



## **Book Review**

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**Book Title- Fertility and Deprivation (A study of differential fertility amongst working class families in Aberdeen, London), Janet Askham, University of Aberdeen and edited by R. M. Blackburn and John H. Goldthrope of Cambridge and Oxford University, 187 pages.**

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The book is based on the case study of the behaviour of the working class in Aberdeen. The women ever married were interviewed in the year 1970 who got married during 1960-61 and having two and more children. The author explains that the achieved family size or the number of children depends upon the extent of the use of birth control practices, which in turn depends upon family size preferences and ability to use contraception effectively. The result of the survey reveals that those families who preferred fewer children at the time of marriage achieved it while there are also some families who preferred less but achieved more because of lack of knowledge about contraceptives before and after marriage, sexual intercourse, reliability of methods etc.

The book can be divided into four parts dealing with the study of differential fertility amongst working class families in Aberdeen. In the first part, the author has described the relationship between fertility and poverty. This part also deals with the classification of society, selection of sample units, method of investigation and questionnaire. The second part is about birth control knowledge, attitude and behaviour. The third part deals with the cultural factors and situational factors which affect the pattern of behaviour and the last part gives the summary and conclusion.



In the next part of the book author explains that the fertility behaviour in lower working class is also determined by the cultural factors as a trend towards female centred families, low family solidarity and lack of planning for the future, a sense of resignation and fatalism and so on and some situational factors such as the lack of resources, lack of education, occupational opportunity, lack of political power and lack of social status etc.

Author argues that cultural factors do not provide an adequate explanation of differences in family building behaviour. There are the situational factors related mainly to the event of becoming married, changes of accommodation during marriages, occupational changes and the existence of marital strain which direct the number of children in each family of the sample population.

Although the author has explained a wide variety of factors affecting the achievements of a certain family size, there are many areas of interest and relevance which it was impossible to cover adequately. The study has the disadvantage of being-a small scale using a small sample of respondents, involving interviews mainly with the wife only and a retrospective study of past behaviour and attitude. So, here are some of the suggestions that can be proposed: (1) It would have been large scale descriptive study comparing the incidence of social and economic deprivation with achieved family size so that sub-samples can be identified and more closely investigated, (2) Studies of husbands as well as wives in order to examine differences and also similarities in their orientation, how the differences are dealt with and how the interaction between them leads to or probabilities of certain types of action, (3) Examination of the transitional period between leaving school and becoming married in order to discover the desire to marry and embark upon the family building process.

The problem of rising population was one of the topics of popular concern at that time. The findings of the book *Fertility and Deprivation* have certain implications for policies on population control. A high proportion of lower working-class families achieve more children than the size they have preferred. However, the problem of reducing family size in such a sector of the population is not merely one of finding the most appropriate form of contraception; making it easily available is also a challenge



highlighted by this study. The whole social environment of such couples must be taken into consideration in which experience of deprivation or insecurity trends to lead passive acceptance, inability to plan or to look into the future etc. The family size can be provided by a domicile family planning service or the development of a contraceptive without the side effects and fears produced by the pill. However, an improvement of the economic, social circumstances and diffusion of ideas is the only certain solution to the problem of family size reduction for those lower working-class couples who have more children than they would have preferred.