Book Reviews

Composite Pictures of Diverse Populations

The Demography of Tropical Africa. WILLIAM BRASS, ANSLEY J. COALE, PAUL DEMENY, DON F. HEISEL, FRANK LORIMER, ANATOLE ROMANIUK, and ETIENNE VAN DE WALLE. Under the editorial sponsorship of the Office of Population Research, Princeton University. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1968. xxx + 539 pp., illus. $15.

This volume, prepared under the sponsorship of the Princeton University Office of Population Research, fittingly testifies to the important part that office has played in demographic research during the last few decades. Since its foundation in 1936, it has paid particular attention to the underdeveloped areas of the world, to population trends there and their significance. To its staff have therefore been attracted personnel particularly aware of the difficulties in demographic study engendered by the features peculiar to populations in such areas. A second main research interest has been the exploration of methods by which these difficulties can be overcome, the development of techniques of estimating rate variables from the incomplete or inaccurate data that are available for these areas. The numerical information that began to emerge in the late 1940's from various parts of tropical Africa provided a focus for these two lines of investigation, in which all seven authors of this book at some time participated.

The book is in two parts. The first is mainly methodological, dealing with fertility, mortality, and nuptiality. In the introduction Frank Lorimer points out that, despite much recent progress in African demographic statistics, very serious limitations and problems remain. For a few regions there is no information on the size of population; where official estimates are available they are without great statistical value and, indeed, complete censuses may be of dubious validity; knowledge of vital rates and trends is almost nonexistent, since in those countries that do have some sort of vital registration coverage is usually very limited. In the absence of current vital statistics, estimates have to be based on cross-sectional surveys or retrospectively on reported experience. Therefore organizers of demographic surveys have given special attention to elicitation of information, and thus for some areas comparable data, collected by comparable methods, exist. The object of this book is the critical evaluation and analysis of the results so far.

In chapter 2 particular systems of data collection are shown to be associated with particular kinds of systematic error; for example, retrospective reports on the number of dead children by age of mother give a more complete coverage of mortality than current reports of children dying. Chapter 3 shows what can be done with biased and incomplete data, a demonstration particularly useful for those in other countries with similarly limited data. It shows, for example, how to estimate fertility from the combined analysis of data on births in the presurvey year and on total number of births experienced by women of childbearing age; or how to estimate fertility, mortality, and adjusted age distributions through the use of model life tables and stable populations. For each method it sets out the underlying propositions, the procedure, with illustration, and the effects of error in the data or in the assumptions. Chapter 4 summarizes estimates of fertility and mortality from the more detailed studies reported later in the book. These estimates are of course very uneven in quality, but the figures indicate that the average fertility of tropical African populations is very high (birth rate about 49 per 1000 and average total fertility about 6½ children). This high fertility is combined with a mortality rate that is also among the highest in the world, so Africa is now about to face all the new problems that other developing countries have so sadly experienced—the barriers to progress that come with extremely rapid population increase. Chapter 5 deals with marriage, one of the most difficult of all topics to investigate by census in peoples of differing cultures.

The second part of the book consists of a series of case studies, detailed analyses from the Democratic Republic of Congo, other French-language territories, the Portuguese territories, the Sudan, and Nigeria. In each of these areas the author has appraised the kinds of evidence available and compared the estimates of fertility or mortality derived from one set of data with those from other, independent sources. He has taken into account the special circumstances in the area and adapted general procedures to them. The data, their appraisal, the comparisons, and the methods of analysis are set out in critical detail, from the fullness of which the reader is able to assess the quality of the estimates and the validity of the arguments. This part of the volume repays the most careful perusal.

This book as a demographic treatise is excellent. Major criticism can be leveled only at its terms of reference, the restriction to census and census-type sources. For in the two decades since such data began to be available, there have occurred other types of investigation, anthropological studies and biological surveys of small units. To the sources used in this volume such small-scale surveys are complementary, and a comparison of their results with the appropriate local census data would have provided a useful further way to validate the latter. Those who have undertaken such surveys are aware of the discrepancies that may exist between their detailed enumerations and those of the census investigators, and sometimes of the reasons for them. Administrative boundaries do not necessarily coincide with ethnic boundaries, and indeed it is noted (p. 473) that "the heterogeneity of the population with respect to various demographic characteristics is apparently considerable even within the same provinces, a circumstance that, if real, would make the interpretation of the average values largely meaningless or, if unreal, would render the discovery of irregularities in the data exceedingly difficult." Appreciation of the extent of cultural differences, particularly as they affect recognition of biological and social status, is imperative, and one may question the dictum (p. 184) that "it is not possible to adapt census methods precisely to all

variations in tribal culture," stated on the grounds that such adaptation would limit the comparability of results obtained in different regions. For it is these very considerations that may be responsible for departures of future population trends from those expected from the present analyses. By the use of such material one may hope to pursue further "a rather strong suspicion of some differential under-enumeration by age," and not only to demonstrate that this occurred but also to measure its incidence and magnitude—a task which is regarded (p. 274) as "near impossible." Demographers are aware of the earlier local surveys—Kuczynski's demographic survey volumes on Africa intensively reviewed those carried out before the 1939–1945 war. A similar compilation and further analysis of the more recent material would be a worthwhile, indeed will be a necessary, companion to this volume.

D. F. ROBERTS
Laboratory of Human Genetics, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne, England

What Do We Do to Adolescence?

Society's Children. A Study of Ressentiment in the Secondary School. CARL NORDSTROM, EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG, and HILARY A. GOLD. Random House, New York, 1968. xii + 209 pp. $4.95.

"Donkin felt vaguely like a blind man feeling in his darkness the fatal antagonism of all the surrounding existences, that to him shall forever remain unrealizable, unseen and enviable. He had a desire to assert his importance, to break, to crush; to be even with everybody for everything; to tear the veil, unmask, expose, leave no refuge—a perfidious desire of truthfulness."

Thus Joseph Conrad describes a character in terms that suggest the quality of "ressentiment" described in the writings of Scheler and Nietzsche and in this short volume. Ressentiment emerges as a secret, unconscious, unfocused tension felt in members of a group who vaguely sense their own impotence and whose rage is contained by a transformation of their inadequacy into a virtue. The ressentient man is the self-righteously weak-willed, the sick-souled, the nay-sayer, the man in bondage to a slave morality; Donkin, Uriah Heep, Smerdyakoff—literature and life abound with such individuals.

It is, however, in its institutionalized form that ressentiment may do its most subtle and devastating damage. The classic study of the phenomenon in its social context (unfortunately ignored by the authors of this book) is *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology* (1964) by the Danish sociologist Svend Ranulf. *Society's Children* is an attempt to identify, measure, and determine the effects of ressentiment in some American high schools.

The authors' interest in this phenomenon grew out of previous studies of college students who began as science majors but then dropped science. They found a peculiar built-in selection and de-selection process going on among students of the natural sciences wherein the most dutiful, uncritical, and conforming students—whom the authors call "conventionals"—stayed in science and got good grades, whereas the more inquiring, skeptical, adventurous, and intellectually restless students—designated as "adolescents" (how refreshing to see this word used in a nonpejorative sense!)—tended to drop out of science. The conclusion troubled the authors (as it should trouble us) because, if this process continues, science will more and more include cadres of smug technologists preoccupied with technical problems, their personal daemons and spirit of inquiry smothered by a need for organizational approval. Aren't we, in fact, even now uneasy over the delivery of science into the hands of plodding mechanics whose attention can be absorbed by biological warfare and weapons delivery systems and whose social consciences are quieted by institutional rhetoric and unexamined righteousness?

In the work described in the book under review, the investigators studied nine high schools, focusing on a random sample of students and teachers and on the rules as articulated by handbooks and administrators, to determine to what extent ressentiment was present and whether it seemed to mold "adolescents" into "conventionals." The schools represented a broad range of social, ethnic, and religious classifications. A number of tests were developed and used to provide a "ressentiment index" of the institution and the responsiveness of its students. Unstructured but guided interviews were used to determine how the "institutional press" of the school was mediated by its teachers and how the aspirations and frustrations of the students fit or deviated from the expectations around them.

A well-designed and well-described social science investigation can illuminate much of our world even if its hypotheses are not validated. The nine schools were found to differ in their ressentiment indices, and these measures did approximately vary with social class; but it could not be determined that the greater the measure of ressentiment in the school the higher the incidence of "conventionalism" among the students. There was no clustering of "adolescents," only a depressing and overwhelming smear of conventionality that cut across any discernible differences between the schools. The sanctions of the higher-class schools were more subtle, but their concern with "propriety" was every bit as stultifying of individuality as the preoccupation of the lower-class schools with "obedience."

There is something in the institution of secondary education itself, regardless of its variety, that provokes or sustains or exploits the conformistic impulses of its charges. And perhaps the impulses themselves are too strongly fashioned by a larger society that derogates adolescence at the same time that it prolongs it.

This book represents a beginning of a line of inquiry about American education that had better become a major order of business. It is urgent reading for educators. The style is light, and every once in a while the prose is rewarding. The biases of the authors are open, accounted for, and very welcome.

MATTHEW P. DUMONT
Center for Studies of Metropolitan Problems, National Institute of Mental Health, Chevy Chase, Maryland

Estuary Life

The Biology of Estuarine Animals. J. GREEN. University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1968. x + 401 pp., illus. $9.50.

Any author who can condense knowledge of the entire realm of estuaries and their fauna and flora into one readable book deserves to be commended. J. Green has done this, and,