

Comptes rendus — Book Reviews

PHILIP GREVEN. — *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977. Pp. xiv, 431.

RANDOLPH TRUMBACH. — *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Academic Press, 1978. Pp. xviii, 324.

TAMARA K. HAREVEN and MARIS A. VINOVSIS, eds. — *Family and Population in Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. xiv, 250.

RUDY RAY SEWARD. — *The American Family, A Demographic History*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978. Pp. 223.

Few areas of historical investigation are as lively or exciting as that cluster of topics usually referred to as "the history of the family". With studies of such subjects as historical demography, child rearing practices and attitudes to sexuality appearing with growing frequency, it is pertinent to ask whether any patterns have begun to emerge, and whether a coherent and unified history of the family is likely to appear in the future. Although the diversity of the books under review make it clear that this is unlikely, it is possible after an examination of them to identify an organizing theme which, even if it does not lay the basis for a complete synthesis, does provide a greater measure of focus to the field.

While differing greatly in subject matter and presuppositions about psychology, Greven and Trumbach both seek to illuminate the "interior" of the family — the world of sentiment and attitude. Their respective studies demonstrate the possibilities, but perhaps even more the limitations, of this type of enterprise. Greven's *The Protestant Temperament* asserts that throughout the colonial period and indeed, he implies, throughout American history, three broad strains of temperament can be discerned, each associated with a religious style, each marked by a different pattern of child rearing, and each manifesting sharply varied reactions to political events. Distinguished by their attitude to self, they are the "evangelical", characterized by "the self suppressed", the "moderate", by "the self controlled" and the genteel", by "the self asserted".

Raised by parents who sought to "break their will" at an early age, the evangelicals were driven by a "persistent and virtually inescapable hostility to the self" (p. 12). Rigid, uncompromising, tormented by a sense of isolation and aloneness, they sought "pure" churches, institutions which could give them a sense of unity and fellowship. Typically, when evangelicals turned to politics they attempted to use the state to enforce the same purity and orthodoxy they desired in religious life. During the Revolutionary era, evangelicals came to see England through the lens of their childhood experience, and found in politics an outlet for their unconscious fears and rage. They also saw in the Revolution an opportunity to transform and purify America, establishing a reign of virtue.

The "moderate" was the product of a home in which the child was disciplined, but not broken. He came to feel a profound tension between his own self-assertion, which unlike the evangelical he saw as legitimate, and the demands of authority which he also saw

as rightful. Growing up with a sense of the crucial importance of balance and control, he reacted strongly against the British attempts to destroy the existing balance of political power.

The final type — the “genteel” — were raised in a permissive atmosphere, free from the tensions and self-doubt of the moderates and evangelicals. They were less inclined to be suspicious of the British government’s actions, and they tended, save in the South, to be Loyalists.

It is difficult to convey in a brief summary the richness of Greven’s argument, and the vast research, primarily in traditional literary sources, on which it is based. Nonetheless, some disturbing questions present themselves about the work. First, is his three-fold division tenable? Given the diversity of human beings, having only three pigeon-holes is bound to present problems of classification, and indeed the boundaries between the temperaments he lists are somewhat blurred. Again, it is astonishing that Greven sees so little change over time. Are the personality types he outlined so stable as to persist for centuries without significant modification? Finally, the psychological foundations of his theory are somewhat murky, since he cites with cheerful eclecticism, but little explanation, Freud, Erikson, Adorno, Kohlberg and others. Since so much of his argument is based on conjectures drawn from his psychological theories, a more explicit discussion and defence of them would be welcome. With all of these reservations, it is still true that this book raises an important problem — that of “temperament” — which, while perhaps not susceptible to definitive answers, must be attacked.

Trumbach’s *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, which focuses on the English aristocracy in the period 1690 to 1780, argues that the history of the European family is best understood through an analysis of two competing systems of kinship and two forms of household organization. In demonstrating this, he is concerned with the “external” features of family life, such as marriage and property law, but even more with the “interior” realms of sentiment and belief, and seeks to show the ways in which the two are connected.

He maintains that the English aristocracy had created a compromise between a “patrilineal” organization, with its emphasis on the preservation of family continuity and its insistence on descent in the male line, and a system based on “cognatic kindred” which placed every individual at the “center of a unique circle of kinsmen connected to him through both mother and father and through his spouse” (p. 1). Only the aristocracy accepted patrilineal principles; the peasantry continued to maintain a kindred system. Trumbach has borrowed from anthropology for both his organizing definitions and for some of his categories of evidence, such as the implications of changes in the forbidden degrees of marriage and in mourning customs. This is the most original section of the book, and should prove to be stimulating to students of family history.

He then turns to the emergence of domesticity, and argues that it was partly the consequence of the continued strength of kindred principles, but even more the result of the replacement of patriarchy by egalitarian family relations. Trumbach touches but briefly on the reason *why* the change occurred, since he is primarily concerned with showing that it did take place. He examines a remarkable range of evidence — the changing relations of masters and servants, divorce law, attitudes to pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding and inoculation, and school reform. Although much of this is novel, the conclusions are, as he admits, strikingly similar to those reached by Lawrence Stone. One original suggestion is that because the English aristocracy “had internalized egalitarian patterns of behavior in their families” (p. 288), they were better prepared to cope with the revolutionary ferment of the period beginning in the late eighteenth century than were the aristocrats of Europe.

Unlike Greven, Trumbach is quite explicit about the psychological theory he uses — John Bowlby’s “theory of attachment” — and the reasons why he favours it. Un-

fortunately they are hardly persuasive, but sound very much as though he chose Bowlby because he was ideologically compatible and because his emphasis on the conscious and external, rather than the unconscious, was more convenient given the nature of historical sources.

While less graciously written than *The Protestant Temperament*, Trumbach's book is also a provocative and important contribution to family history, and is based on a more impressive variety of evidence, much of it non-traditional in character. Ultimately, however, like Greven he relies on conjecture since he is dealing with an area not susceptible to rigorous proof. His candid recognition and defence of this is refreshing, and there is considerable truth to his assertion that "when faced with exiguous evidence,... we construct probabilities on the bases of series..., literary evidence, and analogy" (p. 11).

A far more austere approach to the history of the family can be found in Hareven and Vinovskis' *Family and Population in Nineteenth Century America*. The six essays in this volume, by a total of nine authors, represent a wide variety of approaches, but nonetheless possess a coherence and inter-connectedness rare in edited collections. Their application of statistical techniques is rigorous, imaginative and productive of often quite surprising conclusions. While not attempting to discover the temperaments or sentiments which shaped family life, they provide us with a knowledge of the structure and conduct of the family essential to that enterprise.

The themes which dominate the book are the development of more accurate measures of fertility, its socio-economic determinants, household structure, the persistence of kinship ties outside the household, the development process of the family cycle, and the labour force and income strategies adopted by native and immigrant families. As the editors emphasize, the contributors are concerned not just with demographic analysis, or with household structure and family organization, but with the relationships between them, with family history as seen through family processes. It is this sensitivity to the dynamic and interactive character of social life which gives the book much of its power.

The first and lengthiest study is the analysis of farm family fertility rates in the northern states in 1960, done by Richard Easterlin, George Alter and Gretchen Condran. It is remarkable not only for the size of its sample (11,492 farm households in 102 townships) but also for the ingenuity with which a measure of land availability was devised. It is impossible to review all of their conclusions, the principal one being that declining land availability was the key to falling fertility. While the theory is familiar, it is argued with a sophistication and depth of research which is quite compelling.

Tamara Hareven and Maris Vinovskis' study of fertility in five Massachusetts towns in 1880 is notable for its new approach to the measurement of fertility. It concludes that contrary to the suggestions of Michael Katz and Stuart Blumin, ethnicity was of prime importance in determining fertility, and that "simple divisions into rural and urban categories on the basis of population size are not useful" (p. 114) in predicting it.

The final chapter devoted to fertility is Stanley Engerman's analysis of the black population from 1880 to 1940, which showed a sharp decline in childbearing during the period, similar to the drop in white fertility. Significantly, rural black fertility dropped sharply, raising another challenge to the importance traditionally assigned to urbanization. Though Engerman's analysis is thorough and intelligent, the fact that it is based on aggregate rather than household data prevents it from reaching the level of the other contributions to this volume.

Lawrence Glasco's discussion of the migration and adjustment patterns of native born whites moving to Buffalo in 1855 underscores the crucial role of the family in helping migrants adjust to the city. The importance of kin is made plain as well in Howard Chudacoff's study of newly-wed couples in Providence, Rhode Island in 1864-65 and 1879-80.

He found a high incidence of widowed parents and younger siblings attached to the new household, as well as the frequent occurrence of newly-weds living in close proximity to one of the sets of parents.

The final essay is John Modell's analysis of data on family budgets gathered in 1874, 1889 and 1901 by Carroll Wright. The result is an intriguing look at the differing expenditure patterns and income strategies of Irish immigrants and native born Americans, which shows that those of the Irish changed in these years to approximate those of the native born. Students of immigration and labour history will find this rewarding reading.

Rudy Ray Seward's *The American Family, A Demographic History* is disappointing, particularly if read after the Hareven and Vinovskis collection. It is not the comprehensive study implied in the subtitle, but rather an examination, for three periods in American history, of a limited number of topics, with a heavy emphasis on household size and composition and the degree to which they were influenced by urbanization and industrialization.

His material on the colonial period is wholly derived from previous studies, and his analysis of the period 1950-1970 is based on aggregate census data. Only for the period 1850-1880 has he done a significant amount of research, using the manuscript census to analyze patterns at the household level. His conclusions are hardly startling: the family has always been predominantly nuclear; though it has become smaller, the change is not as great as that traditionally assumed; urbanization and industrialization have not been significant factors in family change.

The author's apparent failure to use a number of important works in the field is disturbing and a source of weakness. For example, his over-emphasis on the stability of the family might have been modified by Frances Koberlin's "The Fall in Household Size and the Rise of the Primary Individual in the United States" (*Demography*, 13, February 1976). A host of other objections could be raised, ranging from his research design to the inordinate number of syntactic and typographical errors in the text. Ultimately, however, its real problem is not its technical weakness but rather its preoccupation with questions of family size and composition. The dynamic and interactive approach of the contributors to *Family and Population* clearly represents a more significant and rewarding approach to the quantitative study of the family.

While there is currently no prospect of some grand synthesis of all of what goes under the rubric "History of the Family", it is clear that we need some framework for analysis which will link such "exterior" aspects of the family as size and composition with the "interior" world of temperament and sentiment, and the family as a whole with the individuals who comprise it. The most promising possibility is outlined in the Introduction to the volume by Hareven and Vinovskis, where they suggest an

approach that will link stages of the individual life cycle to stages in the family unit as it changes over the life of its members... The life course approach, rather than merely focusing on stages of the family cycle, examines the process and timing of transitions as individuals move from one stage to the next... These stages are by no means universal. Such patterns vary significantly among different social classes and cultural groups as well as historically. They also interact strongly with such social and economic processes as women's work, family economy, and migration (p. 21).

(A much fuller discussion is found in Tamara Hareven, ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*. New York: Academic Press, 1978).

Whereas the life course model has hitherto been primarily seen as helpful in the quantitative analysis of the family, it clearly has the potential to incorporate the study of less tangible questions, such as the one raised by Greven — temperament — at least insofar as

they affected the nature and timing of individual transitions. Greven in fact does suggest (pp. 226-27) that “evangelicals” and “moderates” had quite different approaches to movement through the stages of life: whether the temperaments he sketched created different patterns in the life course is a question of some interest. Indeed, if temperament made no difference in the life course, one might wonder whether it was in fact of fundamental significance.

While the life course may prove to be the most important model to appear to date in the history of the family, it would be unwise in a field so young and active to place too large a bet on the future direction of research.

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BURTON J. BLEDESTEN. — *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976. Pp. xii, 354.

MAGALI SARFATTI LARSON. — *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. xviii, 309.

DONALD M. SCOTT. — *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. Pp. xv, 199.

CLIFFORD E. CLARK Jr. — *Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for a Middle-Class America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978. Pp. 288.

History as inevitable progress can rear its whiggish head in many ways. Currently it often appears in a morally inverted manner. Burton J. Bledstein and Magali Sarfatti Larson ascribe an almost lock-step nineteenth-century evolution and enormous social power to American professions, a development which both authors regard as a bad thing. Impersonal and grasping professions “act” in a collective, seemingly intentional way against the interests of a victimized populace. For Bledstein and Larson, progress for professionals means regress for the interests of the majority of the population in a manner approaching moral totality. By contrast, Donald M. Scott and Clifford E. Clark, Jr. approach the process of professionalization as a series of only imperfectly conscious strategies of often loosely constructed groups seeking means with which to cope as well as possible with a sometimes hostile, frequently indifferent, partly welcoming society. The development of the professions is not an unequivocal triumph, and yet professions spread in ways the populace as well as the aspirants for leadership desire, reservations notwithstanding. Not at all celebratory, this approach leads to a subtle critique rather than to an angry denunciation of American professions. Both modes of analysis lead toward a fuller understanding of the institutions and the ideology of the modern American middle class: what differs is the analysis of the manner in which the hegemony of middle-class values was developed and legitimized.

To be middle-class was the cherished goal for nineteenth-century Americans, Bledstein asserts in his stimulating and elegant study, and the professions, most especially in the universities, were the central agencies by which the middle class “matured and defined itself” (p. ix). Dreading failure, passionately courting success, abhorring amateurism, seeking inner confidence, money and status, booming and boosting, but also grasping for order and discipline, middle-class Americans sought structures, both outward and inward. In a