Demographic Perspectives

A Demographic Perspective

- Two aspects:
  - Mathematical and biomedical theories
  - Social implications
- Two questions
  - What are the causes of population change?
  - What are the consequences of population change?

Premodern Doctrines

- Demographic Transition
- Other theories

Premodern Doctrines

- Premodern population doctrines
- Three major camps:
  - Malthusian perspective
  - Marxist perspective
  - Cornucopianism
- Demographic Transition
- Other theories

Premodern Doctrines

- Pronatalist vs. antinatalist:
  - Confucius:
    - More children means prosperity for the family
    - Stability and prosperity for the nation
  - Roman Empire:
    - Replace causality; colonize
  - Arab philosopher: Iban Khaldum
    - More people → specialization in occupation, higher income
  - Aristotle: number of children be limited by law
  - Christian leader: virginity is the highest form of human existence

The world we live in

- Problems?
- Assumptions?
- Solutions?
1. Malthusian Perspective

- Thomas R. Malthus (1766-1834)
- Principles of Population
  - Two postulates:
    - Food is necessary to the existence of man
    - Passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state
  - Two different growth patterns:
    - Population increases in a geometric ratio, if unchecked
    - Subsistence increases in an arithmetic ratio

Team Activity: Malthusian Perspective

- According to Malthus, what is the main problem?
  A) overpopulation
  B) inequality
  C) the lack of advanced technology for food production

Consequences

- Poverty
- Overpopulation
- Vicious cycle:
  - Increase in food production → population growth → overpopulation → poverty

Team Activity: Malthusian Perspective

- According to Malthus, what is the solution?
  A) Emigration
  B) Contraception
  C) Advance technology
  D) Distribute resources between the upper and lower classes
  E) Postpone marriage

Solutions

- Positive "checks": causes of mortality
  - Diseases
  - Starvation
  - War
  - Natural disasters
- Preventive "checks": birth control
  - Moral restraint
    - Postpone marriage, remain chaste
  - Improper means
    - Abortion, contraception
Social Implications
- Blame poverty on the poor themselves
- Against the English Poor Laws (benign neglect)
- Modern applications?

Team Activity: Malthusian Perspective
- What kind of assumptions did Malthus make? List at least two.

Critique
- Food production could not keep up with population growth
- Poverty was an inevitable result of population growth
- Moral restraint was the only acceptable preventive check

Overpopulation?
- Malthusian solutions?
  - Benign neglect: Let the poor die; No welfare program; no food aid, no immigration

Overall Evaluation
"There are good reasons for using Malthus as a point of departure in the discussion of population theory. These are the reasons that made his work influential in his day and make it influential now. But they have little to do with whether his views are right or wrong. Malthus’ theories are not now and never were empirically valid, but they nevertheless were theoretically significant" (Davis 1955: 541)

Neo-Malthusian Perspective
- Neo-Malthusian:
  A person who accepts the basic Malthusian premise that population growth tends to outstrip resources, but believes that birth control measures are appropriate checks to population growth
- Garrett Hardin (1915-2003):
  - Lifeboat ethics
  - the tragedy of the commons
  - What are the main “commons” in modern society?
  - List
Neo-Malthusian Perspective

- Neo-Malthusian:
  - Garrett Hardin (1915-2003):
    - Lifeboat ethics
    - the tragedy of the commons
  - Paul Ehrlich:
    - Too many people, too little food, environmental degradation

Team Activity (graded)

- Why does Hardin think the “World Food Bank” is not a solution?
  A) There is not extra food to create the “bank”
  B) It only encourages population growth
  C) It is unfair to the rich countries
  D) Rich countries are unwilling to do so
  E) Many countries do not like to depend on foreign aid.

Team Activity

- Why does Hardin object foreign aid (e.g. PL 480)?
  A) Foreign aid is insulting to poor countries
  B) Foreign aid is often more political than humanitarian.
  C) Special interests are involved
  D) While it is a good idea, no country is willing to do it
  E) Foreign aid encourages overpopulation

Team Activity: Neo-Malthusian Perspective

- According to neo-Malthusians, what is the solution?
  A) Emigration
  B) Contraception
  C) Advance technology
  D) Redistribute resources between the upper and lower classes
  E) Postpone marriage

Revisit Neo-Malthusian Perspective

- Problems?
- Solutions?
- Assumptions?

Overpopulation?

- Neo-Malthusian Solutions?
  - Birth control; No immigration
2. Marxist Perspective

- **Background**
  - Population growth is a product of a particular socioeconomic environment
  - Different causes, different consequences

- **Capitalist society:**
  - Causes of population growth
    - Unequal distribution of resources
    - Capitalism
    - "Surplus value"
    - "Industrial reserve army"
  - Consequence of population growth
    - poverty and overpopulation

- **An equitable society:**
  - Causes of population growth
  - Economic prosperity
  - Consequences of population growth
  - Wealth

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Team Activity: Marxist Perspective

- According to Marxists, what is the main problem?
  A) overpopulation
  B) poverty
  C) the lack of advanced technology for food production

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Revisit Marxist Perspective

- Problems?
- Solutions?
- Assumptions?
- Critique

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Overpopulation?

- Marxist Solutions?
  - Revolution
- Neo-Marxist solutions?
  - Redistribute resources

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3. Cornucopian Perspective

- No problem
- Population as a resource
- Technology

- Julian Simon
  - "The Resourceful Earth"
- World Bank, UN

Revisit Cornucopianism

- Problems?
- Solutions?
- Assumptions?
- Critique

Overpopulation?

1st
P: 20%  
C: 800kg

3rd
P: 80%  
C: 200kg

- Cornucopian Solutions?
  - Export technology to the 3rd world, e.g. green revolution

Demographic Perspectives

- Comparison

Demographic Transition

- Background
- Thompson, 1929
  - group A, B, C
- Notestein, 1945
  - Incipient decline, transitional growth, high growth potential
- Davis, 1945
  - "World Population in Transition"
Birth and Death Rates, Worldwide
Rates of birth, death, and natural increase per 1,000 population

Team Activity
- What is the main reason for demographic transition?
  - A) Modernization
  - B) Secularization
  - C) Expansion of capitalism
  - D) higher level of education
  - E) availability of contraception

Explain the Demographic Transition
- Modernization theory
  - “Development is the best contraceptive”
  - Macro-level theory
- Decline of death rate
- Decline of birth rate
- Lag of birth rate decline

Team Activity
- Why is there a lag in the decline of birth rate?
  - A) the lack of contraceptive methods
  - B) the strong desire for large families
  - C) it takes time to realize the need for smaller families
  - D) the cost for children remained low for a long time
  - E) The need for labor remained strong

Team Activity (graded)
- What is the main critique to Demographic Transition theory?
  - A) it is Eurocentric
  - B) it does not square with the reality
  - C) it does not explain the changes in population
  - D) it does not tell when the transition will happen
  - E) it is a perfect theory, no critique

Critique
- Eurocentric /ethnocentric
- Fail to predict the level and timing
- Deterministic
- Culture blinded
- Solutions?
Reformulation of the DT

- European Fertility Project
  - Development is a sufficient, not necessary cause
  - Secularization – cultural factors determines fertility
- Rational choice theory (wealth flow) – micro-level perspective
- Availability of contraceptive methods
- Home of all?
  - Late marriage (Malthusian)
  - Birth control, family planning (neo-Malthusian)
  - Change in social institutions, no universal law (Marxist)

Theory of Demographic Change and Response

- Davis, 1963; micro-level
- How can a mortality decline lead to a fertility decline?
- Responses to declining mortality
  - Work harder
  - Migration
  - 2nd generation
- Contributions
  - Link micro-level behavior to macro-level phenomenon, individual behavior to population changes

Relative Income Hypothesis

- Easterlin, 1968, 1978
- Adult vs. childhood well-being
- Economic changes
- Age structure, cohort size
- Contributions
  - Economic change \(\leftrightarrow\) demographic change
- Critique

Summary: Demographic Perspectives

- Premodern population doctrines
- Three camps:
  - Malthusian/Neo-Malthusian perspective
  - Marxist/Neo-Marxist perspective
  - Cornucopian perspective
- Demographic transition, and its reformulation
- Other theories
  - Theory of demographic change and response
  - Relative income hypothesis