

# **Sociological Roots and Epistemological Evaluation of the Population Theories**

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Understanding and predicting population trends require relevant theoretical explanations of demographic behavior and dynamics. There are several population theories that are best classified and analyzed by S. Greenhalgh (1994) and D. van de Kaa (1995). The purposes of current research presented in a paper, are: to further develop classifications of population theories based on inherited sociological orientations (e.g. functionalism, normativism, rational choice models, structuralism, methodological individualism); to summarize criticisms and discourse of the corresponding sociological orientations in order to advance population theories; to evaluate the latter from theory construction requirements perspective (stated purpose, clarity of concepts' definition, logic of provided typology, author's arguments level of quantification, level of detailed mechanism' explication, statistical rigor, encompassing macro-micro-links and ability to stand refutation and falsification); to find the areas of possible integration of existing population theories' premises and to single out the areas of their incompatibility.

In order to meet these goals author had undertaken critical analysis of major sociological theories and methodological orientations. Applying those to existing population theories have allowed for providing new lines for their classification. Population behavior explanations were

also analyzed from theory construction type (e.g. deductive, inductive, retroductive ways). Also, an approach to optimize theories' integration, proposed by J. Alexander in "Scientific Logic in Sociology", was applied in an attempt to build a consensual body of knowledge from the non-contradictory parts of different population theories.

Major results that stem from undertaken research are:

-Several advances in population theories' classification were made; most importantly, demographic transition theory have been divided into two parts, with one, inherited "functionalist" trait of viewing demographic system as the one seeking equilibrium, and the second, operating at a micro-level decision making;

-Major lines of sociological orientations critique has been applied to population theories in order to advance them;

-Population dynamics explanatory claims were analyzed from theory construction perspective that led to providing new avenues for population theories development;

-Major areas of population theories' compatibility were specified; that provided basis for possibility for their integration given defined limitations.

Analyzing population theories from a broader sociological and epistemological perspective provides tools for advancing these theories and for creating a cumulative knowledge of demographic dynamics and behavior.