Environment, Technology and Society

NEWSLETTER OF THE SECTION ON ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION Spring 2011

Section Committee

Section Website

http://www.envirosoc.org/

The Fukushima Daiichi Reactors: Some Observations from Charles Perrow

As I noted in a recent book, *The Next Catastrophe* (Princeton, 2011), we continue to populate our planet with systems that have catastrophic potential. We have vulnerable concentrations of populations, economic power, and hazardous materials. The most fearful concentrations of hazardous materials are in nuclear power plants.

We have yet to face up to the enormous risks of nuclear power plants. Japan is the current case in point. Known risks were run regarding earthquakes, plant layout, and engineering design, all assuming that the "worst case" event would be a rare outlier. I will take each in turn.

An island without other energy sources, Japan has sprinkled its coastline with nuclear power plants. Earthquakes occur in areas where no geological faults are known, such as a 7.3 earthquake in 2000, in Japan. But the area of northeast Honshu, where the Fukushima and the Onagawa nuclear power facilities are a few miles apart, is known for its seismic…

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Inside This Issue

ETS Section Mid Year Report – April 2011

Chair Report
David N. Pellow

The Mid-Year report of the Environment and Technology Section of the ASA is provided for the information of the members. The E&T bylaws require that the chair and council provide a report to the membership every spring.

As you will see from this report, the section is vibrant and very active. A few of the activities I would like to highlight are as follows:

Planning for ASA 2011
Chair-Elect Elizabeth Caniglia has worked diligently to organize a range of exciting sessions for the upcoming ASA meetings in Las Vegas. We will have three section sessions: two open sessions and one invited session (Environmental Epistemologies). Paper submissions have come in from scholars at all career stages, from students to senior faculty, so we expect to have lively presentations and discussions this year, as always. I would like to thank all of you who submitted papers as well as those members who have volunteered to preside over the different paper sessions.

We will also be hosting a memorial service for our colleague Bill Freudenburg, who passed away late last fall. All are invited. Our colleague Robert Futrell at UNLV has been instrumental in securing an extraordinary off-site location for the service and reception. More details to follow.

Climate Change Task Force
This year, several members of the E&T section are working on the ASA Climate Change Task Force Report. Under the leadership of Riley Dunlap, several members (including myself, and past Chairs Robert Brulle and Timmons Roberts, among others) have begun moving forward with writing sections of the report, which we hope to have completed later this year. The ASA has given us outstanding support for this project and a number of policy and media organizations have expressed interest in assisting with publicity and other critical support functions as well.

Student Leadership Update
Christine Bevc is in the process of proposing a listserv for our section's student members. Her idea is that by offering an additional listserv, it would allow for students to ask questions and create a space where they are encouraged to communicate, share ideas, and engage in professional development for this critical segment of our section membership. Thank you, Christine!

I am pleased to report that the Nominations Committee has successfully recruited a great group of candidates to stand for election to the E&T Council, thus ensuring the smooth functioning and transition of leadership into next year.

Finally, I would like to thank the section officers and Council Members for doing outstanding work this year.

Chair-Elect Report
Beth Schaefer Caniglia

2011 Meeting Progress
My primary task as Chair-Elect is to organize the 2011 meeting sessions. In collaboration with our current Chair, David Pellow, three section sessions were created: two open sessions and one invited session (Environmental Epistemologies). We had over 80 papers covering a diverse range of topics. We will also feature 60 papers in 15 roundtables, so we can look forward to a vibrant exchange of ideas in Las Vegas! Please see the paper sessions listed below in the conference section of the newsletter.

Freudenberg Memorial/Oral History
In collaboration with David Pellow, Riley Dunlap, and Robert Futrell, we are finalizing details for the section memorial to honor Bill Freudenberg's recent passing. The same group is working with Dana Fisher to publish Bill's oral history interview, which took place last year.

Secretary Report
Karen Ehrhardt-Martinez

The Secretary's primary activities since the 2010 Annual Meeting in Atlanta have included:

- Assisting the nominations committee in soliciting nominations for four upcoming elected section offices. I have not received a report from Tammy as to the number of nominees that were submitted to ASA for section office; however she did indicate that nominations were received and that they will be on the 2011 spring ballot. (See attached call for section officers.)
- Assisted the ETS Chair and the Policy and Research Committee Chair in putting together a proposed bylaws amendment to address conflicts of interest concerning section awards. ETS members voted on the proposed amendment in

February and it passed. (See attached copy of proposed language.)

- Submitted 2010 ETS award winners names for publication in the ASA newsletter "footnotes".

- Reviewed the requests for nominations for the 2011 ETS Awards, including *The Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award, The Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Award, The Environmental Sociology Teaching and Mentorship Award, and The Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award (for an article).*

- Begin work with JoAnn Carmin to explore options for the 2011 section reception in Las Vegas, Nevada. (This effort was delayed given the change of venue for the annual meetings from Chicago to Las Vegas.) The Section is planning to host a memorial event in honor of William Freudenburg who passed away late in 2010.

Upcoming Tasks Prior to the 2011 Annual Meeting

The next several months will be relatively busy ones for this office. Activities will include:

- Work with the Section Treasurer to organize the Section Reception in Las Vegas.

- Work with the Section Membership Chair (as necessary) to increase section membership.

- Work with the Section Awards committees in preparing for the 2011 awards. This includes preparation of certificates, and for the student paper award, a cash award, as well. Awards committees should submit the results of their deliberations to the Secretary-Treasurer as soon as possible. Awards made early enough will also be conveyed to the ASA offices for inclusion in the awards materials for the annual meeting.

- Recording formal minutes for the 2011 Section Council & Business Meetings.

- Assisting the Chair in producing the 20010/11 Council report for ASA.

Treasurer Report
JoAnn Carmin

As of November 30 2010, the section had a balance of $4,836. This includes $3,035 in annual income from dues and section allocations, less $2,755 in annual expenses for the section reception, awards, and oral history project.

ETS Membership Committee Chair Report
Liam Downey

In the fall of 2010 and then again in early 2011, I sent out membership renewal reminders over the ETS listserv. I also sent out reminders in the winter 2011 ETS newsletter. In all of these reminders, I also asked members to try to recruit to the section people they know who conduct environmental sociology research but are not members of the section. However, as is usual at the beginning of a new calendar year, we had a significant drop in membership due to people either (a) renewing their ASA membership but not their ETS membership or (b) not yet renewing their ASA membership. Despite these hopefully temporary losses, we had 346 members in February (more than at the same time last year). We had 454 members in the fall (again, more than the previous fall). After a good deal of work on the part of many members, we finally reached the 400 mark!

Moving forward, however, as I noted in last year's report, we will likely encounter two significant and related problems in trying to recruit new members and get old members to rejoin the section. First, state budgets are tight, which means that some people can no longer afford to join the ASA or to add on extra sections once they do join. Second, due to budget cuts and the relatively late date of this year's annual meeting, which coincides with the beginning of many college's and university's fall semesters, fewer people are likely to go to the ASA conference this summer, which will dampen enthusiasm for the ASA in general and ETS in particular. I will do my best to counter these problems in the future, as we seek to maintain and increase our membership levels.

Policy and Research Committee Chair Report
Lori Hunter

The committee has three main tasks. Each are outlined below with details as to mid-term progress.

(1) To manage the Marvin E. Olsen Graduate Student Paper award:

We have distributed the announcement below via the section listserv, newsletter and via Footnotes.

The Marvin E. Olsen Study Paper Award Competition from the Section on Environment, Technology and Society

The Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Award recognizes outstanding papers presented by graduate students at the annual American Sociological meetings. In addition to recognition, recipients will receive a modest monetary award to help defray expenses associated with attending the ASA meetings. Nominees are limited to graduate students who are giving presentations at the annual meetings. All members of the Section are invited to submit nominations for the award, together with supporting documentation. All members, including potential recipients, are encouraged to submit nominations. (The paper can be presented at any session or roundtable at ASA). The deadline for submitting papers is April 1, 2011. For more information, contact the chair of the award committee, Lori Hunter, at Lori.Hunter@colorado.edu

The following committee has been formed from responses to a listserv request for volunteers:

- Lori Hunter, University of Colorado at Boulder (Policy & Research Committee Chair)
- Laura Senier, University of Wisconsin
- Michael Mascarenhas, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Jessice Pardee Rochester Institute of Technology
- Alternate: Stefano B. Longo, University of Illinois-Springfield

(2) To manage the Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award:

We have distributed the announcement below via the section listserv, newsletter and via Footnotes.

The Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award from the Section on Environment, Technology and Society

This award is given for publications of special noteworthiness in the field of environmental sociology. In alternate years, publications are considered in either book or article form. This year the committee will consider single articles of special noteworthiness in the field of environmental sociology published within the period January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2010. All members of the Section are encouraged to submit nominations; self-nominations are welcome. Please send a PDF copy of the work along with a nomination letter to Lori Hunter, Chair of the Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award committee, at Lori.Hunter@colorado.edu, by April 1, 2011.

The following committee has been formed from responses to a listserv request for volunteers:

- Lori Hunter, University of Colorado at Boulder (Policy & Research Committee Chair)
- Jill Harrison, University of Wisconsin
- Damayanti Banerjee, University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- Alternates: Harris Ali, York University, Brian Gareau, Boston College

(3) To advance policy and research issues.

The committee chair, Lori Hunter, has written and submitted a piece on research outreach for publication in the Spring 2011 Section newsletter. Attached.

Additional Items

1. Conflict of Interest Policy
The committee was charged with drafting a conflict of interest policy and submitted a draft statement to the Section Chair in Fall 2010. After discussion by the Council it was put to the section membership for a vote and passed.

2. Yet to be discussed
Inclusion of edited volumes and foreign-language books for consideration within Outstanding Publication award.

Nominations Committee Report
Tammy Lewis, Committee Chair
Members: Tanya Gulliver & Damayanti Banerjee

This year, our committee was charged to fill a slate for the following positions:

- Chair-elect,
- Treasurer,
- Membership Chair, and
- Teaching, Training and Practice Committee Chair.

Nominations were solicited at the section's annual business meeting and twice via the section listserv. The nominations solicited at the business meeting were anonymous, while the nominations submitted by email were not.

The Committee worked with the Chair to create a short-list of candidates for each position, if more than two people were nominated. The Committee was mindful of gender, race/ethnicity, and former service to the Council when selecting candidates and strived for broad representation on the slate. The short lists were derived from nominees submitted to the Committee.

Each of the top two nominees was contacted by email and/or phone by the Committee. The nominees were provided an overview of the position for which they were nominated; they were informed regarding the term of service; and an electronic file was updated regularly as to the status of each nominee.

The Committee solicited and received acceptance forms and biographical statements from all candidates. These were submitted to Justin Lini at ASA office.

Environment & Technology Section
Nominees 2011

Chair Elect:
Michael M. Bell, University of Wisconsin Madison
Dorceta Taylor, University of Michigan

Treasurer
Jason Konefal, Sam Houston State University
Damayanti Banerjee, University of Tennessee Knoxville

Membership Chair
Paul Gellert, University of Tennessee Knoxville
Brett Clark, North Carolina State University

Teaching, Training and Practice Committee Chair
Kathy DeMaster, Brown University
Diane Bates, The College of New Jersey

Teaching, Training, and Practice Committee
Brian Mayer, University of Florida (Chair), Penelope Canan, University of Central Florida, and Kari Norgaard, Whitman College

Activities:

- Solicit nominations for Teaching and Mentorship award
- Proposal of conflict of interest rules for adjudication of award
- Solicitation of contributions on teaching for Newsletter

Suggested projects for the future:

- Compile a list of films appropriate for environmental sociology courses to post on the website.
- Solicit newsletter articles written by graduate students describing their experiences as graduate teaching assistants.
- Help to develop teaching module on climate change for Climate Teach-In

Publications Committee Report
Sandy Marquart-Pyatt, Chair
Members: Michael Agliardo and Dan Thompson

Written Publications (Newsletter)

Since the ASA 2010 annual meeting in Atlanta, two section newsletters have been published. The Fall 2010 newsletter and the Winter 2011 newsletter were compiled and prepared by Michael Agliardo, SJ, Ph.D. (Loyola University Chicago, Department of Sociology, Chicago, IL 60660). The Winter 2011 Newsletter included a tribute to our late colleague Bill Freudenburg.

Online Vehicles of Communication (Website, EnviroSoc listserv)

We continue to update the website with appropriate publications and links of interest.

Items the Council Should Consider

A question has informally arisen regarding the policy of the ETS newsletter publishing entire Table of Contents of recent journals. Given previous concerns of ETS officers regarding newsletter length, the recommendation to publish a link to pertinent journal rather than the entire TOC remains the policy for the newsletter. Instead of the newsletter, we recommend that the TOC be sent to the listserv.

Student Representative Report
Christine Bevc

I would like to propose a listserv for our section's student members. Given the large number and tendency for the ENVIROSOC listserv to be a potentially intimidating space for students to ask questions, I would like to create a space where students may be more open to ask questions, request information, disseminate student-related information, promote programs and opportunities, and, ultimately,

where we can foster an environment that encourages communication and professional development among this population of our section. I've answered questions and inquiries directly via email, but many questions from students—particularly those regarding ASA sessions—would most likely be of interest to other student members. Please let me know if you have any suggestions or concerns regarding this idea.

The Fukushima Daiichi Reactors: Some Observations from Charles Perrow (continued from page 1)

activity. Called the Japan Trench Subduction Zone, it has hosted nine events of magnitude 7 or greater since 1973, according the US Geological Survey.

[http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eqinthenews/2011/usc0001xgp/index.php] There was a 5.8 earthquake in 1993, 30 km from the Onagawa facility; a 7.1 in 2003 affecting the Onagawa facility; a 7.2 earthquake in 2005 that shutdown three Onagawa reactors; and a 6.2 earthquake offshore of the Fukushima facility just last year, close calls all. Even relatively small earthquakes can be devastating for the plants; a 6.8 one in 2007 on the west coast cost the Tokyo Electric Power Company $5.62 billion.

[http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf18.html]

The March 11 earthquake, a 9 on the Richter scale, was special; the USGS labeled it an "infrequent catastrophe" for the area. It was the first one to cause a tsunami that seriously flooded a nuclear power plant. But a proper risk analysis will consider infrequent events, and tsunamis are hardly rare in the Pacific Ocean. Four of the five "megaquakes" (over 8.5) in the twenty-first century have had them, and geologists predict increased probability for a major earthquake in the future. http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/earthquake-90-what-magnitude-might-mean-japans-future

Tsunamis should be taken into account in plant design. A Regulatory Guide issued in 2006 and updated in January of this year, put out by the equivalent of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the U.S., the Nuclear Safety Commission, recognized the tsunami danger but reassuringly concluded: "Even for a nuclear plant situated very close to sea level, the robust sealed containment structure around the reactor itself would prevent any damage to the nuclear part from a tsunami, though other parts of the plant might be damaged. No radiological hazard would be likely." http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf18.html

However the "robust sealed containment structure" has failed in two or three of the plants, and the seawall defense against a tsunami was totally inadequate; designed to halt a 10 foot wave, it received a 30 foot wave and water poured into the plant. The Richter earthquake scale is logarithmic. The plants were designed to withstand a maximum 8.2 earthquake, the 9 was 15 times higher than the design limit. But it was not inconceivable that one could have occurred.

The reactors in the six plants at the Fukushima Daiichi facility did remarkably well handling an enormous earthquake a few miles offshore, in that we did not have three meltdowns in the operating plants and fissioning spent pool rods from all six. Perhaps one or two of the reactor containment vessel were cracked, which can lead to serious radiological releases, but that is far less than a core meltdown accompanying a seriously damaged vessel.

But the plants themselves had a serious design failure; the emergency power source, diesel generators, needed if offsite power failed, were reportedly in the basement where it can be flooded, though their location has not been confirmed. There is no surprise flooding here, no "whoever would have thought that…" Most of the area subject to earthquakes is ocean; earthquakes in the ocean can be expected to cause tsunamis. Tsunamis will flood buildings on the shore. Diesel generators, needed for backup power, are unreliable at best, as we know from U.S. plants. They should not be in areas subject to flooding and should be accessible in an emergency. Even if they have to be in the basement, they could have flood protection there in case the first line of defense, the floodwall, is breached. It would not be expensive.

The flooding of the basement also disabled another essential safety device, the wiring for the electrical power supply. This has made it very difficult to restore offsite power once the long transmission line was installed, adding to the importance of having diesel generators above water. Ease of transporting fuel rods to a spent pool in the Boiling Water Design led to having the spent reactor pool storage on the fourth floor of the reactor building. But this makes them unapproachable because of radiation levels, and leaves them without independent power sources to keep the rods chilled. (The pools contain more lethal

potential than the uranium in the core.) This is design vulnerability.

The BWR reactor design, a Mark 1, had an even more serious flaw, the subject of much controversy and serious warnings when it was first developed in the 1960s by G.E. – it lacked robust containment. In contrast to the pressurized water reactor (PWR) the BWR was cheaper and easier to build because of a thinner and smaller containment shell over the reactor vessel. (This is disputed by the designer, G.E. at http://www.gereports.com/deconstructing-the-new-york-times/)

The "last line of defense" in the case of an accident, the BWR containment vessel, was promptly considered inferior to the PWR design by some experts. (It is used in 23 U.S. plants.) The chairman of what was to be the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission agreed it was more dangerous, but said that if it was not allowed it "could well be the end of nuclear power" since it was already being widely accepted. Tom Zeller, in a *New York Times* piece refers to *internal* "company documents dating back to 1975 that suggested the containment vessel designs were either insufficiently tested or had flaws that could compromise safety." https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/asia/16contain.html?_r=1&emc=eta1&pagewanted=all

A construction, rather than a design flaw, was acknowledged by an engineer who falsified documents when casting one vessel for the Fukushima complex, and received a large bonus for saving the company the expense of making a new one. The vessel sits in reactor #4 at Fukushima. In 2006 a nuclear expert resigned from a Japanese nuclear power advisory committee over the issue of lax design standards for earthquakes and tsunamis. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?sfi=AC00NBEasySrch&shr=t

Installing vents in the containment building has moderated the hydrogen explosion risk, but apparently the vents stuck closed in unit 2 at Fukushima.

G.E denies the containment risk., pointing to 40 years of successful operation of the Mark 1 in 32 Japanese installations. With similar risk analysis logic the Tokyo Electric Power Company can point to 40 years of operation without a direct tsunami hit on any of its many plants. But as my colleague John Downer points out, the database is so small for nuclear plants as to be statistically meaningless. The levels of reliability required for a complexly interactive and tightly coupled nuclear power plant is hugely greater than that required for, say, an automobile plant. The number of reactors in operation in the world is very small, and there are many different designs and configurations. Equally statistically meaningless is the trivial experience with tsunamis hitting nuclear plants. If there is a potential for catastrophic failure, placing risky systems such as nuclear plants in risky settings such as storm-washed coasts is doubly unforgivable.

This mindset has continued even after the explosions. On March 12 the American Nuclear Society noted the dire events, but continuing the tradition of risk analysis in the industry reassured us: In an event like this, "containing the radioactive materials could actually be considered a 'success' given the scale of this natural disaster that had not been considered in the original design. The nuclear power industry will learn from this event, and redesign our facilities as needed to make them safer in the future." http://209-20-84-91.slicehost.net/assets/2011/3/13/ANS_Japan_Backgrounder.pdf

Will the industry learn anything from this event, especially anything that might require expenses that reduce profits in either Japan or the U.S. ?

Japan and the US have weak central governments, so regulating hazardous activities has always been difficult. In the U.S. the first body to regulate the nuclear industry, the Atomic Energy Commission, was also responsible for promoting it, an obvious conflict of interests that was resolved with the formation of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. But the NRC was soon compromised as it drew it commissioners from those well connected to the nuclear industry and became a stepping-stone for lucrative positions in the industry when leaving the Commission. The NRC has a history of blackballing whistleblowers and in one egregious case secured a fine and jail sentence for the person most responsible for preventing a meltdown at the Davis-Besse nuclear plant. We should not expect more vigorous regulation from the Japanese equivalent, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency; both promotion and safety still reside there. (This is the case with India also, which has a poor safety record.) Japan has a long history wherein operating utilities falsify data and hide accidents. Tepco, the leading utility, saw ritual resignations by the utility's chairman in 2002 and its president in 2007 after scandals. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-17/japan-s-nuclear-disaster-caps-decades-of-faked-safety-reports-accidents.html

Warnings of unsafe practices in Japan were sounded by international agencies and by the U.S. NRC in 1990 . A representative in the Japanese national parliament, concerned that the six reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi utility were required to withstand only a 5.7-meter tsunami, discussed his concerns at least 20 times with Tepco in 2003 and sent the president of Japan a warning. A seismology professor at Kobe University resigned in protest from a nuclear safety board in 2006 because of lack of attention to earthquake and tsunami risks. After the Fukushima Daiichi disaster he observed that "Nuclear power is national policy and there's a real reluctance to scrutinize it." An engineer reported to the government that he had been ordered to cover up a flaw in a steel pressure vessel, but the government refused to investigate. The flawed vessel sits in reactor #4 at Fukushima Daiichi.

One feature of the nuclear industry is that it has become highly centralized, giving it more political clout in all countries. Westinghouse was bought by Toshiba; the French company Areva dominates in Europe and is now in joint projects in the U.S., Exelon and Entergy run most of the plants in the U.S.; in Japan Tepco accounts for 30 percent of the generating capacity and is the fourth largest utility in the world. Vast amounts of capital, and potential profits, are pooled in the nuclear plants. They supply a third of Japan's electric power and a fifth of the U.S. market; this gives them power over their governments.

But perhaps the most threatening form of concentration in this most dangerous industry is at the facility level. One of Tepco's facilities has 7 plants on one site; Fukushima Daiichi has 6 and plans to build two more there. This makes them obvious targets for a "common mode" failure such as loss of off site power and flooding of sources of emergency power. Even if only one plant had an accident the radiation levels might be too high to safely monitor the other 7 after automatic shut down. Had the facilities been required to disperse their plants, at some small economic penalty, earthquake and tsunami risks would be greatly reduced.

The industry necessarily has a longer time perspective than most— after years of permissions and planning it may take10 years to build a facility that will have a life span of 40 to 60 years. One would think that this time span would broaden their vision enough to embrace all the accident potentials and guard against them: operator error or sloppy work, faulty designs, tsunamis, hurricanes, terrorist attacks, or the rare "normal accident" where, even if everyone plays safe and tries hard, small failures interact in totally unexpected ways to defeat all safety devices, as happened at TMI. Since they are loaded with the most toxic substances we have, a wide embrace of all imaginable risks should occur. But the interests of shareholders, at least in the U.S., are very short term. Legally obedient to them, managers must maximize short-term profits, and this means riskier designs and operating short cuts, and lobbying to prevent expensive regulatory rules. In the U.S. political lobbying and congressional campaign contributions has insured weak and delayed regulation by the NRC. The Japanese regulatory regime is at least as weak.

It is true that the plants' performance exceeded design standards in three respects: they kept running without off-site power longer than required; they survived a wave that may have been three times as high as they were expected to confront; and survived an earthquake much larger than their design anticipated. But, in this "success" that is claimed by the industry and academic nuclear experts alike, we still have radiation levels that, if not catastrophic, will be devastatingly high. In our disasters is our salvation.

Interested in the Research-to-Policy Bridge? Start Building Through PRB

Lori Hunter, University of Colorado at Boulder,
Lori.Hunter@colorado.edu

I believe my recent research on the association between HIV/AIDS and natural resource use has important policy and program implications. In fact, I whole-heartedly believe much of the work we do as Environmental Sociologists has important policy and program implications. Still, the pathways for dissemination of our research findings beyond the research community are not well-lit – I write to shine light on one that is readily available and easy to implement.

In late September, I had the privilege of responding to questions related to my research from conservation, health, and development practitioners, journalists, and international researchers from 10 different countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. I did so within a 2-hour period, and all from the comfort of my Boulder, Colorado office overlooking the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The short-term "bridge" was facilitated through the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), a Washington DC-based organization whose mission is inform

"people around the world about population, health, and the environment, and empower them to use that information to advance the well-being of current and future generations."

Through regular "online discussions", PRB bridges the research to policy divide by bringing together researchers, journalists, practitioners, educators and decision-makers. In collaboration with Ben Piper of the University of Washington (Kenya) and Jason Bremner of PRB, I participated in "discussion" of the question: "*What Do We Know About the Relationship Between HIV/AIDS and the Natural Environment?"* Other environmentally-related topics in past online discussions have included:

- *Population & Climate Change: What Is the Link?*
- *Does Climate Change Threaten Our Cities?*
- *Environmental Change: What Are the Links With Migration?*
- *Environment, Poverty and Security in Today's World: What's Population Got to Do With it?*

During the 2 hour "discussion," I offered informal, written responses to about 20 questions, some received in advance but most queueing up during the discussion window. My collaborators responded to other questions, and we paired up on a few as well since each of us hails from different settings – Ben Piper from the "field," Jason Bremner from PRB, and myself representing academia. About 15 minutes additional preparation time was required and the 2 hour "discussion" was very casual, not at all frantic, and utterly enjoyable – even energizing!

In general, I appreciated the opportunity to reach and engage audiences that may not otherwise encounter our published journal pieces.

To learn more about PRB's discuss on-line and see past transcripts go to http://discuss.prb.org/

Consider this for your own scholarship. Excellent topics may include:

- Social Dimensions of Environmental Risk
- Social Dimensions of Environmental Health
- Demographic Dimensions of Environmental Opinion, Support, Behaviors
- The Social Consequences of Environmental Disasters (BP Oil Spill anyone?)

Write me with questions and ideas ~ I'll offer advice and facilitate the contact with PRB!

Environmental Sociologists ~ let's get bridge-building!

The International Compon Research Project

The International Compon research project -- Comparing Climate Change Policy Networks--with teams now in over 17 countries is in the news and making progress. We just held a panel at the AAAS in DC, including team leaders from Japan (Abe Fellow Koichi Hasegawa--his paper was presented but an accident prevented his attendance) and other countries. The panel photo and information are at: http://compon.org/content/aaas2011. The presentation giving the project overview and some results is here: http://compon.org/sites/default/files/publicfiles/AAAS%202011%20Comparative.pdf.

After the panel, the journal Science interviewed two members, Jeff Broadbent and Sony Pellissery, about the Compon project and presented the interview on a podcast. The Science On-Line Podcast is at: http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2011/02/podcast-international-responses-.html?ref=hp

Also, the Compon project is featured in one of the new White Papers submitted to the NSF Grand Challenges for the SBE (Social, Behavioral and Economic) sciences to help set NSF funding priorities for the next decade. The White Paper suggesting the institution of a global data collection project on social, political and other reactions to climate change based on the existing COMPON project (author: Jeff Broadbent) is available at: http://compon.org/sites/default/files/publicfiles/Broadbent%20NSF%20White%20Paper%203-11.pdf

There are a lot of other interesting white papers too (253 of them), a number of sustainability and the environment, available at: http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_2020/all.cfm

ETS Sessions for the ASA Meeting in Las Vegas

Open Session #1: "Markets, Movements & Commodity Chains"

"Double Movements of Destruction and Regulation: Commodity Chains and a New Political Economy of the Environment" Timmons Roberts, Brown; JoAnn Carmin, MIT; and Tom Rudel, Rutgers

"Dynamics of Social Conflict and Energy Transitions: Lessons for the Clean Energy Movement" Bruce Podobnik, Lewis and Clark College

"Residential Energy Use and Conservation: Social Survey Research" Penelope Canan, Heili Pals, Fernando Rivera, Lindsey Singer, Lei Lei, Katelan Smith, Matthew Landon, and Paul Vines (all from University of Central Florida)

"The Autocracy of Accumulation: U.S. Congress, Biofuels and Ecological Irrationality" Hannah Holleman, University of Oregon

"To Market, To Market: Building Carbon Markets in Brazil and India" Simone Pulver, University of California, Santa Barbara

Open Session #2: "Risk & Uncertainty"

"The Aggravation of Risk: A Freudenburgian Analysis of the Disasters of Tomorrow" Raymond Murphy, University of Ottawa

"Public Opinion on Climate Change: Influences of Political Orientation, Trust, and Views of Science" Sandra Marquart-Pyatt, John Clements, Cameron Whitley, and Aaron McCright (all from Michigan State University)

"Strange Bedfellows: The Military and the Intelligence Establishment as Allies in Climate Change Politics" Andrew Szasz, University of California, Santa Cruz

"'Relax and Take a Deep Breath': Print Media Coverage of Asthma and Air Pollution" Brian Mayer, University of Florida

"'That's just another thing. We use to it': Responses to Living in A Geography of Trouble" Daina Cheyenne Harvey, Rutgers University

Invited Session: "Environmental Epistemologies"

"Bourdieu does Environmental Sociology" Randolph Haluza-Delay, The King's University College

"The Historical Nature of Urbanization: 20th Century Cities & Industrial Waste" James Elliott, University of Oregon and Scott Frickel, Washington State University

"Mobile Phones and Human Health: A History of Popular Epidemiological Challenges to the Dominant Epidemiological Paradigm" Joseph Simpson, Oklahoma State University

"Resilience: Persisting or Resisting? The Theoretical Dimensions of Social-Ecological Resilience" Maria Dillard, University of Pittsburgh

Conferences and Call for Papers

Behavior, Energy & Climate Change Conference 2011 in Washington, D.C.

The 5th Annual Conference focused on the practical applications of social and behavioral research to achieve viable solutions to energy and climate challenges.

Place & time:
November 29 – Dec 1, 2011
Washington, DC, USA

Deadline for abstracts is May 15, 2011
www.BECCconference.org

The 2011 Behavior, Energy & Climate Change Conference (BECC 2011) builds on the overwhelming success of previous BECC conferences at which 700 participants from universities, government, corporations and organizations discussed successful policy and program strategies, shared important research findings, and created dynamic new networks and collaborations.

BECC 2011 is co-convened by the California Institute for Energy and Environment (University of California), the Precourt Energy Efficiency Center (Stanford University) and the American Council for an Energy-Efficiency Economy.

Gender, Hazards, and Disasters:
The US Gender and Disaster Resilience Alliance Call For Papers 2011

The US Gender and Disaster Resilience Alliance (http://usgdra.org/) is a US-based collaborative network committed to supporting, facilitating, and initiating research and applied projects on gender relations in a disaster context. In line with these goals, the US Gender and Disaster Resilience Alliance is pleased to announce its second annual Gender and Disasters Graduate Student Paper Competition.

This competition was created to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of gender, hazards, and disaster research as well as showcase up-and-coming scholars and their work in the field. This is not just a competition, but an opportunity to become part of a national forum for discussion, information-sharing, and networking.

Submissions for this competition can be theoretical arguments, case studies, literature reviews, or analyses of research results, but topics must be on gendered aspects of hazards and disasters in the United States. Papers will be judged on originality, organization, and knowledge of the topic.

Eligibility and Criteria
•Author(s) must be enrolled as a graduate student(s) for at least one term in an accredited graduate program in the 2010-2011 academic year.
•Authors can be from any country as long as the submission focuses on research in the United States.

Judging
Papers will be judged primarily on originality and content by both graduate students and PhDs. Well-organized arguments that exhibit new research and demonstrate author knowledge and ability to integrate a broad scope of resources will be favored.

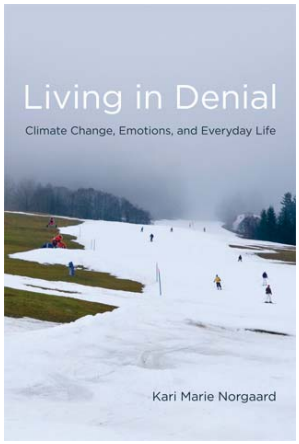
Award
The graduate winner will receive recognition on the US Gender and Disaster Resilience Alliance website and may elect to have their paper posted there. They will also receive an invitation to act as a guest judge on the competition for the following year.

Submissions and Deadline
The deadline for submission is May 15, 2011.
Please visit the GDRA website (http://usgdra.org/) for details. For questions, please contact Adelle Monteblanco (adelle.monteblanco@colorado.edu).
Submissions will be reviewed and winners notified by June 15th.

Publications

Books

Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life
Kari Marie Norgaard
The MIT Press (2011).
http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=12539



Global warming is the most significant environmental issue of our time, yet public response in Western nations has been meager. Why have so few taken any action? In Living in Denial, sociologist Kari Norgaard searches for answers to this question, drawing on interviews and ethnographic data from her study of "Bygdaby," the fictional name of an actual rural community in western Norway, during the unusually warm winter of 2000-2001.

In 2000-2001 the first snowfall came to Bygdaby two months later than usual; ice fishing was impossible; and the ski industry had to invest substantially in artificial snow-making. Stories in local and national newspapers linked the warm winter explicitly to global warming. Yet residents did not write letters to the editor, pressure politicians, or cut down on use of fossil fuels. Norgaard attributes this lack of response to the phenomenon of socially organized denial, by which information about climate science is known in the abstract but disconnected from political, social, and private life, and sees this as emblematic of how citizens of industrialized countries are responding to Global warming.

Norgaard finds that for the highly educated and politically savvy residents of Bygdaby, global warming was both common knowledge and unimaginable. Norgaard traces this denial through multiple levels, from emotions to cultural norms to political economy. Her report from Bygdaby, supplemented by comparisons throughout the book to the United States, tells a larger story behind our paralysis in the face of today's alarming predictions from climate scientists.

Articles

Fisher, Dana R. 2011. " Comment: The Limits of Civil Society's Participation and Influence at COP-15." *Global Environmental Politics.* Volume 11, Number 1: 8-11.

Hamilton, L.C. (2011). "Education, politics and opinions about climate change: Evidence for interaction effects." *Climatic Change* 104:231-242.

Hamilton, L.C. (2011). "Climate change: Partisanship, understanding, and public opinion" Issues Brief. Durham, NH: Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire.

Vandenbergh, Michael, Thomas Dietz, and Paul C. Stern. 2011. "Time to Try Carbon Labeling." *Nature Climate Change* 1:4-6.

Member News

Gene Rosa

Gene Rosa has been awarded 2011 Washington State University, College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Career Achievement in Scholarship Award

Thomas Dietz

The National Research Council released the final report in the America's Climate Choices series on April 12, 2011. Congratulations to Tom Dietz for contributing to this very important project. The four previous reports, which were released last summer, are available at the website, http://americasclimatechoices.org. There you can also find extensive reviews of the literature, as well as links to the short video clips to summarize the reports.

Dana R. Fisher

Dana R. Fisher has moved to the Department of Sociology at the University of Maryland, where she is an Associate Professor. She will be heading the new "Center on Society and the Environment."