

14. Cities and Urban Life

Objectives

- Analyze the growth of cities
- Evaluate theories of urban growth
- Analyze benefits and problems of urbanization

Vocabulary

city	gentrification	suburb
Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA)	megacity	urbanization
	metropolis	

Background

Like most other Americans, students are fascinated by this country's great cities, from New York to Houston to San Francisco. In this chapter, students gain a broader perspective of cities, their history and their problems. They study how cities grew, types of urban areas, theories of urban growth, urban culture, and recent trends in urbanization.

Students discover the history of urbanization with accounts of great cities of the ancient world and medieval Europe. Next they learn about the city growth sparked by the Industrial Revolution and the growth of cities in the U.S.

Students also discover three categories of cities in terms of population and area: the metropolis, the CMSA (Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area) and the megacity.

Students then survey and analyze three theories of urban growth. The concentric zone theory proposed that a city spreads out from the center in concentric zones, with each zone having a different use. The sector theory proposed a model in which cities grow outward from the center in wedge-shaped sectors. The multiple-nuclei pattern posits that a city grows from several different centers.

Next students examine two prevailing approaches to the study of urban culture, especially comparisons of urban to rural life. The urban anomie theory of Louis Wirth posits that living in big cities alienates people from each other and leads to antisocial behavior. The compositional theory of Herbert Gans sees city culture as a collection of urban villages, with people associating in neighborhoods or small groups of friends and associates.

In the last section of the chapter, students analyze three current trends in urbanization and their possible consequences for our society. The trends include shifting populations, edge cities, and urban renewal. Students also analyze urban problems such as housing segregation, disappearance of small businesses, crime and drug trafficking, and poverty. Students then discover how to approach these trends from the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives of sociology.

Further Resources

Anderson, Elijah. *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Gans, Herbert. *Making Sense of America*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

For Discussion

Review

1. What are three types of urban areas?
2. What are three theories of how cities grow?
3. What are two theories of urban culture?
4. What are the current trends in urbanization?

Critical Thinking

1. Why have cities grown so large in modern times? Give at least three causes.
2. What are the negative and positive effects of urban sprawl? Support your answer with examples.
3. Which of the three theories of urban growth do you think is the most valid? Give reasons for your opinion.
4. Do you agree that there is such a thing as an “urban personality”? If so, what are the characteristics of this personality? Support your opinions with examples.
5. What are some factors that might affect the growth of cities in the future? Support your answers with examples.

Activities

1. Ancient Cities

Divide students into teams. Ask each team to choose and research an ancient city that is mentioned in the text. Ask them to find visual resources as well as information. Have the teams report on results.

2. Interviews: Life in the City

Ask each student to interview an adult that they know who has lived in one of America’s large cities. Begin by having the class create a list of questions for the interviews. These might include questions about when and where the interviewee lived, why he or she chose to live or stay in the city, positive and negative aspects of the experience, and the person’s favorite story about city life. Have students share their results.

3. Internet: Visit Your Dream City

Ask teams of students to choose a dream city anywhere in the world—the city they’d most like to visit—and visit it online. Have them prepare exhibits about their Dream Cities for other possible tourists in the class, including an itinerary, places to stay, sights to see, possible costs, etc.

4. Special Sources: Urban Problems

Ask students to choose an urban problem that interests them and use the library and Internet to prepare a report on it.

Name _____

14. Cities and Urban Life

As you read Chapter 14, write an answer to each question below.

1. In the concentric zone, sector, and multiple-nuclei theories of urban growth, what are the categories for urban districts?

2. Compare the urban anomie theory of Louis Wirth and the compositional theory of Herbert Gans.

3. What are three recent trends in city demographics and culture?

4. What are four social problems that characterize city life?

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of city living? Include your own views.

Name _____

14. Cities and Urban Life

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is a permanent concentration of a relatively large number of people?
 - a. city
 - b. suburb
 - c. neighborhood
 - d. edge city
2. What do the initials CMSA stand for?
 - a. Common Metropolis and Suburb Association
 - b. Consolidated Metropolis and Suburb Area
 - c. Consolidated Metropolitan and Statistical Area
 - d. City Metropolis Suburb Agglomeration
3. What term describes the renovation of former working class neighborhoods by white-collar professionals?
 - a. urban sprawl
 - b. gentrification
 - c. urban renewal
 - d. urbanization
4. What word means alienation—the feeling of being apart from other humans?
 - a. agglomeration
 - b. anomie
 - c. multiple-nuclei
 - d. urban personality
5. What term is used to describe how cities absorb smaller cities as they spread?
 - a. edge cities
 - b. urban renewal
 - c. composition
 - d. urban sprawl
6. What is a city with 5 million or more people?
 - a. concentric zone city
 - b. suburb
 - c. megacity
 - d. CMSA
7. What word describes the combination of a city and its suburbs?
 - a. agglomeration
 - b. sunbelt
 - c. edge city
 - d. metropolis
8. What is a mostly residential area on the outskirts of a city?
 - a. suburb
 - b. edge city
 - c. rural area
 - d. agglomeration
9. What is the movement of people from rural to urban areas?
 - a. urban renewal
 - b. urbanization
 - c. composition
 - d. agglomeration
10. What are smaller cities at the boundaries of their larger counterparts?
 - a. suburbs
 - b. agglomerations
 - c. edge cities
 - d. slums

Name _____

14. Cities and Urban Life

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. The largest city in the world in the year 900 was _____.
 - a. Teotihuacán
 - b. Baghdad
 - c. Xian
 - d. Constantinople
2. The largest megacity in the world today is _____.
 - a. Tokyo
 - b. New York
 - c. Mexico City
 - d. Bombay
3. In the concentric zone and sector theories of urban development, a city is built around _____.
 - a. upper-class housing
 - b. light manufacturing
 - c. the center business district
 - d. transportation hubs
4. Today _____ of the people of the United States lives in urban areas.
 - a. one out of three
 - b. 82 percent
 - c. two-thirds
 - d. 40 percent
5. Most of the world's megacities are _____.
 - a. in the world's richest countries
 - b. in the world's poorest countries
 - c. in the United States and Europe
 - d. outside the United States
6. There is a worldwide mass movement away from _____ toward cities.
 - a. suburbs
 - b. rural areas
 - c. multiple nuclei
 - d. urban villages
7. The concentric zone, sector, and multiple-nuclei theories of urban growth focus on _____.
 - a. spatial configuration and land use
 - b. demographic trends
 - c. ecological issues
 - d. technology and distribution
8. According to sociologist George Simmel, the "urban personality" is a form of _____.
 - a. alienation
 - b. agglomeration
 - c. self-protection
 - d. segregation
9. In general, the population of the United States is _____.
 - a. shifting from Northeastern and Midwestern cities to "sunbelt" cities.
 - b. breaking up into smaller cities
 - c. reversing the trends of poverty in the cities
 - d. shifting from suburban to urban areas
10. Two trends that contribute to homelessness are poverty and _____.
 - a. anomie
 - b. urban renewal
 - c. shortage of affordable housing
 - d. edge cities

Essay Question

What solutions would you propose for the problem of growing poverty in U.S. cities?