

Global Review

*Global and Transnational Sociology Newsletter
American Sociological Association*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 2010

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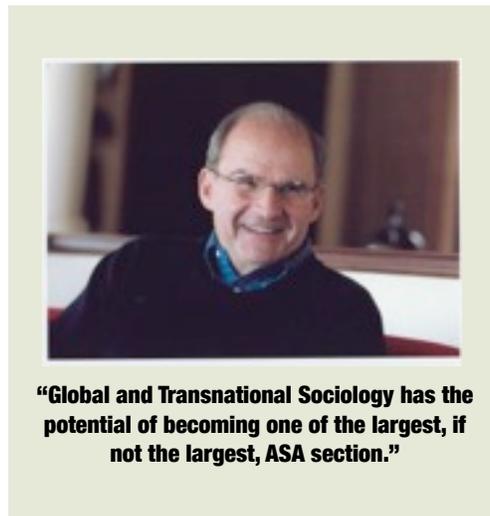


Chair's Message

*George Ritzer**

As editors indicate below, the ASA Section on Global and Transnational Sociology is off to a rousing start exceeding the minimum number of members needed for an ASA section in a few months and, in short order, adding yet another one hundred members. Given the growing worldwide interest in the subject, it seems clear that the membership in, and the importance of, the section can only increase in the coming years. Indeed, it has the potential of becoming one of the largest, if not the largest, ASA section.

One of the reasons is that global and transnational processes can only increase and become more important in the future. There are many factors involved in this growth, but special importance and attention must be given to the rise and increasing dispersion of new information technologies. Of



“Global and Transnational Sociology has the potential of becoming one of the largest, if not the largest, ASA section.”

course, it is possible that we could see a rise in anti-globalization forces and structures (e.g. protectionism, autarkic political regimes), but it seems unlikely that they will be more than minor, passing or intermittent phenomena. There are even “Mad Max” scenarios (e.g. a massive nuclear war leading to a nuclear winter), but they, too, seem unlikely and certainly less likely than they were at the height of the Cold War.

Another reason relates to the fluidity of global and transnational processes and the ability of sociology to adapt to thinking about and studying those processes. A concern for social processes has been an inherent part of sociology since its creation (it certainly was a central element of Comte’s thinking). It has remained central to at least some sociological approaches (e.g. symbolic interactionism, Norbert Elias’s “process sociology”, Bauman’s “liquid modernity”) to this day. Every introductory sociology textbook starts with the notion that sociology is concerned with social processes, as well as social structures. The problem for much of sociology in the mid-twentieth century (e.g. in structural-functionalism, structuralism) was that a concern for structure had become predominant and process had come to be subordinated to it. Of course, by the latter part of the 20th century, and early 21st century, the predominant mid-century theories were under attack and in decline. One result of this is that a concern for process has attained its rightful place alongside of, if not of more importance than, structure. In fact, one way to look at structure is as congealed processes. Thus, sociology today is well-positioned to deal with processes of all kinds, including, if not especially, global processes. Furthermore, the historical concern for structure

EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the Global and Transnational Sociology Section. While all membership-based groups have reasons to be proud of their purpose, our gratification stems from being at the forefront of studying the epochal shift in the very nature of society. As old ensembles that maintained agrarian or national societies begin to show their seams, we are proud of refocusing sociology's commitment to studying the changing nature of society, which must now include the global in its self-descriptions.

This newsletter will be the venue for communicating the section's debates, events and achievements. We plan to release a Spring, Summer, and Fall edition each year. We heartily encourage you to submit any relevant content you may have.

As of March 2010 we have a strong and growing membership of more than 400 scholars. This means that we are now entitled to organize three sessions at ASA. We can gain further sessions if we continue to recruit more members. Our numbers will be officially tallied in September 2010 in order for us to be fully instated, giving us a chance to organize our first sessions in 2011.

Although our sessions will not take place until 2011, we are planning several events for the ASA meeting in August 2010. Most importantly, we will hold our annual business meeting in Atlanta this August. We encourage you to participate and help set the agenda for our 2011 activities. We will review the achievements of our committees and organize these committees for the following year. Also, we will celebrate the winners of our section awards. Finally, this will be an opportunity to get to know our chair-elect for 2011, George Thomas of Arizona State University.

The election for section chair in 2012 is on the horizon. Included in this newsletter are the bios and statements of our two candidates: Sarah Babb and Shelly Feldman. We encourage you to read these carefully and vote. Your ballot will arrive in May enclosed with the ballot for the ASA general election.

A. Aneesh & P.J. Rey

remains of great importance in examining the structures that serve to block (e.g. national borders in the case of migration, especially that which is illegal), as well as expedite (e.g. established routes for everything from international air flights to the well-trodden paths followed by illegal immigrants), globalization.

Just as sociology has tended to overcome the split between process and structure, it has also moved toward overcoming the equally dysfunctional tendency to focus on either micro or macro (mainly in US sociology) or structure or agency (mainly in European sociology). In terms of the end of the micro-macro split, this means that at the minimum



those interested in globalization can, if they wish, deal much more easily with the relationship between the micro and the macro levels involved in globalization. Of course,

this does not mean that they cannot focus on the micro or macro, or even the meso (in the context of the global). It does mean, however, that they must always be cognizant of their place in, and the way they relate to, the entire continuum as it relates to globalization. A similar point, albeit with different foci, can be made about the agency-structure issue. That is, those interested in globalization can focus on everything from the agent to the largest of global structures (e.g. the UN and the IOC), as well as their myriad interrelationships.

There are, of course, many other trends in sociology worth mentioning in this context. There is, for example, the movement from the use of single methods (e.g. experiments, participant observation) perhaps best-suited to a given "level" of social reality (e.g. agents, interaction, social structures) to multi-method research that is far better suited to studying global issues. Even use of a single method would now be attuned to how it relates to research using other methods and at other levels of social reality. Then there is the globalization of sociology itself with a much greater exchange of ideas, as well as of sociologists, across the globe. This serves to attune increasing numbers of sociologists to global issues and to give them a much more global outlook on their focal concerns.

The most general point I want to make is that there is a confluence of global changes and changes in sociology. Of course, to some degree, these are not coincidental, changes in sociology are being caused, at least in part, by global changes. However, a variety of changes took place in sociology before the "global age" for a number of other,



often internal, reasons that have positioned the field well to study and to theorize about global issues. That is not to say that there are not great difficulties ahead for sociology in the global age (for example,

the lack of truly global data; the relative weakness of non-economic global data) but it is well-placed to deal with global issues. For example, unlike other social sciences, sociology is not locked into the study of a single institution as is the case in other disciplines (e.g., economics and political science), or level of analysis (say the micro level in psychology or rational choice [as opposed to institutional] economics). Of course, all of these disciplines have their specific strengths and advantages in dealing with global issues (e.g. the power of economics in analyzing that most central aspect of the global age-economic processes). All of the social sciences, whatever their breadth or specificity, will be drawn increasingly into studies of the global in the future. Changes in sociology in the last century, recent changes in light of globalization, the rise in the number of truly global sociologists, and the existence of the ASA Section on Global and Transnational Sociology all serve to put sociology in an excellent position to be an important analyst of, and player in, the global age.

**George Ritzer is Distinguished University Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland.*

Global Lunch with a Mentor

Graduate Students - Sign up for Global Lunch with a Mentor! The Student Committee is organizing one or more lunches with mentors from the Global and Transnational section during the ASA meeting. Several graduate students will be matched with an established professors/scholar of global and transnational studies. The Student Committee will match students with mentors and will be in touch with a designated location and possibly funding for your lunch. If you are a graduate student and would like to participate in an informal and casual lunch with a mentor, please email hurwitz@umail.ucsb.edu by July 1.



Student Committee

The Student Committee seeks more students to be involved in the section. We discuss section matters, suggest activities and programs to increase student participation, recruit other students to the section, and have some fun. We're interested in student input! Please contact Heather Hurwitz hurwitz@umail.ucsb.edu to get involved.

A New Sociology of Globalization

Conceiving of globalization not simply in terms of interdependence and global institutions, but also as inhabiting and reshaping the national, opens up a vast agenda for research and politics that remains largely unaddressed.

— Saskia Sassen*

Writing about the sociology of globalization is a triple-edged sword. First, as a discipline, sociology has thrived analytically on the closure provided by the nation-state, especially with the positivist turn that took off in the 1950s. One effect has been that international sociology basically compares nation-states. Second, the ethnographic strand, always strong in sociology, for a long time did not consider the macro-level pertinent – and this became a built-in resistance to studying the global given common definitions of the global as beyond the local and the nation-state. Third, the main strands of sociology dealing with cross-border and interstate processes, such as world-systems theory, colonialism studies, and marxist political economy, have tended to reject globalization as a useful category. The overall result of

these three features is that a strict definition of sociological studies of globalization leaves us with a very small, though very rapidly growing body of research and theorization that has directly engaged the global.



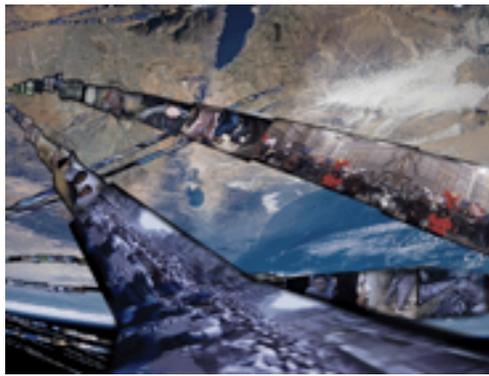
“the global...both transcends the exclusive framing of national states as well as inhabits national territories”

It seems to me that we should at least explore whether these three major strands in sociology can contribute to the study of globalization even if the

authors did not have globalization in mind. This sociological scholarship contains many important methodological, data and conceptual elements that would allow us to raise the level of complexity in the study of

globalization. But to use these we need a new conceptual architecture within which to situate these elements.

One way of opening up the subject to a discipline that has resisted the category of globalization is to posit that the global –whether an institution, a process, a discursive practice, or an imaginary-- both transcends the exclusive framing of national states as well as inhabits national territories. Seen this way, globalization is more than its common representation as growing interdependence and formation of self-evidently global institutions. Further, if the global gets partly structured inside the national, then the methodological and theoretical challenges to state-centric social sciences will be different from those posed by the common binary of the global versus the national. Sociology, with its strong state-centric methodological and conceptual foundations, has not been particularly



active in the study of globalization. But I think it should. We may recover for the study of globalization a variety of sociological studies, which, while not concerned with globalization per se, offer us methodological and conceptual tools to study structurations of the global inside the national. The effort is, then, to examine particular contributions of sociology through this larger lens.

Conceiving of globalization not simply in terms of interdependence and global institutions, but also as inhabiting and reshaping the national, opens up a vast agenda for research and politics that remains largely unaddressed. Research on globalization needs to include detailed studies, notably ethnographies, of multiple national conditions and dynamics that are likely to be engaged by the global and often are the global, but do so inside the national; further, such conditions and dynamics are often still dressed in national codes and clothes. Examples are global cities, immobile or localized activists that are part of transnational networks, and even particular state institutions, such as ministries of finance and central banks, that have played a major role in implementing the new economic logics of the global corporate economy. This does not mean that everything about these cities, localized activists, or state institutions is global. It might be simply that they house or enable particular global dynamics and conditions. As for politics, such a broader understanding of globalization opens up the possibility of national actors (legislators, courts, citizens, local NGOs) doing global politics from inside the national; it also suggests that the immobile, those who do not or cannot cross borders, may nonetheless participate in global politics.

Thus part of the research work entails detecting the presence of globalizing dynamics in thick social environments that mix national and non-national elements. We can use many of the existing research techniques and data sets developed with the national in mind. But the results need to be analyzed through new conceptual and interpretive frameworks—frameworks that recognize that the national can be one of the sites for the global. Surveys of factories that are part of global commodity chains; in-depth interviews that decipher individual imaginaries about globality; and ethnographies of national financial centers: all

expand the analytic terrain for understanding global processes.

Generally, the focus on the global as interdependence has dominated discussion and interpretation. This has been to the disadvantage of sociology as a discipline. Although methodological nationalism tends to be present in just about all the social sciences, it is the norm in most of sociology and in political science. These are two disciplines in which some of the most influential data sets are collected at the national level and some of the most advanced methods and data sets require closure of the unit of analysis, i.e. the nation-state.

I add a twist to the discussion about methodological nationalism through my insistence that the national—whether as national territory or national institutions—can become partly denationalized. Crucial to existing criticisms of methodological nationalism is the call for recognizing transnationalism; that is, the “nation as container” category is shown to be inadequate given the proliferation of transnational dynamics and formations. My criticism of methodological nationalism, on the other hand, focuses on the fact that multiple and specific structurations of the global now exist inside what has historically been constructed as national. In many ways, I focus on the other end of the transnationalism dynamic: I look inside the national, which allows me to use many of the existing data sets, methods and concepts of sociology. Further, I posit that because the national is thick and highly institutionalized, it is not always easy to detect the often partial or highly specialized denationalizations that are taking place. Mine is, then, a critique of methodological nationalism with a starting point not exclusively predicated on the fact of transnationalism, but rather on the possibility of internal denationalization.

Once we accept that the global is partly structured inside the national, we open up analytic terrain for sociology in the study of globalization. A key proposition is, then, that existing sociological studies, which may not have been concerned with globalization at all, can in fact contribute to the sociological study of globalization. This helps in overriding a key assumption in the social sciences: The implied correspondence of national territory

and national institutions with the national, i.e. if a process or condition is located in a national institution or in national territory, it must be national. This assumption describes conditions that have held, albeit never fully, throughout much of the history of the modern state, especially since WWI, and to some extent continue to do so. What is different today is that these conditions are partly but actively being unbundled. Different also is the scope of this unbundling.

**Saskia Sassen is Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology and Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University, New York. For details, visit: <http://www.saskiasassen.com>*

For a larger version of this essay, please see the article in the newly launched Sociopedia (International Sociological Association) June 2010 as well as A Sociology of Globalization (Norton 2007) by Saskia Sassen.

Articles by Section Members

Aneesh. "Global Labor: Algoratic Modes of Organization," *Sociological Theory*, 27, 4, 2009: 347.

David A. Smith and Matthew C. Mahutga. "Trading Up the Commodity Chain? The Impact of Extractive and Labor-Intensive Manufacturing Trade on World-System Inequalities." Pp. 63-82 in Jennifer Bair (ed), *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press 2009.

Esparza, Louis Edgar. 2009. "Global Movement Coalitions: The Global South and the World Trade Organization in Cancun." *Societies Without Borders* 4 (2): 226-247.

Gareau, Brian J. 2010. "A Critical Review of the Successful CFC Phase-Out versus the Delayed Methyl Bromide Phase-Out in the Montreal Protocol." *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law, and Economics*.

Ho-fung Hung, ed. 2009. *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ho-fung Hung. 2009. "America's Head Servant? The PRC's Dilemma in the Global Crisis." *New Left Review* No. 60.



Kim Scipes. 2009. "An Alternative Perspective for the Global South--Neo-liberal Economic Policies in the United States: The Impact of Globalisation on a 'Northern' Country." *Indian Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 1: 12-47.

Sanderson, Matthew R., and Jeffrey D. Kentor. 2009. "Globalization, Development, and International Migration: A Cross-National Analysis, 1970-2000." *Social Forces* 88(1): 301-336.

Xuilian Ma, Matthew C. Mahutga, David A. Smith and Michael Timberlake. "Economic Globalization and the Structure of the World-City System: The Case of Airline Passenger Data," *Urban Studies* (Forthcoming 2010).

Presentations

Manashi Ray. Negotiating Identity as Transnationals: The contextual intersection of multi-state membership and identity among the immigrant and returnee entrepreneurs in the U.S. and India. National Association for Ethnic Studies. Washington D.C. April 2010.

Manashi Ray. Transcending National Borders for Global Markets: A comparison of U.S. based returnee and non-migrant transnational Indian entrepreneurs in high tech and consumer goods sectors. The Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE). Philadelphia, June 2010.

SECTION INFORMATION

Chair: George Ritzer

Chair-elect: George Thomas

Council members: Liz Boyle, Lauren Langman, Peggy Levitt, Francisco (Chiqui) Ramirez, Roland Robertson, Jackie Smith

Secretary/Treasurer: Maria Charles and Gili Drori

Newsletter: A. Aneesh & P.J. Rey

Webmaster: Malcom Fairbrother

Statements of Candidates for Section Chair

Name: Sarah Babb

Present Professional Position: Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Boston College, Fall 2004-Present.

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Boston College, Fall 2003-Fall 2004.

Previous Professional Positions: Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Fall 1998-Spring 2003

Education:

Ph.D., Sociology, Northwestern University, 1998

M.A., Sociology, Northwestern University, 1993

B.A., Philosophy, University of Michigan, 1988

Statement

Offices, Committee Memberships, and Editorial Appointments Held in ASA: None.

Global and transnational sociology is an area with tremendous potential for growth. Undergraduates are drawn to the topic in droves; at Boston College our interdisciplinary International Studies major has to turn away many applicants every year because the demand for classes in this area exceeds the supply of professors teaching globally oriented courses. I believe there will be tremendous job growth in this area over the course of the next decade, and that our section therefore has great potential for expansion.

And yet, as members of an incipient subfield, we global and transnational sociologists have had little opportunity to consider what standard curricula in this area might look like, particularly at the undergraduate level. My own experience has been that there are considerable challenges to teaching global sociology to undergraduates. One challenge is to bring home topics that seem-quite literally-to be foreign to the experiences of the average U.S.-born undergraduate, a problem that our colleagues teaching "Inequality in America" or "Gender and Society" do not have to face. A second challenge is

that much of the seminal theoretical literature one can assemble on this topic is extremely densely written, and hence appropriate for undergraduates only in very limited doses. And third, because globalization is an object in perpetual motion, one has to devote considerable energy to simply keep up with recent trends; in this subfield, lecture notes often have a short shelf-life.

I do not pretend to have a solution to these and other pedagogical problems facing global and transnational sociologists. Rather, I am interested in generating a collective discussion about effective ways to convey our section's major themes in courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some ways to generate such a discussion would include the development and publication of an ASA syllabus set and the organization of at least one panel on "Teaching Global and Transnational Sociology." I believe that through addressing these issues, in addition to carrying out my regular duties as Chair, I could make a solid contribution to the future of the section.

Name: Shelley Feldman

Present Professional Position: Professor, Development Sociology, and Director, Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, Cornell University, Visiting Professor, Sociology, Binghamton University, and President, American Institute of Bangladesh Studies

Previous Professional Positions: Assistant to Associate Professor, Cornell University, 1987-Present

Education:

Ph.D., University of Connecticut, 1982

M.A., University of Connecticut, 1974

B.A., Queens College, CUNY, 1970

Offices, Committee Memberships, and Editorial Appointments Held in ASA: Chair, Political Economy of the World System; Awards, Program Organizer, and Nominations; Awards Committee, Sociologists of Women in Society

Statement

As its name suggests, the ASA focuses primarily on issues of interest to the US and to the problems and debates that are generated within its bounds. The new Global and Transnational Section promises to expand this focus and reimagine the relations and frames within which we think. As a sociologist with extensive experience outside the US, I am excited by the prospects of a collectivity of sociologists engaging a broad theoretical template, and various methodological approaches and substantive interests that coalesce at the intersection of global and transnational processes and institutions. Not limited to the study of transnational institutions and organizations, nor to particular formulations of the global economy, I imagine productive engagements that transcend national space and territory, highlight global and transnational institutions, and/or situate the national as embedded in deterritorialized processes and practices. What I see as critical is that we create a place to discuss substantive issues such as climate change, international migration, or regional associations and economic partnerships, or new relations of power or commodity exchanges that critically engage notions of space and place in global and transnational practices.

I view the specific role of chair as enhancing our thinking about these critical relations by strengthening and extending our global ties and relationships with research centers, institutes (e.g.; Oxford, Sussex in the UK; JNU or Delhi University, India), and organizations (e.g.; the ISA; Association of American Geographers) that share our intellectual project. I would encourage the sharing of syllabi and teaching practices among members given a dramatically changing audience who, despite living in a global economy, often thinks within a national/ist frame. Finally, I would give attention to developing opportunities and forms of collaboration for ongoing intellectual exchange at our annual meetings but also, as appropriate, in other venues. I see these efforts as ways to further discussion about the reasons why the section seems to have captured the imagination of so many of us and what this signals for the role we might play in critical analyses of global and transnational relations and practices.

Website

Our temporary website (<http://seis.bris.ac.uk/~ggmhf/GlobeSocWeb/index.html>) will soon be relocated and integrated into the ASA server. Suggestions for the website should be directed at our webmaster, Malcom Fairbrother (m.fairbrother@bristol.ac.uk).

Global and Transnational Sociology Section Awards

Best Scholarly Book Award

The Global and Transnational Sociology Section solicits nominations for the 2010 Best Scholarly Book Award, recognizing an outstanding book published between 2008 and 2010 in the area of Global and Transnational Sociology. Self-nominations are encouraged. In nominating a book for the award, please include a brief (no more than one page) comment on its contributions to the field. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Only section



members may submit nominations.

Please mail materials (including the book) to each of the three committee members: Nitsan Chorev, Department of Sociology, Brown University, Maxcy Hall, Box 1916, Providence, RI 02912; Heather Hurwitz, Department of Sociology, 3005 Social Sciences & Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-9430; and Simone Pulver, UC Santa Barbara, Environmental Studies Program, Bren Hall, Room 4312, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

Best Scholarly Article Award

The Global and Transnational Sociology Section solicits nominations for the 2010 Best Scholarly Article Award, recognizing an outstanding article published between 2008 and 2010 in the area of Global and Transnational Sociology. Self-nominations are encouraged. In nominating an article for the award, please include a brief (no more than one page) comment on its contributions to the field. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Only section members may submit nominations.

Please email materials (including the article) to each of the three committee members: Sara Curran scurran@u.washington.edu, Rachel Sullivan rrobinson@american.edu, and Miriam Abu Sharkh mabu@stanford.edu.



Best Publication by a Graduate Student

The Global and Transnational Sociology Section solicits nominations for the 2010 Best Publication by a Graduate Student, recognizing an outstanding article or book published between 2008 and 2010 in the area of Global and Transnational Sociology. The first author must have been a graduate student when the publication was written. Self-nominations

are encouraged. In nominating a publication for the award, please include a brief (no more than one page) comment on its contributions to the field. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Only section members may submit nominations.

Please email or mail materials (including the publication) to each of the three committee members: Salvatore Babones sbabones@inbox.com, Andrew Jorgenson andrew.jorgenson@soc.utah.edu, and Matt Mathias mmathia@emory.edu.

Best Scholarly Publication Award by an International Scholar

The Global and Transnational Sociology Section solicits nominations for the 2010 Best Scholarly Publication Award by an International Scholar, recognizing an outstanding article or book published between 2008 and 2010 in the area of Global and Transnational Sociology. The author must be an international scholar who is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident of the USA. Self-nominations are encouraged. In nominating a publication for the award, please include a brief (no more than one page) comment on its contributions to the field. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Only section members may submit nominations.

Please email or mail materials (including the publication) to each of the three committee members: Elizabeth Heger Boyle boyle014@umn.edu, Sociology Department, 909 Social Sciences Building, 267 19th Avenue South, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Katja M. Guenther katja@ucr.edu, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of California, Riverside, 1206 Watkins Hall, Riverside, CA 92521; and Joachim Savelsberg savel001@umn.edu, Sociology Department, 1181 Social Sciences Building, 267 19th Avenue South, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.



Distinguished Career Award

The Global and Transnational Sociology Section solicits nominations for the 2010 Distinguished Career Award, recognizing a senior scholar's lifetime contributions to the study of Global and Transnational Sociology. In nominating an individual for the award, please include a letter describing the individual's contributions to the field. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Only section members may submit nominations. Please email nomination letters to each of the three committee members: Colin Beck cbeck@pomona.edu, David John Frank frankd@uci.edu, and Ann Hironaka hironaka@uci.edu.