

Population geography essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Understanding Population Geography

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What did you learn this week that you did not know before or that you found interesting? What outside resources did you use this week?

I remember growing up in the 70s and 80s the term “ Zero Population”. At the time, I didn’t really know what it meant except a term to encourage teenagers to use birth control and thereby avoid having children while they’re still a child as well. As it turns out I wasn’t that far off from my view of the concept. It actually originated by the prime minister of Singapore in 1972. He was concerned that his island country was facing overpopulation with its current count of 1 million people. So he legalized abortion and sterilization and banned maternity care and benefits for women who have more than two children. However by the mid-1980s, the Singapore’s birthrates plummeted to below the levels that are necessary to replenish the population. The prime minister’s plan to reduce his country’s population backfired because the abortions performed in the country were terminated more than one-third of all the country’s pregnancies. This lead the prime minister to reverse his policy in 1990 to encourage multiple births for mothers under 28 by offering long term tax rebates and thereby restore population loss suffered in Singapore (Getis, Bjelland, & Getis, 2014, p. 111).

This reversal of policy is an example of an unbending population reality: how a country’s infrastructure is controlled today will determine how it is controlled in the future. This means the size, characteristics, migrations and even growth trends are what determines the overall health of those yet to be

born. This information is necessary when considering the locations and numbers of people as it relates to the necessary background to all of the aspects of population geography (Getis, Bjelland, & Getis, 2014, p. 111).

Population geography is an aspect of human geography. This branch of geography focuses scientifically studies people in their spatial distributions and the density (Briney, 2014). Population geography provides geographers and scientists with the theories and concepts need to better comprehend and thereby forecast the composition, size, and the distribution of human population (Getis, Bjelland, & Getis, 2014, p. 111). In order for population geographers to study this factors, they review the data that documents the increase and decrease in an area of population, general settlement patterns, peoples' movements over time, and even topics like occupation. This is what develops the geographic character of a particular region (Briney, 2014).

Population geography is closely related and yet differs from demography. Demography statistically studies human population as well, however, demography is more concerned with spatial analysis – pattern, location, and density. Instead, population geography studies a region's resources such as standard of living, economic development, and food supply as they affect a population's health and well-being. These characteristics are the essential ingredients for human population geography (Getis, Bjelland, & Getis, 2014, p. 111).

Population geography is a large branch in the geography tree. It contains quite a few different topics that relate to the world's population issues. The first of these topics is called population distribution. Population distribution is described as the study of where people are choosing (or not choosing) to

live. Our world's population tends to be quite uneven. Some regions are considered to be rural and are thereby sparsely populated. Meanwhile, other locations that are more urban are consequently more densely populated. In order to learn more about population distribution population geographers often study past population distributions of that region's people so that they can understand how and why certain spatial locations areas have blossomed into major urban centers we have today. Sparsely populated areas are usually harsh places to live such as areas in Alaska, Siberia, and Canada's northern territories. On the other hand, densely populated areas like Hong Kong, or cities such as New York City or Los Angeles, California are far more hospitable.

A second topic in population geography is population density. While closely related to population distribution, population density however studies a region to determine the average number of people that live in an area. This is done by dividing the number of people that currently live that area by total area available. These numbers usually are noted as persons per square mile or persons per square kilometer.

Population density are often affected by several factors which, coincidentally, are often subjects of population geographers' study. These factors tend to relate to the population's physical environment such as topography and climate. For example, regions with harsh climates such as California's Death Valley are thereby sparsely populated. Other factors that affect population density can also be related to the region's political environments as well as the social, economic culture of an area. For

example, Singapore and Tokyo have mild climates with healthy political, social, and economic and are thereby densely populated.

Another area of study for population geographers consists of overall population growth as well as changes in population. This topic is of great interest to population geographers because the population of the world has grown so dramatically since the 1800s. In order to properly study overall population growth, population geographers study the population's areas natural increase birth rates as well as death rates. The number of infants born per 1000 people in the area's population every year is considered the birth rate. Likewise the number of deaths per 1000 individuals every year is considered the death rate.

Historically speaking, the increase rate of population used to naturally be near zero. This didn't mean that no one being born nor that no one was dying. Actually, this meant that the area's births roughly equaled the area's deaths. However, many regions now host populations with that are living much longer because of access to better health care as well as higher standards of living. These factors have reduced the overall death rate. Birth rates are now known to either increase or decrease based on the wealth of the nation. For example, birth rates are actually lower in developed nations. However, in developing nations, the birth rate is still high. Therefore, the population of the world has grown tremendously.

Along the same lines of natural increase, population geographers study population changes as it relates to a population's net migration for an area (Briney, 2014). They compare and contrast data found in a population's in-

migration and out-migration patterns. Therefore, a region's overall rate of growth or population change is the result of a population's natural increase as well as their net migration.

Finally, though certainly not exhaustively, an essential tool in population geography that is essential to the study of growth rates around the world as well as changes in population is called the demographic transition model. This model looks at the four stages of a country's development and considers how population changes are thereby affected. The first stage of a country's development takes place when the new country's birth rates and death rates are both high, resulting in a small amount of natural increase and an equally small population. The second stage of a country's development reveals an increase in birth rates and a decrease in death rates resulting in a high growth period in the population (surprisingly, this is normally the stage where least developed countries actually fail). The third stage of a country's development show a change in trends with a decrease in birth rate as well as a decreasing death rate, thereby once again slowing down the growth of that country's population growth. The fourth and final stage of a country's development shows a balance in birth and death rates both being low, resulting in a low natural increase (Briney, 2014). I can see how using a demographic transition model enables population geographers forecast the future health and wellbeing of a nation by studying the four stages of development that nation experienced.

Conclusion:

After reviewing the concepts of population geography, I have a better understanding of the actions of the Singapore's prime minister in 1972.

While I don't agree with his extreme measures of limiting care for more than two children per family and legalizing abortions and sterilizations, I can see how charting a country's birth and death rates and considering how those numbers affect his nation's resources could lead him to believe his nation would be picked clean by an over-abundance of his own people and for the good of his nation, At the same time, I can see how population geography was at the heart of prime minister's reversal of policy because he can now see how his policies were leaving his country vulnerable to constant poverty because there simply were not enough citizens avail to care for and protect their land. Therefore, I have a better appreciation of how population geography is used to study health and well-being of a population anywhere in the world.

References

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