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Population, Urbanization, and the Environment

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 15 ties together three interrelated aspects of society that are key to figuring out the modern world. The chapter begins with an explanation of the numerous demographic indicators that contribute to our understanding of the populations of the world. Key variables such as growth rates, birth rates, fertility rates, and death rates are explained.

Next, Thomas Malthus's theory is addressed briefly, along with Marx's response to Malthus. This is followed by Thompson's demographic transition theory, which posits that societies around the world follow four stages of growth. This theory, however, has several critics. Some of the more notable argue that this model is oversimplified, monolithic, and contains a Western bias.

Shifting to a more Canadian focus, the chapter shows how urban development in Canada has five distinct epochs. The first was the mercantile era during the days of British North America. The early nineteenth century saw the second period of urban development with weaker ties to Britain and an increase in commercial production and consumption. By the time Canada entered Confederation, the third stage—industrialization—had come into full force. Following the Second World War, the redistribution-oriented government interventions epoch had become policy. Up until 1975, it helped stimulate demographic and economic growth. The fifth epoch of deindustrialization, which we are currently in, is characterized by a shift away from the redistribution and social welfare government model towards one of neo-liberalism.

Sociology is keenly interested in city life and functionalist theorists saw an urban–rural divide. For Ferdinand Tönnies, the terms *Gemeinschaft* (rural community) and *Gesellschaft* (industrial urban community) characterized communities. For Émile Durkheim, communities were classified as having

either mechanical solidarity (rural) or organic solidarity (urban), with each having different social relationships and degrees of cohesion. Georg Simmel's theory, while not necessarily a theoretical model, provided the foundation for the Chicago School of thought in sociology where scholars developed urban sociology in the 1920s. Theorists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess conceptualized the concentric zone model which consists of five zones. The conflict approach to urbanization sought to explain how cities in modern times are oriented around profit, capitalist and neo-liberal policies, and power inequalities.

The next section of this chapter looks at environmental sociology. This area of sociology grew out of a concern for the environment after numerous environmental problems became evident in the twenty-first century. Concepts such as climate change, ecological footprints, the notion of sustainable development and urban sustainability have become hot topics for society and social scientists. The chapter ends with the issue of urban sprawl, one of the most significant environmental and social problems affecting many large cities in Canada.

KEY TERMS

Birth rate	Green job	Net migration rate
Crude birth rate	Greenbelt	Replacement fertility rate
Crude death rate	Greenhouse effect	Settler colonialism
Deindustrialization	Growth rate	Staple economy
Demographic transition	Infant mortality rate	Urban sprawl
Demography	Life expectancy at birth	Urban sustainability
Gentrification	Natural growth rate	
Global economy	Net migration	

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Malthus's theory and how did Marx respond? (p. 347)
2. What is a crude death rate? (p. 346)
3. Bunting, Filion, and Walker identify what five distinct epochs of urban development in Canada? (p. 350)
4. What is the human exemptionalist paradigm (HEP)? (p. 361)
5. What is a "replacement fertility rate" and what is the estimated number required to sustain a population? (p. 345)
6. In what ways is urban sprawl one of the most significant environmental and social problems affecting many larger cities in Canada? (p. 362)
7. What is the second stage in the demographic transition theory? What characterizes it? (p. 349)
8. What is sustainable development? (p. 360)

9. Why are new forms of gentrification and urban renewal targeting abandoned industrial sites? (p. 363)
10. Why does the conflict approach criticize urban gentrification? (p. 364)

READINGS AND WEBSITES

Bulkeley, Harriet and Michele Betsill. (2005). *Cities and climate change: Urban sustainability and global environmental governance*. London: Routledge.

Bulkeley and Betsill's book is divided up into three parts. In the first part, the authors address the political aspects of climate change, ranging from its governance by various nations, to the local/regional/municipal governments. In part two, they examine a few cities (mostly in the United Kingdom) and the various strategies of climate protection. In the final part, the authors look at cities that are currently attempting to protect the climate and the transnational networks for global environmental governance.

Bunting, Trudi and Pierre Fillion (eds). (2006). *Canadian cities in transition: Local through global perspectives*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

This book emphasizes Canada. More specifically, it examines how cities in Canada have evolved and changed over time. Looking at recent trends of the cities, the authors discuss what these trends mean for society today, and what implications may be present for future policies. The addition of addressing changes in these Canadian cities not only at a local level, but on a global level, provides the reader with a greater degree of understanding as to how several forces act on and shape our cities.

Hiller, Harry (ed) (2010). *Urban Canada: Sociological perspectives* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

This book covers a wide variety of areas within urbanization studies in Canada. The first section of the book encompasses readings regarding the historical and global aspects of Canadian urbanization along with its dynamics. The second section focuses on the differences between rural and urban, the rise of inequality in urban spaces, and immigration into Canada. This is followed up with a modern analysis of cities, with specific focus on the neo-liberal city, political economy, consumer culture, and housing.

Greene, Gregory. (2016, Oct. 6). "Growing Pains." *The Globe and Mail*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/growing-pains-how-toronto-and-the-gta-are-battling-urban-sprawl/article30506518/>

In "Growing Pains," a three-part documentary series directed by Gregory Greene, and produced in partnership with Evergreen CityWorks and *The Globe and Mail*, viewers will explore the decades-spanning planning history that led to the creation of the act. See first-hand the progress city planners and residents across the region have made—and the challenges they have faced—and peek at what the near future holds for one of Canada's fastest-growing regions.

Politics Video Channel. (2017, Apr. 22). “Bill Nye Destroys climate change-denying Trump advisor William Harper.” [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQY3-rQzVD8>

In a clear difference of opinion and interpretation of data, Bill Nye argues with Trump’s climate-change denying advisor. Along with explicitly making his point, Nye also criticizes CNN for even allowing Harper the opportunity to talk on air.