

BOOK REVIEWS

POPULATION DYNAMICS: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

RALPH THOMLINSON

New York, Random House, 1965, 576 pp., \$8.50.

There should always be room for another elementary textbook in demography, for the writing of an all-sufficient one is a virtually impossible task. The emphasis of the present work is on the recent rapid growth in world population as seen from the United States. "As the world spins," writes the author in his peroration, "its people change; and in distinction to most of man's experience, at the present moment the population is increasing at a rate so rapid as to be extremely difficult to handle, scientific ingenuity notwithstanding. Still, our collective fate is in our own hands, and men seem likely to be here for many centuries to come, attaining quantities and qualities that offer the prospect of permitting most persons reasonable comfort and enjoyment of their lengthening lives."

He reaches this comforting conclusion after about 70 pages of general orientation, some 200 pages devoted to mortality, fertility, and migration, some 150 pages to issues and problems, and, finally, a little over 100 pages to size, characteristics, and growth trends. The book closes with a glossary, list of recommended readings, and indexes of names and of subjects. The numerous quotations in the text are accompanied by brief bibliographical footnotes, citing mainly works in English, and the sources of the 57 tables and 26 diagrams, for the most part reproduced or adapted from those in

other publications, are indicated. The intended audience seems to be an undergraduate class in sociology without mathematical or language prerequisite.

Brightness, topicality, broad strokes, picturesque details, anecdotes, quotations from *The New Yorker* carry the reader along. He will become familiar with the vocabulary, the famous names, the simpler demographic concepts and processes, some recent statistics, and the pros and cons of popular controversy. The more solid virtues of logical construction, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and timeliness are less easily discerned.

Thomlinson has clearly not attempted a rigorously systematic treatment. Yet it is unfortunate that his chosen sequence of topics, in which dynamic factors and their social correlates are described before demographic characteristics, places him in the difficulty of being unable to demonstrate the interrelations of demographic structure and change until almost the end. Even there the significance of simultaneous processes is largely implicit.

Throughout the book the avoidance of statistical complexity is carried to such a point that little can be shown as proved and much is needlessly left to appear a matter of opinion. Many are the loosely worded statements without qualification as to degree of probability or indication of the time and place to which they refer. What, for instance, in view of mortality trends in Western Europe and the United States since 1958, is one to make of the declaration on page 91: "Ten factors have been prominent contributors to the decline of mortality that began weakly in the seventeenth century, gathered momentum through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and continues unabated to the present"?

In the three chapters on mortality, statistical measurement is given somewhat more attention than in the chapters on fertility and migration. Yet even here the greater part of the space is given to the "rats, lice, and history" theme and to discussion of changing causes of death. Explanations of statistics offered are scanty. To illustrate life tables, the abridged table for the total population of the United States in 1960 is presented on page 104, without conventional symbols and with the suggestion: "To learn some of the

properties of the table, look in the first column for your age group and then read across that row until you reach the last column, noting the meaning of each figure by reading the heading over its column. It might be instructive to follow the same procedure for your parents, a child, and others you know who differ considerably in age from yourself." How will such a tour, in the absence of further guidance, enlighten the reader about the meaning of the columns of stationary population? And if he wishes to look further may he not be confused by the unexplained use of provisional figures in the table on this page and of final figures on expectation of life for the same year in the table on page 117, which has obviously an error in the source citation?

The subtitle, "Causes and Consequences of World Demographic Change," invites comparison as to topics covered with "The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends." In that collective study, published by the United Nations Department of Social Affairs in 1953 and soon to be reissued in a revised edition, economic and social factors were given equal stress. Here the stress on social factors is overshadowing, and the exclusion seems deliberate, for in a section, "Maturation of Demography," Thomlinson remarks: "From its origins in seventeenth-century dilettantism, eighteenth-century political economy, and nineteenth-century economics, demography shifted allegiance in the twentieth century to the newly-established field of sociology." The issues to which he devotes chapters are: city and metropolitan growth; resources and food; industrialization and level of living; politics and power; ideals and preferences; national policies. Neither the text nor the bibliographical references do anything like justice to the contributions to these problems of specialists other than sociologists. Less than just, too, is the misinterpretation implied in the observation: "Eugenics has of late been watered down by some supporters to a rather innocuous 'we want children reared better' policy" (page 385).

Comprehensive geographical coverage also seems to be suggested by the subtitle. The primary focus, however, is on the United States, and the world view for the most part is based on compilations of international data from the United Nations and other agencies.

The body of demographic research, and the relevant periodical literature, in countries other than Great Britain, France, and Sweden is largely ignored. The gap is particularly noticeable for the countries of eastern Europe.

In addition to many generalizations to which one would like to take exception, one encounters occasional factual errors, misleading statistical statements, and oversights. On page 23 there is an error in the inclusion of Southeast Europe (except Albania) and the Soviet Union in the statement: "Countries which have attained control over death but have not decreased their fertility—Southeast Europe, many Latin American nations, India, and the Soviet Union—are now undergoing rapid growth." In most recent yearbook issued by the Central Statistical Organization of the U.S.S.R., *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1963 g.*, crude birth rates for the present territory of the Soviet Union are given on page 30: for 1913, 45.5; 1926, 44.0; 1962, 22.4; 1963, 21.2. Thomlinson on page 500 of the book under review himself gives the crude birth rate in 1959 as 25.

On page 172 an error appears to have been made in copying figures of natural increase in Sweden during the period 1736 to 1800 from estimates by Halvor Gille given in his paper in *Population Studies* (Vol. 3, June 1949, pp. 3–65). Over a footnote reference to page 46 in that source, Thomlinson reports a crude rate of natural increase of 5.1 in years of crop failure and of 12.0 in years of exceptionally good harvests, "more than doubling the rate in years of inadequate harvest." On the cited page, however, Gille states: "In Sweden, the total effect on population growth was that the excess of births over deaths in years after crop failure was only 2.0 per 1,000 on the average, but . . . 8.4 per 1,000 after years with good harvests."

As an example of misleading statement, one may object that the notes on fertility and replacement rates on page 164 omit some essential qualifying phrases. Should not the sentence, "Negative rates of natural increase have prevailed in Japan since 1956 and Hungary since 1958," include the specification that these are intrinsic rates? In the last two sentences of the same paragraph, the

listing of countries which had negative rates in the 1930s should somewhere indicate that for many other countries no rates were available and their omission from the list does not necessarily mean that they had positive rates.

Careless slips are frequent in bibliographic citations and in the index. In the citation of the work by Glass and Grebenik on page 549, for example, the publication date is given as 1946 instead of 1954, and the subtitle of the work which might help to identify it ("A Report on the Family Census of 1946") is omitted. So, too, is any note to the effect that this is part of the report of the British Royal Commission on Population.

From internal evidence the preparation of this manuscript seems to have been completed in 1962 with a few additions in 1963. The author has taken the risk, and to some extent has paid the penalties, of using the present tense for statements true at the time of writing but likely soon to be out of date. Statements most in need of updating are those on the population policies of the Soviet Union (pp. 391, 413), the United States (pp. 401, 402, 409, 423), and Mainland China (p. 421), which no longer apply, and on the position of the Roman Catholic Church on fertility controls (p. 391). The time lag in publication may be in part responsible for the omission from the bibliography of the demographic journals published under governmental auspices in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.

In conclusion, one may salute Thomlinson's temerity in undertaking so ambitious a project while regretting the haste with which he has obviously had to execute it. The result is a provocative book, uneven in quality, and a none too reliable guide for the innocent and unwary.

DOROTHY GOOD