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Redaktionsschluss: 31. August 2006

Preface

I am delighted to write this preface to the special issue on "Reproductive Disparities in African Contexts," guest-edited by me and Sylvie Schuster for curare. This issue is presented in this special issue of the journal. The 12th International Conference on Reproductive Health, Childlessness, Adoption, and Family Planning Complexities," which was held in Gießen, Germany, 2005, at the University of Michigan, USA. This conference is the third international effort to bring together behavioral scientists and health workers from around the world who study reproductive health and other forms of reproductive health complexity. The first conference was held at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1999, and the second in Gießen, Germany, in 2002.

This third international conference at the University of Michigan involved participants from 31 countries, including 15 from Africa (particularly Niger, Nigeria, and Kenya). The conference addressed a wide range of reproductive topics, including local practices detrimental to reproductive health and birth; reproductive loss; stillbirths, and child deaths; and the challenges of contraception, sterilization, and cultural anxieties over infertility, parenthood, and childhood. The conference also addressed reproductive goals between health care providers and health care providers; and reproductive and genetic technologies.

As reflected in this special issue, Africa was richly represented at the conference. On the one hand, the wealth of emerging scholarship on Africa, by both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars. On the other hand, this preface highlights the fact that most sub-Saharan African countries are still facing numerous disparities in men's reproductive health care, including the devastating epidemic of HIV/AIDS.