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0521801532 - Changing Family Size in England and Wales: Place, Class and Demography, 1891-1911

Eilidh Garrett, Alice Reid, Kevin Schurer and Simon Szreter

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Changing Family Size in England and Wales

This volume is an important study in demographic history. It draws on the individual returns from the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses of England and Wales, to which Garrett, Reid, Schürer and Szreter were permitted access ahead of scheduled release dates. Using the responses of the inhabitants of 13 communities to the special questions included in the 1911 'fertility' census, they consider the interactions between the social, economic and physical environments in which people lived and their family building experience and behaviour. Techniques and approaches based in demography, history and geography enable the authors to re-examine the declines in infant mortality and marital fertility which occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. Comparisons are drawn within and between white collar, agricultural and industrial communities and the analyses, conducted at both local and national level, lead to conclusions which challenge both contemporary and current orthodoxies.

EILIDH GARRETT was until recently a Senior Research Associate at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. She has published widely in the field of demographic history, with articles in journals which include *Continuity and Change*, *International Journal of Population Geography*, *Population and Development Review*, *Historical Research* and *Social History of Medicine* and is now a Senior Research Fellow in the Geography Department, University of Portsmouth.

ALICE REID is a Research Fellow both at St John's College, Cambridge and at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. She has published extensively in the field of demographic history, with articles in journals including *International Journal of Population Geography* and *Historical Research*, and has contributed chapters to *The Decline of Infant and Child Mortality: The European Experience 1750-1900* (1997) and *La Demographia y la Historia de la Familia* (1997).

KEVIN SCHÜRER is the Director of the UK Data Archive and Professor of History at the University of Essex. Previously he was employed as a Senior Research Associate at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. He has published widely on aspects of the history of the family, methodology and historical demography. His books include *Surveying the People* (1992) and *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books* (1996).

SIMON SZRETER is a Lecturer in History at the University of Cambridge, a Fellow at St John's College and currently an ESRC Research Fellow. He has published widely on demographic history and the history of demography and on many related aspects of modern British history. His major study, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain 1860-1940*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1996.

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EILIDH GARRETT

Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure

ALICE REID

St John's College, Cambridge

KEVIN SCHÜRER

Department of History, University of Essex

SIMON SZRETER

St John's College, Cambridge



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For our children:

Ruairidh

Rachel, Agnes and Madeleine

Anastasia Sophia

Sam, Ben and Zack

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Preface and acknowledgements

This book would not have been written had it not been for a meeting, in the mid-1980s, between Peter Laslett and Roger Thatcher, the then Registrar-General. Neither fertility nor the survival chances of young children was the original focus of their discussions, but their vision of comparative historical research across space and time made the present study possible.

The four authors came together from a diversity of academic disciplines; history, geography and demography, and this has encouraged us to take an interdisciplinary approach to our subject. Realisation that we were not always 'talking the same language' led us, within the constraints of the space available, to lay out the methods, techniques and assumptions used in an effort to make our work more transparent for readers drawn from across a spectrum of disciplines. Our book has been laid out in the expectation that readers may wish to go straight to chapters which interest them, but with the hope that they might feel drawn to follow cross-references to investigate more fully the interconnections between fertility and mortality, geography and history, sources and methods.

Our work, we gratefully acknowledge, has been supported throughout by funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and has formed part of the research programme of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

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Friends and colleagues, students and visitors to the Cambridge

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Preface and acknowledgements

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Humphrey Southall and Ian Gregory, both then members of the Geography Department, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, but currently in the Geography Department at the University of Portsmouth, taught one of the authors and Ros Davies of the Cambridge Group the intricacies of using ArcInfo and the Great Britain Historical Database. It was Ros who then prepared all the maps used in the volume, the other pupil proving decidedly inept! We wish to thank Ros for creating versions of the maps of which we are very proud. We also owe her many thanks for extracting us from numerous entanglements with software which allowed us to accomplish our computing goals when we had all but admitted defeat. Jim Oeppen, too, has provided a great deal of support and encouragement on matters statistical and demographic, all of which has been very much appreciated.

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We have presented papers at a variety of conferences and members of the audiences have given us many helpful suggestions and set us off in

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new directions with their questions and challenges. In a similar vein, parts of the material presented here have appeared in earlier versions as journal articles in *Continuity and Change*, *Economic History Review*, *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, *Historical Research*, *International Journal of Population Geography*, *Local Population Studies* and *Population and Development Review*, and in books by Corsini and Viazzo (1997) and Rowland and Moll Blanes (1997). We would like to acknowledge the role of the referees and editors of these publications in furthering our arguments and bringing our thoughts into clearer focus. Michael Anderson has given us a great deal of his valuable time and copious comments on an earlier draft of our manuscript, and his enthusiasm has been an inspiration. Bob Woods, too, has been a source of encouragement and a motivational force. To both we extend our grateful thanks.

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Finally, we have dedicated this book to our children. Their arrivals took us away from the realms of theory and immersed us in the practical world of family building, bringing home the choices and constraints, trials and tribulations faced by our own parents and generations of parents before them. It is however to our respective wives, husbands and partners that we owe our greatest debt of gratitude. They have helped us balance our lives between the private and public spheres, given unstintingly of their time, support and affection, and accompanied us through those life-cycle stages which still, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, remain a great adventure: household and family formation.

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