

K. Mahadevan with P.J. Reddy and D.A. Naidu (eds.). *Fertility and Mortality: Theory, Methodology and Empirical Issues*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 1986. 351 pp.

This is an ambitious title for a book of 350 pages, but the senior editor has no qualms and promises confidently that the "book will be a worthwhile addition to the existing body of knowledge in the field of population sciences" (p.9). The book is an outcome of a seminar held at the Tirupati University, India, in January 1984. Not all the papers presented at the seminar have been included and some new ones have been added. Since the programme of the seminar is not appended to the book, it is not clear which are which.

In fact, "a couple of articles" have been published elsewhere, including the *PDR* (in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent obviously *The Pakistan Development Review*). On scrutiny it appears that at least one of the articles appeared in the *P and DR*, meaning the Population Council's *Population and Development Review*. The name of the distinguished editor of the *P and DR* is misspelt (p. 194). For demographers to misspell Demeny is like economists writing Koynes. Copyright laws must be quite lax in India because the editor admitted the use of articles published elsewhere, giving no details, only the general admission, at the insistence of "Dr Kingsley Davis and a few other authors".

The book consists of 18 chapters by 22 authors. Some of the names are the biggest in world demography, seven are quite unknown, at least to this reviewer. The chapters are grouped in four parts: fertility theories, impact of culture on fertility, interrelation of social change with fertility, and mortality. There is a short appreciation and bibliography of C. Chandrasekaran, the Grand Old Man of Indian, indeed world, demography. Chandra contributes a reminiscing chapter on the Mysore study conducted in 1952 (this reviewer had to look up the year) and reported upon in 1961. Among Chandra's writings is a review of a book edited by this reviewer and published by the Press of this University.

Kingsley Davis (with Pietronella van den Oever) wrote the opening chapter. He shows the fundamental impact of demographic phenomena on the shaping of sociological variables, in this case the sex roles. "... the remarkable extension of life in advanced societies has not been an unmixed blessing. Not only has it achieved a reduction in fertility and, therefore an aging of the population, but by favouring

females more than males, it has produced a revolutionary imbalance of the sexes at the older ages" (p.18). The imbalance caused in the first instance by sex differentials in mortality is reinforced by the male proclivity to marry younger women, "which maximizes the possibility of mating for women during their reproductive span" (p.21). The masculinity ratio of the unmarried aged 25–29 in selected developed countries is 178, and in LDCs 215. The impact of these imbalances on sex roles is inevitable. The imbalances are some of the fuel behind the feminist movement, even if the participants are not necessarily aware of the demographic origin of their ideology. Demographic forces determining social evolution are not unlike the system of production and distribution affecting the socio-psychological superstructure in a good Marxist argument, but Davis "doth protests too much, methinks". Personal experiences stretch into societal explanations. They remind me of two Canadian analysts in demography, both childless. In their analytic work they see repeatedly childlessness as a means, and preferred means to boot, of the society adjusting to the modern world.

Two brief chapters in the theory part by Ronald Freedman and by Namboodiri reinforce each other. Freedman sees in contraception and abortion the immediate causes of fertility decline in the modern world. He wonders whether Korea and Taiwan needed family planning programmes, but, an old family-planning man, he consoles himself with the thought that in the absence of such programmes the transformation would not have happened as quickly as it did. The disappointment of Freedman and the failure of the traditional variables (education, urbanization, etc.) to explain the demographic transition generally is taken up by Namboodiri who reappraises several selected theories. It is a good introduction for beginning graduate students. He opens with Vance's 1952 question, "Is theory for demographers?" and gave in this way another lease of life to this article in one of my introductory courses. Nobody seems to be asking this question nowadays and I was beginning to feel lonely imposing it upon my students. Namboodiri wonders with Ryder why demographers look for micro answers to the macro questions about societal differences in fertilities.

The theory part is completed with two chapters, respectively, by Albert I. Hermalin and James T. Fawcett. They endeavour to enmesh theory with variables operationalized in the field. Hermalin points to the inadequacies of analysis when carried out without clear attention to the underlying model. He sees in our over-reliance on surveys (p.61) the reason why micro variables are used to explain macro phenomena (social norms, opinions, values). Fawcett quotes the late Barney Berelson to the effect that psychologically oriented studies of the value of children are one of the five promising new lines of enquiry. Micro-economic studies are another one and the convergence of theory and research in both are the subject of the Fawcett chapter. (For the curious, the other three are: biosocial measurements

of fecundity/fertility, impact of equality of income distribution upon fertility, ability of communities to develop means of controlling fertility.) Micro-economic theory is introduced by a 1975 citation from Easterlin, where, as far as I can remember, he acknowledges the existence of Becker for the first time fifteen years after the appearance of Becker's seminal article. (Becker was equally ignorant of the existence of Easterlin for many years.)

Fawcett asserts that from "a psychological standpoint, most needs would appear to have been met by having two children" (p.77). He deplores the absence of value of children studies in socialist countries and in Arab countries; must be due — one is tempted to think — to lack of interest in individual feelings among socialists and the sensitivity surrounding this intimate field among the Arabs. Of interest to the readers of this journal will be the conclusions that economists will have to create their own sets of data if intending to pursue micro-economic theories (p.79).

The second part of the book on culture and fertility consists of six chapters, most based on data obtained in South Central India, often collected purposefully to the disregard of principles of representative sampling. No wonder the late Mahalanobis, a sampling purist *par excellence*, yet with his physicist's feet firmly on the ground, suggested to Chandrasekaran that the Mysore money used in the National Sample Survey would have unearthed truly national interrelationships (p.88). Chandrasekaran preferred the Princeton model of limiting purposefully the cultural heterogeneity of his respondents. Then, within such contrived homogeneity he would identify his "contrast" groups.

Mahadevan provides a chapter on the differentials between Muslims and Hindus in a small village, the untouchables separated out colloquially throughout the chapters as harijans. The anthropological part of the chapter is fascinating. Presumably, as a quid pro quo, the *n*-s in many cells are as small as 1, and 2, and 4, the daily bread of anthropologists one assumes, but it is unusual to see a demographer drawing conclusions from such data. Krishnan's chapter on the Gujrat population is one of the three rigorous chapters, but this reviewer was confused at the end: education does not matter as an independent variable explanatory to fertility, contrary to all received literature. A few lines later (p.133) religion does not matter and one is left with just residence (the urban-rural dichotomy)? Krishnan does not share enough of his print-outs for the reader to make up his own mind. The editor does not feel it necessary to square the unimportance of religion in this chapter with its principal role reported in other chapters.

The other three chapters of the part on fertility and culture deal with the cost of rearing children, with the contributions accruing to households from child labour, as ever an important correlate of fertility, and with factors determining the fertility decline in Kerala, a subject to be taken up again in a subsequent chapter. In the last chapter of this part, the routine claim is made that the caste system has been abolished (p.159). This claim is made in spite of the fact that the reality of the differentials due to harijans has been reported earlier in Chapters 7 and 9.

The third part on social change and fertility is made up of four chapters. Srinivasan undertakes an ambitious review of fertility changes under modernization, and the chapter turns out to be equal in importance to that by Namboodiri. One is impressed by its quality and the erudition of the author after the rather patchy impression left by some chapters in the previous part. Srinivasan is even able to relate to the recent experience of Canadian Amerindians. Their increased fertility in the early stages of demographic transition reminded the Canadian writer Anatole Romaniuc of his experiences with tribes in Zaire at a similar stage of demographic transition. The inapplicability of Easterlin to India is used as an explanation of the low impact of family-planning campaigns (p.180; could be sheer inefficiency of arrangements). On the next page, somewhat confusingly, the social equality of Kerala is explained in comparison with West Bengal. The comparison of the leftist institutions of China and Kerala should not have been quoted in their impact on fertility, even if made in writing by some scholars; it is nonsensical (p.181).

The other three chapters in the third part deal respectively with aspects of demographic transition in Kerala, Indonesia, and in the Southern Indian city of Hyderabad (where slum-dwellers are contrasted with non-slum-dwellers). All three stories are interesting in their own right, though another general introduction to the geography of Kerala and its history should have fallen victim to the editor's blue pencil. The alleged role of the elaborate network of roads in spreading the family-planning message and supplies throughout Kerala (pp. 159; 165) should draw the attention of Pakistan's family planners. The well-written chapter on Indonesia whets one's appetite for non-Indian material. It is a sober reminder that the claims of much of the book that Indian findings have somehow validity for all of humanity are unjustified. Most societies do behave differently in the same manner as the various Indian societies do not behave monolithically. The enthusiasm of a — presumably — liberal academician for a military regime in the Indonesian article is usual. This must be due to the fact that the regime delivered the goods — lowered fertility — so that all other sins are forgiven by a true family-planning believer. The regime was "responsive to technocratic advice on economic and social issues and relatively unhampered by conflicting views from other quarters" (pp. 2-5).

The three chapters in the fourth part on mortality do not hang together and have been selected in ignorance of much of the literature on mortality. Mahadevan contributes an article of over sixty pages; the average length of the other chapters is sixteen pages. The ambitious and all-embracing purposes of the chapter are marred by lop-sided erudition of the author (no Stolnitz on mortality!) and the quality of the analysis is not unfairly illustrated by one of the closing sentences: "Other multivariate analysis can also be similarly used besides other tabulation" (p. 289). Another thirty-page article by six authors under the leadership of Mahadevan on culture and nutrition in early mortality is interesting but poorly presented.

The chapter by Charles B. Nam and Thomas M. Harrington deals with the population socialization model, a rather narrow dimension of the mortality domain. It shows the ignorance of captive youth in some school in Florida on causes of death in the context of morbidity mortality socialization; well written and interesting in itself, but hardly adequate as one of the three chapters of what might have been half of the book, judging from the title of the book.

The book is well printed and bound, a pleasing change in comparison with what one had been experiencing in the past in the Indo-Pakistan book production. However, the editorial standards have not caught up with the publishing achievements. Much of Indian type of English is with us through several chapters right up to the level of incomprehensibility. Even Kingsley Davis is made to say twice "aware about" (pp.14) instead of "aware of". Next to awkward English such as "entrepreneurship is . . . more among them" (p.102), there are logically slovenly expressions such as "surveys . . . released" (p.55) instead of "survey reports . . . released" and the "age at marriage . . . is . . . universal in India" (pp. 2-8). The distinguished French demographer Bourgeois-Pichat will find himself alphabetically under P (p.297), the titles of French works are incomprehensible, and New Zealand became one word. Most chapters must have been commissioned in ignorance of each other and contain the same repetitive introductions, even the same substantive argumentation and summaries of world literature.

Of the numerous minor problems, only a few further examples can be given. The life expectancy in Japan is reported in terms of percentages (p. 14), in fact they are years correctly shown in the original (*P and DR*, 8(3):511). The Nayar Tharwad on page 157 is given as Nair "Tharvad" two pages later. Some chapter writers notoriously say "this data" etc. instead of "these data" (e.g. pp. 107, 139, 142, 150), "between countries" instead of "among countries" (p.57). What is a net reproduction ratio of 17.5 and 22.2 (p.155)? How can a 156-percent reduction in birth rate take place (p.189)? Hundred percent abolishes births altogether. The other 56 create a negative rate? And what is an "adverse sex ratio of girls" (p.258) or "adverse female sex ratio"? The Mysore study report is referred to at least four times and each time with different and contradictory bibliographic details. What is one to make of expressions "recently" and "nearly twenty years ago" in a book where some of the chapters have the latest references dated 1976? Certain findings "are discussed elsewhere" (p.314), but it is not stated where. There is no index. The diligent reader will find it worth his/her while to make one as he/she goes along to be able at a second go to mine at leisure this rich text for the nuggets it contains.

Demographers need not be warned against some of the terrible demography; e.g. "changes in age distribution" are one of the main causes of "reduction in the birth rate" (p.189). No reader will fall for doubtful familiarity with Western society and for peculiar leaps of logic, e.g. "increase in divorce in the USA . . . leads to morbidity and mortality" (p.163) and "sexual abuse of teenage girls . . . gives rise . . . to

suicide" (p.266). Arranged marriages end in divorce (p.201). Do we have objective data on that? In Canada we found in the first national survey of 1984 that marriages based on trial periods are less stable than traditional marriages; another shibboleth gone.

On the whole, this book can be recommended only to readers with highly developed critical faculties, readers who know their percentages, who will not be taken in by poor sampling theory (e.g. p. 315). All the contributors to the book come from the school of believers in the efficacy of public intervention in the bedrooms of their societies and the impact *sui generis* of family-planning programmes, even though there are several admissions that some of the changes might have taken place without family planning. There is at least one warning: that the declines that took place before the onset of family-planning campaigns must not be credited to the campaigns (pp. 202 and 201).

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