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Demography in a new key A theory of population theory

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VOLUME 9 - ARTICLE 11

Date Received: 24 Apr 2003

Date Published: 5 Dec 2003

<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol9/11/>

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Abstract

The widespread opinion that demography is lacking in theory is based in part on a particular view of the nature of scientific theory, generally known as logical empiricism [or positivism]. A newer school of philosophy of science, the model-based view, provides a different perspective on demography, one that enhances its status as a scientific discipline. From this perspective, much of formal demography can be seen as a collection of substantive models of population dynamics [how populations and cohorts behave], in short, theoretical knowledge. And many theories in behavioural demography - often discarded as too old or too simplistic - can be seen as perfectly good scientific theory, useful for many purposes, although often in need of more rigorous statement.

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Keywords

[demographic models](#), [demographic theory](#), [methodology](#), [philosophy of science](#), [population theory](#), [the structure of demographic knowledge](#)

Word count (Main text)

7180

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