reserve, indifference, and blasé outlook" as devices "for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others" (Wirth, 1938: 153; see also Simmel, 1905; Park, 1916; for exegeses and extensions, see Morris, 1968; Milgram, 1970). The argument claims that this estranged, urban style comes to pervade and alter family life, intimate ties, and personality. The more urban the community, the greater the estrangement. The weakening of intimate social bonds, in turn, aggravates psychological distress.

Critics of this thesis claim that social integration—and consequently, psychological well-being too—is sustained within small, private, social worlds even in the largest cities (see, for example, Lewis,

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1965; Gans, 1962; Wellman, 1979). Thus, urban residence does not, according to the critics, cause interpersonal estrangement, nor its subsequent effects.

Most of the evidence used in this debate can be divided into four lines of research: studies of helpfulness, conflict, social ties, and psychological states. The first two lines bolster the Wirthian thesis and the latter two undermine it.

Helpfulness. Social psychologists have recently conducted many field experiments comparing the willingness of residents of small towns and of cities to help strangers in need—strangers such as experimenters who reach a “wrong” number with their “last” dime, who have “lost” addressed letters, who ask for directions, and so on. The general drift of the results has been that American city-dwellers tend to be less helpful than American small-town residents (see review of the field by Korte, 1978). This finding coincides with the popular American belief that small-town people are “friendlier” than city people (e.g. Louis Harris Associates, 1978).

Conflict. Research tends to show that various types of group conflict—racial disorders and major industrial disputes, for example—are disproportionately likely to occur in large communities (e.g., Tilly, 1974; Morgan and Clark, 1973; Lincoln, 1978). If we think of some crimes as forms of interpersonal conflict, urbanism is strongly associated again with incidence of hostility (Wolfgang, 1970; Skogan, 1977). The group conflict and crime Park and Wirth saw in Chicago were certainly important spurs to their ideas about urban anomie.

Both these sets of findings suggest that urbanism increased estrangement, even to the point of conflict. But the other lines of research do not.

Personal Relations. The handful of studies which have tried to compare the number or quality of friendships or other relations have generally shown no difference between more and less urban people, or have shown *greater* social integration among urbanites (e.g., Reiss, 1959; Key, 1968; Swedner, 1960; Crowe, 1978).

Psychological States. Research gener-

ally has not found that residents of large communities are any likelier to display psychological symptoms of disorder, stress, or subjective alienation than are residents of smaller communities; indeed, they often show less (see, for example, Srole, 1972; Webb and Collette, 1977, 1979; Webb, 1978). These findings challenge the theory that urban life strains personality. However, one study expressly addressing the estrangement issue (Fischer, 1973) found that urbanites were, all else equal, slightly more likely (partial $r=.07$) than residents of small places to endorse statements expressing distrust of “most people.”¹ This finding reinforces the urban alienation thesis.

If the validity of all these findings is accepted, how can they be reconciled? My starting point is Lofland's (1973) distinction between the public and private spheres of urban life. The former consists of settings where people are strangers, and it requires a special etiquette—reserved, nonintrusive, careful, impersonal. Actors sometimes must be, and more often simply appear to be, indifferent to other people. But this is a situational, not a psychological, style, and says nothing about attitude and action in the private sphere: the city-dweller “did not lose the capacity for the deep, long-lasting, multifaceted relationship. But he gained the capacity for the surface, fleeting, restricted relationship,” and for discerning the occasion for each (Lofland, 1973: 178).

Lofland's concern here is the urban “world of strangers,” by which she essentially means the world of people who are personally unfamiliar to one another. But there is another meaning: the world of strange people, people who appear odd, different, unconventional, potentially threatening to one another (Fischer, 1976: 180–92). A city is heterogeneous, a “mosaic” of racial, ethnic, age, occupational, and lifestyle groups. The urban dweller typically has the capacity to know people categorically, to place them by ap-

¹ The statements used in the distrust study were largely original or adapted items from the “Rosenberg Misanthropy Scale”—e.g., “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?”

pearance and behavior in one of these urban subcultures, the stereotypic characteristics of which he or she is familiar with (see Bruner, 1973; Berreman, 1978). Often, these characteristics are distasteful or frightening; at the least, the "foreign" nature of the groups means that their members' actions are relatively unpredictable. In contemporary America, for example, black men on city streets are often scary to whites, and young people who look like "punk-rockers" are often irritating to the middle-aged. The strange aspects of people in the public sphere, together with the strangers in Lofland's sense, generate public impersonality. They also generate public withdrawal, fear (particularly, in America, fear of crime), and some hostility toward those "others."² But this reaction is, as described, situationally specific; it does not necessarily involve people's private lives or alter personality.

In sum, there are kinds of evidence that support the argument that urban life is alienating, that it weakens social integration down to the level of intimate relations and in turn impairs psychological well-being. But there are also kinds of evidence that support the claim that urbanism has no such effects at all. I am suggesting that this contradiction can be resolved by emphasizing the distinction—implicitly and explicitly denied by theorists of the Wirthian School—between the public and private spheres. As urbanism increases, residents' public activities increasingly bring them into contact with unfamiliar, annoying, and threatening people. Their subjective reaction and public behavior expresses estrangement from, and even conflict with, members of these foreign subcultures. However, urbanism does not estrange individuals from familiar and

similar people.³ Conversely, urbanism's effects are specified: estrangement occurs in the public sphere—less helpfulness, more conflict—but not in the private one—personal relations and psychological well-being. As to urbanites' greater distrust of "most people" reported in Fischer (1973), that should be understood as referring to "most strangers." (On this argument, see also Fischer, 1976: 180–92; Franck, 1980; Baldassare, 1979; Korte, 1978.)

The remainder of this paper presents results from a recent survey that was designed to test whether urban residence itself was a cause of characteristics considered typical of an "urban way of life." Within a single sample of respondents, we find evidence that urban residence is, all else equal, associated with signs of public estrangement but not with signs of private estrangement—evidence that urban alienation is specifically public alienation.

THE STUDY: METHOD

Between August, 1977, and February, 1978, we interviewed 1,050 adults living in 50 communities throughout Northern California, communities that ranged from districts in central San Francisco to small towns in agricultural regions over a hundred miles away. (The description of the procedure provided here is slightly simplified; the details are extensively discussed in the methodological appendix to Fischer (1981).) The sampling and interviewing were done by the Survey Research Center, University of California, Berkeley. The communities, operationally defined as city census tracts or nonmetropolitan towns, were randomly selected from a theoretically-specified population of places in a five-by-five stratified design. First, all communities located in, or within 200 miles north or east of, San Francisco (excepting those discussed below) were divided into five urban strata:

- (1) *Center City*—tracts in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento;

² Fear of crime may suffice to explain the findings of less urban helpfulness. Street crimes and fear of crime increase with urbanism and wariness of strangers is a more reasonable response for city-dwellers than small-town residents. It is even recommended. An article on "Ways to Foil a Pickpocket," for example, states: "Always be on guard if a stranger approaches you for any reason—to ask for a light, directions, the time, or the like." This kind of approach is precisely one way experimenters test helpfulness. See, also, House and Wolf (1978) on crime as an explanation of lesser urban helpfulness.

³ This does not mean that urbanism has no effect on private relations; it does (see Fischer, 1981).

(2) tracts in the *Inner Suburbs* of those cities;

(3) tracts in the *Outer Suburbs*, including the rest of the San Francisco-Oakland SMSA and the urbanized area of the Sacramento SMSA;

(4) *Large Towns*—tracts in places over 10,000 in population but not in either major SMSA; and

(5) *Small Towns*—municipalities between 2,500 and 10,000, and not in either major SMSA.

Within each stratum, communities were cross-stratified into five equal quintiles by median family income, yielding 25 sampling cells. (Stratum 4 was handled somewhat differently, but the effect was the same—to guarantee a spread of income levels.) In each cell, two communities were randomly selected proportional to population. The urban strata were used to guarantee a sample of places ranging across the metropolitan-small town continuum (albeit, one purposely weighted to the lower end). The sampling strata were not, however, used as the measure of urbanism (see below).

To simplify analyses of community differences, we excluded open countryside and places under 2,500 (i.e., we have no truly "rural" respondents), special communities such as army bases, and communities over 40% black in 1970. Since our goal was to make analytic rather than descriptive statements with our data, the special features of our sampling design are warranted. Weighting the data to correct for the disproportionately small-town sample barely affects the ultimate statistical results. And all our analysis involves statistical controls so that spurious associations with urbanism caused by third factors, whether the third factors correlate with urbanism in the population at large or just in our special sample, are eliminated (see below). On many points, moreover, our findings parallel those from fully representative national samples.

Within each of the 50 communities, two neighborhoods were drawn proportional to population and households randomly sampled in each. English-speaking adults were randomly chosen from each household. In the end, we achieved a 76% completion rate, with an 18% refusal rate, and

had from 7 to 41 interviews in each community. We conducted some extensive analyses of the consequences of the refusal rate, which was, as in other surveys, highest in the central cities. These tests included weighting respondents in proportion to the community refusal rate. The general conclusion is that a lower refusal rate would probably not have changed any of the present conclusions, and might have reinforced a few (such as the role of fear of crime).

The interview focused on having respondents describe their personal social networks, but also included items concerning their views of the neighborhood and city.

We defined the independent variable, urbanism of the community, in terms of proximity to concentrations of people. We measured it with a logged interval scale composed equally of two standardized subscales: the 1970 population of the municipality within which the community lay, and a measure of "population potential" (see Carrothers, 1956) based on how far the community was from every county in Northern California and how populous those counties were (i.e., the closer a place was to each county or the more populated the county, the higher its score). This logged scale, which was normally distributed across our sample of 50 places, correlated .85 with the five-category stratification variable used to draw the sample. The significant differences introduced by using the scale rather than the sampling strata are to rank parts of Sacramento as roughly as urban as San Francisco suburbs and distant Sacramento suburbs as urban as small towns (the results would have been roughly similar with either measure). The urbanism scale correlates well with standard accompaniments of city size, such as heterogeneity, housing density, and respondents' own labels for their towns.

THE STUDY: RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the results of our study that are most relevant to this paper's concerns. The first column presents product-moment correlations between the urbanism of respondents' communities

Table 1. Correlations between Urbanism Scale and Dependent Variables

Responses to survey	Correlations with Urbanism			Mean	S. D.
	Zero-order r	Partialled for personal traits ^a	Partialled also for neighborhood unsafe		
1. Neighborhood is unsafe	.19***	.23***	—	1.75	0.60
2. Crime is a worst feature of town	.32***	.29***	.25***	.25	.43
3. Respondent's cooperativeness with interview	.06*	-.01	.03	4.05	1.44
4. Residents generally are a best feature	-.04	-.07*	-.05	.29	.45
5. Residents generally are a worst feature	.14***	.10**	.08*	.12	.32
6. Specific groups are a best feature	.25***	.18***	.18***	.09	.29
7. Specific groups are a worst feature	.12***	.11***	.11***	.14	.35
8. Number of kin outside the household	-.18***	-.13***	-.11***	6.66	5.13
9. Number of nonkin named	.18***	-.00	-.00	10.72	6.83
10. Feeling upset	.01	.04	.00	1.74	0.82
11. Feeling angry	-.04	.01	-.05	1.63	0.88
12. Feeling pleased	.04	-.05	.00	4.39	0.75
13. Residents know one another is a best	-.12***	-.12***	-.11***	.06	.23
14. Residents not know " is a worst	.11***	.09*	.08	.03	.16
15. Often see people unexpectedly	-.18***	-.20***	-.19***	3.83	1.17
16. Neighbors similar to respondent	-.10*	-.05	-.03	1.89	0.89
17. Distrust neighbors	.03	.11***	.05	1.19	0.52
18. Distrust most people in town	.17***	.24***	.21***	1.49	0.74

NOTE: The urbanism scale (mean=2.40, S.D. =0.24) and dependent variables are described in the text and notes.

^a The control variables are gender; age; education (5 categories); household income (17 categories); dummy variables for having never been married, currently being married, working full-time, and working part-time; number of children under twelve living at home; number of children twelve or older living at home; length of residence in the city; and length of residence in the neighborhood (each in eight categories).

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

and the respondents' scores on 18 dependent variables. These statistics answer the questions of whether urbanism is associated in our sample with the stipulated effects. The second column presents the same correlations partialled for several important characteristics of the respondents: gender, stage in the lifecycle, education, income, and length of residence (see note to table). These adjusted statistics allow us to assess whether the original correlations are spuriously inflated or deflated by self-selection—e.g., educated people are more likely to live in cities and are also less likely to be distrustful—or whether there is, as hypothesized, an independent association between urbanism and respondents' answers to the survey. The third column adds one more control variable in calculating the partials, respondents' fear of crime, and thus indicates the association of urbanism with respondents' answers independent of personal traits and anxiety about crime. (The analysis presented here focuses on the existence or nonexistence of associations

(i.e., on the significance of correlations) rather than on variance explained, because our concern is with testing hypotheses that urbanism is one cause of the effects, not with finding the major causes of the effects. While several theorists argue that urban residence has independent causal effects, few if any would claim that the magnitude of such effects was as great as those of personal traits, such as education or age.)

This table is misleadingly simple. I performed more complex statistical analyses—crosstabulations, multiple-regression, analyses of covariance, subgroup analyses, etc.—and examined detailed problems, such as skewedness in the dependent variables. But the correlations in Table 1 capture the substance of the patterns revealed in the other analyses, with a few qualifications noted in the text. Thus, they suffice for present purposes. I will discuss the findings in categories that parallel the major lines of research.

Helpfulness. We did not include in our

survey specific measures of respondents' willingness to help strangers; but the willingness of potential respondents to be interviewed by a stranger did vary, as survey organizations know well, by urbanism. Of the eligible central city households, 31% refused, forthrightly or indirectly, to be interviewed, compared to 20% or less in the other sampling strata (data not shown here). House and Wolf (1978) have shown, with national surveys, that this kind of difference in refusals can be largely explained by increases in city crime rates during the 1960s.

There are findings from our survey consistent with this fear-of-crime interpretation: Table 1 (lines 1 and 2) shows that the more urban the community, the more likely were people whom we did interview to feel that their neighborhood was unsafe, and the more likely they were to volunteer that crime was one of the "worst things" about their town or city, a finding similar to those others have reported (e.g., Clemente and Kleiman, 1977).⁴ Fear may indeed explain why big-city people were less willing than small-town residents to be helpful by allowing interviewers into their homes.⁵ Furthermore, among people who did admit interviewers, there was no linear association between urbanism and how cooperative they were during the interview (Table 1, line 3; there was a

modest curvilinear trend, with cooperativeness greatest in the middle range).⁶ In other words, urbanites were apparently more reluctant than people living in smaller places to let strangers into their private spheres, their homes, but once having done so, were no less helpful.

Conflict. Since our data concern individuals as units of analysis, we have no direct measures of group conflict. But we can tap intergroup resentments. We asked respondents to tell us the "best" and "worst" things about their towns. Their answers were coded for social references—comments on the general types or behavior of residents and comments on specific ethnic, class, age, or lifestyle groups (including the respondents' own). As Table 1 shows, there was little difference by urbanism in the likelihood that respondents mentioned general positive attributes of residents—"kind," "friendly," "variety," etc.—as best things about their towns (line 4), but urbanites were a bit more likely to cite general negative attributes—"rude," "suspicious," "nosey," etc.—as worst things (line 5). Moreover, urbanism was independently correlated with respondents' inclination to cite specific groups—"blacks," "old people," "gays," "rich snobs," etc.—both as best and worst features of their cities (lines 6 and 7). The particular group references also varied by urbanism, of course,

⁴ The "Neighborhood Is Unsafe" question reads and is coded: "Generally speaking, do you think of this neighborhood as (1) a very safe place, (2) a somewhat safe place, or (3) not a very safe place to live?" Since the question followed one about "homes being broken into," the context made it clear that safety referred to safety from crime. The "worst feature" item was coded from answers to an open-ended question, "What would you say are the worst things about living in this (city/town)?" Respondents who mentioned serious crimes or vandalism were coded 1; respondents who mentioned neither were coded 0. We asked a similar question about the "best things in this (city/town)," and the probability that a respondent cited safety from crime declined with urbanism ($r = -.11$; partial $r = -.12$; partial $r = -.09$).

⁵ How might this differential response rate have affected the remainder of the results? There is no way to know, of course, how un interviewed people would have responded. But efforts we made to estimate biases due to nonresponse suggested that, in general, the overall direction of our results would have been unchanged (see Methodological Appendix to Fischer, 1981).

⁶ We asked interviewers to answer several closed-ended questions after each interview. Three items were combined into a cooperativeness scale: "What was the respondent's initial attitude about being interviewed?", coded on a five-point scale from "very reluctant" to "very interested and enthusiastic"; "What was the respondent's attitude during the interview?", coded from "often irritated or hostile" to "friendly, eager"; and "How open and forthcoming do you think the respondent was about (his/her) personal problems and feelings—basically not frank, a little guarded, or open?" (The modest curvilinear relationship appeared in analyses of covariance that treated the urbanism scale as a four-category factor.) A respondent's willingness to be interviewed and his or her cooperativeness are also dependent on the skill and personality of the interviewer. To minimize interviewer effects, we rotated our 16 interviewers through the five sampling strata. That is, we minimized as much as practically possible the association between urbanism and specific interviewer. Analyses of interviewer effects showed that they minimally influenced our findings (Fischer, 1981: Methodological Appendix).

with small-town residents occasionally saying that white neighbors were an advantage and poor neighbors a disadvantage, while big-city residents cited fellow Asians as an advantage and homosexuals as a disadvantage.

The more urban the community, the more salient were social groups—with one's own group typically seen as a good thing and other groups as a bad thing—and the more annoying were other people's general attitudes and actions. Occasionally (and more so in large cities), respondents thought that other groups were a "best thing"—e.g., an elderly person saying it was good to be near young people—but positive references were typically to respondents' own groups. All the differences reinforce those earlier studies' findings that urbanism is independently associated with intergroup tension.

Personal Relations. This study was largely directed at measuring differences in the social networks of people residing in communities of varying urbanism. Consequently, we asked many questions designed to elicit from respondents full and accurate lists of the people with whom they were most involved (on the technique, see McCallister and Fischer, 1978; Jones and Fischer, 1978). They named and described, on average, 18.5 associates apiece. The complete results on the causal connection between urbanism and personal relations are numerous and complexly detailed, involving nonlinearities, interaction effects, and ambiguities; the final results are presented elsewhere (Fischer, 1981). The two items in Table 1 (lines 8 and 9) and brief comments will summarize the interim findings sufficiently well to make the basic point for this report: that urbanism does not impair personal relations.

! The more urban the community, the fewer kin respondents named in their networks ($r = -.18$). The difference is largely accounted for by declines in the number of extended kin named, rather than in parents, children, and siblings, and also by the fact that residents of the most urban communities—immediately in or next to San Francisco–Oakland—named fewer kin than did respondents elsewhere. Ur-

banism does seem to encourage disconnection from relatives.

But urbanism is equally associated with naming more nonkin, especially nonkin called "friends" ($r = .18$). That correlation is largely explained by self-selection—the greater education, income, and youthfulness of urbanites. Those factors held constant, there was no straightforward variation by urbanism in number of nonkin named (partial $r = .00$). There were variations by urbanism in the types of nonkin, respondents in smaller places naming slightly more neighbors and cocongregants, respondents in larger places naming slightly more friends, "others," associates similar to themselves, and geographically dispersed nonkin. But there was no overall net effect.

Although the negative effect of urbanism on kin involvement lends weight to some notions of urban disintegration (i.e., "decline" of the family), it is much less relevant to the present argument than is the finding that urbanism was not associated with weaker nonkin involvement. Urban overload and protective withdrawal should presumably manifest themselves most in people's reluctance to make and hold friends, but friends remained constant, or even increased, with urbanism. Moreover, other analyses we conducted showed no net correlation between the quality—felt closeness and intimacy—of relations and urbanism, nor between urbanism and the adequacy of the social support respondents received from their associates.

In sum, the specific make-up of people's social networks apparently varies with urbanism, but this study, like those cited earlier, fails to show that urbanism socially isolates individuals.

Psychological States. As in the case of social ties, our detailed findings on psychological well-being are presented elsewhere. But the basic results are, again, consistent with earlier studies. We constructed scales that measure three domains of affect: feeling upset, nervous, or depressed; feeling angry; and feeling pleased or happy.⁷ Table 1 (lines 10, 11,

⁷ All items but one had the same structure, asking

and 12) shows that there is no correlation, either zero-order or partial, between urbanism and these feeling states. (Suburbanites expressed slightly more negative affect, all else equal, than did respondents in either more or less urban places). Feeling that the neighborhood is unsafe, however, is strongly correlated with psychological states (the partial r with Upset is .19; Angry, .18; and Pleased, -.20). Whether this really indicates that fear of crime causes depression, or just reflects underlying response styles, or both, is unclear.

Summary. If overload and resultant stress accompany city life, we see no evidence of it in this study, nor in others. If urbanites have managed to completely avoid the resultant stress, as overload theorists sometimes argue, by avoiding or dampening some social involvements in the private sphere, we have no evidence of that, either. (Urbanites did report fewer kin than did residents of smaller places. But if this "withdrawal" from kin is a strategy for reducing stress, then it should be the case that social ties generally impair psychological well-being. In fact, the more social ties, the higher the well-being.⁸ Children living at home, however,

are "associates" who *do* detract from psychological well-being, especially of their mothers.)

DISTRUST

To this point, we have basically confirmed, albeit with different sample and different method, earlier findings that are contradictory within the terms of urban alienation theories: urbanites seem less helpful (although fear of crime may explain it) and seem to bear more group resentments, but they seem no more isolated or disturbed than small-town people. Our evidence also supports the alternative explanation which distinguishes public and private spheres.

Some evidence from the survey indicates that urbanites more often felt themselves to be in a "world of strangers" when in public than did small-town residents. The more urban the community, the less likely respondents were to volunteer that one of the best features of the town or city was that "everyone knows everyone else" (Table 1, line 13), and the slightly more likely they were to complain that people in the town did not know one another (line 14; the skewness of these items understates the degree of association). Furthermore, we directly asked respondents how often they "ran into" people they

"How often do . . . a lot of the time, some of the time, only once in a while, or never?" The "Upset" scale combined three items: ". . . you feel unhappy or a bit depressed these days," ". . . you feel nervous, fidgety, or tense these days," and ". . . you feel worried or upset." The "Angry" scale combines two items: ". . . things get on your nerves so much that you feel like losing your temper," and ". . . you feel you are boiling inside with anger because of others these days." The "Pleased" scale includes four: ". . . you feel you are particularly excited about or interested in something these days," ". . . you feel that things are going the way you want them to," ". . . you feel pleased with what you are doing these days," and "Thinking about your life as a whole, how happy would you say you are—very happy, pretty happy, pretty unhappy, or very unhappy?" Pooling all these items into one overall affect scale yields essentially the same results.

⁸ Put another way, the overload-and-withdrawal argument implies that controlling for the size of respondents' networks should, all else equal, reveal a direct, negative effect of urbanism on feeling states (because reduced networks suppress overload symptoms). In fact, it does not. A variation on the argument would be that urban social withdrawal reduces people's contacts to a medium, "optimal" level, neither too few nor too many associates. But net-

work size was correlated with psychological well-being in a linear fashion. Finally, a more complex overload-and-withdrawal argument can be constructed, starting with the fact that psychological well-being was maximized in this sample by a high ratio of nonkin to kin ties, all else being equal. That ratio is independently associated with urbanism (as is clear from the correlations with its components). Urbanites may "withdraw" in the sense that they conserve their social attention for the most psychologically rewarding associates they have: their friends, not their relatives. The problem with this version of a withdrawal argument is that the data cannot distinguish it from a quite different argument: that urban life offers more compatible and rewarding associates than are available in small places; in cities, more compatible friends replace the less compatible kin. Some additional results lend weight to the latter thesis, for example, the finding that urbanites' nonkin associates tended to be slightly more similar to them in age than were the nonkin associates of less urban respondents to them (see Fischer, 1981).

knew in public places.⁹ The larger the community, the lower the reported frequency of such encounters (line 15). We know, from community-level data, that the cities urbanites lived in were more heterogeneous than were the small towns, more full of "strange" people as well as of "strangers." These findings are consistent with the common sense expectation that urbanites are more likely to experience the wider community as anonymous and unfamiliar than are small-town residents.¹⁰

But the neighborhood is a different matter. Personal traits held constant, urbanites were just as likely as small-town residents to perceive their neighbors as similar to themselves in style of life (Table 1, line 16).¹¹ Although cities as wholes are very heterogeneous, residential segregation in metropolitan areas produces homogeneous neighborhoods. Other findings (not shown here) indicate that there was no systematic association between urbanism and casual interaction with neighbors—chatting on the street and borrowing small items. In sum, neighbors were an equally familiar group both to large-city and to small-town respondents. (This does not mean that neighbors were equally likely to become intimates of large-city and small-town respondents; they were not.)

A Quasi Experiment. If the logic of our explanation—urban life estranges public relations but not private ones—and the evidence presented so far are valid, the

⁹ Specifically, the question asked, "When you are not at home [or at (work/school)], about how often do you run into someone you know?" If necessary, interviewers explained, "I mean someone you're not expecting to see." The answer categories ranged from (1), never, to (5), almost every day. (Carol J. Silverman thought of this item.)

¹⁰ Another question asked respondents if they had favorite restaurants or bar "hangouts," if they knew people who worked there by name, and if so, whether they knew members of that person's family by name. Among the 265 respondents who knew at least one worker by name, the correlation between urbanism and knowing family members is $-.23$ ($p < .001$).

¹¹ The question was "In terms of general lifestyle, do you think that most of your neighbors are pretty much like you, or are they quite different from you?" The answers were coded (1) quite different, (2) some like, some different, or can't say, and (3) pretty much like me.

following should be true: urbanism does not cause—is not independently associated with—distrust of neighbors (a relatively private group), but does cause—is independently associated with—distrust of other people in the city (the general public). To test this hypothesis, we divided the standard distrust item into two forms:

Thinking of the neighborhood as a whole, would you say that most of the people who live here *can* or *cannot* be trusted? (86% said "can," 6% "cannot," and 8% couldn't say.)

What about most people who live in [name of town or city]?¹² would you say that most of them *can* be trusted or *cannot* be trusted? (66% said "can," 15% "cannot," and 20% couldn't say.)

Interviewers were instructed that "what we mean by 'trust' is whether the respondents can expect other people to behave appropriately over a range of situations." We coded the answers from (1) can trust, (2) cannot say, to (3) cannot trust, and correlated them with urbanism. The two items correlate at $r = .25$. (This is a "quasi experiment" in that each "subject," serving as his or her own control, is exposed by the questions to two different stimuli. If the hypothesis is correct, the responses to this "manipulation" should differ by and interact with the urbanism of the subjects' communities.)

As Table 1 (lines 17 and 18; first column) shows, the predicted pattern appeared: urbanism was significantly correlated with distrusting most people in the city ($r = .17$; distrust was especially high in the center cities) but not correlated with distrusting neighbors ($r = .03$). The correlations differ from one another significantly ($p < .001$).

The results change, however, if the personal traits of the respondents are held constant (second column). Urbanites tend

¹² The name of the municipality—e.g., San Francisco, Middletown, etc.—was inserted here. This may seem to create incommensurate comparisons, between populations of hundreds of thousands of people and populations of a few thousand. But this is exactly the appropriate comparison. The small-town resident when in public, say when downtown, is exposed to a relatively narrow range of others. The city resident is potentially exposed downtown to a vast range of others. This difference is an attribute of the places, not the question.

to be more educated and affluent, both characteristics that increase trust. When these and other traits are controlled, urbanism is significantly and more strongly associated with both items, distrusting neighbors ($r = .11$) and distrusting most people ($r = .24$). Still, the hypothesis is supported to some extent; urbanism is more highly correlated with distrusting most in the city than it is with distrusting neighbors (the difference in partial r 's is significant at $p < .001$). (Since both items, and particularly the neighbor question, are heavily skewed, the comparison of the r 's can be misleading. We can compare, instead, urbanism's contribution to the explained variance of each item. Because skewness will reduce the correlations with the control variables, too, this serves as a form of standardization. Of the variance in the neighbor item explained by urbanism and the control variables, $R^2 = .09$, urbanism explains 14%. Of the explained variance in the city item, $R^2 = .10$, urbanism accounts for 55%. This exercise also shows that urbanism is more strongly associated with responses to the city question.) Graphing the data shows that, as expected, respondents at the urban end of the scale accounted for the difference: they said they trusted their neighbors, but were less likely to trust others in the city.

Moreover, the connection between urbanism and distrust of neighbors can be fully explained by fear of neighborhood crime (third column). Adding the neighborhood safety item to the controls reduces that partial correlation to nonsignificance ($r = .05$; urbanism now accounts for two percent of the explained variance). But that fear cannot explain why urbanism was associated with distrust of most people in the city; the partial correlation there remains sizeable ($r = .21$; 35% of the explained variance) and significantly greater than that with distrust of neighbors ($p < .001$).¹³

¹³ The appropriate control for the "distrust most people" item should perhaps have been a variable measuring fear of crime in the city as a whole (not in the neighborhood). We did not have such an item. But I did add an additional dummy variable to the controls: whether or not the respondent cited crime as a "worst thing" about the city. The resulting partial correlations are .02 between urbanism and dis-

In sum, the hypothesis is supported, with a small modification. Urbanism does not increase, nor is it even associated with, distrust of neighbors, except insofar as city residence increases anxiety about crime in the neighborhood (and even then, only slightly). Urbanism does increase, and is associated with, distrust of "most people" in the town or city, in the public world, and not simply because of fear of crime. Presumably, had we contrasted the "most people in the city" item with parallel questions asking about other groups of people in respondents' private worlds besides neighbors—coworkers, friends, kin—the contrast would have been at least as great.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented evidence from a single study that replicates and extends cumulative findings from several lines of research on the question of whether urbanism tends to estrange people from one another. The data seem to support a theory that distinguishes between the public and private spheres of life. In contrast to the arguments of the Wirthian school, urbanism does not produce estrangement from close associates, or from familiar groups such as neighbors. It does seem to produce estrangement from, and even conflict with, the unknown, socially dissimilar, and potentially threatening people and subcultures who make up the city—the inhabitants of the "world of strangers."

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