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Author

Fisher, Claude S.

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Claude S. Fischer

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ABSTRACT

Wirth's (1938) theory of urban life has been eclipsed in recent years by a perspective that denies the importance of ecological factors. This view, though more accurate than Wirth's, fails to account for the pervasive "unconventionality" (deviance, invention, etc.) of urban life. A model is presented here to remedy that problem and which re-introduces the variable of size but in a manner distinct from Wirth's. Population concentration produces a diversity of subcultures, strengthens them, and fosters diffusion among them. Together, these three mediating variables account for urban unconventionality. The propositions of the theory and others deducible from it are examined against existing research.

TOWARD A SUBCULTURAL THEORY OF URBANISM

This paper presents a theory designed to answer the question, What are the social effects of urbanism? There exists in sociology a very influential answer to that question, a theory detailed by Louis Wirth in his classic essay, "Urbanism as a way of life" (1938). The major consequences were, he suggested, social disorganization and individual alienation. There also exists a significant challenge to Wirth's theory, identified with Herbert Gans' paper, "Urbanism and suburbanism as ways of life: A re-evaluation of definitions" (1962b). The argument Gans and others make is that there are no particularly significant social effects to be attributed to urbanism. I shall argue that the empirical facts, as we best know them now, pose a difficult problem for both these positions, and thus call for a third alternative.

The question which concerns this paper is, it should be understood, an analytical one. It involves tracing out the independent effects of population concentration: What cultural and behavioral differences, if any, are generated just by residence in communities of differing levels of urbanization?

It is recognized, of course, that there are many differences between large and small communities in population composition -- the ages, ethnicities, educational levels, and so on, of their residents -- which would account at least in part for any cultural and behavioral differences (as Gans et al. argue). In addition, community characteristics other than urbanism, such as economic opportunities and political

structure, will partly account for such differences. Nevertheless, the issue is whether urbanism is an additional meaningful causal factor.

It is also recognized that the cultural and behavioral phenomena to be examined are multi-determined. Among the list of causal variables, urbanism may not rank very highly (compared to factors such as class, race, sex, etc.). However, if urbanism does have an autonomous effect, even if it is not a primary cause of any specific phenomenon, such a finding would still be quite important for understanding the nature of urbanism. This theoretical issue, what are the social effects of urbanism?, forms the analytical assignment of the present paper.

The theory which shall be presented states, to summarize briefly, that there are independent effects of urban size and density, including those which Wirth described as deviance and disorganization. The processes which lead to these consequences are, however, quite different from those hypothesized by Wirth. Alienation, anonymity, impersonality, etc., do not account for the higher rates of "deviance and disorganization" in cities, but, rather, it is the congregation of numbers of persons, "critical masses," sufficient to maintain viable unconventional subcultures. It is the behavioral expressions of those subcultures which come to be called, "deviant."

This paper is divided into five parts. In the first section, I present the empirical problem which challenges both Wirth's and Gans' positions and which calls for a new formulation. The second part is an exposition of a subcultural theory of urbanism, divided into four main propositions. Part three illustrates the propositions

with research conducted on that type of subculture which causes the greatest difficulty for the theory: ethnicity. The fourth section examines additional propositions which can be derived from the model. The final section discusses the implications of such a subcultural theory of urbanism.

The Problem

The traditional sociological approach to urban styles of community and personality was founded in the work of Durkheim (1933), Simmel (1905) and Park (1916), and fully presented by Wirth (1938). The concentration of large and heterogeneous populations, Wirth posited, eventually leads to the weakening of interpersonal ties, primary social structures, and normative consensus. It does so largely for two reasons: the immediate psychological impact of the urban scene (Simmel, 1905; cf. Milgram, 1970) and the complex structural differentiation generated by dynamic density. The ultimate consequences of these processes are individual alienation, societal anomie, and the prevalence of 'disorganized,' 'non-traditional,' and 'deviant' behavior. (A detailed exegesis of this theory and a review of the relevant evidence is presented in Fischer 1972.)

However, the growing literature in urban ethnography brought this thesis into great doubt. Gans (1962a), Lewis (1952), Young and Willmott (1957) and others (see review in Gulick 1973) described the wealth of personal ties and thriving primary groups which they found even in the innermost recesses of the large city. Consequently, they argued that "the variables of number, density and heterogeneity... are not crucial determinants of social life or personality" (Lewis

1965: 497). This position, which might be termed "non-ecological,"¹ asserts that there are few differences between urban and rural; those which do exist are attributable to differences in age, ethnicity, life-cycle, or social class -- not to any autonomous effect of ecological factors (Gans 1962b; 1967).

At this writing, the latter position seems to hold sway in sociology.² Though few critical tests of either theory have been conducted (Reiss 1959; Hauser 1965; Fischer 1972), those observations which have accumulated tend to support the non-ecological position. In particular, there is little evidence to confirm the hypothesis of urban alienation and anomie (Gulick 1973; Fischer 1972, 1973; Wellman et al. 1973).

However, there is a serious flaw in the non-ecological position. With regard to one realm of belief and behavior, urban residents do differ significantly from residents of non-urban places, and they differ to a degree insufficiently accounted for by the individual traits each group brings to its locale.

Urban residents are more likely than rural residents to behave in ways that diverge from the central and/or traditional norms of their common society. Cases in point: cities are disproportionately the locale of invention (Thompson 1965: 49-50; Jacobs 1965; Turner 1941; Childe 1951; Ogburn and Duncan 1964; Bulloch and Bulloch 1971), of crime, particularly with regard to property (Wolfgang 1970; Clinard 1963; Tobias 1972; Szabo 1960), and of behaviors and attitudes which contradict standard morality -- illegitimacy, alcoholism, divorce, irreligiosity, political dissent, violence for social change, and smoking marijuana, for examples (Clinard 1963; Trice 1966; Argyle 1968;

Blumenthal et al. 1972; Lipset 1963: 264-267; A.I.P.O. 1972, #82; Willitis et al. 1971; cf. summary in Swedner 1960: 30-45).³ Some of these behaviors to which the urban are prone are socially approved (e.g., artistic innovation), some severely disapproved (e.g., crime), and some unsanctioned (e.g., religious variation in the United States). What they have in common is that they digress from the predominant norms of the society. I shall use the term, unconventional, to refer to these behaviors and beliefs.⁴

The association between urban residence and unconventionality is pervasive. It appears in many cultures, various historical periods, and with regard to different specific norms. A non-ecological explanation might account for the greater part of this relationship. The individual traits of urbanites (age, ethnicity, education, etc.) generate their high levels of unconventionality. Additionally, other divergent types migrate to cities, creating an association by self-selection.

However, this explanation will not suffice. The few studies which sought to control for correlated personal traits failed to account fully for the covariation between urbanism and unconventionality (Fischer 1975; Hoch 1972; Nelsen et al. 1971; Swedner 1960, especially pp. 30-45). Furthermore, the very pervasiveness and strength of the zero-order differences challenge the adequacy of an explanation based simply on compositional (age, education, etc.) differences between urban and rural. And, the direction of self-selection itself calls for explanation. I am making no argument here that this residual covariation is of major practical importance (for social policy, that is), but only that it is of theoretical importance.

It is this state of our empirical knowledge which poses the problem: How can the greater unconventionality of urbanites be explained? Wirthian theory accounts for it -- but by processes of alienation and anomie for which there is little substantiation. The approach termed here "non-ecological" has been better supported by research -- but it cannot account sufficiently for urban unconventionality. This paper is meant to resolve the problem by presenting a theory which re-introduces the variables of size and density, but in a manner quite distinct from Wirth's.

A Subcultural Theory

The model outlined in this section is based initially on a non-ecological approach. That is, simple ecological determinism (for instance, the notion that crowding deranges people) is rejected. And, the source of social action is sought in the small milieus of personal life. To quote Oscar Lewis (1965: 497): "Social life is not a mass phenomenon. It occurs for the most part in small groups, within the family, within households, within neighborhoods, within the church, formal and informal groups...." (Cf. also Reiss 1955.) Additions to the non-ecological approach were suggested in part by social mobilization or communications theorists (Deutsch 1961; Sjoberg 1965b; Meier 1962) who stress the role of cities as locales for the origin and dissemination of modernizing ideas, and, in part, by the urban "mosaic of social worlds" painted by the Chicago School (cf. Short 1971; Park 1916). Its elaboration is an attempt to demonstrate that ecological factors, especially size, produce that urban 'mosaic,' and produce urban "unconventionality."

To commence with the definitions and assumptions undergirding the model, "urban" is defined solely in terms of population concentration -- the greater the number of persons aggregated at a place of settlement, the more urban the place. (Thus, the use of the terms, 'urban' and 'rural,' are meant solely as conveniences, not as references to a dichotomy.) A "subculture" is a set of modal beliefs, values and norms associated with a relatively distinct social subsystem (a set of interpersonal networks and institutions), existing within a larger social system and culture. (For ease of presentation, "subculture" will be used to refer to "subsystem," as well.)

"Unconventionality" was defined loosely earlier, but requires further comment. What is 'unconventional' can be defined only in contrast to what is 'conventional,' wherein lies the difficulty. How does an observer determine the dominant standards of a society; how does he or she deal with internal variability and changes over time? These are not small problems -- but neither are they problems unique to this essay. Those who write on the topic of "deviance," Parsons and Merton included, confront the same issue. The common response is, simultaneously, to acknowledge the vagueness of their reference to societal norms and to assert the categorical quality of behavior at variance with those norms. "Deviant behavior is behavior that violates the normative rules, understandings, or expectations of social systems" (A. K. Cohen 1968: 148). Unconventional behavior is similar, only it incorporates as well less socially significant (and unstigmatized) behavior, that in the realm of taste or style. Also, when the standards are in flux, the "unconventional" is defined as that which is non-traditional.

The model which will be outlined is an abstracted one. That is, for clarity of presentation, it assumes "all else equal." Place of residence is assumed to be uncorrelated with wealth, age, education, region, etc., at least at time one. Of course, in any actual case, these factors, as well as other historical, cultural, and economic circumstances, will significantly alter the phenomenon that this theory, if it operated in a vacuum, would predict. However, this admission does not invalidate the argument that urbanism tends to generate the effects described below, that they can be partly ascribed to the independent influence of urbanism.

1. The more urban a place, the greater its subcultural variety.

In general, population concentration generates distinctive subcultures (Wirth's "heterogeneity," Park's "urban mosaic"), and it does so through at least two related, but independently sufficient mechanisms:

(a) Population size encourages structural differentiation through the familiar process of "dynamic density" (Durkheim 1933; Schnore 1958). As the forces of competition, comparative advantage, and associative selection produce distinguishable and internally elaborated subsystems, they thereby differentiate the cultures associated with those subsystems. The result is increased subcultural variation, particularly as evidenced among social class, occupational, life-cycle, and common-interest groups. This association between urbanization and differentiation has been commonly observed in both historical and cross-sectional studies, largely with regard to economic specialization, somewhat with regard to spatial differentiation, and only to a small extent with regard to other institutions

(Hawley 1971; Gibbs and Martin 1962; Ogburn and Duncan 1964; Meade 1972; Betz 1972; Clemente and Sturgis 1972; Crowley 1973).⁵ The question of whether division of labor precedes or follows urbanization (Hawley 1971: 328; Kemper 1972) is relevant but should not detain us. Clearly, the two reinforce each other. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence on the microscopic level to assign some independent causality to size (cf. literature on organizational size and differentiation).

(As has been often noted, the process of differentiation [especially, economic] requires relatively free exchange, movement, and interaction [Schnore 1958]. In those societies which are rigidly segmented, the process will be retarded. This point would apply to African and Asian cities often described as "large villages.")

The idea that these differentiated structural subsystems are accompanied by differentiated subcultures is consistent with systemic models of society. The hypothesis is that urban differentiation results in distinguishable subcultures tied to occupations, classes, stages in the life-cycle, and other common interests. Little systematic evidence in support is presently available, but the wealth of ethnographies on urban "social worlds" (from Gold Coast to slum, from "swinging singles" to criminal guilds) lends credence to the hypothesis. A specific example is Wilensky's survey of professionals in the Detroit area, which convinced him that: "To say 'professional, technical, and kindred' captures more of social life [than do traditional class distinctions] but not much more. 'Lawyer' and 'engineer' move us closer to social reality, for these men develop quite different styles of life, rooted in diverse professional schools, tasks, work schedules, and organizational contexts" (Wilensky 1964: 195).

Urban occupational subcultures are also described by Pilcher (1972) -- longshoremen in Portland, Oregon -- and Lipset et al. (1962) -- printers in New York.

(b) The second process by which urbanism generates subcultural variety involves migration. The larger a settlement, the larger its hinterland, and the more it is a "central place" within its cultural region. In general, the larger a geographical area, the greater the variety of groups within it. And, given the general cityward direction of migration, the consequence is that a large settlement will draw migrants from a greater variety of subcultures than will a small one. This process resulting from city-size hierarchies evidences itself in, for example, the general association between community size and ethnic heterogeneity (e.g., Schnore 1963; Hanna and Hanna 1971: 109).

2. The more urban a place, the more "intense" its subcultures.

By "intensity" I mean the antithesis of anomie and normlessness. It refers to the presence of, attachment to, and force of subcultural beliefs, values, and norms. In place of the anomic city, it suggests the city of articulated value systems. This intensification comes about through at least two mutually reinforcing, though independently sufficient, processes.

(a) The first is based on the common notion of "critical mass." The larger a subculture's population, the greater its "institutional completeness" (Breton 1964).⁶ That is, given basic market mechanisms, the achievement of certain critical size levels enables a social subsystem to create and support institutions which structure, envelop, protect, and foster its subculture. These institutions (for example,

dress styles, newspapers, associations, etc.) establish sources of authority, points of congregation, and delimit social boundaries. In addition to the simple fact of the numbers themselves, they make possible and encourage keeping social ties within the group.

One illustration of this phenomenon is the criminal subcommunity: It has been common historically for large cities (more so than smaller towns) to have distinguishable groups of professional criminals, with their own meeting places and quarters. The criminals are usually organized, have regularized means of distributing stolen goods, finding protection, training apprentices, and enjoying each other's company (e.g., Tobias 1972; Lapidus 1966: 153-163). Less dramatic but similar examples can be made of artistic subcommunities, student subcultures, "young singles," and other cases. Numbers bring the services and institutions necessary for a thriving "social world."

These are but examples; there is little yet in the way of systematic data on such subcultures. There is evidence that the larger a town, the more likely is the presence and more numerous the variety of institutions and services, both of a general and of a specialized nature (Keyes 1958; Ogburn and Duncan 1964; Thompson 1965). That the presence of specialized institutions should promote the internal ties, cohesion, and core values of a subculture is both sensible and supported by some limited data on urban migrants (e.g., Breton 1964; Doughty 1970; Little 1965) and occupational groups (e.g., Lipset et al. 1962: 170-208).

(b) The second process which promotes subcultural intensity involves intergroup relations. The greater the variety and sizes of subcultures in a place, the greater the contrast and conflict among

them, and, consequently, the greater the subcultural intensity. On the group level, the competition and conflict which co-residence makes possible foster in-group cohesion (Simmel 1951; Coser 1956; Sherif 1956). On the individual level, contact with, or even simple observation of, strange others will lead, at least initially, to stronger affirmation of own-group standards. Clyde Kluckhohn (1960: 78) has made a similar argument: "Another direct consequence of expansion of population arises from contact with divergent moral orders, with contrasting perspectives.... Reasons must be found to justify the existing moral order or it will be altered by negation, reshaping, or syncretism.... The moral order becomes for the first time a genuine problem. Ideas take their place as forces in history." Both psychological and group contact will strengthen subcultures. (This argument will be modified later.)

This sort of culture clash can be subtle and difficult to measure. Sharper instances, such as political and violent conflict, have been studied and there is evidence that rates of such intergroup clashes are greater in larger communities (Tilly 1974; Coleman 1957; Scheuch 1969; Ennis 1962; Spilerman 1971; Danzger 1970). One can presume that these incidents reflect and/or increase in-group cohesion.

We do not as yet have solid evidence that confrontation with "odd" strangers in the subculturally heterogeneous city does lead to recoil and the embracing of own-group values. There are, however, ethnographic descriptions of this process in the literature on urban migrants. Their encounter with distinctively foreign behavior increases their self-conscious adherence to their own culture. (This point will be expanded upon in the next section.)

In these two ways -- institutional completeness due to "critical mass" and cultural opposition -- subcultures are intensified by urbanism. However, this is but one side of urban social change.

3. The more urban a place, the more numerous the sources of and the greater the diffusion into a subculture. Diffusion refers to the adoption by members of one subculture of beliefs or behaviors of another. This results from the variety (Prop. 1) and strength (Prop. 2) of the subcultures within the metropolitan area. The specific rates and directions of diffusion will vary according to the sizes of, relative intensities of, and the dissimilarity between any two groups, as well as their degree of contact, relative power and prestige, and the utility of the borrowed item.

The critical import of this proposition is that the urban process of subcultural intensification operates against another urban process, cultural diffusion. No matter the conflict or isolation of subcultures, some diffusion is highly probable when peoples live in close proximity and functional interdependence. This does not imply that the two forces cancel each other out in any simple way. Rather, they occur simultaneously so that one finds both 'intensified' and diffused elements in a subculture. For instance, one can observe in many American metropolitan areas the uneasy relationship between working-class youth (so-called "hardhat") groups and quasi-student youth (so-called "counter-culture") groups. The former seem both to react against the latter, as on political issues, and to adopt life-style elements from them, as in hair and dress styles.

In any event, the counterplay of intensification and diffusion suggests some interesting hypotheses which will be discussed below.

For now, I will point out only that there is probably a temporal dynamic involved, such that the intensification process precedes the levelling effect of diffusion.

One consequence of diffusion is the mixture and recombination of cultural elements into social innovations. This introduces the final proposition.

4. The more urban a place, the higher the rates of unconventionality. This is, of course, the empirical generalization which was presented as posing the theoretical problem. How do the previous three propositions explain this association?

(a) The proposition follows, first, from the subcultural variety of urban places (Prop. 1). The more variable and distinct subcultures there are, the more behavior there is that deviates from general norms.⁷ Ogburn and Duncan (1964: 70) phrased it this way: "The larger the city the more likely it is to include within its population extreme deviations from the normal or average....The tendency of phenomena to occur in clusters...adds to the likelihood that large cities will be the locus of the unusual." But, if variety were the only factor, then the non-ecological model would suffice: the group membership characteristics of residents explain the correlation of urbanism and unconventionality. However, there are two more processes:

(b) The present theory posits, secondly, that the effect of subcultural intensification (Prop. 2) increases the urban-rural differential in deviance above that accounted for by a model which is based solely on individual characteristics and ignores the ecological

factor of size. Instead, the aggregation of numbers does have an effect. (To quote Simmel: "The strange thing is that the absolute numbers of the total group and of its prominent elements so remarkably determine the relations within the group -- in spite of the fact that their numerical ratio remains the same [Simmel 1950: 98].) The size and distinctiveness of a group make behavior which is unique to it more likely to occur. Examples: a small town may have a few delinquent youths, but only in a large city will there be sufficient numbers (i.e., a critical mass) sufficiently distinctive to establish a viable delinquent subculture. The same holds true for political dissidents, splinter religious sects, and criminals. Cities provide the "critical mass" necessary for a viable subculture and the clashes which accentuate that culture. With size comes "community" -- even if it is a community of thieves, counter-culture experimenters, avante-garde intellectuals, or other unconventional persons.

There are studies, particularly in the realm of criminal deviance, which suggest that the existence of cohesive deviant groups is important in encouraging individual deviant behavior (Miller 1958; Becker 1963; Wolfgang and Ferracutti 1967).⁸ Certainly, harder data would be useful (e.g., Wilson 1971), but little has been done in systematically estimating the effects of 'grouping' across various realms of action.

(c) Thirdly, rates of unconventionality will be increased in larger communities by the process of diffusion into the mainstream culture of behaviors and beliefs from the periphery (Prop. 3). The larger the town, the more likely it is that there will be, in meaningful numbers and unity, drug addicts, radicals, intellectuals, "swingers,"

health-food faddists, or whatever; and the more likely it is that they will influence (as well as offend) the conventional center of the society. In most communities, large and small, the influence of "Middle-American" culture is pervasive and weighty. It is, however, in the larger communities that counter-influence from unconventional subcultures occurs. This diffusion, too, will boost rates of urban unconventionality above that accounted for by the non-ecological model.

More anecdotes than systematic research can be cited at this time in support of such 'climate-of-opinion' effects: E.g., the spread in urban areas of language from the drug subculture, dress styles from the black ("Superfly") underworld and homosexual communities. Some data can also be pointed to: E.g., the influence of community educational levels on individual racial attitudes (Schuman and Gruenberg 1970).⁹

It is these three processes which explain the association of urbanism and unconventionality. This is an explanation which more fully accounts for the association than does the approach I have labelled "non-ecological." And, it is an explanation which does not rely, as does Wirthian theory, upon assuming an association between urbanism and anomie for which there is little empirical support.

As a heuristic device, the theory presented in these four propositions has been displayed schematically in a causal diagram (Figure 1). The figure should not be considered as fully representative of the model, but only as an illustration. In addition to presenting the variables and causal directions, I have translated the causal connections into the processes which were discussed

in this section. The reader will also note that other, exogenous variables have been explicitly acknowledged, with some specific examples provided.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The Special Case of Ethnicity

The theory which I have presented argues that urban unconventionality is accounted for by the strengthening of subcultures which encourage or tolerate behaviors that the wider society finds to be deviant or unusual. The references have largely been to groups which emerge or become defined in the urban setting because of the numbers provided there -- intellectuals, criminals, "life-stylers," etc. This section of the paper will be particularly concerned with a different type: the ethnic group.¹⁰ This group forms a distinctive subculture in both rural and urban settings (though the meaning and nature of that ethnicity may differ somewhat; cf. Epstein 1967). Also unlike the others, it rests on a "primordial" basis of association: descent. While recognizing these special characteristics of ethnicity, I will attempt here to assess the applicability of the propositions outlined above to ethnic subcultures -- for two reasons: (1) There have been relatively few studies of subcultures based on life-style, occupation, etc., and almost none which incorporate inter-community comparisons, but there are a wealth of ethnic studies, including some comparative ones. Therefore, if one wishes to examine the plausibility of the arguments proposed above, one is compelled to turn to the ethnicity literature. (2) For certain of the propositions

described above, ethnic subcultures provide the extreme test case. If one can demonstrate that ethnic subcultures are "intensified" by urbanism, in spite of the fact that they are the most threatened by the generation in cities of alternative bases of association, then the arguments about the intensification of those alternative subcultures are buttressed. These two points explain the consideration here and later in the paper of ethnic groups. The reader should understand that this discussion implies neither that the theory is about ethnicity nor that evidence about ethnic groups is necessary to establish the validity of the theory.

The first and third propositions do not require much discussion. The association of urbanism and ethnic minority concentration seems generally true in most societies (see, for example, Hanna and Hanna 1971: 109), though there are of course notable exceptions (e.g., until recently, American blacks). The cultural diffusion of urban life is a commonplace. Virtually all historical and anthropological descriptions of urban ethnicity note the adoption of language, styles of behavior, and other cultural elements by ethnic groups from each other, and especially from the most powerful group in the urban setting. Indeed, this assimilationist understanding of urban ethnicity is so pervasive that when the second proposition is applied to ethnic groups it seems counter-intuitive.

Proposition Two: The more urban a place, the more "intense" its subcultures. It was argued that this occurred through two processes: institutional completeness due to critical mass, and culture clash. There are a good number of descriptions of the first process. Urban migrants tend to establish institutions of all sorts, many of

which never existed in the rural village -- sports clubs, mutual-aid associations, festival committees, newspapers, political organizations -- to the extent to which numbers permit (cf. Doughty 1970; Handlin 1959, 1969; Little 1965; Bascom 1963; Hanna and Hanna 1971, among others). Breton's (1964) study of immigrants in Montreal revealed that those groups which had such institutions were best able to keep their members' social ties internal. Whether such organizations existed was partly a function of group size. These ethnic institutions also preserve elements of the traditional culture and selectively introduce new elements from the urban environment (Little 1973). For instance, leaders of associations will simultaneously instruct newcomers on etiquette appropriate for job-finding and on the need for maintaining ties with the home village (e.g., Bruner 1961).

Suttles (1968) provides an example of the relationships of size to institutions to cultural continuity in his study of the Adaams area of Chicago. Of the four ethnic groups inhabiting the neighborhood, the Puerto Ricans were the only ones threatened with an erosion of their culture. This Suttles attributes to the lack of institutions, particularly of an ethnic church, which he in turn attributes to their small numbers.

The second process, cultural opposition, was explained in part by encounters between members of different subcultures, encounters which lead them to affirm even more strongly their own groups' world views. Descriptions of this process are common in the literature on African migrants.¹¹ It is a main contributor to what has been called "retribalization" or "supertribalization" -- the elevation to conscious awareness of, and increased attachment

to, tribal identity (cf. Epstein 1967; Hanna and Hanna 1971: ch. 4). Similar observations have been made about other migrants (e.g., Rowe 1973), including those to American cities (e.g., Nelli 1970; Handlin 1969; Suttles 1968). Some quantitative evidence is provided by a survey of Ukrainians in Canada. Those who lived in the larger, more heterogeneous city, rather than small homogeneous town, were the most resistant to assimilation (Borhek 1970).¹²

Finally, there is evidence to support the proposition that, by these processes, urbanism increases (or at least maintains) the cohesion and identity even of ethnic subcultures -- in spite of all the disorganizing aspects of urbanization (e.g., migration, economic change, alternative subcultures).

I have already referred to the evidence of tribalism among new urbanites in Africa and to Borhek's (1970) study of Ukrainian consciousness in Canada. Doughty (1970) has described a wealth of organizations and activities in Lima, Peru which serve to preserve Andean village identification and culture. Bruner's (1961; 1963) studies of a Christian ethnic group, the Toba Batak, residing in the Moslem city of Medan, Indonesia, indicate that ties to traditional kinship norms and values were at least as strong if not stronger there than in the village home of the community. Lewis' (1952; 1965) descriptions of migrants to Mexico City seem quite similar. Finally, Handlin's (1959; 1969) histories of immigrants to American cities not only indicate the plethora of culture-maintaining mechanisms which arose there, but also the strengthening of old institutions, such as the church, which resulted from culture clash.

These illustrations are presented not to deny that assimilational pressures operate on ethnic groups in cities -- one of those pressures being the emergence of subcultures that accompanies urbanism -- but rather to bolster the argument that the processes of intensification do occur, even for the most difficult case, ethnic groups. In all probability, the extent to which intensification occurs is limited by time and other factors (e.g., whether in-migration continues, attributes of the ethnic culture), so that it is usually transient, succumbing eventually to the intensification of competing subcultures. Nevertheless, it does occur.

The fourth proposition, relating urbanism to unconventionality, is exhibited in ethnic groups in the following ways. The greater ethnic variety of cities means that there will be greater amounts of unconventionality there based on ethnicity (process one). For example, simply because of this population distribution, cities will tend to have more dissident and unusual forms of religious behavior. The greater 'intensity' of ethnic groups, which tends to be associated with urbanism (especially because of group size), means that minority group members will be more able and willing to maintain their unconventional behaviors and beliefs (process two). And, the diffusion of cultural elements from minority to majority groups will also act to increase rates of urban unconventionality (process three). Usually, the diffusion will operate from majority to minority subcultures, but there are cases of the reverse. For example, black ghetto culture clearly influences middle-class white culture in certain realms.

This discussion of ethnic groups is not an effort to prove the theory; support for it will depend on other sources. Rather, it

is an effort to illustrate the theory with data on a type of sub-culture upon which much research has been done and which forms the most difficult test case.

Further Derivations

The four propositions which comprise this subcultural theory of urbanism seem to be consistent with currently available data, limited as they are. Yet, any plausible ex post facto theory will incorporate the data it was created to explain. The critical test is whether the theory suggests further, novel hypotheses which are also borne out. I turn now to a few of these.

One of the intriguing processes in the model is the counter-play of subcultural intensification resulting from urbanism and increased diffusion across subcultures also resulting from urbanism. It was argued earlier that this process did not mean mutual negation, but, instead, selective changes.¹³ Three predictions about these changes can be made:

The first requires an additional concept -- that of "cultural centrality." I shall assume that cultural items (customs, values, artifacts, etc.) can be scaled on a continuum, ranging from a central core which is fundamental to the subculture and firmly defended (e.g., Weltanschauung, family relations) to relatively peripheral and unimportant items (e.g., dress style). The hypothesis which follows from the present theory is that peripheral cultural items will be most easily and earliest modified by diffusion; central items will be bolstered by the processes of intensification. Put another way:

(1.a.) For a given subculture, the effects of urbanism should be greatest with regard to peripheral items and least with regard to central items.¹⁴

There are some data, drawn again from the ethnicity literature, to illustrate the point. In their review of the urban African literature, Hanna and Hanna (1971) make a distinction between bicycles and beliefs (p. 135), by which they refer to the common observation that tribal members residing in the city differ from their kin in the hinterland in terms of consumer habits and material goods (peripheral items), but not in terms of basic values (central items). Bruner's (1973) study of the Batak is particularly illustrative of this distinction. In the very pluralistic city of Medan, the Batak subculture is quite like the village version. In Bandung, a city in which, first, their members are fewer, and, second, there is a very large majority subculture (the Sundanese), the Batak changed. They dropped far more of their customs in favor of Sundanese ones, particularly regarding public behavior. Yet, even in Bandung, the Batak formed a distinguishable and self-conscious group.

(1.b.) One can also derive a prediction of time lag: As urbanism increases over time, increases in subcultural intensity precede the diffusion into the subculture of outside elements. This lag can best be seen when those forces which energize the processes of the model -- growth of a subculture due to city growth or ethnic in-migration -- cease. A simple example is the history of American ethnic groups which are facing (through resisting) assimilation now, 50 years after the great migration waves ended.

(2) The model states that the forms urban unconventionality take are a function of the specific societal norms and the specific emergent urban subcultures. The main implication which follows is that there is no universal direction to urban unconventionality. In

contrast to Wirth's theory, there is no a priori reason why cities should deviate in the direction of rationalism, secularism, universalism, etc. Cities need only differ from the modal standards.¹⁵

There is some illustrative support for this prediction of "content-free" differences. In pre-World War II Japan, divorce rates tended to be lower in the more urban places (Kawashima and Steiner 1960; cf. comments in Goode 1963: 360-365). The authors' explanation suggests that urban anomie had little to do with it. High divorce rates were traditional in Japan, but cities deviate from such traditions (pp. 238-239). Tiriyakian (1972) has recently reported a French survey which revealed that belief in astrology was greater in urban than in rural areas (p. 495; it was also greater among middle than among lower classes). The contention here is that secularism and rationality have little to do with this correlation -- the explanation is that cities are where non-conventional ideas flourish.

(3) Cultural differences between urban and rural persons are persistent. It is often claimed that differences between city and country are disappearing. This theory implies that, at least with respect to the conventional-unconventional, traditional-nontraditional dimension, such differences will persist. (It is of course acknowledged that there will be many specific exceptions; I refer only to general trends.) Social changes, this theory suggests, usually begin as the unconventionality of a few, and then spread to the wider society. The importance of size for the support of innovative subcultures means that cities will always have an advantage in this regard. Even as rural areas adopt and make generally normative a new value, ones discrepant with it are arising in the cities. Thus, there is a lag

in social change as successive "waves" diffuse from the urban center to the rural periphery.¹⁶ (The degree of lag is, however, quite variable.)

Friedl (1964) has coined the term, "lagging emulation," for this process and has described a pattern among Greek villagers of adopting urban elite styles and views just as those standards are being supplanted in the city. Recent research indicates that urban-rural differences even in the United States, presumably the most "massified" society, have not been erased (Willitis et al. 1973; Glenn and Alston 1967; Fischer 1975; Glenn and Simmons 1967). In sum, it is in the nature of urbanism to constantly foster innovation and change.

Implications

I am quite aware of the clarifications and qualifications this theory requires. In this section, however, I shall presume that the propositions intrinsic to and logically deducible from the subcultural model are empirically true. Certain points then follow.

First, the "unconventionality" of urban life is accounted for. This is, of course, the problem which initiated the search for such a theory.

In providing this explanation, the model does not rely on the Wirthian mechanisms. There is no proposition which states that urbanism creates alienation, isolation, impersonality, superficiality, stress, strain, anxiety, or dehumanization, etc. While such propositions remain plausible and worthy of investigation, this theory renders them unnecessary for explaining the "disorganization" Wirth wished to account for.

Yet, the theory does rely on ecology. Population density, heterogeneity, and especially size are determinants of social life. The non-ecological model is not sufficient.

It is not one of the implications of the subcultures model that such ecological effects are large, of any practical, policy-relevant proportion. By far, the more important influences on behavior are the non-ecological ones. The real implication is theoretical -- that a full understanding of life in cities requires incorporation of ecological factors, subcultural development, and diffusion in a dynamic model.

This theory does raise an important question with regard to a community's "moral order." Implicit in the analysis presented here is the contention that the large city is integrated neither by virtue of its citizens sharing a common "social world," nor by the formal instruments of an anomic "mass society." How, then, is it integrated? To some extent, it is not; that is, value consensus is less likely to exist in larger than in smaller communities. Rather than unanimity, there is "multinimity" (Meadows 1973). The integration which does exist is, I will suggest without elaborating, based on exchange, negotiation, and conflict among the various subcultures of the city. This process does not mean, however, that individuals are psychically fractured in some sort of miniature replication of their city (thus, alienated, disordered, etc.). Instead, they, like their rural fellows, live within on-going, psychically supportive and restraining, subcultures. In the city, those subcultures are more often unconventional.

A final comment: In terms of popular evaluations of urban life, much effort has been expended in explaining the "evil" of cities -- the destructive or disturbing unconventionality. Urbanism per se has been blamed, or causes have been discovered in population composition, temporary social change, and so on. The theory presented here explains the "evil" and the "good" of cities simultaneously.¹⁷ "Criminal" unconventionality and "innovative" (e.g., artistic) unconventionality are both nourished by vibrant subcultures. Less pleasing, perhaps, is the conclusion that it may be difficult to achieve the latter without the former, for they both result from the same dynamics (cf. Cook 1968).

FOOTNOTES

¹Sjoberg (1965a) refers to this school as "non-materialist," but Herbert Gans has pointed out (in personal communication) that he and other "non-materialists" do recognize the importance of material factors such as income, but doubt the importance of ecological variables. Hence, "non-ecological" seems most appropriate.

²There are, of course, other theories of urbanism (cf. Sjoberg 1965; Fischer 1972). But, the Wirthian/non-ecological polarity is a central one in urban sociology.

³There are reversals (e.g., illegitimacy in Scandinavia, criminal violence in many nations), but this is the pervasive pattern.

⁴In an earlier version of this paper, the term, "deviance," was used to label this phenomenon. The connotations of that word were, however, so salient that they hindered understanding of the specific meaning which I intended. Near-synonyms for "unconventional" which were also considered are: unusual, divergent, idiosyncratic, non-globally-normative, etc.

The difficulties in employing this definition are evident: contradictions between expressed norms and statistically normative behavior; situations in which a plurality of norms appears to exist; periods in which a previous minority viewpoint wins majority acceptance; defining the society's normative center; the criteria for

the minimum amount of divergence which can be called unconventional, etc. Yet, while these distinctions will require clarification in any research, there does exist a great amount of behavior which can be clearly categorized in this manner and the urban nature of which calls for explanation.

⁵An example is provided in Indian history:

The distinguishing mark of a town or city in the ancient texts was that only there did one find all the castes resident. It was in the city alone that the more specialized ritual castes, the learned Brahmins and astrologers, as well as the artisans producing luxury goods, could be maintained [Rowe 1973: 213].

⁶Implicit is the proposition that urbanism increases group sizes, which in turn leads to the achievement of critical masses. It is because the size of specific subgroups mediates the effect of urbanization that specialized subcultures are occasionally found in non-urban areas (e.g., the college town).

⁷This statement is not a tautology, but an empirical generalization. It is not simply the case that being in a distinguishable subgroup means, ipso facto, unconventionality. Being Swedish-American or being a pipefitter need not necessarily imply unconventional behavior. But, the greater the number of such distinguishable subcultures, the greater the likelihood of unconventionality.

⁸I do not intend to raise here the debate between theses of lower-class cultures and lower-class "value stretch"; nor to raise the role of societal definition in creating "deviance." My point

is simple: that, given a distinctive set of values or behavior patterns, group cohesion (itself partly a function of numbers) promotes conformity to those patterns, rather than to outside alternatives.

⁹Recently, a debate has arisen on the importance of contextual effects (cf. Hauser 1970, 1974; Farkas 1974). The present model clearly rides on the presumption that they exist and are meaningful. It also suggests a distinction in types of contextual effects: (a) there are influences which result from structural characteristics of one's own subculture. For example, the numbers of non-conformists will affect the likelihood of a given non-conformist expressing his feelings (Lipset, Trow and Coleman 1962: 186-194; Asch 1958). (b) There is the contextual effect of conflict with or diffusion from other groups in the environment (e.g. the dissemination of racial attitudes from the educated elite -- Schuman and Gruenberg 1970). The existence of both these contextual effects is predicted by the model.

¹⁰By ethnic group I mean a culturally-distinct group, membership in which is determined by descent. The fineness with which one determines cultural distinctiveness is, as with other subcultures, dependent upon the specific analytical problem.

¹¹A. Cohen (1969) has documented a resurgence in ethnic traditions and unity among Hasau traders in Yoruba cities of Nigeria. He contends that this nationalism was a political ploy to maintain economic control over trade and that some of the "tradition" was invented for that purpose. Whatever the specific cause, this is another case of ethnic in-turning under confrontation in the urban setting.

¹²Bruner (1973) describes an example of culture clash in the confrontation of the immigrant Batak with the dominant Sundanese in Bandung, Java:

The Sundanese and the Batak each approach the initial interaction guided by their own customs and emotional set, and at first they judge the other by their own standards. What the Sundanese define as being crude the Batak define as being honest, straightforward, and strong. What the Sundanese regard as refined behavior the Batak regard as being evasive, insincere, and feminine. Each group feels morally superior to the other and at least initially the behavior of each tends to validate these stereotypic evaluations. Each group in doing what it thinks is right and proper behaves in ways that the other feels are morally deficient. [p. 256]

¹³A similar argument is made by an anthropologist student of ethnic groups:

...It is clear that [ethnic] boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on the absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories....Ethnic distinctions do not depend on the absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built [Barth 1969: 9-10].

¹⁴The use of the terms, central and peripheral, are borrowed in this instance from Rokeach's (1967) parallel formulation of the structure of psychological attitudes.

¹⁵Gerald Suttles has suggested (in personal communication) that those subcultures generated by cities (e.g., ones based on art, literature, etc.) virtually require a libertarian atmosphere. Thus, urban-rural differences should tend to be in that direction. It is plausible to argue that innovative subcultures would collectively have an interest in maintaining an atmosphere tolerant of innovation. However, "libertarian" is not necessarily liberal, nor are the beneficiaries of civil liberties necessarily modern, secular, rational, etc., or themselves libertarian. I suspect, therefore, that social changes in the direction of the sacred, the non-scientific, and the repressive would also tend to be initiated in the city.

¹⁶Ogburn and Duncan (1964) have described a similar process in the form of different diffusion curves for metropolitan, urban, and rural places in the cases of radio, television and hospital births. The smaller places have parallel "learning" curves (elongated S's) to those of larger communities, but with a few years' lag. The argument I am presenting here is that, with regard to behavioral patterns, the peak of the S is not an absorbing state. Instead, adherence to that norm begins to decline in favor of a newer -- urban-bred -- one. E.g., one can view the movement for natural child-birth as an innovation following a delayed version of the same diffusion pattern as did anesthetized birth.

¹⁷This point was generously contributed by an anonymous member of the A.S.A. audience.

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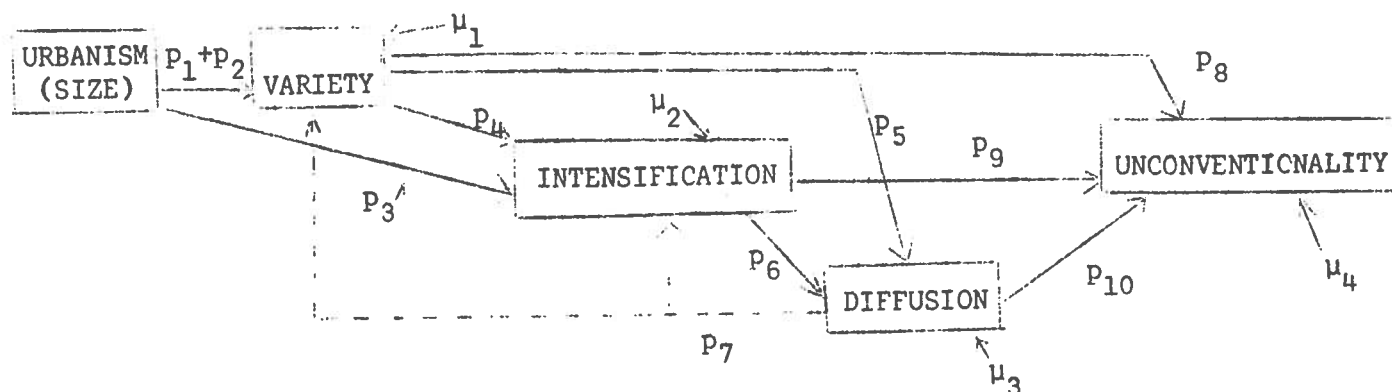
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Figure 1. A Schematic Representation of a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism

Processes (p)

- p_1 = structural differentiation
- p_2 = size of migration catchment area
- p_3 = "critical mass"
- p_4 = culture clash
- p_5 = quantity of sources
- p_6 = social strength of sources
- p_7 = assimilation (conventional to unconventional diffusion)
- p_8 = compositional effect
- p_9 = in-group socialization and influence
- p_{10} = unconventional to conventional group diffusion

Exogenous Influences (Examples) (μ)

- μ_1 = economic structure of city; migration type; degree of interaction ("dynamic density")
- μ_2 = degree of distinctiveness; demographic structure; power and status of groups.
- μ_3 = relative sizes, power, prestige of groups; degree of contact; utility of diffused item.
- μ_4 = political structure; material resources for protection; climate of tolerance.