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URBAN PATHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Urban theorists have long debated to what extent and how the social problems of the city have been brought about or exaggerated in some consistent way by the urban environments in which they occur. This presentation reviews theories of urbanism, and the features of cities which contribute to the augmentation and control of various types of social pathology. Special emphasis is given to some types and patterns of urban unrest, and the structural characteristics associated with deleterious urban environments. Also included is perspective on the contested nature of social relations, the construction of perceptions of social pathology, and some overall implications for public policy relative to urban pathology.

INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of the full history of human civilization, cities and urban places are relatively recent social inventions. Though we tend to identify major civilizations/dynasties of antiquity by the key city, which was usually near the center of the empire (e.g. Rome, Athens, Beijing, Old Delhi), until recently, the world has been overwhelmingly rural. Even by beginning of the 19th century less than 3 percent of the worlds population lived in places of 20,000 or more. London was the only city with a population of 1,000,000. Now as we end the 20th century, approximately 50 percent of the worlds population lives in cities of 20,000 or more, with several mega-metropolises of 20,000,000 population or more.

This new urban society, with significant social, cultural and economic implications, is transforming modern social relationships. Traditional social institutions, the nature of social order, and mechanisms of social control have been challenged to adjust to the new urban patterns and relationships. While urbanization refers to the comprehensive process of metropolitan growth, this paper will focus more on urbanism -- the behavioral effect of living in an urban areas on values, mores, customs, and behavior. Specifically, it will explore some broad universal social problems or pathologies typically associated with life in cities.

In the analysis of urbanization/urbanism, it is important to understand that these modern processes occur in parallel with a whole set of interrelated institutional changes associated industrialization. Economic and educational innovations, changes in the family, religion, mass media, and government have all influenced and were influenced by patterns of population and cultural change. Stability in urban society versus change and deviance must be understood in the context of both urbanization and industrialization more generally.

OVERVIEW OF SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF URBANISM IN THE GLOBAL SETTING

Classic theoretical formulations of the social psychology of urban life have tended to emphasize the pathological rather than constructive aspects of social change. For example, American urban scholars of the 1920s and 1930s assumed linear relationships treating urban growth as an independent variable and both economic success and social disorganization as dependent variables. The most famous treatise on the subject was Louis Wirth's essay *Urbanism as a Way of Life*. In summary, some effects of city size on urban life (see Phalen, 1992) as described by Wirth are:

1. The replacement of the artisan system by a more complex and extensive division of labor.
2. A cultural change emphasizing rational and utilitarian goals of success, achievement and social mobility.
3. A decline in the strength and functionality of the family system, and a shifting of responsibilities from the family to public institutions (e.g. schools, government agencies, business).
4. An overall breakdown in the support of primary groups underlying traditional bases of social solidarity in family, neighborhood, and community. Secondary group-control mechanisms, such as the legal system, and public agencies increase in importance.
5. A decline in interpersonal relations based on affective characteristics. Utilitarian considerations increase in importance and people interact based on segmented roles within formal institutions (e.g. the occupational role), rather than relationships based on the whole person.
6. Decrease in cultural homogeneity and an increase of diversity of values, views and opinions. This leads to the emergence of deviant subcultures and pathology at variance with the larger society.
7. An increase in the separation of groups spatially on the basis of

income, status, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.

According to this school of urban theory, overall social and organizational characteristics of cities tend to foster the personal experience of alienation, social isolation, loss of identity and social disorganization.

On the other hand, an alternative school of thought purports that these generalizations are limited by historical time, culture, and the differing composition and variety of urban areas. For example, Herbert Gans (1972) argues that isolation, social disorganization and deviance are more a consequence of urban-industrial society, rather than of the city itself. He argues there is not necessarily a relationship between size, density, and heterogeneity with deviance or social disorganization. These theorists point out that many urban residents have relationships with others which are as full and meaningful as residents in small towns. For example, studies of community life in San Francisco demonstrate that family and kinship bonds continue to be strong and supportive (Drabek and Key, 1984).

In sum, this line of theory posits that the experience of urban living varies enormously depending on where you live and what you belong to. They argue that Wirths characterization would apply to a few categories of residents (inner city and slum residents), while other categories of urban residents have social and cultural anchors which shield them. Gans suggests that types of urban residents who are perceived to be at the margins of society (outcasts -- cosmopolites, unmarried or childless, elderly, unemployed, and poor) are most likely to experience pathology.

In other important work, Claude Fisher (1982) has suggested a third perspective on major effects of urbanism on social life. His argument is that large cities contain enough people, and enough tolerance for unpopular ideas and interests, to allow subcultures to emerge and flourish. According to this theoretical approach urbanism does not weaken social groups, it strengthens and intensifies diverse subcultural patterns.

In summary, the theoretical debate about urban pathology today is not about the Urban-Rural dichotomy and size/density, as suggested by Wirths work. It is more

about special features of cities which contribute to the appearance of social problems. What is clear from the research literature is that the urban condition, especially in its individual and local manifestations, has some effect on the extent to which social problems occur and the particular forms they take (Herbert and Smith, 1989). As suggested by the discussion above, some key characteristics for differentiating types of urban experience relate to the externalities associated with spacial structures of cities, with group affiliations and conflicts, and with resources and opportunity structures for various categories of citizens.

URBAN PATHOLOGY AND SOCIAL ORDER

A society can be understood by studying social order. One central question is: How are institutions such as government, work, education, family, religion, police/military, media, etc. organized and functioning? Other questions are: What is the nature and effectiveness of social control? How it is changing and why? Society can be understood as comprised of both (1) mainstream social groups who support and benefit from the institutionalized order, and (2) opposition groups who have an interest in changing the status quo either by institutionalized means, or by collective behavior and social movements.

In societies with significant group differences (mainstream and deviant subcultures, social classes, ethnic groups, gender and age groups), it is useful to analyze and understand patterns and processes involved in the institutionalized competition and struggles of opposition groups with one another. To a significant degree, struggles, unrest and deviance in urban settings can be understood by dissatisfaction and frustration with unequal access to employment, income, education, housing, health care, welfare, etc. opportunities, in a destabilized institutional setting.

The contested nature of power and status relationships suggests that one should also recognize that categories, definitions and hierarchies of social problems are also subject to influence by incumbent versus opposition groups. What we identified as social problems are place, time and often interest group specific. Social conditions which elicit moral indignation and public interventions in one society or by one

incumbent group (e.g. health or housing) may not appear to merit attention at another time, by another society, or by opposition groups. Since the identification of social problems are socially constructed, social problems seen to be critical in a society in 1980, may no longer be viewed as worthy of major social policy and action effort. This contested nature of group relationships affects both the severity of the social problem state, and the recognition and legitimation of that state as a problem.

URBAN UNREST

Four particularly urban types of unrest often associated with conflict versus social control are crime, gang activity, riots, and social movements. It would be a mistake, of course, to suggest that cities are necessarily violent, disorderly, or disruptive. Some of the largest, most densely populated cities in the world are extremely safe and quiet (e.g. cities in East Asia). Though urban environments do not encourage unrest, per se, metropolitan areas do tend to have higher rates.

Crime

How much crime is there in cities, and what kind of crime is it, and what do the trends show about increases or decreases in crime? Crimes are acts that violate the law, and in the U.S. the FBI publishes a crime rate which is an index of the reported rates (per 100,000 population) of eight common and serious crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, arson, and larceny. Data from the United States tends to show that cities are most crime prone, see Table I.

Table I. Crime Rates in the U.S. per 1,000 inhabitants by Type of Community, 1980, 1993.

	Total Crime		Violent Crime		Property Crime	
	1980	1993	1980	1993	1980	1993
U.S.Total	59	55	5.8	7.5	53	47
Metropolitan Areas	68	60	7.0	8.5	61	52
Other Cities	54	53	3.5	5.0	50	48
Rural Areas	23	20	1.8	2.2	21	18

Source : Data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1980, Table 1 and 1993, Table 2.

Though metropolitan areas in the U.S. have higher crime rates, the highest rates of crime tend to be in the second and third tier cities. The largest cities (New York and Los Angeles) actually rank in the 70-79th range for total crime, though near the top for violent crimes. The conclusion is that different cities have different rates and types of crime.

That social problems are socially constructed is no more evident anywhere than in terms of crime. Great attention continues to be given to property crime and crime on the streets such as mugging. Yet we see barely the tip of the iceberg of corporate crime, and much financial business appears to hover around the fringe of illegality.

Currie (1985) and Sullivan (1989) found that crime rates vary inversely with economic viability. The research they surveyed found that young people are most likely to commit crimes when they are unable to find high-quality satisfying work, and when educational opportunity is blunted.

MacLeod (1995) and Anderson (1990) studied how the community and family setting in job-poor neighborhoods can encourage crime. Many young people develop a sense of powerlessness about achieving through socially acceptable channels, and completely give up on the prospect of going to college or finding a legitimate occupation. Many have parents and older siblings who are still mired in poverty despite many years of hard work. They also have seen others take a criminal route

to some economic success. From this view, crime is a response to an economic setting that has different opportunities, rewards, and risks for legitimate work compared to illegal work such as dealing drugs, or selling stolen goods.

Fishers sub-culture hypothesis helps account for the existence and meaning of gangs within the urban scene. Gangs are overwhelmingly composed of teenagers or young adults and are characterized by homogeneity in composition. Gangs typically exist within a context of rivalry and competition. Violence is used as a way to gain power, respect and material success -- when they can not get these from school, their menial jobs, or dysfunctional social relationships. Violence and crime are only minor parts of most gangs activities; hanging around, showing-off, dancing, playing sports, drinking, looking for girls, etc. take a greater proportion of gang members time. Members join gangs for economic gain, protection, fun and socializing, access to drugs and alcohol, rebellion from parents, etc. (Williams and Kornblum, 1985).

Victimization studies also demonstrate that risk is coincident with common indicators of urban deprivation (Smith, 1989). In addition, incidence of victimization is connected with characteristics of the urban lifestyle such as increased separation of workplace from residence, increasing participation of women in the work force, a preference for leisure activities outside the home, all trends ensuring that property is left unguarded.

Variations in the distribution of risks is also related to life-style and activity patterns. Demographic characteristics associated with vulnerability include: the young seem to be more vulnerable than the elderly to a range of personal and property crimes; males are more at risk than females from violent crimes (with the exceptions of rape and domestic violence); and there are significant differences by ethnic group status.

The impact of crime is often greatest among those less at risk -- women and elderly are more fearful than men or youth. On the other hand, public fears are often accurately grounded -- the poor suffer most from both crime and from the anxiety it generates (Kinsey, 1984). Quite thought-provoking, however, is the discovery that fear is most acute, and most likely to be debilitating, where communities feel a sense of powerlessness, instability, and/or lack of confidence/trust

in social control agencies (police, military, etc.) who are to support them. Smith (1989) notes that repressive styles of policing, decaying physical environments, and incomplete social support networks all act to heighten the sense of victimization.

The use and sale of illegal drugs have added another dimension to the urban crime profile in recent years. Drugs, it is argued, have eroded the moral fabric of modern urban society, and the malaise is purportedly continuing to grow. It is popular for residents and political candidates in Western nations to declare an all-out war on drug abuse in cities. Though neither the use or sale of illegal drugs is an index crime, that is one reported by FBI statistics, arrests for drug offenses have risen sharply in recent years.

The challenges of controlling drug use include the quite universal tendency for societies to use some form of intoxicant for recreational purposes, the global economic profit imperative from alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, and the decline in social/cultural commitments, strong self-identities, etc. as alternative coping mechanisms to compete with drug use. There are tremendous costs and burdens via health education and rehabilitation, suggesting that this is a problem for society at-large and not just for addicts and their families.

At least a brief mention of beverage alcohol should be made in this overview of urban pathologies. It has been estimated that ten times more people die as a result of someone abusing alcohol than from the abuse of all the illegal drugs combined (NYSDA, 1986). In spite of this, beverage alcohol is easily available, relatively cheap, and widely advertised. It is evident that alcohol consumption is generally more widespread in the U.S. in an urban area than elsewhere and also more diversified (Room, 1983). Alcohol consumption patterns in the city tend to involve drinking at a wide variety of times and places, particularly if there is an extensive tourist and entertainment business. All these factors make it likely that the density of alcohol outlets will be considerably higher in cities than elsewhere.

Finally, some comment is merited on the relationships of policing, crime and perceived well-being in urban areas. Associated with urbanization and modernization has been a professionalization, specialization, and standardization of police practice. This has usually meant a centralization of authority and power

distancing and rigidifying key decisions from local contexts and sensitivities. This creates a gap between the police and the public -- often seen as widest in the inner cities and among racial and minority populations.

Riots

Collective behavior refers roughly to emergent and extra-institutional social forms and behavior -- panic stricken, riotous and ecstatic crowds being the more dramatic of types of expressions. Urban settings are breeding grounds for such spontaneous or sometimes orchestrated crowd behavior. Sociologists classify riots by three types: (1) communal riots between opposing racial or religious groups, (2) political riots centering on a specific government policy or situation, and (3) commodity riots where the object of violence is clearly property rather than people of the opposition group (Miller, 1985). Rioting is clearly a non-trivial form of civil unrest manifesting the accumulation of pent-up grievances and the failure of institutional means to resolve differences and concerns. Riots and epidemics of riots are a significant challenge to institutional social order, and may be precursors to violent social change, even revolution, if the conflict is allowed to escalate.

Studies of modern urban riots in American and British society have shown that there is no separate problem of riots-civil disorders as such (Keith, 1989). Rather, they represent a series of specific, ongoing conflicts built into the structure of the civil society, which may at times erupt in popular or violent mobilization, and may at times be manipulated by the various opposition groups (including the media) in rhetoric symbolic of the political discourse. According to Morrison and Lorry (1994), two conditions characterize readiness for violence: (1) a long accumulation of deep-felt grievances against an opposition group without means for resolution, and (2) a large pool of idle young men who have little stake in civil order.

Social Movements

A social movement is an organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale

social change by group tactics which fall outside of official or institutional means (Piven and Cloward, 1977). Wealthy groups with more access to the resources of money and power are more likely to work within the system, whereas middle class and the poor often have to turn to social movement tactics (inside and outside the law) to pursue social action. In his book The City and the Grassroots, Manuel Castells (1983) suggests that urban social movements often address three types of issues:

1. **Collective consumption**, or the movement to maintain high-quality, publicly supported goods and services, such as subsidized housing and parks, and to preserve historic areas.
2. **Community**, or the search for cultural identity that affirms ethnically or socially based ties within a neighborhood.
3. **Citizens movements**, or movements organized to gain political influence or self-management.

Conditions of urban deprivation, inattention of authorities to local neighborhood or minority group needs, or oppression are often stimulus events which precipitate action, and serve to mobilize widespread grassroots support for change. Social movements are common mechanisms for social change -- mixing noninstitutional, yet legal, with other strategies clearly outside the law. Social movements are consciously organized to bring about change, often involving a renegotiation or redefinition of laws and public policies. For example, from the U.S., the case of a squatters campaign, where activists persuaded local and national authorities to change laws and policies regarding the ownership of abandoned housing, and the case of low-income groups successfully challenging the role of banking in mortgage lending by both putting direct pressure on banks and by indirect pressure on Congress and the government agencies that regulate banks (Kleniewski, 1997). Social movements are a natural and effective process of social change.

THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL CLASS

All complex societies are stratified, or unequal. In The Republic Plato noted, as well, that all cities are in fact two, one of the poor and one of the rich, then these are at war with one another. In any society or city there are persistent differences among social classes in wealth and in access to quality of life. Some argue that these differences represent the social problem of injustice, and that civil disorder is rooted in an unjust society (Keith, 1989). At minimum we must recognize that the wealth, power, and prestige of different social class groups affect ability to select, improve or change where one lives. The sorting of social classes tends to result in an extreme geographic concentration of poverty (see Figure 1). Housing and labor markets tend to foster this sort of spacial sorting, along with various institutional gate-keepers which influence access to housing and employment.

Figure I. Poverty Areas in six American Cities. (Source: Knox, 1989)

Housing

Population and urban growth associated with industrialization place severe strains on housing options (quantity, quality and price). Often, in the early stages of urban growth the problems of inadequate housing are most severe -- witness the development of shantytowns, ghettos, etc. -- contributing as well to public health problems. Later there are problems with the decline of the privately rented sector as single-family homes are handed down and converted to apartment or rooming houses. This might contribute to problems with of high rates of vacancies or property abandonment altogether. The roles of government, private interests, local planning and zoning boards, local neighborhood organizations, realtors, and lenders, etc, are all important for understanding the institutional mechanisms which sort and concentrate people in neighborhoods.

Unemployment

Early stages of industrialization also tend to be characterized by high levels of urban unemployment -- because of an over-supply of labor, inflated wage rates, and/or an exaggerated perception of the availability of well paid employment opportunities. In the post-modern deindustrializing economy, unemployment problems again become severe due to a downgrading of manufacturing jobs, a shift to service employment, and a polarization of the rich and poor.

Kleniewski (1997) summarizes two basic labor market trends in modern central cities. The first trend is that the work force has expanded more rapidly than the economic opportunities, and second, the number of well-paying jobs has decreased and the number of low-paying dead-end jobs has increased. In other words the competition for work has increased and the opportunity structure for workers who rank low in education and skill levels has narrowed.

The critical problem for residents of localized poverty neighborhoods is that these areas represent large concentrations of people who are the bottom rung of the hiring ladder -- the employers last choice. When economic opportunities are created these areas are the last to benefit. When there are plant closings or downsizing the population of these areas are first and greatest impacted. In sum, in addition to simple market features such as how much money a household makes and housing costs, a number of other social, political, and economic factors influence the poverty and social class status of a neighborhood.

The polarization between the rich and poor in modern Western society merits some further discussion. The size of the middle class is shrinking overall, but it seems to be shrinking more in the cities. The following data from the United States illustrate this fact.

Table II. Growing Inequality in Incomes in the United States, 1970-1990

Fifth of the Population	Shares of the Total Income Received by each Fifth		
	1970	1980	1990
Top fifth	43.3	44.1	46.6
Second fifth	24.5	24.8	24.0
Third fifth	17.4	16.8	15.9
Fourth fifth	10.8	10.2	9.6
Bottom fifth	4.1	4.2	3.9

Source : Kleniewski, 1997, Derived from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992e,
Table 1

Table III. The Changing Distribution of Incomes in Cities in the United States

	1969	1979	1989
Relative Incomes			
Median Income :			
Ratio of Selected Areas to Total U.S.			
Total population of the U.S.	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Cities of Metro Areas	1.00	.92	.88
Suburbs of Metro Areas	1.15	1.17	1.19
Percent of Population with			
Incomes Below 25% of the Median			
Total population	5.5	6.7	8.3
Central City population	5.1	9.2	12.3
Percent of Population with Incomes			
Greater Than Twice the Median			
Total population	10.9	11.9	14.7
Central City population	11.3	10.6	12.8

Source : Kleniewski, 1997, Derived from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991,
Tables 1nad 2

Except for the top income group, all experienced a decline between 1970 and 1990 in their share of the national earnings. The income gap in cities changed even more

than for the nation as a whole (Table III). In America, and also many other western nations, increasing inequality has also been caused by the growing number of single-parent families.

Since the 1980's in the west the emphasis of government policy has been more on shaping the legal infrastructure and upholding moral values (in public rhetoric if not necessarily in private conduct), rather than redistribution in response to social need. Social justice has almost become unfashionable as a sphere of discourse in the 1980s compared to the 1970s and 60s. Yet, is it no less pertinent today to ask what justifies the evident disparities in level of living between people whose shared humanity is arguably more important than what largely may be the good fortune of the right family, education, or job in the right place?

URBANIZATION AND URBANISM IN KOREA

To what extent does the theories, issues, patterns and trends discussed above apply to the analysis of urbanism in Korea? Phalen (1992) warns to be careful making generalizations about Asian cities -- that urbanization has very different historical and cultural roots in each society. The situation in Korea is indeed different from China, Japan, India, etc., as well as from the United State and Great Europe. However, there are also many commonalities and similarities, which merit further discussion.

One key characteristic of urbanization in Korea has been the rapid, even exponential, rate of development since 1945. According to Nahm (1988), the liberation from Japan at that time and the partition of Korea, together intitated an exhilarating yet challenging opportunity for social transformation of the social system and practices. Japans occupation of Korea for several decades had created artificial, manipulative and restrictive social controls. Though liberation from these restrictions produced great opportunity, cultural and economic development still faced critical limiting conditions. Principal among these were the divided nation, the Korean war and continued foreign occupation, the damaged social psychological outlook of a people long oppressed by occupying foreign powers, and changes in social cohesion

and moral fibre of the society.

Despite these challenges, Korea began to develop rapidly. The migration of large numbers of the rural population to urban centers was only one of an important set of social trends associated with overall national development (Nahm, 1988). These trends include industrialization of the economy, population growth, the decline of traditional religious concepts, greater social mobility, the rise of the middle class and a new elite class, the improvement in the status of women, and closing the gap between urban and rural areas. Collectively, they represent processes which characterize modernization.

In 1945 less than one-fifth of Korea's population resided in urban areas of more than 50,000 people, where today, more than four-fifths of the population live in urban areas of this size. This growth has been highly concentrated -- more than one-half of the national population lives in the six largest cities.

According to Kwon (1980) urban population growth during the 1950s and early 1960s was due mainly to external factors such as independence from Japan, the partition and the Korean War, with some outmigrants from rural areas -- mainly the extremely poor, or the rich -- looking for better opportunities. This rapid migration contributed to the supply of low-wage labor required for early stages of industrialization, but also gave influx to various problems such as squatter settlements, traffic congestion, and the like. Unemployment and poverty were acute problems for both urban and rural areas.

After the oil crises of the 1970s, the Korean economy recaptured momentum. This economic prosperity, the concentration of higher education in urban areas, the crop failures of the late 1980s, and the opportunity to reunite families continued to act drawing away the rural population. In consequence, critical housing shortages developed in urban areas. In response the government housing authority and private firms went to work. Now, while housing shortages remain, the shantytowns which sprung up around cities during earlier decades have declined -- as opposed to the development of ghettos which happened in many other countries.

Korea, with strong government leadership, has been aggressive in urban renewal and expansion plans for transportation systems, as well as the development of

commercial property, parks and private residences. The major cities have seen a conspicuous transformation into large modern cosmopolitan areas with significant secondary and tertiary industry. In 1990, approximately 20 percent of the total labor force was in agriculture, about 35 percent in mining/manufacturing/ construction, and about 45 percent in services. These expanded services include recreation opportunities such as theatres, museums, opera, and other cultural institutions, as well as nightclubs, bars and dance halls. Eating out has become increasingly popular. The acquisition of automobiles, mechanical and electronic household furnishings, Western style clothing, and styles, etc. have increased significantly. With the emergence of a large middle class and a smaller extremely nouveau riche class, Korea has seen a sort of epidemic of conspicuous consumption.

Urbanization has figured prominently in the changing way of life in Korean society, and is clearly the dominant context for contemporary Korean social life. Though regionalism, as well as family and hierarchical ties, remain strong overall, there has been new emphasis on social mobility and egalitarianism -- a shift from the tradition. In addition, the experience of large scale social dislocation and the decline of traditional relationships/values have not occurred without some level of social isolation, alienation, unrest and conflict. The perceived decline in public morality, and the breakdown of the traditional social code of conduct and the family system, have been perceived to be associated to some extent with life in cities. Though social deviance is at a low level as compared to Western standards, the occurrence of typical forms of deviance/pathology have increased. Varied subcultural and even counter-culture groups have emerged and expanded.

In addition, various forms of collective behavior and anti-establishment social movements are being promulgated by groups who are either missing out on economic prosperity, or critical of economic, political or cultural conditions. South Korean universities have been storm centers of young adults impatient with prevailing conditions. Urbanism and the relationship of urbanism with various social problems and pathologies are clearly salient for understanding contemporary Korean society.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented an overview of a variety of perspectives on urban pathologies in global as well as Korean contexts. Though differences have been noted, a number of common elements weave through these discussions and reflect a quite high level of agreement among academic researchers on pathology in the modern urban area.

As noted above, the key characteristics for differentiating types of urban experience relate to factors associated with:

1. The spacial structures of cities.
2. Group affiliations and the characteristics and life-styles of those groups.
3. Resources and opportunity structures associated with neighborhoods and various identity groups -- ethnic, religion, age, nationality, etc.
4. The characteristics of relationships -- conflicts between incumbent and opposition groups.
5. The social construction of urban pathology (problems) as it relates to the occurrence and severity of different social problems.
6. The nature and effectiveness of agents of social control.

The social problems of urban areas truly merit significant public concern and action. While it is worthwhile to study and learn to understand the processes which contribute to the continuance of urban problems, we must take action beyond understanding. Some factors associated with social problems are built into the structures of our societies, and others are a result of either inept or misguided managerial actions. Irregardless, it is always those at the margins of society who suffer most, those with least access to jobs, to good schools, quality health care and other amenities of the urban environment. Such people have least access to sources of power and control, weakest family and non-family support systems, and greatest difficulty getting government or private entities to recognize, legitimate, and act on their problems.

Though the urban social problems of our time which have elicited most government attention have themselves been significant, even symbolic. The stress by government has been on law and order, drug abuse, crime, and moral issues. In recent years national governments have shifted from trying to address social problems head-on via social policy and welfare services, to greater emphasis on economic priorities to increase the overall wealth of the nation.

It is of concern that there isn't more attention being given directly to deficiencies in attitudes and policies towards urban social problems. Government and society, at large, must retain a sense of responsibility and priority to social needs -- the social problems of the city are real problems felt by real people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and victimized.

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