A Demographic Transition

First Births in America. Changes in the Timing of Parenthood. RONALD B. RINDFUSS, S. PHILIP MORGAN, and GRAY SWICEGOOD. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988. xii, 291 pp., illus. $35. Studies in Demography.

The study of human fertility has been a principal interest of American demographers for more than four decades. Fertility research in demography initially involved the attempt to understand the causes of childlessness among some couples, to explain the dramatic increases in period rates of fertility during the post–World War II period (called the Baby Boom), and to produce data on birth expectations that would provide a more scientific basis for projections of future fertility rates and population growth. But these interests waned as yearly birth rates became relatively stable, as there was a convergence on the two-child family, and as it became clear that information on birth expectations was an inadequate basis for fertility prediction. Research on fertility became segmented, with some investigators exploring childbearing at very early ages and others investigating the causes of delayed childbearing. Description and projection remained the focus, with little attention to the social and biographical context of fertility decisions.

Now, with the publication of *First Births in America*, demographers have been presented with an innovative new research agenda for the study of human fertility. In this provocative study, the authors recast the subject in a comprehensive analytic framework, focusing on the transition to parenthood. The study focuses on whether and when during the life course cohorts of men and women have their first birth, considering the causes of early (teenage), "on-time," and delayed parenthood. The authors convincingly argue that few men or women decide early in their lives to remain childless; rather childlessness is viewed as the end result of a process of repeated fertility postponement. To understand childlessness, then, it is necessary to understand why persons do not have their first birth early in their life course, or in the primary childbearing years. These decisions depend on ethnic group, religious affiliation, education and human capital investment, and employment and the opportunity costs of childbearing. The circumstances of social history (war and peace, depression and prosperity) constrain individual fertility options.

The entry into parenthood is unique among demographic transitions because of the permanence and continual obligations that characterize modern parenthood. Parenthood is but one of numerous adult roles occupied simultaneously or sequentially; how individuals time and sequence transitions in adulthood (determining the complementarity and succession of roles over the life course) is one of the concerns of this study. The occurrence and timing of parenthood affect marital relations and the structure of families. Delayed parenthood affects the workplace through impacts on the supply of labor and career paths of women. At the societal level, changes in the timing of parenthood largely determine the level of fertility in any time period, with implications for cohort size and the smoothness of cohort succession.

The authors bring to bear an impressive array of data and research methods. Vital-statistics data permit detailed analyses of aggregate trends in period rates of fertility by birth cohort and race but lack the information needed for individual-level explanations of behavior. Data from a national longitudinal sample survey of high school seniors in 1972 provide detailed individual-level data that shed light on causes of parenthood in the early life course for a single cohort of young people. In an ambitious attempt to link the temporal and structural dimensions of fertility, the authors conduct comparative analyses of the fertility behaviors of women as tracked in six national fertility surveys conducted between 1955 and 1976. The findings of the study are further informed by a careful attempt to set American fertility trends in the context of those of other urban-industrial nations. Comparisons with the childbearing patterns of the Japanese provide insight into the looser linkages among schooling and employment, marriage, and fertility in the United States.

This work documents sharp differences among cohorts in first-birth timing. But it demonstrates that a second pattern of change in birth timing is associated with the similar reproductive responses to period events by women of all ages, regardless of their cohort's past experiences. Thus, the authors find little evidence that cohorts who have previously delayed births "catch up" through subsequent increases in age-specific fertility rates.

Becoming a parent is shown to be a continual process that unfolds over the reproductive lifetime. The social and economic experiences of childless men and women at any point in time have strong effects on whether they will become parents in the short run. Thus, period factors that increase male unemployment or female employment lead to fertility delays among individuals that translate into declines in period rates of fertility. Until our ability to predict economic trends improves, the authors find little prospect for the successful projection of fertility behavior.

Thus, the authors argue (p. 236) that "the timing of the transition to parenthood in the United States is affected by *anything* that influences the perception of young men and women of their ability to set up a household and take care of a child." This argument is convincingly demonstrated at the aggregate level. Unfortunately, at the individual level a fundamental flaw in the analytic design prevents the authors from making an equally convincing argument. Citing recent increases in fertility outside of marriage and the tendency among some other couples to make decisions about marriage and parenthood at the same time, the authors write (p. 37):

> There is no necessary relationship between marriage and becoming a parent. Note that we are not arguing that marriage is either irrelevant or unimportant for childbearing; rather the importance varies across socially defined groups, as does the causal direction of the relationship. Given this situation, most of our analysis focuses on the timing of the first birth without reference to marriage.

The more sensible and usual social scientific procedure would have been to specify and model the variability in the importance of marriage for parenthood across groups rather than to proceed as if no relationship exists.

The biases introduced by the omission of marriage from the study are in some cases severe. The authors use such variables as parents' socioeconomic status, residential origins, religious affiliation, and activity states to model fertility; a major finding is that "homemakers" are significantly more likely to become parents. The effect of being a homemaker is, of course, likely to be due in good part to the greater likelihood that

homemakers are married (a possibility not specified in the models). Despite the repeated assertion of the salience of economic factors in the first-birth process, the same model includes no variable indicating husband's income or household income, preventing the authors from testing a major economic explanation of fertility. The instability of fertility intentions over time is analyzed without indication of whether marriage in the interim is associated with changing plans about parenthood.

Though the matter of the role of marriage in the timing of parenthood is troublesome, there is no doubt that this book provides a dramatic point of departure for future demographic studies of fertility. Its analytic framework will be widely adopted, and the authors' mastery of demographic data and methods provides a standard that other fertility researchers would do well to emulate.

DENNIS P. HOGAN
Department of Sociology and Population Issues Research Center, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802

Allegiances in Education

Ed School. A Brief for Professional Education. GERALDINE JONÇICH CLIFFORD and JAMES W. GUTHRIE. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988. xii, 413 pp. $24.95.

This provocative book by two professors of education at the University of California at Berkeley argues that "schools of education, particularly those located on the campuses of prestigious research universities, have become ensnared improvidently in the academic and political cultures of their institutions and have neglected their professional allegiances" (p. 3). By seeking status through the academic disciplines, schools of education in the research universities have lost a sense of purpose. They "have seldom succeeded in satisfying the scholarly norms of their campus letters and science colleagues, and they are simultaneously estranged from their practicing professional peers" (p. 3). The more scholarly such schools become, the more distant they are from the public schools; on those few occasions where they have made systematic efforts to address the problems of the public schools, they have been placed at risk on their research-dominated campuses.

The authors make their case largely through integrated histories and case examples drawn from ten schools of education in elite, graduate-oriented research universities—including Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Michigan, Duke, Chicago, and Columbia—during the 20th century, showing how these schools became the model type toward which other institutions gravitated. Their affiliation with elite universities, the emphasis on the scientific principles of education to be discovered by researchers, and the prominence given to preparing educational leaders (defined primarily as administrators and professors of education) increased their status at the expense of normal schools and state teachers' colleges. Yet on their own campuses these same schools of education were second-class citizens.

Facing "status deprivation" as vocational schools in an academic milieu the education schools adopted "dysfunctional coping strat-