Editor Introduction

Lori M. Hunter

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This issue of *Population and Environment* might best be characterized by the word *innovation*. The scholarship presented in these pages pushes the boundaries of current scientific understanding in interesting and important ways; each also applies innovative methods to explore those boundary-pushing topics. It is my hope that these innovative works strengthen the foundation on which future research will rest. It is also my hope that the creativity exhibited by the authors inspires our entire research community to be inventive in our exploration of population–environment topics.

First, on fertility and environment, with the aim of contributing to the very limited scholarship on this association, Shreffler presents qualitative evidence of the environmental pathways contributing to contemporary Kenyan fertility decline. As explained by Shreffler (2009), “The recent African fertility transitions present important opportunities for “real-time” clarification of the underlying causes of this decline since the individuals involved in the transitions are still alive.” She spoke with such individuals and the resulting data offer the evidence on which her argument rests. Shreffler concludes that land availability, farm size, and inheritance patterns shape fertility decision-making as well as decisions regarding investment in children’s education. To learn more, please see her interesting article.

While Shreffler offers insight on an under-explored *topic*—Bremner and colleagues (Bremner et al. 2009) take us to an under-explored *population* in their work “Fertility beyond the frontier: indigenous women, fertility, and reproductive practices in the Ecuadorian Amazon.” As argued by the authors, indigenous groups have been historically marginalized, often lack access to modern health care, and are frequently positioned in settings of ecological significance. Still, we know little of indigenous fertility patterns and preferences—and such information is

L. M. Hunter (✉)
Institute of Behavioral Science, Programs on Population, Environment and Society,
University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, CO, USA
e-mail: lorimaehunter@comcast.net

increasingly important to programs aiming to reduce human pressure on ecological hotspots. Using data from a household survey of 648 women of reproductive age from 5 distinct ethnic populations in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Bremner and colleagues estimate fertility, analyze reproductive intentions and contraceptive use, and determine unmet need for reproductive health services. Based on their results, they argue that meeting health and environmental challenges facing indigenous populations will require innovative policy and programmatic approaches. Please see their research article for specific findings.

Finally, the sex ratio at birth has been called by some a “sentinel environmental health indicator.” (Jarrell 2002 as presented in Tragaki and Lasaridi 2009). In this way, sex ratio may shed light on the health consequences of environmental exposure, although environmental demographers have not thoroughly tapped into this potential analytical perspective. Tragaki and Lasaridi do so in this volume. They make use of an innovative combination of data from vital records to undertake suggestive analyses and generate preliminary results. Although lacking specific indicators of environmental exposure, Tragaki and Lasaridi offered detailed examination of temporal variation in the sex ratio at birth as related to known influential factors (e.g., age and nationality of the mother, birth order) as well as related to potential environmental exposure as suggested through urban/rural distinctions. Their ideas and innovative approach are intriguing, and certainly present a topic worthy of additional research consideration.

Thank you to the authors for their excellent work, and thank you to the reviewers who provided important feedback through several rounds of revisions. And again, may we all find stronger intellectual foundations, as well as methodological inspiration, by reviewing the innovative scholarship presented in this issue of *Population and Environment*.

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