

There is much to argue about in the *French Generation of 1820*, but the arguments themselves can only be a source of pleasure and of a clearer understanding of Restoration France.

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Mark J. Stern — *Society and Family Strategy: Erie County, New York 1850-1920*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 172.

The dramatic decline in childbearing in the United States between 1800 and 1920 represented a virtual revolution in human behaviour. In 1800 the yearly birth rate of white Americans stood at around 55 births per living American; it was halved by 1920. Mark Stern offers a unique, and compactly written study of Erie county for the period after 1850. The study is unique in two respects. First, it is based on a very large nominal data set, using samples drawn from the federal census of 1900 and the New York state censuses of 1855 and 1915 for Buffalo and Erie county. Second, the study takes the question of fertility decline as central to wider questions of changes in class structure, educational opportunity and family economy.

The analysis is tightly organized into six chapters. The first reviews historical explanations of fertility decline in the U.S., and draws on the important recent European and international studies. A critical, but admiring view of Caldwell's emphasis on the effects of mass education on fertility and family strategy informs Stern's core analysis.

Chapter two reviews the county's economic and social structural changes from the mid nineteenth-century to 1920. A theoretically grounded class analysis is introduced, emphasizing the split between the old, entrepreneurial business class and the emerging white-collar stratum, and a parallel division between primary and secondary workers (skilled and unskilled), as well as ethnic divisions. The categorization of occupational data into class strata, rather than status ranks, is convincing, but problems of classification and boundary drawing are not fully resolved, nor discussed (semi-professionals and government employees are included in the "old" propertied business class). A key to the subsequent analysis appears in aggregate evidence and 1918 cost-of-living data showing that after 1890, for the first time, local economic conditions provided a modestly secure standard of living for skilled labour.

Chapter three traces differential fertility among specific occupational groups, larger class strata (old and new business and working classes) and among nativity and ethnic groups. Stern adopts the standardized child-woman ratio as a measure of fertility, with only the most abbreviated discussion of its limits. Fertility differentials are analysed for occupational, nativity and ethnic groups and in terms of the varying shapes of age-specific fertility curves for three census cross-sections. The latter leaves room for alternative interpretations. The general fertility transition of Erie county (and by inference of the U.S.) is revealed to be composed of a set of "mini-transitions" among occupational and ethnic populations. Each class stratum experienced declining fertility in different ways, with professional and business employees leading the way; skilled workers led the unskilled. Natives had lower fertility than immigrants and old immigrants lower than new. There is evidence that families controlled fertility first by birth spacing, later, by practicing family limitation. Stern might have indicated that, despite nominal data, the series of cross-sections do not trace individual women over time to detect the effects of class mobility, rather than class position, on fertility.

With a strong emphasis on the leading role of changes in opportunity structures, Stern follows Joseph A. Bank's early study of Victorian England (*Prosperity and Parenthood*, London, 1954) suggesting that fertility declines were endangered by the emergence (not diffusion) of different, but parallel, middle-class cultures among the new salaried business class and among skilled workers.

The new emphasis on advancing the occupational prospects of children, especially through formal education, prompted differential, but progressive, fertility control. Inferences regarding changes in values and outlook invite complementary *cultural* histories. Although beyond his data, Stern fails to mention the potential significance of religion, as a mediating factor in the timing and differentials of fertility decline among class segments.

Chapter four takes up the implications for fertility of mass school attendance. The thesis is boldly offered. "Education is the Grand Central Station of the fertility decline" (93). Patterns of *high school* attendance from 1850 to 1915 among occupational and ethnic groups are analysed (mass public school attendance was largely completed). Gender-specific high-school attendance patterns for the occupational and ethnic groups are considered in some detail, supplementing the data of 1900 and 1915 with Federal Census data for Erie county in 1850, 1870 and 1880.

Before 1900, school attendance increased especially rapidly among the new white-collar business class. Only after 1900 did working-class families send much larger numbers of children to high school. Stern attributes considerable importance to the difference between the increased attendance of the children of skilled and unskilled workers, but the data could be interpreted more cautiously (103 and table 4.2). The class differences among boys were more striking than among girls and the native-born consistently had higher attendance than immigrants. Those of German ancestry, however, had surprisingly low attendance. Stern avers that the German community was able to continue to promote informal recruitment for sons to skilled work, blunting the value of formal education.

The central issue of education and fertility is presented in a brief section. In 1900 and 1915, the new business class had the lowest average fertility and highest attendance, followed in order by the old business class, skilled workers and the unskilled. At the individual level, for all occupational groups, estimated completed fertility is inversely related to teenaged childrens' school attendance, as expected. The data present some puzzles, however. The associations are much weakened in multivariate analysis and the complications not fully unravelled. Moreover, as Stern makes clear, the cross-sectional data for 1900 are too early to reflect the expected transformation for the working class.

If the analysis persuasively places the class experience at the core of the American fertility decline, it is rather less clear how the effect of education should be interpreted. In the end, this lack of clarity is mainly a matter of inconsistency in emphasis. In these data, rising school attendance seems to be a response to the same forces that led to reduced fertility — the rise in working-class standards of living and opportunities for occupational mobility among skilled workers and the new business class. Thus, increased education, like lowered fertility itself, is as much a consequence of altered family strategies in the face of new class experiences as a "switching station" (3) or prior condition influencing parent's childbearing (113), as it appears in, say, Caldwell's work ("Mass Education as a Determinant of the Timing of Fertility Decline," *Population and Development Review*, 6:2 (June, 1980), 225-55). The complexity of these mutual influences warrants precision.

The interpretation raises a further cultural, perhaps, socio-psychological, question. How do we account for the quite sudden recognition by working-class parents after 1900 that their circumstances had changed decisively and predictably enough to warrant a dramatic transformation in family strategies and in matters as intimate and consequential as childbearing?

Chapter 5 provides a comparison of farm and urban fertility differentials and class variations within each sector. It is a unique comparative contribution, but seems the most strained. The (unreported) age distribution of tenants is taken to indicate that Erie county had a permanent tenant population (119). The higher fertility ratio of tenants than farm owners is taken as evidence of the formers' greater responsiveness to immediate economic circumstances. I find the evidence ambiguous and implications unclear. Stern does find general support for the "land availability" thesis, reduced fertility in the face of restricted land markets, but exempts the higher fertility German-born on cultural grounds, reversing the book's general emphasis on the preeminence of structural over cultural conditions.

In the final chapter, a review broadens into a wide ranging interpretation of class structure and ethnic accommodation in American society. Most interestingly, it places the remarkable decline of fertility in the U.S. and its class differentials at the centre of the changes that deeply incorporated the American working class into the cultural forms and family commitments of American capitalism. Stern suggests, in effect, the decline of fertility among white-collar workers and among the skilled aristocracy of American labour reflected the emergence of a version of Stedman-Jones "culture of consolation" in England (75), presumably replacing the community and potential for conflict of the earlier working class with the more individualist accommodations of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This is an interesting, readable and tightly-written book that contributes significant empirical evidence and theoretical argument to the study of the decline in fertility; it offers, moreover, interpretations that are intended to and should draw demographic history into wider debates about class formation and forms of class action in the making of modern American capitalism.

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Frank B. Tipton and Robert Aldrich — *An Economic and Social History of Europe, 1890-1939*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Pp. vii, 323.

Frank B. Tipton and Robert Aldrich — *An Economic and Social History of Europe, from 1939 to the Present*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Pp. viii, 297.

To write an economic and social history of Europe for the last century is an ambitious undertaking. Yet Tipton and Aldrich attempt more: they cover the political and military history of Europe as well, and they seek to deal with all the European countries, except the dwarf states like Liechtenstein and Malta. Moreover, as the bookjacket puts it, they "further examine Europe's impact on Africa, Asia and America, particularly through trade and decolonization." This task is addressed in volumes which together contain a quarter of a million words of text, four maps, about 159 references and an index.

Volume I has a symmetric structure. The first four chapters deal with European economic development, Europe and the international economy, European society, and European politics and ideology, all prior to 1914. Then, after a chapter on World War I, the next four chapters repeat the themes of the first chapters, but for the inter-war period. The volume ends with a brief epilogue on the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Volume II starts with a chapter on World War II, and two chapters on post-war reconstruction, the first focussing on Europe, the second on the international economy. The four following chapters cover the period 1950-70 and repeat the themes of the first four chapters in volume I. Chapter 8 deals with the so-called continuing crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, and the volume ends with an epilogue on World War III.

The overall organization is thus thematic rather than national, somewhat along the lines of volume V of Carlo Cipolla's *Economic History of Europe*. However, within this overall approach, nearly half the chapters have a micro-level structure which successively deals with individual countries or groups of countries, such as Scandinavia, Eastern or Southern Europe. This framework has the advantage of permitting a self-contained discussion on a given theme over a given period. A topic well suited to such treatment is decolonization after World War II. But the framework has attendant disadvantages: where themes overlap, there will be repetition; the chronology of events and policies will be difficult to follow; and a coherent presentation of the formulation and execution of government policies at the national or sub-national level is likely to be impossible. *Clio* is not likely to flourish under these disabilities; and indeed, Tipton and Aldrich celebrate their approach as a succession of epochs, rather than a dynamic flow of change.