

## *The Washington State Census Board and Its Demographic Legacy*

by David A. Swanson

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One might read the title of this book and think it would be of interest only to those who had connections with the Washington State Census Board; however, this book reveals links to the demographic community in the United States and around the world. In general, it provides the reader with historical knowledge of the field of demography in the United States that he or she may not be familiar with. As Al Swift states in the Foreword of the book, it traces how population figures were gathered, compared, and projected at a time when technology was changing and impacting the profession of demography. Without a doubt, anyone reading this book will come across at least one unique piece of information that they did not know.

In the Preface, Charles Hirschman notes that the book identifies the importance of the field of demography and its connection to government, businesses, and organizations that need information for planning the future. Indeed, the book is a case study of the 1940s and 1950s in Washington state and how demographic data and models impacted decision making there at a time of rapid population increase. In compiling material for the publication, the author acknowledges several people who contributed to this book, including the late Dr. Wayne McVey, a past editor of *Canadian Studies in Population* (p. xiii). Sidebars appear throughout the book—including one for Dr. Warren Kalbach, who is the namesake of the Society of Edmonton Demographers' annual population conference (p. 24)—these extend the impact of the international connections and add personal details that connect the reader to the material. Even the rationale for renaming the Office of Population Research at the University of Washington in the late 1960s to the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology (CSDE), provides context to today's reader. The CSDE continues to make an impact on the field, and updates to this book will be necessary down the road.

The book is a brief snapshot of time and contains five chapters, each containing key references. The first chapter (Overview) discusses the rapid growth of Washington State during WWI, and the beginnings of the Washington State Census Board. The second chapter (The Washington State Census Board, 1943–67) focuses on the history of the board and its activities. The third chapter (The Demographic Legacy) focuses on when the board was abolished in 1967, and its functions as it moved to a state agency. The fourth chapter (Impacts Beyond Washington State) spotlights Dr. Calvin Schmid's students, and the impacts they had and continue to have. In the fifth chapter, which is only four pages in length (The Emergency that Never Went Away), the author returns the book to its starting point and discusses why the functions of the board continue today. In the last two sentences of the book, the author notes that, "The work of the Board and its successors has touched the life of virtually every one of Washington's residents since 1943. In the process, the State Census Board left a demographic legacy that extends even beyond the borders of Washington, one in large part due to the efforts and vision of a single person, Dr. Calvin F. Schmid" (p. 80). Given the material presented in the seventy-nine pages, the reader is inclined to concur with the author and appreciate the significance of the statement.

The book ends with a condensed technical appendix, including key demographic methods: Population Estimates (distinguishing the difference between estimates, projections, and forecasts), the Housing Unit Method (HUM), the Censal Ratio Method, the Ratio-Correlation Method, the Component Methods, Component Methods II, and the Cohort-Component Method. The references in this section are particularly useful for identifying seminal demographic resources, such as *The Methods and Materials of Demography* and *Demographics: A Casebook for Business and Government*, for example.

The book is downloadable in PDF format online and can be purchased as a paperback book. The downside of the paperback copy is that the website links are long and not easy to transcribe if one wants to type them on their computer or tablet. Some colours used in the graphs are difficult to differentiate; however, one can get the essence of the discussion in the text portion.

By the end of this book, any demographer or general reader will feel somehow connected to it, if not by the fascinating stories about the people mentioned, then by the technological or methodological advancements that have taken place. The author does an excellent job in guiding the reader (and particularly those in the profession) through an important historical period for demography. The book is appropriate for higher-level demography courses and interest reading. It is apparent that the author worked meticulously on gathering information that will go on record as an important piece of demographic history.