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The Journal of American History, Vol. 68, No. 1. (Jun., 1981), pp. 69-84.

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Urban History: Retrospect and Prospect

Michael H. Ebner

Youthful, growing, and buoyant, yet filled with apprehension—this is an apt description of the state of American urban history. Research agendas continue to be propounded in the pages of learned journals, wherein practitioners discourse on investigations past, present, and future.¹ But a truly major figure in the subfield, Stephan Thernstrom—whose name is most often associated with the rubric “new urban history” of the late 1960s—recently observed, “I’ve stopped labeling myself an urban historian at all.”² To some this pronouncement suggests a danger signal; it also can be interpreted as reflecting a healthy environment that encourages introspection and discourages complacency.³ Following the substantive and methodological “great leap forward” of the 1960s, to which Thernstrom clearly contributed in significant ways, the time appears propitious to pause, to reexamine. Michael Frisch recently remarked, justifiably, that a review and preview is especially pertinent to urban history

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¹ For recent examples, see John B. Sharpless and Sam Bass Warner, Jr., “Urban History,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 21 (Nov.-Dec. 1977), 221-44; Theodore Hershberg, “The New Urban History: Toward an Interdisciplinary History of the City,” *Journal of Urban History*, 5 (Nov. 1978), 3-40; Michael Frisch, “American Urban History as an Example of Recent Historiography,” *History and Theory*, XVIII (Oct. 1979), 350-77; James E. Cronin, “The Problem with Urban History: Reflections on a Recent Meeting,” *Urbanism Past and Present*, 4 (Winter 1979-80), 40-44; and Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History,” in *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca, 1980), 270-91.

² Bruce M. Stave, *The Making of Urban History: Historiography through Oral History* (Beverly Hills, 1977), 230. This volume contains a series of interviews, originally published in the *Journal of Urban History*, which represent an ingenious contribution to the sociology of knowledge. Also consult Stephan Thernstrom, “The New Urban History,” in *The Future of History: Essays in the Vanderbilt University Centennial Symposium*, ed. Charles F. Delzell (Nashville, 1977), 43-51.

³ For a beneficial reassessment of one specific field, consult John Higham and Paul K. Conkin, eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore, 1979). On the vagaries of scholarly interest, read Michael Kammen, “Clio and the Changing Fashions: Some Patterns in Current American Historiography,” *American Scholar*, 44 (Summer 1975), 484-96; and Michael Kammen, “The Historian’s Vocation and the State of the Discipline in the United States,” in *Past Before Us*, ed. Kammen, 19-46.

because the subfield has loomed so importantly in the ascent of its parent field of social history.⁴

This analysis, then, has several purposes. It provides some recapitulation of the development of urban history, although the historiography has been covered several times over in substantially more detail as well as depth.⁵ It is also an assessment of the subfield in its current circumstances, followed by an estimation that ventures to ruminate on its immediate future. In the course of this exploration, attention will be devoted to those issues—largely methodological and primarily evolving in the late sixties—which have prompted debate.

To appreciate the youthful character of the subfield it is informative to examine data on the granting of doctoral degrees. Between 1882 and 1974, doctorates were awarded to 1,417 candidates for research broadly classifiable as urban history. Of these, 76.4 percent (1,089) have been granted since 1950, 32 percent (453) in the decade 1960–1969, and 29.1 percent (413) in the four-year period 1970–1974.⁶

In 1952 only six historians—Oscar Handlin, W. Stull Holt, Allan Nevins, Bessie Louise Pierce, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., and Bayrd Still—taught or had taught courses on the American city at colleges or universities. The Urban History Group, a loosely organized association formed in 1953, issued its first newsletter the next year. Fourteen years later at least 50 institutions of higher education offered courses on urban history, while 150 reported that “provisions existed or were in prospect” for the same.⁷ Today, of course, urban history is virtually a staple.

A corresponding measure of development is the interest of academic publishers. Urban historians lacked a textbook until the publication of Charles N.

⁴ On the relationship of urban history to social history, see Frisch, “American Urban History,” 352–53. It is best read in conjunction with *American Behavioral Scientist*, 21 (Nov.–Dec. 1977), a “theme” issue entitled “History and the Social Sciences: Progress and Prospects.” See also Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York, 1976), xi–xiv; Laurence Veysey, “The ‘New’ Social History in the Context of American Historical Writing,” *Reviews in American History*, 7 (March 1979), 1–12; James A. Henretta, “Social History as Lived and Written,” *American Historical Review*, 84 (Dec. 1979), 1293–1322; Tony Judt, “A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians,” *History Workshop*, no. 7 (Spring 1979), 66–94; and Bernard S. Cohn, “History and Anthropology: The State of Play,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (April 1980), 198–221.

⁵ See Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 13–30. Historiographically more comprehensive, if somewhat dated, is Raymond A. Mohl, “The History of the American City,” in *The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture*, ed. William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr. (Washington, 1973), 165–205. Helpful because of its currency is Duncan R. Jamieson, “The City in American History,” *Choice*, 16 (March 1979), 25–42.

⁶ R. David Weber and Donna C. Belli, *Dissertations in Urban Studies: The Historical Dimension* (Ann Arbor [1975]), v–viii. The compilation of data is only partially complete for 1974; it includes many titles that can be considered urban history only by applying the broadest possible definition. For an analysis of more than 550 dissertation, see Conzen, “Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History,” 287. Also useful is *Urban Problems: A Catalog of Dissertations* (Ann Arbor, 1974).

⁷ Bayrd Still and Diana Klebanow, “The Teaching of American Urban History,” *Journal of American History*, 55 (March 1969), 843–47; Blake McKelvey and A. Theodore Brown, “The Urban History Group Newsletter,” *Urbanism Past and Present*, no. 1 (Winter 1975–76), 36–37; and Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge, 1979), 369. On the earliest years of the field’s development, see Stave, *Making of Urban History*.

Glaab and A. Theodore Brown's *History of Urban America* in 1967. Fourteen years later, a revised edition of this pioneer text is one of several such books, joined by a number of anthologies.⁸ Also in 1967, Oxford University Press inaugurated its monographic series on "Urban Life in America" under the general editorship of Richard C. Wade. Eleven years later, when its conclusion was announced ("I didn't want to get into editing books for the rest of my life just because we had a series," said Wade), twenty-four volumes had been published.⁹ Somewhat similar, if less ambitious, series have been sponsored by Harvard University Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Kennikat Press. Meanwhile, the initial number of the quarterly *Journal of Urban History* appeared in 1974, followed the next year by *Urbanism Past & Present*, semiannual successor to the newsletter of the Urban History Group. From England comes an annual *Urban History Yearbook* and from Canada a quarterly *Urban History Review/Revue D'Histoire Urbain*.

Urban history as a recognized subfield of scholarly inquiry dates from 1940 when Schlesinger published a landmark article, "The City in American History," expounding upon the wide range of possibilities for urban research within the broader scope of the national experience. Significant though Schlesinger's article was, it inspired a timely rejoinder by William Diamond. Alluding to the distortion of Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," he expressed dismay at the overly inclusive definition of urban history advanced by Schlesinger. It would be ill conceived, Diamond argued, to claim that virtually every event or phenomenon within a city qualified for inclusion. "Unless the concept 'city' is carefully analyzed," he wrote, "students, in their enthusiasm for a fresh and attractive reinterpretation of American history, may make of the 'city' another 'frontier' and fall into the difficulties inherent in Turner's 'hazy

⁸ Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Evolution of American Urban Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981); Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America* (New York, 1976); David Goldfield and Blaine A. Brownell, *Urban America: From Downtown to No Town* (Boston, 1979); Diana Klebanow, Franklin L. Jonas, and Ira M. Leonard, *Urban Legacy: The Story of America's Cities* (New York, 1977); Blake McKelvey, *American Urbanization: A Comparative History* (Glenview, Ill., 1973); Zane L. Miller, *The Urbanization of Modern America: A Brief History* (New York, 1973); Bayrd Still, *Urban America: A History with Documents* (Boston, 1974); and Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City* (New York, 1972). Two textbooks focus exclusively on portions of the twentieth century: Richard O. Davies, *From Metropolis to Megalopolis: A History of Urban America since 1930* (Cambridge, 1980); and William H. Wilson, *Coming of Age: Urban America, 1915-1945* (New York, 1974). Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield, eds., *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1977) is organized regionally, while urban history is viewed from the perspective of policy science in Peter R. Gluck and Richard J. Meister, *Cities in Transition: Social Changes and Institutional Responses in Urban Development* (New York, 1979). Anthologies covering the broad chronological sweep of American urban history include Alexander B. Callow, Jr., ed., *American Urban History: An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries* (New York, 1973); Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley K. Schultz, eds., *Cities in American History* (New York, 1972); Raymond A. Mohl and James F. Richardson, eds., *The Urban Experience: Themes in American History* (Belmont, Calif., 1973); and Allen M. Wakstein, ed., *The Urbanization of America: An Historical Anthology* (Boston, 1970).

⁹ Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 174. Also see the advertisement captioned "Announcing the conclusion of The Urban Life in America Series, Richard C. Wade, General Editor," in *Program of the Ninety-Second Annual Meeting, American Historical Association, December 28-29-30, 1977, Dallas, Texas*, 123.

and shifting concept.'"¹⁰ From the very inception of the subfield, therefore, questions of scope and definition confronted urban historians.

Ironically, another dimension of Turner's scholarship—his attention to population as key to comprehending the evolution of American society—has had an important, if indirect, influence on the writing of urban history.¹¹ It is revealed in the continuing essays, beginning in 1955, of Eric Lampard. Trained as an economic historian at the London School of Economics and at the University of Wisconsin, he once ascribed to himself the role of "critic" rather than "practicing" urban historian. Labels aside, his scholarship stands absolutely essential to the subfield, in recent years gaining recognition of international proportions.¹²

Urbanization is Lampard's signal word. Alluding to the so-called city-biography genre in vogue with urban historians since the 1940s, he has contended that cities should not be examined as a series of "problems," be they social, economic, or political. Rather, "we need a more comprehensive and searching theory of 'community' in order to ascertain what is generically 'urban' or otherwise in the American experience." As the beginning point—and here we see the Turnerian influence—he stressed the study of population. Lampard advocated the formulation of an "ecological complex" containing quantified data on population, economics, and physical resources as well as reliance upon social scientific concepts to facilitate, where necessary, interpretation. Lampard's objective was to understand cities as "a continuum of many interacting elements. . . . a culturally ordered and transmitted whole." He claimed that "a definition of urbanization in terms of population concentration provides a framework for the study of cities, which is relatively unambiguous."¹³

¹⁰ Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The City in American History," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVII (June 1940), 43–66, and William Diamond, "On the Dangers of an Urban Interpretation of History," in *Historiography and Urbanization: Essays in American History in Honor of W. Stull Holt*, ed. Eric F. Goldman (Baltimore, 1941), 67–108. On the influence of William Diamond's essay upon the early members of the Urban History Group, see the recollections of Blake McKelvey in Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 49. Schlesinger stands nonetheless as the central figure in the early development of urban history as a subfield. See the index references to him in Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 334; and Michael H. Frisch, "L'histoire urbaine américaine: Réflexions sur les tendances récentes," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 25 (July–Aug. 1970), 883.

¹¹ For a helpful distinction between Frederick Jackson Turner's primary and secondary interests, see Richard Mowery Andrews, "Some Implications of the *Annales* School and Its Methods for a Revision of Historical Writing about the United States," *Review*, I (Winter–Spring 1978), 171–73. Too many historians emphasize the frontier thesis to the exclusion of Turner's other interests. See the interviews with Bayrd Still, Richard C. Wade, and Stephan Thernstrom in Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 65–69, 163–67, 227; and Egal Feldman, "The American City: From George Bancroft to Charles A. Beard," *Societas*, II (Spring 1972), 125, 134–36. On Turner's thinking about cities, see Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York, 1973), 492–93.

¹² On Eric Lampard's career, see Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 253–90.

¹³ Eric E. Lampard, "American Historians and the Study of Urbanization," *American Historical Review*, LXVII (Oct. 1961), 50, 54, 56, 60; Eric E. Lampard, "The History of Cities in the Economically Advanced Areas," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 3 (Jan. 1955), 85. For Lampard's view of the influence of Turner, see Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 260; and Eric

Aspects of Lampard's prospectus aroused criticism. Particularly forceful was Roy Lubove, a historian of urban planning and environment, who was skeptical about the analysis of cities based upon vast stores of quantified data. Addressing himself to Lampard, he stated: "Urbanization . . . is an abstraction." Central to Lubove's concern was the possibility of an overly zealous quantifier diminishing the importance of "the city as an artifact." While granting the importance of assembling the statistically based "ecological complex" propounded by Lampard, Lubove was bothered by the prospect for "minimizing the role of behavioral and subjective phenomena as change-agents." Hence, because of its restrictiveness, he would replace the concept of urbanization as defined by Lampard with that of city-building because the latter allowed for incorporation of "subjective, attitudinal variables." Lubove concluded: "I have used the term 'city-building' . . . in order to emphasize the weight attached to the literal process of environmental formulation. This implies not only a concern for what geographers call the urban 'site,' but for the whole range of city-building mechanisms: architecture and landscape architecture, housing and housing finance, the real estate market and realty institutions, transportation, communication, public health and sanitation, industrial technology, and business organization."¹⁴

Lampard quickly digested the criticism. In a paper delivered within a year of Lubove's article he again stressed the primacy of the "ecological complex." Moreover, he set forth an inclusive schema for studying any given city within a regional and national framework. (At the time Lampard disavowed the notion that this represented his own, distinctive functional definition of urban history, but in reflecting on his scholarly contributions several years later he admitted, "There I was letting it all hang out. . . . it's my sort of grand construction of the thing.") At the foundation were "four continuously interacting elements": population, topography, economy, and social organization. Then came three factors labeled "the civic polity and culture": political process, civic leadership, and civic culture. Next was an examination of external relations between a community and its social environs, followed by an analysis of the "image" of the city. Finally, and here Lubove's contribution was approvingly incorporated, historians needed to consider the city-building process and "the legal integument." "The key to . . . advances in historical understanding," Lampard concluded, "resides in a greater appreciation of the

E. Lampard, "The Pursuit of Happiness in the City: Changing Opportunities and Options in America," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 23 (1973), 177-79. On Turner's interest in statistical data consult Richard Jensen, "American Election Analysis: A Case History of Methodological Innovation and Diffusion," in *Politics and the Social Sciences*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (New York, 1969), 232-35. See also Robert H. Block, "Frederick Jackson Turner and American Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 70 (March 1980), 31-42.

¹⁴ Roy Lubove, "The Urbanization Process: An Approach to Historical Research," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXXIII (Jan. 1967), 36. For misgivings similar to Roy Lubove's, see S. G. Checkland, "Toward a Definition of Urban History," in *The Study of Urban History*, ed. H. J. Dyos (London, 1968), 349. For Lampard's reply, see Eric Lampard, review of *Study of Urban History*, ed. Dyos, *Urban History Newsletter*, no. 11 (Dec. 1968), 20-23.

'symbiotic' ties between individual communities and the social systems that sustain them."¹⁵

Thus by the late 1960s urban history had reached a critical juncture. The cumulative writings of Lampard called practitioners to bring greater conceptual clarity to their research. Simultaneously, the confluence of two external and initially unrelated factors proved catalytic. The ghetto riots in American cities and the disillusionment with the nation's military role in Southeast Asia profoundly affected the nature of scholarship.¹⁶ In fact, surely among the most distinguishing features of social science research in the second half of the 1960s was that once again, as in the first third of the twentieth century, the American city became a focal point. "As such origins suggest," reflects Kathleen Neils Conzen, "much of this urban history was empirical and problem-oriented; studies proliferated of individual city growth and of pathological aspects of urban life—social tensions, inadequate services, minority discrimination, political corruption." After all, as the social historian Herbert G. Gutman had aptly observed in 1968, "however carefully the present is studied and however refined the techniques of analysis, the present is not fully comprehended if the past is ignored or distorted."¹⁷

Amidst this political and intellectual ferment, the appellation *new urban history* became au courant. It can be traced to a Yale University conference on nineteenth-century industrial cities in 1968 that led to the publication of *Nineteenth-Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History*, edited by Thernstrom and Richard Sennett. Thernstrom's monograph published four years earlier, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City*, was then receiving considerable attention because of its substantive and methodological contributions. Participants in the conference, as the editors' introduction to the collection put it, were engaged in "deepening our understanding of the lives of men and women living in dense urban settlements undergoing explosive growth and structural transformation." Clearly they were influenced in part by the ideological milieu of the times, which prompted interest in "the social dimensions of urbanization." Among the topics covered

¹⁵ Eric E. Lampard, "The Dimensions of Urban History: A Footnote to the 'Urban Crisis,'" *Pacific Historical Review*, XXXIX (Aug. 1970), 261-78. For Lampard's subsequent reflections, see Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 271.

¹⁶ For the best examples of this development, see Theodore Roszak, ed., *The Dissenting Academy* (New York, 1968); and Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York, 1968). See also Irwin Unger, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," *American Historical Review*, LX-XII (July 1967), 1237-63; and Aileen S. Kraditor and David Donald, reviews of Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past*, in *American Historical Review*, LXXIV (Dec. 1968), 529-33. Also consult Kammen, "Historian's Vocation and the State of the Discipline," 24-26.

¹⁷ Conzen, "Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History," 281; Herbert G. Gutman, "Class, Status, and Community Power in Nineteenth-Century American Industrial Cities—Paterson, New Jersey: A Case Study," in *The Age of Industrialism in America: Essays in Social Structure and Cultural Values*, ed. Frederic Cople Jaher (New York, 1968), 282. Significantly, among Herbert G. Gutman's major works, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), is admittedly in response to the urban ghetto crisis of the 1960s, specifically the controversial and flawed report on the Afro-American family by Daniel P. Moynihan. U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, 1965).

were family structure, social and political control by elites, residential and ecological patterns, and social class and mobility.¹⁸

What was less clear about *Nineteenth-Century Cities*, Thernstrom observed within two years after the collection's publication, was the precise meaning of the new urban history. To be sure, as he readily pointed out, much of the existing scholarship was "deficient": it lacked "breadth and analytical rigor," and it primarily examined the "visible, articulate elements . . . rather than the masses of ordinary people." As to what was actually new, Thernstrom argued that it was the discovery of source materials—manuscript census schedules, city directories, tax lists—that would yield abundant data to be analyzed quantitatively on hitherto ignored members of society. One "possibly misleading feature of the phrase, 'the new urban history,'" he then hastened to add,

lies with the term 'urban,' which seems to imply that this is a distinctive specialized field of historical inquiry. I am doubtful about that. The city is a distinctive legal entity, and there are certain phenomena peculiar to it. But the decisive features of urban life in modern times are not spatially distributed in a way that justifies urban history, or for that matter urban sociology, as a special field. . . . It is important . . . to recognize that most of the subjects that have preoccupied the new urban historians . . . are not confined to the city, and should not be approached as if they were.

As for a functional definition, Thernstrom contended, "The ultimate aim . . . is to understand how and why the complex changes suggested by the concept 'urbanization' reshaped society. Urban history . . . lies squarely within the domain of social history, and for the student of modern society it is nearly coterminous with social history." In fact, Thernstrom anticipated criticism of his own scholarship on mobility. His critics would claim that he did not treat communities—Newburyport in *Poverty and Progress* and Boston in his Bancroft Prize-winning *The Other Bostonians*—as distinctive urban entities; more than anything, else his work came to be viewed as narrowly conceived case studies of one aspect of social history.¹⁹ One might even conjecture that Thernstrom's subsequent disavowal of the label *urban* historian is related to this criticism of his work. But this is getting ahead of our story.

¹⁸ Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (New Haven, 1969), vii–xi; Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, 1964). See also Stephan Thernstrom, "Urbanization, Migration, and Social Mobility in Late Nineteenth-Century America," in *Towards a New Past*, ed. Bernstein, 158–75; and Thernstrom's reflections on New Left interpretations of history in Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 227–28.

¹⁹ Stephan Thernstrom, "Reflections on the New Urban History," *Daedalus*, 100 (Spring 1971), 360–62; Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress*; and Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880–1970* (Cambridge, 1973). The concluding chapter of the latter work does place Boston in a broader urban context. For an astute critique of Thernstrom's approaches and findings, see Veysey, "'New' Social History," 7–9. Some reflections of Thernstrom are recorded in Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 234–43. See also Thernstrom, "New Urban History," 43–51; Frisch, "American Urban History," 367; and Steven L. Olsen, "Yankee City and the New Urban History," *Journal of Urban History*, 6 (May 1980), 321–38. The influence of Thernstrom's scholarship has proven significant. See Kammen, "Clio and the Changing Fashions," 484–96; Peter N. Stearns, "Toward a Wider Vision: Trends in Social History," in *Past before Us*, ed. Kammen, 214, 227; Conzen, "Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History," *ibid.*, 282; and J. Morgan Kousser, "Quantitative Social-Scientific History," *ibid.*, 433, 436, 448.

In 1968—as it happened, just one month before the Yale conference—Sam Bass Warner, Jr., published a singularly important conceptual article, "If All the World Were Philadelphia: A Scaffolding for Urban History, 1774-1930." By studying the city in a holistic framework he appeared to be avoiding the criticism made of Thernstrom. On one level Warner offered what amounted to a quantified model, which could be adopted elsewhere, of one city's economy as it related to social organization at three distinct chronological points, 1774, 1860, and 1930. Another objective, borrowed from Lewis Mumford, was to analyze Philadelphia's history as it related to the sequences of technological evolution rather than to political benchmarks. Warner created a typology for examining what he called "the process of Atlantic urbanization." Hence, any city in the region could be placed in local, national, and international perspective. "Urban history," he contended, "still lacks a study of the succession of urban environments for any major city and the custom of research that would allow a reader to compare the history of one city to the history of any other." Although the author judiciously refrained from attaching labels to his handiwork, he clearly sought to resolve the definitional muddle perplexing fellow scholars. "This article," proclaimed Warner, "is offered as the first attempt to discover and arrange the data for one large modern city in such a way that historians may find evidence of the processes they have long speculated upon." That same year came Warner's Bancroft Prize monograph, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth*.²⁰ Together with the contributions of Thernstrom, Warner's scholarship seemed to signal the full-fledged arrival of urban history.

The notion of a new urban history instantaneously became a catchall of considerable popularity in the aftermath of what amounted to a double-barreled infusion of innovation. Everyone seemed to be doing it, or so it appeared. When the Mathematical Social Science Board organized a symposium at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in June 1970, the subsequent volume of conference papers was entitled *The New Urban History: Quantitative Explorations by American Historians*. Yet despite the identification with the adjective *new* that had been born at Yale, Leo F. Schnore, editor of the volume, later wrote that "the only real consensus achieved . . . was that an 'old-new' distinction was insufficient to embrace much of the urban-historical work that was going on in the 1960s." Reflecting on the narrow scope of scholarship included in the collection—urban stratification, mobility, and spatial patterns, in particular—he alluded to his sometime collaborator Lampard in reporting that what had not yet emerged as a major concern were "broader questions concerning the evolving institutional structure of the American city." Hence the irony of a volume entitled *The New Urban History*, but containing

²⁰ Sam Bass Warner, Jr., "If All the World Were Philadelphia: A Scaffolding for Urban History, 1774-1930," *American Historical Review*, LXXIV (Oct. 1968), 26-43; and Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968). Illustrative of the "Atlantic urbanization" theme suggested by Sam Bass Warner, Jr., is a book by his former student, John Burk Sharpless, *City Growth in the United States, England and Wales, 1820-1861: The Effects of Location, Size and Economic Structure on Inter-Urban Variations in Demographic Growth* (New York, 1977).

Schnore's candid admission that "it is not presently possible to offer a comprehensive and synthetic statement of what is transpiring under the rubric 'the new urban history.' Topically, the field is extremely diverse. . . . There is no unitary subject matter, nor problem, nor method. One cannot fashion an agenda for a field that is so new and subject to radical innovations."²¹

How then do we describe the state of American urban history by the early 1970s? One practitioner claimed that "conceptual chaos" reigned. Another lamented the absence of a unifying figure, like Turner for historians of the frontier, remarking that "legions are at work on endless and often minute research projects, but no grand framework of the American urban past and its impact on American society and culture . . . appears." An editorial in the first number of the *Journal of Urban History* observed: "The editors view urban history inclusively; they are willing, at this point in the development of the discipline, to encourage any potentially fruitful lines of inquiry. They are receptive to varied methodologies, and they are concerned about the history of cities and urban societies. . . . As one of the members of the editorial board has noted, 'urban history is a big tent.'"²²

This brings us, then, to an assessment of urban history at the moment. Frisch has suggested that something of a division exists: one group of practitioners has fastened on the history of urbanization, another on the relationship between urbanization and the broader history of the United States.²³ Unquestionably, those studying the history of urbanization stand on the cutting edge of the subfield. Nonetheless, essential to the future development of urban history is continued collaboration and mutual respect between specialists and generalists. What is to be avoided is a situation in which those working on the frontier of knowledge will construct methodological barriers preventing others from contributing to the growth and vitality of urban history. Specifically, the subfield should not come to resemble the highly technical scholarship of econometricians.²⁴

Central to this concern is the approach suggested very recently by Theodore Hershberg's boldly entitled article, "The New Urban History: Toward an

²¹ Leo F. Schnore, "Further Reflections on the 'New' Urban History: A Prefatory Note," in *The New Urban History, Quantitative Explorations by American Historians*, ed. Leo F. Schnore (Princeton, 1975), 3-7. At the time of the Madison meeting the National Archives and Record Service sponsored a conference in Washington, D.C., for urban historians. Portions of the proceedings are in Jerome Finster, ed., *The National Archives and Urban Research* (Athens, Ohio, 1974).

²² Frisch, "L'histoire urbaine americaine," 880; Stuart M. Blumin, "In Pursuit of the American City," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, II (Summer 1971), 173; and Raymond A. Mohl, "Editorial," *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (Nov. 1974), 3-5. Also consult Raymond A. Mohl, "Editorial," *ibid.*, 3 (Feb. 1977), 140.

²³ Frisch, "L'histoire urbaine americaine," 880.

²⁴ David S. Landes and Charles Tilly, eds., *History as Social Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971), 51-56; Robert William Fogel, "The Limits of Quantitative Methods in History," *American Historical Review*, 80 (April 1975), 329-50. On the possibilities and shortcomings of quantification, see Douglass C. North, "The New Economic History after Twenty Years," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 21 (Nov.-Dec. 1977), 187-200; and Henretta, "Social History as Lived and Written," 1315-16. An ardent and learned reaffirmation of quantification's possibilities is Kousser, "Quantitative Social-Scientific History," 433-56.

Interdisciplinary History of the City." Like other propagators of research manifestos, he laments past failures, in this instance the lack of a "scheme of conceptualization" for studying the urban experience. The promising starts of a decade ago found in the work of Warner and Thernstrom proved less productive than anticipated. The city must be studied, notes Hershberg, as process rather than as site. "Our goal . . . is to conceive of the city in active terms. We must move beyond static cross-sections and disconnected pieces of the urban experience." By way of definition, he concludes: "*Urban as process* should be thought of as the dynamic modeling of the interrelationships among environment, behavior, and group experience—three basic components in the larger urban system."²⁵

The first troublesome aspect on the Hershberg agenda is the heavy, indeed zealous reliance upon collaboration as the mode for researching "urban as process." He contends that the new urban history must be interdisciplinary, integrating the efforts of demographers, sociologists, geographers, and economists with historians. This aspect of his agenda, of course, stems from his role as director of the Philadelphia Social History Project (PSHP), a herculean enterprise (at least by the standards of historians) funded since 1969 by federal research agencies. What Hershberg labels an "interdisciplinary research culture" stands essential, in his opinion, to future scholarly endeavors. "To ignore it further," he claims, "dooms us to continued frustration. Unless new institutional mechanisms are developed to support interdisciplinary collaborative research, our knowledge about cities will remain hopelessly fragmented."²⁶ Realistically, the PSHP cannot be widely emulated. Admirable though it is as a model for pursuing large-scale historical research, the political economy will support only rare replications of the "culture" it is dependent upon. The PSHP can best be thought of as an alternate route among several possibilities, not as the sole access into the city.

A second troublesome dimension of the Hershberg agenda is the conception of "urban as process." It has been focused almost exclusively upon research concerns derivative from the ecological approach to urban history heralded by Lampard in the late 1950s. Despite the scholarly ferment spawned by the upheavals in the national and urban political cultures of the late 1960s, until very recently the associates of PSHP have appeared relatively uninterested in studying "power relationships in society."²⁷ For whatever reasons, this defi-

²⁵ Hershberg, "New Urban History," 32-33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32. Also see Theodore Hershberg, "The Organization of Historical Research," *AHA Newsletter*, 12 (Oct. 1974), 5-6; Theodore Hershberg, "The Philadelphia Social History Project: An Overview and Progress Report," *Public Data Use*, 1 (Jan. 1976), 29-36; Theodore Hershberg, "The Philadelphia Social History Project: An Introduction," *Historical Methods Newsletter*, 9 (March-June 1976), 43-58; and Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century: Essays toward an Interdisciplinary History of the City* (New York, 1981).

²⁷ Hershberg, "New Urban History," 29-32. For the phrase "power relationships in society," see Sharpless and Warner, "Urban History," 238. Also see Michael B. Katz, "Origins of the Institutional State," *Marxist Perspectives*, 1 (Winter 1978), 14-15; Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 275; and Samuel P. Hays, "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America," *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (Nov. 1974), 6-38.

ciency now appears in the process of being remedied as Hershberg and his collaborators pursue "public policy" questions au courant with federal research agencies.²⁸

The final and most important problem with Hershberg's research agenda is the role of quantification. Undeniably, it is essential. But one only has to peruse the pages of the *Journal of Economic History* or the *American Political Science Review* to be introduced to the perils of what Lampard has aptly labeled *quantifiers*. Ironically, Lampard and Thernstrom, the two scholars who stimulated the genre known among urban historians as the work of "the accountants," have best placed quantification in proper perspective. Both value its utility, yet admonish practitioners and their apprentices to beware of its limitations. Each views quantification as a means to an end, with Lampard urging "'an end to quantifying,' or huffing and puffing about quantification," and Thernstrom speaking of himself as a quantifier of "the more chastened variety." In different ways, moreover, both urge renewed devotion to the writing of a readable literature of urban history. Lampard's invocation of the sociologist Charles Horton Cooley is especially to the point. "Use diagrams, by all means, use classification, use maps, curves, statistics," wrote Cooley, "—and forget them. These are methods of manipulating the material. . . . But the materials themselves are living wholes which can only be apprehended by a trained sympathy in contact with them. And when you have reached your conclusions, no presentation of them is adequate that does not restore the facts to their human reality."²⁹

Happily for urban historians, and even more so for historians of the American experience writ broadly, calls for literate, comprehensible scholarship are being heeded. A fine example is Stuart M. Blumin's *The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth-Century American Community*. A study of Kingston in New York's Hudson River Valley, it is based at least in part on substantial, sometimes rather sophisticated, quantitative analysis. Although once associated with the new urban history, Blumin today unquestionably fits into the category of a "chastened" accountant.³⁰ He has made ample use of

²⁸ For evidence of the Philadelphia Social History Project redirecting at least some of its attention to public policy questions, see Theodore Hershberg et al., "A Tale of Three Cities: Blacks and Immigrants in Philadelphia: 1850-1880, 1930 and 1970," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 441 (Jan. 1979), 55-81; and Howard Gillette, Jr., "The Emergence of the Modern Metropolis: Philadelphia in the Age of Its Consolidation," in *The Divided Metropolis: Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia, 1800-1975*, ed. William W. Cutler III and Howard Gillette, Jr. (Westport, Conn., 1980), 3-25. See also Hershberg, *Philadelphia*, 455-60. For insight into the dilemma of historians whose projects fall into the gray area between the National Endowment for the Humanities, the statutory home assigned to history, and the National Science Foundation, concerned with applied social scientific questions, see Allan G. Bogue, "Data Dilemmas: Quantitative Data and the Social Science History Association," *Social Science History*, 3 (Oct. 1979), 221-22.

²⁹ Charles Horton Cooley as quoted in Eric E. Lampard, "Two Cheers for Quantitative History: An Agnostic Foreword," in *New Urban History*, ed. Schnore, 48. The observations of Lampard and Thernstrom are drawn from Stave, *Making of Urban History*, 243, 264-65; and Thernstrom, "New Urban History," 50-51.

³⁰ Stuart M. Blumin, *The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth-Century American Community* (Chicago, 1976). For an example of Blumin in a different mode, see Stuart Blumin, "Mobility and Change in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," in *Nineteenth-Century Cities*, ed. Thernstrom and Sennett, 165-208.

statistical data, yet he does not overwhelm the reader. Compared with the scholarship produced by the new urban historians, *The Urban Threshold* is graced with a narrative in the traditional sense. Significantly, Blumin also made a systematic exploration of *lettristic* evidence (to borrow Eric Lampard's word), whereas Hershberg and Thernstrom rely almost exclusively on quantifiable sources. "National census tabulations," Blumin instructs, "quickly yield the quantitative dimensions of urban growth . . . , but only a careful reading of a variety of local documents can suggest ways of interpreting the consequences of growth." His objective is "to examine at close range—in the real environment of daily social life—the broad social and economic changes that swept across the American landscape."³¹ In doing so he has artfully bridged the strictures of social science and the values of humanistic expression. If not the most important book of its type—Kingston, after all, ranked fifty-sixth in population for 1860—*The Urban Threshold* achieved a literary mark worthy of emulation.

A very different type of book—Warner's *The Way We Really Live: Social Change in Metropolitan Boston since 1920*—is an avowed attempt to alter the nature of scholarship produced by urban historians. No ordinary monograph, it was originally a lecture series at the Boston Public Library underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities. One of its fundamental contributions is that it continues the author's long-established goal of educating non-academic audiences. "If history would accept its universality and come out of its academic hiding places to meet its many audiences," he wrote in 1972 while setting forth his own "agenda" for the subfield, "there would be much for it to do and we could once again speak of history as a useful art." In no sense, however, is this volume a piece of claptrap prepared for traditional local history buffs. Rather, it is an altogether serious effort to suggest directions that practitioners might eschew if left to their own predilections.³²

Warner's approach to urban history is in the tradition of regional science. He ventures beyond Boston's corporate limits, asking readers to think about their circumstances in a three-state, twenty-six-county, six-million-person metropolitan network. The discerning eye catches the influence of Lampard and, for that matter, Turner.³³ Whatever the author's concern in any given

³¹ Blumin, *Urban Threshold*, xi, 3; Lampard, "Two Cheers for Quantitative History," 13.

³² Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Way We Really Live: Social Change in Metropolitan Boston since 1920* (Boston, 1977), xi; Sam Bass Warner, Jr., "An Urban Historian's Agenda for the Profession," in Arthur Mann, Neil Harris, and Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *History and the Role of the City in American Life* (Indianapolis, 1972), 55. The latter was widely circulated in conjunction with Warner's insurgent, and unsuccessful, candidacy for the vice-presidency of the American Historical Association in 1973. For an outstanding example of nonacademically oriented urban history, see the booklets produced by the research associates of Brooklyn Rediscovery, an arm of the Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance. Thomas Mills, *Rediscovering Brooklyn History: A Guide to Research Collections* (Brooklyn, 1978); David Ment, *The Shaping of a City: A Brief History of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn, 1979); David Ment, Anthony Robins, and David Framberger, *Building Blocks of Brooklyn: A Study of Urban Growth* (Brooklyn, 1979); and Carol Lopate, *Education and Culture in Brooklyn: A History of Ten Institutions* (Brooklyn, 1979).

³³ For an earlier development of this theme, see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., and Sylvia Fleisch, "The Past of Today's Present: A Social History of America's Metropolises, 1960-1860," *Journal of Urban History*, 3 (Nov. 1976), 3-117. For a global approach to urban history, see Eric E. Lampard,

chapter—demography, geography, economics, ecology, politics, or mass culture—he contends with the central urban place in its relationship to the surrounding metropolis. Most case studies, by contrast, conventionally investigate constricted municipal entities.³⁴

A capsule overview of *The Way We Really Live* illustrates Warner's approach. Metropolitan population analysis, as suggested already, provides the starting place. It is followed by a two-pronged discussion of the regional economy, focusing on family life and occupational structure. Then comes an unexpected turn, no matter the audience. Warner launches into a natural history of Boston and environs built on the "Peaceable Kingdom" metaphor of the nineteenth-century artist Edward Hicks. He touches upon bird life, predatory rodents, climate, ground cover, forestation, and water, often moving back and forth between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for sake of contrast. This section, in particular, suggests an altogether new terrain that urban historians might explore. From this evolves a more conventional visit to the "Metropolitan Zoo"—Warner's euphemism for the difficult, confounding politics of environmental control and planning. Finally, he turns to the "symbolic climate." Drawing upon fiction (E. M. Forster, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Updike) and popular culture, he muses on the individual within Boston and its surrounding region as envisioned in print and graphic media since 1920. Indeed, the skills and knowledge Warner brings to this book are subordinated to his overarching goal: helping audiences—in the library lecture hall, in living rooms, in classrooms, and in places where policy is formed—to understand *The Way We Really Live*. Warner has succeeded in writing a book attractive, at once, to specialists and generalists among urban historians, as well as to readers of nonacademic stripes who desire to study modern urban society in historical perspective.

Although the urban historian's pursuit of definition and maturity has encountered pitfalls, this assessment of the subfield's current circumstances remains optimistic. Granted that the highly selective substantive focus of the

"The Urbanizing World," in *The Victorian City, Images and Realities*, ed. H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (2 vols., London, 1973), I, 3-57. Also useful, though focused nationally, is Edgar S. Dunn, Jr., *The Development of the U.S. Urban System*, Vol. 1: *Concepts, Structures, Regional Shifts* (Baltimore, 1980).

³⁴ For an excellent example of urban history conceived in regional terms, see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, 1962). See also Linda Keller Brown and Patricia Vasilenko, "Time, Space, and Suburbanites: The Social-Spatial Structure of Essex, Union, and Morris Counties in the Twentieth Century," in *Cities of the Garden State: Essays in the Urban and Suburban History of New Jersey*, ed. Joel Schwartz and Daniel Prosser (Dubuque, Iowa, 1977), 85-108; Diane Lindström, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850* (New York, 1978); Roberta Balstad Miller, *City and Hinterland: A Case Study of Urban Growth and Regional Development* (Westport, Conn., 1979); Howard L. Preston, *Automobile Age Atlanta: The Making of a Southern Metropolis, 1900-1935* (Athens, Ga., 1979); Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Growth Trends in the Albuquerque SMSA, 1940-1978," *Journal of the West*, XVIII (July 1979), 62-74; and Francis X. Blouin, Jr., *The Boston Region, 1810-1850: A Study in Urbanization* (Ann Arbor, 1980). Kenneth T. Jackson is conducting influential research on suburbanization that looks beyond a single municipality. See Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Crabgrass Frontier: 150 Years of Suburban Growth in America" in *Urban Experience*, ed. Mohl and Richardson, 196-221.

new urban history proved "disappointing," even this conclusion must be tempered by recognition of the methodological advances it inspired. Moreover, as the books by Blumin and Warner—and many others, to be sure—serve to illustrate, life beyond the new urban history has proven productive. Indeed, speaking at a symposium entitled "The Future of History," Thernstrom aptly reflected upon the subfield's recent past while simultaneously looking to the years ahead. "Although it is sometimes quite difficult to avoid such terms," he observed, "I sometimes think our profession would benefit from a moratorium on the use of adjectives 'new' and 'traditional' as modifiers of the noun 'history.'" ³⁵

What does the immediate future hold? As already suggested, urban history—despite the admonitions of specific agenda setters—will best be served by an environment that encourages diversity. Of course, as Diamond argued so convincingly forty years ago, an overly inclusive definition has its own perils: segmentation and the possibility of fragmentation. Surely nothing would lead more readily to a breach between specialist and generalist.

Hence, the first priority: following the leads of Lampard, Warner, and social scientists long interested in regionalism, attention must be devoted to the historical adaptation of what economists call the urban system. Initially a task for specialists, the result would be a frame of reference and store of data for many consumers. It would include national, regional, metropolitan, and intrametropolitan elements; it would borrow from geography, demography, economics, and sociology for yardsticks of measurement. The sum total, ideally, would provide historians of widely varying urban (and for that matter, nonurban) research concerns with tools to measure and categorize, to compare and contrast, to specify and generalize; most importantly, this framework would make it conducive for those investigating one particular locale to place it within a metropolitan and comparative setting. ³⁶

Another priority—already being fulfilled—is the urban historian's contribution to the formulation of public policy. Several examples of so-called applied or public history can be cited: a special issue of the *Journal of Urban History* contained articles on street pavements, sewage, energy usage, and transportation; studies of transportation in Atlanta, Boston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Chicago; a book on public health in Newark; analyses of civic decision-making processes in Pittsburgh, New York City, Birmingham, and three medium-sized Wisconsin cities; a volume of original essays on urban pollution. Beyond the intrinsic value such scholarship holds for academicians, policy studies will attract a new constituency for urban history: government officials, elective and appointive, charged with

³⁵ Thernstrom, "New Urban History," 44. For differing assessments of the works of the late 1960s, see John Sharpless, "In Search of Community: A New Theme for the Old 'New' Urban History," *Reviews in American History*, 5 (June 1977), 215-16; and J. Morgan Kousser, "History QUASSHed: Quantitative Social Science History in Perspective," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 23 (July-Aug. 1980), 895-97.

³⁶ See note 33. On the examination of cities in aggregated terms, see J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, *Dimensions in Urban History: Historical and Social Science Perspectives on Middle-Size American Cities* (Madison, 1979).

responsibility for managing the nation's cities and metropolitan areas. At least one urban historian—Joel A. Tarr, codirector of the Program in Applied History, Carnegie-Mellon University—has competed successfully for federal funding to underwrite applied research of a retrospective nature.³⁷

A third and final priority—starkly divergent from the progressive ethos which has imbued the subfield—is to bring the substantial, increasingly sophisticated powers of Marxist analysis to American urban history. Historians are conversant, of course, with the significant books by Eugene D. Genovese, the most prolific and respected Marxist scholar in the discipline. Since the mid-1960s his work has profoundly affected, in an immediate sense, the historiography of Afro-American plantation life, while more generally it has influenced the thinking of historians well beyond his specialty, many of whom do not consider themselves Marxists. The highly textured portrayal of black bondage rendered by Genovese—viewed through the filter of class analysis—deserves the thoughtful consideration of those urban historians frustrated by the prevailing left-liberal paradigm of contemporary social science. This is not to assert, foolishly, that one need be a Marxist to qualify as an urban historian; rather, it is to contend that ample room is available for those Marxists, some of whom already are contributing to the literature, offering their unique, sometimes prescient, talents to the study of the urban past.³⁸

³⁷ Joel A. Tarr, ed., "The City and Technology" (special issue), *Journal of Urban History*, 5 (May 1979), 273–408; Preston, *Automobile Age Atlanta*; Joel A. Tarr, *Transportation Innovation and Changing Spatial Patterns in Pittsburgh, 1850–1934* (Chicago, 1978); Alan D. Anderson, *The Origin and Resolution of an Urban Crisis: Baltimore, 1890–1930* (Baltimore, 1977); Charles W. Cheape, *Moving the Masses: Urban Public Transit in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1880–1912* (Cambridge, 1980); Paul Barrett, "Public Policy and Private Choice: Mass Transit and the Automobile in Chicago between the Wars," *Business History Review*, XLIX (Winter 1975), 473–97; Stuart Galishoff, *Safeguarding the Public Health: Newark, 1895–1918* (Westport, Conn., 1975); Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business, and Environmental Change* (New York, 1969); David Conrad Hammack, *Power and Society in Greater New York, 1886–1903: The Making of Major Decisions in the Metropolis* (New York, 1981); Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham, 1871–1921* (Knoxville, 1977); Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth, *Dimensions in Urban History*, 57–118; and Martin V. Melosi, ed., *Pollution and Reform in American Cities, 1870–1930* (Austin, 1980). On Joel A. Tarr's activities, see Peter N. Stearns and Joel A. Tarr, "New Public Uses for History," *New York Times*, June 7, 1980, p. 19; Elizabeth M. Fowler, "Applying the Past to the Present," *ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1980, p. D17; and Joel A. Tarr, Gary David Goodman, and Ken Koons, "Coal and Natural Gas: Fuel and Environmental Policy in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 1940–1960," *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 5 (Summer 1980), 19–21. On the possibilities of achieving an intersection between urban history and public policy, see Zane L. Miller, "Scarcity, Abundance, and American Urban History," *Journal of Urban History*, 4 (Feb. 1978), 131–55; Kenneth Fox, *Better City Government: Innovation in American Urban Politics, 1850–1937* (Philadelphia, 1977); and Seymour J. Mandelbaum, "Urban Pasts and Urban Policies," *Journal of Urban History*, 6 (Aug. 1980), 453–83.

³⁸ See Ronald Radosh, "An Interview with Eugene Genovese: The Rise of a Marxist Historian," *Change*, 10 (Nov. 1978), 31–35. For further assessments of Genovese's influence, see Frisch, "American Urban History," 370–71; and Carl N. Degler, "Remaking American History," *Journal of American History*, 67 (June 1980), 17–18. For examples of urban history conceived in Marxist terms, see Roy Rosenzweig, "Middle-Class Parks and Working-Class Play: The Struggle over Recreational Space in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1870–1910," *Radical History Review*, no. 21 (Fall 1979), 31–48; Betsy Blackmar, "Re-walking the 'Walking City': Housing and Property

By now, of course, urban historians should have steeled themselves against new calls to pursue agenda priorities. They will select or cast off advice—to develop a historically informed system of macroanalysis, to examine policy, to welcome Marxist perspectives, to foster cross-disciplinary, social scientific collaboration, to utilize (or sublimate or ignore) quantification, to be narrow specialists, to be generalists, to be literate—based on their individual dispositions. After all, it is worthwhile to remember that not too long ago, practitioners encountered disappointment (if not considerable bewilderment) with the definition of the so-called new urban history associated with Thernstrom. From that they ought to have learned a lesson. Urban historians should be pluralists—in method, substance, ideology, and taste—instead of fastening upon oversimplified, needlessly narrow resolutions to obviously complex research problems.

Relations in New York City, 1780-1840," *ibid.*, 131-50; Michael E. Stone, "The Housing Problem in the United States: Origins and Prospects," *Socialist Review*, 10 (July-Aug. 1980), 65-119; and William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers, eds., *Marxism and the Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy* (New York, 1978). Finally, see the Bancroft Prize-winning study, Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, 1976). Written in the framework of working-class history, it raises issues bearing on the nexus of Marxism and urban history.