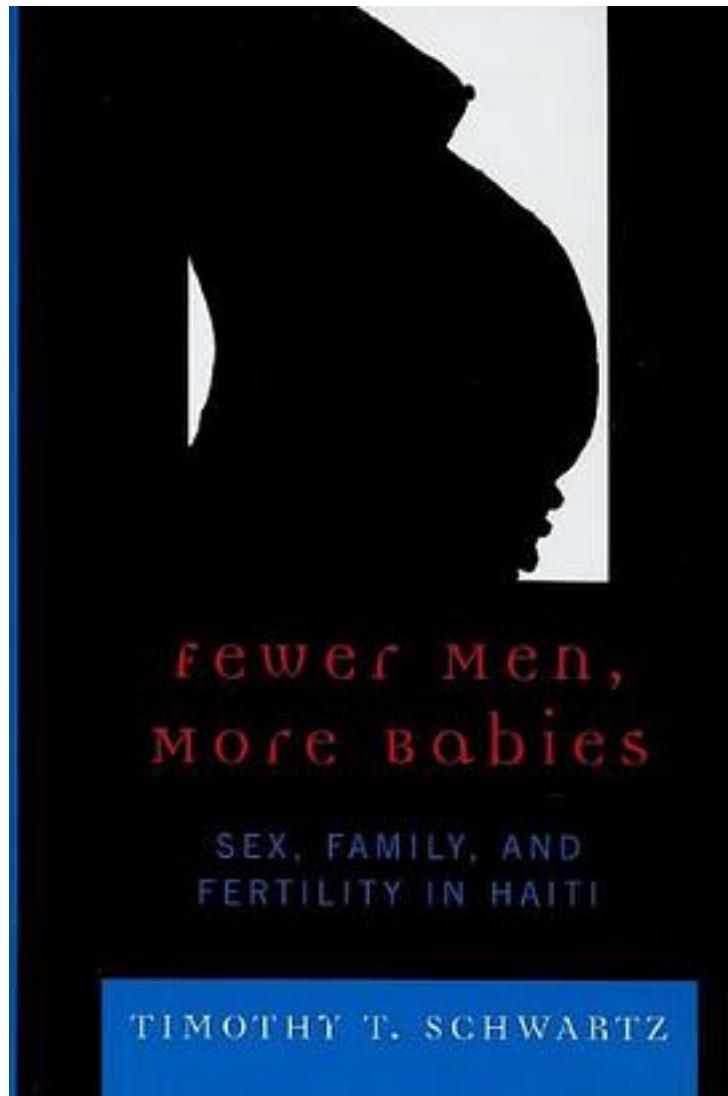


Fewer Men, More Babies



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Fewer Men, More Babies re-evaluates the debate over family patterns in the Caribbean with respect to the critical importance that child labor plays in peasant household livelihood strategies. Earlier anthropologists widely accepted and provided empirical evidence that the contributions made by children to the peasant household labor pool was a significant determinant of social patterns and high birth rates. In the 1960s researchers began to dismiss the economic utility of children. Children were conceptualized as economic burdens, wanted for emotional, religious, and cultural reasons. This ideational trend emerged in the context of changes in Western economies and corresponding shifts in ideology; it reflected agendas promoted and exported to the developing world by aid agencies; and it derailed the refinement of academic models that explain kinship and high fertility. This shortcoming is especially evident in the Caribbean. Based on original ethnographic research, this book demonstrates how the process unfolds in contemporary rural Haiti; how intensive work regimes make children necessary; how this necessity conditions sexual behavior, gender relations, and kinship; and why, despite massive contraceptive campaigns, birth rates in rural Haiti continue to be among the highest in the world. Schwartz offers a solution to a demographic paradox that some of the most prominent sociologists and demographers of the 20th century noted but were never able to explain: among impoverished small farmers, when more men are absent due to male wage migration, the women remaining behind give birth to more, not fewer, babies.

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