

Vägen till den moderna familjen
Fruktsamhet i den växande industristaden Borås
cirka 1830–1930

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Abstract

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This thesis studies the fertility transition in Sweden by focusing on both the actual shift to smaller families and the process which lead towards it. Using the town of Borås as a case study, the thesis analyzes how fertility and family formation were affected by changing conditions for the families in expanding urban industrial areas. Its overall purpose is to shed further light on and try to explain the development of fertility and family formation during the time period circa 1830-1930, i.e, the process which lead to the advance of the modern family.

A statistical survey in chapters three and four is based on a family reconstitution. Using data from parish registers, cohorts of families from Borås have been constructed for three periods: 1831-1839, 1871-1880, and 1905-1912. Additional source material includes contemporary public statistics, censuses, and workers' memoirs.

A central result is that fertility patterns changed remarkably during the periods studied, forming three different phases: 1) a pre-industrial phase with moderately high fertility, 2) exceptionally high fertility in the late 19th century, and 3) decreasing fertility and smaller families in the early 20th century. The driving force behind the rise in fertility in late-19th-century Borås was the working class families with a rural background. By the turn of the 20th century, fertility had declined, and the modern family system was evident in a majority of the cohort. Yet, working class families still had more children and higher fertility rates. With regard to the difference between a rural and urban upbringing, the families in which the father had an urban background were most likely to show low fertility rates. The large differences in family systems among the three studied cohorts highlight the importance of studying the fertility transition as an extended process, taking into account other important changes, prior to the shift to the strict limiting of births in the early 20th century. Moreover, the difference in fertility rates between the two 19th-century-cohorts emphasizes the fact that deliberate fertility control existed also before the reign of the modern family system.

Keywords: demography, fertility, fertility transition, fertility control, family limitation, family formation, marriage, spacing, stopping, urbanization, migration, industrialization, textile industry, consumption, family reconstitution, 19th century, early 20th century, Sweden, Sjuhäradsbygden, Borås