

ABSTRACT

The Political Economy of Fertility in the British Caribbean 1891-1921

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The Dissertation addresses the need for demographic phenomena to be understood in terms of the societal context within which they occur. It questions the epistemological, institutional and ideological basis of the unidisciplinarianism which has characterized much of the study of demographic processes. It utilizes a multidisciplinary approach in an attempt to establish linkages between demographic phenomena and socioeconomic processes at the macro level. The study focuses on fertility in the British Caribbean of 1891-1921. In doing so, it takes cognizance of the impact of socioeconomic processes on fertility, via the intermediaries of mortality and migration. It is argued that the character of these processes is a reflection of the way in which the production of wealth is organized and that local reality in the Caribbean is the outcome of

the interface of the limited set of institutional variations, associated with this organization, and the wider global economy. These variations, it is posited, underlie differences in the demographic profiles of the region. Empirical data from Grenada and Trinidad are analyzed in an attempt to come to an understanding of the relationships between these variables.

The fertility patterns identified were found to be related to the specificities of territorial social and economic organization. In particular, differing mortality regimes, which were found to be associated with proxies of the impact of the international economy at the territorial level, attended distinctive fertility profiles in the two territories. Furthermore internal productive relationships in the two territories were found to be related to distinctive migratory patterns. These affected fertility through skewed sex ratios.

The thesis is an important contribution towards a theory of socioeconomic and demographic relationships. It points the way towards the development of theory which accounts for those factors which determine some of the proximate determinants of fertility in the context of the West Indies.