

3-1-2013

Review of The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and Policy Making in US History, by Derek S. Hoff.

Dennis G. Hodgson
Fairfield University, hodgson@fairfield.edu

Archived with permission from the copyright holder.

Copyright 2013 Wiley and Population Council.

Link to the journal homepage: (<http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/padr>)

Repository Citation

Hodgson, Dennis G., "Review of The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and Policy Making in US History, by Derek S. Hoff." (2013). *Sociology & Anthropology Faculty Publications*. 56.
<http://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/sociologyandanthropology-facultypubs/56>

Published Citation

Hodgson, Dennis. Review of The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and Policy Making in US History, by Derek S. Hoff. *Population and Development Review* 39, no. 1 (March 2013): 171-172.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology & Anthropology Department at DigitalCommons@Fairfield. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology & Anthropology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Fairfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@fairfield.edu.

hazards and the development of quantifiable models of disaster risk become a part of both national security preparations and private-sector attempts to sell risk protection. The age of disaster relief as a simple humanitarian expression of the “kindness of strangers” might soon become a thing of the past.—D.H.

DEREK S. HOFF

The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and Policy Making in US History

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 392 p. \$49.00.

What is the relationship between population growth and economic development in the United States? Was Adam Smith correct when he argued that a growing population aids economic development by enlarging markets, facilitating a more complex division of labor, and allowing greater economies of scale? Was Malthus correct when he asserted that a growing population hinders economic development by pressing upon resource limits, enlarging the labor force, and depressing wages? In the 1930s was Keynes correct when he argued that a resurgence in population growth was needed to stimulate consumer demand and pull the economy out of depression, or were the “Stable Population Keynesians” correct when they contended that altering the spending and savings habits of consumers through fiscal and monetary policies was a much more potent way of stimulating demand in a modern economy than having babies? What about the correctness of the current consensus among US policymakers that a positive rate of population growth is beneficial since it allows the economy to cope more easily with aging baby boomers? In an era of significant man-made climate change and proliferating water shortages, should this pro-growth stance be reconsidered?

Hoff, an associate professor of economic history at Kansas State University, chronicles how economists, students of population, and political leaders have debated the effects of population growth on US economic development. He treats the colonial period through the late nineteenth century in thirty pages (Chapter 1), contrasting Thomas Jefferson’s worries that substantial population growth was making an agrarian republic increasingly improbable with the Federalist Party’s embrace of population growth and manufacturing. The heart of Hoff’s story, though, is the twentieth century, especially the period from the 1950s through the 1970s. His meticulous archival research adds considerably to our knowledge of the machinations that lay behind President Richard Nixon’s decision to establish a Presidential Commission on Population and America’s Future and his subsequent disavowal of its findings. He does a similarly excellent job tracing the economic and environmental thought that led to the rise of Zero Population Growth as a significant policy movement and the subsequent changes in that thinking which led to its declining policy relevance.

It is important to note the book’s subtitle. Hoff believes that *the* population debate of real significance in American history is the economic one: does population growth aid development, detract from it, or have little impact on it? He objects to American historians who focus on America’s compositional population debates while ignoring its quantitative ones. He admits that racism and eugenics had much to do with the passage of restrictive immigration policies in the 1920s, but he explicitly takes to task

Matthew Connelly (*Fatal Misconception*) and Linda Gordon (*Woman's Body, Woman's Right*) for identifying racism and eugenics as the motivations behind mid-twentieth-century US policymakers' attempts to defuse the population bomb and to increase US minorities' access to contraception. At times his focus on population size and growth leads him to downplay the obvious compositional components of contemporary population debates. He largely ignores the overt anti-Hispanic sentiment that fuels much opposition to recent Latin American immigration, simply voicing concern that social scientists might be unwilling to openly question its economic utility for fear of being labeled racist. Overall, though, Hoff has done a real service by bringing to the foreground the economic dimension of US debates over population size and growth, a topic that has been relegated to the shadows for too long.—D.H.

MOJÚBÀOLÚ OLÚFÚNKÉ OKOME AND OLUFEMI VAUGHAN (EDS.)

West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. xiii + 280 p. \$95.00.

The volume, originating in a 2008 Bowdoin College symposium on migration and globalization, is concerned with the new diaspora generated by the structural adjustment reforms in West Africa in the 1980s. While some other origin and destination countries are considered, most attention is given to Nigerians in the United States. The contributors' emphases are cultural rather than demographic: there are few numbers and many personal stories. The writing leans toward the often opaque language of critical social science. Representative chapter titles are "Cosmopolitan lives and local loyalty in a Malian transnational social field" and "Toward an African Muslim globality." Many of the lives in question are the authors' own and their families', making for a far from subaltern perspective—although perhaps accurately reflecting the composition of the diaspora, formed as it disproportionately was by the emigration of an intellectual elite. One thread linking a number of chapters is the ease with which transnational communities can now be sustained, with new communication options like Facebook supplementing actual (and still significant) circular migration. Migrants' cultural maintenance in the West is not assured, but erosion can be slowed and traditions and transnational kin-ties may even be preserved to a degree in the second generation. The editors and contributors are African studies specialists at US universities. A companion volume, *Transnational Africa and Globalization* (2012), derives from the same conference and has the same editors and publisher. Chapter bibliographies, index.—G.McN.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Africa Human Development Report 2012: Towards a Food Secure Future
New York: United Nations, 2012. 188 p. \$30.00 (pbk.).

Parts of sub-Saharan Africa are rich in land and water, yet hunger and starvation are widespread and the continent remains the poorest world region. Rapid economic growth and improvements in education and health over the past decade have done