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Governmentality and the population crisis: bio-political interpretations of American international population control

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**Governmentality and the Population Crisis:
Bio-political Interpretations of American International Population Control**

By
Karl Poehlauer

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Karl Poechlauer

November 11, 2011

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Bio-political Interpretations of American International Population Control**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

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Abstract

The history of the United States Government's international population policy is examined according to a theoretical framework invented by the philosopher-historian Michel Foucault. "The population crisis" of the 1960s and 1970s is analyzed as a discourse involving the production of knowledge and the transmission of power in terms of Foucault's original conceptions of power-knowledge and governmentality. Two major pieces of evidence are considered: United States Senate hearings from 1965 titled "Population Crisis," and a 1974 National Security Council study memorandum titled "Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests." Conclusions about the meaning and nature of the population crisis as a discourse are drawn from an analysis of the metaphors and narratives that these sources reflect, and the operation of this discourse upon individuals and populations in the developing world is interpreted in relation to Foucault's bio-politics.

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Throughout modern history the growth of the human population on Earth has been the subject of controversy and discussion. Population growth has been problematized as a crisis for humanity by many theorists following in the tradition of Thomas Malthus. Rather than trying to decide whether or not there really was a population crisis that had to be overcome during the 20th Century, this thesis will investigate the population crisis as a discourse. By analyzing the language and metaphorical constructions present in the writings and discussions of the population crisis during the 1960s and 1970s, I will build on the work of other scholars who have approached the population crisis from a Foucauldian perspective. Before explaining this methodology, I will first survey some of the historical writing that has been done on the population crisis and examine the arguments of several authors to show how they share a common interpretation of the population crisis as it has been formulated in the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. Such a review will also serve to illustrate the many factors and concerns that constituted the population crisis and the issues that were debated during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s: birth control, economic development, communist expansion and U.S. national security, ecological and environmental consequences, etc. I will then introduce the discursive approach and try to expand on the work of a few scholars who have applied discourse analysis to the history of the population crisis.

Phyllis Tilson Piotrow produced the first historical account of the population issue in the United States in 1973: *World Population Crisis: The United States Response*. Piotrow's

perspective – admittedly that of a proponent of government-sponsored international birth control programs – must be understood in the context of the early 1970s when world population growth was a popular issue in the United States. Her research was initiated by a fellowship from the Ford Foundation, which was heavily involved in the promotion of birth control as a solution to the perceived problems of population growth during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Many of the sources upon which she based her analysis and conclusions came out of a network of American population organizations dedicated to solving the population crisis. Her history is uncritical of the population crisis and takes its existence as the basis of her research and her argument. Thus her book is a product of the population crisis discourse.

Piotrow gave special emphasis to the role of individual leadership and initiative in the development of a population policy for the U.S. government. She highlighted John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Hugh Moore, and William H. Draper, whose actions deliberately and significantly influenced government policy. The author suggested that there were moments when the interventions of such individuals had decisive impact on policy. Another important theme was the pressure put on the professionals – demographers, economists, health professionals, etc. – by the activists seeking to persuade the public of the importance of the population issue. The interplay of these realms of debate generated tensions that stimulated the development of population policies.

While Piotrow's history of the population crisis is thorough and contains a lot of important information about what happened and who was involved, it is not analytical or

critical, the work itself being imbedded within the discourse of the population crisis of the 1970s. More reflective and analytical work was done by demographers in the 1980s, a period when the population crisis was being interrogated and reconsidered by many academics and politicians. Paul Demeny, demographer and vice-president of the Population Council from 1973 to 1988, analyzed and criticized the simultaneous and conflicting roles of demographers as social scientists and as policy researchers in the 1988 article "Social Science and Population Policy," in the journal *Population and Development Review*, which he founded and has edited since 1975. (The Population Council is a non-governmental organization established in 1952 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd.) He described how demographers in the post-war period took care to present their emerging field as a full-fledged science and to separate their work from the realm of advocacy. He argued that such a separation never existed, and he explained the reasons why.

According to Demeny, most observers understood the potential consequences of the unprecedented increase in birth rates that was taking place in the 1940s to be a threat to global security. Social scientists supplied a rationale for policy intervention to slow this rapid growth in population: lowering population growth with birth control technology and information would increase per capita incomes in developing countries (and thus improve development). This plan was put forward by social scientists as a low cost method of improving development prospects in poor countries. The novel idea led to a growth in demography by virtue of that social science's political utility.

The major part of Demeny's article discussed how the population industry came to subsume the study of population. As government funding for population activities began to flow, the social science research that justified its program came to be supported by the same sources of funding. This had the effect of "industrializing" social science relevant to population policy and directing research toward short-term goals of family planning policy needs. According to Demeny, an expert in the field of population studies, the state of demographic research with respect to developing countries reflected this funding bias into the 1980s, at the time he wrote this article.

Dennis Hodgson, professor of sociology at Fairfield University, in Connecticut, examined how demographic theories changed over time within the discipline of demography from the post-war period to the 1980s when he wrote the article "Orthodoxy and Revisionism in American Demography," which was published in the journal *Population and Development Review*. The author takes the perspective of an historian of sociology, interested in the causes of the shifts that occurred in demographic thought from a period characterized by the prominence of "transition theory" to a period in which a neo-Malthusian, antinatalist perspective dominated, and on to the era in which his own writing occurred, when "revisionism" began to question and dismantle the assumptions of neo-Malthusian "orthodoxy." (While "Malthusianism" represents a belief in a certain precarious relationship between growing human populations and finite or limited resources, "neo-Malthusianism" represents this belief held with the contention that birth-control is necessary and able to stabilize that relationship. An "antinatalist" position would place a

negative value judgment upon procreation.) Hodgson argued that internal factors within the discipline of demography only partly explain the rise of “orthodoxy” in the 1950s, and that external factors – “social, economic, and political conditions” – must be examined in order to understand why such a paradigmatic shift in perspective occurred among demographers during that time.

Hodgson defined “orthodoxy” as having been founded on two basic assumptions: that “rapid population growth in nonindustrial societies is a significant problem, and providing contraceptives to peasant couples can lower fertility prior to industrialization.”¹ (This position is also referred to by some scholars as a “neo-Malthusian” perspective.) This view replaced “transition theory,” or “modernization theory,” or “the demographic transition,” during the 1945-1965 period. Hodgson located some internal factors that may have contributed to the decline of transition theory and the rise of orthodoxy. The “baby boom” represented a stark change in the reigning (downward) demographic trend in the West and caused many demographers to question their acceptance of the modernization theory. At the same time, a new trend developed in the non-industrialized world: mortality rates declined sharply in the absence of modern industrialization. The cause of this was recognized to be effective sanitation and transportation improvements brought about in these areas by colonial administrations and recent (post-war) technological innovations such as the chemical compound DDT that practically eradicated diseases like malaria in many places. This decline in mortality resulted in an “explosion” in the population growth

¹ Dennis Hodgson, “Orthodoxy and Revisionism in American Demography,” *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 4 (December 1988): 542.

rates of the non-industrialized world. The emphasis among demographers then shifted to cope with this unprecedented situation. Thus Hodgson found an internal explanation for the questioning of transition theory during the 1950s, but the assertion of the orthodox view that fertility decline could be induced by contraception must have come from some outside forces, since no research or demographic evidence existed within the discipline to suggest such a possibility.

Hodgson found three main external factors that allowed the orthodox view of induced fertility decline to prosper and take hold. These were the Cold War, the end of colonialism, and the availability of funds for fertility control. The combination of delayed industrialization, which was a consequence of colonialism, and rapid population growth, which threatened to thwart the modernization process, gave rise to demographic scenarios that were perceived to be geopolitically dangerous. Stagnant economic conditions were thought to be conducive to communist revolution. If the growth of population could be slowed or reversed, industrialization might have better chances, it was hoped. Hodgson remarked that “orthodoxy was as much a development strategy as a demographic perspective.”² Hodgson concluded that the impact of foundation and U.S. government funding toward this effort was to institutionalize an orthodox agenda of lowering third world fertility. This institutionalization had taken place by the end of the 1960s.

Dennis Hodgson was interested in the emergence of perspectives on population growth within the discipline of demography and the effects that various political and

² Hodgson, “Orthodoxy and Revisionism,” 546.

economic circumstances had on those ideas. Peter J. Donaldson, in the article “On the Origins of the United States Government’s International Population Policy,” sought to explain the motivations behind the U.S. government’s adoption of certain demographic understandings about population growth in a detailed account of the history of the evolution and implementation of an international population policy.

Donaldson received a doctorate in sociology from Brown University and has worked for the Population Council since the early 1970s. He was appointed president of the Population Council in 2005. Another version of his argument was published as the book *Nature against Us: The United States and the World Population Crisis, 1965-1980* in 1990. At the time the article was published he was the Population Council’s Senior Associate and Representative for South East Asia. His perspective might be justifiably characterized as establishmentarian. His account may be biased in favor of the agenda which he worked much of his life to carry out. The sources which he used include archived material from the U.S. Agency for International Development and personal interviews with participants in U.S.-supported population activities, as well as published sources.

Donaldson argued that the primary motivations for government policies to influence the population growth of foreign developing countries were “pessimistic or conservative sentiments about the potential dangers of rapid population growth and their impact on U.S. interests around the world.”³ However, the author also produced evidence to show that

³ Peter J. Donaldson, “On the Origins of the United States Government’s International Population Policy,” *Population Studies* 44, no. 3 (November 1990): 386.

optimism for the economic development of those countries and “hope for a better life for the people in those countries” also played a role in U.S. efforts to slow population growth.⁴ Donaldson stressed this dichotomy of influences as having motivated the population movement in general.

Donaldson listed several reasons other than national security and U.S. interests that policy makers considered in their project of reducing population growth. These considerations included a belief that slower population growth was one of many factors that would allow for increased potential for economic development. The notion that U.S.-supported birth control or family planning would enhance the freedom of women in developing countries by enabling them to exercise choice in such matters was expressed by feminists. The possible favorable effects of family planning programs on general health were emphasized by others. Donaldson postulated that government family planning services “increased the private welfare of families at very small cost and probably substantial benefit to society at large.”⁵

Donaldson’s article outlined the main motivations behind the U.S. government’s adoption of a population policy. In the article “The Idea of Demographic Transition and the Study of Fertility Change: A Critical Intellectual History,” Cambridge University historian Simon Szreter offered an interpretation of the history of American demography and population policy that differed from the conclusions reached by Hodgson and Demeny.

⁴ Donaldson, “On the Origins,” 386.

⁵ Donaldson, “On the Origins,” 389.

Where they argued that the social science of demography was somehow adulterated by (in Hodgson's account) the rise of "orthodoxy" over transition theory or (in Demeny's account) the ascendance of the "family planning industry," Szreter demonstrated that demography was intimately connected with applied policy since its very inception. Transition theory as it was expressed by Frank Notestein and his colleagues in the 1940s was tailored to the policy needs of the time in which it was conceived, as were the later innovations adjusting the theory of demographic transition to include the possibility of lowering fertility directly through birth control (Hodgson's "Orthodoxy," or "neo-Malthusianism" elsewhere).

The original formulation of transition theory describing how social and economic structures influenced cultural motivations for reproduction had appeal to demographers trying to make sense of low fertility in developed countries. It also enabled classification of developing societies into policy-relevant typologies for increasing numbers of economic and policy scientists in the 1930s and 1940s. A coherent theory on how societies developed from traditional to modern had important policy implications to planners interested in directing such a transition in nonindustrial societies. Szreter described transition theory as "an archetypal construct for simultaneously specifying and justifying the direction that active policy should follow."⁶

Szreter's argument that demographic transition theory was tailored to the foreign policy needs of its era, along with Hodgson's and Demeny's critical histories of demographic thought which characterized the discipline as part of a government-sponsored population-

⁶ Szreter, "The Idea of Demographic Transition," 689.

industrial complex, inspired the anthropologist-historian Susan Greenhalgh to study the dilemma or contradiction of demography as social science versus policy science from a Foucauldian perspective of disciplinarity. In “The Social Construction of Population Science: An Intellectual, Institutional, and Political History of Twentieth-Century Demography,” published in the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Greenhalgh’s interest in the political embeddedness and social constructedness of knowledge led her to take a “social constructionist approach” or “social practice perspective” emphasizing the role of the historical contingency of knowledge creation in the discipline of demography.⁷ The author suggested that this point could be generalized and that any discipline could be studied from such a perspective to produce a broader understanding of why social scientists, whether demographers or students of other fields, developed the theories that they did. This approach is more sympathetic, according to Greenhalgh, because it does not paint demographers as intellectually unprincipled, racist and classist, or ignorant of theoretical problems of their discipline. The perspective that all disciplines are more or less equally susceptible to politicization, or that all disciplines are inescapably political because they are involved in the production of knowledge, emphasizes the more general character of the problems and practices witnessed throughout the history of demography. She argued that the discipline of demography and the knowledge that was produced therein was so closely tied to the project of policing population growth that the discipline was incapable of

⁷ Susan Greenhalgh, “The Social Construction of Population Science: An Intellectual, Institutional, and Political History of Twentieth-Century Demography,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 1 (January 1996): 29.

formulating different social theories of fertility from those which served to legitimize the neo-Malthusian regime.

The arguments of Demeny, Hodgson, Donaldson, Szreter, and Greenhalgh basically concluded that the discipline of Demography was shaped by concerns about population growth in connection with U.S. national security. Another important book that reinforces the conclusions of the demographers that the relationship between U.S. national security and population growth is what sustained the population crisis was written by John H. Perkins, a professor at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Most of the author's work during the 1980s and 1990s dealt with historical and contemporary environmental issues such as pesticide use and biotechnology. His book *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution* traced the history of the science of plant breeding and its role in the Green Revolution during the 1960s. Specifically, the author followed the development of high-yielding varieties of wheat by plant breeders in the United States, Mexico, India, and the United Kingdom. One major argument of his book is that the so-called Green Revolution and the science behind it would not have had the support that it did without the perception of national leaders that plant breeding was essential to national security and foreign exchange management.

Perkins examined the intellectual and political climate in the United States that allowed the science of wheat breeding to enter into the realm of international relations during the post-war period, from 1945 to 1956 and concluded that what brought plant breeding science into the arena of U.S. foreign policy was the presence of a pervasive cold-

war strategic theory he called the “population-national security theory.”⁸ He described the theory as a causal linkage that began with overpopulation and progressed to resource exhaustion, hunger, political instability, communist insurrection, and endangerment of American interests. Perkins traced the origins of the population-national security theory from the writings of Thomas Malthus in the early 1800s to the early demographers of the 1920s and 1930s and their institutional successors in the 1940s. According to Perkins, what had developed by the 1940s were two strands of “neo-Malthusianism,” one a political neo-Malthusianism concerned with the collapse of civilization through societal upheaval caused by overpopulation, the other an ecological neo-Malthusianism concerned about the rape of the natural environment caused by overpopulation and the negative consequences for humanity. Perkins argued that in the United States the strategic importance of wheat breeding was rationalized in neo-Malthusian terms.

Perkins explained that during the post-war period, the experts in the consequences of population growth, located in foundations, universities and institutions created specifically to study population, had to appeal to the politics of national security in order to achieve recognition of their concerns at the policy-agenda level. Foundation officers engaged in agricultural research came to justify their efforts in neo-Malthusian terms in the late 1940s and 1950s. Their science represented a solution to the problem of hunger – understood as a consequence of “overpopulation” and a potential cause of political instability and communist advance. This contribution to the management of national

⁸ John H. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 119.

security allowed the science of plant breeding (at the time led by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations) to develop and prosper in what became the Green Revolution.

Perkins's "population-national security theory" was also understood by Demeny, Donaldson, Hodgson, Szreter, and Greenhalgh as the intellectual or discursive basis for the population crisis. This argument, then, seems to represent a consensus among the scholars who have attempted to write the history of the population crisis. With the exception of Greenhalgh, however, these authors did not approach the population crisis as a discourse. Instead, they tried to explain what circumstances or events or individuals led to the creation of a population policy. Piotrow can be included with this group of history writers as well. Greenhalgh's introduction of Foucauldian methodology to the study of this topic, however, represents a more complex and sophisticated approach that allows for a broader understanding of the population crisis.

Other scholars have applied this kind of analysis, interpreting the population crisis discursively as a process involving the production of knowledge and the genesis of power. Two authors that have done this work on the population crisis are Ronald Walter Greene and Kolson Schlosser. Their arguments will provide the foundation for my thesis and I will seek to build on their work. Greene is a rhetorical and cultural studies scholar in the department of communication studies at the University of Minnesota. Schlosser is a professor of geography at Clarkson University in New York. His dissertation at Pennsylvania State University examined the historical connections between discourse of environment and national security in U.S. foreign policy. I have looked to the work of these scholars of

geography, rhetoric, and culture because I think they have offered a more complex and interesting way of looking at the history of the population crisis than have historians (of demography, in this case) whose work in this area has been mainly reconstructive. By acknowledging and employing other disciplinary perspectives, a deconstructive approach in which the discursive and literary elements of the population crisis are brought out and interrogated becomes possible – and profitable for a historical study of the population crisis as a discourse.

More recent attempts to understand the population crisis have relied on these methods, emphasizing the nature of discourse to understand the workings of such a thing as the population crisis. An example from Ronald Walter Greene's book *Malthusian Worlds: U.S. Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* is instructive. Where Perkins interpreted two strands of neo-Malthusianism – one concerned with the environmental impact of population growth and the other concerned with political consequences – Greene suggested that a better way to understand these two related points of view within neo-Malthusianism would be to see them as different discursive strategies articulated to the population crisis: the discourse strategy of environmentalism and the discourse strategy of containment.

Greene argued that the population crisis was “articulated” to multiple discourse strategies: the discourse strategy of development, that of containment, and that of

environmentalism.⁹ By “articulation” he understood a relationship between discourses that linked them together. These discourses, through their articulations to the population crisis, allowed for and sustained a population apparatus, which acted upon the population crisis according to its own peculiar rationality of government. In other words, as a governing apparatus, the population apparatus would govern the population crisis through, among other entities, government institutions such as the United States government. Greene located three discourse strategies that supported an international population apparatus. These are useful categories into which most of my sources fit neatly. However, perhaps there are other discourse strategies that might be interesting to explore in a similar way, and other dimensions of those categories that might not have yet been interrogated. It is in this space that I place my investigation into the discourse of the world population crisis.

Another author who has explored the discourse of the population crisis from a Foucauldian perspective is Kolson Schlosser. In “Malthus at Mid-century: Neo-Malthusianism as Bio-political Governance in the Post-WWII United States,” Schlosser analyzed the way neo-Malthusian discourse operated bio-politically to legitimate Cold War containment doctrine. Michel Foucault invented the term bio-power to represent the technique of power at work in the modern government of life processes. The regulation of procreation falls under this category of bio-politics. Schlosser argued that neo-Malthusian discourse conceptualized population growth in a way that impinged upon the “construction and circulation of Malthusian models of population-resource relationships” and that “these

⁹ Ronald Walter Greene, *Malthusian Worlds: U.S. Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999).

models were crucial aspects of bio-political governance in this time period.”¹⁰ Greene might describe Schlosser’s area of investigation as an articulation between the discourse strategy of containment and the discourse of the population crisis.

Greene demonstrated that neo-Malthusianism was the basis for the emergence and development of an international population apparatus that took upon itself the responsibility for administering the Malthusian dilemma through the bio-politics of birth control. This neo-Malthusian will to control population found expression in multiple discourses: development, containment, and environmentalism.

My thesis investigates a particular discourse imbedded within a set of other discourses: the best name that I have found for this discourse is “the world population crisis” or “the population crisis.” From a perspective that understands certain literary elements to have significant meaning for historians, the trope of a “crisis” reveals one way in which that discourse operated. The population crisis, as a “discourse strategy,” operated according to a mode of governing – in Foucauldian terms, a governing rationality, a “governmentality” – that is peculiar to modern history. This modern “art” of governing (understood in the wider sense, as in “the conduct of conduct,” and not merely as an activity of the institution: the state) deploys a modern form of power, which Foucault called “bio-power.” As a technology of power, bio-power takes as its object of government life – not the territory of its dominion but the life of the population (“all and each”), and not in

¹⁰ Kolson Schlosser, “Malthus at Mid-century: Neo-Malthusianism as Bio-political Governance in the Post-WWII United States,” *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 465.

the sense of holding a power over their life (and/or death) as in the old sovereign right to kill (his subjects), but in a sense of deploying power-knowledge toward the end of securing, insuring, and managing the biological life of the population. Central to this rationality of government is the continuity, the survival, of the population. The population crisis was a discourse strategy that functioned bio-politically. Using the metaphor of crisis to place the survival of mankind in jeopardy, the discourse of the population crisis was a form of power-knowledge. This form of power-knowledge is best described as bio-power as its rationality operated to affect the continuity of the life of the population.

To me, the trope of crisis represents a lead into an investigation of the history of the population crisis and the population apparatus that it produced. It leads to many questions: what made trends in population growth a crisis? Who made it a crisis? What were the proposed solutions and who proposed them? But most importantly, what mechanisms of power were involved in producing the crisis and determining and executing its solutions? If we accept a bio-political interpretation of the history of the population crisis, to the latter question we should answer: It is modern governmentality that necessitated the construction of the population apparatus. The population apparatus was a manifestation of modern forms of power and the discourse of the population crisis reveals the relationship between the population crisis and bio-power.

In "Security, Territory, Population," which was a series of lectures that he delivered during 1978, Foucault explored and studied the concept of bio-power. He explained the idea as the sum of the various political strategies and technologies of power that came

about during the 18th century in order to reckon with human beings biologically, as a species. Foucault began these lectures with a rough idea of what he meant by bio-power:

“By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is roughly what I have called bio-power.”¹¹

To quote from “Society Must Be Defended,” (Lectures from 1975-76) in which Foucault elucidated his work on bio-power and war and state racism:

“...This new technology of power, this bio-politics, this bio-power that is beginning to establish itself [in the eighteenth century] involve[s]...a set of processes – the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity, and so on – together with a whole series of related economic and political problems...which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, become bio-politics’ first object of knowledge and the targets it seeks to control.”¹²

In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault described bio-power – the power over life – as having two poles: one centered on the individual and the other centered on the population. The second:

Focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of

¹¹ Michel Foucault, “Security, Territory, Population,” *Lectures at the College de France, 1977-78*, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan: République Française, 2007.

¹² Michel Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended,” *Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, translated by David Macey, (New York: Picador, 1997), 243.

interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*. (Foucault's emphasis)¹³

Foucault investigated the invention of a discourse of sexuality that deployed mechanisms of power-knowledge as it defined norms and produced truth about sexuality. He described four mechanisms, technologies, strategies of knowledge and power that emerged in the discourse of sexuality. The discourse strategy of sexuality that I want to focus on is one that Foucault sketched as "a socialization of procreative behavior." (The others were "a hysterization of women's bodies," "a pedagogization of children's sex," and "a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure." So this is the variety of ways in which sexuality as a discourse produced knowledge and power. They produced four "privileged objects of knowledge, which were also targets: ...the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the *Malthusian couple*, and the perverse adult."¹⁴)

I want to analyze the population crisis by seeing it as having or being linked to discourse strategies. Through various discourse strategies, the population crisis produced knowledge and power. Foucault's "Malthusian couple" represents an important tool for analyzing the population crisis as a discourse. I want to suggest that the discourse of the population crisis deployed the "socialization of procreative behavior" strategy, which involved:

An economic socialization via all the incitements and restrictions, the 'social' and fiscal measures brought to bear on the fertility of couples; a political socialization achieved through the 'responsibilization' of couples with regard to the social body as

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) p. 139

¹⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 105.

a whole (which had to be limited or on the contrary reinvigorated), and a medical socialization carried out by attributing a pathogenic value – for the individual and for the species – to birth-control practices.¹⁵

Schlosser suggested that the Malthusian Couple, originally an abstraction representing the overly fertile working class family, constituted the basic reduction upon which the entirety of a neo-Malthusian discourse was constructed. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, Schlosser argued, “neo-Malthusians, eugenists, birth control advocates, population control advocates, etc, all still extracted the Malthusian couple from social context, constructing and circulating it as an object of scientific knowledge and governance.”¹⁶

Greene argued that the Malthusian couple, as an object of knowledge and governance, became a central component in the discourses of social planning: “The desire to govern fertility takes on an increasingly social character with the deployment of economic, political, and medical discourses that take as its object the Malthusian couple.”¹⁷ Greene argued that the Malthusian couple was both internationalized and domesticated by the United States population apparatus as the U.S. government formulated foreign policies and domestic policies to govern fertility at home and abroad. In Greene’s analysis, the Malthusian couple represents the basic rationale of the population apparatus: “In order to police the Malthusian couple it would be necessary to create a vast network of governmental technologies that could both keep track of demographic variables as well as

¹⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 104-105

¹⁶ Schlosser, “Malthus at Mid-century,” 474.

¹⁷ Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 49.

provide options for intervention.”¹⁸ This power-knowledge network was the population apparatus.

The Malthusian couple circulated as an object of knowledge and governance within and among multiple discourses. Together, these discourses supported a population apparatus, an international population-policing agency made up of many organizations, states, etc. The population apparatus functioned according to the logic of bio-political governance or governmentality: the apparatus intervened in populations to enhance their welfare. This engagement was sometimes organized around the principle of development. In other instances the organizing principle was containment of the spread of communism. The discourses that operated according to these rationales were linked; according to Greene, they traversed a common “field of practical reasoning” that constituted the population crisis as a discourse. Greene argued that this field of Malthusian practical reasoning activated the U.S. and other institutions “as agents responsible for disarming the population bomb.”¹⁹ The metaphor of population growth as a bomb that would blow up and cause mass destruction is an important and prevalent image that circulated through and supported the discourse of the population crisis, as will be seen below.

Development, as a discourse strategy, played a significant role in the population crisis. According to Greene, the discourse of development problematized procreation as a threat both to the economic security of the West and to modernization in the developing

¹⁸ Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 50.

¹⁹ Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 2-3.

countries. Modernization theory became the basis of the development discourse after World War II. It created a normalizing scheme according to which most of the world was “underdeveloped.” The development discourse was concerned with changing the economic status of the world, which entailed changing the cultural habits of the world’s people. One of the cultural changes theorized to be conducive to economic progress was family planning, according to the logic of the population crisis. Greene argued,

The discourse strategy of development entailed a cultural policy dedicated to transforming the habits of a population. Economic development had come to include a complex process that entailed forms of cultural change conducive to its achievements. ...It is this dual process of economic development and cultural change that marks the guiding rationale of modernization theory.²⁰

By reference to the historians surveyed above we have a basic understanding of modernization theory, sometimes called transition theory. Modernization theory should be interpreted bio-politically as well. Through a complex process, the discourse of economic development brought together various institutions in order to bring about an improvement in the welfare of populations. According to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, these populations were acted upon as they were induced to act upon themselves; they were being governed at the same time as they were being empowered to govern themselves. This is how governing technologies like family planning worked. Greene called the mechanism “familialization.” Family planning enlisted the family as an agent responsible for curbing population growth. According to the logic of family planning as population control, families limit their own procreative activities in a form of self-government. That many (third

²⁰ Greene, *Malthusian Worlds*, 67.

world, un-modernized) families did not practice this self-government necessitated the cultural change implicit in economic development discourse.



Having constructed through these authors' arguments a bio-political framework for analyzing the population crisis, I will proceed to explore some sources in the discourse of the population crisis in order to illustrate how bio-power was deployed through the population apparatus. One way to approach these sources is to look within the discourse of the population crisis at the uses of different metaphors – the population bomb, the survival of mankind, the cancerous spread of population growth – and analyze the way in which they supported and sustained and legitimized the practical reasoning of the population apparatus. The metaphoric discourse of the population crisis also reveals the narratives that were constructed by population control experts and their audiences to understand and visualize the phenomena of population growth. These narratives varied among the different discursive strategies that were linked to the population crisis discourse and they ranged from heroic to apocalyptic. In some places the population crisis was narrativized as a challenge that humanity would overcome through technological progress and organization; in other places the story prophesized the doom of man.

As Piotrow pointed out, a major step in the construction of a population apparatus was the effort in the United States Senate to create legislation binding the U.S. government

in a commitment to reduce population growth around the world. From 1965 to 1967 Senator Ernest Gruening presided over congressional hearings on the "Population Crisis." The Gruening hearings amassed volumes of written evidence and witness testimony to persuade the government to pass legislation which would enable its direct involvement in the population apparatus and, most significantly, direct funding of the population apparatus. The funding that was eventually made available by Congress for population control efforts made the United States government the biggest player on the international population control field. The United States thereafter took the leadership position in the population apparatus and has held it since. What was said by the witnesses and experts called by the committee constitutes a part of the discourse of the population crisis. Here in this collection of statements can be found many repetitions of the familiar metaphors that characterized the population crisis discourse.

One construct that permeates this discourse and others during this period is that of "mankind." I want to explore the use of this idea of mankind as a single-minded entity with a unified will, and how it relates to bio-power. One passage, and there are many, in which this idea appears (in the record of the Gruening Hearings), stated by witness General William H. Draper (of the Draper Committee, 1958) reads: "Mankind can now, if he and she so decide, reduce the birth rate and bring it again into balance with the lowered rate of death." This was stated in the context of advances in medical science and the invention of

“safe, cheap, and effective contraceptives.”²¹ This statement exemplifies the hope of the neo-Malthusians that a new balance between birth and death rates can be achieved through the application of birth control technologies in developing countries. It also illustrates a host of unstated assumptions about the nature of the project to change the cultural habits of the world’s populations. The use of the mankind metaphor suggests that the U.S. population apparatus is to act as the agent of all humanity and that it is to embody the will of all humanity. The use of mankind may be interpreted as an indication of the tremendous importance that this group of population controllers attributed to themselves and their ideas. What it may also reveal is the extent to which their ways of thinking were restricted or constrained by their times. This type of political rhetoric does seem to characterize the era of the 1950s and 1960s. Many of President Kennedy’s speeches, for example, are famous for having played on this theme of a universalized humanity. The U.S. government’s space program was decorated in such lofty terms, as Neil Armstrong’s famous utterance epitomized. Did these men really think about and believe that their scientific discoveries were good for everyone, everywhere – or were they speaking in accordance with their discursive regime?

The metaphor of mankind served to simplify an issue so vast in scope as world population growth while situating it within a narrative that rendered the vast problem understandable and manageable. Mankind became a character in a heroic story of triumph

²¹ United States Senate, "Population crisis : hearings before the Subcommittee on Foreign Aid Expenditures of the Committee on Government Operations, United States Senate, Eighty-ninth Congress, Second Session, on S. 1676, a bill to reorganize the Department of State and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare," (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), vol. 2-A, 617.

and emancipation. This same mankind that would conquer the Moon and harness the power of the atom would also bring the human population into balance with the Earth's resources. This narrative of mankind set free through scientific knowledge constitutes a discursive regime that organized the language and literary tropes used to describe and understand and narrate the "population crisis." That narrative was familiar in other discourses as well, before and during the period of the population crisis, which is what qualifies it as a larger context for all of those discourses – a discursive regime according to which many fields of knowledge operated.

The statement of General Draper contained another central metaphor of the population crisis discourse: the population bomb. Draper stated:

A new Manhattan project is needed – not to build another atomic bomb which might destroy the world, but a grand and noble project for knowledge and demographic understanding around the world – a project to defuse the population bomb – so that mankind does not multiply itself into oblivion.²²

The population bomb became a ubiquitous catchphrase in American culture. It gained much attention for the issue. It was the title of a pamphlet published by the Hugh Moore Fund which became a piece of evidence for the Draper Committee in 1958, which first recommended to the government of the United States that it consider supporting population control programs in foreign countries as part of its effort to promote economic development around the world. (The Hugh Moore Fund for International Peace was established in 1944 by Dixie Cup Company founder Hugh Moore to promote population

²² United States Senate, "Population crisis," 622.

control and fund organizations involved in research and promotion of birth control around the world.) Paul Ehrlich, a biologist and staunch environmentalist appropriated the title for his 1968 book *The Population Bomb* warning that population control would fail and that the planet was doomed for a mass die-off before the end of the twentieth century. The concept appeared also as the population explosion, which indicated the high rate of births in comparison to that of deaths – Malthus’s geometric ratio of increase against the arithmetic rate of increase of food resources. Unless these rates were somehow equalized, “mankind” would “multiply itself into oblivion” and thus destroy itself as if it were a bomb. The solution lay thus in “defusing” the bomb, and the fuse was procreation. Draper mentioned that what was needed was a “project for knowledge.” The object of that knowledge was the Malthusian couple, as Greene and Schlosser both demonstrated. Thus the target of this defusing was the Malthusian couple. The bomb metaphor served to simplify the problem in neo-Malthusian terms. For neo-Malthusians, the bomb could be defused with birth control.

The metaphor of the population bomb was used in part to justify a project to change the cultural habits of people in order to improve their welfare. When population controllers talked about defusing the population bomb, what this meant in practical terms was motivating people to use birth control by certain means. These means included direct educational (propaganda) efforts, and less direct means such as improving economic conditions. This is evidenced in the development discourse and its articulations to the population crisis. The metaphor of mankind, in a similar way, represented the source of this power, which was in the knowledge produced by the population apparatus. The population

controllers were not attempting to hide their intentions by speaking in these metaphorical terms. The power over life that came from this power-knowledge was also not hidden. The use of metaphor served to concretize and simplify the massive idea of reducing world population growth, which in practical terms would have been very complex and difficult to imagine doing.

The population bomb also represents a narrative that organized the population crisis in a literary sense. Much scholarship has been done on many different topics in history and culture using “postmodern” methodologies inspired by Hayden White, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and others. Some of the work of these theorists, and scholars that have followed them, employed an analysis of history and culture in terms of narrative. One of the suggestions that has come out of this body of research is that scientific knowledge follows the rules of narrative just as more literary or humanistic fields of knowledge do; that science is not above or outside of discourse and so it is subject to the same constraints of narrative that history or literature are, for example. The population crisis, even in its most scientific discursive strategies – the medical discourse of birth control and vaccinations, the demographic discourse of population dynamics, the agricultural discourse of food and nutrition, the militaristic and strategic discourse and so on – follows the rules of narrative and operates according to some narrative story or another. Scientists

tell “an epic of knowledge,” according to Lyotard, when they claim to have made a discovery.²³

The population crisis discourse was constructed in large part by scientists. There is an important link between science and government in the modern era; this link is a major part of what Foucault constructed as governmentality: modern forms of controlling populations based upon scientific knowledge of biology, physiology, psychology, etc. That this knowledge is in narrative form has significance. To quote further from Lyotard, “The state spends large amounts of money to enable science to pass itself off as an epic: the State’s own credibility is based on that epic, which it uses to obtain the public consent its decision makers need.”²⁴ This relationship between the science epic and the power of the state is represented in the Gruening Hearings and reflected by narratives and metaphors. An example is the construction of a technological triumph of mankind over the challenge of population growth that was presented in a birth-control-as-solution narrative.

In presenting proposed solutions for the problem of population growth, Draper discussed birth control, which reflected the neo-Malthusian point of view that widespread use of contraceptive technologies, techniques, and devices in developing countries could “defuse the population bomb” in time to save the world. The neo-Malthusian narrative presents scientific progress as an epic. Scott C. Zeman, in “Taking Hell’s Measurements’:

²³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, quoted in Scott C. Zeman, “Taking Hell’s Measurements’: *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* Magazines and the Atomic Bomb from Hiroshima to Bikini, *The Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 41 no. 4, 2008, 696.

²⁴ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, quoted in Zeman, “Taking Hell’s Measurements,” 696.

Popular Science and *Popular Mechanics* Magazines and the Atomic Bomb from Hiroshima to Bikini,” referred to different types of narratives to explain representations of the atomic bomb during the 1940s. He used Lyotard’s “narrative of emancipation,” to describe the story of scientific progress as it related to atomic power. The population bomb metaphor followed an emancipatory narrative where it was presented as a threat to be averted, a bomb to be defused. Birth control was the scientific discovery around which this epic narrative was centered. It was presented by neo-Malthusians as the solution to the population problem: birth control would defuse the population bomb. This narrative was an epic of scientific discovery and emancipation and it was one way among others in which the population crisis was narrativized in discourse.

Draper described the work of some of the foundations with which he was involved, which included setting up “birth control facilities” in various developing countries and encouraging the governments of those countries to assume the responsibility of expanding and distributing such facilities. Draper cited the insertion of hundreds of thousands of intrauterine devices in Korean women as “progress” and said that, “It would appear then Korea’s population problem is on the way to solution.”²⁵ He described the I.U.D. as “safe and effective and also cheap.”²⁶ The birth control pill was still relatively expensive at this time, so the I.U.D. was promoted by neo-Malthusians as a cheap, easy solution to the population problem. The I.U.D. was also highlighted by John D. Rockefeller in his testimony before the committee. Rockefeller was the head of the Population Council, which was

²⁵ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 618.

²⁶ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 619.

formed in 1952 to support research geared toward reducing population growth. The Population Council put a lot of its resources into research and support of the I.U.D. “This simple device,” Rockefeller stated, represented, “a major breakthrough in population control, and might even change the history of the world.”²⁷ And he stated that, “the modern intrauterine device is clearly the most dramatic recent event in the population field.”²⁸

The I.U.D. was used by these population control advocates as a symbol for the epic narrative of scientific progress in the emancipatory mode. The I.U.D. would “change the history of the world;” it would solve the population crisis, they claimed. By applying this technology the population crisis could be averted, the bomb defused. It was not the device itself alone, however, that would bring the crisis to its solution. The device functioned symbolically within the narrative of emancipation that these population controllers constructed. As Rockefeller stated, it was “dramatic.” However, the solution also involved relations of power-knowledge among the foundations that were funding and disseminating the technology to control reproduction, the governments that were implementing the population control programs, and the people, specifically the women, who were accepting and receiving this technology upon their bodies.

Frank Notestein, demographer and president of the Population Council, spoke about the importance of the I.U.D. in Korea and also Taiwan. The council was consulted in

²⁷ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 835.

²⁸ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 835.

setting up programs and “intrauterine clinics” in these countries where he stated up to 20,000 women a month (15,000 in Taiwan) were then “receiving intrauterine devices under the government’s program.”²⁹ He used these examples to illustrate the kind of “real progress” that was possible under the right circumstances and with the right level of “organization.”³⁰ The epic narrative was again reflected in these statements. The technology of birth control represented by the I.U.D. was used to illustrate the inevitability of scientific knowledge solving the crisis of population growth. Technology along with “organization,” which in this context meant state control, represented “progress” and ultimately the solution of the problem. What this narrative leaves out, however, are the details – not so minor – describing the relations of power-knowledge and the effects of those relations on the individuals making up the populations being controlled.

Through the efforts of these members of the population apparatus, many people were being affected in a bio-political sense. The population controllers’ shared idea of progress toward a solution of the population crisis – progress toward the ultimate survival and continuity of the species – was in essence an exercise of power-knowledge, an application of bio-power upon those people accepting and receiving birth control technology. Notestein spoke of “organization” and “government programs” and “intrauterine clinics.” This represented a deployment of power from the network which sustained the population apparatus. This is not to say that these thousands of women were forced into these clinics to receive their regulatory controls, however. They may have acted

²⁹ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 846.

³⁰ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 847.

in self-government through mechanisms of Foucault's "responsibilization," or Greene's "familialization." These mechanisms constituted the cultural change that the population apparatus implicitly required for its mission to be successful (assuming its "mission" was to reduce population growth), though was not necessarily its responsibility to carry out or direct. The population apparatus did influence and stimulate cultural change; by disbursing knowledge and technologies such as birth control and medicine, the apparatus impacted cultural attitudes and empowered couples in the developing world.

Foucault's concept of bio-power describes the technique of power employed by states and other institutions to govern populations with respect to their biological characteristics. He used the term disciplinary power to describe the techniques of power focused on people as individuals. While bio-power best represents the mechanism of population control by the states and institutions of the population apparatus, disciplinary power is also involved when we examine population control at the level of the birth control clinic. These clinics were noted by Notestein, Draper, and Rockefeller as the sites of real progress toward the solution of the population problem. Here women were lining up (metaphorically) to receive their state-sponsored birth control technological devices, to have them inserted into their bodies by medical personnel. That act of submission to power-knowledge – that *discipline* demonstrated by those thousands of women – is an illustration of governmentality. That is, the power-knowledge constructed by the population apparatus – the truth represented by the neo-Malthusian rationality – reached individuals who then were empowered by that truth to make changes in their cultural attitudes.

Women in Korea, for example, learned that they could and should use birth control. They learned this indirectly from the population apparatus (which included the Korean government). The act of receiving birth control technology was simultaneously an empowerment and a submission to bio-power/disciplinary power/power-knowledge.

The forms of modern state and institutional control over populations that are described by governmentality depend upon the dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge and the norms and truths that it creates work to define and direct the choices that people make as individuals and in groups or populations. So it is through the production of knowledge about birth control that power over populations with regard to their reproductive behavior is wielded. This technique of power was not possessed by the population apparatus as a king possesses power over his kingdom, but rather that power-knowledge was deployed through the population apparatus wherever information caused people to act. This arrangement of power-knowledge reveals why, in the population crisis discourse, there was so much emphasis on changing people's cultural attitudes and convincing them of certain truths, certain rationalities.

Draper stated that it must be demonstrated to "the masses of humanity in the developing countries that voluntary population control means better maternal health, better family life, better employment, better opportunities for their children's education, and a better standard of living for all."³¹ However, this was the truth only according to a neo-Malthusian rationality. For the "masses of humanity"—in their world—more children

³¹ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 619.

often meant better security for their family under the conditions in which they lived. This dilemma was not mentioned by Draper, though it was a recurring topic of discussion within the discourse of the population crisis. Although, Draper implied this dilemma by emphasizing that, “greatly expanded, costly, and long continued efforts”³² would be required to convince the “masses” to limit the number of children that they would have, that is, to demonstrate the truth of the neo-Malthusian rationality. Notestein suggested that promoting government health services in general would help their cause. He stated, “There is nothing like having their babies survive to induce people to limit their childbearing.”³³

Again these statements reveal the workings of bio-power in the context of the population apparatus. Many third world “Malthusian couples” gave birth to multiple children simply because it was likely that at least one would not survive past infancy due to common health problems. This was represented statistically by high infant mortality rates. As Notestein suggested, a reduction in infant mortality rates could lead to a reduction in birth rates. This approach involved other bio-political technologies, such as vaccinations, etc. Thus, the health of children was to be policed by the population apparatus along with the procreative behavior of couples. Not only health and well-being, but employment, education, and standard of living were all linked to the responsabilization (“voluntary population control”) of the Malthusian couple. The population controllers revealed in their statements that they sought to intervene in the biological life of the populations of the

³² United States Senate, "Population crisis," 619.

³³ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 850.

developing world in order to enhance their welfare. These interventions illustrated the flow of power through the population apparatus and onto women lining up at birth control clinics in the developing world.

The bio-political nature of the population apparatus was further revealed by the statement before the Senate committee of John D. Rockefeller 3rd, who was chairman of the Population Council, a major institution in the population apparatus. In the context of population growth as a problem in the United States, Rockefeller stated:

The problem, as I see it...is not only numbers of people versus material resources but also cultural resources. This third dimension is the sum total of all man's mental, emotional, and spiritual needs that go far beyond the bare necessities and creature comforts. Every man deserves the chance to lead a life of satisfaction and purpose, to achieve in life more than mere existence. ...The moral, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of life cannot be omitted from the solution. Indeed, there can be no true solution until society can offer every individual an opportunity to live – the fullest sense – as well as to survive.³⁴

According to Rockefeller's vision, society must offer a full life to the whole population. Let us interpret this statement from a Foucauldian point of view. According to Foucault, the aim of bio-power as a technology of governmentality is to enhance the welfare of the population as a whole. Rockefeller was here concerned with the cultural welfare of the population of the United States, though his thought could be considered to apply to the world population too, I think. Rockefeller and his Population Council – the population apparatus – purposed to bring this kind of enhanced life to everybody by wielding the modern power over life. I want to emphasize that population control as it was put into discourse during the 1960s is best understood as a bio-political phenomenon.

³⁴ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 621.

Population control had to do with more than a simple adjustment of birth rates; it involved induced cultural change with the goal of an improvement in the welfare of the populations being controlled. Such an undertaking could only have occurred under the conditions of modern governmentality and with the scientific knowledge that allowed for that form of politics to develop.

Other language in the statement of General Draper in reference to the issue of population growth further demonstrates how various metaphors and constructs contained and deployed power-knowledge. While the narrative of emancipation was prominent in the population crisis discourse, another version that circulated tended toward a style of the “apocalyptic” narrative. The witness stated that “the world population explosion represents a serious and imminent threat,” and that “something has to be done to dispel that threat.”³⁵ He cited a recent Conference on Population Growth which called for a “massive attack on demographic problems” and compared the effort to those international health organizations which were “combating disease.”³⁶ He stated that the trend in population growth “must be reversed or disaster lies ahead,” and “the world is on a collision course.”³⁷ If population growth rates were to continue along the present trend, he said, “the result would be economic, political, and social chaos...and the impact on the United States would be disastrous.”³⁸ As Draper concluded, he stated:

³⁵ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 617.

³⁶ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 618.

³⁷ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 619.

³⁸ United States Senate, “Population crisis,” 620.

...I firmly believe that the present excessive rate of world population growth is already taking its toll in many parts of the world, and that unless it can be slowed down to a rate that can be reasonably absorbed, our children will suffer grave consequences and our grandchildren may well find life on this planet intolerable. Like cancer cells multiplying in the human body, it will, unless slowed down, destroy our present day civilization just as surely as would a nuclear conflict.³⁹

General Draper's testimony was filled with language that typified the point of view he presented and which was repeated by others who shared his views. Violent language and images were employed in the call for population control. Key words and phrases like: explosion, bomb, threat, disaster, chaos, collision, attack, disease, cancer, suffer, life intolerable, destroy civilization, nuclear conflict – all were frequently used in connection with or describing the effects of a high rate of reproduction among particular groups of people in various parts of the world. These constructs and metaphors are what characterized the discourse of the "population crisis" and they reflected the development of the government's population control programs. Similar language is found in the testimony of John D. Rockefeller:

...No problem is more urgently important to the well-being of mankind than the limitation of population growth. As a threat to our future, it is often compared with nuclear warfare. Population growth is like a lingering, wasting illness; nuclear destruction is like a sudden act of violence. But both endanger the future of life on our planet or, more important perhaps, life as we want it to be.⁴⁰

Again the words and constructs are repeated: mankind, threat, nuclear war, illness, destruction, violence, danger, life on our planet, etc. These references are made over and over again by many witnesses. These terms were symbols and metaphors for an apocalyptic

³⁹ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 622.

⁴⁰ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 836.

narrative of the population crisis. In contrast to the neo-Malthusian narrative of emancipation according to which birth control technology would save humanity from overpopulation, the plain “Malthusian” apocalyptic narrative emphasized the horrible consequences that humanity faced if efforts to reduce population growth were to fail.

The population crisis was painted as a near extinction event for humanity by these witnesses. This placed their argument in the context of the survival of the species, the continuity of human life. This reasoning represents the most basic level of bio-power. These would-be population controllers sought regulatory controls and interventions to affect the basic life processes of the species body in order to ensure its survival. Advocates of birth control used the apocalyptic narrative like a scare campaign. The apocalyptic narrative frightened people with the prospect that failure to act according to the neo-Malthusian rationality could literally mean the end of the world as they knew it. Hence the violence of the metaphors and images that symbolized the apocalyptic narrative: the consequences of population growth were constantly compared to the aftermath of worldwide nuclear war, or in other cases to a spreading deadly disease – these were other common apocalyptic scenarios that were articulated in other discourses. Scott C. Zeman, referencing David Nye, argued that *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* magazines constructed an “apocalyptic narrative” for atomic energy after the Bikini tests revealed the deadliness of nuclear radiation.⁴¹ The population crisis discourse constructed its apocalypse in relation to other fears that were created previously in other discourses such as that of nuclear

⁴¹ Scott C. Zeman, “Taking Hell’s Measurements”: *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* Magazines and the Atomic Bomb from Hiroshima to Bikini, *The Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 41 no. 4, 2008, 697.

energy/nuclear war and that of pandemic disease, i.e. cancer. This constitutes a demonstration of the linkages, or articulations that existed between and among different discourses at a set period in time.

The metaphors that symbolized the apocalyptic narrative of the population crisis were characterized by references to violence and popular cultural fears. In “Contaminated Communities: the Metaphor of ‘Immigrant as Pollutant’ in Media Representations of Immigration,” J. David Cisneros described metaphors as “repositories of cultural understandings” and “principle tools with which dominant ideologies and prejudices are represented and reinforced.”⁴² The construction of population growth as a cancer or a “lingering, wasting illness” by the witnesses suggests that they were playing on widespread cultural fears to elicit support for their agenda. The cancer metaphor served to concretize the abstract phenomena of population growth in the minds of American government officials and the public as a disease upon the earth, or alternatively a disease upon the collective body of mankind. Draper even linked population control efforts to those of international health organizations working to control the spread of diseases in the developing world, and Notestein argued that vaccinations could play a role in reducing population growth by reducing infant mortality. So population growth was not only described metaphorically as a disease, but it was also to be regulated together with actual diseases in an overall strategy of “health control” in the developing world. The metaphorical construction of population growth as cancer or disease served to reinforce the ideology of

⁴² J. David Cisneros, “Contaminated Communities: The Metaphor of ‘Immigrant as Pollutant’ in Media Representations of Immigration,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* vol. 11, no. 4, 2008, 571.

neo-Malthusianism: that population growth, like disease, must be controlled or else the consequences of out of control population growth would mimic those of an uncontrolled deadly disease.

Another prevalent metaphor that reflected the violent imaginary used to construct the population crisis discourse was that of war. Not only were the consequences of population growth compared with those of nuclear war, (i.e. total destruction of life on our planet, etc.) but the language used to approach the population crisis often suggested the terminology of combat. Draper called for a “massive attack” on demographic problems. Such language conjured the image of population growth as an enemy to be joined in battle. Population growth was continuously referred to as a “threat” as if from an enemy. It was portrayed as a threat “to our future,” and a threat to the American way of life. The cultural understandings associated with the word threat in the context of the 1960s could reasonably have included the ubiquitous threat of communism, the threat to the free world emanating from the Soviet Union. The use of the threat metaphor in the discourse of the population crisis was surely linked to its use in the discourse of the containment of communism. In some instances that link was made explicit by the claim that high population growth rates and the conditions of poverty that such growth supposedly exacerbated could lead to worldwide communist revolutions. The metaphors of violence and war prevalent in the discourse of the population crisis worked to concretize the idea of population growth as an enemy threat in a culture so steeped in the rhetoric of war as the United States during the Cold War as well as the War in Vietnam.

As Greene outlined in his book, the discourse of the population crisis was articulated to other discourses, one of which had to do with the containment of communism around the world. In one exchange between witness Dr. Alberto Lleras Camargo, who was President of Columbia from 1958 to 1962 (as well as in 1945-46), and U.S. Senator Joseph Montoya (New Mexico), the question of whether communism was abetted by high population growth in Latin America was brought up. Dr. Lleras described the rise of slums as increasing numbers of poor people went to the cities where they were subsequently unable to find employment and he had stated: "Some of the toughest gangsters and more than one extremist political movement have their origin in these sad agglomerations of desperate humanity."⁴³ Senator Montoya asked if Dr. Lleras believed that communists did exploit the "disorganized, poverty-stricken masses"⁴⁴ and Dr. Lleras conceded that while the poor slum-dwellers were not communists per se they were often motivated by the immediate objectives that communists agitated for and were thus able to be of use to them. In this way the witness linked the political crisis occurring in Latin American countries at this time to the population explosion. He Stated:

What has caused this crisis is the speed at which Latin America's population has been growing. If the population increase were not proceeding at such an inordinate rate, the problem would be manageable, but at the current rate it is beyond manageable proportions, and certainly beyond the capacities of the Latin Americans to cope with. Latin America is breeding misery, revolutionary pressures, famine, and many other potentially disastrous problems in proportions that exceed our imagination even in the age of thermonuclear war.⁴⁵

⁴³ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 712.

⁴⁴ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 712.

⁴⁵ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 713.

The (communist) revolutionary pressures that were occurring in Latin America were caused by the high growth rate of the populations there, according to the former president of Columbia. This type of testimony had a heavy impact on the U.S. government in the context of the Cold War. This point of view took the governmentality of the population crisis to another level, from improving the welfare of the population for its own sake to improving their welfare in order to maintain political control. As Foucault explained, as bio-power developed in the modern era this was always its ultimate purpose and reason for existence – to rule. Governmentality evolved to maintain the biological life and welfare of populations in order to continue to rule over them, even democratically.

Note the words chosen by the witness and how they match the testimony of the other witnesses: misery, revolution, famine, disastrous problems, thermonuclear war, crisis. Again images of chaos and destruction animated the testimony and these discursive characteristics reveal the extent to which the statements fit the mold of the population crisis discourse. The familiar set of metaphorical constructs evoked feelings of fear and desperation that played on the shared cultural sentiments of U.S. officials and the public and served to reinforce hegemonic ideologies linked to the population crisis discourse such as anti-communism and neo-Malthusianism.

At last, the question of the political power represented by a potential U.S. international population policy was also discussed during Dr. Lleras's testimony. This question is very interesting because it will show up again in NSSM-200, the document which represents the U.S. government's international population policy as it was written in 1974,

and which will be analyzed in the second part of this thesis. If the U.S. government were to have a population policy, the committee asked themselves, what form of response from governments of other nations could it expect? Dr. Lleras cautioned: "...I think in this particular matter it has to be very cautious not to try to impose any kind of condition or any kind of policy related to the problems of foreign aid to any country."⁴⁶ Senator Gruening responded in this way: "I fully agree...The program should not be tied to AID or in any way apply condition such as saying to a country, 'Unless you use these methods or some methods, we cannot give you so much aid.' ...There must be no element of compulsion whatsoever."⁴⁷ Of course, the population program that came out of this process of hearings was established within the Agency for International Development, so the "coercion" dilemma would continue to be a part of the U.S. government's population policy, as will be seen below.

The way in which the witness cautioned against the soft use of force or the imposition of any conditions in the implementation of a foreign population control policy brings us back to the complex phenomenon of power-knowledge and its role in producing and inducing cultural change. As was the focus of so much of the population crisis discourse, couples in the developing world that constituted aggregately the high growth populations in question had to decide for themselves to have fewer children. The "responsibilization" or "familialization" of these "Malthusian couples" represented the only viable birth-control-solution to the population crisis: "voluntary population control." Any population control

⁴⁶ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 711.

⁴⁷ United States Senate, "Population crisis," 711.

policy the U.S. government might pursue could not violate the rhetoric of freedom that justified its entire foreign aid program, regardless of whatever violations thereof existed at the time. Such ideological consistency was especially relevant at the stage of creating legislation for an international population policy, obviously. Beyond diplomatic face, however, the policy of voluntarism represented the bio-political dimension of cultural change and the complex nuances of power-knowledge that empower individuals to change their minds and act according to new rationalities.



The Gruening hearings ultimately resulted in Congress earmarking funds within the Agency for International Development for population control activities. The U.S. government's direct involvement in and funding of population control began in the context of President Johnson's War on Hunger. Johnson launched the "War on Hunger" in 1967 which established the Population Service at the Agency for International Development. In March 1967 Senator J. William Fulbright introduced an amendment to the Foreign Aid Act: "Title X. Program Relating to Population Growth," which authorized the appropriation of \$50 million for family planning assistance, of which \$35 million was actually appropriated in

November 1967.⁴⁸ The administration of President Nixon took steps to further institutionalize the U.S. international population control program. In July 1969 Nixon delivered his “Message to Congress on Population.” In line with the neo-Malthusian policy, he urged the “need to address world population growth rates and their adverse impact on economic growth.”⁴⁹ He also instructed the Secretary of State and the Administrator of AID, among other agencies and officials, “to take steps to enlist the active support of all U.S. representatives abroad...to encourage and assist developing nations to recognize and take action to protect against the hazards of unchecked population growth.”⁵⁰

Nixon also proposed a “Commission on Population Growth and the American Future,” which was established in March 1970 and headed by John D. Rockefeller 3rd. After two years of public hearings, the Rockefeller Commission submitted its report to the President in March 1972 with recommendations for a domestic population policy. Nixon, however, was unprepared to endorse the report as it advocated unrestricted abortion policies as well as unrestricted distribution of family planning services to minors.⁵¹ The president could not advocate such measures without jeopardizing much of his political support. Such a policy would have gone against some of the basic tenets of the Republican Party platform. Instead, Nixon focused on population growth in other countries, the

⁴⁸ Phyllis Tilson Piotrow, *World Population Crisis: The United States Response* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), p. 138.

⁴⁹ Green, “The Evolution of U.S. International Population Policy,” p. 308.

⁵⁰ Green, “The Evolution of U.S. International Population Policy,” p. 308.

⁵¹ Green, “The Evolution of U.S. International Population Policy,” p. 309.

populations of which had no representation in the U.S. and whose political support was not an issue.

The next primary source which I want to analyze according to Foucault's bio-politics was created by Nixon's National Security Council in 1974. Having not the political will to endorse a domestic population policy, the president (and his influential national security advisor Henry Kissinger) did proceed to draft detailed plans in order to deal with population growth around the world, which was generally interpreted and accepted at that time to be a threat to national security and American interests, as scholars cited above have agreed. This document represents the culmination of what men like Draper and Rockefeller had been actively promoting and campaigning for since the late 1950s. This document, titled "Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests (National Security Study Memorandum 200)" represents what Perkins called the "population-national security theory" reflected in official U.S. policy. What else is interesting about this document is that it remained classified secret until 1989. "NSSM-200" is an important document in the history of the U.S. government's involvement in the population apparatus, and I do not believe anyone has yet applied to it a bio-political analysis.

Foucault's bio-power has a long history of development beginning, as he stated, somewhere in the eighteenth century. When we look at the U.S. government's population policies and programs written during the 1960s and 1970s from such a perspective, we can see how this discourse is an important part of the history of modern governmentality.

NSSM-200 is a document that recommended various techniques to effect a biological management of the population of the world, or at least of the populations of certain areas (e.g. less developed countries). NSSM-200 discussed ways of reducing population growth in the target countries. The authors suggested that the U.S. government convince or in some instances all but coerce the governments of these countries to use family planning programs, improved health services, education and indoctrination, comprehensive social and economic planning, urban planning, regulation of international migration, women's equality, bio-medical research for improved contraceptive technologies, welfare, and censuses. These are all categories which represent bio-political techniques and technologies that gradually developed over the course of the modern period in western societies.

The document frames these discussions in such a way as to minimize the chance of an imperialistic interpretation of its conception, with various disclaimers to the contrary included within. However, the discourse of which NSSM-200 is a part is impossible to separate from the history of imperialism. The technologies of bio-power upon which the NSC population strategy is based were invented through the experience of empire: mapping territories, statistics (counting births and deaths), managing populations, etc. The U.S. government authors and bureaucrats involved in policing population growth in these foreign countries believed, perhaps, that they were protecting American interests by helping people in the third world develop their economies and live better lives. By taking the perspective of discourse and of bio-power, a different interpretation becomes possible

– an interpretation that reveals the mechanisms of power-knowledge at play in a situation where populations are being bio-politically managed and controlled, an interpretation that reveals governmentality.

Under “Policy Recommendations,” NSSM-200 contains a brief warning about how to handle approaching foreign governments with plans for reducing the rates of population growth in their countries. The report states:

While some [presumably in the National Security Council] have argued for use of explicit ‘leverage’ to ‘force’ better population programs on LDC governments, there are several practical constraints on our efforts to achieve program improvements. Attempts to use ‘leverage’ for far less sensitive issues have generally caused political frictions and often backfired. Successful family planning requires strong local dedication and commitment that cannot over the long run be enforced from the outside.⁵²

The report cautions, “There is also the danger that some LDC [less developed country] leaders will see developed country pressures for family planning as a form of economic or racial imperialism...”⁵³ After implying that distributions of PL 480 (Public Law 480) food aid should take into consideration “...what steps a country is taking in population control...” the report candidly states, “In these sensitive relationships, however, it is important in style as well as substance to avoid the appearance of coercion.”⁵⁴

It is remarkable that the very situation that Dr. Lleras warned against in his testimony before the “population crisis” committee in 1965 – that they had to be cautious

⁵² *National Security Study Memorandum 200: Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests* in Stephen D. Mumford, *The Life and Death of NSSM 200: How the destruction of Political Will Doomed a U.S. Population Policy* (North Carolina: Center for Research on Population and Security, 1994), 135.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 135.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 135.

not to “impose any kind of condition or any kind of policy related to the problems of foreign aid” – was presented as an option in the population policy recommendations of 1974. The report stated: “Since population growth is a major determinant of increases in food demand, allocation of scarce PL 480 resources should take account of what steps a country is taking in population control as well as food production.”⁵⁵ It was this type of bargaining for population control that engendered a political backlash against the United States and its neo-Malthusian agenda at the United Nations Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974, which occurred while the NSSM-200 report was being prepared. There a coalition of developing nations rejected the population plan of action proposed by the U.S. and the U.N. and demanded substantial revisions that placed population control and birth control in the context of human rights, and recognizing simply the “importance of population trends for socio-economic development,”⁵⁶ without declaring the causal relationship that was the central tenet of neo-Malthusianism. The coalition of anti-imperialist and developing nations did not accept the neo-Malthusian position, some denying that their population growth constituted an obstacle to development,⁵⁷ and some asserting the standard Marxist critique of neo-Malthusianism as a cloak for imperialism and colonialism. Hence the concern evident within the NSSM-200 report over appearances.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 135.

⁵⁶ United Nations, World Population Plan of Action, United Nations Population Information Network (POPIN), UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), B: 14: c, online, August 16, 2008, <<http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/bkg/wppa.html>>

⁵⁷ Michael Carder, “A Family Quarrel? ‘Developmentalism’ or Family Planning?,” *Concerned Demography* vol. 4, no. 2.

To take a moment once again to dwell on language, it is interesting to note the terminology used to distinguish the developing countries from the developed, industrialized countries like the United States. Developing countries were referred to by the acronym “LDC” standing for less developed country. This type of language operated according to a normalization scheme which standardized developed as normal and good and less developed as abnormal and in need of intervention and assistance in order to make it normal and good and developed. This bipolar dichotomy is central to the way that Foucault understood the cultural production of truth. The neo-Malthusian truth upon which NSSM-200 was based hinged on such normalizing judgments. The two-child family was normal and desirable, the four-child or six-child or eight-child family was abnormal, dangerous, and in need of reform. The less developed country, populated by these dangerously, abnormally reproducing couples, was likewise abnormal and in need of reform. The population policies of the United States can be seen in the context of the continuing Western project to make “them” more like “us.”

NSSM-200 included a section discussing the World Population Conference. In conclusion, the report stated: “The beliefs, ideologies, and misconceptions displayed by many nations at Bucharest indicate more forcefully than ever the need for extensive education of the leaders of many governments.”⁵⁸ This call for “extensive education” points to the importance of Foucault’s power-knowledge concept in understanding how bio-power flowed through the population apparatus to affect changes in the cultural life of the

⁵⁸ *National Security Study Memorandum 200*, 128.

populations of those developing countries which were made subject to the population crisis governmentality. The possibility of the neo-Malthusian endeavor to reduce population growth hinged on the acceptance of that rationality and form of truth by the governments of the developing countries, if not the populations under the political control of state governing institutions. The knowledge produced by the population crisis discourse – its transmission and acceptance as truth – represented a flow of power from the population apparatus to the people of the developing world.

The report also discussed ways of achieving “population reduction” in “countries where U.S. assistance is limited either by the nature of political or diplomatic relations with those countries or by lack of strong government desire.”⁵⁹ That is, even in countries where the government did not want a population program, the U.S. would still do everything in its power to get them to want one, and even in countries that did not receive financial assistance or other kinds of foreign aid from the U.S. government, population programs could be run by private organizations funded in part by the U.S. government.⁶⁰ The report also emphasized the importance of getting the leaders of developing countries to champion the cause of population control themselves – the U.S. government remaining in the shadows, so to speak. The report states, “...It is vital that leaders of major LDCs themselves take the lead in advancing family planning and population stabilization,”⁶¹ and, “It is vital that the effort to develop and strengthen a commitment on the part of the LDC leaders not

⁵⁹ Ibid, 133.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 133.

⁶¹ Ibid, 138.

be seen by them as an industrialized country policy to keep their strength down or to reserve resources for use by the 'rich' countries."⁶²

I think that such warnings reveal something important about power/knowledge and the population apparatus. With Foucault's conception of power/knowledge in mind, what might be the meaning of U.S. representatives being advised to "avoid the appearance of coercion" when urging leaders of developing countries to intensify family planning programs? To the authors of NSSM-200 this advice may have simply been a reminder about the sensitivity of the birth control issue at this time and in these places. From a Foucauldian perspective, however, the meaning behind the statement can be interpreted as a demonstration of the hidden workings of knowledge and power.

The population apparatus and its population controllers made a case according to a particular neo-Malthusian rationality. This rationality led to the formation of certain truths about procreation and economic development, and so on. The presentation of this knowledge as truth to countries receiving funds from the U.S. government involved, fundamentally and simultaneously, an exercise of power. By appealing to the truth in order to change the behavior of the recipients of that information, population controllers deployed power/knowledge. The question of coercion is largely irrelevant. The politicians of the less developed world were faced with "the truth" according to which they were to act. Their acceptance of that truth and their acting according to its rationality was their submission to the power at the source of that knowledge. Just as families governed their

⁶² Ibid, 139.

own fertility according to the logic of family planning through “familialization,” so less developed countries were to govern their own population growth. The population apparatus existed not to force family planning, but to present the truth of the desirability and necessity of it. The authors of NSSM-200 were bound to the structure of the discursive regime that organized the discourse of the population crisis. They acknowledged no other truth than the neo-Malthusian rationality. It is this presentation of truth according to neo-Malthusian rationality which represented power/knowledge – a much more complex process than coercion.

By employing Foucault’s tools of analysis we can find something other than pure irony in statements such as “It is vital that the effort to develop and strengthen a commitment on the part of the LDC leaders not be seen by them as an industrialized country policy to ... reserve resources for use by the ‘rich’ countries,”⁶³ since this report was, after all, about reducing population growth in order to sustain U.S. access to resources and even titled “Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests.” Those overseas interests were illustrated in charts and tables within the report and they were certainly “resources.” As it was explained in the report, the projected consequences of overpopulation would interfere with the extraction of resources from those areas: “In the extreme cases where population pressures lead to endemic famine, food riot, and breakdown of social order, those conditions are scarcely conducive to

⁶³ Ibid, 139.

systematic exploration for mineral deposits or the long term investments required for their exploitation.”⁶⁴

While it seems Machiavellian that they would deny such intentions in their efforts to recruit leaders of developing nations to their cause of reducing population growth, perhaps it is actually Foucauldian. Discourse describes the field of understanding which limits the conceptions that both sides of this debate can form. Within the population crisis discourse, both the U.S. government and the leaders of other countries hearing the arguments were limited to viewing population control as necessary and beneficial to everyone involved. Leaders who would have rejected the reasoning behind neo-Malthusianism and cried Imperialism represented a challenge to the power-knowledge of the population apparatus. However, it was through knowledge – the practical reasoning of neo-Malthusianism – that these rogue, counter-discursive elements were to be dealt with, and not through the use of force, or coercion. This is why the presentation of knowledge to these leaders and their acceptance and adoption of it received so much emphasis in the plan. According to the policy, it was “vital” that the leaders of the developing countries “take the lead in advancing family planning and population stabilization.”⁶⁵ Here the meaning of power-knowledge can be understood simply: by controlling the discourse of the population crisis, the population apparatus controlled the way in which the leaders of countries with high population growth rates would understand those statistics, which was according to the model or norm that high rates were detrimental to development and other general national goals. The

⁶⁴ Ibid, 94.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 138.

knowledge generated by the population crisis discourse represented the power that would control the leaders of those countries, and thus control and modify the behaviors of the populations with respect to procreation and other aspects of their life and culture. Leaders who did not accept this truth – like the members of the bloc at Bucharest – required an “extensive education,” according to the authors of NSSM-200.

While NSSM-200 definitely belongs to the discourse of the population crisis, it differs from that discourse which I have used the Gruening Hearings to illustrate. This government document is less sensational in its language than the many testimonials recorded in the Hearings. NSSM-200 does not pretend to be a document of “mankind” but rather of “USG.” It does not claim as its end the diffusion of the population bomb but rather “population reduction” and “population stabilization.” It does not refer to high rates of population growth as a cancer spreading over the earth but rather as a “threat to national security.” Perhaps this is because Kissinger was a professed “realist.” Perhaps this is because by 1974 most government officials had already been convinced by the neo-Malthusian rationality, in part by the scary images of an overpopulation Armageddon circulating during the late 1960s. According to Foucault’s work, the discursive regime which governs what is said and understood about a particular subject at a particular point in time undergoes shifts in which language, norms, attitudes and understandings with respect to this subject change. Perhaps a shift in the discursive regime of the population crisis can explain the absence of those epic metaphors which colored the doom-sayings of the 1960s.

According to the article by John Sharpless titled “World Population Growth, Family Planning, and American Foreign Policy,” the period between 1967 and 1974 was a “moment of consensus” characterized by what he called the “crisis mentality” over population and resources.⁶⁶ This is the era of Paul Erlich’s *The Population Bomb* and William and Paul Paddock’s *Famine – 1975!* After 1974 until 1980, dissent on the population crisis grew and the 1980s saw complete reevaluations of the so-called population problem. Other scholars, such as Dennis Hodgeson reviewed above, also described different attitudes toward population growth prevailing at different times, following the pattern of growing urgency and alarmism during the late 1960s and early 1970s (“orthodoxy”), and then a sobering period during the following decade in which the apocalypse never showed up (“revisionism”). Sharpless did not suggest that the differences in perceptions of population growth between these time periods could be described as shifts in the discursive regime of the population crisis. Neither did Hodgeson explain these changes according to the logic of Foucauldian shifts in the discursive regime. However, since I am applying a Foucauldian analysis to the history of the population crisis, I will posit that it might be one possible way to understand the differences between the language in the Gruening Hearings and that in NSSM-200 as a shift in the discursive regime of the population crisis.

When Foucault spoke of shifts in the discursive regime this is how he understood historical change, which would seem to be something larger and more significant – and taking more than a few years to occur – than a shift from total panic crisis mode with

⁶⁶ John Sharpless, “World Population Growth, Family Planning, and American Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Policy History* Vol. 7, No. 1, 1995, 89.

respect to population growth found in the Hearings to a cold, calculating and sophisticated analysis of a multitude of strategic factors relating to population growth found in NSSM-200. However, if we narrowed the scope of it, the concept could still describe historical change over smaller stretches of time, and within one discourse such as that of the population crisis, I think it helps to make sense of even year-to-year changes in the language and attitudes that were expressed within that discourse. In actuality, a discourse consists of many differing discursive elements representing varying views, attitudes, and arguments. So it is not as if one discursive regime replaces another continually, but rather many discourses existing together and overlapping and colliding in such a way that some formulations prevail at certain times while others are just unpopular. One example of this is the British economist Peter Bauer's dissident position during the 1950s and 1960s on economic development and population growth which finally became vogue sometime during the mid-1980s. Bauer's position existed and was being expressed all the time even during the peak of the 1960s population crisis yet his point of view was squashed by the might of the population crisis discourse.

When a historian compares the population discourse of the 1980s to that of the 1960s it is clear that a shift in the discursive regime did occur. To look closely at the changes taking place between smaller increments of time within that greater span is perhaps to more clearly understand what a shift in the discursive regime looks like. A comparison between a document of the population crisis discourse from 1965 (the Gruening Hearings) and one from 1974 (NSSM-200) has revealed something that can help to understand the

shift. The clearest change from the former to the latter that I have seen is the language used to express the problem. The former was epically poetic, the latter realistic – realistic according to the rationality of neo-Malthusianism, that is. Perhaps as language shifted into less apocalyptic and more realistic terms during the 1970s, this led to what occurred afterward which was a total reevaluation of what constituted the population crisis.

An alternative approach to explain the differences in rhetorical style evident between the 1960s “population crisis” hearings and the 1974 national security study can be predicated upon a simple observation: that is, the Gruening hearings were public, and NSSM-200 was a secret document. This point could lead a Foucauldian analysis into an exploration of the discursive realm of secret discourse. While definitely a part of the larger population crisis discourse, the secret population crisis discourse would have to have certain elements that would distinguish it from the public discourse. These elements would likely highlight the significance of state power as it relates to discourse and power-knowledge. This would be so because such a discourse would contain information that only the state could be privy to, i.e. “state secrets.”

Foucault described governmentality as a development in the evolution of state power over the course of the most recent several centuries in Western societies. The state, with its vast resources (taxed and borrowed), supports a multitude of knowledge-producing institutions, scientists, statisticians, economists, etc., which it in turn uses to support itself. In the case of the population crisis, government-funded research of demographic phenomena, biotechnological research and development, strategic and defense-related

sciences, and other fields of knowledge sustained and legitimized the United States government's role in the population apparatus. What the secret discourse of the population crisis reveals is that part of the population apparatus which was uniquely the prerogative of the state exclusive of all other institutions involved in the greater governing apparatus.

NSSM-200 is not a document that claims as its purpose the salvation of all mankind and peace on Earth. The document is clear as to the ultimate purpose of a U.S. international population policy: to protect American interests, to preserve American power. Modern governmentality evolved to allow states to maintain political control over populations by seeing to their welfare, yet it was this welfare that represented a means to legitimize the political control which constituted the end. Bio-power was directed at populations in the form of interventions designed to enhance the welfare of the whole, but the purpose was to thus maintain rule in a liberalized society. The secret discourse of the population crisis that is represented by NSSM-200 reflects an emphasis on the maintenance of political control.

The political control that was sought by the (state) authors of NSSM-200 overreaches the population represented by the U.S. government. The policies outlined in the document were aimed at the populations of other countries; they were not concerned with the population of the United States. Those policies were, however, designed to benefit the population of the U.S. by supporting the country's international super-power status. So, by extending U.S. power overseas to benefit populations of other countries, the U.S. state

could thus benefit its own population – all to maintain political control, domestically and internationally.



NSSM-200 is an example of how the population apparatus produced and deployed power/knowledge. The project outlined in that document continued to develop during the 1970s. In 1974 President Ford endorsed the population control recommendations contained in NSSM-200 with the signature of his National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft on National Security Decision Memorandum 314. Thus was born, over the ensuing years, the National Security Council Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy, comprised of eighteen government departments and agencies. I have collected two reports produced by this NSC policy group: “U.S. International Population Policy: Second Annual Report of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy” (1978), and “Executive Summary and Conclusions of the U.S. National Security Council Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy (‘U.S. International Population Policy’)” (1980) published in the journal *Population and Development Review*. These documents are discursive evidence of the U.S. government’s continuing contribution to the population apparatus. The statistics within the text reveal the extent to which the U.S. government indeed attained a leadership position within the population apparatus. By reviewing how the U.S. government reported on their policies put into action, and what

their continuing recommendations and innovations were, I want to further highlight the bio-political nature of the U.S. international population policy and response to the “population crisis.”

In general, these documents seem to report little success in the implementation of various population control strategies, mainly due to a lack of knowledge and understanding about the complexities of population growth. In its review of the population control activities of the Agency for International Development (AID), the 1978 report states that: “Despite all the progress achieved over the past decade with AID assistance in introducing and expanding developing country family planning programs, population growth rates remain excessively high, with most couples in the developing world desiring a completed family size of four or more children.”⁶⁷ (In NSSM-200, the population controllers had set the desired family size at two children in order to achieve a replacement level of fertility.) I want to point out the term “couple” used here in reference to the basic unit to be governed by the population apparatus. This should be interpreted bio-politically as the “Malthusian couple” described by Foucault as an object of power/knowledge within the discursive strategy of bio-power.

The goal of population policies was to regulate the Malthusian couple, to alter the desires and behavior of the Malthusian couple to fit the norm of the two-child ideal. So far, according to this report, this had not been accomplished. Recommendations for a “broader

⁶⁷ NSC Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy, “U.S. International Population Policy Second Annual Report,” Washington D.C.: Department of State, January 1978, 42.

approach” followed, which focused on improving knowledge about what factors influenced the Malthusian couple, so that these factors might be adjusted to facilitate the objectives of the population apparatus. Here are a few of the recommendations: “...Better means to evaluate the effectiveness of population programs,...research which increases understanding on [sic] the determinants of fertility,...improved demographic data collection, including recognition of the need for better vital registration systems.”⁶⁸ These points have to do with knowing the populations to be governed: knowing their numbers, knowing the “determinants of [their] fertility” with and through “registration systems” and “demographic data collection.” The collection of this knowledge and its insertion into discourse that these reports represent is how power is wielded over the populations in question and the couples that comprise them.

Another recommendation noted the need for “improved motivation programs.” AID was required by U.S. law (the Foreign Assistance Act) to ensure that its development assistance programs were “developed with a view to ‘building motivation’ for smaller families.”⁶⁹ The report stated that AID was involved in the “training of paramedics and auxiliaries in family planning techniques, distribution, and *ways to motivate people to practice contraception and otherwise to lower fertility rates*”⁷⁰ (my emphasis). The report did not explain what, exactly, these “ways” were. My point is that from the point of view of the Agency for International development, and the population apparatus, success in

⁶⁸ Ibid, 43.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 43.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 43.

reforming and regulating the procreative behavior of the Malthusian couple hinged upon the couples themselves deciding to have no more than two children. Greene's "familialization" represents this process by which families governed themselves as they were governed by the population apparatus.

The 1980 report of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy tells a similar story. According to this report, reducing population growth in developing countries to replacement levels would require "considerably more intensive, and expensive, efforts in terms of education, motivation, and expansion of services."⁷¹ (More intensive and expensive efforts than were currently in progress, that is.) The report states that one half to two thirds of "Third World couples [read: Malthusian couples] ...do not currently have access to family planning information and services, and thus cannot exercise their basic human right, expressed at international conferences during the 1970's in Tehran and Bucharest, to determine the number and spacing of their children."⁷² I think it is interesting the way the report presents this information – that these couples lack the ability to exercise their human rights because they do not have access to certain knowledge. (Whether or not there are "human rights" and what is the nature of such rights is another discussion entirely.) This discourse, interpreted bio-politically, reinforces the notion of power/knowledge. The power of these people to claim their rights rests upon their reception and acceptance of a particular truth derived from the neo-Malthusian rationality.

⁷¹ "U.S. International Population Policy, Fourth Annual Report of the National Security Council Ad Hoc Group on Population Policy," Washington D.C.: Department of State, April 1980, in *Population and Development Review* 6, 3 (Sep., 1980), 511.

⁷² *Ibid*, 511.

The statement reasserts the fundamental power-knowledge dynamic at the heart of self-governance: that knowledge of birth control, etc. is what grants a couple the power to control its fertility. Without access to the neo-Malthusian truth, the Malthusian couple is powerless and completely out of control. The uninformed population is ungovernable, in this sense. Thus an objective of the population apparatus: to educate and to motivate. Education and motivation involves the transmission of knowledge and this act is a deployment of power; the end of this effort is to enhance the welfare of those being educated and motivated – to enable them to exercise their human rights. Also, a population's acceptance of this knowledge renders that population governable, since those couples are then empowered to modify their beliefs and behavior in accordance with the knowledge transferred to them by the population apparatus.

The United Nations conference on population that took place during 1974 placed birth control in the context of human rights by affirming the 1968 Proclamation of Teheran ("Parents have a basic right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate education and information in this respect."⁷³) This proclamation followed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What I find interesting for the purposes of this thesis is the declaration by the U.N. qualifying a specific form of power-knowledge (education and information concerning birth control) as a human right. Knowledge about reproduction is a human right, while other knowledge is not included in that set of rights. All couples have the right to know certain truths about

⁷³ United Nations, "[Proclamation of Teheran](http://web.archive.org/web/20071017025912/http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/b_tehern.htm)," International Conference on Human Rights, 1968, <http://web.archive.org/web/20071017025912/http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/b_tehern.htm>

reproduction while being forbidden to know other truths, for example, those under the category of state secrets. Knowledge about reproduction might lead some couples to reduce their fertility. That knowledge grants them the power to do so. This is a desirable outcome for states operating according to the rationality of neo-Malthusianism such as the United States. Knowledge about the State's secret motivations behind its population control policies might lead to a confrontation between the state and the populations targeted by its policies. This is not a desirable outcome for the state, and so this form of knowledge is restricted. This is how states use knowledge for social and political control, thus Foucault's concept of power-knowledge linking power and knowledge as one and the same phenomenon.

By reference to the population policies that the U.S. government created during the 1970s in response to (and in a continuation of) the discourse of the population crisis which enjoined the state during the 1960s to act, I have demonstrated the bio-political nature of the population crisis and of population control. The population apparatus became a government for the biological aspects of the population of the developing world through discursive productions of the population crisis, which involved articulations to other discourse strategies, including those of economic development, military "containment" doctrines, and the environment. The evidence that I used in my analysis was sourced primarily within the development discourse, operating according to a neo-Malthusian mode of reasoning. However, being from the U.S. National Security Council, this evidence is equally related to the discourse of containment (of communism). These multiple discourses

reflect the various aspects of the population crisis and of the population apparatus that governs population through bio-power, or governmentality.

Many other regions of this discursive world remain to be explored by historians. I think that the modest sample that I have presented is enough to conclude that Foucault's conceptual framework of governmentality represents a thought-provoking and meaning-revealing tool of analysis for this type of historical inquiry. Governmentality, it may be argued, has more to do with the study of politics than with history, but: are politics and history separable? When one takes a discursive approach, it is clear that they are not. Moreover, Foucault's governmentality represents a special historical development, namely, the modern technologies of government developed by states and other institutions of power and knowledge since the eighteenth century in Western societies. I hope to have furthered this area of study by extending it into the second half of the twentieth century and showing one way in which it is part of recent and contemporary government. Bio-power, the power over life that is the heart of governmentality, explains in a very effective way many aspects of the history of the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s and the discursive regimes of that era as they were concerned with things like population growth and economic development. It is the history of governance rather than that of a particular country or group or idea that this thesis has sought to study and reveal. Foucault's work forms the basis of this area of study, though other scholars have contributed to and furthered it as an important sub-field of history. It is this kind of historical work to which I hope I have contributed as well.

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