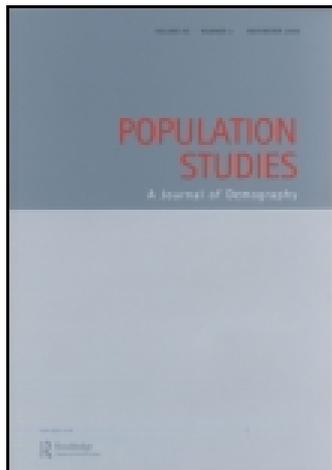


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How We Do It: The Evolution and Future of Human Reproduction

Rebecca Sear^a

^a Department of Population Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK

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where the immigration policies are considered at depth with a specific theme developed for each. Perhaps particularly interesting is Mexico, which developed a policy to select ‘those who never came’ (Chapter 6), although recent migration trends indicate that migrants may finally be coming even if not quite in the way that the laws had intended. After a concluding chapter, there is an appendix which provides a brief description and discussion of the policies in the remaining 16 states, and finally 118 pages of notes, references, and index. By any yardstick, this is a major work of scholarship.

Readers of this journal, however, might have liked to see, amidst the discussions of ideologies and organizations, some greater appreciation of the role of broader demographic and developmental factors. These could surely have been integrated into the dimensions posited by the authors. Thus, in addition to the factors covered, the immigration policies in the Americas were also being devised within, initially, transatlantic systems of migration, and later transpacific systems. The shifting patterns of development in Europe and associated transitions in fertility saw Europe transformed from an area of net emigration to one of net immigration. This had important implications for the supply of migrants to the Americas that surely impinged on the discussions that led to the design of immigration policy. While it might be argued that these issues are already well understood, the socio-economic context would have brought a certain completeness to the study. Nevertheless, the authors of *Culling the Masses* have broken new ground in bringing together a mass of information not readily available elsewhere and in reinterpreting a complex literature on liberalism and racism. Almost encyclopaedic in scope, the book is also well written and will provide a valuable resource to be mined by both students of the Americas and students of the design of immigration policy. This book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the relationships among liberalism, democracy, and racism.

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School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

Graduate School of Governance

Maastricht University

R.Skeldon@sussex.ac.uk

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How We Do It: The Evolution and Future of Human Reproduction. 2013. By ROBERT MARTIN. New York: Basic Books. Pp. xii + 304. £18.99. ISBN: 978-0-465-03015-6.

Robert Martin has written an engaging account of the evolutionary biology of human reproduction. The author, currently Curator of Biological Anthropology at the Field Museum of Chicago, has had a long career working on the reproduction of primarily non-human primates, with a particular focus on cross-species comparative work. This background no doubt explains why the book is so strong on situating our own species within the framework of mammalian, especially non-human primate, biology, and exploring the deep evolutionary history of human reproduction. He lucidly explains how many of the features of human reproductive biology, including menstruation, internal gestation and pregnancy length, the birth process, and breast-feeding developed during evolutionary history. He also discusses perhaps less obvious topics such as what our physiology reveals about mating strategies in our species (spoiler alert: Martin considers the evidence points to a mating strategy where women partner with one man, though this may involve lifelong monogamy, serial monogamy, or polygyny, in contrast to some evolutionary psychologists who have emphasized the importance of promiscuous mating and sperm competition in humans).

The book is also particularly strong on the history of research into reproductive biology. Martin describes many early attempts to understand the biology of reproduction in both human and non-human species, and provides a number of amusing anecdotes along the way. He recounts, for example, the first demonstration in the 1760s that the meeting of sperm and eggs is necessary to result in fertilization. A presumably somewhat eccentric, though undoubtedly curious, Italian priest put male frogs into taffeta pants which prevented the discharge of sperm, thereby preventing the fertilization of eggs. Martin also highlights how political and social influences affect the history of research into human reproductive biology. For example, he describes how the authors of a paper published in 1937 ran into difficulties when trying to research whether sexual desire varies in women across the ovulatory cycle. These authors used questionnaires distributed to students to research the topic, but the heads of some medical schools refused to allow the questionnaires to be used in their own institutions on the basis that ‘sexual feeling was abnormal in unmarried women students’ (p. 86).

The author’s own views also come through clearly when discussing certain issues of relevance to human reproduction, such as when he emphasizes the benefits of breast-feeding over bottle-feeding babies in his chapter on feeding infants. This is particularly

so in the final chapter, which is the one chapter devoted to human-specific aspects of reproduction: contraception and assisted reproduction. He is rather scathing about some of the, primarily religious, objections to the development and use of contraception. As he points out, it is the height of hypocrisy to get very het up over the minor details of human reproductive biology manipulated by contraceptive techniques, but to allow the castration of young boys in order to keep women out of church choirs, which the Catholic church did almost up until the 20th century.

The author also seems to have something of a bee in his bonnet about 'timeworn' sperm and eggs, that is, sperm or eggs that are not freshly released but have spent a few days hanging around the female reproductive tract. The argument is made more than once in the book that conception with such weary sex cells can have negative consequences for any children conceived. A rather substantial portion of the final chapter is devoted to the perils of using 'natural' methods of contraception, citing evidence that the rhythm method results in a high proportion of babies with various abnormalities. This, claims the author, is attributable to the fact that the (not infrequent) conceptions that do take place in couples using this method tend to occur at less than optimal times during the ovulatory cycle, with timeworn sperm or eggs.

The book is not intended to be an academic reference tome, but an accessible popular science book. Nevertheless, it has an impressively long list of references for a popular science work, of both books and journal articles. I therefore feel confident in recommending the book to anyone who has either an academic or personal interest in human reproductive biology. There are a handful of occasions where the book perhaps errs a little too much on the popular side, for example, it devotes some time to exploding the myth that conception is only possible during a short window in each ovulatory cycle. Martin neatly exposes the flaws in early research on this topic, and points out that subsequent evidence, demonstrating that conception can occur on pretty much any day of the cycle, has possibly not received the attention it deserves. For my cautious academic taste he overemphasizes the exploding-of-myths aspect of this topic, with the risk that the reader will come away from the book believing that much reproductive biology research is wrong, and that conception is likely on any day of the cycle. As far as I can tell, the early research was roughly right, in that conception is much more likely during mid-cycle; Martin just wants to emphasize that there is

rather more variability in women's cycles than the medical profession, even today, is comfortable with. I am being hypercritical here, though, since on the whole the book is a very scholarly, but also very readable account of human reproductive biology.

The emphasis on cross-species comparative research does mean that there is relatively little in the book on aspects of human reproduction—such as the impact of social and cultural influences—which have few parallels in non-human species. At all times, however, the focus of the book is on what non-human research can tell us about human reproduction. The social aspects are not entirely neglected. For example, some of the research on this aspect is covered in a discussion of social influences on menstrual irregularities. Moreover, Martin doesn't claim to comprehensively cover all aspects of human reproductive biology. As his subtitle states, his aim is to survey the 'evolution and future of human reproduction'. A more valid criticism would be that he barely mentions the future of human reproduction, though this minor instance of false advertising does not alter my view that this is an excellent summary of the biological evolution of human reproduction.

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Department of Population Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK
rebecca.sear@lshtm.ac.uk

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The Family and Social Change in Chinese Societies. 2014. Edited by DUDLEY L. POSTON, JR., WEN SHAN YANG, and DEMETREA NICOLE FARRIS. Dordrecht: Springer. Pp. xviii + 295. £93.50. ISBN: 978-94-007-7444-5.

The casual reader picking the book up in a library or being persuaded to buy it by the title alone might think that this is a book about (the People's Republic of) China. (That is, if demographers these days are persuaded to buy a book that costs £93.50 by a title alone.) In fact, it is really more of a book about Taiwan. Of the 16 chapters, a full 13 concern Taiwan with only two on the People's Republic of China and one on Hong Kong. Using the 'Chinese Societies' tag would have been appropriate if the Chinese characteristics of the studies had been highlighted in the various chapters or in an overview chapter that synthesized the findings, but they are not. Nevertheless, for researchers working on demographic and family change issues in Taiwan or, indeed, in East Asia, this is a 'must-read'. The