American Sociological Association
Community & Urban Sociology Section

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CUSS Newsletter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Meanings of "Theory" and "Theorizing" in Urban Sociology

Kevin Fox Gotham
Tulane University

Theory is one of the most important terms in the lexicon of contemporary urban sociology, though it is not at all clear what sociologists mean by theory, theoretical, or theorize. We have theories of urban space, gentrification, residential segregation, ethnic neighborhoods, place attachment, socio-spatial urban restructuring, and so on. Urban sociologists tend to focus on applying, testing, and/or developing theories of cities, space, place, and the urban. Sometimes theorizing means the work urban sociologists do to abstract or generalize empirical findings, or to set them in context. Moreover, there is a widespread belief that empirical work in urban sociology should be driven or informed by theory. Thus, urban journals tend to reject "atheoretical" and "undertheorized" papers, as well as papers that fail to make a theoretical contribution to the literature on cities and urban life. An important intellectual activity for urban sociologists is to "theorize" about urban things like cities, places, communities, and spaces. Indeed, that urban sociology offers "theories" about cities and urban life is arguably what makes it count as a social science and differentiates it from journalistic exposes of cities and accounts that laypersons and poets offer.

But what exactly do urban sociologists mean by the words "theory", "theoretical", and "theorize"? Are these terms and their meanings

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clear to urban sociologists? What are the basic components or features of theory in urban sociology? Answering these questions is not an abstract philosophical concern but is an important and practical problem that is directly related to the generation of new knowledge about cities and the urban world. Some scholars have insinuated to me (in conver

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Chair's Message

Kevin Fox Gotham, Tulane University

It was great seeing everyone at the ASA meeting in Chicago. CUSS hosted a number of regular sessions and a set of dynamic roundtable sessions. We also had a great business meeting that was exceptionally well attended thanks to many of you. Finally, we had a fun and lively section reception that included recognition of our esteemed 2015 Section Award winners. I want to thank past chair Ray Hutchison for organizing the CUSS section

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The 2016 ASA Annual Meetings will be held in Seattle, Washington from August 20-23.

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activities at the ASA and leading the business meeting and council meeting. Thank you to Jacob Rugh (our secretary-treasurer) for putting together the secretary-treasurer report and agenda for the business meeting. Thank you to Hilary Silver for her time and effort editing *City & Community*. Thank you to new *City & Community* editors Sudhir Venkatesh and Lance Freeman for taking over leadership of the journal. We also want to thank the following CUSS session organizers for the ASA Meeting: Rachel Dwyer for organizing the CUSS roundtables; Ryan Centner for organizing the urban theory session; Japonica Brown-Saracino for organizing sexualities and place; Rachel Waldoff for organizing the housing session; and Jeffrey Timberlake for organizing the neighborhood inequalities session. Thank you to Bill Holt for his great work in organizing and editing our CUSS newsletter. Thank you also to Deirdre Oakley (CUSS Chair-elect and past co-chair of the Publications Committee) and Bruce Haynes (past co-chair of the Publications Committee) for their tireless work on the Publications Committee. The Publications Committee unanimously approved revised by-laws for our excellent journal, *City & Community*.

Fall is a busy time for the CUSS Chair, CUSS Council, and CUSS Committee Members, with planning for the ASA meeting in Seattle, by-law changes, and work required to create a new standing CUSS Membership Committee. CUSS finances are strong and our *City & Community* journal is healthy. CUSS membership has dipped this past year and we will have one less session at next year's ASA meeting. As of October 5, our member count was at 575, down 9% from 630 the year before. There were 27 low-income members, 178 student members, and 370 regular members. Collectively, ASA sections ended the year with 27,358 members, down from 954 from last year's 28,312. There were 1,248 low income members, 9,495 student members and 16,615 regular members. The smallest section this year had 129 members (Ethnomethodology), whereas the largest section had 1,176 members (Sex and Gender).

I have discussed with the CUSS Council that we should amend the bylaws to transform the ad hoc Membership Committee into a standing committee of one elected member and two appointed members, who serve staggered, 3-year terms. According to ASA rules, there is a seven-step process to getting bylaws and amendments approved. They go through an extensive review process before formally going into effect. Amendments for next year's election are due at the ASA Executive Office by November 10. If the amendment to establish the Membership Committee as an official committee is approved, then it would go into effect starting Fall 2016. The Committee would not have elected members, however. The election of Membership Committee members would take place the year after the amendment to the bylaws has been approved. We need a Committee that has specific responsibility for reaching out to current members to sustain their membership and participation, and adopting specific strategies to recruit new members.

You may have heard that Judith Friedman, long time manager of the Comm urb listserv is retiring. I have talked with Ray Hutchison, Deirdre Oakley, and several others about a successor. There is no formal process of nomination for the listserv since it is not owned and controlled by the ASA. It is important that whoever manages the listserv be someone who is an active members of CUSS and is collegial and understands the importance of monitoring and enforcing listserv etiquette. I am proud to announce that Deirdre Oakley has volunteered to take Judith's place and manage the listserv.

This year I asked CUSS membership for suggestions on ASA session topics, the suggestions were discussed and ranked by Council members, and we have

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planned sessions on Urban Spatial Inequality (Joe Galaskiewicz), Transformations in Contemporary Urban Governances (Nicole Marwell and Michael McQuarrie), and Crime, Disorder, and the City (Rachael Woldoff). There will also be a general session on urban sociology. The round–table sessions are listed as a separate topic, as always, but papers that are not accepted for presentation at the regular sessions will be forwarded to the roundtable organizers, so that we can maximize participation for section members at the Seattle meeting. Papers that do not fit into the sessions listed above should be submitted to the Roundtable Sessions. In addition, all papers submitted to the sessions listed above, but not accepted into those sessions, will be forwarded to the organizer for possible inclusion in the Roundtable Sessions. I want to thank Meredith Greif for kindly offering to take the lead in organizing the roundtables.

We have assembled chairs and committee members for the various CUSS Awards, and this information should be coming from ASA in more formal announcement sometime soon. More information about the awards is included in the newsletter.

The Call for Papers for the Seattle meeting went out from ASA on November 3, and they have set a date of January 6th for submission of papers through the portal at the ASA website. More information about the sessions is included in the newsletter. We have also solicited nominations for elections, and I have asked Nicole Marwell to serve as Chair of the Nominations Committee. I have also asked Ryan Centner to lead the planning and organizing effort for our CUSS reception. Over the next month, we will be working on arrangements for the session reception and other activities for the Seattle meeting, and look forward to seeing everyone there!

The submission deadline for the 2016 ASA Annual Meetings Is January 6, 2016 at 3pm EST.

Editor's Note

William Holt, Birmingham-Southern College

The *CUSS Newsletter* starts its 28th year with a feature article by Kevin Fox Gotham outlying different approaches to urban sociological theories with a call to debate the role of theories in our subfield.

As Fall Term 2015 draws down for many of us whose attention is on grading final exams, it's time to start thinking about the 2016 ASA Annual Meetings to be held in Seattle this coming August. This newsletter edition on page 4 includes the 2016 CUSS Call for Submissions for the three open sessions and refereed roundtables. The ASA submission deadline is January 6th at 3pm. All materials should be submitted through the ASA Conference website submission system.

Also, please see the 2016 CUSS Awards Call for Nominations. Directions are on page 5 for each award which all have a common April 30, 2016 deadline.

This edition includes regular features such as News & Notes and New Books where you may see recent publications by fellow CUSS members.

For CUSS members looking for publishing opportunities, the newsletter provides many. Ever since we went digital in 2011, the newsletter is no longer bound by the constraints of traditional paper publishing. For each edition I am always looking for suggestions from CUSS members for new ideas and materials.

Specifically, I am seeking members interested in writing a feature article on Seattle or the Pacific Northwest for the Summer 2016 newsletter to be published in July 2016. Also, we have the capacity to include other formats including shorter reflective works and photo essays. Feel free to contact me with ideas.

2016 CUSS Panels & Roundtables

Most CUSS events at ASA 2016 are scheduled for Sunday, August 21

The 2016 ASA Annual Meetings will be held in Seattle, Washington from August 20-23. CUSS events are scheduled for Sunday, August, 21. The CUSS Section will sponsor three open sessions as well as roundtables. All papers should be submitted though the conference website at www.asanet.org by January 6, 2016.

OPEN SESSION: Transformations in Contemporary Urban Governance
Organizers:
Nicole Marwell
Michael McQuarrie

Urban governance has been undergoing many transformations over the last 30 years. The role of private firms, nonprofits, and management consultants has expanded greatly. Philanthropies and government-sponsored organizations continue to play a large role. Municipal agencies and bureaucracies have themselves been changing. While urbanists now take organizations seriously as entities with distinct logics and productive capacities, theoretical development around urban organizations needs to continue, particularly to make sense of much new and emerging empirical work. More importantly, our theories of urban governance are dated and often describe institutional arrangements that no longer have the central role they once did, if they continue to exist at all. This panel invites papers that offer new empirical work on urban governance and organizations, as well as theoretical interventions that build upon recent work on urban organizations and governance.

OPEN SESSION: Crime, Disorder, and the City.
Organizer:
Rachael A. Woldoff
West Virginia University

Urban sociology and criminology intersect in many ways. Though the claim that disorder leads to serious crime has been contested, ample research suggests that disorder is related to crime, as it is associated with other problems, such as lower property values, negative evaluations of neighborhoods, reduced quality of life, fear of crime, mobility thoughts, distrust of neighbors, and psychological distress. Some research suggests that disorder and crime are part of the diversity of cities and reflect heterogeneity and inclusion. This session seeks papers that examine the ways in which crime and disorder affect the urban landscape.

OPEN SESSION: Urban Spatial Inequality
Organizer:
Joseph Galaskiewicz,
Arizona State University

The objectives of the session are twofold. First, it will give a voice to various perspectives on spatial inequality within urban settings. Papers that focus on local cultures, urban institutions, spatial distribution of amenities, urban transportation systems, residential segregation, and federal/state policies would all be welcome. Second, it will showcase how the spatial organization of the urban community is important in explaining not only access to jobs and schools, but access to other people, amenities, and ideas. All too often spatial analyses have been limited to explaining housing prices or real estate markets; it is time to explore how those who live within communities interact with, are shaped by, and shape the built environment.

REFEREED ROUNDTABLES
Organizer:
Meredith Greif,
Johns Hopkins University

Papers that do not fit into the sessions listed above should be submitted to the Roundtable Sessions. In addition, all papers submitted to the sessions listed above, but not accepted into those sessions, will be forwarded to the organizer for possible inclusion in the Roundtable Sessions.

2016 Awards: Call for Nominations

Nominations for the 2016 CUSS Awards are due on April 30, 2016. Below are the award descriptions as well as contact information for award committee chairs. You contact committee chairs for specific information.

The Robert and Helen Lynd Career - Lifetime Achievement Award

This award recognizes distinguished career achievement in community and urban sociology. Nominators should send all committee members an email letter stating the case for the nominee winning the award and attaching a copy of the nominee's vitae. Please send nominations to Award Committee members by April 30, 2016

Committee
-Miriam Greenberg (Chair)
University of California, Santa Cruz
miriam@ucsc.edu.
-Emily Molina
CUNY-Brooklyn College
etmolina
@brooklyn.cuny.edu
-Miranda Martinez
Ohio State University
mirandajmartinez
@gmail.com

•The Jane Addams Award for Best Article

This award (formerly the Park Article Award) goes to authors of the best scholarly article in community and urban sociology published in the past two years. Nominations are now being sought for articles that appeared in 2014 or 2015. Nominations should include standard bibliographic information about the work and a brief comment on its merits. To facilitate distributing articles for committee review, we are also requesting electronic submission of articles when possible. Please email a short statement of nomination and a copy of the article to all committee members by April 30, 2016.

Committee
-Josh Pacewicz (Chair)
Brown University
pacewicz@brown.edu
-Chase Billingham.
Wichita State University
chase.billingham@wichita.edu
-Jonathan Wynn
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
wynn@soc.umass.edu

•The Robert E. Park Award for Best Book

This award (formerly the Park Book Award) goes to the author(s) of the best book published in the past two years. Nominations are now being sought for books that appeared in 2014 or 2015. Nominations should include standard bibliographic information about the work, a brief comment on its merits, and copies of the book. Please submit all nominations and required materials to the committee members by April 30th 2016. Please send one book to EACH committee member:

Committee
-Patrick Sharkey (Chair)
New York University
patrick.sharkey
@nyu.edu
-Patricia Herzog
University of Arkansas
herzog@uark.edu
-Rory Kramer
Villanova University
rory.kramer
@villanova.edu

•CUSS Student Paper Award

This award goes to the student author of the paper the award committee regards as the best graduate student paper in community and urban sociology. The competition is open to both published and unpublished article-length papers (roughly 25 pages in length without tables or references) written by a graduate student in the last two years (2014 or 2015). The committee will accept sole-authored and multiple-authored papers as long as the applicant is the lead or senior author. No student-faculty collaborations can be accepted. The Committee will select the paper that demonstrates the most thoughtful, competent or innovative analysis of a theoretical or empirical issue that is germane to the Section's main interests. Please send all papers electronically to all committee members listed below by April, 30 2016.

Committee
-Shelley Kimelberg (Chair)
University of Buffalo
shelleyk@buffalo.edu
-Marco Garrido
University of Chicago
garrido@uchicago.edu
-Jean Beaman
Purdue University
beamanj@purdue.edu

CUSS will host three panels as well as roundtables at the 2015 ASA Annual Meetings

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sations) that it is unclear what urban sociologists mean by theory and theorizing. Others have expressed that we need to develop a new unitary paradigm that overarches part, if not all of urban theory. Still others contend that theoretical confusion rules the subdiscipline because of the continued ritualistic paean to totalizing paradigms.

For this essay, I want to suggest that the diversity of urban theories, the diverse roles played by different urban theories, and the disparate nature of urban theorizing are sources of strength rather than weakness. The plethora of different theories about the urban, place making, community, and so on results in intellectual cross-fertilization, hybridization, and creativity. Theoretical diversity and diversification, quite simply, should be nourished and cultivated. As I see it, diversity and differentiation are assets for urban sociology because they foster inventiveness and innovation. We are not only interested in nurturing a diversity of theories but also in nurturing a diversity of ways of theorizing. Richard Swedberg (2009; 2010) urges sociologists to examine and teach the craft of theorizing and offers a series of helpful tips: make the relationship we study plural and investigate its varieties; generalize to reveal both patterns and contingencies in what we are analyzing; turn concepts into social relationships; turn nouns into verbs; and perhaps most importantly, appreciate that in theory, as in life, no one ever has the last word in transforming theory. To Swedberg's advice, Wendy Espeland (2012) adds we should write in the active voice and view theorizing as a verb. That is, keep the verbs in place and attached to people.

In the next section, I identify several different meanings of the word "theory" in the urban sociology language. Yet before moving on, I would like to add an important caveat. I am not interested in getting into debates about the superiority of one theory over another. Lots of urban scholars have posed questions: What is a good theory? What is theory for? What are the functions of theory? What theories are true, valid, or plausible? How does one tell a true from a false theory? What constitutes a theoretical contribution? How should sociologists use theory in their urban research? I do not have answers to these questions. Complicating these issues is that the notions of theory, theoretical, and theorizing and not clear things. Theories can have overlapping and contested assumptions and boundaries. Theories can be messy, porous, and ambiguous. They also can be fragmented, chaotic, and discontinuous. Finally, theories change historically as cities change.

Multiple Meanings of "Theory" and "Theorizing" in Urban Sociology

Sociological metatheorists have long studied the underlying structure of theory and sociology in general as well as it various components (for an overview see Abend, 2008). Much of the work of metatheorizing involves identifying the key features of theories, their major assumptions, and goals. I have several goals. A first goal is to identify several meanings of theory and theorizing in urban sociology. A second goal is to analyze urban theory in order to attain a deeper understanding of theory and its diverse uses. A third goal is to cultivate the development of new theories of cities, and by implication, other societal units such as neighborhoods, places, metropolitan areas, regions. A fourth goal is to nurture new ways of theorizing about cities and urban life. The third and fourth goals sound similar but they are different. Theory and theorizing are not the same thing. Overall, I wish to assist others in the interrogation of the underlying structure and operation of urban theories with an eye toward developing new research questions, new theoretical perspectives, and new forms of theorizing. Several meanings and definitions of urban theorizing dominate contemporary empirical research on cities and metropolitan life. I view these meanings as "ideal types" and categorize them causal-analytic (CA) theorizing, interpretative urban (IU) theorizing, comparative urban (CU) theorizing, and critical-normative (CN) theorizing.

Causal-analytic (CA) Theorizing

One popular approach, what one might call the causal analytic (CA) theorizing, defines urban theory as a set of interrelated propositions that seeks to establish a causal relationship between two or more variables. In CA theorizing, "cause" means lawlike regularities of the kind that events like X regularly precede and are contiguous with events like Y. Particular actions and events are subsumed under general theories, while general regularities are explained by subsumption under still broader theories. General theories also consist of mechanisms, which describe the process by which X influences Y. Because causal relations are not directly observable, their identification can be subjective and based on a high degree of interpretive license. There are no agreed upon criteria for assessing the relevance and significance of a causal mechanism (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010). On the one hand, the appropriate causal mechanism may be isolated if the time lag between explanans and explanadums is reduced (the shorter the time lag between X and Y, the more preferable the mechanism). On the oth-

er hand, a researcher may evaluate the appropriateness of a causal mechanism when s/he finds evidence of a specific feature of an outcome that is uniquely implicated by that particular mechanism.

Logical deduction, hypothesis testing, clear operationalization and specification of independent and dependent variables, and quantitative analysis are the key characteristics of CA theorizing. There are many examples. Many scholars have used place stratification theory, spatial assimilation theory, and neighborhood preferences theory to understand minority access to white neighborhoods (Freeman 2000; Pais, South, and Crowder 2012; Lee, et al. 2015; Park and Iceland 2011; Iceland and Sharp 2013; Adelman 2005). Rugh and Massey (2010) theorize that high levels of racial residential segregation are causally related to high rates of housing foreclosure. Extending theories of risk society and classic urban ecology, Elliott and Frickel (2013; 2015) examine the historical accumulation of hazardous parcels in relation to changing patterns of industrial land use, neighborhood composition, new residential development, and environmental regulation. In these and other CA examples, theory means a general proposition that specifies both causal relations between variables (including models that indicate how causal factors are interrelated) and causal mechanisms responsible for producing these relations. Importantly, scholars and researchers will usually put emphasis on predictive power as a main criterion for evaluating a theory's validity. In this meaning of theory, theoretical contribution lies in making some novel and original conclusion that challenges rival causal explanations of change in a dependent variable. If there is no such conclusion, or if it is not clear why the independent variables were chosen for analysis, then the research and findings might be criticized as atheoretical or undertheoretized.

There are strong and weak versions of CA theorizing. A strong version embraces positive epistemology and views knowledge as cumulative, coherent, and rational. By using the scientific method and testing of theoretically derived hypotheses, a strong version of CA theorizing pursues analysis to develop generalizable findings that are context-independent. Here proponents might see their analyses as offering factual statements, objective and verifiable explanations, and scientific progress in understanding urban reality and solving empirical and theoretical problems. Weaker versions recognize that positivism has never been stable and coherent in urban sociology and is probably better seen as a stock of assumptions and procedures that are partial, selective, incomplete, and deeply contested. Efforts to fuse quantitative practices with principles of scientific vision and rigor do not mean that analyses and results have to be context-independent or value-empty. The assumption of value-neutrality is a myth anyway since all of our research is infused with value orientations and decisions that affect the choice of research topic, identification of research questions, the selection of methods, and the selection of theories to engage, analyze, or test. In fact, a great deal of our work in urban sociology is oriented toward showing the context-dependence of urban life. That is, theorizing that aims to understand how and why cities and neighborhoods change will need to take into account where and the when they change.

Interpretive Urban (IU) Theorizing

A second meaning of theory – the interpretive urban (IU) approach - seeks to explain a particular urban (localized) phenomenon. The particular case itself can be a city, a neighborhood, a region, and so on. What is important is that the case – its integrity, complexity, historical development, and socio-spatial context – constitutes the focus of the interpretive urban approach. Sometimes, the researcher crafts his/her explanation by identifying a number of "factors" or "conditions" which individually pass some sort of counterfactual test for causal relevance, and whose interaction effects should be somehow taken into account. In addition, scholars may appropriate existing concepts or develop new concepts and heuristic devices to explain the phenomenon under investigation. Urban sociological case studies are exemplary. The IU mode of theorizing is apparent in Herbert Gans's (1962) classic book, the Urban Villagers. An explanation for the displacement of West Enders' displacement from their neighborhood during 1950s is also a theory of the drivers of displacement. Through her examination of intra-class interactions between poor and middle-class black people, Mary Pattillo (2008) offers a theory of how the dynamics of race and class inequality intersect and reinforce one another in contemporary urban America. Related, Karyn Lacy's (2007) examination of identity construction processes in suburban Washington, DC suggests a continuum of middle-classness among blacks, ranging from lower-middle class to middle-middle class to upper-middle class. She theorizes the race-class interaction as interconnected with the identity options of individuals.

There are many examples of IU theorizing in which scholars attempt to explain the how and why of a particular urban

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event, condition, or circumstance using specific concepts or one or more general propositions about extra-local events, processes, and trends. Urban sociologists work back and forth from abstract concepts to specific local happenings in a dialectical and reflexive fashion. Eric Klinenberg's (2002) explanation of why so many older peopled died during the 1995 Chicago heat wave is also a theory of what particular sociodemographic, political, and cultural factors interacted to cause the spike in the number of deaths. At the same time, in order to explain the negative effects of the 1995 Chicago heat wave, Klinenberg appeals to several more general propositions about the social production of urban isolation. Richard Lloyd's (2010) *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* guides its readers through Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, offering a nuanced account of the production and consumption of local arts scenes in the postindustrial economy. The explanation of what is happening in Wicker Park becomes a theory of neo-bohemia that challenges contemporary urban theories that stress deconcentation, and theories of urban tourism that overstate the regulated and hermetic nature of consumption spaces. Miriam Greenberg's (2009) *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World*, traces the rise of New York City as a brand and the resultant transformation of urban politics and public life. The explanation of the post-1970s fiscal crisis and transformation of New York City becomes a theory of urban rebranding as a political strategy to legitimize market-based solutions to urban problems.

In IU theorizing, urban theories are interpretive tools, heuristic or sensitizing devices that address questions such as what is "urban" about urban life, how are cities organized and how do they change over time, and what is the nature of urban order and stability? The main questions the theorist sets out to answer are not of the type "what x causes y"? Rather, given a certain urban phenomenon or a certain fact, relation, process, or trend, this theoretical variant asks: how can we make sense of or shed light on a certain slice of urban reality? Examples include the relationship of size, density, and inter-group contact on the formation of urban subcultures (e.g., the subcultural theory of urbanism) (Fischer 1975; 1995); impacts of community-based organizations on neighborhood life (Marwell 2004; 2009); the effect of gentrification on neighborhoods in transition (Freeman 2011); dynamics of racial change (Woldoff 2011); the origin of distinctive lesbian, bisexual, and queer-identified (LBQ) identities in small cities (Brown-Saracino 2015); the intersection of new forms of urban redevelopment and entrenched patterns of racialized poverty (Hyra 2008). To put it another way, what interpretive urban approaches offer is an original "interpretation" or "way of making sense" of a certain aspect of the urban world. They may shed new light on an empirical problem, help one understand some social process, or reveal what "really" went on in a certain conjuncture.

Unlike the CA model, the interpretive urban approach does not view urban reality as composed of variables, which in turn are related to other variables in such a way that can be described by an equation. But that does not mean that IU approaches reject causality. The key point is that IU approaches explicitly embrace multicausality in which urban change is understood as complex combinations of reciprocal effects, feedback loops, and cumulative multiscale processes. Rather than testing hypotheses or formulating theoretical statements or causal models, an interpretive urban approach focuses on the construction of concepts and reconstruction of cases. Causal statements should apply to the development of the case rather than exist a priori. That is, the researcher formulates causal statements from the richness of urban detail be it a street block, neighborhood, city, or region. Put another way, causal statements come from the chronology of events and sequence of actions (local and extra-local) rather than by reference to a rigorous causal method and testing different hypotheses.

Comparative Urban (CU) Theorizing

The comparative urban (CU) approach seeks to explain variation and similarity in outcomes across a range of different cases (e.g., cities, neighborhoods, etc.). Central to this approach is the view that cases are relational and a "case" only makes sense as an empirical referent or theoretical category in relation to other cases. Concerning comparison, the researcher may compare and contrast cases with another using a guiding concept, question, or theme. The goal in this comparative orientation is to provide an accurate isolation of the unique aspects of each case under comparison and identify and explain the multiple lines of causality in each case. In the process, the researcher seeks to highlight particularity of each case and illuminate the embeddedness of each case in particular contextual and social structural forces. Examples of CU theorizing include Harvey Molotch and colleagues' (2000) comparative-historical analysis of how places achieve and reproduce distinctiveness; Janet Abu Lughod's (2007) comparison of urban disturbances and political mobilization in Chicago, New

York, and Los Angeles; Loic Wacquant's (2008) Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality; and the contributions to David Halle's (2003) edited volume that compares New York and Los Angeles to understand the nature of urban politics and culture.

I want to focus specific attention on CU theorizing using my book with Miriam Greenberg on disaster and redevelopment in New York and New Orleans (Gotham and Greenberg 2008; 2014). One of our goals is to explain variation and similarity in the federal response to the 9/11 terrorist strike and Hurricane Katrina. We adopt a holistic and context-embracing approach aimed at explaining how specific emergency management strategies and processes recur or diverge in the different cities. In various chapters we compare HUD and FEMA's response to the disasters, modifications in eligibility rules for disaster assistance, problems and limitations with post-disaster federal response, and post-disaster rebuilding strategies. Our CU theorizing reflects process-oriented comparative research in which we analytically juxtapose differences in federal and local policy, response, and the post-disaster redevelopment trajectories.

Identifying similarities and differences in post-disaster redevelopment policy actions and outcomes in New York and New Orleans implicates comparison as research method and mode of theorizing that reveals the limitations and problems of particular empirical claims made by scholars about the 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina disasters. Typical case study accounts of the two disasters tend to embrace an event-centered conception in which each disaster's immediate and disruptive impacts and subsequent response and recovery efforts become the main objects of analysis. While useful and important, event-centered conceptions concentrate analysis in time and space and thereby obscure the deep historical roots of both 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Moreover, case study approaches miss the multiple intersecting processes that connect the two disasters. Case study approaches also fail to reveal or explain the striking similarity of the post-disaster policy response despite differences in disaster triggers (terrorist strike and hurricane), differences in scale and intensity of destruction, and differences in the political-economic structure and culture of each city.

What is distinctive about our comparative historical approach is that we problematize conventional notions of "disasters" as discrete events or static occurrences. We reveal that disasters are processes that unfold over time, are contested politically, and interact with local socio-spatial conditions. As we point out, entrenched policy orientations, framing strategies, and the feedback effects of past decisions can affect the subsequent trajectories and outcomes of urban rebuilding. As such, comparison reveals that post-disaster recovery periods are not just about physical or infrastructural rebuilding but also about reinforcing and perpetuating pre-disaster power relations and social inequalities, all of which can operate to create new patterns of risk and vulnerability to future disaster.

Critical-Normative (CN) Theorizing

Another meaning of urban theory starts from a critical-normative foundation and views theory as a set of concepts and explanatory tools to examine the operation of urban power structures, identify the causes and consequences of urban inequalities, and clarify the bases of social conflict and political struggle in cities. Critical normative (CN) urban theorizing is problem-centered, embraces a strong social justice and equity standpoint, and aims for urban praxis - a fusion of urban knowledge and practice. CN theorizing is undergirded by a utopian impulse to illuminate the mechanisms of domination and subordination in cities, and provide a prescription for ameliorative social action and progressive change. Theorists draw their inspiration from Karl Marx's (1975, p. 145) eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." For proponents of CN theorizing, theory should be employed to change the world not just describe or interpret it as in the IU mode or assess causality like the CA mode.

Critical theorizing begins with Karl Marx's (1975, p. 209) definition of critical theory as "the self-clarification of the struggle and wishes of the age." This definition is straightforwardly political and does not claim any epistemological status. CN theorizing seeks to reveal how urban political institutions and policies reinforce and perpetuate social inequalities. CN theorizing also seeks to relate exploitative relations in the sphere of housing and urban political economy, for example, to wider structures of urban neoliberalism, institutionalized discrimination, and patterns of class, race, and gender inequality. CN theorizing typically employs categories and explanatory models that reveal rather than hide or blind spot entrenched patterns of poverty and segregation. In addition, CN theorizing also seeks to demystify as ideological any rival theories or modes of theorizing that obfuscate or rationalize those patterns or relationships of inequality. In this situation, then, one of the standards for CN theorizing

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would be: how well does this mode of theorizing help us understand and explain the situation and prospects of those isolated and disadvantage neighborhoods that are "stuck in place"? (Sharkey 2013). To what extent does CN theorizing serve the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of exploited urban immigrants, residents from disaster-devastated urban neighborhoods, or LGBT urbanites?

Critical theorizing, following the CN model, blends normative argument and empirical urban analysis with an interrogation of the major cross-scale processes and multidimensional trends that are affecting cities, neighborhoods, and urban life. The contemporary projects of critical urban theory (Brenner 2009; Brenner, et al 2011; Marcuse 2009); just city theory (Fainstein 2011; 2014); postcolonial urbanism (Roy 2011, 2014; Robinson 2006; 2011, 2014; Sheppard, Leitner, and Maringanti 2013); and feminist urban theory (Bondi and Rose 2003; Maginn and Steinmetz 2014) are explicitly normative ones, which usually reject the fact/value dichotomy, and hence the supposedly value-neutral stance of CA theory. The same is true of a good deal of critical theorizing on neoliberalism and neoliberalization (Brenner and Theodor 2002; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009) and contemporary transformations in metropolitan and regional politics (Dreier, et al. 2012). In these and many other accounts, researchers use theory to analyze the possibilities and limits of grassroots democracy. Theory fuses normative questions and empirical questions that have explicit political concerns at heart. Scholars leverage theory to criticize the status quo and offer a politics of resistance and transcendence.

Conclusion: Expanding our Repertoire of Theorizing

There are other meanings of theory and modes of theorizing in urban sociology and we could spend a great deal of time and effort analyzing their structure, domain assumptions, and scope conditions. Different theories and modes of theorizing entail a different set of goals, epistemological and ontological assumptions, core concepts, level(s) of analysis, stress given to inductive and deductive theorizing, and specification of agency-structure relationships.

I think the proper metaphor is that there exist different "repertoires" of theorizing and we can become proficient in many of these repertoires. A first step toward expanding our repertoire is by learning a variety of theories and growing our knowledge bases. One of the strengths of urban sociology is its multidisciplinary character. Indeed, the diversity of theorizing emanates from the diversity of cross-discipline linkages and connections which encourage and facilitate a sharing and blending of different theoretical ideas and insights. Another step is acquiring a diversity of theoretical skills such as skills at defining theory and describing its role in building urban sociological knowledge; skills at comparing and contrasting different theoretical orientations and modes of theorizing; skills at contextualizing theories to show how they reflect the historical and socio-spatial context of the times and cultures in which they are embedded; skills at applying theories to address particular urban problems or empirical research questions; and skills at constructing new theories to understand contemporary urban phenomena, trends, or problems, with an eye toward ameliorating those problems.

There are no timeless, static, or immutable urban theories. Just as urban theories are products of particular times, places, and historical conditions, urban theories change as social movements, social processes, and groups and individuals transform cities and metropolitan areas.

What do you think passes or should pass for theory in urban sociology, and why? What is an appropriate understanding of the place of theory and theorizing in contemporary urban sociology? What would be a desirable role for theory and theorizing? I suggest we discuss and debate these issues here in our newsletter. We can debate the state, role, purpose, possibilities, and projects of theory and theorizing in urban sociology. I look forward to your contributions.

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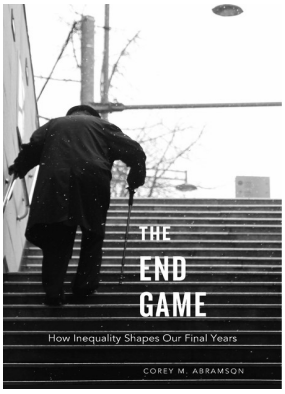
NEW BOOKS

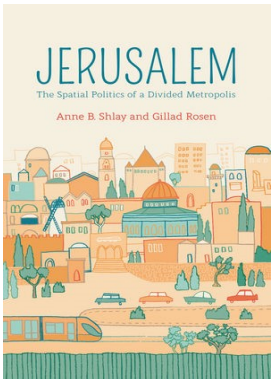


***The End Game: How Inequality Shapes Our Final Years*. 2015. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press**

-Corey M. Abramson
University of Arizona

Senior citizens from all walks of life face a gauntlet of physical, psychological, and social hurdles. But do the disadvantages some people accumulate over the course of their lives make their final years especially difficult? Or does the quality of life among poor and affluent seniors converge at some point? *The End Game* investigates whether persistent socioeconomic, racial, and gender divisions in America create inequalities that structure the lives of the elderly. Corey Abramson's portraits of seniors from diverse backgrounds offer an intimate look at aging as a stratified social process. They illustrate that disparities in wealth, access to health care, neighborhood conditions, and networks of friends and family shape how different people understand and adapt to the challenges of old age. Social Security and Medicare are helpful but insufficient to alleviate deep structural inequalities. Yet material disadvantages alone cannot explain why seniors respond to aging in different ways. Culture, in all its variations, plays a crucial role.

Abramson argues that studying the experience of aging is central to understanding inequality, in part because this segment of the population is rapidly growing. But there is another reason. The shared challenges of the elderly—declining mobility and health, loss of loved ones and friends—affect people across the socioeconomic spectrum, allowing for powerful ethnographic comparisons that are difficult to make earlier in life. *The End Game* makes clear that, despite the shared experiences of old age, inequality remains a powerful arbiter of who wins and who loses in American society.



***Jerusalem: The Spatial Politics of a Divided Metropolis*. 2015. Malden, MA: Polity**

-Anne B. Shlay
Georgia State University

-Gillad Rosen
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Jerusalem has for centuries been known as the spiritual center for the three largest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Yet, Jerusalem's other-worldly transcendence is far from the daily reality of Jerusalem, a city bombarded by conflict. The battle over who owns and controls Jerusalem is intensely disputed on a global basis. Few cities rival Jerusalem in how its divisions are expressed in the political sphere and in ordinary everyday life.

Jerusalem: The Spatial Politics of a Divided Metropolis is about this constellation of competing on-the-ground interests: the endless set of claims, struggles, and debates over the land, neighborhoods, and communities that make up Jerusalem. Spatial politics explain the motivations and organizing around the battle for Jerusalem and illustrate how space is a weapon in the Jerusalem struggle. These are the windows to the world of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Based on ninety interviews, years of fieldwork, and numerous Jerusalem experiences, this book depicts the groups living in Jerusalem, their roles in the conflict, and their connections to Jerusalem's development. Written for students, scholars, and those seeking to demystify the Jerusalem labyrinth, this book shows how religion, ideology, nationalism, and power underlie patterns of urban development, inequality, and conflict.

NEWS & NOTES

●**Susan Bridle-Fitzpatrick**, Tulane University, has published a new article, "Food deserts or food swamps?: A mixed-methods study of local food environments in a Mexican city," *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 142, pp. 202-213. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.08.010

●**Mary Patrice Erdmans**, Case Western Reserve, and **Timothy Black's**, Case Western Reserve, book, *On Becoming a Teen Mom: Life Before Pregnancy* (University of California Press, 2015) is this year's recipient of the Bette & Alfred McClung Lee Book Award given by the Association for Humanist Sociology.

●**Amin Ghaziani's**, University of British Columbia, new book, *There Goes the Gayborhood?,* was the subject of an Author Meets Critics panel at the 2015 ASA meetings in Chicago. The buzz surrounding the session inspired a special book symposium in Environment and Planning A. Contributors include Harvey Molotch, Andrew Deener, Iddo Tavory, and Mary Pattillo.

●**Ray Hutchison**, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, has been awarded the Cátedra Santander (Santander Chair) in Humanities and Social Sciences at the New University of Lisbon (Faculdade de Ciéncias Socialis e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa) for the 2016 Spring Semester. The New University of Lisbon was founded in 1973 following the collapse of the Estado Novo military regime in the25 de Abril Carnation revolution, and has a strong tradition of innovative work, including interdisciplinary degree programs and graduate research centers. His responsibilities include mentoring a 10-week seminar on urban studies for graduate students and faculty at CICS-NOVA (Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais), as well as a series of public lectures on topics such as "The Invention of the American West" and "Utopian Communities in the US" that are often taught in American Studies programs at universities across Europe. He will also arrange a conference on comparative suburban studies featuring faculty from the Banlieue Network (Paris), Westminster University (London), University of Florence, University of Bologna, and other universities.

●**Michelle Annette Meyer**, Louisiana State University, was selected as a Fellow in the Enabling the Next Generation of Hazard and Disaster Researchers Program. In this NSF-sponsored program, 22 early-career professors from various disciplines including engineering, planning, psychology, and sociology were invited and matched to experienced disaster scholar-mentors and participate in three conferences to foster collaborations, grant opportunities, and publications in the interdisciplinary field of hazard and disaster research.

●**Victoria Reyes**, Bryn Mawr College, has just published a new article, "Global Borderlands: A Case Study of Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines" *Theory and Society* 44(4):355-384.

●**Rachael A. Woldoff**, West Virginia University, was elected to CUSS council and was also chosen to be an Associate Editor of City and Community. She is organizing an ASA CUSS session on crime and disorder in the city for 2016. Her new book on Stuyvesant Town will be published in February 2016 for those interested in including this ethnography in course syllabi.

Help ASA redesign the organization's website.
Go to:

https://beaconfire.optimalworkshop.com/treejack/sociology

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REMINDER

ASA MEMEBRSHIP EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2015

RENEW EARLY