The Demographic Component: Mating, Fertility, and Mortality.

In selecting a community, attention was given to finding one which would be representative in size of the communities in this region but hopefully large enough to permit analysis of intra-community variation as well. Though La Hatte is one of the larger communities in this area, it nonetheless gave a deceptive initial appearance of being even larger than it really is.

There are more than 350 "buildings" in the community. Though there are a handful of tin roofs, the majority of these structures are wattle-daub, thatched-roof two room cottages. With this number of buildings and a modal household size of about five persons, I expected a population of over 1,500.

But a complete census done on the community revealed that the vast majority of the smaller and older structures were not human dwelling places. The final tabulation showed that only 217 structures were normally lived in by people, and that of these 217 houses, 31 currently had no occupants (in most cases the residents all living in Port-au-Prince). Thus there are 186 currently occupied houses in La Hatte. The remaining structures fall, in descending order of frequency, into the following categories: kitchens (81), storage sheds (43), and kay lwa (private vodun cult temples, ofwwhich there are 35).

Table 1

Breakdown of the Population
by age and sex.

Age Groups	Males		Females		Males + Females	
	Number	% (of pop)	Number	%	Number	%
0+	14	2.0	16	2.2	30	4.2
1-4	49	6.8	38	5.4	87	12.2
5-9	57	7.9	57	7.9	114	15.8
10-14	52	7.3	40	5.6	92	12.9
15-19	47	6.6	27	3.7	74	10.3
20-24	29	4.0	21	2.9	50	6.9
25-29	24	3.3	21	2.9	45	6.2
30-34	18	2.5	15	2.1	33	4.6
35-39	23	3.2	19	2.6	42	5.8
40-44	17	2.4	15	2.0	32	4.4
45-49	12	1.8	13	1.9	25	3.7
50-54	11	1.3	12	1.8	23	3.1
55-59	5	0.7	7	1.0	12	1.7
60-64	7	1.0	9	1.2	16	2.2
65+	22	3.0	22	3.0	44	6.0
Total	387	53.8	332	46.2	719	100.0

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the population by age and sex. It should be borne in mind that the total of 719 represents only those 171 currently occupied houses that were reached in the census. To compute the entire population we have to take into account those members of the community (mostly females) who temporarily leave the community for economic activities elsewhere but whose spouses and children remain in La Hatte and who are thus demographically relevant members of the community; as well as the projected number of individuals in the 15 currently occupied dwellings whom I was not successful in contacting for the census. The resulting population of 943 people gives a mean of 5.3 persons per household. But since in many cases dependent children live in houses adjacent to, though in the same compound with, that of their parents, the size of the economic units is slightly larger. If we give a functional definition to the domestic unit and include in it all those who are economically dependent or active in one group, the average unit will have some 6 individuals.

Table 1 reveals two important demographic characteristics. In the first place the population of La Hatte is very young: 45.1% of the population is under 15 years of age. Furthermore there is a sex-imbalance (understandable in light of the preceding economic discussion). Though the sex-imbalance applies to the population as a whole,

it becomes much more prominent if we break the population down into economically relevant age groups. The ratio for the 10-49 age group is 56% male--44% female. If we take the 10-19 age group the sex imbalance reaches a remarkable 59.7% male--40.3% female. Several economic facts are reflected here. Girls begin to be of use in Port-au-Prince in their early teens, and women up till the age of 50 continue to be active in the market. (We also know of many older women still involved in this activity). But females begin mating for the most part in their early twenties. A mated female will spend much more time in La Hatte than her younger unmated counterparts. After childbirth the woman will remain about a year in La Hatte nursing her baby. Furthermore the female who is married or plasé (i.e. involved in a consensual union) will feel social pressure to return to La Hatte at least once a month and spend some time at home. The woman generally explain their visits in terms of the need to clean their houses and visit their children; but it is also said that a woman who stays away for too long will be suspected of having another man in Port-au-Prince.

If the only periodic emigrants were the female entrepreneurs, the sex-ratio would be much more imbalanced than it is. But there are over 50 young males who were reported

to be currently in the Dominican Republic working in the cane fields. The fact that most of these males slipped quietly across the nearby border (to be picked up by the truckload in vehicles supplied by labor-seeking Dominican sugar-mill administrators) suggests that many households might have denied having sons across the border, which would increase the number of male emigrants above that shown in the census. At any rate the census indicates that slightly less than 30% of the economically active population was out of La Hatte.

Mating Patterns. As was to be expected, but perhaps in contradiction with certain stereotypes concerning the Haitian family (stereotypes which I have encountered in talking to foreigners and certain Port-au-Prince Haitians), reproduction in La Hatte was found to take place in the context of stable coresidential conjugal unions in which most children spend most of their childhood under the same roof with both of their biological parents. There are two widespread and socially recognized forms of conjugal union: marriage and "plasaj." The former type of union is one which has been ratified by civil registration and a religious ceremony; the latter (which is the more widespread of the two) is a consensual union which is usually as stable as, and frequently a prelude to, legal marriage.

There is a variant of the plasaj relationship which should be mentioned: extraresidential visiting relationships. While these exist in La Hatte, the frequency with which partners to such a union deny it (at least to the census

taker) suggests that it does not have the same general social acceptance that it has in other Caribbean communities where it has been reported. There appear to be two circumstances in which a visiting relationship occurs: either early in the life of a couple while both are still living in their parents' houses, or later when a man takes on a second woman and sets her up in a house of her own. In both cases the woman will be called the "madam" of the man (though "madam" as a prefix to a name is used only for married women as a rule). The low statistical frequency of these extraresidential relationships has made it impractical to give them separate tabulation, and they have been included under plasaj relationships.

Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of the different marital statuses by age groups among males and females respectively. Our suspicions concerning the lack of candor as regards visiting relationships are justifiably increased when we see the large percentage of "separated" females in their early twenties. In the case of a male, the relationship may be denied easily. But in the case of a female who has a baby the only claim that she could make is that "we have separated."

Examining tables 2 and 3 we see that 70% of the current conjugal unions in La Hatte are based on plasaj

Table 2

Males: Marital Status by Age Group

Age Groups	Never Mated		Married		Plasé		Separated		Widow		All	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
20-24	89.7	26	3.5	1	6.8	2	0.0	0	0.0	0	100	29
25-29	41.8	10	12.4	3	37.5	9	8.3	2	0.0	0	100	24
30-34	22.3	4	33.3	6	33.3	6	11.1	2	0.0	0	100	18
35-39	13.0	3	34.7	8	47.9	11	4.4	1	0.0	0	100	23
40-44	0.0	0	17.6	3	76.5	13	5.9	1	0.0	0	100	17
45-49	0.0	0	16.6	2	83.4	10	0.0	0	0.0	0	100	12
50-54	0.0	0	27.2	3	72.8	8	0.0	0	0.0	0	100	11
55-59	20.0	1	20.0	1	60.0	3	0.0	0	0.0	0	100	5
60-64	0.0	0	42.9	3	57.1	4	0.0	0	0.0	0	100	7
65 +	13.6	3	13.6	3	45.5	10	4.5	1	22.8	5	100	22
Total	28.0	47	19.6	33	45.2	76	4.2	7	3.0	5	100	168

Table 3*

Females: Marital Status by Age Group

Age Groups	Never Mated		Married		Plase'		Separated		Widow		All	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
15-19				2		3		1				
20-24	19.0	4	4.8	1	38.1	8	38.1	8	0.0	0	100	21
25-29	14.3	3	23.8	5	47.6	10	9.5	2	4.8	1	100	21
30-34	13.3	2	26.7	4	33.4	5	20.0	3	6.6	1	100	15
35-39	0.0	0	26.3	5	52.6	10	21.1	4	0.0	0	100	19
40-44	0.0	0	26.7	4	66.6	10	6.7	1	0.0	0	100	15
45-49	0.0	0	15.3	2	77.0	10	7.7	1	0.0	0	100	13
50-54	0.0	0	8.3	1	41.5	5	33.4	4	16.8	2	100	12
55-59	0.0	0	0.0	0	85.8	6	0.0	0	14.2	1	100	7
60-64	0.0	0	22.2	2	0.0	0	22.2	2	55.6	5	100	9
65+	4.5	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	22.7	5	72.8	16	100	22
TOTAL	6.4	10	15.6	24	41.6	64	19.6	30	16.8	26	100	154

* For purposes of comparison with Table 2, only females above the age of 20 will be included in the total

as opposed to legal marriage. In certain Caribbean communities (i.e. rural Jamaica and the Dominican Republic) legal marriage is partly a function of age, a progressively larger percentage of the unions being marriage as one moves up the age groups. This is not the case in La Hatte.

If one uses furniture and house type as indicants of economic status, there will be a correlation between house type and marriage. But this is a somewhat circular analysis, as one of the prerequisites for legal marriage (imposed by custom, not by law) is the possession of an above average house and of furniture that is upholstered (cushions on the chairs) or at least varnished, as well as a bed (instead of the more common mats). Nonetheless it seems fairly certain that if more information were had on the amount of land or money a family had, there would appear a genuine relationship between economic status and marital status.

There is also a noticeable relationship between religion and marital status. The community may be divided into three religious groups: Vodouists (persons, Catholics, who answered yes to the question as to whether they served lwa), Catholics (i.e. Catholics who denied serving lwa) and Protestants. (The percentage of adults who fell into each of these groups was 60.3, 20.5, 19.2 respectively). As was expected, most people are Vodouists; what was surprising was the openness with which it was admitted.

Table 4
Currently Mated Adults:

Religion
by
Marital Status

RELIGION	MARRIED (NUMBER)	%	PLASÉ (NUMBER)	%	ALL (NUMBER)	%
VODOUIST	(21)	16.8	(104)	83.2	(125)	100.0
CATHOLIC	(11)	28.3	(28)	71.7	(39)	100.0
PROTESTANT	(20)	54.0	(17)	46.0	(37)	100.0

A glance at table 4 will show a strong association between religion and marital status. The table is interesting in that it also indicates that the Catholics (i.e. the "katolik frâ" who reject Vodoun) do form a group which differs noticeably from the Vodouists in at least some respects.

But though one is able to find associations between marital status and other categories (i.e. economic status and religion), there have been found no associations between fertility and these categories. A tentative stratification of the community in terms of individuals of high, medium, and low fertility was attempted in order to probe for social or economic correlates to fertility differentials, and none were found. (This attempt is discussed in an appendix). Thus though legal marriage has many social implications, from the point of view of reproductive output, either in terms of live children or children everborn, it appears irrelevant. Thus a slightly different breakdown of the population, focusing on essential mating information, is given in Tables 5 and 6.

Here we see clearly two different typical mating careers: the male career and the female career. It is obvious that the females get an earlier start. In the 20-29 age group a much higher percentage of females are

Table 5

Males: Mating Status by Age

Age Groups	Never Mated		Currently Mated		Formerly Mated		All Males	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
20-24	26	89.7	3	10.3	0	0.0	29	100.0
25-29	10	41.8	12	49.9	2	8.3	24	100.0
30-34	4	22.3	12	66.6	2	11.1	18	100.0
35-39	3	13.0	19	82.6	1	4.4	23	100.0
40-44	0	0.0	16	94.1	1	5.9	17	100.0
45-49	0	0.0	12	100.0	0	0.0	12	100.0
50-54	0	0.0	11	100.0	0	0.0	11	100.0
55-59	1	20.0	4	80.0	0	0.0	5	100.0
60-64	0	0.0	7	100.0	0	0.0	7	100.0
65+	3	13.6	13	59.1	6	27.3	22	100.0
Total	47	28.0	109	64.8	12	7.2	168	100.0

Table 6

Females: Mating Status by Age

Age Groups	Never Mated		Currently Mated		Formerly Mated		All Females	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
20-24	4	19.0	9	42.9	8	38.1	21	100
25-29	3	14.3	15	71.4	3	14.3	21	100
30-34	2	13.3	9	60.1	4	26.6	15	100
35-39	0	0.0	15	78.9	4	21.1	19	100
40-44	0	0.0	14	93.3	1	6.7	15	100
45-49	0	0.0	12	92.3	1	7.7	13	100
50-54	0	0.0	6	49.8	6	50.2	12	100
55-59	0	0.0	6	85.8	1	14.2	7	100
60-64	0	0.0	2	22.2	7	77.8	9	100
65+	1	4.5	0	0.0	21	95.5	22	100
Total	10	6.4	88	57.2	56	36.4	154	100

currently mated than males. By the age of thirty only about five out of ten males will have ever been in a conjugal union as compared to nine out of ten females. But from the age of thirty on, the percentages begin to even out and the tables begin to reverse. Already in this age group (30-40) a certain number of mated females begin to withdraw from the unions and enter the category of the "formerly mated." In the 30-50 age group already about a fifth of the female population has entered this category outnumbering by over two to one the males in this group. This trend strengthens noticeably in the 50-64 age group where already half of the once mated females have been consigned to permanent conjugal solitude, whereas their male counterparts are all currently mated (except for one man who has never mated). The trend reaches its culmination among the old folks above 65, where there is not a single currently mated female, but where six out of ten males are still partners to a conjugal union. The reproductive implications of these patterns are obvious.

Ignoring these age-specific differences, on the whole both sexes contribute about equally to the pool of the currently-mated--as of course is to be expected. In both groups about six out of every ten individuals who meet the cultural and biological prerequisites for mating will be currently involved in a conjugal union. The four out of ten males who are not mated tend to be young, whereas

most of the unmated females are beyond the childbearing age.

This situation has repercussions in terms of the household composition. 65% of the households (n.106) have a conjugal pair in them, whereas 35% (n. 58) have none. (Of course domestic units in which the wife is in Port-au-Prince selling beans are counted as having a conjugal pair). In the latter group of "incomplete" domestic units, 47 of the 58 at one time did have a conjugal pair. Denudation was brought about by death of one of the partners in 55% of the cases, by conjugal breakup in only 45% of the cases. Thus only about one out of five households in the community has been left without a husband-father or wife-mother because of conjugal instability. Thus though domestic groups that have been denuded by marital breakup do exist, they are far from being the norm.

On the contrary present information indicates that most of the conjugal unions are monogamous and stable. Only six men in the entire group of adult males (n. 168) are currently involved in polygamous unions--which makes the much discussed Haitian polygamy a statistical rarity in La Hatte. And although a third of the currently mated males claimed to have had children by women other than their current mates (as opposed to only one-fifth of the females), information given in the preceding paragraph forces us to assume that at least half of these previous unions were dissolved by death rather than by

conjugal breakup. The eventual collection of detailled mating histories will give us more exact information, but at present it appears that the domestic scene in rural Haiti manifests a stability that matches that found in other West Indian peasant communities.

Fertility and Mortality. Tables 7 and 8 present various types of fertility and mortality data on the male and female population respectively. The tables record only fertile individuals, here defined as any man or woman who has had at least one child born live.

Most discussions of fertility consider data for female fertility exclusively. The common sense assumption is that the figures for male fertility as a whole will come out to be the same as those of the females of that population. Unfortunately this assumption is not borne out in the figures for the population of La Hatte. There is a difference for which at present I have no convincing explanation, and the figures are worth reporting in the hopes that this discrepancy will be found to exist in other communities as well, or will be found to be a peculiarity of this community alone.

The 115 fertile males in the population have had a total of 712 children (198 of whom have died), giving a mean of 6.2 children everborn to all fertile males. The 146 females, on the other hand, have had a total of 837 children (280 of whom have died), giving a mean of only

Table 7*

Male Fertility and Infant Mortality

Age Groups	Number of Men	Mean Number Child. Ever-Born	Mean Number Live Children	Mean Number Dead Children	Percentage of Children Dead	Percentage of men who have lost at least one child
15-24	5	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
25-34	25	2.5	2.0	0.5	20.8	36.1
35-44	34	5.8	4.6	1.2	21.1	55.9
45-54	19	8.6	5.5	3.1	36.0	73.9
55-64	15	7.9	6.1	1.9	23.6	60.0
65+	17	9.5	6.1	3.4	35.5	94.8
Total	115	6.2	4.5	1.7	27.8	58.2

Table 8*

Female Fertility and Infant Mortality

Age Groups	Number of Women	Mean Number Child. Ever-Born	Mean Number Live Children	Mean Number Dead Children	Percentage of Children Dead	Percentage of women who have lost at least one child
15-24	21	1.7	1.4	0.2	14.2	23.8
25-34	30	3.7	3.0	0.7	19.8	44.4
35-44	27	5.9	4.7	1.2	20.8	66.7
45-54	31	7.8	4.9	2.9	37.7	71.0
55-64	16	8.4	5.1	3.2	38.9	93.7
65+	21	7.5	3.7	3.8	50.1	95.5
Total	146	5.6	3.8	1.9	33.5	63.9

* Tables include only fertile individuals.

younger?

5.6 children everborn to all fertile females. According to the ta bles the males produced more children than the females.

This discrepancy could be due to selective remembrance. But if one of the sexes were to have memory slips with regard to children, it would seem that the males would be the ones--which would give a lower mean to the males. This is not the case. The discrepancy could be due to intentional falsification, the females either denying some children, or the males claiming more than they had. But there is no evidence or motivation for believing that there would be any systematic falsification in this matter that would be stronger among one of the sexes than the other. The discrepancy could also conceivably be due to earlier mortality on the part of females of completed child-bearing. That is, if females with many children die before the census taker asks them how many children they have had, the per-female mean would be deflated. But there is no justification in Table 1 that would support this possibility.

Or then again the discrepancy could be caused because as a matter of fact the males have more children than the females. In a closed population this would not be possible. But the population of La Hatte is not closed. Though over 90% of the conjugal unions in La Hatte are village endogamous, we have seen that a third of the currently

mated males claimed to have had children by persons other than their current mates. This in itself would suggest that on the whole males are more likely to have been in more than one union during their lifetime--giving them a slightly higher mean on children.

Furthermore the existence of even a small percentage of polygynous unions would tend to push up the male mean.

Finally the post-marital residence rules applying in this part of Haiti make it easier for males to have affairs with women outside of La Hatte and thus have more children on the whole than the females. Briefly stated, the population of La Hatte and the surrounding communities abide by uxorilocal residence rules. When two young people are going to marry (or plasé), the family of the girl allocates a piece of land in their compound for the boy to build a house there. This practice has been followed by most of the couples now in La Hatte; and furthermore this is seen as the way things are "supposed to be." For the couple to reside on the husband's family's land is seen as permissible, but not normal; it is a "hillbilly" custom, say the people of the plain. (This is a surprising finding; all accounts of Haitian peasantry speak of virilocal residence as though it were the only pattern acceptable to the peasants. Obviously this was a premature generalization. And we are not dealing with a "new" custom in La Hatte, the older residents say that men have <u>always</u> gone

to live on the property of their wives' families.) This pattern of uxorilocal residence means that the girls stay put while the men move out to new pastures. And at least some of them will have grazed in more than one new pasture in their lifetime, giving them a slightly higher mean on children everborn than the females.

The principal flaw in this explanation is that if the men of La Hatte are having children with women in other communities, some men in other communities should be having children with the women in La Hatte.

Thus we will need more case histories to make any confident statements about the why of higher male fertility. In the meantime the figures stand as an interesting paradox, which, along with the data already discussed in Tables 5 and 6, indicate that despite the obvious biological cooperation involved in reproduction, each of the sexes in La Hatte has its own particular mating career.

One other aspect of the fertility and mortality tables that must be discussed is the eccentric figures for one of the age groups in each table. In the case of the females, the over-65 group has a surprisingly low mean on children everborn and live children. In the case of the male chart it is the figures for the 55-64 age group which are lower than would be expected. Part of this is probably due to the difficulty of getting accurate ages and the resulting misplacement of some individuals. (This difficulty is discussed in Appendix I). And undoubtedly part of it is

due to the relatively small number of cases from a demographic point of view, which reduces the likelihood of smooth progressions.

Despite these questions about the fertility and mortality figures, the relevance of these tables for the central theme of these pages should be immediately obvious. If the economic system prevailing in La Hatte establishes certain personnel needs, the high mortality figures create an additional factor with which the population of La Hatte has to deal in order to regulate itself. By the time a woman reaches her 65th birthday, she can expect to have lost half of her children. Nineteen out of every twenty men and women in the oldest age group have had the experience of losing at least one child, and the majority have lost more than one.

How does the final effective fertility output of the local population do in terms of the personnel needs discussed earlier? We are forced to conclude that when all is said and done the population achieves a per household level that coincides closely with the level that would have been achieved had the households been effectively and intelligently planning their size. We see this not only in the modal household size, but more convincingly in the final effective fertility output of the females. Subtracting children who die, women over the age of 45 achieve a mean

of 4.6 live children per woman, which is extremely close to what they would have to achieve if they wanted their households to participate effectively in the local economic system.

There are two "buts" which can be anticipated. The figure of 4.6 is a mathematical mean and does not take into account the many groups which are burdened with too many children, nor those households whose children have been wiped out by early death. But the central issue here is ~~whether~~ whether the rural Haitian population is really suffering from uncontrolled growth. And the answer is no. When all is said and done, the final population figure in terms of per-household personnel levels indicates ~~that~~ that the fertility dynamics are keeping in close touch with the demands confronting individual domestic groups within the current economic context. The peasant population is effectively regulating its size in terms of the conditions which individual domestic groups must meet to secure an effective hold in the ongoing economic system.

An even stronger objection will come from those who are projecting current growth trends into the future. Though it may be conceded that individual households are producing children at a rate that is in accord with their immediate economic interests, the result of this is a growth rate that will ultimately lead to demographic disaster in Haiti.

This is certainly a justified fear. But the ultimate cause of "overpopulation" is not irrational, irresponsible reproductive behavior on the part of the Haitian peasantry; but rather an eventual incongruity between the economic organization of Haitian society and the insular Haitian habitat. This point must be made strongly, as predictions of demographic disaster are usually made by those who advocate or are planning some sort of intervention. Programs of population control will be doomed from the start if they are predicated on the existence of an "irrational" tradition-bound population whose men and women must be coaxed into contraception for their own good.

If the preceding sections have indicated that in terms of the economic system in which they are born, the families of La Hatte are maintaining an effective size, the following section will argue that in the ideological sphere as well, their beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations are in fundamental harmony with the economic and demographic realities of their lives.