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Volume 43

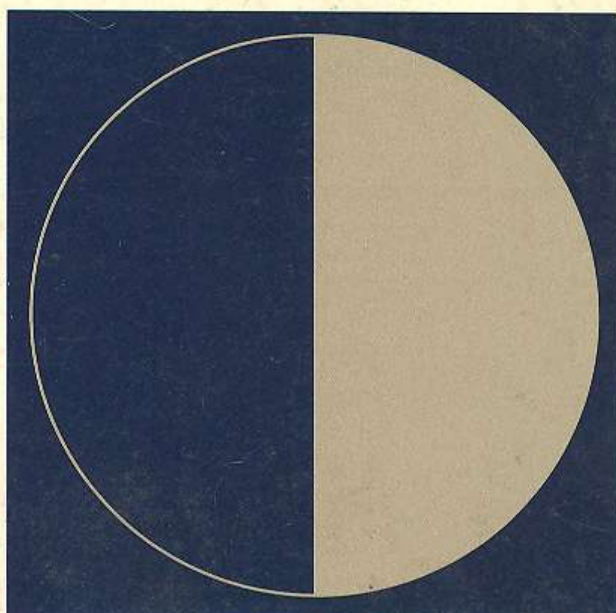
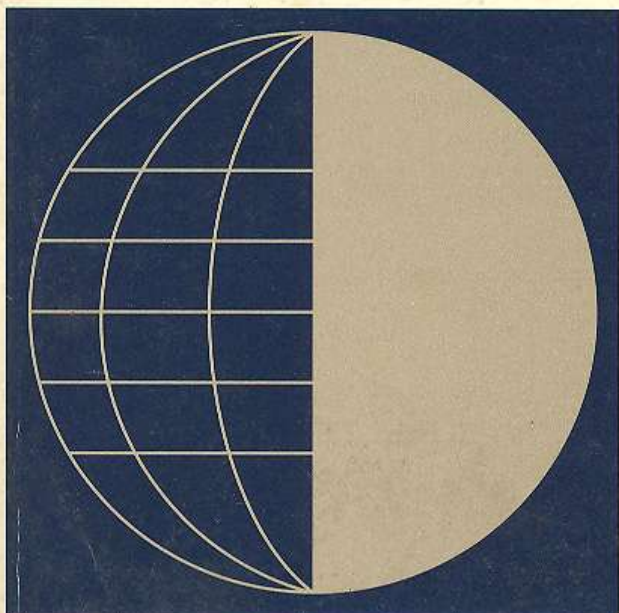
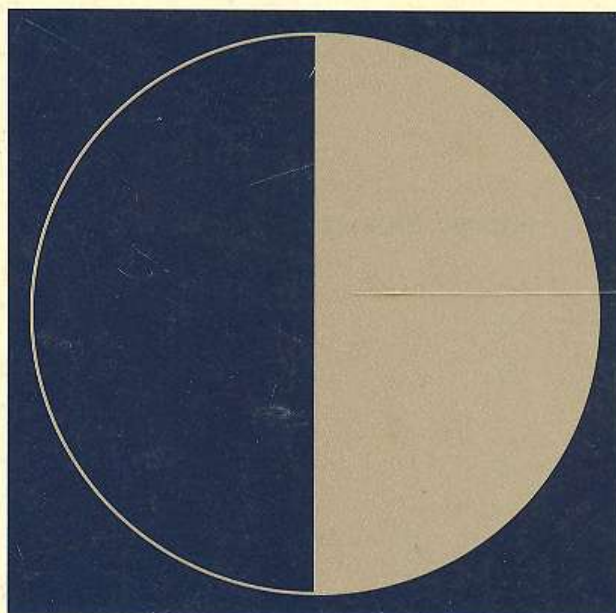
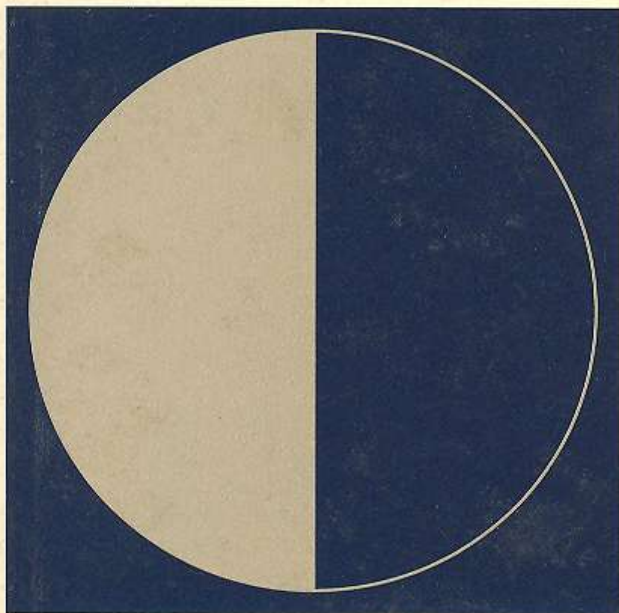
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affecting human populations
and their evolution

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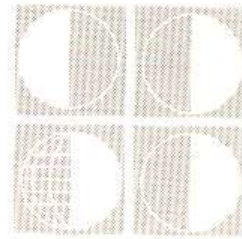
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Social Biology

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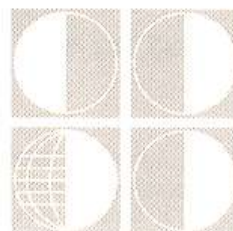
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Contents

- Teenage Sexual Attitudes in China,
*Gayle Kaufman, Dudley L. Poston, Jr.,
Thomas A. Hirschl, and J. Mayone Stycos* 141
- Impact of Future Cigarette Smoking Scenarios on Mortality
of the Adult Population in the United States, 2000-2050,
Charles B. Nam, Richard G. Roger, and Robert A. Hummer 155
- Psychosocial Factors in Blood Pressure Variation:
A Comparative Study of Young Samoans,
Joel M. Hanna 169
- Trends in the Relationship Between Breastfeeding
and Postpartum Employment in the United States,
Laura Duberstein Lindberg 191
- The Changing Pattern of Interracial Marriage,
Tim B. Heaton and Stan L. Albrecht 203
- Racial Fertility Differences: The Role of Female Employment
and Education in Wanted and Unwanted Childbearing,
Jeffrey A. Burr and Frank D. Bean 218
- Reproductive Change in Sri Lanka:
Analysis of Intermediate Variables, 1982 and 1987,
W. Indralal De Silva 242
- Sex Ratio at Birth Deviations in Modern Venezuela:
The Trivers-Willard Effect,
Grace Cristina Chacon-Puignau and Klaus Jaffe 257
- The Determinants of IUD Discontinuation in China:
A Discrete-time Competing Risk Model Analysis,
Duolao Wang 271
-
- Book Notes* 290
-
- Index, Volume 43 293
-

Reproductive Change in Sri Lanka: Analysis of Intermediate Variables, 1982 and 1987



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ABSTRACT: This study examines the intermediate determinants of fertility in Sri Lanka by making use of the data collected in the 1982 Sri Lanka Contraceptive Prevalence Survey and the 1987 Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey. The analysis shows that the most important inhibitor of potential fertility is deliberate control. The marital structure of the population is also an important fertility-inhibitor, but lactational infecundability is increasingly becoming an unimportant contributor. The findings show the success of the family planning program in Sri Lanka, which propelled fertility to a substantial lower level. Achievement of the replacement level fertility by the turn of the century, set by the Sri Lankan government, would largely depend on the efforts to increase the quality and quantity of contraceptive use and the duration of breastfeeding.

Even though Sri Lanka is among the least developed of the Third World countries, it is characterized by a continued high level of socioeconomic development, high literacy, low mortality, increasing status for women, and is becoming a nonagrarian economy. Related to the socioeconomic and cultural changes taking place, the country is experiencing rapid fertility decline. Many couples in Sri Lanka intend to have very small families and have rapidly adopted fertility regulation (De Silva, 1991).

The dramatic change in fertility in Sri Lanka during the past three decades has been well documented (Department of Census and Statistics, 1988; Ministry of Health, 1992). The total fertility rate (TFR) fell from 5.3 children per woman in 1953 to 2.6 children per woman in 1985–87. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's TFR decline was moderate, but during 1980's it

gathered momentum. The TFR of 1981 was as high as 3.4 children but declined by 24 per cent, or almost one child, by the period 1985–87. The rapidity that has characterized the decline in fertility makes Sri Lanka an unusually interesting case for examining the determinants of fertility among developing countries (Gajanayake and Caldwell, 1989; De Silva, 1990a).

There have been numerous studies on fertility in Sri Lanka, but still little is known about the precise nature of the determinants of the recent fertility change. Studies of the determinants of fertility levels and their changes often seek to measure the impact of socioeconomic factors on fertility. Substantial insights can be gained if, in addition to the socioeconomic factors influencing fertility, the specific mechanisms through which these factors operate are identified (Gajanayake, 1983). For example, the level of edu-

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