CITIES AND SUBURBS

INTRODUCTION

- Urban areas are examples of economic and social progress (+), but are also characterized by poverty, crime, crowding, pollution and collapsing infrastructures (-).
- Additionally, opportunities and resources are unevenly distributed - some neighborhoods have safer streets, better services, and offer a better quality of life than others.

URBAN SOCIOLOGY

- **Urban Sociology** - examines the social, political and economic structures and their impact within an urban setting.
- Sociologists in the 1920’s (University of Chicago) examined the city and the impact of city life and its problems on its residents, providing the basis for urban study.
  - Initially took a functionalist approach, comparing a city to a biological organism.
  - **Human Ecology** - the study of the relationship between individuals and their physical environment and population dynamics

INTRODUCTION

URBAN SOCIOLOGY STUDIES:

- **Demography** - the study of the size, composition, and distribution of human populations.
  - Analyzes the changes and trends in the population beginning with two fundamental facts – we are born and then we die.
- **Migration** – the movement of individuals from one area to another.
- **Domestic Migration** - the movement of people within a country

URBANIZATION

- **Urbanization** - the process by which a population shifts from rural to urban.
  - Took off in the later half of the 19th century.
  - As industrial economy grew, people were drawn by work in factories and mills.
  - Helped by emigration of Europeans and the migration of Southern rural blacks and whites.
  - **Overurbanization** - an excess population is concentrated in an urban area that lacks the capacity to provide basic services and shelter.
  - Now a global concern for developing nations.
After WW II, the U.S. experienced suburbanization – the outward expansion of central cities into suburban areas.

This caused population shifts from the Snowbelt (industrial regions of the North and Midwest) to the Sunbelt (South and Southwest) and from rural to metropolitan areas.

Facilitated by new housing laws and the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956.

It was further exacerbated by White Flight in the 1960s in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement.

Population Composition
- Population Composition - the biological and social characteristics of a population.
- Affected by changes in the fertility, mortality and migration rates.
- The ethnic composition of communities also has an impact on social and human services.
- Age Distribution - distribution of individuals by age
  - Provides a community with direction in its social and economic planning, affecting its education, health, housing and employment needs.

Table 14-4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pop. 2000</th>
<th>Pop. 2005</th>
<th>Pop. 2010</th>
<th>Pop. 2015</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>82,331</td>
<td>84,017</td>
<td>85,793</td>
<td>87,569</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>89,345</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>85,793</td>
<td>87,569</td>
<td>89,345</td>
<td>91,121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: As of 2015, there were only two megacities in the world, by 2050, there could be three (Ethiopia and Bangladesh). By 2100, there could be five (Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, China, India).


Functionalist Perspective
- Durkheim: Society changed from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity.
  - Mechanical solidarity - members in small simple societies united through a set of common values, beliefs and customs and a simple division of labor.
  - Organic Solidarity - the result of increasing industrialization and the growth of large complex societies, where individuals are linked through a complex division of labor.
  - Shift from solidarity based on sameness to solidarity based on difference.
FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

- Industrialization and urbanization have been functional, creating a more efficient, interdependent, and productive society (+), but have also been problematic (-).
  - With weakening of social bonds and absence of norms (anomie), society begins to lose its ability to function effectively.
  - As social bonds weaken, so does sense of obligation or duty to one another.
  - Such that urbanization can lead to social problems such as crime, poverty, violence, and deviant behavior.
- Solutions:
  - Reinforcing or recreating social bonds through social institutions or political and economic initiatives.

CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

- Critical Political-Economy (aka socio-spatial) Perspective - uses a conflict perspective to focus on how cities are formed on the basis of racial, gender, and/or class inequalities.
  - Cities are shaped by powerful actors working within capitalistic structure.
  - Social problems are natural to this system, arising from the unequal distribution of power between politicians versus taxpayers, the rich versus the poor, the homeowner versus the renter, etc.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

- Feminist urbanists argue for development of theory and research which acknowledge the role of women in urban structures because theories about urbanization have traditionally taken a gender blind approach.
- Examples:
  - Feminist theory on patriarchy can help us understand the ways cities reproduce and challenge patriarchy and the problems this creates.
- Living conditions of lower income, inner city women have been affected by the economic restructuring of cities and the patterns of downtown development.

INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

- A city represents an opportunity for individuals to find self expression, while being connected with fellow city dwellers.
- The way a city is constructed might actually interfere with your social interaction with others.
  - Ex: Simmel’s Blasé Attitude
  - Ex: Urban communities are segregated by income, race/ethnicity, or immigrant status, which contributes to our isolation, physically and through meanings we attach to these different neighborhoods.
- Ex: Urban dwellers are able to create a “public privacy” while living in a demanding urban world (e.g. newspaper, iPad, etc.)
  - How do you create and maintain your public privacy?

SUMMARY

- Along with suburbanization came the decentralization - some say the demise of American cities.
LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- A major problem is the lack of affordable housing.
- Causes:
  - The lack of public assistance.
  - Increasing prices.
  - Slow wage growth.
  - Limited inventory of affordable apartments and houses.
  - Discrimination and prejudice.
  - Central city residents less likely to own a home than suburban residents with the same income.
  - Along with the increase in homeownership rates there has been a decline in home affordability.
  - Minorities are more likely to be denied home loans, even if they have similar financial, employment and neighborhood backgrounds.

HOUSEHOLD CROWDING

- Household Crowding - the number of individuals per room in a dwelling.
- Crowding - when there is more than one person per room in the household.
- Children from more crowded homes have greater behavioral problems in the classroom.

SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

- Substandard Housing
  - Housing quality has been associated with morbidity from infectious diseases, chronic illnesses, injuries, poor nutrition, and mental disorders.
  - People of color and those with low incomes are disproportionately exposed to substandard housing.

HOMELESSNESS

- The number of homeless is at least in the hundreds of thousands, not counting those who live with relatives or friends.
- Pre mid-1970s, the majority of the homeless were older, single males with substance abuse or physical or mental problems.
- Since the mid-1970s, however, the increasing number of homeless men, women, and families indicates that more than individual disabilities or personal characteristics are causing homelessness.
- New homeless are likely to be:
  - Female
  - Ethnic Minority
  - 20s-30s
  - Unemployed
  - No or Low Income

OTHER URBAN ISSUES

- Studies indicate that family homelessness in the 1980s and 1990s was primarily attributable not to individual deficits but to:
  - The increased number of the poor, especially minority, single, female-headed households.
  - The lack of affordable low-income housing units.
- Other Causes:
  - Mental illness and the lack of needed services
  - Lack of affordable housing
  - Substance abuse and the lack of needed services
  - Low-paying jobs
  - Domestic violence
  - Prisoner reentry
  - Unemployment
  - Poverty
GENTRIFICATION

- **Gentrification** - the process of neighborhood change which results in the replacement of lower income residents with higher income ones.
- "double edged sword" - some point to increasing real estate values, tax revenues, and commercial activity (+) but the most contentious byproduct is the involuntary displacement of low income residents (-).

URBAN SPRAWL

- **Urban Sprawl** – When the spread of development outpaces population growth.
- Began with land developments after WWII.
- Creates 4 conditions:
  - Population widely dispersed in low density developments.
  - Rigidly separated homes, shops, and workplaces.
  - A network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access.
  - A lack of well-defined activity centers, such as downtowns or town centers.

COMMUTING

- On average, an American worker’s daily commute is about 24 minutes (one-way commute time).
- As sprawl increases, so do the number of miles traveled, number of vehicles owned per household, traffic fatality rates, air pollution (Corvin 2001; Ewing et al. 2002), and eventually, our risk of asthma, obesity, and poor health.
- Food for Thought:
  - Is public transportation available in Houston?
  - Is it effective?
  - Does it serve all populations well?

SOCIAL ACTION

- **Department of Housing and Urban Development** - Federal agency responsible for addressing the nation’s housing needs and improving and developing the nation’s communities.
  - Created in 1965.
  - Part of Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty.
  - Enforces fair housing laws.
  - Administers programs to provide a decent, safe and sanitary environment for every American.
  - Has been a major player in:
    - Influencing land use decisions in urban areas.
    - Spurring economic growth and development in distressed communities.
- **Renewal Communities, Empowerment Zones, and Enterprise Communities**
  - Program brings communities together through partnerships to attract the social and economic investment necessary for sustainable economic and community development.
- **Sustainable Communities**
  - Since the early 60s, thousands of public-private partnerships have been formed to work for economic development, educational improvement, environmental protection, health care, social issues and other issues critical to communities.
  - Table on Next Slide
- **Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program - HOPE VI**
  - Program grants fund demolition of distressed public housing and rehabilitation or new construction.
  - Has been criticized for worsening housing situations since all demolished units are not replaced and not all residents return.
CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

- Urbanization is characterized by a series of both improvements and consequences.
  - Such as?
- The study of urban areas was central to the development of early American sociology and remains an important component of the field.
  - There are a variety of approaches to studying city life (F, C, F, I).
- A number of social policies have been adopted in an effort to combat the problems associated with urbanization.
  - Such as?