Editor's introduction

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Demographic dimensions of contemporary environmental change are highlighted in this issue of *Population and Environment*. The contributions have various socio-demographic foci—migration, population growth, gender—and they also represent a variety of geographies—from rural Canada, China, Switzerland and the United States.

Opening this issue, the association between migration and the environment has received substantial public and policy attention of late, although dialogue surrounding the issue tends to be based on slim empirical evidence. Genevieve Gilbert and Robert McLeman present an historical examination designed to inform this current conversation. Their article, entitled “Household access to capital and its effects on drought adaptation and migration: a case study of rural Alberta in the 1930s,” explores household response within a context of extreme summer heat conditions and low precipitation levels, which led to repeated crop failures. They argue that this historical experience provides an analogue for consideration of potential impacts of contemporary environmental change. An innovative combination of data is used—including secondary data and interviews with surviving migrant and non-migrant households—and their results highlight the central importance of various forms of capital as well as social institutions.

Moving from a rural study context to the global stage, Andrew K. Jorgenson and Brett Clark present macro analyses within their research brief “Assessing the temporal stability of the population/environment relationship in comparative perspective: a cross-national panel study of carbon dioxide emissions, 1960–2005.” The authors build on other scholarship on the political economy of emissions to examine changes in the national-level association between population and carbon dioxide emissions in recent decades. Their results provide some answers to the intriguing question of the relative importance of population size and other

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socio-economic factors in understanding cross-national distinctions in contributions to climate change.

Population and Environment is also pleased to present a collection of intriguing, interdisciplinary articles focused on the socio-demographic aspects of environmental perceptions, concern and willingness to pay for environmental gain. First, Reto Meyer and Ulf Liebe offer an important contribution to the understanding of the interactions between income, environmental concern and willingness to pay (WTP). Their manuscript, entitled “Are the affluent prepared to pay for the planet? Explaining willingness to pay for public and quasi-private environmental goods in Switzerland,” expands prior research through specific examination of competing determinants (psychological, sociological and economic) as well as consideration of both private and quasi-public environmental goods. Study results suggest important directions for policies and programs aiming to enhance individual engagement in pro-environmental behaviors.

With a specific focus on climate change, Aaron McCright offers an important contribution to the science of public understanding in his work entitled “The effects of gender on climate change knowledge and concern in the American public.” As noted by McCright, the study adjudicates among competing environmental concern hypotheses, especially as related to gender, and improves our understanding of the American public’s beliefs and attitudes about this impending global environmental challenge. Study results have policy and programmatic importance, while also offering engaging insights for gender socialization theory as well as considerations regarding gender measurement.

Dovetailing nicely with both Meyer and Liebe’s findings as well as those of McCright, Chenyang Xiao and Dayong Hong focus on gender, but within a different context—China—and as related to environmental behaviors beyond WTP. Little research has been undertaken with regard to environmental concern of Chinese nationals and Xiao and Hong offer a timely contribution. Their findings parallel some gender-environment distinctions found in Western settings, although interesting differences also emerge. This study lays a critically important foundation for future environmental social science research in the Chinese setting.

Thank you to the authors for the diligence in crafting these excellent contributions to population and environment scholarship!