

tory. Instead it ends up contributing to their marginalization.

Timothy J. Stanley  
University of British Columbia

**George Emery. *Facts of Life: The Social Construction of Vital Statistics, Ontario, 1869 - 1952*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993. Pp. xv, 243. \$39.95 cloth.**

George Emery's *Facts of Life* is the first work in over sixty years to consider systematically the development of civil registration and vital statistics in Canada. While the book focuses particularly upon Ontario's vital statistics, Emery draws comparisons with death classifications in Quebec and other provinces. Besides, for much of his period, Ontario was part of a national registration system.

Emery's first concern is to detail the evolution of Ontario's vital statistical resources and to evaluate their quality and completeness. Through a case study of death registration in Ingersoll, he suggests a method for the revision of defective mortality statistics. He discusses the effects of changing social policies on birth registrations, investigates the effects of changing definitions of infant death and stillbirth on returns, and, in the case of maternal deaths, examines the determinations of causes of death used by physicians and government statisticians. Finally, he probes the problem

of residence allocation in the vital statistical enterprise.

As the subtitle of the work suggests, Emery also attends to the relations among social and bureaucratic organization, political projects, and vital statistics as a body of official knowledge. In this regard, his work is clearly situated in an anti-positivist historical methodology, and on a number of occasions it evidences an appreciation of the reflexive character of official knowledge. Thus, for example, the centralization of medical services in urban hospitals is seen to shape the reporting of places of birth and death, and to lead to bureaucratic conventions of administrative re-allocation. Again, in a slightly different vein, pro-natalist and pro-nativist interests are held to have encouraged complete reportings of mother's parity on birth registrations but not on death certificates, and to have heightened the interest of officials in reducing maternal and infant mortality more generally. Emery asserts that the generation of statistical information is a matter of state power and of state formation, a proposition, however, which is not pursued systematically in the book.

Despite careful attempts at idiot-proofing, some of Emery's methodological arguments are hard going for the non-demographer, harder still for readers like me who are prone to confuse SPSS with SPCA. So why should sociologists and historians of education pay attention to a book on the history of vital statistics? For solid historical and theoretical reasons.

The public educational project was itself a leading part of the nineteenth-century statistical movement,

both of them in turn elements in a process of state formation that involved the intensive administration of populations. In nineteenth-century Canada, in the absence of reliable population censuses, educational administration generated returns of the juvenile population which were used by state officials to chart population movements. For example, William Hutton, a former Canada West school inspector who became secretary to the Canadian Bureau of Registration and Statistics, applied multipliers to educational returns of school-age children to calculate population movements in the absence of a quinquennial census, and sought to enlist school teachers as census enumerators. In terms of personnel and objectives, the educational and statistical projects were closely related.

Again, both the educational and the broader statistical projects were normalizing and disciplinary projects. They specified identities for citizens and subjects, codified, organized, and represented their experiences, tied the conditions of life, health, and security to their occupation of administrative categories. The statistical knowledges these projects produced constituted political resources which could be mobilized by members of social classes and groups in the pursuit of interests.

Thus George Emery's work deserves the close attention of historical sociologists of education. But it also deserves our critical attention in some respects, for Emery skirts around a number of issues. While he rejects a naively positivist rendering of vital statistics, there are clear, but unexamined, limits to his constructivist posi-

tion. His discussion of definitions of life at birth, for instance, does not prevent him from sustaining a seemingly unexamined concept of "completeness" in registration. And while he sees clearly that statistical knowledge is shaped by social conditions, official policy, and political interests, he seems to wish to sustain an empirical historical demography. The issues involved are complex; more discussion of them would be welcome.

George Emery's book raises questions of broad concern and constitutes an important contribution to its field. It takes an important step in the movement from positivism to indeterminacy in historical analysis.

Bruce Curtis  
Carleton University

**John Neubauer.** *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. Pp. xv, 288, illus. \$30.00 U.S. cloth.

*The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* is a transformative example of the "new" cultural history and a bold, immensely rich, and fascinating exercise in "textualism." There is no new master narrative of adolescence here. To convey the distinctiveness of *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*, we have to foreground its methodological and theoretical framework. The "new" cultural history is concerned first and foremost with the role