

increases with the introduction of new scientific techniques, including new means for the control of disease. Meanwhile, the traditional readjustment of population through the movement of people in blocks is being replaced by massive labor migrations and the growth of cities. These prospects bring a series of new and very complex problems.

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### AMERICAN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE<sup>1</sup>

STUDENTS of migration have complained on occasion that migration statistics are the "poor cousins" in the demographic field. This dubious distinction seems also to be claimed for another area of demography. In the book under review, Jacobson states "Marriage and divorce statistics are today the least developed branch of American vital statistics." (p. 9)

The poor state of marriage and divorce statistics in the United States is perhaps one of the prices we pay for "states rights." As explained by Jacobson, "The United States is the only major country without a system of centralized collection of marriage and divorce records." (p. vii)

Whereas the United States has the longest chain of uninterrupted decennial censuses, it was a late comer in the development of national vital statistics. The reason is that whereas there was constitutional provision from the outset for a federal decennial census, the registration of births, deaths, and other vital events was left to the individual states.

Recognizing the need for national vital statistics, leaders in the field succeeded in starting a death registration area in 1900 and a birth registration area in 1915. Given standards of registration were required for admission and since 1933 all states of continental United States have been included.<sup>2</sup> Our National Office of Vital Statistics receives continuous reports on births

<sup>1</sup> Jacobson, Paul H.: *AMERICAN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE*. New York, Rinehart & Company, 1959, 188 pp., \$12.00.

<sup>2</sup> Alaska was admitted to the birth and death registration area as a territory in 1950. Hawaii was admitted to the death registration area in 1917 and to the birth registration area in 1929.

and deaths from the various states. It compiles and publishes national tables on these subjects.

An encouraging beginning has been made toward the strengthening of national marriage and divorce statistics through the establishment of marriage and divorce registration areas. Yet the author rightfully says that "with respect to marriage and divorce, the information available for our country is woefully inadequate." (p. 1) The National Office of Vital Statistics publishes estimates on annual numbers of marriages and divorces occurring in the Nation as a whole. More detailed data relate to "reporting states." Jacobson has utilized the available published materials. He has also collected much basic data from many marriage license bureaus and courts in which divorce decrees were given in order to patch together something like a national picture on various aspects of marriage and divorce.

As described by the author, "This book deals with the *occurrence, duration, and dissolution* of marriage in the United States. For the first time, nationwide data are made available on such topics as the chances of marriage and of remarriage, the frequency of religious ceremonies, the duration of marriage and of widowhood, the chances of celebrating wedding anniversaries, the frequency of racial intermarriage, and the probabilities of divorce and of widowhood. Other topics are Gretna Greens, effectiveness of premarital regulations, seasonal pattern of marriage, interval between divorce and remarriage, stability of war and of depression marriages, causes of divorce, children in divorce, orphanhood, divorce proceedings, and alimony. Divorce and annulment in South Carolina and New York, and migratory divorce are reviewed in detail. Also highlighted are the changes in trend engendered by the depression of the 1930's and by World War II. Most subjects cover events of the twentieth century; some antedate the Civil War." (p. vii)

In this reviewer's opinion, this is a very valuable book. Doubtless it represents years of toil and worry on the part of the author. It bears witness to long hours of research in law libraries as well as collection and analysis of statistical data described above.

Probably the book will be criticized by some as being only a statistical and legal handbook of marriage and divorce. It is true that the author has not taken advantage of the opportunities offered by data for some states to analyze marriage and divorce in relation to certain social and economic variables. However, the author's chief interest apparently was to provide as much data on a national basis as possible. In this reviewer's opinion this is a scholarly book which analysts will consult repeatedly in the years to come. Although the author sticks close to the factual situation and does not discourse much on broad social implications, he easily inspires confidence that he knows whereof he speaks.

It should also be said that the author's terse factual sentences often serve to expose the hypocrisy engendered by some of the state laws on grounds of divorce. They tell of the shoddy consequences such as the subterfuge of the professional "co-respondent" in New York, the divorce mill in Reno, and the efforts of several other states (and Mexico) to cut in on the divorce racket.

The author comes nearest to carrying the torch himself on a purely technical matter. He takes the Census Bureau to task for its practice of lumping the annulees with the "single" rather than with the divorced. He admits that the practice causes little difference to the percentages single and divorced for the country as a whole. He points out, however, that it does affect the data for New York and California where annulments are frequently resorted to because of the restricted grounds for divorce. The National Office of Vital Statistics does combine the reported annulments with the divorces in preparing the annual rates from registration data.

Except for the annulments the author rather purposely avoids the role of the reformer. He emphasizes that the legal grounds for divorce may have little or no relation to the underlying causes of marriage failures. But on this point he also displays his tolerance and understanding. "As John Milton pointed out in his *THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF DIVORCE* during the seventeenth century, no court is capable of inquiring into 'the secret reason of dissatisfaction between man and wife'. . . . A multiplicity of studies have advanced numerous hypotheses

and explanations for the social and individual situations which lead to divorce. However, in most instances it may be nothing more than the fact that when the spark of love, of comradeship, and of mutual respect no longer exists in a marriage, the relationship has no further meaning for the couple concerned.”  
(p. 126)

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