The Changing Canadian Population

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Canadian research, which is often very powerful and innovative, provides a perfect antidote to the academic hegemony of the United States that extends across much of the developed and developing world. While one has to admire those United States scholars for their "get up and go," for those of us in the Neo-Europes but outside North America, who look for comparators other than the USA, it is refreshing to be exposed to Canadian scholarship. To add to that, living in a small country with a large, assertive neighbour (in New Zealand's case, Australia), we also find it instructive to have case studies drawn from another bigger, but still only medium-sized, nation with huge population movements to and from its much larger neighbour. This last point is not sufficiently developed in this book, yet is surely a defining issue for Canadian demography (see my comments below). Finally, for New Zealanders there is the added attraction that Canada is politically and culturally, and in other ways, more like us than is the USA.

Thus, I picked up this book with great anticipation, hoping to learn a lot that I could apply to ongoing issues confronting New Zealand demography. However, I began to have concerns even as I read the editors' Introduction. Like much of the book, it was competent, well written, and technically impeccable; in this regard, I cannot fault the editors or authors. But their "Introduction" leads straight into a discussion of the role of censuses and of issues relating to data sources. Later in the same chapter, they partially restore the interest of the reader by discussing some generalities and historical drivers, then by picking up the themes in the first substantive chapter, and then, in order, the other chapters, as all good editors must do. And when I got to page 18 under the heading "Themes," after ploughing through what should have been merely a footnote referring to a Statistics Canada website telling one how to source data (Census Information), there is a sort of synthesis on three of Canada's population dynamics—but not, I regret to say, the structures.

This focus on the 2001 census permeates the entire book. Many chapters read like short cross-sectional reports from Statistics Canada rather than like demographic analyses. Missing, too, in most but not all of the chapters, are any cross-national comparisons that are more than token mentions. Most of the chapters give a time-series perspective, but some only for very short spans, not very insightful ones; those that provide a truly historical perspective tend to stand out. The entry on "Low Income Status" by Rod Beaujot, Jianye Liu, and Don Kerr is all the more powerful because it sets the 2001 census into a longer set of time-series changes; that on "Changing Families" by Zheng Wu and Christophe Schimmele not only adopted this approach but also went beyond the census to use registration data to explain the dynamics of family formation; and the demo-linguistic chapter ("Language") gives a similar long-term view, although I am bound to say that changes by cohort would have added interest to the analysis of language shifts. In general, in fact, there is little recognition of the tremendous importance of cohort effects; exceptions to this include the chapter on "Immigrants" (Monica Boyd;

categorized innovatively in a way that illustrates the value of this sort of approach—by cohort, based on date of arrival). While on the topic of migrants, we envy Canada for its data on second-generation migrants used in Boyd's chapter and in that on Religion (Table 17.3). Unfortunately, in the latter chapter the text (pp. 337–38) and table title were much in need of specification – it was not clear that they were migrant generations as against conventional cohorts.

To have such lacunae as these in this list is a real pity, as the editors have assembled both the stars and the replacement generation of Canadian demographers—arguably a school of demographers that has punched well above its weight. Thus, it is unfortunate that missing, too (seemingly with one exception), are contributions from the other side of the "two solitudes," despite the enormous strengths of Quebecois demography. Better articulated, the chapters here could have been spectacular, a showcase for Canadian population studies. I am not sure whether this is the fault of the editors or of those who commissioned the book.

It would be unfair to pick out individual chapters, for there are gems throughout the book. Nevertheless, to take an example of what the book might have done, one gets a glimpse from the chapter on "Population Growth" by Alan Simmons. It was very thought-provoking. He gave us a history and then put forward various explanatory models for these patterns. The Canadian Nation-building Model was very appealing, not just because it seems to be truly of indigenous provenance, but because it synthesises the demographic and international mobility transitions, an issue we are struggling with in New Zealand.

This book certainly gives the reader a comprehensive and clear view of much of Canada's demography around one census, but it does not provide an in-depth analysis of "the changing Canadian population." I came away with many questions. For example, the fact that Canada is now 80 per cent urban must have occurred despite the magnetic pull of the United States—am I right in recalling that "Canadian urbanization" in the inter-war years was not to Toronto but more to Chicago or Boston? Was this why inter-provincial migration (Fig 10.1) was so blunted from 1921–41, because the Canadian-born were living in New England or Illinois? There just does not seem to be a mention of all of this, except for a reference to Montreal in 1941 (pp. 177–78). How was this pull overcome to give the high level of urbanization one sees now? Or was it mainly due to the countering effect of international migration? This is surely an urbanization issue of wider theoretical significance, and of critical importance for nation-building.

To take another case that is occurring across the more developed world, what about the effects of increasingly concentrated metropolitanisation and the surging growth of the FIRE industries (finance, insurance, and real estate, to use American historian Kevin Phillips' term in *American Theocracy,* New York: Penguin, pp. ix, 265ff) that are now much greater than manufacturing. This surge has had impacts on age structures at regions of origin (are birth rates, as against fertility rates, low in non-metropolitan Canada as elsewhere in some developed countries?) and of destination? Across the developed (and developing) world we see these and numerous other consequences of these factors of agglomeration. This is an urgent issue, because the "advantages" of mega-cities have been so uncritically trumpeted by the World Bank in a recent annual report, and explained simplistically as due to "market forces." Yet, coupled with work-life imbalances, the clustering of the young in big cities has an impact on metropolitan fertility rates. In Australasia the skilled young are also concentrated in big cities, but are delaying childbearing; fertility rates are higher in some non-metropolitan regions, yet birth rates are lower because of small numbers at parenting ages. These emerging dynamics have national implications. There are also other very obvious disadvantages in agglomeration, both for regions of origin and destination – one wonders whether the World Bank's authors had ever visited Lagos – that this must be a key topic for those of us in developed countries. To add to the urgency of issues like this, Canada is also a magnet for non-metropolitan emigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, as Australasia is for its near neighbours in Oceania and Asia. Thus, Canada, and Australasia are affecting the dynamics in foreign developing countries—is this a massive replay of the United States/Canada interactions in the inter-war years?

Finally, there is the elephant in the room: mortality (I was going to say "the ghost of Banquo," but that seemed inappropriate for this phenomenon). Of course, a census does not collect data on this, and thus deaths could be legitimately seen to be outside the scope of a census volume. Yet, most chapters would have benefited from attention being paid to this topic, for mortality is a key driver of changes in the population dynamics and structures. And structures at censuses are not just something that appears out of the blue, so even a cross-sec-

tional stocktaking must look at determinants and consequences. This applies particularly to the chapter on "The Elderly," where coverage of that key determinant is very bland; incidentally, the fact that the sex-ratio at older ages has just started to turn up again (Table 14.1) is a trend emerging in a number of developed countries, where it is seen in association with modest decreases in gender mortality differences. It could be a critical emerging issue that should have been picked up.

In some ways it is also unfortunate that the policy implications of ageing were in the chapter on "Age and Sex Composition," but the analysis there did give a balanced and interesting assessment of that most important of issues. Indeed, there are so many unanswered questions across the book about survival issues that one wishes that a further "extra-censal" chapter had been specially commissioned on mortality, health expectancies (in the development of whose methodology Canadian scholars have played a key role), and like questions. It would have rounded out the book.

In short, we must be pleased to have this statistical review of Canada in 2001. Disappointed, though, that it was not more insightful.