

BOOK REVIEW

SAMUEL AGYEI MENSAH and JOHN B. CASTERLINE, Editors, *Reproduction and Social Context in Sub Saharan Africa: a Collection of Micro-demographic Studies*. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies No. 206. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press (2003). Pp. 206. ISBN 0-313-31908-1

This volume contains eight chapters of localized contextual studies which use both qualitative and quantitative methods and investigate a number of topics in more depth than is possible with standard demographic survey approaches. They aim to demonstrate how such a micro-in depth approach can deepen our knowledge of reproductive behaviour and reproductive change in Sub Saharan Africa.

Seven countries are included in the various studies, which cover topics ranging from social identity and minority group influences to adolescent fertility, reproductive decision making and the impact of development programs, social organization and birth timing on fertility change. The authors of the chapters come from all over Africa and elsewhere. They include several disciplinary approaches – anthropology, demography, economics, geography, sociology and public health.

The editors drew the collection together with the express purpose of trying to rectify imbalances and omissions of previous survey work. In particular, they wanted to bring together a collection of localized studies that would complement national surveys. They eschewed a purely ethnographic or anthropological approach and tried to show the diversity of the region by including studies from different sub regions. They also tried to represent different stages of Africa's fertility transition. At the same time, the collection is admittedly eclectic and does not purport to be comprehensive or representative.

All the essays are original contributions. The volume is introduced by the editors and concluded by Jack and Pat Caldwell, who attempt to situate the reproductive stability and change in the region during the past two decades within the context of an overview of the global fertility transition. As they emphasize, the studies in this collection are of great value as they put flesh on the DHS's statistical proof that fertility decline is underway, and show how and why the mechanisms operate to postpone or forego births. Moreover, they show at the individual and state level the reactions to new circumstances.

This is valuable collection of essays which needs to be made readily available to students of population studies in the region, and the authors are to be commended for their effort in producing such a useful text.

Christine Oppong