

Demographer's Perspective

## PHILIPPINE DEMOGRAPHY IN RETROSPECT

Francis C. Madigan, S.J.

Philippine efforts in the sphere of population and development closely followed the developments in the First World of development theory, and of population-development relationship theory. Thus, in general these efforts first followed a conservative version of the Demographic Transition theory excogitated in the mid-1940s. Thus, the population in the 1960s was conceived to be one in the high growth transitional stage following a decline over some 60 years of mortality without correlative decline in fertility.

The goal was felt to be arriving at a much lower fertility rate in order to bring population growth into balance. Modernization was seen as related to declining fertility in the main, although how this mechanism operated causally was not clearly specified.

Subsequently, the work of American and of European demographers, especially of those at Princeton (Coale, 1975 and 1976; Coale and Watkins, 1986; Freedman, 1979; Teitelbaum, 1975) began to raise doubts in the Philippines about applicability of transition theory to the Philippines. Knodel and van de Walle (1979: 240) had found in reviewing studies in historical demography that fertility had declined in Europe under quite diverse economic, social, and demographic conditions, and Nag in the following year (1980: 579) had pointed out that the theory of "modernization" as the engine driving fertility decline was subject to serious question.

Demographers at the University of the Philippines (Concepcion, Raymundo, Zablan, de Guzman, Feranil, Cabigon at the Population Institute and Herrin and Pernia at the School of Economics), at the University of San Carlos (Flieger, Lim, and Gultiano), at Xavier University (Michael and Marilou Costelo, Pagtolun-an, Madigan, Burton, and Cabaraban), and at the National Statistics Office (Morada, Engracia, and others) found correlations between modernization and fertility variables an elusive goal to pin down.

Perhaps the most successful of such work was that of Herrin and of Madigan linking rural electrification of particular north Mindanao areas with fertility decline. However, these studies appeared to indicate that the relationship was not so much between "modernization" and fertility decline as between determination to obtain home electrification and fertility decline (Madigan, 1981: 67-83). Social status and convenience considerations seemed to be more important driving forces than modernization.

Caldwell's restatement of the demographic transition theory attracted some following in the Philippines for a time but has been largely abandoned at present as dif-

difficult to apply in survey research. Since 1981, attention has been more concentrated upon population-development types of approaches in which fertility declines were linked with specific development inputs, and (somewhat later) specific development inputs were studied with an eye to their demographic consequences.

In retrospect, the stress during the years 1965-1986 in the Philippines upon the demographic transition and other theories of fertility with or without relation to development may have been excessive. By concentrating scarce talent upon fertility, it probably constricted research efforts in such other important areas of Philippine demography as mortality and migration. A more well-rounded development of Philippine demography would, it seems, have been a better scenario from the point of view of the discipline.

Why then did not Philippine demographers follow a course that was more well-balanced rather than concentrate upon fertility to so great an extent? Response to this question may be made in terms of: (a) research capacity and its use, (b) the management of population science funds and the disbursement of such funds to population scientists, and (c) the relation of research to population policy design.

The research capacity of Philippine demography is not small, relative to many other developing countries. As many as thirty to thirty-five well-trained and active demographers are found at the institutions mentioned above. Why then has there been such a concentration upon fertility?

First, most demographers have felt that the Philippine population was growing too fast and needed to be slowed down. That however does not mainly explain the phenomenon. The fact is that little funding has been available from donor agencies for migration and for mortality studies. Most demographic institutes or social research centers in the Philippines must rely upon donor funding, as their home institutions are generally unable to fund in-house research; thus, the unbalanced development of Philippine demography. To keep their institutions alive, demographers must propose research upon topics aligned with the interest and objectives of funding agencies, which are mostly overseas agencies. Very often, these are principally interested in fertility reduction and encourage research bearing upon this objective. Philippine governmental agencies tend to have very limited funds for research outside the governmental universities (principally the University of the Philippines), and Philippine private agencies do not show much interest in funding demographic research.

Looking toward the near future, one can not realistically expect any great change in Philippine potential donor agencies, public or private. Thus for a better-rounded demographic development of Philippine demographic data, Philippine demographic institutions must look abroad at potential foreign donor agencies.

Realistically, here again the situation does not warrant expectations of special interest of donors in problems of Philippine demography. Thus, to obtain funding for mortality and migration studies, it will be necessary to approach those fewer agencies with interests in such areas for data gathering types of studies in competition with studies from more developed countries on interesting theoretical or practical points of research based upon much data already gathered in the developed country.

The outlook for the near future, therefore, is not likely to change, unless some arrangements can be made with funding agencies for a program in the more southerly and eastern developing countries of Asia tending to encourage the gathering of fairly basic data in the areas of migration and mortality. Possibly, CICRED or IUSSP could play the role of advocate with international donor agencies in this regard.

#### REFERENCES

- Caldwell, John C. 1985. *Theory of Fertility Decline*. New York: Academic Press.
- Coale, Ansley J. 1975. The Demographic Transition. In *The Population Debate: Dimensions and Perspectives* (United Nations). New York: United Nations, I:347-355.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.) 1976. *Economic Factors in Population Growth*. New York: John Wiley.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Susan C. Watkins (eds.). 1986. *The Decline of Fertility in Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Freedman, Ronald. 1979. Theories of Fertility Decline: *A Reappraisal in World Population and Development: Challenges and Prospects*. Philip M. Hauser (ed.). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 63-79.
- Knodel, John and Etienne van de Walle. 1975. Lessons from the Past: Policy Implications of Historical Fertility Studies. *Population and Development Review*. V: 217-245.
- Madigan, Francis C. 1981. *Rural Electrification in the Philippine Context*. Cagayan de Oro: RIMCU.
- Nag, Moni. 1980. How Modernization Can Also Increase Fertility. *Current Anthropology*. 21: 571-587.
- Teitelbaum, Michael S. 1975. Relevance of Demographic Transition Theory for Developing Countries. *Science*, 188: 420-425.