

An Introduction to Demographic Anthropology

Demographic Anthropology is a difficult field of study to define. Whereas in the first part of the century, anthropologists and demographers participated in many of the same conversations, as disagreements over the role of culture solidified into paradigmatic differences this communication all but ceased, although scholars in both fields continue to address similar issues. The problems inherent in the study of demographic issues from within the boundaries of one or the other discipline has blinded both sides to important issues and interpretations. This course looks at a selection of works drawn from both fields, with the goal of delineating a common space for productive intellectual inquiry.

As Cotts Watkins states, “the subject matter of demography perhaps is focused more on women than is the subject matter of other social science disciplines.”(1993: 553) This course, though it will touch on all aspects of demographic inquiry, is primarily devoted to an analysis of the demographic study of women, from a life-cycle perspective. The course should be useful to undergraduate students of demography and anthropology alike, and discussions will benefit from the presence of students from both fields not yet inculcated into the dogmas of their respective disciplines. Although some of the issues addressed will overlap with other courses with demographic content, the presentation and analysis of the material will be sufficiently different so as not to be repetitive. **Weeks one, two and three** will provide a brief introduction to population and population policy trends and their interpretations (both demographic and anthropological) throughout recent history. In **week four** we will expand on the world-systems framework used in the previous weeks to analyze different notions of time as they apply to ways of thinking about demographic processes. Weeks five through six will focus on evolutionary ecology. In **week five** we will begin to look at ethnographic life-cycle analysis by examining

two seminal (in both anthropology and demography) works on the hunter-gatherer Dobe !Kung. In **week six** we will discuss more case studies and broaden the discussion from the previous week to include evolutionary models more generally. The readings in **week seven** present critiques of and proposals for improving the methodology and results of demographic and anthropological studies. They will be addressed in terms of both their academic merit and of their contributions toward the aim of joining anthropological and demographic agendas. **Week eight** will begin our look at issues of the “modern” life cycle with an anthropologically contextualized discussion of that ubiquitous and all-important demographic event, birth. This will be followed in **week nine** by a look at some examples of political-economic analyses of fertility control. **Week ten** takes us further along the woman’s life cycle to menopause, also addressing issues of aging in general. In **week eleven**, a discussion of death will be combined with an analysis of the ethics of demographic and anthropological studies of populations given both fields’ past (and arguably present) engagement with eugenics. While there is much to critique in this regard, the focus this week will be on trying to find ways to avoid the pitfalls of the colonial (or developmental) mindset which explicitly and implicitly places first-world lives above third-world lives, younger lives over older lives, white lives over non-white lives, etcetera. Finally, in **week twelve** we will examine the different approaches used throughout the course and their attempts to reach a synthesis between anthropology and demography.

1. Introduction

Of the preventive checks, the restraint from marriage which is not followed by irregular gratification may properly be termed moral restraint.

Promiscuous intercourse, unnatural passions, violations of the marriage bed, and improper arts to conceal the consequences of irregular connections, are preventive checks that clearly come under the head of vice.

Of the positive checks, those which appear to arise unavoidably from the laws of nature, may be called exclusively misery; and those which we obviously bring upon ourselves, such as wars, excesses, and many others which it would be in our power to avoid, are of a mixed nature. They are brought upon us by vice, and their consequences are misery.

(Malthus:14)

Paradoxically, given that this most recent call [for rapprochement with anthropology] originates internally, the implications of this rethinking may be more troubling to the current demographic enterprise, since this is not simply a matter of add-fieldwork-and-stir. (Kertzer:2)

Malthus, Thomas

1958 (1798) *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

Livi-Bacci, Massimo

1997 *A Concise History of World Population*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Kertzer, David I., and Thomas E. Fricke

1997 "Toward an Anthropological Demography." In *Anthropological Demography : Toward a New Synthesis*. D.I. Kertzer and T.E. Fricke, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1-35.

Greenhalgh, Susan

1996 "The Social Construction of Population Science: An Intellectual, Institutional, and Political History of Twentieth-Century Demography." In *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38(1):26-66.

This week will introduce some of the basic problems addressed in population studies, beginning with the godfather of demography, Malthus. The importance of Malthus's own class background and his explicit motivations for writing *An Essay on the Principle of Population* will be discussed as a background and context for the theory of population growth and the preventative and positive checks on it he espouses in this work. This will set the tone for the class, which will focus not only on the possible intersections of anthropology and demography but also on the social forces which have driven theories of population over time.

Livi-Bacci's *A Concise History of World Population* gives an overview of both the current state of world populations and the current state of theories about them. For Malthus, choice—in the form of marriage delayed or foregone—was ultimately the only preventive option for resolving the pressure of population on resources. We now know that he vastly underestimated the potential growth of economies and technologies and their apparent demographic effects, and did not foresee (nor would he have approved of) the impact that contraceptive technologies have had on fertility levels. In addition, the sheer size of the world's population today (over 6 billion, as opposed to less than one billion when Malthus wrote) led to the need for new formulations. Livi-Bacci weighs elements of Malthus's formula, discarding some and revamping others, and reviews some of the "positive theories" that have challenged the Malthusian perspective with its doomsday approach to growth and emphasis on nuptiality. In addition, Livi-Bacci emphasizes that the thrust of demography should now be to explain differences between transitions rather than to seek an overarching theory. His discussion of choice and constraints, and the interrelatedness of population dynamics and culture through proximate determinants (e.g., family structures, infant mortality, breastfeeding and child care, age and sexual division of labor, women's status and property) will be used to illustrate how demography can and should be used as a starting point for understanding many anthropological issues.

In addition to the issues addressed by Livi-Bacci and Malthus, this week's readings include a review of anthropological demography (Kertzer and Fricke) and an anthropological review of demography (Greenhalgh). The Kertzer and Fricke reading provides a useful brief history of the interactions, collaborations and disputes between the two fields, covering many of the readings to be examined in this course. Greenhalgh's article examines the social construction of the discipline of demography. This piece, drawn from ten years of participant observation in the

Population Council and the Population and Development Review, offers a scathing yet thorough critique of demography and reviews its development as a sophisticated mathematical discipline that resists social theories often at the cost of logic. It has been noted to me that Greenhalgh, as an anthropologist and a woman, might have been embittered by her time in the very masculine and scientific environment at the Pop Council and would therefore present a biased account. I believe the opposite to be the case: her anthropological insight and insider status combined with a personal knowledge of the intransigence of the demographic establishment give her a unique authority to speak on such matters.

2. Ecology, Progress and the Population Problem

“The mores of Suburbia now dictate that crabgrass must go at whatever cost”
(p.177 Carson)

“When [Dr. S. Chandrasekhar] suggested sterilizing all Indian males with three or more children, we should have applied pressure on the Indian government to go ahead with the plan... We should have sent doctors to aid in the program by setting up centers for training para-medical personnel to do vasectomies. Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause.” (pp167-8 Ehrlich)

Carson, Rachel

1999 (1962) *Silent Spring*. London: Penguin in association with Hamilton.

Ehrlich, Paul R.

1968 *The Population Bomb*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Simon, Julian L.

1981 *The Ultimate Resource*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
(selections).

Boserup, Ester

1965 *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
(selections).

Population studies, since at least Malthus’s time, have been linked to environmental resource issues. This week we will examine some of the authors who shaped the population/environment debates in the latter part of the 20th century. Discussion of these authors will be framed in lecture by background information on the geopolitics of population in the 20th century, including a review of the Bucharest, Mexico City, and Cairo population conferences. Studies of population have always been intimately linked to policy—often in morally ambiguous ways—as outlined last week in Greenhalgh’s history of the field. This week’s readings are no exception.

Carson’s 1962 classic *Silent Spring* was instrumental in launching the modern environmental movement. Not only does Carson outline in graphic detail the effects of insecticide and pesticide use on humans, other animals and plant life, she exposes the corporate and political powers behind the poisoning of the earth. Her book is not about damage done by *populations* on the environment but about the damage caused by *people*. Carson’s story is a cry for democratic

involvement in the decision-making process from which the majority of those affected by these poisons has been excluded.

The Population Bomb tells a very different story from that told by Carson. Ehrlich led neo-Malthusianists in the 1970s and 80s into a veritable panicked frenzy over population growth. Though he draws on Carson's data (e.g., p. 53) Ehrlich ascribes environmental problems and impending doom to a lack of centralized control of population growth. This differs from Carson's account, in which the centralized corporate and governmental control of the spread of toxins, left unchecked through the exclusion from the decision process of the people (and populations) affected, is held responsible.

Julian Simon's perspective on population and the environment is fundamentally different from both Carson's and Ehrlich's. In *The Ultimate Resource*, Simon challenges the neo-Malthusian notion that an increase in population has negative economic consequences, that population is a drain on natural resources, and that humanity stands at risk of running out of resources through over-consumption. This argument made him a darling of the Reagan administration, which needed an economic rationale behind its anti-abortion stance articulated in the Mexico City population conference, where it was asserted that population growth is, in and of itself, a neutral phenomenon. Simon took this argument one step further in advocating population growth.

In 1980, Simon placed the now famous Bet with Ehrlich over the future price of five metals, asserting that if Ehrlich were correct and the world truly was heading toward an era of scarcity, then the price of various commodities would rise over time. Simon claimed instead that prices would fall, and that the future would bring a cleaner environment, a healthier humanity, and more abundant supplies of food and raw materials for everyone, because continued population

growth produces more people who in turn produce more bright ideas. He challenged Ehrlich to pick any commodity and any future date to illustrate his point. Ehrlich accepted the challenge: In October 1980, he purchased \$1,000 worth of five metals (\$200 each) -- tin, tungsten, copper, nickel and chrome. Ehrlich bet that if the combined value of all five metals he purchased was higher in 1990, Simon would have to pay him the difference. If the prices turned out to be lower, Ehrlich would pay Simon the difference. Ten years later, Ehrlich sent Simon a check for \$576 -- all five metals had fallen in price. In lecture it will be argued that the logic of the Bet was flawed; the economic value of natural resources does not represent their true value to the ecosystem and to human survival, and such a calculus does not account for the myriad resources which would be excluded by the economist as “externalities.” Environmentalist Carson recognized this; Simon and Ehrlich did not.

Boserup's *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth* challenges the Malthusian assumption that technological change induces population growth. She shows the reverse scenario to be more plausible; that population growth leads to the adoption of different technologies (which may have been invented long before) to accommodate larger populations. Her analysis differs from Simon's in that while acknowledging a correlation, she argues that population growth does not necessarily *cause* technological innovation, nor does the adoption of new technologies lead to a higher standard of living. In fact, Boserup demonstrates that with each stage of technological advancement (from hunter-gatherer societies to sedentism and agriculture, etc.) the calorie output/input ratio increases; that is, more work is required to produce the same amount of food, despite the use of more “advanced” technologies.

3. Ecology, Population and the Progress Problem

“...This is the argument which a dispassionate sociologist may put forward, when he sees the harmony of life of the Tikopia disturbed, their social and economic equilibrium threatened, entirely against their will. In doing so he ignores of course the thirst of our pseudo-Christian culture to make other people conform to our standards, irrespective of the effect of what that conformity may mean.”(p.376 Firth)

Amalric, Frank, and Tariq Banuri

1993 *Population: Malady or Symptom?* Islamabad: Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

Darby, H. C.

1956 “The Clearing of the Woodland in Europe” in *Man's role in changing the face of the earth*. W.L. Thomas, ed. Chicago: Published for the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the National Science Foundation by the University of Chicago Press: 183-216.

Firth, Raymond William

1983 (1936) “A Modern Population Problem” in *We, the Tikopia: A Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press: 367-376

Scudder, Thayer, and Elizabeth Colson

1979 “Long-Term Research in Gwembe Valley, Zambia” in *Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology*. G.M. Foster, ed. New York: Academic Press:227-254.

Simon, Joel

1997 “Crisis in El Campo” in *Endangered Mexico : An Environment on the Edge*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books: 35-59

This week’s readings focus on issues of the population “problem” and the environment and their relationship to issues of anthropological concern: colonialism, culture and power. Attention will be paid to the ways in which anthropological understandings of the issues discussed in the preceding week, in conjunction with quantitative data, can offer more thorough and accurate analyses of population/environment issues than the more common demographic formula of combining decontextualized numbers with decontextualized speculation.

The Amalric/Banuri paper provides a framework for this week’s discussion. In addition to a comprehensive review of major fertility theories, this paper explores the complications and inconsistencies of population, environmental and development policies over the past half-century

on the local, national and global levels. As the authors demonstrate, population is alternately portrayed as the source of all environmental and standard-of-living problems and as the result of poor governance on the national level, often by the same actors at the same time (to different audiences). The former position fails to take into account problems of consumption: for as then president Bush stated in Rio (quoted in Amalric on p.17) "the American way of life is not debatable." Both positions tend to overlook the fact that good governance by population control standards can often be very bad for cultures and societies. Time and again anthropological studies have shown different cultures to have had successful means of controlling population growth in local communities prior to colonial intervention. The aggressive intervention of the state and market into local communities has not only undermined the collective decision-making that allowed for community-level control of issues like population control; it has also alienated people from public affairs, i.e., from democratic involvement in their own destinies. The world-systems approach used in their analysis will be important for framing this week's discussion, as well as the rest of the course.

Firth's chapter entitled "A Modern Population Problem" in *We The Tikopia* is one of the best examples of the above-mentioned anthropological works focusing on community-controlled means of population control. Firth describes the Tikopia's complex means of local population control, in which the community decides the number of children an individual or couple may have depending on land tenure and wealth. The means which served at the time of his fieldwork (1928-9) to limit children to the desired number included (according to Firth): celibacy, coitus interruptus, abortion, infanticide, sea-voyaging, and war. He argues that contact with European civilization and the introduction of Christianity has caused a population crisis by removing the "old checks." The subsequent population growth led to a resource crisis which contributed,

along with increasing disease rates resulting from contact, to a destruction of what Firth describes as their social and economic equilibrium.

Darby's article shows how European woodlands have been destroyed since Roman times not only because of population pressure, but more importantly because of inefficient use of natural resources, including goat herding and logging in the interests of local lords and empire. This was justified by an expansionist philosophy which relied upon the extraction of resources by the many for the benefit of a few. Darby's approach recognizes issues of class and power to be more important than simple Malthusian equations even before the beginnings of intercontinental colonialism.

Similarly, Simon shows the ecologically devastating effects of environmental management based on an expansionist model in Oaxaca from the time of the Conquest to the present. As in Europe, the introduction of grazing caused widespread destruction of lands which had previously supported Mixtec subsistence farming. This, along with the confiscation of Mixtec lands for Spanish-controlled larger-scale agriculture and haciendas, led to an inability to meet subsistence needs *despite* the huge drop in population which followed the conquest of New Spain. In addition it caused a dependence on external forces which continues to this day and is the central factor in massive emigration from the area.

As Amalric and Banuri note, in order for concerns of status like the issue of women's social standing addressed at the Cairo conference to be relevant to egalitarian societies, that egalitarianism must first be destroyed. Scudder and Colson show that development projects like the Kariba Hydroelectric Dam are an excellent means of fulfilling this goal, undermining mechanisms for biological and cultural survival while simultaneously creating a dependence on national and international structures in previously isolated communities. This piece also outlines

the nuts and bolts of a fieldwork methodology which over the years has successfully combined the collection of census data with other ethnographic material. One advantage of doing long-term ethnographic research on demographic issues, the authors note, is the experience of aging along with one's informants, which affords different insights to the researcher at different ages, accompanying changes in one's social status. Methodological issues such as these and the ethics of academic complicity in development projects will be addressed in more depth in the final week of the course.

4. Life Cycle, Families, and Time

Fortes, Meyer

1958 "Introduction" in *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. J. Goody, ed. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press:1-14.

Hareven, Tamara K.

1993 *Family Time & Industrial Time : The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Wallerstein, I.

1979 "An Historical Perspective on the Emergence of the New International 'order' - Economic and Political Aspects" in *Capitalist World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 269-282

This week's discussion and readings focus on notions of time and the life cycle. Life cycle studies arise out of anthropological studies which challenged earlier functional models to show social structures as *processes*, dependent on linear and biological time, rather than being fixed. Demography has taken the life cycle model much further to develop methods of studying populations which take life-cycle dependent variables (such as the age-specific fertility rate and e_x) into account. Each field stands to benefit greatly from the other in this area. Demography shows us how the different risks women and men face vary over the life cycle, providing through the study of probabilities a more complete picture of demographic variables than ethnographic observation alone could do. In turn, anthropology provides the ethnographic context for demographic observations and findings. This is necessary for scientifically valid conclusions to be made from probabilistic studies; for only through an understanding of the ethnographic context can the proper variables for analysis be chosen.

The first reading is Fortes's introduction to *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. In attempting to "isolate and conceptualize the time factor," (p.1) anthropologists have shown the ways in which biological continuity and replacement are the basis for social reproduction. The study of the cyclical processes of the individual life cycle, the domestic group, and the family lead to a much more thorough understanding of a society than would a study done in the

ethnographic present. Fortes and the authors in this volume illuminate changing structural relationships by examining aspects of kinship, including rites of passage, changing residence norms, the formation and dissolution of households. They also confirm the importance of numerical data in analyzing the developmental cycle in the domestic group.

Hareven, an historical demographer, argues in the introduction to *Family and Population in Nineteenth Century America* that the study of demographic processes has focused on the household rather than the family as a result of the reliance on census data. She lays out a methodology for studying the importance of kinship and economic factors from a life course perspective in historical demography. As she argues, the life course framework has myriad uses for the historian (as well as for the anthropologist and demographer). It offers an integrative and comprehensive approach through which individual and family transitions can be viewed as part of a continuous process, even though they are only observed at one point in time. In addition, it shows how individual transitions occur along with a number of simultaneous transitions which in turn affect one another and treats cohorts as groups not only belonging to specific ages but also shaped by different political and historical forces.

Finally, Wallerstein's piece is germane to the course, and specifically this week's discussion on several counts. First, his discussion of cyclical crashes brought about by ineffective interstate coordination of a capitalist world supply can be contrasted with the Malthusian notion of "crashes" resulting from population pressures on bounded ecosystems. His world-systems approach to understanding time provides a framework, as did the Hareven and Amalric pieces, for understanding changes and continuities in cyclical time (such as family and life cycles) as they relate to capitalist time in the *longue duree*, the medium term, and the short term.

5. The Demography of “Anthropological” Populations: The !Kung, a Case Study

Howell, Nancy

1979 *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*. New York: Academic Press.

1983 “Nisa: the life and words of a !Kung woman,” (review) in *American Ethnologist*, 10(1):187-188.

Shostak, Marjorie

1983 *Nisa: the life and words of a !Kung woman*. New York: Vintage Books.

This week we will begin our look at demographic ethnographies from a life-cycle perspective. The readings come out of the multidisciplinary project on the Dobe !Kung led by Harvard anthropologists Irven DeVore and Richard Lee. The object of the project was to gather data about the !Kung as representatives of modern hunter-gatherers and to use this data (along with data on other contemporary groups) to better understand pre-historic hunter-gatherer populations. Since humans have spent the vast majority of our time as a species within hunter-gatherer societies, the study of such societies today is assumed to be useful for understanding human evolution and the cultural and biological mechanisms which influenced it.

Howell stresses in her introduction that her conclusions may not be generalizable to other modern or pre-historic hunter-gatherer groups. The Dobe !Kung are situated in an historical and geopolitical context which includes European colonialism, material and cultural exchange and intermarriage with local hunter-gatherer and sedentary groups, extensive migration of the group as a whole as well as of individual members, and war. The possibility that the group at some point experimented with other forms of economic organization before “devolving” into a stable hunter-gatherer population is also entertained. Nonetheless, Howell argues that the complexity of the skills needed for them to survive as hunter-gatherers coupled with their relative isolation is evidence of the limited influence of outside contact on !Kung culture. Methodological concerns are given much weight in this study, since its conclusions rest on successful age-estimation in a population which does not follow a calendar amenable to such a pursuit. Howell provides a

thorough picture of !Kung fertility and mortality schedules, emphasizing the importance of kinship, women's status, economic and social relations to demographic variables over the female life cycle. Demographic characteristics such as the importance of body weight, long birth intervals, high age at menarche, etc. are explained as biological adaptations to problems peculiar to hunter-gatherer social organization.

Nisa is a very different kind of book, one which, as Howell notes in her review, challenges several of the conclusions of the research team which she had been a part of. In it, Shostak presents a picture of the !Kung life-cycle through the narration of one woman's life history. In *Nisa*, the book, Nisa the woman offers a rich, deeply personal ethnographic context--mediated through Shostak's sensitive translation and editing--for the demographic data supplied in *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*. Shostak exposes a complex social portrait of the !Kung which complements Howell's more impersonal aggregate depiction. *Nisa* is an exceptional work of anthropology which has challenged previously-held notions of !Kung society as well as readers' notions of what it means to be feminine, masculine, and indeed, human.

6. Evolutionary Models

Haddix, Kimber and E.A.Hammel

2000 “Integrating Evolutionary and Demographic Models of Fertility,” conference proceedings from invited panel, *The Status of Fertility Theories*, Pop. Assn of America.

Turke, P. W.

1989 “Evolution and the Demand For Children” in *Population and Development Review* 15(1):61-90.

Fricke, T. E.

1990 “Darwinian Transitions - a Comment” in *Population and Development Review* 16(1):107-119.

Turke, P. W.

1991 “Theory and Evidence On Wealth Flows and Old-Age Security - a Reply” in *Population and Development Review* 17(4):687-702.

Gladwell, Malcolm

2000 “John Rock's Error” in *The New Yorker*. March 13, 2000:52-63.

This week we will take a closer look at evolutionary ecology. While there are but a small number of scholars in this field, they hold uncommonly strong (obstinate?) viewpoints about their theories. The paper by Haddix and Hammel gives an overview of the state of the field and reviews its problems and politics as well. The Turke-Fricke debate, carried out in the pages of PDR, is included both for its academic content and as an example of the passions which flow around evolutionary theories of demography. The Gladstone article will be discussed as an example of the uses of evolutionary approaches outside theory.

The first Turke article, “Evolution and the Demand for Children,” gives an evolutionary explanation for the fertility transition. Turke claims that in “traditional” societies, kinship networks served as a mechanism to disperse the costs of childrearing among a number of relatives. In such societies reproductive success is, he claims, correlated with prestige, the pursuit of which then leads to... greater reproductive success! With modernization, Turke argues, measures of status change, kinship networks break down and parents bear more of the burden of childrearing, providing them with an economic incentive to have (and concentrate their resources on) fewer children.

Fricke contests Turke's analysis by drawing on Caldwell's wealth flows theory of fertility decline. A brief overview of Caldwell's theory and his contributions to anthropological demography, arising from his work in Nigeria, will be given in lecture as background. Fricke contends that Turke's argument is based on speculation and amounts to a Darwinian tautology, and that an economic theory of the fertility transition can make much better use of the empirical facts of kinship.

In Turke's response to Fricke he claims that Fricke misunderstands the underlying evolutionary arguments, and as a result drew incorrect conclusions about Turke's arguments. Fricke's main mistake, according to Turke, is his failure to recognize that human culture evolved principally by natural selection, implying a coevolution of adaptive mechanisms for learning. Therefore human thoughts and actions should exhibit an adaptive reproductive logic in the context of modern fertility decline.

The Gladwell article presents a more concrete example of how evolutionary theory can and should be—but in this case was not—applied. The concept of “nature” is at issue here: John Rock, the co-inventor of the birth-control pill, believed monthly menstruation to be “natural” for women and therefore designed a pill that ensured this regularity. However, evolutionary anthropologists and demographers have found otherwise. Gladwell cites the work of Beverly Strassman, who found in her studies of the Mali Dogon that over the course of their lifetime, Dogon women menstruate only one fourth as many times as Western women. This is due to a number of factors, including pregnancy and intensive breast-feeding. By framing monthly menses and not the menstrual pattern which has evolved in human women as the norm, John Rock invented a birth control pill which was much more dangerous than it might have been.

7. Empirical Critiques and Suggestions

Wilmsen, Edwin N.

1989 *Land Filled with Flies : A Political Economy of the Kalahari*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

or:

Reidmann, Agnes

1993 *Science that Colonizes: A Critique of Fertility Studies in Africa*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Watkins, S. C.

1993 "If All We Knew About Women Was What We Read in Demography, What Would We Know?" in *Demography* 30(4):551-577.

Hammel, E.A., and Diana S. Friou

1997 "Anthropology and Demography: Marriage, Liason, or Encounter?" in *Anthropological Demography: Toward a New Synthesis*. D.I. Kertzer and T.E. Fricke, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press:175-200

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

1997 "Demography Without Numbers" in *Anthropological Demography : Toward a New Synthesis*. D.I. Kertzer and T.E. Fricke, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press:201-222

This week students will have the option of reading *Land Filled with Flies* or *Science that Colonizes*, two books that use world-systems and political economic approaches to call into question the validity of demographic measurements and conclusions and the Eurocentric assumptions made in the !Kung studies and in the Changing African Family-Nigeria (CAFN), respectively. The articles offer more critiques, the relative merits of which will be debated in class. Issues covered in week three will be especially relevant to this week's discussion.

Wilmsen finds Howell's speculation that !Kung hunter-gatherers might have previously had other forms of economic organization (discussed in week 5) to be correct in his political economy of the Kalahari. An analysis which denies the Bushmen, or San (as he refers to them) history fits well within not just an evolutionary, but also a Social Darwinist framework.

Wilmsen shows that the groups idealized by researchers in the Kalahari desert for their simplicity have arrived at their current social and economic state as a result of centuries of exclusion from

the larger regional political economy. Scholars who write about the San as isolated hunter-gatherers, according to Wilmsen, perpetuate and justify harmful neo-colonial policies.

Reidmann reveals another aspect of academic complicity in creating the discourse of empire in her study of the CAFN. She shows that the CAFN project itself (directed by Caldwell) served the larger purpose of bringing Yorubaland into the world system by setting up the means for bureaucratic surveillance. In addition, through its questions the survey promoted value-laden lessons in Western ways of thinking which posed a serious threat to their cultural integrity, and these lessons were reinforced by the survey's authority. They include: 1) The nuclear family is the "real" family; 2) The decision to have children should be consciously decided according to a cost calculus; 3) Western methods of contraception are as valid as traditional ones; 4) Individual control of one's affairs should take precedence over family control; and 5) It is normal and natural to be placed under bureaucratic surveillance. Thus the demographers behind the CAFN were instrumental in creating a dependence on larger structures of power and disrupting mechanisms of cultural maintenance formerly in place.

In the article "If All We Knew About Women Was What We Read in Demography, What Would We Know?", Susan Cotts Watkins found that the flagship journal of the Population Association of America, *Demography*, perpetuates many myths about women. Because the positivist arguments within the pages of *Demography* are informed by misguided notions of gender left unchecked by ethnographic intervention, a very inaccurate picture of women has emerged. Cotts Watkins argues that by challenging assumptions implicit in a theoretical framework which maintains a nineteenth-century Western notion of separate gender spheres, demographers can gain a richer understanding of their topics of study.

The article by Hammel and Friou addresses some of the paradigmatic and practical barriers to interdisciplinary cooperation. The authors also demonstrate through an amusing review of the heterogeneity of the supposed demographic universal, marriage, that ethnographers and demographers need to be aware of each other when researching demographic topics. This implies a collaboration rather than the inclusion of cheapened ethnography (of the add-fieldwork-and-stir variety mentioned by Kertzer) on the part of demographers or a slipshod interpretation of population dynamics on the part of anthropologists.

Scheper-Hughes's article in the same volume takes a more critical stance towards demography. As do Greenhalgh and Reidmann (above), she treats the production of scientific data itself as an enterprise of cultural dominance. She critiques demography's reliance on a positivist enlightenment notion of science and shows that in Brazil, the work of demographers has been anything but neutral. While Hammel and Friou critique Scheper-Hughes as showing "outright hostility" (p.178) towards interdisciplinary work, I believe this to be a misinterpretation. Scheper-Hughes states, "[t]here is really no need for more collaborations between qualitatively-trained anthropologists and epidemiologists or demographers *in which the realm of the social is reduced to a set of reified and lifeless variables.*"(p.219, emphasis my own) Collaboration which addresses categories of demographic relevance based on an ethnographic understanding of context (as she does in this paper) is not ruled out.

8. Birth and Fertility

Greenhalgh, Susan

1995 "Anthropology theorizes reproduction: Integrating practice, political economic and feminist perspectives" in *Situating Fertility : Anthropology and Demographic Inquiry*. S. Greenhalgh, ed. Cambridge, U.K. New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press:3-28.

Jordan, Brigitte, and Robbie Davis-Floyd

1993 *Birth in Four Cultures : A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States*. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.

Hostetler, John Andrew, and Gertrude Enders Huntington

1980 *The Hutterites in North America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bledsoe, C., F. Banja, and A. G. Hill

1998 "Reproductive Mishaps and Western Contraception: an African Challenge to Fertility Theory" in *Population and Development Review* 24(1):15-57.

Margaret Mead wrote, "Every human society is faced not with one population problem but with two: how to beget enough children and how not to beget and rear too many."(p.224 Mead) Demographers focus almost exclusively on the latter problem, though they recognize the former issue as an ideational barrier to the fertility transition. This week will look at processes surrounding birth itself. The importance of recognizing culturally specific meanings of birth in local settings in order to better understand cultures (rather than impose fertility change on them) will be emphasized.

In the introduction to *Situating Fertility*, Greenhalgh provides an overview of demographic theories of fertility, arguing that "anthropological" approaches within demography have been unsatisfactory because they have espoused only the fieldwork aspect of anthropology, excluding theory. The use of anthropological theory, she argues, would allow for "whole demographies" which would contextualize reproduction not only in terms of conventional demographic theory but in cultural and political terms as well. The result would be a demography which perhaps would be less universal, but more relevant.

Jordan sets forth the reasons for studying childbirth in a cross-cultural setting as threefold. Firstly, childbirth is a universal event, and therefore makes possible the documentation of a range

of physiological and behavioral variability not available in less universal phenomena. Secondly, being largely the domain of women, it could fill a gender gap in the ethnographic literature [this book was first published in 1978]. Finally, a cross-cultural study would allow for a better understanding of the process of childbirth itself as it is socially organized and culturally produced, and open a space for discussion and critique. (pp. 6-7). Jordan discusses birthing as a “system” and not simply an event as normally conceived in demographic terms, one which by default would conform to a reified Western notion of birth. Her comparison of birth in the Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States demonstrates how differently a supposedly “universal” event can be experienced in varying cultural contexts.

In contrast to hunter-gatherer groups like the !Kung from week 5 which are studied by demographers as “anthropological” populations, the Hostetler/Huntington piece will be read as the anthropology of a demographic population. As seen in the Livi-Bacci work from week one, the Hutterites are one of demography’s star groups, and more than any other group represent birth. Louis Henry coined the term “natural fertility” in reference to fertility without parity-specific control. While many demographers recognize that the term “natural” is a highly ambiguous one to describe such a fertility regime, Hutterite fertility nonetheless represents the *naturalized* standard by which other fertilities are measured, as in the Coale-Trussell model.

The Hutterites, as this brief ethnography shows, are a highly complex group that is well-integrated in the world economy. It is only through a social structure with communal child care, highly stratified gender roles, and a high cultural value placed on children that Hutterite women are able to have so many of them. Indeed, there is nothing “natural” about the “natural fertility” which is calculated from the Hutterites (and often assumed in demography to represent pre-

transition fertility), who like hunter-gatherers require an extraordinary amount of culture to maintain their total fertility rate.

The article by Bledsoe et. al. is included as an example of the weakness of conventional demographic fertility theory in explaining the relatively obvious. The authors find, much to their surprise, that women who desperately desire children are contracepting. Following a discussion of the Western logic of population planners, they examine local understandings of fertility and find that contracepting is indeed a logical course for a Gambian woman who desires children. Ironically, this revelation would have come as no surprise to the many Western women who reach the same conclusion. This article's argument underscores Cotts Watkins's argument regarding the need for feminist intervention in both global and local demographic theory.

9. Political Economies of Fertility

Fuchs, Rachel G., and Leslie Page Moch

1995 "Invisible Cultures: Poor Women's Networks and Reproductive Strategies in Nineteenth-Century Paris" in *Situating Fertility: Anthropology and Demographic Inquiry*. S. Greenhalgh, ed. Cambridge, U.K., New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press: 86-107.

Anagnost, Ann

1995 Anagnost, Ann. "A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and the Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China" in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*. Edited by Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press:22-41.

Hammel, E. A.

1995 "Economics 1, Culture 0: Fertility Change and Differences in the Northwest Balkans, 1700-1900" in *Situating Fertility: Anthropology and Demographic Inquiry*. S. Greenhalgh, ed. Cambridge, U.K. New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press:225-258.

Collier, Jane F.

1986 "From Mary to Modern Woman: the Material Basis of Marianismo and its Transformation in a Spanish Village" in *American Ethnologist* 13(1):100-107.

The readings for this week focus on the ways in which political, economic, and cultural forces affect fertility-related behaviors within a society and how women are able to negotiate and manipulate their own fertility options within diverse constraints. These articles answer Greenhalgh's call for "whole demographics" (the Fuchs and Moch and Hammel readings come from her edited volume) and present complex and compelling descriptions explanations for the historically and politically situated demographic regimes explored.

The Fuchs and Moch reading looks at the importance of poor women's informal networks of information and support at the turn of the century in Paris during the pro-natalist Third Regime. These women, often migrants, could not always rely on family support when faced with an unwanted pregnancy or a child they could not raise alone. In addition, their options were limited by a government which increasingly criminalized abortion in an attempt to rekindle France's stalled population growth. With abortion and poor childcare reframed as crimes against the nation, there was little institutional support for poor pregnant women and single mothers. Fuchs

and Moch find that these women operated outside official channels, relying on their own social networks as well as links with charitable middle-class women for help with procuring abortions or childcare.

Anagnost examines Chinese attitudes towards fertility under the one-child policy, presenting an inverse-case scenario to that of the Fuchs and Moch reading. She explores a situation in which the dominant paradigm regarding fertility behavior is based on the assumption that having multiple children is a bad thing. On observing the shock generated by her own two children, she wonders “whether the meaning of the one-child policy has expanded from a remedy for underdevelopment to become a sign of the modern itself?” (22) This is a relevant question for population studies today, at a time when indicators like the Human Development Index measure lowered birth rate as a sign of development, and even in this country families with more than two children are regarded as abnormal. Anagnost finds that the debate regarding population in China has turned from the issue of quantity to that of quality. Chinese acceptance of the need for the one-child policy because of the poor “quality” of the Chinese population, despite a strong cultural desire for male children, plays into the hands of and legitimates a repressive government.

The Hammel article, “Economics 1, culture 0...”, challenges the results of the Princeton European Fertility Project by showing that culture and ethnicity had much less to do with fertility levels than did economic and political conditions in Slavonia between 1700 and 1900. This conclusion, however, could only be reached through an historically situated micro (country-level) analysis informed by a knowledge of “ethnic” and cultural differences. In addition to demonstrating the primacy of economic and political factors in military and civilian populations, Hammel argues that ethnicity, where it appears to relate to fertility, only does so as a proxy for those political and economic relations which themselves determine demographic behavior.

Collier, like Hammel, finds economic explanations to be more plausible than the “cultural” ones provided by her informants in rural Spain for changes in their demographic behavior. On returning to “Los Olivos” in 1984, twenty years after her first fieldwork visit there, Collier discovers that women’s “traditional” dress and behavior have been replaced by a much more “modern” aesthetic and sense of values. Whereas under the old system of “honor and shame” a woman’s appearance and actions emphasized her chastity, in 1984 this is dismissed as “stupidity” by villagers, who now stress the need for women to maintain their figures and interact within the public sphere. Although the villagers ascribe it to a cultural “opening up,” Collier demonstrates that the change in behavior needed for a woman to successfully attract and maintain a mate today can be traced to changes in land tenure and the capitalization of the economy. Like the first two articles from this week, Collier shows how women operating within oppressive discourses of feminine legitimacy are able to find ways to negotiate demographic choices which represent not progress but rather appropriate actions within changed constraints.

10. Aging and Menopause

...if we are to move beyond the usual mind/body dichotomy that sees either culture as dominant and biology as essentially irrelevant or, conversely, biology as an immutable base and culture as a distortion, then it is essential that we acknowledge the plasticity of biology and its interdependence with culture. (p. 373, Lock)

Lock, Margaret M.

1995 *Encounters with Aging: Mythologies of Menopause in Japan and North America*. Berkeley London: University of California Press.

Moving forward in the life cycle, this week we examine the end of the reproductive period of women's lives. *Encounters with Aging* is a book which combines survey data with ethnographic methods to challenge Western positivist notions of the female body and the experience of aging. Lock has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Japan with a medical anthropology focus since 1973, and her choice of data sources (large-scale survey and life-history interviews) was guided by an ethnographic understanding of native categories and culture. Additionally, in order to examine the topic(s) of *kōnenki* /menopause from a biosocial perspective quantitative data on a scale beyond the reach of normal participant-observation was needed.

In her analysis of *kōnenki* and menopause, Lock presents a fascinating picture of the history and development of socio-medical concepts and the ways they are experienced by women. Her quantitative data shows real differences in symptomology between North American and Japanese women. Through extensive use of life histories she demonstrates how the meanings and experiences of *kōnenki* are intertwined with work, marriage and women's roles through history, over generations, and within the individual life cycle. She shows how social experiences of women around (but not necessarily *at*) the age of cessation of menstruation shape their biology, and how their biology affects their social interpretations of *kōnenki*. This book synthesizes anthropological and demographic methodologies in a very unorthodox way to produce a

theoretically sophisticated ethnography.

11. Eugenics, Euthanasia and Ethics

The population explosion is making us ask...What are people for?
(Julian Huxley, quoted in Kevles p.260)

Kevles, Daniel J.

1995 *In the Name of Eugenics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press:269-290.

Rapp, Rayna

1999 *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: The Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America*. New York: Routledge. (selections)

Kaufman, Sharon R.

2000 "In the Shadow of 'Death With Dignity': Medicine and Cultural Quandaries of the Vegetative State" in *American Anthropologist* 102(1):69-83.

This week we will look at death and issues which have arisen largely due to our increasing control over life through new technologies. These include questions of amniocentesis, abortion, euthanasia, and eugenics. We will also explore the ethics of demography as a field and the ways in which it intersects with the above issues. What are the ethics of a system of knowledge production like demography (and at times anthropology) that encourages people to think about human beings as disembodied figures, in the service of a hegemony which it ignores? How can ethnographic understandings of the cultural, political and economic contexts for human statistics be incorporated in demographic research to avoid complicity in dangerous and often hidden abuses of power?

The first reading this week examines the misuse of demographic statistics by mainstream academics (some of them demographers) in the recent past and the racist and eugenic implications of such work. This reading recalls issues of academic complicity in state abuses of power brought up in the Greenhalgh article from week 1. Kevler points out the danger of framing what are essentially [im-]moral arguments as "value-free" scientific (demographic and biological) ones.

The Rapp book looks at amniocentesis from a feminist anthropological perspective. Amniocentesis is at once a very personal issue and an issue of population—that is, of “improving” the population, a topic similar to that encountered in the Anagnost article in week 9. It is also one in a long line of technologies which is unproblematically accepted within the field of demography as a health measure which can improve Quality of Life. Rapp explores the ethics of the very complex ways in which the option of amniocentesis has changed the meanings and action of giving birth across wide cultural and class divides in the United States.

The Kaufman article looks at death occurring at or arguably beyond the end of the life cycle. In the study of population within the field of Demography, one ethical question which surfaces infrequently is: what is personhood? While Demography has celebrated many technological advances that have led to lowered death rates over the years, whether these changes imply better living, and indeed living at all, is unclear. In light of amniocentesis, contraceptive and abortion technologies, and medical machinery that maintains bodies “alive” in a vegetative state, birth and death have become events that are increasingly ambiguous in their meanings. Demography as a field has much to gain from anthropological insights into these technological changes and their myriad cultural meanings. As the meanings of birth, death, and life change, the unreflexive statistical study of these reified categories becomes increasingly irrelevant.

12. Synthesis Efforts:

Carter, Anthony T.

1998 "Does Culture Matter? The Case of the Demographic Transition" in *Historical Methods* 21(4):169-169.

Hammel, E. A.

1990 "A Theory of Culture For Demography" in *Population and Development Review* 16(3):455-485.

Geoffrey McNicoll

1992 "The Agenda of Population Studies: A Commentary and Complaint" in *Population and Development Review* 18(3):399-420.

In the final week of class we will reflect on the possibilities for doing demographic anthropology. The readings will serve as a starting point to discuss issues that have arisen over the course over the semester. Through them we will try to outline a set of criteria for what demographic anthropology should be and how it can be done. It will be argued in lecture that while anthropology should not be ignorant of demography, especially when addressing traditional topics of demographic concern, demography *needs* anthropology in order to be academically (rather than just politically) relevant. The articles this week look at the ways in which anthropological methods and concepts can be employed to study demographic issues.

The first reading: "Does Culture Matter" addresses the source of much of the confusion embedded in discussions of culture as it relates to demography: no one agrees on what culture really is. Drawing on anthropological insights on the topic, Carter argues that a) "a view of culture as a set of norms, all of which are external to and constraining of action, leads to impassable terrain," and b) culture should be seen as an ingredient to action, rather than separate from it. As seen in the Hammel reading from week 9, "culture" alone is not always a tenable explanation for changes in demographic behavior. However, this depends on the question being asked, and as other works from this semester have shown, "culture" is very important in understanding how oppressive demographic regimes are legitimated even when economic and

political factors alone can be used to explain the utility of such changes for most of the actors involved.

In “A Theory of Culture for Demography,” Hammel outlines the development of the culture concept in anthropology as it contrasts with the economic (universalistic) and sociological (institutional) understandings of culture. Like Carter, Hammel argues against the view of culture as external to human agents. He lays out a methodology for demographers in which they are told to take into account native frames of reference in their elicitation of data. Explanations, Hammel states, should be “situated at a microlevel that not only reflects immediately relevant economic and ecological considerations and overarching social institutions, but also includes especially the identity of significant co-actors in a social network.”(457) Hammel suggests the use of ethnographic network analysis, which would allow culturally-informed demographers to ascertain the emic “optimal node level” at which their question should be analyzed. This simplified methodology presents a danger of short-shrifting the ethnographic method in the interest of inserting a “culture” concept into demographic analysis, but its employment would certainly improve the results of demographic analysis as it stands. The feasibility of this method will be discussed in class along with other alternatives presented throughout the semester.

Finally, McNicoll attacks demography’s aversion to both social theory and ethics. He examines problems in demographic explanation that have been discussed this semester: ideas of conscious choice and/or institutional constraints divorced from a notion of culture, “diffusion” theories, and conventional structural analysis. “The methodological ingredients are here,” he argues, “for rich explanatory accounts of changing demographic regimes, interweaving historical contingency, social dynamics, and cultural idiosyncrasy.”(410) In such accounts, he continues, formal multivariate analysis would play a “properly subordinated part,” and demography as a

field would move from its status quo of cheerleading and the “end of [demographic transition] history,”(411) and confront new challenges of merit within and far beyond the confines of academia.

Cited:

Mead, Margaret

1952 Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World. New York:
William Morrow and Co.