

# The Dilemma of Sub-Replacement Fertility

## *Society faces a complex set of issues*

Book Review by Craig Straub

This book would be an excellent supplement to an introductory or advanced demography course. The influence and implications of fertility, mortality and migration are succinctly applied to 21<sup>st</sup> century society. The authors approach the issues emanating from these variables from a demographic and sociological perspective — population projection data are assessed with interjection of professional opinion.

A comprehensive overview of world population is provided in the context of demographic trends, promotion of lower fertility, and population decline. For the limitationist the resultant trends are alarming:

- 1) By 2030 all Americans will be minorities.
- 2) By 2025 the labor force in developing regions will surpass 2.7 billion causing a severe job deficit, resulting in migratory flooding of developed countries.
- 3) Immigration reduction is unlikely without fertility reduction in developing countries.
- 4) The Cairo agenda focused on gender equity rather than curbing population growth.

Bouvier and Bertrand provide conclusions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century global situation which consist of :

- 1) Lower fertility to keep population growth under 10 billion;

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- 2) Drastic alteration of Western civilization by convergence of old Europe and New Asia into the United States;
- 3) Gradual alteration of European and Japanese ethnic composition as European civilization recedes in importance.

**World Population: Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
 by Leon F. Bouvier and Jane T. Bertrand  
 New York: Seven Locks Press  
 185 pages, \$19.75



The authors raise critical issues related to immigration and sub-replacement fertility. However, perpetual analytical weaving with each other as demographers and sociologists results in unclear conclusions. The transition from population projection data analysis to recommendations and conclusions is

difficult to follow. Many of the vital issues addressed pertaining to immigration conflict with and are omitted from the conclusions. This results in mixed signals to those who may be interested in population related issues.

The following excerpts and associated reviewer commentary are intended to provide appreciation for and qualification of the complexity and importance of population issues contained within this book.

*Most advanced nations, particularly in Europe and Japan, cannot afford to lose population for many more decades... In our view, the solution is not to increase fertility to above replacement in the rich countries, as that would simply contribute to increased world population. Rather, continued low, near-replacement fertility; very limited and selective immigration; and increased life expectancy should be encouraged in those rich countries so as to achieve zero population growth at a level agreed upon to be economically sound.* (p.6)

Each country must solve its own population problem based on individual circumstances. Every sovereign nation should live within the limit of its resources and be responsible for the consequences of not doing so. Rich countries exhibiting near-replacement fertility would not be further contributing to the increase of population. Allowing immigration would contribute to above-replacement fertility and increased population which is contrary to the solution. There is no elaboration on the numbers and types of immigrants to be admitted.

*...what will happen to immigration if population growth continues unabated in Central America, Asia, and Africa? It is in the best interest of all, including Americans, for fertility to be drastically reduced in all areas where it is above replacement. (p. 6-7)*

The appropriate question is "How will countries with unabated population growth solve their respective problems?" Each country must resolve this question independently. The U.S. fertility level (2.05) is currently below replacement, further fertility reduction is a mechanism to allow continued levels of immigration.

*Almost without exception, the world's industrialized nations exhibit below-replacement fertility. Without any immigration these nations will soon begin to lose population if they have not already done so. And what if immigration levels are maintained and possibly increased while fertility remains low? Eventually the immigrants and their descendants would become the majority in the respective host countries. How long it would take to accomplish such a goal depends on the level of fertility of both the native-born and newcomer groups, as well as the level of immigration. (p. 25-26)*

The impetus for promoting sub-replacement fertility is unclear. Is it to decrease population growth (p.6) or to allow more room for immigration (p.25-26)? Who is promoting the goal of immigrants becoming the majority in host countries? The authors? Immigrant groups? Native-born Americans?

*...Most pressing will be the job demands of the*

*billions of residents of developing countries. Even in the most optimistic scenario, it appears virtually impossible to provide a sufficient number of jobs for these teeming billions. Utilization of this growing resource calls for adequate flows of capital for investment and technology transfers from the more affluent to the less affluent nations. (p.25)*

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This ideology follows the same premise of growing more food to feed an exploding population. Fueling the developing countries' demand for jobs is contrary to the solution of lower fertility (p.6-7). You can't cure a cancer by feeding it.

*Given the population density in Europe and Japan, and given the environmental degradation and resource utilization that result from population growth and higher than average consumption, it seems that any further population growth in Europe and Japan is not only unwarranted but could be detrimental to the quality of life there. (p.27)*

*Despite demands by some people in the receiving countries to limit and end immigration, it is clear that some such movements should be allowed if countries like Germany and Japan are to survive. (p.32)*

These two conflicting passages are one example of the mixed signals sent forth throughout the book regarding the population issue of immigration.

*...It has been argued that because of American consumption behavior, the United States is the most overpopulated nation in the world. One hundred million additional Americans could prove disastrous for the environment of the*

*planet. A number of scientists have argued quite convincingly that the population of the United States should be considerably smaller than it is today if Americans are to maintain, even remotely, their present lifestyle. (p.28)*

This is an excellent point which requires qualification. Population growth diminishes any gain related to American reduction in consumption. Continued immigration exacerbates consumption by the addition of more people to the United States.

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*In the United States, even if immigration ended in the year 2000, the population would continue to grow until 2050 when it would peak at 311 million. It would then fall very slowly to 298 million by 2100. (p. 30)*

The United States must be an exception to the rule of those industrialized nations which will desperately lose population without immigration as indicated on p. 25-26.

*How much heterogeneity can these nations tolerate without changing their entire identity? When does a Turk become a German? When does a Filipino become Japanese? When does a Mexican become American? The last example is plausible in that countries like the United States have been built on immigration — they are by nature, somewhat heterogeneous, although there is some question as to how much more diversity can be tolerated. (p.35)*

Immigrants came to America because this is a great country which was abundant in natural resources and founded on enlightened principles of government.

*However, there is compelling evidence that*

*slightly higher fertility could be attained under certain circumstances. In recent years, Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have provided excellent examples...Research suggests that the reason could be a mixture of excellent social provisions (paid maternity and paternity leave, child care, kindergarten, comfortable housing) together with a significant degree of overall gender equality, measured, for example, in the numbers of female politicians and cabinet ministers. (p. 36)*

It is curious that this compelling evidence was not mentioned earlier in the book on pages 6 and 32 as a sub-replacement fertility alternative to immigration.

*...The richer countries, while maintaining low fertility, should continue to accept limited numbers of immigrants under certain conditions. More important, these nations should accept the fact that in the process, their identity will change, albeit very gradually. It is relatively easy for Americans and Canadians to accept limited numbers of newcomers. Their countries are continually redefining themselves and are truly nations of immigrants...To survive as independent nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, receiving countries will have to adjust culturally and ethnically to an entirely new situation. (p. 48-49)*

Again, there is no elaboration on the number and types of immigrants to be accepted. It is difficult to comprehend how world population can decrease with the continued option of immigration. History and recent events reveal that multiculturalism results in chaos and violence. Compassion overtakes intellect as the authors cannot seem to accept traditional approaches to population reduction such as tighter immigration laws and enforcement of restrictions.

*The United States is probably the best example of a fairly successful program of cultural adaptation where groups of different background s— whether race, ethnicity, or religion — manage to meld into a single group (or approximately so). (p.149)*

Dr. William Frey, demographer at the University of Michigan's Population Studies Center concludes that the

influx of immigrants is provoking sharper racial divisions and white flight instead of greater racial and cultural mixing. George Borjas, an economist from Harvard University concludes that immigration causes native American workers to lose about \$133 billion a year in depressed wages. Bouvier and Garling conducted a study which indicates that heavy immigration is closely correlated with a marked deterioration in the urban living environment.

The last point worthy of discussion and analysis is *pluralistic assimilation* (p. 155) which the authors define as the ability of all residents to maintain their own sub-cultures within America while assimilating into mainstream society. The authors suggest that this concept might be appropriate if the goal of society is to unite pluralism. This concept of multiracial groups maintaining their identities while assimilating is an oxymoron and an absolute rejection of American culture. Bouvier and Bertrand have twisted the definition of assimilation from “absorption” to “adsorption”. The authors go beyond suggesting this concept by providing detailed steps required to successfully implement pluralistic assimilation. The following excerpts contain some of these steps.

*...the society must provide the means to make economic and social advancement possible for all its residents. This will involve easy and inexpensive access to higher education as well as technical training. (p.156)*

The American Engineering Association has been asking Congress for more than twenty years to cut the importation of engineers to allow Americans in the profession the opportunity to pursue their careers. Bouvier has concluded in the past that admission of highly educated migrants discourages native minorities, distorts the labor market and hurts developing countries through the brain drain. In addition, the job demands

posed by the projected 2.7 billion people in developing regions is certain to cause difficulty for America if current U.S. immigration policy persists.

*Schools at all levels should develop programs to better understand the multilingual and multicultural backgrounds of all its residents, new and old. (p.157)*

Under current California law, immigrant children

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***— Demographer William Frey  
University of Michigan  
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must be taught in their native language, costing California almost \$2 billion per year. New York City public schools have enrolled children from 167 countries, speaking 185 languages and dialects. The cost for bilingual instruction is \$130 million per year.

The authors bring forth a comprehensive and complex set of critical issues facing society which require further inquiry and action. The interspersed sociological implications within demographic exercises exhibited signs of obstructive empiricism which impeded the clarity and effectiveness of recommendations and conclusions. This book is an important contribution to the field of demography and highly recommended for understanding the dynamics and influence of fertility, mortality, and migration on the 21<sup>st</sup> century situation. €