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The premises and promises of Psychological Research on Urban Society

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Why should psychological studies be conducted in urban settings be considered differently? When you see the title of this journal, Psychological Research on Urban Society (PRoUSt), you could have this query. As an editor of PRoUSt, I would like to remind you again of the work conducted by the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Urban Psychology that laid the foundations and prospects for the new branch of psychology known as "urban psychology" (APA, 2005). PRoUSt attempts to add and enrich the discipline of psychology by using the basic premises and promises of urban psychology as its base.

Back to history, the seminal paper "The Metropolis and Mental Life," written in 1905 by sociologist George Simmel, who is regarded as the forerunner of urban psychology (Takooshian, 2005). Simmel wonders what effect the dense, anonymous, and complex sociological structure of cities has on human mental health. Simmel's urban structure notion gave rise to the feature of "intellectualization," in which "intellect" takes precedence over "muscle" and even "heart". Anonymity and frigid city features loosened societal links and gave birth to increasing individuality.

Stanley Milgram, who responded to Simmel's study with a thorough examination of the psychological experiences of people living in cities seventy years later, is largely considered as the pioneer of urban psychology. Milgram conducted a systematic and experimental examina-

tion of the psychological features of urban life with his PhD students in his seminal paper "The Experience of Living in Cities" (Milgram, 1970). Milgram developed the concept of "stimulus overload", which laid the groundwork for understanding human psychological phenomena in cities. These stimulus overloads should trigger adaptation mechanisms that contribute to the distinct tone and behaviors of city life. Milgram also discusses the different atmospheres of major cities such as Paris, London, and New York in his article. Each has a distinct flavor and provides a different level of enjoyment. When Milgram published this seminal essay in 1970, it soon became a "citation classic." Other authors and researchers, both inside and outside of psychology, frequently referred to it as a source.

The rapid rise of publications in the decades since Milgram's 1970 manifesto, such as special issues of the Journal of Social Issues (Krupat, 1980) and Environment & Behavior (Sadalla & Stea, 1978), promises very well for urban psychology. However, strangely, the growing impetus slowed significantly during the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in relatively little publication under the name of "urban psychology."

The turning point for urban psychology came in 2005, when the American Psychological Association (APA) established the Task Force on Urban Psychology, with the main objective of formulating and defining what is called "urban psychology." What are its main characteristics in terms of theoretical approaches, methods, research areas, applied psychology, and policy formulation? Perhaps this initiative recognizes the reawakening of the field called "urban psychology".

Along the same lines as the APA proposal, which we believe is the most exhaustive and full document ever written on the subject of "urban

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psychology" as the study of human behavior in an urban context/society. We shall sketch and add certain premises and promises in order to legitimize urban psychology.

Premise one: What we mean by urban is not limited to the concept of city, but rather encompasses inner cities (i.e., the central or inner-most parts of a city, particularly when associated with social problems such as insufficient housing, high levels of crime, and unemployment), central cities (i.e., the densely populated city at the heart of a metropolitan area), and metropolitan areas (i.e., large urban areas that typically include a city and its suburbs and outlying areas).

Premise two: Psychology has been criticized for overemphasizing an intra-individual approach that focuses exclusively on what is going on inside the human "brain" regardless of the social context. Whereas, in recent years, the context of behavior has begun to play a part in comprehending human behavior on an equal ground (Guerin, 2020; Pettigrew, 2021). The setting of the urban environment, with all of its qualities, becomes critical in this case.

Premise three: The distinctive characteristics of the people and places (urban settings) that characterize urban environments resulting in unique sorts of experiences and behaviors, which have unique implications for physical and mental health, well-being, and human development.

Premise four: Since the characteristics of the urban environment have an effect on psychological processes, those psychological processes will eventually have an effect on the construction of the urban environment (e.g., residence/urban planning) (Churchman, 2002).

Premise five: Urban psychology is concerned not only with the negative repercussions of urban environments (e.g., depression, crime and violence, stress, loneliness, etc.), but also with the good ones (e.g., joy, happiness, quality of life, leisure, modern life, career, etc.) (Park & Peterson, 2010).

Premise six: Between the 1800s and the 2000s, the trend in the study of cultural psychology shows discontent with just comparisons between cultures, which are essentially comparisons between cities (Greenfield, 2013). The study aggregates the country, which is in fact a sample selected from a city (urban) with a variety of features. Barrett (2022) refers to this as an intra-

state issue. This situation promotes comparisons between cities (urban areas) in different nations as well as between urban and rural areas within a country (for example, see Wicks, Barton, Orbell, & Andrews, 2022).

Apart from emphasizing the fundamental assumption of so-called "urban psychology," we would also convey the future promise of conducting psychological studies in urban society, as our journal's title implies explicitly.

Premise one: According to the UN's most recent statistics, 68 percent of the world's population lives in cities. By 2030, that figure is expected to reach 70%. As a result, the city's structure is becoming denser and more complicated, resulting in increasingly complex behavior. Urban studies of human behavior will become increasingly relevant.

Premise two: Due to the complexity of future societal problems in cities, resolving urban issues will require a multidisciplinary approach including key branches of study. For instance, social sciences in general, economics, politics, environmental science, planning, science and technology, and health sciences will inevitably be collaborating with psychology. Funding for multidisciplinary studies will become more accessible.

Premise three: As a result of multidisciplinary research, investigating psychological phenomena in an urban setting would necessitate the use of numerous approaches, so limiting the existing conventional psychological method. For instance, big data analytics and geospatial devices are increasingly used to detect patterns in the everyday life of urban people or to get accurate insights of how city governments allocate resources (Liao et al., 2022).

Premise four: Psychological studies in urban contexts are not just basic studies for scientific advancement, but also research that is responsive to societal issues and problems in increasingly complicated urban areas. Thus, urban psychology research will be both basic and applied. The fact that this psychological study is applied means that it will have policy implications. Effective policymaking aims to improve urban life indefinitely, most notably in terms of people's psychological well-being. For examples of this responsive nature, see Murray (2020) and Murray & Landry (2020).

In conclusion, we hope that this brief note

will encourage the communities of scholars and academia pertaining human behavior in urban areas, thus not necessarily limited to those who conduct psychological studies of urban people, to continue their endeavor in studying human behavior in urban settings, and consider PRoUST to be a suitable outlet for publications. In addition, we also invite practitioners and policymakers related to urban studies to publish their work to provide vivid conversations between science and practice.

Depok, April 2022
Chief Editor
Hamdi Muluk

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