



Weathering the Storm: Working-Class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline

Wally Seccombe

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The industrial revolution which so transformed nineteenth-century labour brought about fundamental changes in the lives of working-class families. In this challenging sequel to *A Millennium of Family Change* Wally Seccombe examines in detail the ways in which large-scale economic changes shape the microcosm of personal life.

Seccombe argues that what we think of as the modern nuclear family only took shape relatively recently: whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century families tended to contain several earners, it was not until the time of the First World War that the male breadwinner had become the norm. He traces the effects on the family of increasingly centralized manufacture, the separation of workplaces from the home neighbourhood, and the changes in domestic labour brought about by urban housing. And he documents how the introduction of compulsory schooling and the rise of birth control contributed to changes in the dynamic of the working-class family, as children are differentiated from adults and conjugal rights and duties renegotiated.

Combining empirical scope with conceptual clarity, *Weathering the Storm* makes a decisive contribution to the study of family history.

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