

## DEMOGRAPHY

PETER R. COX

London and New York, Cambridge University Press  
1970 (fourth edition), 477 pp. \$3.25 (paperback).

The author of a basic work in demography faces several difficult decisions. In recent years, mathematical representations of population dynamics have become much more common and various papers demonstrate that rather sophisticated ideas can be taught to undergraduates. Thus, an author must decide how much of this literature he should summarize and how detailed his presentation should be. In addition, the volume and breadth of demographic studies has greatly expanded in the past 20 years. We now can cite carefully done investigations of historic demographic trends in Europe, emerging social trends in the United States and Britain, postwar demographic changes in the less-developed lands and the consequences of the fertility control programs that have recently been initiated. This presents another set of problems to an author for he must include some of this literature, but if he incorporates all of it his text will become gargantuan.

Peter Cox, in the fourth edition of his text, has generally elected to be inclusive and, as a result, this edition is approximately one-third larger than the first edition. This edition also differs from its predecessors in that data and examples from the United Kingdom are less dominant. The careful reader of this volume will learn about many different aspects of demography. Six introductory chapters describe numerous ideas used by demographers as well as the rudiments of data collection.

Techniques of analysis comprise eleven chapters and students who read these will, at the minimum, know what methods are currently employed by demographers. The final eight chapters recount historic demographic trends and contemporary population problems in various areas and discuss, very briefly, the possibilities for population policies.

The thoroughness of this volume is its greatest asset. This virtue is offset by two major liabilities. First, the book appears to be appropriate for few audiences. If an instructor used this text with an undergraduate class he would need to add many supplementary readings to describe current demographic trends and emerging population programs. In addition, the instructor would have to greatly expand the examples of demographic techniques and develop more lucid examples than those provided by Cox. Alternatively, an instructor might choose this volume as a text for a higher level course in demographic techniques. He too, would need to greatly expand the explanations Cox gives. This edition, for instance, devotes but seven pages to stable population models and provides no concrete examples of their use in describing demographic trends. A person who lacked an understanding of the fundamentals of a life table would experience difficulty learning about the construction of life tables from the chapter in this text. Although mention is made of multiple decrement tables, the subtleties of these tables and their widespread applicability is not made clear in the five paragraphs devoted to this topic. The author has made injudicious decisions concerning the presentation of the mathematical and technical aspects of demography and, as a result, an instructor will find this book unsatisfactory either for an introductory undergraduate course or as a text for advanced students who wish to master demographic methods.

The second liability is the rather restricted image of the discipline that is conveyed by this volume. If this book were an individual's sole contact with demography he would probably conclude that demographers analyze fertility, mortality and migration trends. I fear that he would get very little sense

of the broader interests of demographers and their studies. For example, there is little systematic treatment of the relation of demographic composition to economic development or political stability. There is only a brief mention of the numerous investigations of racial and ethnic differences carried out by demographers or studies of social change. Trends in urbanization and shifts in the rural-urban distribution of population receive minimal treatment. The author has erred in devoting so little of his attention to these important topics.

Most demographers will find certain chapters of this book useful—even very helpful—for reference purposes, but I am afraid the book is not suitable for classroom use.

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