

Final Examination Questions and Responses

Nicholas Rebhun

Prepared for:

**Dr. Efren Padilla
Social Demography (SOC 3200)
CSU East Bay**

Submitted:
December 6, 2013

A. Research and explain in your own words why population growth is considered as one of the most revolutionary phenomena of our times.

The science of demography dates back thousands of years, to the ancient Roman censuses. This culture used demography to calculate an approximate tax revenue for a given year, and further military exploits, among other things. Demography was later applied by monarchy throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as a means of determining the size of their respective empires, as well as determining the degree of an imposing enemy's threat. While modernized, information is still gathered for similar purposes today. Rapidly-evolving technology, over the course of the last sixty years, has made both data collection and data reference increasingly simple and significantly more accurate. Where the Romans went door-to-door to collect this type of information, censuses today are often gathered through computers and the internet, and storing this data for quick retrieval has never been easier.

In modernity, the practical applications are expansive. Demography is frequently applied to a wide range of industries. Governments, for example, use demography to determine the needs of their (and in the case of America, everyone else's) populations. Politicians, individually, use data gathered by demographers to campaign for elections more effectively. Scientists apply the information towards research, forming hypotheses or observing the effects of an experiment with the data. Advertising companies are extremely dependent on demographic research; an advertisement placed incorrectly is as effective as trying to make a sales pitch across the Pacific Ocean using only the power of one's voice.

Though the provided examples have a more narrow view on the study of a population, the underlying goal of the field of demography is to predict the future of humanity. With demographic information we gain valuable insight towards global resource consumption and population growth, and gain the ability to approximately predict the future of our species. Population growth, for example, is a strong focus in the field. Currently, our population is expanding at an arithmetic rate. Despite this, our resource consumption has been growing exponentially. Research of population growth has led many historically significant scholars to develop theories to describe the sustainability of the human race.

B. Research and explain in your own words why the Marxian perspective rejects the Malthusian assumption of “natural law of population.”

Thomas Robert Malthus was born in February of 1766, to a successful family in England. Growing up he received his early formal education primarily at home, and in 1784 Malthus was admitted to Jesus College, in Cambridge. After earning his master of art’s degree in 1791, he was elected to be a fellow of the college. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, after marrying his wife Harriet Eckersall, Malthus became a political economics and history professor at the East India Company college.

Throughout his life, Malthus had always taken an interest in the development of populations. He gathered a wide spectrum of demographic data (everything from age of marriage, to economic affairs which might contribute towards longevity), and theorized that humanity was in danger of overpopulation. By this, he was not referring to the amount of space taken up by civilization on the planet; Malthus was referring to the rate of resource consumption by humanity. His data brought him to the conclusion that the human population grows at an exponential rate, while the production of food (resources) is set at an arithmetic growth rate. Logically, it follows that at some point, humanity will suffer from starvation, and Malthus argued that a population should practice abstinence to avoid deadlier forms of population reduction such as famine and disease.

In 1798, Malthus published his paper, “Essay on the Principle of Population” which was only received with acclaim by those in the field of economics. Malthus revised his published work a total of six times, each with updated data and modification to his evolving beliefs, based on his continual research on the topics included in the paper. Its stark, undeniable pessimism struck discord in those who did not see the paper for Malthus’ intended purpose. While the Essay does predict a dire outcome for humanity, Malthus makes a point of noting that economic incentives have actually saved the world’s human population from encountering this theorized disaster sooner.

Before discussing the Malthusian Perspective, it is important to note that Thomas Robert Malthus was, first and foremost, a scholar and a cleric of the late 1700’s. The Malthusian Perspective on population growth is a rather pessimistic view, essentially postulating that the human population will eventually come to outpace resource availability.

This theory was based on a very simple concept of mathematics. The first sentence in the second chapter of his published work, “Essay on the Principle of Population”, states that *“population, when unchecked, increased in a geometrical ratio, and subsistence for man in an arithmetic ratio.”* While the math behind this hypothesis makes sense, it would be reasonable for one to question the basis of the argument; how did Malthus know that the human population was increasing at an exponential rate? Thomas Robert Malthus based his argument on statistics gathered by great cultures of the past, such as the Roman Empire, and compared the demographic data against then-modern records, and discussed this throughout his Essay. Malthus cites an example of a successful culture in the fourth chapter of his papers, mentioning the

frugality of the Chinese population combined with a vast capacity for resource production indicates that this particular population has the potential for massive growth.

The system of checks which Malthus implicitly refers to in Chapter 2 of his Essay is further explained in later chapters. Primarily, Malthus believed that war, disease, and famine would be the largest inhibitor for population growth. In Chapter 3 of the Essay, he discusses clan warfare between nomadic tribes, more commonly found in the ancient era. Malthus discusses the heightened frequency catastrophes such as widespread disease and famine, in overpopulated urban regions.

One solution Malthus offers to help reduce population growth without dealing with tragedies, is focused on birth rates. Unsurprisingly (given his background) Malthus urged his readers to practice moral restraint, through abstinence, and to only bare as many children as one can support. He also was in support of sterilization as a means of birth control, however Malthus considered contraceptives an unacceptable preventative measure.

While many go hungry in the world today, and many more succumb to deadly, irreversible diseases, the human population has (so far) largely managed to avoid the catastrophes Malthus argues are inevitable. Advancements in agricultural technology, have lead to an increase in global food production. One of the more notable achievements in this area comes from the German professor of chemistry, Fritz Haber. In 1909, Haber discovered a means by which nitrogen could be extracted from the air, in the form of ammonia (NH₃). The Haber Process is the reason the human population is able to sustain seven billion people. This process is also driving our population towards the estimated twelve billion mark by the year 2050. Additionally, continuous innovations in the medical field over the last century have vastly lengthened the average human lifespan. New, more effective vaccines are being developed and revised health standards contribute to the overall health of the population. As a result, humanity's average lifespan has increased significantly in the course of a few decades; a relatively microscopic period of time, considering our species' 5.4 million-year history.

The Father of Communism, Karl Marx is a name that seldom few people with a high school diploma haven't heard. Born, raised, and educated in Germany, Marx was a known sociologist and journalist, but make great bounds in the field of economics, which lead to the modern understanding of a population's work force with relation to net monetary gains. Marx wrote and published radical newspapers in Paris, until he was exiled in 1849. As a revolutionary philosopher, Marx vehemently opposed capitalism, claiming that the selfish ideals perpetuated in such an economic system would unavoidably lead to tensions that would force its collapse. He gave the system the nickname "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" and held the opinion that the wealthy perpetuated the system purely out of greed, without consideration of any other socio-economic group.

As a result of the system, Marx theorized that the proletariat (or working class) would volley for political power, and establish a counter to capitalism, he coined "dictatorship of the proletariat." In this government system, social classes based on wealth would be completely

eliminated, which is effectively what is known today as socialism. In addition to his published works on the topics, he fought openly for the implementation of socialism and communism, arguing that the underprivileged should start organized revolutions to overthrow their current systems of government.

The Marxist Perspective on population growth is actually not directly a theory regarding population growth. It is actually theory which was deduced from Karl Marx's views on a communist population. Essentially, Marxism places the issue as a result of corrupt capitalistic societies, which seek only to profit, caring little for the laborers. He theorizes that capitalism eventually leads to a reduction in labor, in the interest of maximizing profits. Reduced labor leaves a larger unemployed population, and a need for income reduces labor wage further. Poverty and hunger follow soon after this stage, and the social injustice that capitalism fuels reaches its peak.

This is in contrast with Malthusian Perspective, which states that the impoverished population is the source of social illness, which then leads to problems with population growth. Marx, himself, strongly criticized the Malthusian perspective. Instead, Marxism proposes that the issue actually lies in the greedy, selfish ideals of the successful capitalist whose pockets are lined through blindness towards the working class, which gets chewed up, then spit out, by the system. In fact, Marxism largely focuses on the injustices imposed by the "bourgeoisie", which is debatably ironic considering his well-seated middle-class upbringing.

C. Research, define, and discuss in your own words the relationship between “secularization” and “demographic transition theory.”

Secularization is defined as “the transformation of society from a close identification with who it is used and institutions towards nonreligious for irreligious values and secularists institutions.” Demographic Transition by itself is a model of demographic data, specifically focusing on the changing birth rate and the changing death rate of a population over the course of time, and with respect to the degree of modernization that a population has adopted. The model itself is based on the work of Warren Thompson, a demographer who studied the change in population growth in 1929. In essence, secularization describes the process by which a society changes, while Demographic Transition Theory extrapolates from data to form a similar conclusion, with regards to changes in human societies.

Projections depicted by the model’s data currently suggest that, as a population matures from pre-modernism into post-industrialism, both the change in birth rates and the change in death rates decline. The birth rate stays firmly above the death rate for quite some time, until a society is well into its post-industrial era. This indicates that population growth is imminent for developing cultures, and that a population increases exponentially, though the growth itself appears to slow considerably upon exiting the what is known as the “Mature Industrial” era.

The Demographic Transition Theory, therefore, states that a population will increase in size exponentially as it progresses through its industrialization. However, demographics indicate that the post-industrial era brings a slowing of population growth, almost to the point of population decline. These observations are rather interesting, because if one tries to apply the Malthusian Perspective to counter this theory, the data supporting Demographic Transition Theory remains strong. While the mathematics behind Malthusian and Neo-Malthusian Perspectives are logical, they do not necessarily account for the possibility for change in a human population. The data described by the Demographic Transition model, however, is data supported by continually updated demographic statistics, and gives a clear view on the status of population growth with regards to a typical country in each era of development.

D. Research and discuss in your own words at least three reasons for fertility decline.

Fertility is defined as "property of being fertile." The Demographic Transition Theory states that a population will increase in size exponentially as it progresses through its industrialization. However, demographic research and statistics currently indicate that the post-industrial era brings a slowing of population growth, almost to the point of population decline. These observations are rather interesting, because if one tries to apply the Malthusian Perspective to counter this theory, the data supporting Demographic Transition Theory remains strong. While the mathematics behind Malthusian and Neo-Malthusian Perspectives are logical, they do not necessarily account for the possibility for change in a human population. The data described by the Demographic Transition model, however, is data supported by continually updated demographic statistics, and gives a clear view on the status of population growth with regards to a typical country in each era of development. Currently, Demographic Transition Theory states that, as a population matures from pre-modernism into post-industrialism, both the change in birth rates and the change in death rates decline. The birth rate stays firmly above the death rate for quite some time, until a society is well into its post-industrial era.

Industrialization and urbanization play a massive roll in the decline of fertility rate. As countries develop and further-see financial and social stability, individuals become less inclined to start large families. This phenomenon, with regards to fiscal responsibility occurs primarily as a means of saving money. Much research and statistical analysis has been put towards the cost of raising a family. One study from 2008 showed that, in order to have a child, and raise it to the age of 18 years, the absolute bare necessities can cost upwards of \$118,000 on average. This total accounts for clothing, bare-minimum medical care, food, and housing. The luxuries of the every day American, everything from smartphones, to books, to motorized vehicles and all associated costs (such as warranties, maintenance, insurance, etc.)

Education is another important factor when studying tendencies in population growth. As a population becomes more educated, family size noticeably restricts. While education may have strong ties to an increase in fiscal responsibility, it also has an impact on overall responsibility. Educated adults are more likely to have the common sense to implement birth control, if they do not want to start a family. Again tying education and economics together, individuals with higher education tend to have better, higher-paying jobs than those with lower education, and the increased financial responsibility, though it may seem counterintuitive at first, results in smaller family sizes. Some believe that this is because the so-coined "American Dream" for a better life, and for any children, to have their parents provide them a better life than they themselves had.

Gender equality is also a significant factor in fertility. In ancient times, reproduction was often seen as a duty for women. However with industrialization and education comes modernization, and modernization brings with it radical new ideas regarding nearly every aspect of life. Gender equality is particularly important, because women are being significantly less objectified, which leads to empowerment and the ability for women to choose when they wish to have children.

E. Research and discuss in your own words at least three reasons why do people migrate internationally.

Migration is described as "movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions." Economic potential is an incredibly strong motivator for international migration. Happiness and stability are an inherent human goal, the driving force to achieve better standards in life. People are always searching for a way to better their lives, or the lives of those they care about. The potential for opportunity is a large part of why immigrants in the United States exist, in the first place. Often, if not to support themselves, immigrants will work extremely hard, and send most of their earnings to their families, elsewhere. Whether an individual or family is searching for an escape from a bad life or an entrance into a better life, when there are few opportunities in your current country of inhabitation, this goal becomes all but unattainable.

Migration also occurs as a means of escape. Often, citizens of foreign, developing countries are oppressed by their government, and feel the need to leave for better horizons. One might leave the country because of the threat of physical danger, such as the warring countries of the Middle-East, or potentially some other reason. Whether the problems are ideologically based, business-based, or religion-based, if you are living in a country where you do not feel you can live your fullest potential, you are bound to a state of lost potential. When faced with this, the only escape is immigration.

Less frequently however, one might migrate to a different country for the purposes of education or leisure. Naturally nomadic humans exist in society today and they have existed for quite some time. Many a man and woman has felt uncomfortable staying in one place or working one job for too long a period of time. This boredom can only be sated by change and when the change must take place in either of these areas of your life, though not mandatory, immigration is a lofty solution.