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“CITY AIR MAKES FREE”: A MULTI-LEVEL, CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF
SELF-EFFICACY*

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ABSTRACT

The effects of cities on the subjective states of individuals have been the subject of continuous inquiry. Recent research has demonstrated potential links between immediate environments and individual outcomes such as perceived powerlessness. However, the results of such studies are inconsistent and fail to account for the greater societal environment in which observations occur. Using a more comparative, cross-national sample and multi-level modeling, we retest the expectation that the immediate physical and social environment influences feelings of powerlessness, and extend the test to consider urbanism operating at societal levels beyond the local. Controlling for demographic composition, we find that urban factors operating at both societal and local levels are important predictors of self-efficacy and powerlessness. While one factor was found to correspond with decreased self-efficacy, two aspects of urban environments—one local and one societal—are found to be consistent with Simmel’s assertion that urban settings increase individual feelings of efficacy and freedom. The implications of these findings for urban theory are discussed.

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<REM> Start running text</REM>Classical urban theory posits that city life has strong effects on the subjective states of residents. One strain suggests a largely negative effect, wherein residents are alienated and powerless (e.g. Maine [1862] 1960; Tonnies [1887] 1940; Wirth 1938). However, another perspective (Simmel [1903] 1997), suggests that urbanites are relatively unburdened by the expectations of traditional institutions and other individuals. This perspective is consistent with the medieval German saying that *stadtluft macht frei* (“city air makes free”), illustrating the apparent independence of city-dwellers relative to those who remain in the countryside. Despite more recent declarations that city environments have no unique or direct effects on their populations, that what few effects might exist are due largely to the demographic composition of a given locale, and that cities are not inherently alienating (e.g. Gans 1962; Lewis 1952; Whyte 1955) researchers continue to revisit the original questions and continue to find new answers to them.

While the majority of such efforts have focused on unconventionality, interpersonal social bonds, and tolerance as urban outcomes and yielded conflicting evidence (Tittle 1989), another promising approach reconsiders alienation as an outcome of city life. Alienation, conceptualized as a feeling of powerlessness (Seeman 1959, 1971, 1983), has been hypothesized to be related to urban residence net of compositional factors, but few studies have tested the relationship and those that do yield conflicting results. Fischer (1973) found no significant relationship, whereas Tittle (1989) found a negative relationship and Geis and Ross (1998) found mixed results.

Even if all research were in agreement on the matter, such studies do not take into account the classical idea that urbanism is a *societal* phenomenon, occurring at the macro-level (Durkheim [1893] 1984; Maine [1862] 1960; Redfield 1947), or more recent

acknowledgment that cities have influences *beyond* their immediate and arbitrary boundaries (Fischer 1975a; Hummon 1990; Tittle and Grasmick 2001). Urbanism is not just a matter of immediate environmental context, but of social organization. Urban factors at the macro-societal level, in addition to urbanization at the local level, need to be analyzed simultaneously in order to more fully appraise classical urban theory and more recent revisitations thereof.

In this paper, we reexamine urban powerlessness while expanding the analysis to account for societal urbanity as well as the local and compositional factors considered in prior research. This effort is rendered more comparative than previous work by using a cross-national sample to identify factors that are important regardless of a specific context. Drawing on 1) data on individuals drawn from the World Values Survey (World Values Study Group 1999-2004), 2) cross-national data at the societal level, and 3) hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques, we find that both local and societal factors play an important role in predicting patterns of self-efficacy. Increasing urbanism, at both the local and societal level, largely *decreases* feelings of powerlessness. Specifically, ethnic heterogeneity in a society and, at the local level, the size of people's towns of residence are both positively associated with feelings of freedom and efficacy. However, one factor, linguistic heterogeneity within a society, is associated with diminished self-efficacy. This pattern is largely interpreted as support for Simmel's ([1903] 1997) argument that city air makes free—that urban settings increase individual dependence on one's self and grant freedom from the expectations of others and from the demands of collectivities or institutions. However, the mixed results suggest that although urban factors do influence how people feel, they are not all the same in terms of their effects.

BACKGROUND<REM> #1 Head</REM>

Perspectives on Urbanism and Alienation<REM> #2 Head</REM>

The term “urbanism” is used to delineate a theoretical entity that makes city life qualitatively different from life outside of the city. Similar variations of this theme, exemplified in the works of such classical theorists as Maine ([1862] 1960); Redfield (1947); and Tonnies ([1887] 1940), suggest that traditional life is disrupted and altered by urbanization. This disruption is characterized by alienation, loss of intimacy, increased deviance, anomie, and psychological stress.

Perhaps the most influential formulation of this general perspective is Wirth’s (1938), who stated that “urbanism as way of life” results from three factors: population size, density, and heterogeneity. Increases in these factors lead to increases in an urban personality of individuals and modify the nature of their interactions with others. Living in cities means living near a greater number of people than in other, less populated localities. It is impossible to know everyone due to the sheer scale of even modestly sized cities. This results in the condition that most individuals encountered are unknown others—strangers (Lofland 1973). Moreover, such density entails greater specialization and greater diversity in the types of people encountered. As a response to this overwhelming environment, what social bonds one does create are generally goal-oriented and weak rather than lasting and intimate. Dealing with a large number of diverse people does not permit everyone to get to know everyone else in a meaningful way nor for any meaningful duration. The presence of so many strangers, different types of people, and the lack of intimate bonds relative to the number of interactions one needs to engage in results in anxiety, alienation, and similarly

negative psychological states. This general perspective of urbanism—involving the breakdown of social bonds and resulting in mental strain—has come to be called *determinist theory* (Fischer 1975b).

Though classical theorists generally agree on the bleak portrayal of urban life painted by determinist theory, the view is not without relief. Georg Simmel ([1903] 1997), although also a determinist, argued that cities may be alienating, but they can also be, in some sense, liberating. According to Simmel, the urban milieu is characterized by two phenomena that, together, create an urban personality among city residents: 1) external nervous stimuli, and 2) the centrality of an underlying money economy. The first of these, nervous stimuli, suggests a condition similar to that proposed by other determinists, many of whom were influenced by Simmel's work. The physical and social environment with which city dwellers need to contend is vast in size and scale. To interact fully and meaningfully with each part and citizen would overwhelm the individual, so they interact with few and do so only superficially. This results in a blasé attitude, wherein individuals are largely indifferent to one another, a sort of protective personality one develops to stave off the anxiety and strain that would otherwise develop from emotional involvement with too many stimuli. The second characteristic of city life, the money economy, meanwhile underlies and influences all interactions while reinforcing a blasé attitude. Such interactions are based on a calculating, emotionless mentality wherein self-interest becomes the motivating factor—not affective bonds.

The urban personality that results from abundant nervous stimuli and money-based interactions is aloof, rational, and “sophisticated.” Again, this end result appears to be very similar to other formulations of determinist theory, but Simmel also posited a beneficial

tradeoff that resulted from this apparent social breakdown < specifically, that it entailed a greater level of freedom than could be had in any other sort of social setting. Weak social bonds result in a condition wherein individuals have little power either to make demands or to establish sweeping sets of expectations for one another. Similarly, the dominance of the money economy in setting the norms of interaction weakens the hold that traditional institutions might have over the individual. Relative to rural, traditional settings, city dwellers are free individuals who make their own decisions and set their own goals. They may be isolated, but they are free.

Both strains of the rather static determinist theory were later criticized by a number of researchers. The first wave of criticism is embodied in the works of urban ethnographers such as William F. Whyte (1955) and Oscar Lewis (1952). Such studies typically found vibrant communities and extensive primary ties, not isolation and breakdown, in urban settings. Herbert Gans (1962), additionally, argued that there was not a single urban way of life, but many, and that these did not result from an urban environment. Each of these ways of life was best explained by different demographic characteristics of the populations under investigation: ethnicity, income, lifecycle phase, and similar compositional factors. To the extent that the physical setting was influential at all in explaining such lifestyles, it was merely as an indirect factor. For example, cities have more members of the underclass who, according to Gans, were the most likely to exhibit something resembling the determinist's urban personality. In this case, economic factors, not the city itself, are directly causal.

With the rise of this *compositionalist theory*, the urban environment was relegated to a position of relative unimportance for some time. However, later studies began to consider the possibility that it had been discarded prematurely. The best known of such efforts is

Claude Fischer's *subcultural theory of urbanism* (1975b). Fischer argued, against the determinists, that cities can actually promote some types of cohesion and that characteristics of the specific population were important. He also argued against the compositionists in that size, density, and heterogeneity are important factors as well. According to this argument, once certain groups with shared but unconventional interests, ideologies, or behaviors gather in sufficient size and density (i.e., once a critical mass is reached), subcultures based on these shared traits can develop. Since cities are both more heterogeneous and more populous than other places, these subcultures will develop more frequently, and with greater intensity, there than in less urban areas. Unable to achieve a critical mass, people in nonurban areas with unconventional interests will remain fragmented and unable to form subcultures.¹

Self-Efficacy and Urbanism Revisited<REM> #2 Head</REM>

Though the best known, Fischer's is far from the only work in this area to conclude that the idea of urbanism was declared invalid too soon. Numerous studies have attempted to test various aspects of the determinist and compositionist theories. The majority of such efforts have focused on unconventionality, interpersonal social bonds, and tolerance as outcomes and yield conflicting evidence in terms of our understanding of urbanism and its effects (Tittle 1989), but many recent studies have focused on the social psychological outcomes of urban environments. For example, living in areas that are perceived as "threatening" can result in fearfulness and worry (Robinson et al. 2003). Other studies have

¹ It is interesting to note that a number of studies seem to confirm Fischer's (1975b) subcultural theory of urbanism (e.g., Boyd 2005; Sampson and Bartusch 1998). The fact that unconventional behavior thrives in urban areas is consistent with Simmel's arguments, suggesting that tradition and other strict expectations hold less sway over individuals there.

found that neighborhood stability and concentrated poverty or prosperity interact to modify feelings of depression and anxiety (Ross, Reynolds, and Geis 2000), and that disorder fosters general distress (Cutrona et al. 2000). The relationships between locality and other social psychological outcomes revealed in such studies emphasize the need for a continued analysis of the urban/efficacy relationship, and underscore the need to revisit determinist hypotheses.

A promising approach to the study of urbanism considers alienation as an outcome of city life. The classical theorists all consider some type of alienation to result from urban living but they, and more recent theorists, are not at all unanimous in agreeing upon what features characterize urban alienation (Lee 1973; Travis 1986). Several studies have identified social isolation as a form of urban alienation and found uncertain results; some indicate that isolation is found to result from city life (e.g. Freudenburg 1986; Guterman 1969) while others indicate that it does not (e.g. Fischer 1973, 1982).

Another possibility is that alienation is actually experienced as a feeling of powerlessness (Seeman 1959, 1971, 1983). Powerlessness is “the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks” (Seeman 1959: 784). The opposite of powerlessness is efficacy or personal control wherein one feels they have power over their life or other desired outcomes (Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh 2001). Formulated as such, powerlessness and efficacy are similar to other sociological concepts—such as self-directedness (Kohn and Schooler 1982) and mastery (Pearlin et al. 1981)—and to concepts in other disciplines. In psychology, for example, powerlessness is described as “hopelessness” (Seligman 1975) or an “external locus of control” (Rotter 1966), wherein a given individual believes forces

outside of their control direct their fate or destiny. Efficacy, on the other hand, corresponds with an internal locus of control.

A sense of efficacy can be beneficial to the individual, whereas powerlessness can have serious consequences. *Efficacy*, feeling control over one's life, generally corresponds to other positive cognitions and physical health, but powerlessness can lead to distress, paranoia, and illness (Grembowski et al. 1993; Mirowsky and Ross 1983, 1986; Ross and Mirowsky 2001; Ross et al. 2001). Similar patterns have been found regarding collective, as opposed to individual, efficacy (e.g. Browning and Cagney 2002; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). Worse still, while powerlessness brings its own problems, it also renders individuals less capable and less willing to deal with other problems they may face (Wheaton 1983).

What causes one to feel a sense of efficacy or powerlessness? Either condition is a response to the cumulative experiences one has throughout their life (Bandura 1977; Mirowsky and Ross 1983; Seligman 1975) and develops through “interactions between individual and environment” (Gecas 1989:300). Past events or current conditions lead one to believe either that they can or cannot act to alter their situation or the social environment around them. For example, having extensive social ties with neighbors (Geis and Ross 1998), achieving personal goals (Grabowski et al. 2001), and neighborhood affluence (Boardman and Robert 2000) are all associated with heightened self-efficacy. While research in this area has predominantly focused on compositional variables—sociodemographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status, education, and sex—which influence efficacy (Mirowsky and Ross 1983, 1986), the question that concerns us here is

whether or not the experiences of living in urban environments influence the extent to which one feels either in control of their life or powerless net of demographics.

Using the urban theories delineated above as a guide, three hypotheses are evident which offer potential answers to this question: 1) urban environments are inherently alienating and inimical to the development of self-efficacy (e.g. Wirth 1938); 2) that urban environments free individuals from the expectations of tradition and each other, resulting in a heightened sense of self-efficacy (Simmel [1903] 1997); and 3) the null hypothesis that demographic characteristics, not the urban environment itself, are responsible for any variations in self-efficacy (Gans 1962).

The first and second hypotheses are both drawn from the determinist tradition but suggest very different relationships between urban environments and self-efficacy. The strain of classic urban theory summarized by Wirth (1938) suggests that city life is simply overwhelming to the individual. The size, density, and heterogeneity of urban populations are overwhelming, erode the ability to establish intimate bonds between individuals in favor of secondary associations, and result in alienation. Yet, Seeman suggests that “it is not the ‘lost community’ (i.e., the absence of sentiments of social solidarity) that is the urban problem, but the sense of ‘lost control’ (i.e., powerlessness)” (1971:140). Conceptualizing alienation as powerlessness or a lack of self-efficacy instead of social isolation, from this perspective city dwellers will feel powerless to control the conditions of their lives relative to people who live in less urban areas, where the conditions of everyday life seem more manageable. As Fischer puts it, “the aggregation of great numbers of people creates both the reality and the perception of individual impotence” (Fischer 1975a:311).

The second hypothesis drawn from determinist theory, as exemplified by Simmel ([1903] 1997), suggests that city life is not uniformly negative. Weak, rationalized social bonds leave individuals little power to make demands or set expectations for one another in any deep, emotionally involved way. The rationality of the money economy in setting the norms of interaction, likewise, weakens the hold of traditional institutions over the individual. The city actually promotes self-efficacy: it frees urbanites from one another and from collective expectations and obligations.

The final, null hypothesis is derived from compositionalist theory (Gans 1962). Whereas either strain of determinism would expect a relationship between efficacy and city life (either negative or positive), the compositionalist hypothesis would suggest that there is no such relationship. Efficacy, and any other outcomes one might expect from living in a particular environment, is actually influenced by demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, income, and lifecycle phase.

Empirical tests of the effects of urban living on efficacy and powerlessness have been few and have not yielded consistent results. Whereas Fischer (1973) found a theoretically consistent, but nonsignificant, negative correlation between decreased efficacy and urban living, Tittle (1989) found a significant, negative relationship between efficacy and the size of the place in which individuals in his sample resided. However, Tittle noted that he, following Fischer (1973), used a somewhat peculiar way of measuring powerlessness that may be better interpreted as “political cynicism” (1989:279). More recently, Geis and Ross (1998) found a significant relationship between a more general measurement of efficacy and urban environments. Yet, much of this relationship was found to be attributable to respondents’ perceptions of disorder (Skogan 1986, 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982), not the

urban setting itself though they argued that urban settings tend to have higher levels of disorder than nonurban areas. Apparently trivial signs that social order had broken down, such as litter and graffiti, along with more serious but less common signs of disorder, such as drug use and criminal activity, tended to make individuals feel less in control of their lives and their surroundings. Using suburban residence as a reference category, Geis and Ross (1998) found that people who live in small cities experienced an increased sense of efficacy, independent of disorder, but this was at a level that not all researchers would consider significant ($p < .10$). Interestingly, although no significant differences in efficacy were found between suburban residential environments and either urban or rural environments, urbanites were associated with higher levels of efficacy and rural residents with lower.

These findings are intriguing, but they are also inconsistent and raise further questions in relation to urban theory. Fischer's (1973) and Tittle's (1989) work can, for example, be interpreted as being consistent with the arguments of Wirth (1938) and others, such that cities are experienced as alienating places. However, Geis and Ross (1998) provide partial support for Simmel's ([1903] 1997) argument that cities, independent of disorder, may actually increase individual dependence on one's self and grant freedom from the expectations and desires of others. Such research suggests that the determinist paradigm, though perhaps in need of revision, is still relevant to continued urban and community studies.

Local and Societal Urbanism <REM> #2 Head </REM>

An immense body of research has focused on differences in life quality and lifestyles between different ecological units of analysis. Early works in this area largely distinguished

between cities and their surrounding hinterlands (e.g., Wirth 1938; Redfield 1947) or studied “natural” ecological niches within a city (e.g., Park 1925). More recently, numerous studies have focused on the “neighborhood” level of analysis (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002), defined by street patterns and networks of interaction.

Such levels of analysis are inherently nested: neighborhoods within communities, communities within cities or regional areas and so on, with each more inclusive unit successively influencing those within its bounds (Suttles 1972). Taking advantage of the opportunities presented by such a situation, research has increasingly focused on multi-level frameworks. Bursik and Grasmick (1993), for example, examine three ecological levels of informal social control (i.e., private, parochial, and public), and Taylor (1997) identifies the street-block as an additional conceptual level intervening between neighborhoods and larger ecological schemes. Ecological research has, thus, “broadened the analytical universe to include any territorially based system of social relationships that has unit character” (Wilson 1984: 283).

What is lacking in such analyses is attention to the nation-state, to whole societies. Each unit of ecological analysis can be further nested into the level of the *nation*—a territorial unit with some shared sense of identity and definite boundaries (Hirst 2005). Sociology in general, and urban sociology in particular, “evolved centrally around a concern for the consequences of the Great Transformation” (Fischer 1975a: 67), that is, the massive changes in social organization occurring at that time and the effects such changes were presumed to have on individuals and communities. The new, modern society emerging was believed to be spearheaded by, and exemplified in, cities. Thus, “empirical investigation of the new society [commenced] via the study of the city” (Fischer 1975a:68), but the city itself

was only the microcosm and vanguard of the changes that were occurring throughout a given society. Society itself, demarcated by the nation-state, was an intended, but unreachable, unit of analysis. Indeed, we can conceptualize different settlement types “to be derivative from the national social structure... differentiated subunits of society, integrated in functional relationships” (Fischer 1975a:69). That is, cities, suburbs, rural areas, and so on, are not isolated entities, but are interconnected within a shared social structure that causes each of them to exist and is, in turn, enabled by their existence. Urban societies are, after all, *societies* and not isolated metropolises floating in seas of rural traditionalism. In other words, “urban communities are not self-contained forms of social organization but rather are part of a larger division of labor” (Wilson 1984:284).

We have already considered, in the previous section, how the local environment might promote or hinder self-efficacy. Now we must consider how the macro-level, social environment might do the same. In other words, what is societal urbanism and how does it affect self-efficacy? Similar processes apply at this societal unit of analysis, but must operate at a more removed, abstract level—from the local environment to the society as a whole. Here it is not the immediate press of people or the busy sounds of the city that influence personality, but social structure itself, regardless of whether or not one lives in an urban area. Expanding the concept of urbanism to encompass the societal level in addition to the local level, as the classical theorists had intended, serves to address two common limitations in social psychological research which: 1) “treats the immediately impinging environment as if this were all there were to social structure” and 2) “equates ‘the environment’ with ‘the interpersonal environment,’ as if there were no realities in our lives other than interpersonal realities” (Kohn 1989:27).

The classical theorists were all in accordance that a fundamental shift in social organization both necessitates and permits cities to form within societies. This shift has variously been described as a change from a “status” to a “contract society” (Maine [1862] 1960), from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* (Tonnies [1887] 1940), from a “mechanical” to an “organic” society (Durkheim [1893] 1984), or from a “folk” to a “modern urbanized” society (Redfield 1947). The shift, regardless of the specific name attributed to it, is conceptualized as a transition from some “traditional” societal form to a more “advanced” form. The social organization of traditional societies is based on the small-scale interaction of individuals and ascribed statuses assigned by tradition, and enforced by traditional institutions such as the family and the Church. Given the small scale, it is possible to know everyone else. Bonds are intimate and long-lasting. Moreover, solidarity is achieved by the commonality of experience, belief, and activities engaged in by its members. The social organization of such small-scale, traditional society is radically changed when it increases in population size, density, and heterogeneity (Wirth 1938). It is no longer possible to know everyone, and survival requires specialization of activities (Durkheim [1893] 1984). Traditional bonds and institutions are weakened, and replaced by instrumental relationships which facilitate the economic shift. Commonality is replaced by diversity and the interrelation of different roles based on achieved statuses and voluntary association.

All of these changes, marking the coming of urban modernity, require that a larger, more diverse population interact. Urban modernity thus constitutes a profound shift in the nature of a society’s social structure— in the way that people relate to one another—allowing relationships other than the immediate and intimate. While the micro-organization of specific areas within a given society (e.g., city, suburb, etc.) may have their own independent

effects on residents, a shared macro-structure will influence each of these diverse areas over and above this immediate environmental context. The same hypotheses proposed in the previous section, regarding local urbanism, can be expanded and applied to urbanism at the societal level. Net of local environments, the changes in social structure brought about by increases in a society's population size, density, and heterogeneity will: 1) be alienating and inimical to the development of self-efficacy; 2) free individuals from the expectations of tradition and each other, resulting in a heightened sense of self-efficacy; or 3) have no effect on self-efficacy net of demographic characteristics.

No research has directly tested these hypotheses at the societal level, however a number of studies have argued for, or empirically found, relationships between social structure and individual personality, including perceptions of self-efficacy. Generally, such studies examine individuals within a given social structure (e.g., comparing positions in a system of stratification) and note variations in self-efficacy, but some of these findings are relevant to examining traits of *different* social structures that lead to variations in self-efficacy. For example, Kohn (1969, 1976; Kohn and Schooler 1983) examined the occupational conditions workers experience, finding that self-direction was inhibited by supervision, routinization, and lack of complexity. While these conditions clearly exist in modern societies, they are not universally experienced by all workers but vary by occupation. However, these conditions *do* closely approximate those overriding conditions of traditional societies described above. Similarly, Gecas and Schwalbe argue that the “features of contexts of action that [have] the greatest importance in determining possibilities for efficacious action... are (1) the degree of constraint on individual autonomy, (2) the degree of individual control, and (3) the resources which are available to the individual for

producing intended outcomes” (1983:81). Again, these conditions are more likely to be met in modern, urban societies which stress “public rights over public duty” (Hunter 1995:212), than in traditional societies, where the emphasis is on duty to family and community, not individualism.

A more direct link between the social structure of urban modernity and self-efficacy is illustrated by Inkeles (1969), who found that exposure to modern social structure—urbanization, industrial work, mass education, and mass media—correlates with attributes of “individual modernity.” These attributes include being open to new experiences, personal ambition, and feeling independent from traditional sources of authority. Moreover, following cross-national comparisons, Inkeles found that this personality type results from general societal modernity. This “exemplif[ies] the impact... of the general character of the social milieu in which each individual lived. Those who lived in modern societies, with more opportunity for contact with modern institutions and objects, and more interaction with decidedly modern men... have become more modern as a result” (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 66).

Hypotheses and Summary<REM> #2 Head</REM>

In this paper, we reexamine competing hypotheses of urban efficacy and powerlessness: do urban environments either (a) decrease or (b) increase perceptions of efficacy net of other compositional factors? Following Fischer’s recommendation (1973) we test these hypotheses cross-nationally, but also expand the analysis to examine the role of *societal* urbanism—factors that operate beyond the local level. Societal factors are expected to exhibit the same relationship with efficacy/powerlessness as that found at the local level.

DATA AND METHODS<REM> #1 Head</REM>

We analyzed two levels of data in this research. The first consisted of individual-level data obtained from the World Values Survey (WVS) (World Values Study Group 1999 – 2004). The WVS is a cross-national, representative survey conducted by investigators in participating countries. The goal of the WVS is to provide insight into different worldviews of people around the world, to assess what people value and believe, and evaluate how that changes over time. To that end, survey data has been gathered about a range of topics, including feelings of perceived efficacy and powerlessness, in five waves since 1981. The individual data for this project came from the 70 countries included in the fourth wave of the WVS. Operationalizing the macro-social nature of the preceding discussion as constituting nation-states, the second level consisted of cross-national data obtained from several sources detailed below. Encompassing both multiple societies and representative samples of individuals within each society, this sample provides a more comparative basis upon which to appraise urban efficacy and powerlessness than those of previous studies (e.g., Fischer 1973; Geis and Ross 1998; Tittle 1989). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and number of cases for all variables at both levels of measurement before estimation of missing cases (see below), while Table 2 provides the correlation matrices for variables at each level of measurement following case estimation.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

One of the limitations of these data was the presence of considerable missing cases. While the WVS contains data on 70 countries, we only analyze 64 because 6 societies, and therefore the individual level cases within those societies, were removed from the analysis entirely because of an excess of missing data: Israel, Iran, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, and Montenegro.² At the individual level, listwise deletion of cases would have removed approximately half of the total cases, opening the possibility for measurement error. To overcome this problem, missing data were estimated through multiple imputation, a procedure that estimates missing cases based on other available data (see Allison 2002). We conducted five imputations, yielding five distinct datasets with slightly varying estimates to account for the uncertainty inherent in data estimation, each of which was analyzed after removal of all cases missing the dependent variable to limit noise in the estimation. All multivariate results of the study, presented below, are derived from the combination of the analyses of these five datasets.³ The process of combining results was performed in *HLM* which utilizes Rubin's (1987) well-known formulas.

Hierarchical linear regression models (HLM) were estimated with sampling weights provided by the WVS (World Values Study Group 1999-2004).⁴ HLM models are superior

² Two other cases were combined; "Germany" consists of East Germany and West Germany, "United Kingdom" consists of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

³ The dependant variable was included during the imputation process, but its estimated values were removed prior to the analysis. The findings presented below are the combined results from analysis of all five estimated datasets. Results from the individual datasets were also examined to ensure reliability of the estimates. These results were generally consistent, with the significance and directions of individual predictors remaining the same across each set, and the size of the coefficients and standard errors changing only slightly.

⁴ Since the dependent variable in the analysis is technically ordinal, it may be the case that an ordered logit model would be more appropriate than linear estimation. Moreover, the current variable consists of ten categories and has a normal distribution. In such situations, the parallel regression assumption required for ordered logit analysis rarely holds (Long and Freese 2001) whereas linear assumptions do hold (Berry 1993; Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao 2004) and actually yield fewer Type II errors than logistic equations. Nonetheless, to ensure the robustness of the results presented in the following section, ordered logit analyses

to OLS regression models for nested data, such as the data used here, where individuals are nested within societies, because they remove the need to aggregate data which does not permit the ability to discern within-group effects. Instead, variables are included at multiple levels and linear regressions are estimated at all levels of observation. In the current research, this allows for the ability to understand the variance that is occurring at both the individual and societal levels. Additionally, the assumption of independence that linear regression requires is satisfied because HLM specifically takes into account nested, and thus not independent, data (Raudenbush and Byrk 2002). The equations for this technique are formalized as:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{ij} + r_{ij} \quad (1)$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + u_{0j} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} \quad (3)$$

We estimated a basic, two-level HLM model with random intercepts and slopes. This allowed for the evaluation of the central question of this paper: do society-level factors of urbanity influence feelings of powerlessness and efficacy, in addition to the influences of local urbanity and beyond individual, compositional factors?

Dependent Variable <REM> #2 Head </REM>

Perceived efficacy served as the dependent variable. In the WVS, respondents were asked “how much freedom of choice and control” (World Values Study Group 1999-2004)

were performed on all models following rounding of the dependent variable. These results yielded no substantive differences between the linear and ordered logit methods.

they felt they had over their lives.⁵ Responses consisted of a ten-point scale ranging from 1 = none at all at one extreme, to 10 = a great deal. Higher scores on the scale indicated a greater perception of efficacy whereas lower scores indicated greater powerlessness.

Individual Level, Independent Variables <REM> #2 Head</REM>

Interviewers for the WVS coded the size of the town population for each respondent they interviewed. These codes consist of eight categories ranging from “less than 2,000” to “500,000 or more” residents. This variable was included in the analysis to account for the expected effect of locally experienced urbanity on perceived efficacy and powerlessness derived from determinist theory. The WVS did not include local-level measures of population density, heterogeneity, or disorder. Ideally, more specific information would be available to allow greater sensitivity to local urbanism. However, the ability to conduct a cross-national analysis and the availability of additional individual level controls and factors at the societal level (see below), make possible a reasonable evaluation of whether societal urbanism, the main focus of this research, had significant effects on efficacy net of other predictors.

Though the effects of urbanity on efficacy are of primary interest, we had to control for other factors. Geis and Ross (1998) found that social ties were positively associated with feelings of efficacy. To take this into account, several measurements of social ties available in the WVS were included in the analysis at the individual level: membership in voluntary

⁵ As a general rule, an index with multiple indicators might be preferable to single indicators such as that used here; however the World Values Survey does not provide other measures which can be combined to construct such a composite measurement with either empirical or theoretical confidence. To our knowledge, no specific problems have been reported to date regarding this measurement of efficacy other than the desirability of multiple indicators as a general practice. Other datasets, such as that used by Geis and Ross (1998), provide such indices, but there is a tradeoff in their use due to the inability to perform cross-national analyses. Older waves of the WVS also offer the potential to create such indices, but survey fewer countries, particularly those in Europe.

associations, employment, generalized trust, and tolerance of others. Voluntary associations were measured by the total number of distinct types of groups that an individual belongs to or works at unpaid. Possible types of groups included social welfare services, religious organizations, cultural activities, environmental organizations, labor unions, political parties, professional associations, sports organizations, women's groups, peace movements, and so on. Possible values for this variable, which was logged in the equations to correct for skewness, were from 0 to 30. Employment status was included as two dummy variables: "full-time employment" and "other employment", with "unemployed" as the reference category. Full time employment included self-employment and employment by another. Other employment included part time employment, student employment, and other, similar forms of contingent labor.

Generalized trust and tolerance were both included in the analysis as another way of conceptualizing social ties. Along with the more "objective" indicators of social ties described above, trust and tolerance are subjective indicators of social ties (Coleman 1990; Putnam 2000) which have been found to play a key role in the production of feelings of efficacy (Browning and Cagney 2002; Sampson 1997). Here it is not simply the number of social ties or opportunity to create them that is measured, but the quality which people attribute to connections with others. Trust was measured as a dichotomous variable where those who agreed with the statement, "most people can be trusted," were coded as 1. This represents generalized trust, which is not based on appraisals of past interactions with a given individual (Hardin 1996), but on a general belief in social order and the goodness of others (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Tolerance is also measured as a dichotomous dummy

variable, where a coding of 1 indicates respondents agree that tolerance and respect of others are important qualities for children to learn.

At the individual level, the following demographic characteristics of respondents were also taken from the WVS in order to account for the compositionalist theory outlined above: sex, age, education, income, and marital status. Sex was measured as a dummy variable where female was used as the omitted, reference category. Age was measured as a continuous variable ranging from 15 to 101 years of age. Educational status was measured by an ordinal variable, which ranged in value from “inadequately completed elementary education” to “university with degree.” Income was included to account for each respondent’s relative prosperity. This variable was measured as two dummy variables: high income and medium income, with low income serving as the reference category. Lastly, marital status was included in the analysis as a dummy variable where not married serves as the reference category. Married included legally married couples as well as those living together as married or cohabiting. Not married was comprised of all other marital statuses including single, divorced, widowed, and separated.

Societal Level, Independent Variables<REM> #2 Head</REM>

The society level variables used in the analysis included measures of population size, population density, population heterogeneity, disorder, and wealth/prosperity.

At the center of this research is the question of whether societal urbanity will influence individuals’ perceptions of efficacy net of local urbanity and individual demographics. According to Wirth’s influential definition, urbanity is characterized by population size, density, and heterogeneity (1938). Based on the extension of the determinist

perspective outlined above, these factors measured at the societal level were expected to influence respondents' perceptions of efficacy or powerlessness, net of the locally experienced factors described above.

Crude population size was drawn from the World Development Indicators (WDI) dataset (World Bank 2008) except for the population of Iraq which was drawn from the World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency 2008). Density was calculated by dividing a nation's surface area, also provided by the (WDI), by its population and logging the outcome to account for skewness.⁶ Population heterogeneity was included in three ways: ethnic, religious, and linguistic fractionalization of groups within each society. Fractionalization—whether ethnic, religious, or linguistic—consists of an index ranging from 0 to 1 that represents “the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population [belong] to different groups” (Alesina et al. 2003:5). For example, if every member of a society belonged to a different ethnic group, that society would be represented by a 1 on the ethnic fractionalization index, representing perfect heterogeneity. A society where each member belonged to the same ethnic group, or perfect homogeneity, would be represented by a 0. This measure was developed by Alesina et al. (2003), from whom the data were also drawn, and improves upon previous measures of heterogeneity by taking into account both the total number of distinguishable groups in a particular society and the number of members within each of these groups.

Since disorder experienced or perceived locally may account for some of the relationship between the immediate environment and self-efficacy, two indicators of *societal* disorder are included in the models to explore the relationship at this level of analysis:

⁶ To ensure the robustness, an alternative measure of density was also used: the percentage of a population classified as “urban” (Human Development Report 2008). This measurement functioned very similarly to the ratio measure of density in the analysis and is not presented here.

national murder rates and unemployment. Murder, although an incomplete measure of disorder, constitutes a serious crime that exists at the extreme of disorder (Lewis and Salem 1986). Since official reports of violence are known to correlate with individual perceptions of disorder (Quillian and Pager 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004), it can therefore serve as an indicator for a type of disorder that could conceivably impact a much wider area than more localized phenomena such as graffiti and broken windows. A society's murder rate can thus influence feelings of efficacy and powerlessness, especially since an individual does not need to be victimized directly to experience repercussions from this sort of disorder given that "most serious crimes... are widely experienced only secondhand" (Skogan 1986: 212). These statistics on murder rates come from both United Nations and Interpol data combined from the Comparative Criminology Database (2008) and are logged to correct for skewness. Unemployment is measured as the percent of the total labor force that is unemployed and is drawn from the Human Development Report dataset (HDR) (2008) except for three cases, (i.e., Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jordan, and Nigeria) drawn from the World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency 2008).

Lastly, two control measures were included to account for compositional theory at the societal level. First, each society's overall wealth and prosperity was measured as its *per capita* gross domestic product (GDP) as reported by the WDI (World Bank 2008). Second, the GINI index is included to account for societal inequality, an unequal sharing of wealth and prosperity. The index can theoretically range from zero percent to 100 percent, where zero percent represents perfect economic equality and 100 percent represents perfect inequality, such that a single individual controls all of the wealth. This measure was

provided by the HDR (2008), except for Iceland, Luxembourg, and Malta (Central Intelligence Agency 2008).

RESULTS<REM> #1 Head</REM>

Table 3 presents the results of the HLM regressions. Model 1 is the unconditional model, which included no variables and establishes the baseline variance components. Model 2 evaluated only the individual-level factors. This model allowed an initial assessment of whether the size of a place of residence was associated with efficacy net of compositional factors. Model 3, on the other hand, evaluated only the society level factors. This model allowed a similar assessment of urbanity on efficacy but at the second level of analysis. Model 4, lastly, evaluated both the individual- and society-level factors simultaneously to evaluate their respective strengths and determine whether society-level factors matter, net of local urbanity and individual demographics, in predicting individual perceptions of efficacy and powerlessness.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Model 1 presents the amount of variation at both levels of observation. As expected, most of the variation occurred at level one (5.77), but a significant amount (.54) occurred at level two, or the societal level. Model 2 largely confirmed prior research with one key exception: whereas earlier work found either no real association between urban residence and efficacy (Fischer 1973; Geis and Ross 1998) or found a negative relationship (Tittle 1989), this model indicated a positive relationship. The relationship was small, each unit change yielding 1/100 of a standard deviation change in efficacy, but significant nevertheless—essentially, urban residence increasingly yields greater feelings of control over one's life.

While this model did not control for disorder, the unmodeled, negative effects that previous research has associated with disorder are unlikely to result in a positive coefficient for the size of a town.

The association between size of place and efficacy is all the more interesting in light of the remaining results in Model 2, which were consistent with prior research. First, all the measurements of social ties were positively associated with increased feelings of efficacy. Increased association memberships yield greater efficacy, both types of employment—especially full-time employment—corresponded with greater efficacy than being unemployed, and trusting individuals were more empowered than those who did not trust. It is also noteworthy that the coefficient for tolerance, although not significant, was in the theoretically expected direction and positively associated with efficacy. In addition to social ties, with the exception of marital status, all of the sociodemographic variables accounting for compositionality were significantly associated with efficacy. Being male, having high or medium income, having greater education, and being younger were all associated with greater feelings of efficacy. The majority of these results were consistent with the expectations set by prior research, and suggest that necessary controls were sufficiently modeled. Tolerance and marital status, which were insignificant and are not of major theoretical interest, were removed from further analysis.

In summary, Model 2 suggested that urban places of residence are associated with increasing feelings of efficacy and control. Social ties were also associated with efficacy, consistent with prior work (e.g., Geis and Ross 1998), and composition also accounted for much but not all of the variation in efficacy (Tittle 1989). The effect of urbanity continued despite attempts to control for other factors. The question remains as to whether this

relationship will persist once factors at the societal level are modeled, but first we must turn to an appraisal of what influences operate at that level, independent of individual and local context.

Model 3 evaluated only those factors hypothesized to be related to efficacy at the societal level. This model included five measures of societal urbanism, two measures of societal disorder, and two additional variables that can be conceptualized as societal controls for compositionism. Most importantly for appraising societal urbanism, three factors based on Wirth's (1938) definition of the city were modeled: population size, density, and three measures of heterogeneity. Much like Fischer's (1973) study, the model indicated negative, but not significant, associations between both population size and density and efficacy.⁷ However, population heterogeneity, measured as ethnic fractionalization and linguistic fractionalization, were significantly associated with efficacy. Specifically, as societies become more ethnically heterogeneous, a greater degree of aggregate efficacy and control results. While, again, this positive association between urbanity and efficacy is at odds with some prior work, it is entirely consistent with the results found at the local level. Interestingly, linguistic fractionalization was significant but in the opposite direction, indicating that as the diversity of languages spoken in a country increase, efficacy decreases. Coupled with the fact that religious fractionalization shows no significant relationship, it is clear that all heterogeneity is not the same, but instead operates differently on efficacy.

Both measurements for societal-level disorder in Model 3, murder rates and unemployment, were found to be significant in this model, with the coefficients in the

⁷ Alternative models were tried with population size but not density, density but not population size. Also, a model was run in that included population and territory as an alternative means of normalizing population by the land size occupied (Firebaugh and Gibbs 1986). None of these alternative models yielded significant effects for either population size or density and are not reported here.

expected, negative, direction indicating reduced feelings of efficacy as murder rates and unemployment increase. Both control variables were also found to be significant. GDP, conceptualized as the overall wealth and prosperity of a society relative to other societies, was included to control for compositionality at the societal level. Here, we found that societal wealth is positively associated with aggregate perceptions of efficacy. The GINI index, a measure of inequality, was also positively associated with self-efficacy.⁸ Although disorder and composition were found to matter, even at the societal level, these still did not fully account for the association between urbanity and efficacy, as can be seen by the significance of ethnic and linguistic fractionalization within the same model. Despite these findings, the possibility remained that societal factors only matter in the absence of individual level factors. To address this issue, it was necessary to test one further model.

Model 4 evaluated the combined equation wherein both individual and society level factors were included. This model tested the expectation that societal urbanity, in addition to local urbanity, is influential in predicting perceptions of efficacy. The nonsignificant variables from model 3 were retained in the model since they were of key theoretical interest. All variables, at both levels, remained similar in terms of their effects and significance as in prior modeling. Most importantly, key urban factors at both levels remained significant: size of town of residence at the local level and the two measures of population heterogeneity at the societal level, although population size and density remained nonsignificant. Social ties continued to be significant predictors of efficacy as well, as did the measures of

⁸ While this variable was included only as a control, it is worthwhile to consider why inequality might correspond with higher self-efficacy. A possible explanation may be drawn from urban theory. While the index can mathematically range from zero percent to 100 percent, Table 1 shows the range in our sample is 24.7 percent to 57.8 percent. In this range, the scores could be interpreted as an increase in economic class heterogeneity.

sociodemographic composition at both levels, but these effects persisted alongside the urban influences without substituting for them.

The results of Model 4 indicate that urbanity matters, as do factors operating beyond the individual and local level. There is a case to be made for societal urbanism rather than just local urbanism. Compositional factors are also important, as evidenced by the significant demographic factors at the individual level, but they do not account for all of the observed influence of urbanity. The continued significance of murder rates, unemployment, GDP, and the GINI index, moreover, make a case for the necessity of accounting for *societal* disorder and composition as well, in addition to local disorder and sociodemographic composition. These are crucial findings, illustrating both mass society factors which render societies more alike, despite individual position within a given society, but also attenuating sweeping generalizations since individual variation persists despite aggregate influences. Both levels of influence are important pieces in solving the old puzzle of the relationships between city life and freedom or powerlessness.

The impact of the societal factors, however, should not be overstated. Additional endorsement for previous studies that focused on the individual level of observation can be gleaned by examination of the variance components. In the unconditional model, where there are no individual-level or societal-level factors, the variance in perceived efficacy that results from differences between societies is relatively low at about eight percent. After including factors at both levels, the variance attributable to differences among societies remains approximately six percent. This indicates two things; first, most of the observed difference in perceived efficacy stems from the differences within societies rather than between societies. Second, the factors included at the societal level explain only some of the

between-society variance, with more variance left to be explained. While this situation may be in part attributable to the need for more precise societal measurements—especially, for example, a better proxy for societal disorder than murder rates and unemployment—focusing on the relative strengths of societal versus individual or local effects misses an important point as well as the significance of the current research. It is no surprise that factors more proximate to individuals are more closely related to individual level outcomes, such as efficacy, but more remote factors can be especially important since they affect large populations (Fischer 1975a). Though the effects of the societal factors are small in a technical sense, their impact is quite large in terms of the aggregate populations affected by them. Similarly, although it is true that compositional variables account for a majority of the observed variation, any suggestion that urban influences are less important hold little relevance since “the crucial task is to specify theoretically, and ascertain empirically, the conditions under which compositional/systemic factors intervene to divert or alter the forces of urbanness, or alternatively the conditions under which compositional/systemic factors affect behavior, attitudes, and social relationships despite urbanness” (Tittle 1989:283).

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION<REM> #1 Head</REM>

The goal of this paper was to contribute to the existing literature on the social consequences of urbanism. Specifically, we reexamined self-efficacy cross-nationally to evaluate the effects of societal urbanization, and its associated social structure, in addition to the individual factors considered in prior research. We found that urbanization, in both the immediately experienced environment and within societies at large, plays an important role in predicting patterns of self-efficacy, net of the other factors. Specifically, ethnic

heterogeneity within a society and the size of people's towns of residence were both positively associated with feelings of efficacy, while linguistic heterogeneity within a society decreased self-efficacy. These mixed findings suggest that 1) classical determinist theory is not irrelevant to contemporary research; 2) determinist theory, while relevant, is in need of further testing and revision; and 3) the concept of alienation continues to be important, but like determinism it requires further consideration.

For a long time after the advent of compositional theory, the possibility that urban structure could influence personality and other subjective conditions was often dismissed. This study, and much recent research, has illustrated that this should not be the case. Local urban conditions influence how people feel and, as we have attempted to show through this examination of self-efficacy, *societal* urban conditions also influence how people feel, beyond the composition of specific populations and beyond local conditions. This test was not, of course, without its limitations and future research could further refine the argument. Perhaps most importantly, there is a need to further control for local urban conditions, disorder, and other societal-level factors. With the data available at present, such a test may only be possible with a smaller cross-national sample.

While determinist theory is still fertile ground for exploration, it is not consistent in its expectations, does not always yield consistent results, and is in need of revision. Part of the confusion surrounding years of differing results is likely due to the various ways in which alienation is conceptualized and, therefore, measured. While the majority of previous studies have determined that there is no specifically urban character to alienation when it is conceived of as a lack of social ties (e.g., Lewis 1952; Whyte 1955), conceptualizing

alienation as a subjective sense of powerlessness (e.g, Geis and Ross 1998; Seeman 1959) is promising ground for further research.

In the present study, we found partial support for two competing expectations: urban factors can either increase or decrease feelings of self-efficacy, depending on the type of urbanity under consideration. Two things need to be explained: 1) the fact that two of the urban factors considered here, at odds with previous studies of urban powerlessness, are associated with self-efficacy, and 2) why a third urban factor is inconsistent with the first two in its association with decreased self-efficacy.

First, how can we explain the divergence between these findings and those of earlier work? Both Tittle (1989) and Fischer (1973) used a somewhat peculiar way of measuring powerlessness that may be better interpreted as “political cynicism” (Tittle 1989: 279). Such a measurement is more likely to yield different results than the general means of appraising efficacy and powerlessness used in the present study. However, Geis and Ross (1998) did use a similar, general measurement of efficacy and found only a slightly significant relationship between urbanity and self-efficacy (see above). One possible explanation for this particular divergence in findings is the lack of availability of a local measure of disorder in the current study. Yet, if disorder is partly conflated with urban settings, as Geis and Ross suggest, in a model where local disorder cannot be controlled for, such as in the current paper, the coefficients for town size would be artificially lowered by the unmodeled influences of disorder. Instead, we found a positive association that largely held across national comparisons and across regional samples. It may be the case that, cross-nationally,

cities are not uniformly associated with greater levels of disorder than other areas.⁹ Another possible explanation for our different conclusions may be found in the differences between samples and research designs. Whereas Geis and Ross concentrated on community factors in Illinois, the current study used a cross-national sample with heavy emphasis on societal factors. It cannot be expected that the social dynamics of Illinois, or even of a single society, could be generalized on a cross-national scale.

There remains the matter of why, in the current study, urban conditions are linked to both increased *and* decreased self-efficacy, contingent upon the specific factor under consideration. The reason for the link between ethnic heterogeneity and self-efficacy may be explained via classical theory. More groups with different ways of life present more options from which individual can choose. Whereas the ideal folk society (Redfield 1947) consists of only one way of life, one conception of propriety which is shared and unquestionable, the presence of so many other ways of life calls into question such monolithic conceptions of propriety and weakens the ability of individuals or institutions to enforce a single set of strict norms. There are two theoretical reasons why the size of a place of residence might correspond with heightened self-efficacy. First, unconventional interests, and the subcultures based on them, multiply in large places such as cities (Fischer 1975b). Similar to the effects of ethnic heterogeneity, this profusion of different ways of life presents many options to the individual, renders enforcement of absolute ideas of right and wrong problematic, and grants increased freedom to the individual over how to live. Also, large places present an abundance of nervous stimuli and potential interactions for individuals to engage in (Simmel [1903] 1997), but do not permit total investiture in each. This results in weaker relationships,

⁹ We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this possibility. As they noted, while cities may be the major sites of disorder in the United States, for example, in many parts of Europe disorder is often concentrated in suburbs.

if not fewer, where individuals have less control over one another. Moreover, if larger places are indeed more fully dominated by market logic ([1903] 1997), then traditional expectations will be further weakened while individual autonomy will increase.

Yet, if these arguments are valid, why would linguistic heterogeneity *decrease* self-efficacy? We believe this highlights one of the major deficiencies of determinist theory as it currently stands—not all urban factors are equal. Whereas one can encounter other ways of life (e.g. through ethnicity or unconventional subcultures) and come away with new ideas or weakened conceptions of a single, proper way of life, a profusion of different languages is likely to be experienced quite differently. Unless one has a thorough understanding of these other languages—in terms of both denotation and connotation—this experience is likely to be less comprehensible and more threatening. Here, linguistic fractionalization may be experienced less as heterogeneity, as representing alternative ways of living, and more as social disorder—as an uncomfortable and literally incomprehensible disruption of social life. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, the divergent effects of two different kinds of heterogeneity clearly indicate the need for further study and additional revision of determinist theory. Urban factors matter, but qualitative distinctions between them are as important as levels of magnitude.

Urbanism is more than a response to an immediate environmental context—it is also a matter of social organization. Urban factors at multiple levels of analysis need to be considered in order to more fully appraise classical urban theory and recent reexaminations thereof. While we have built on previous research by considering the societal level of urbanity—here operationalized as the nation-state—previous work clearly indicates that the community level of the immediate environment is important as well. Future research can

shed more light on the effects of urbanism, and in so doing revise determinist theory, by modeling both societal- and community-level factors and their influences on individuals. Such research would benefit from the ability to obtain better measures or proxies of societal and community factors. Cross-national data that accurately measure disorder, for instance, are neither readily available nor well-theorized. Were this not the case, it would allow for extended tests of Geis and Ross's original model of perceived powerlessness, tests that could better appraise the effects of disorder across societies. Future multi-level models should also incorporate other community-level factors. While the current study included a measure of local urbanity, this was not a full representation of that concept—measures of local density and heterogeneity are needed that can be linked to a cross-national sample. Social phenomena are complicated and exert influences from, and between, multiple levels. The local may influence the individual, but the societal influences both of these in turn. Studies that seek to understand these complex layers of influence and their effects on efficacy would do well to pay increasing attention to the interaction of these layers. Although the findings that result from such studies may partially refute the classical idea that city life is inherently negative, they may support another classical idea: that “city air makes free”— an idea deserving of continued inquiry.<REM> End of running text</REM>

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