

**Table. Comparative Section Structures of Two Readers in Sociology of Work**

<i>The Transformation of Work in the New Economy</i> (Perrucci and Perrucci)	<i>Working in America</i> (Wharton)
Historical Background	Historical Foundations Conceptual Foundations The New Workplace
Globalization Technology Organization	Immigration, Globalization, and Inequality Technology and Flexibility
Professional Work Life on the Factory Floor Service Work Work and Family Connections Policies for Work and Family	Work Wages and Inequality Marginal, Contingent, and Low-Wage Jobs Race, Gender, and Sexuality Professional and Managerial Work Industrial Work Service Work Balancing Work and Family Life Care Work: Paid and Unpaid

each major section (generally 70 pages or more) in Wharton’s book.

In past semesters I have used *Working in America* with considerable success. I selected that book in the first place because I considered it to be the best edited volume available at the time. The next occasion I teach Sociology of Work, I will give serious consideration to *The Transformation of Work in the New Economy*—a book that follows, on the whole, the fine lead of Amy Wharton’s excellent compendium (which is now in its third edition).

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*Cities, Change, and Conflict: A Political Economy of Urban Life.* 3d ed. Nancy Kleniewski. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth. 2006. 420 pages. \$94.46.

This text positions itself as a key work in urban sociology, specifically as a political-economic analysis of the social organizational form known as the city. The text is very well written in that the author presents the basic premises of the analysis and the unique view of the topic through a political economy lens. Nonetheless, the organization of the book is likely to be challenging for many readers because it is neither historical nor strictly thematic. It is, rather, a hybrid, in which various parts of the study are themselves chronologically organized. While the schema seems to have its own internal logic, it could

hardly be characterized as intuitive. The book offers a well buried treasure where considerable intellectual effort must be expended to garner the most valuable nuggets of wisdom, though each such quest is rewarded.

The thesis of the book involves a defense of two related important sociological propositions concerning the city. The first is that the city remains relevant as an object of significance for scientific investigation. The author clearly makes that case as she establishes a sufficient theoretical case for the presence of symbiotic linkages between the city—and the urban organizing phenomenon more generally at macro and micro levels—in the United States and across the globe. The second concept is that much of the conventional wisdom and common mythology about the city—inevitably involving violence, chaos, and poverty—are in many cases empirically ungrounded and are in others distortions of reality created from a degree of theoretical and statistical reductionism in the literature that bears more rigorous substantive examination.

The book is certainly appropriate for graduate students and advanced undergraduate courses in political science and economics. It could potentially be more useful to sociology instructors if it addressed some concerns I will subsequently raise. One would likely need to be a bit more guarded concerning presenting this text to lower-level undergraduates or in introductory courses, since the aforementioned structural and organizational peculiarities would likely be more intimidating for those audiences. In such cases, there



would be considerably more onus upon the engaged instructor to shepherd students pedagogically towards critical concepts and to define touchstones of learning. Students will come away from the material with a greater sense of the interconnection between cities as human social living environments, economics as a vital context, culture as a crucible, and spatial geography as a nexus for the "event" that is modernity. While the text does have a targeted core audience of interest, it could potentially be useful to the new and expanding group of social science researchers who are involved in socio-spatial analyses and how the physical, temporal, and sociological dimensions of life are interconnected.

The greatest strength of the text is that it begins by giving possibly the best exposition I have seen of the transitional processes in the study of the urban. The author takes great pains to explain why paradigmatic shifts have occurred in terms of timing and dynamically evolving empirical circumstances. She links the critical historical moments in the development of the political-economic perspective into a concise but thorough narrative. It is very important—and consistent with the critical perspective—that students have some sense of scholarship as a field of discourse, debate, and change so that they can successfully enter that debate. This text extends a very strong invitation to engage the sociological imagination.

Yet this strong introduction is precisely the most difficult matter for engaging the rest of the text. In laying out the aforementioned narrative, the text positions itself and the political economy perspective as a response to the classical, largely sociological, theoretical ground concerning the study of cities that was laid early on. The text then traces the discipline's autobiography through the Chicago School and their work. The author critiques the naturalistic approach to the city as a kind of pseudo-biological organism. Paradoxically, the book responds to that rather reductionist and deterministic framework by discarding most of the grounded theoretical insights of qualitative sociology, ending up with a political economy that is more political science and economics than sociology. This means that phenomena that the book subsequently examines tend to have their political and economic dimensions highlighted and thrown in great relief. Culture and the more strictly sociological dimensions tend to be mentioned almost as asides. As a

scholar of social stratification from a critical sociological perspective, I found the presentation of the role of the concepts of race and gender particularly disturbing. While the author acknowledges the existence of discrimination, she does not present it as a central variable—or at least as a variable equivalent to larger (albeit equally legitimate) issues of gentrification and class and economic employment opportunity structures. One looking for a real critique of the role of patriarchy and white supremacy in maintaining the city is going to leave the table very hungry, left with only a bite on ill-defined "political decision-making."

It is as if all the social scientists were invited to the table and then the political scientists and economists were given the first chairs. The psychologist was allowed to put on a few agenda items, but the poor critical sociologist was just given a lifetime achievement award for his or her contributions to the field and then left to a round of "me, too." I believe the book would be stronger if, in fact, it had continued with the stated objective for a more integrative, holistic social science approach to political economy in the cities. The amount of literature in sociology proper—not to mention transcendent epistemological frameworks like feminist theory, race/class/gender studies, and so on—that could have buttressed some of the purely economic stuff here is legion and too great in quantity for us to specifically reference them all.

Overall, it was a fascinating read and a worthwhile text. Although I think it comes up rather short with respect to contemporary sociological coverage as it relates to the city and the urban, it does an inversely outstanding job of 1) pointing out the necessity of examining the political city in concert with the economic one and 2) knowing that, overall, all of this involves human process and is not merely a natural occurrence. Cities are seen here to be creatures of our own device, for good or bad, and therefore offering us an opportunity to construct the cities of the future. On this closing note, I was very pleased that the author took the time to do something so many do not, that is, to speculate and to reference from a humanistic standpoint other speculation on the future of the city form and what it could be. That speaks volumes about the author and the text. I urge you to give it a look.

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