

## Book Review

Tukufu Zuberi, Amson Sibanda, And Eric Udjo (Eds.) *The Demography of South Africa*. M.E. Sharpe Inc., Armonk, New York, London, 2005. pp,310,

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South Africa presents an interesting case study for the demographer and statistician, being a melting pot of different population groups with different historical, cultural backgrounds, and yet exposed to policies that have tended both to perpetuate their identities (apartheid) and later aim at redressing consequent structural imbalances in human and capital resources (post apartheid).

Sifting through the components of demographic change - fertility, mortality and migration - within the last two eventful decades, and weaving a demographic mosaic through the myriad of social, cultural, political, economic and other surrounding factors in South Africa must have been a tough task for the editors of this epoch making masterpiece. Reading through the volume left me with no doubt that the editors carefully selected the most appropriate and accurate combination of census and survey data they could find, and applied the best direct and indirect demographic techniques to estimate fertility and mortality while applying the most appropriate statistical techniques to analyze variations in household structure as it relates to parental survivorship status and racial differences. The inclusion of the chapter on Race and Gender gaps in Education tended, though, to shift focus from purely demographic to policy issues. This may, however, be relevant in the case of South Africa where certain racial groups have been exposed to extreme educational disadvantage.

The ten chapters in the book could be reviewed under four main headings namely: South African Population Data, Fertility, Mortality and Household Structure, and Migration. The chapters provide very unique baseline data and a wealth of valuable details on demographic patterns and trends in South Africa. The following are examples of the book's contents that I thought were particularly interesting and informative. In the chapter on Population Statistics the author traced the evolution of Census data (over almost two centuries) and vital registration data (over almost a century) in South Africa, highlighting the racial undertones in classification. Two important facts stand out here: first is that under apartheid it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at an accurate population figure for native South Africans and second, racial classification of population data

still remains a tool for reflecting, and possibly perpetuating, inequities in the society. The role of Statistics South Africa in improving the collection of vital statistics, especially death data, is commendable.

In the two chapters on Fertility levels and Age at First Birth the interpretations of fertility rates and comments on marriage rates among the different population groups are based on a sound knowledge of appropriate techniques of demographic analysis and statistical methods. One would have wanted to know more, however, about the definition of marriage used, especially in the context of African and Coloured women. This may have influenced the low proportion reported to have ever married among these groups. The use of P/F ratios for first births could have served as a check on the accuracy of fertility rates where such data were available. Using the Gompertz model, however, clearly showed trends and differentials in fertility among the White and African populations.

The unusual pattern and trends in childhood mortality, indicating higher  $q_1$  values for White compared to African children between 1992 and 1995 calls for greater scrutiny of the data used, especially since the HIV/AIDS prevalence is known to be higher among Africans in general. The report of dead children by women aged 15-19 is not that reliable. The use of  $q_2$  (or  $q_3$ ) values may give better results. A pertinent question in the reporting of lower levels of paternal or maternal deaths in rural compared to urban areas is: 'Could this be due to higher omission rates in rural areas of 'own fathers and mothers' by fostered children? It would be interesting to know whether deaths due to HIV/AIDS occur more in urban than in rural areas. Such information would be useful, especially, for explaining residential variations in  $e^0$  values of South African life tables, and also make for comparability using similar data for other countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

One fact is evident on the issue of migration and employment in South Africa: so long as the economy remains the strongest in Africa the influx of foreign born and/or South Africa Development Community (SADC) immigrants may not abate if the demand for their skills remains high, the disadvantage to the South African born non-migrants notwithstanding. An aggressive education policy favouring South African born non-migrants may well be the solution, culminating in a reversal of the pattern of labour immigration into South Africa.

There are other noteworthy inclusions in the book. The South African family setting is as diverse as the population groupings in the larger society. Even though the nuclear household is the most prevalent among all races, it is clearly evident that the extended family setting typifies the African, Coloured and Indian/Asian groups. The effect of apartheid policies may have exacerbated the proliferation of children's living arrangement that is common among Africans in South Africa, but to my mind, household structure comes with a people's culture. The overriding question is: 'To what

extent is there a hope, no matter how dim, that the various population groups in South Africa will eventually move towards a distinct, monocultural setting where racial classification of data will be de-emphasized and a 'South African' entity will be made prominent? This is the million-dollar question. Whenever the hope becomes materialized, another volume with a similar title *The Demography of New South Africa* will capture the demographic features.

This book is an extremely valuable resource to demographers, population experts and practitioners, and students of Demography and Social Statistics not only in Africa but also all over the world. It poses a challenge to other African demographers and sets the stage for understanding each African country's population dynamics in the face of challenges like poverty and HIV/AIDS. The volume fills a void that had been created since the publication of *The Demography of Tropical Africa* by Brass and others in 1968. The work is highly commendable.