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**Sensing the City**

**A Companion to Urban Anthropology**

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# Prologue

*Howard S. Becker*

## Learning to Observe in Chicago

I am reading Jean Peneff's<sup>1</sup> account of the observational experiences of his generation in a small town in Southwestern France after WWII. He describes how the kids could watch the tradesmen at work in the street, because most workshops were not big enough to hold all the things the artisans did; how these workers would have the kids help them ("Hold this, kid!") or send them on errands ("Go get me this or that tool" or "Go get me a beer from the tavern"). He talks about watching the dealings, honest and not so honest, of the farmers as they bought and sold cattle and horses, and of watching and seeing how some of them put the money from their sale in their wallet and went home while others went off to the tavern and drank it up. He talks about how the kids knew all about the adulterous affairs which were not so uncommon in the town. He says that experiences like these gave the kids the taste for observation and some real experience with, and skill in, observing. A good skill for a would-be sociologist.

When I was a kid in Chicago, I had some similar experiences. Of course, we didn't have a lot of people working at their trades in the street where they were easy for us kids to observe. But we had some other things.

The El. When I was perhaps ten, my boy friends and I would take advantage of the structure of the Chicago elevated train system (the El, everyone called it that) to pay one fare and ride all day long. Our mothers would pack us a sandwich and we would walk a few blocks to Lake Street, where the Lake Street El line ran from our neighborhood on the far West Side of the city to the Loop, the downtown center (so-called because it was ringed by the elevated lines, all of which converged from every part of the city on this center, went around it, and back to where they had come from). Once you got on a train, you could find places where the lines crossed – especially in the Loop – and change to another train that went to another

part of the city. Six or seven major lines ran to the three main parts of the city and, Chicago being a very large city, they went a long way.

So, for example, we could ride the Lake Street El from our neighborhood, nearly at the end of that line, to downtown, transfer to the Jackson Park line, which went to the South Side, and ride 6 or 7 miles to the end of that line at Stony Island Avenue, walk across the platform and take the same train back to the center, where we could transfer to a North Side Rogers Park train and ride that to Howard Street. And do that all day long, covering the entire city, before we went home, tired and happy. What did we see? We saw the buildings and how they varied from place to place: the poor deteriorating wooden apartment buildings in the city's poorer neighborhoods; the multi-story brick buildings in neighborhoods that were more well to do; the one-family houses of some ethnic neighborhoods; and so on. We learned the characteristic ethnic patterns of the city by reading the signs on the businesses we went by and learned that the Poles lived on Milwaukee Avenue, the Italians on the Near West Side, the Swedes farther north, the Blacks on the South Side, and so on. We saw people of different racial and ethnic groups as they got on and off the train, and learned who lived where (we were very good at reading ethnicity from small clues, including listening to the languages spoken, styles of clothing, even the smell of the food people carried).

We saw the industrial parts of the city: the factories and the buildings that housed them, the lines of trucks that served them. We saw the railroad yards that served the city; Chicago was the major railroad hub of the country. We saw the thriving neighborhood shopping centers and the kinds of stores that were there.

We saw things close up as well as from a distance. As all these people got on and off the cars we rode in, we knew we were different from many of them – racially different, different in class, different in ethnicity. We knew that we were Jewish and lots of these people weren't; we weren't always sure what to make of that but we thought it was probably just as well if the others didn't know it.

In many of the places the trains went through, the buildings were very close to the tracks, maybe no more than five feet away, and the windows in the buildings looked out directly on to the tracks. So we could look into people's apartments and watch them going about the ordinary routines of apartment living: making and eating meals, cleaning, doing laundry, sitting around listening to the radio and drinking coffee, women doing each other's hair, kids playing. We seldom saw anything private – people having sex – but we sometimes saw women who weren't fully



dressed and that excited us, it wasn't something a ten- or eleven-year-old boy saw very often. This gave us a lot of material on differing ways of life to think about.

As we rode we observed, looking closely at everything that went by our little window on the city, commenting to each other about what we saw, seeing the differences and taking them home with us to think about. By the time I was, say, twelve, I had a good understanding of the physical and social structure of the city, at least from a geographic point of view.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Editorial note: Jean Peneff is a French sociologist, who among others introduced the Chicago School of Sociology to France. This prologue has originally been written for his book *Le goût de l'observation* (Paris : La Découverte, 2009).

## Introduction

In this book you will become acquainted with some remarkable people: Marta from Detroit, Curtis from Chicago Woodlawn, Mick from south London and Tarek from Berlin Tempelhof. Anthropologists hung around with them, spoke with them, argued with them, laughed with them, drove around with them, invited them to their homes. And wrote down their stories ...

The first part of the book (*Anthropology in the City*) offers three examples of ethnographic studies in London, Detroit and Berlin, following up on Peter Jackson's classic introduction to urban ethnography. These studies by Les Back, Ruth Behar and Moritz Ege provide first-hand observations of lower class communities and let them speak for themselves. They show how city life is guided by a "structure of feeling", i.e. by a sense of togetherness that is expressed and realized through symbols, gestures, music, fashion, accessories and tattoos. The neighbourhood serves as a refuge from the stigmas of society outside, it also serves as a source of pride. These studies are in line with the general interest of Urban Anthropology: since the days of the Chicago School of Sociology, which some consider as the birth-place of Urban Anthropology, the underside of city life has been the most prominent subject of inquiry. As Peter Jackson in this volume put it, "the subjects of ethnographic research have tended to be the poor and relatively powerless residents of multiethnic inner-city areas" (33). Chicago School classics include Nels Anderson's study of *The Hobo* (1923), F.M. Thrasher's *The Gang* (1927), Louis Wirth's *The Ghetto* (1928) and Paul Cressey's *The Taxi-Dance Hall* (1932). The *second generation* of Chicago School research equally studied gangs, street culture and urban underdogs, among them Elliott Liebow's study of black streetcorner men in Washington, D.C. named *Tally's Corner* (1967), and Elijah Anderson's *A Place on the Corner* (1976). Ulf Hannerz' *Soulside* (1968), though not originating from Chicago School, provides another example of ghetto ethnography of this time. Sometimes criticized for exoticizing urban culture, these ethnographies, too, reported on poor inner-city communities and their struggle to maintain a living. Up until today, urban ethnography has continued to return to other social worlds in order to understand the diversity of city life.

Equally, the methodology of urban ethnography is and always has been urban fieldwork: the observation of people in situ. Through participation and observation, the researcher seeks to acquaint him- or herself with the discrete circumstances of urban society. He or she gets up close, conducting his or her life in face-to-face proximity to the persons and circumstances under study for a significant period of time. It then becomes possible for research reports to provide the kind of description and quotation that moves the reader *inside* the world under study. Fieldwork is about *being there*, a motivated relocation, where the anthropologist (from the middle class) seeks “to penetrate and interpret social worlds apparently quite alien from their own” (22).

The studies of Back, Behar and Ege of contemporary urban culture are not directly related to the Chicago School. Rather, they explicitly or implicitly pick up on the subject and develop their own take on lower class urban neighbourhood within the framework of their time and place. Influenced by British Cultural Studies (28), the British sociologist Back and the German European Ethnologist Ege put pop and popular culture at the centre of urban ethnography. They observe and report how problems of social inequality and despair are faced up to and experienced through a “structure of feeling” that is formed in the ephemeral sphere of fashion and style. In recent years, in which European socioeconomic forces and the impact of a neoliberalizing welfare state have made the fault lines of social inequality increasingly visible, the interest in the underside of city life has increased evermore. With the triumph of popular culture, social inequality is increasingly acted out and lived through within a mass market of products and images, that people appropriate in order to make sense of their everyday lives. Strategies of individual style and fashion do not change the larger economic and social structures, but make them liveable and challengeable. These contemporary ethnographies are in line with the Chicago School tradition of hanging around in “places of cigarettes, hamburgers and tattoos”, as Back puts it, and “portraying the sights and sounds of urban life” (23).

Furthermore, the authors offer insights into their fieldwork methodology. Behar and Back make exciting methodological suggestions, pointing to urban ethnography at the beginning of the 21st century: they include the ethnography of one’s own family in order to understand in fuller detail the wider society in which researchers and the subjects of their research are equally embedded. It makes us aware of the fact that within urban settings, anthropology does not deal with cultures *out there*

(as the case with classic, non-Western anthropology), but with our next-door neighbours. The ethnographers' lives are not disconnected from the environment around them, but socially interlinked and emotionally entangled. These entanglements, Behar suggests, should be faced up front. They are not an obstacle to objectivity. Rather, highlighting these entanglements and being open about one's emotions as a fieldworker help to clarify the larger forces of society that drive our emotions and our thinking.

Peter Jackson's essay "Urban Ethnography", which frames the first part of the book, was written in 1985. As he mentions, in the 1980s, there developed a new way of thinking and theorising the city, the *Anthropology of the City*, which became an important line of thinking in the last two decades and which is the subject of the second part of the book.

The second part of the book introduces *Anthropology of the City*. Rather than studying the everyday life of a particular neighbourhood, *Anthropology of the City* refers to the city as a whole: the ways people and communities perceive and make sense of the city. Under scrutiny are the images and sensations that are produced by cities at large such as Berlin, London or New York and how they are felt and lived. *Imaginaire*, as Lindner points out, reaches back to the French tradition of addressing questions of "mentalité" and "mémoire collective" (114). It is the European city that stimulates this concept of the urban imaginary: with its ancient urban nuclei and its historical layers reaching back to the Middle Ages, unlike US American cities. This concept was born out of a sense of loss and nostalgia, ever since modern city planning destroyed old and established city structures, starting with the industrial revolution in the 19th century, followed by the functional city planning of the 1950s and the sanitizing of the urban environment since the 1980s.

This approach was formalised in 1980, when Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz suggested the study of anthropology *of* the city rather than *in* the city.<sup>1</sup> This was at a time when the deindustrialization of the Western city was more or less complete. Entertainment, urban festivals and the service industry began to mould the urban landscape. Questions of security and control and how they can be secured through urban design started to occupy the minds of politicians and urban planners. This development was accompanied by the discovery of the *Creative City* as location factor. Various European cities started to work on individual city branding in order to express the unique quality of their city and thus

redirect global flows of tourists and money. The discovery of *Anthropology of Cities* is part of this urban renaissance and its critical companion. As Jonathan Raban criticizes: behind all strategies of urban planning, “lie a savage contempt for the city and an arrogant desire to refashion human society into almost any shape other than the one we have at present” (133).

In German-speaking countries, Rolf Lindner is among the advocates of the imaginary of the city. He argues that the city resists visions of urban planners and city politics. It is moulded by larger forces such as economy, social structure and morphology. Thus, the imaginary of the city develops beyond or below their control. Sometimes criticized as homogenized urban spaces, London, Berlin, Paris and other cities are actually living beings that do have distinct personalities.

To sum it up: whereas *Anthropology in the City* refers to a particular research practice, i.e. urban ethnography or fieldwork, *Anthropology of the City* refers to a programmatic approach to the city, that shares an ethnographic sensibility without necessarily conducting fieldwork in the city. Whereas *Anthropology in the City* is clearly located within the discipline of anthropology and qualitative sociology, *Anthropology of the City* is interdisciplinary, blurring the boundaries between social science, humanities, art and architecture. Whereas *Anthropology in the City* originated in the US-American Chicago School of Sociology, *Anthropology of the City* originated from Europe. It aims at locating the subjects of urban ethnographies in terms of their larger social and historical context and also in terms of the built environment and the urban landscape. There is an academic debate about whether and how these two approaches are connected, but so far the study suggests that one cannot talk about *Anthropology of Cities* without talking about *Anthropology in Cities*.

It is by the very nature of the city that its imaginary can only be grasped with an interdisciplinary approach that embraces storytelling, literature and journalism. Thus, in the second part of the anthology, the line between the fields has been blurred. It includes writers from various fields beyond anthropology, i.e. sociology, architecture and literature. Despite the variety of approaches, all authors share an interest in the question of how the city is experienced on a street-level. The authors sympathize with what some might criticize as *magazine sociology*: theorising on cities in a cosmopolitan, urban style. Adapting poetic approaches to the city does not contradict the search for objective patterns and rules of urban life, rather, it deepens the understanding of it.

Besides the urban imaginary, the *Anthropology of Cities* also questions urban living, the way people act, behave and perform in public spaces. As British travel writer Jonathan Raban has put it: what is special about behaviour in urban public arenas? How do people behave in restaurants, late night tube trains, certain streets and squares? What makes their behavior distinct from the small city? Implicitly referring to Georg Simmel's classic "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben" ("The metropolis and mental life"), Raban explains that in a city of strangers, where people generally do not know each other, citizens tend to put on a show in order to escape the anonymous mass. People use fashion and style to give themselves "cartoon-like outlines", easy to read by the people who live in cities and who are *in the know*. "Synecdoche", as Raban calls it, "is much more than a rhetorical figure, it is a means of survival" (135). It is challenging to compare Raban's thoughts with the ethnographic studies of Back, Behar and Ege. The way Back describes the meaning of tattoos, for example, as designs that are a "continuous part of personality" (Raban) that condense and communicate emotions and sympathies. "Impression management" (101), as Ege explains, should not be trivialized, because it has an empowering quality and gives a sense of solidarity and belonging to the neighbourhood and beyond.

Raban has written a flaming apology for street life and spectacle. In 1980, when he wrote this essay, the prejudices towards the city as a place of crime and vice were stronger than today, in the city of the festival. But many urban neighbourhoods still struggle with the anonymous atmosphere created by modernist housing projects from the 1950s onwards. As Zardini put it, the "death of the street" is virulent – more than ever before – due to the sanitization of the urban environment for the sake of security and control. Just as Raban, he highlights the importance of street life and its experiential qualities vis-à-vis the functional and sanitized city. He criticizes the ocular-centrism of city planners and architects and invites urban researchers and city planners to consider the sensual qualities of city life, landscape, soundscape and smellscape. We are in need of a sensual understanding, being in the world through the body, because, as Zardini puts it, the cities are "places of our bodies and souls" (149).

The closing essay by Loïc Wacquant provides connections between *Anthropology in the City* and the *Anthropology of the City* – Wacquant combines both a European and an American way of thinking. He got his PhD at the department of sociology of the University of Chicago, but started his academic career at a French univer-

sity. His most well-known ethnographic study, *Body and Soul* (2004), is about a black urban boxing gym in Chicago. In his essay, he undertakes a “ride-along”, as Kusenbach in this volume puts it (156), through the very neighbourhood of the boxing gym with his friend Curtis, who in a stream of consciousness reflects about the environment. The car ride is not only a trip through the streets, it is also a – very sad – journey into the psyche of an urban underclass. Like Lindner, Wacquant picks up on Maurice Halbwachs’ notion of “*mémoire collective*”. The desolated area mirrors the people’s conditions and becomes tangible – a physical manifestation of their state of mind. People in this neighbourhood are neglected by the neo-liberal system and experience this loss through the urban landscape. Thus, the images and symbols of the urban landscape – closed down shops, decaying buildings and dirt – is acting upon the people and vice versa. How Wacquant puts it: there is a “link between the built environment, social structure, and collective psychology” (165).

The method of data-collection Wacquant uses is what the sociologist Margarethe Kusenbach has called “go-along”. This practice implicitly echoes artistic movements of the 1920s and 1930s, at times when Surrealists undertook “*déambulations*” in Paris in order to uncover the hidden side of city life. In the 1950s, the French writer Guy Debord (part of the artist group “Situationist International”) promoted “*dérive*” as a technique to explore the relation between the psyche and the built environment, i.e. the psychogeography of the city. Nowadays, with the festivalization of the urban environment, the urban imaginary becomes a tool of city planning. The go-along, as Wacquant has shown, is a means to experience everyday urbanism on a street-level.

The encounter between the researcher and the subject of research is a very personal experience. Comic-strips by the artist Nele Brönnner comment on these encounters. These *true fictions* – invented stories rooted in actual events – show Back, Ege, Behar, Lindner, Raban and Wacquant conducting field research. They are the results of e-mail-exchanges between the artist and the authors, in order to grasp a significant moment of their fieldwork and transform it into a story. They not only highlight and illustrate the fieldresearch experience, but take ethnographic work further by showing the dramatic and poetic qualities of being out in the field. Inspired by Lindner’s essay “Die Angst des Forschers vor dem Feld”<sup>2</sup> (“The researcher’s fear of the field”), they dramatise the encounter between the fieldresearcher and his or her subject as a moment of sympathy, fear, misunderstanding, humour and

embarrassment. Urban Anthropology, even though it is an academic discipline, is built upon personal encounters that are nothing but human and sometimes funny.

Urban Anthropology has become a key discipline in exploring contemporary society in general and the culture of cities in particular. Together with Psychology and cultural Marxism, Anthropology is a fundamental discourse of modernity. What does Urban Anthropology and Sensing the City mean? It means cultivating a sensibility towards the city, its people and its structures of feeling. It means to open the senses towards the atmosphere of the urban landscape and the symbols, images and legends that are shaped by it. It means hanging around in the city and finding friends. As Robert Ezra Park, the *spiritus rector* of the Chicago School, in an often quoted instruction for his students put it: “Go into the district, get the feeling, become acquainted with people.”<sup>3</sup>

*In August 2015, Anja Schwanhäuffer*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ulf Hannerz: Exploring the City. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology. Columbia University Press: New York, Chichester, West Sussex, 1980, S. 3. See Jackson in this volume: 35.
- <sup>2</sup> Lindner, Rolf. “Die Angst des Forschers vor dem Feld. Überlegungen zur teilnehmenden Beobachtung als Interaktionsprozess.” From *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 77, 1981.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert E. Park, quoted from Rolf Lindner. *The reportage of urban culture. Robert Park and the Chicago School*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Originally published in German as *Die Entdeckung der Stadtkultur. Soziologie aus der Erfahrung der Reportage*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1990: 10.



# Anthropology in the City

*Peter Jackson*

## Urban Ethnography

A marked revival of interest in ethnographic research has taken place among social anthropologists and urban sociologists in recent years (e.g. Hannerz 1980; Burgess 1982; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Ellen 1984) which is beginning to claim the attention of geographers (e.g. Jackson and Smith 1984).<sup>1</sup> Interest is already sufficient across the social sciences to sustain a journal devoted entirely to urban ethnography, defined to include those studies which employ participant observation and intensive qualitative interviewing 'to convey the inner life and texture of the diverse social enclaves and personal circumstances of urban societies' (*Urban Life*).

A comprehensive review of urban ethnography is not possible here and our horizons must necessarily be narrowed. The present paper is therefore deliberately selective and concentrates on certain themes and issues raised by the literature of urban 'community studies'. This emphasis on the urban is problematic as several recent authors (notably Saunders 1981) have pointed out. What is specifically 'urban' about the community studies which we are to review apart from their location? And what can the ethnographer contribute to a workable theory of urbanism?

In making the transition to urban research, anthropologists have discovered that their traditional methods of year-round isolation from their own ordinary lives and round-the-clock participation in the ordinary lives of other people are no longer possible. They have been obliged to devise new research strategies that are feasible in dense urban settings and to ask, as one anthropologist has put it: 'is it possible to map context without sitting in the middle of it?' (Wallman 1984: 42). Geographers are now asking themselves the same questions and, while further elaboration of these points is mainly confined to the conclusion, their significance is implicit throughout the paper.

Besides a preoccupation with the urban, this review also concentrates on studies which employ some version of participant observation rather than qualitative interviewing or other research strategies which may be more familiar to geographers (cf. Jackson 1983a). Questions of theory and method are raised which transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Yet the geographer can take solace from Janowitz's magisterial survey of recent sociological research on the residential community which he sees as embodying a distinctively 'geographical dimension' (Janowitz 1978).

Within this general framework, a number of specific topics are selected for comment including some observations on the relationship between ethnography and theory; an evaluation of the ethnographer's contribution to the literature on ethnicity, class and politics; and a discussion of ethnography as method. The paper begins, though, by considering the intellectual roots of ethnographic research on the city which have continued to exert a powerful influence on current work.

## **1 Intellectual Origins: The 'Chicago school'**

The urban sociologists of the 'Chicago school' are well known to geographers for their studies of the city's human ecology (e.g. Park and Burgess 1925). Their morphological studies of the growth of the city according to ecological processes of 'invasion' and 'succession' have been celebrated as the forerunners of social area analysis and factorial ecology, while Park's interest in social and physical distance has been heralded as the original inspiration for much contemporary work in 'spatial sociology' (Peach 1975).

In recent years, however, geographers and sociologists have shown a growing hostility to the 'Chicago school' authors for their tacit Social Darwinism and for their uncritical stance towards the specific conditions of *laissez-faire* capitalism which produced the distinctive form of the city which they regarded as a universal 'natural order'. Following his critique of the 'reactionary and ideological character' of Louis Wirth's writings about urbanism (Castells 1976), for example, Castells went on to dismiss the whole corpus of Chicago sociology as dedicated to the 'myth of urban culture' (Castells 1977). Harvey has been equally critical of the 'culturalist' explanations of Park and Burgess (Harvey 1973), while humanists like David Ley have also found fault with the reductionist view of urban sociology as 'social phys-

ics' which they attribute to Park (Ley 1980). Geographers have apparently chosen to ignore the rival interpretation of Park's work as being 'on the side of *verstehen* sociology as opposed to positivistic approaches' (Turner 1967: xx), although there are recent signs that this balance is being redressed (Entrikin 1980; Jackson and Smith 1981; 1984).

The non-positivistic version of 'Chicago school' sociology is most readily sustained by an examination of their pioneering contributions to urban ethnography. These studies were carried out as doctoral and masters' dissertations by graduate students in the Department of Sociology at Chicago during the 1920s and 1930s. Several were later published by the University of Chicago Press. (The dissertations are listed in an appendix to Faris 1967; the monographs are sympathetically reviewed by Hannerz 1980). A series of richly descriptive vignettes resulted from the students' attempts to gain firsthand acquaintance with their subject matter following the instructions of their mentor, Robert Park.

It is possible to discern a number of common themes in these diverse ethnographies which reveal their intellectual roots and highlight their unique contribution. Each of the monographs attempts to present a faithful and sympathetic portrait of the social and moral order which lies behind the outward signs of an apparently alien and 'disorganized' world (cf. Jackson 1984). This is as true of Anderson's classic evocation of the world of *The hobo* (Anderson 1923) as it is of Cressey's description of *The taxi-dance hall* (Cressey 1932). Each draws intellectual sustenance from the pragmatic philosophy which inspired Park through his reading of William James, John Dewey and, to a lesser extent perhaps, also George Herbert Mead (cf. Smith 1984a). From James, Park learned not to be blind to the world of other people but to seek to capture 'the zest, the tingle, the excitement of reality' as conveyed by first-hand 'acquaintance with' their various worlds (James 1899). From Dewey, Park derived his faith in the role of human communication as a means to greater knowledge and mutual understanding (Park 1940), underscoring his earliest conception of the sociologist as a kind of super-reporter (Park 1950). And from Mead, Park gained his view of society as an emergent and dynamic system in which meaning and identity are constantly negotiated through interaction (Mead 1934).

Two further influences on the early 'Chicago school' sociologists should also be acknowledged: from his friend and colleague in Chicago, W. I. Thomas, Park inherited a series of concepts (including 'disorganization' and 'definition of the situation')

and a set of methods (including the use of personal documents) which were used to structure countless ethnographies (cf. Janowitz 1966).<sup>2</sup> And from the formal sociology of Georg Simmel, Park developed a characteristic interest in social forms including that most celebrated ‘social type’, the stranger (Simmel 1908). Simmel’s influence has been particularly strong and provides a thread of continuity between several generations of ethnographers who acknowledge implicit allegiance to a generally ‘understated’ interactionist sociology (Rock 1979).<sup>3</sup> Park himself, for example, was fascinated by city life, having witnessed the phenomenal growth of metropolitan Chicago in the early years of this century (cf. Mayer and Wade 1969). In Park’s words:

The social problem is fundamentally a city problem. It is the problem of achieving in the freedom of the city a social order and a social control equivalent to that which grew up naturally in the family, the clan, and the tribe (Park 1929; reprinted in Park 1952: 74).

His inspiration, here as elsewhere, however, was Simmel rather than Tönnies. It was Park’s student, Louis Wirth, who in 1925 cited Simmel’s essay on ‘The metropolis and mental life’ (Simmel 1903) as ‘the most important single article on the city from the sociological point of view’ (Wirth 1925: 219).

Simmel’s essay on ‘The stranger’ (Simmel 1908) had an even more pervasive and lasting influence. It is explicitly cited in Anderson’s study of *The bobo* (Anderson 1923) and is an implicit reference in Wirth’s study of *The ghetto* (Wirth 1928). It was taken up by Everett Stonequist in his analysis of *The marginal man* (Stonequist 1937) and by Norman Hayner in his study of *Hotel life* (Hayner 1936). This intellectual genealogy is traced in detail by Donald Levine (1979). Combined with his seminal ideas about the positive role of conflict as an integrative social force (Simmel 1955), Simmel’s influence on contemporary urban sociology and on urban ethnography in particular can scarcely be exaggerated.

Rather than continue to treat in generalities, however, the argument is best pursued by more detailed analysis of specific ethnographies. It will be convenient to select two studies from the first generation of ‘Chicago ethnography’ and to trace their counterparts in more recent literature. It will also then be possible to review the contribution of other early ethnographic studies which fall outside the direct influence of the ‘Chicago school’.