

Environment, Technology and Society

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

SUMMER 2012

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New Developments at Northeastern's Ph.D. Program in Environmental Sociology: Focus on Environmental Health, Environmental Justice, Environmental Social Movements, and Community-Based Participatory Research

by Phil Brown and Daniel Faber

New arrivals and major federal research and training grants have led to our department now hosting one of the country's strongest graduate programs in environmental sociology. Our extensive faculty offer a focus on environmental health, environmental justice, environmental social movements, and community-based participatory research. This rich combination represents a unique contribution to training a new generation of environmental sociologists. We also have a unique emphasis on teaching environmental social scientists to work with environmental health scientists. This type of interdisciplinary work is increasingly common, and a growing source of research support.

Daniel Faber has for a long time trained environmental sociologists in the areas of chemicals policy, environmental justice, and quantitative measurement of health hazards. Phil Brown, previously at Brown University, is now University Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Health Sciences at Northeastern. He directs the new Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute, which will include an additional four faculty members, a postdoc, and two doctoral student research assistants.

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ETS Award Announcements

Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award

Award committee: Lori Hunter, Chair (University of Colorado), Steve Brechin (Syracuse University), Larry Hamilton (University of New Hampshire), Diana Mincyte (NYU)

Recipient: **William Freudenburg & Robert Gramling**
for *Blowout in the Gulf*

On April 20, 2010, the gigantic drilling rig *Deepwater Horizon* blew up in the Gulf of Mexico, killing eleven crew members and causing a massive eruption of oil from BP's Macondo well. For months, oil gushed into the Gulf, spreading death and destruction. Americans watched real-time video of the huge column of oil and gas spewing from the obviously failed "blowout preventer." The evening news showed heart-rending images of pelicans, dolphins, and other Gulf wildlife covered in oil. What has been missing until now, though, is a book that tells the larger story of this disaster. In *Blowout in the Gulf*, energy experts William Freudenburg and Robert Gramling explain both the disaster and the decisions that led up to it. They note that—both in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere—we have been getting into increasingly dangerous waters over recent decades, with some in the industry cutting corners and with most federal regulators not even noticing. In the process, the actual owners of the oil—American taxpayers—have come to receive a lower fraction of the income from the oil than in almost any other nation on earth.

Freudenburg and Gramling argue that it is time for a new approach. BP's Oil Spill Response Plan was pure fantasy, claiming the company could handle the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez spill every day, even though "cleaning up" an oil spill is essentially impossible. For the future, our emphasis needs to be on true prevention, and our risk-management policies need to be based on better understandings of humans as well as hardware. *Blowout in the Gulf* weaves these failures, missteps, and bad decisions into a fascinating narrative that explains why this oil spill was a disaster waiting to happen—and how making better energy choices will help prevent others like it.

Honorable Mention: **Kari Norgaard**
for *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life*

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.

Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Award

Recipient: **Justin Farrell,**
University of Notre Dame

Award committee: Lori Hunter, Chair (University of Colorado), Christine Bevc (UNC-Chapel Hill), Jason Konefal (Sam Houston State) and Debbie Kasper (Hiram College).

"Moral Outpouring: The BP Oil Spill and Americans' Responses to Large-Scale Disasters"

Abstract: Drawing on three waves of nationally representative panel data that include data from before, during, and after the 2010 BP oil spill, this paper examines how, and why, Americans responded to the largest human-caused disaster in U.S. history. First, the paper argues that the 2010 BP oil spill had unique characteristics inhibiting Americans from giving time and money to the relief efforts (as they had generously done for other disasters). Instead, the paper contends that a large-scale disaster can have broader societal effects not limited to the relief site itself—finding that from shortly before to shortly after the spill, the percentage of Americans giving money

for the environment increased by 208 percent and volunteering for the environment increased by 547 percent. The second aim of the paper is to explain this dramatic rise in pro-environmental behavior by developing a theoretical model based on *victim identity, practices and habits, politics, and culture*. Lastly, the paper examines whether or not these effects are enduring or fleeting one year later. Situated at the nexus of disaster research, environment, culture, and social movements, this study brings disaster research into conversation with larger subfields within sociology, sheds new light on the broader societal impacts of disasters, and explains why some Americans, but not others, are able to convert the moral shock of a disaster into action.

The Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award

Recipient: **Prof. Kathleen Tierney,
University of Colorado at Boulder**

Award committee: David N. Pellow, chair (University of Minnesota), Karen O'Neill (Rutgers University) and Steven Brechin (Syracuse University).

The Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award is to recognize individuals for outstanding service, innovation, or publication in environmental sociology or sociology of technology. It is intended to be an expression of appreciation, to be awarded when an individual is deemed extraordinarily meritorious by the Section. Please join me in congratulating Professor Kathleen Tierney--this year's winner of the Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award. We will present this award at the ASA meetings in Denver. See you there!

ASA Environmental Sociology Teaching and Mentorship Award

Recipient: **Prof. Thomas Shriver,
Oklahoma State University**

Award committee: Diane C. Bates, chair (College of New Jersey), Lee Clark, Randy Haluza-DeLay, Brian Mayer, and Christine Overdevest

Dr. Shriver has a strong reputation for his commitment to teaching and mentoring students. In 2008, he was awarded the Ted Mills Award for Outstanding Environmental Teaching for inspiring his students to develop a passion for environmental sociology. Dr. Shriver is an exemplary mentor to both his undergraduate and his graduate students. He encourages students to be involved in every step of

the research process, from data collection to writing articles for academic journals. He has an excellent publication record; throughout his career, Dr. Shriver has coauthored 25 peer-reviewed articles with graduate students, in journals such as *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Symbolic Interaction*, *Social Forces*, and *Mobilization*.

AESS Freudenburg Lifetime Achievement Award

The Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences is pleased to announce that Dr. Riley Dunlap, Regents Professor and Laurence L. and Georgia Ina Dresser Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University, has been awarded the 2012 Freudenburg Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences.



The picture above was taken of Riley and Bill at the ETS Social Hour at the 2010 ASA Meeting in Atlanta.

This award is given each year to an individual with a long and highly distinguished record of innovative environmental research, education, and/or outreach. Recipients of the Freudenburg Lifetime Achievement Award address environmental challenges through trans-disciplinary approaches or collaborations or by endeavoring to make his or her work accessible to scholars and practitioners from other disciplinary traditions. And through their accomplishments, they inspire a generation of environmental scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to enact change.

Previous recipients of the award include Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale University (2011).

The awards ceremony occurred during the evening banquet (June 23) of the 2012 AESS conference at Santa Clara University.

**New Developments at Northeastern's
Ph.D. Program in Environmental Sociology**
(continued from page 1)

This new institute will continue and expand the work Phil Brown has done over the last 12 years with the Contested Illnesses Research Group (CIRG). CIRG will continue to meet at Brown University and have strong connections with the Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute. In tandem, they will continue a tradition of developing theoretical, empirical, and policy work at the intersection of environmental sociology, environmental health, medical sociology, social movements, and STS.

One prime focus of the Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute will be to create specialized emphasis for training social scientists to collaborate with life scientists. This includes continuing collaboration with the Silent Spring Institute (silentspring.org) on biomonitoring, democratic approaches to reporting-back personal environmental health data, and working on data privacy issues. The Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute also works with Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (publiclaboratory.org), a Cambridge-based organization with collaborators and projects across the US and the world. Public Lab works with environmentally-impacted communities to conduct balloon mapping, remote sensing, GIS, spectral imaging, robotic indoor air and dust collection, and other low-cost, participatory projects.

Sara Wylie, another new faculty member at the Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute, is a recent Ph.D. from MIT's History, Anthropology, Science, Technology and Society (HASTS) Program. Her dissertation "Corporate Bodies and Chemical Bonds: An STS Analysis of the American Natural Gas Industry" is an ethnographic study of the role science based NGOs played in the emergence of public concerns about the human and environmental health impacts of chemicals used in natural gas extraction, particularly hydraulic fracturing. Investigating new methods for practicing STS research, her dissertation additionally developed and implemented web-based tools to help communities and experts across the country study and hold extractive industries accountable for their social and environmental impacts. This project (called ExtrAct) was developed in collaboration with artist and technologist Chris Csikszentmihalyi, in MIT's Center for Future Civic Media. More generally, Sara seeks to develop new modes of studying and intervening in large-scale social issues such endocrine disrupting chemicals and

corporate accountability through a fusion of social scientific, scientific and art/design practices. Pursuing these interests Sara taught in Digital+Media at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) for three years before moving to Northeastern. She has worked extensively with Theo Colborn, lead author of "Our Stolen Future." Sara is also one of the founders of Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science, a non-profit that develops open source, Do It Yourself tools for community based environmental analysis.

To add to Sara Wylie's expertise in fracking research, we are fortunate to have another new faculty member, Len Albright (Ph.D. Chicago), who works on community mobilization around fracking in Pennsylvania. Other Department faculty working in environmental sociology include Tom Koenig, who studies restorative justice to supplement deterrence-based punishment of polluting power plants, product liability to compensate victims of the BP oil spill, and efforts to expand public interest tort law to address health and environmental catastrophes), and Judith Perrolle, who works on social impact of computing and information technology, environmental policy, and social factors in risk assessment. Bindu Panikkar, a Postdoctoral Research Associate, works on ethical issues in fetal tissue research, ethics of reporting biomonitoring data to participants, thorium-based nuclear power, ethics of uranium mining research, teratogenic effects of depleted uranium, health disparities in asthma, and scientific uncertainties in risk analysis of endocrine disrupting pesticide Resmethrin to control West Nile Virus. Three more faculty will join the department by September 2013.

Northeastern's environmental sociologists have many collaborations with environmental organizations locally and further away, offering wide opportunities for community-based participatory research and environmental advocacy: Green Science Policy Institute, Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, Clean Water Action, Silent Spring Institute, Alternatives for Community and Environment, Toxics Action Center, Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science.

We will begin in September 2013 our NSF-funded Research Training Program "New Directions in Environmental Ethics: Emerging Contaminants, Emerging Technologies, and Beyond," which will support a postdoc and 2-3 graduate students. Trainees will: 1) study a variety of emerging contaminants and emerging technologies and their ethical implications; 2) critically investigate public participation in science, which is common with these emerging contaminants and technologies; 3) study

how scientists produce knowledge about contaminants and technologies; 4) learn about scientific research ethics with a special emphasis on novel approaches to informed consent and on models of reporting data to research participants; and (5) learn about ethical quandaries faced by scientists in communicating data that has uncertainty about exposure and outcome. The job announcement for the postdoc position, as well as recruitment information for the doctoral training positions, should appear no later than September.

In addition to extended funding from the NSF Training Grant, research assistantships are available from existing and about-to-awarded grants with partner organization Silent Spring Institute (biomonitoring report-back ethics, computer models for report-back of environmental health data, and data privacy), and from the Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute's own funding.

The Northeastern Environmental Justice Research Collaborative (NEJRC), another major feature of our program, is made up of scholars dedicated to building a more transformative environmentalism in the United States and around the world. Based at Northeastern University, NEJRC Associates collaborate with policy makers, elected officials, environmental advocates, foundation officials, scholars, students, community activists, the media, and the general public to provide timely research and commentary on critical social and environmental justice issues, and to promote an alternative political ecology for the new millennium. Our reports and publications have contributed to the adoption of new government regulations and policies, as well as innovative programs and projects from foundations, non-profit organizations, and progressive movements for social change. Professor Daniel Faber, a long-time researcher and advocate around environmental justice, serves as the Director. NEJRC also sponsors workshops, seminars, speaker series, and conferences. There are currently eight separate projects housed at NEJRC relating to: (1) Philanthropy and Environmental Justice; (2) Climate Justice; (3) New England Environmental Justice; (4) National Environmental Justice Politics, Policy, and Ethics; (5) Central American Environmental Policy; (6) Globalization and Environmental Justice; (7) Body Burden; and (8) Environmental Justice and Emerging Technologies. Explore our website to learn more about NEJRC, and how you might join us in our efforts. Go to: <http://www.northeastern.edu/nejrc/>

We are also a field site for the NSF-funded project, Northeast Ethics Education Partnership (Brown, Syracuse, Northeastern), which extends the previous

work of the Collaborative Initiative for Research Ethics. It provides ethics education training through several New England and New York regional centers, and through ASA and other professional conferences. This makes possible excellent opportunities for research and training in environmental ethics.

Our faculty and graduate students work together in a number of interdisciplinary research projects, programs, and centers relating to environmental sociology, including the Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Institute for Urban Health Research, Institute on Race and Justice, Ethics Institute, and the Urban Sustainability Initiative in the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. Sustainability is one of Northeastern's three pillars, along with health and security. Research opportunities are available in many units: Center for High Rate Nanomanufacturing, Center for Urban Environmental Studies, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Laboratory for Acoustics and Remote Sensing, Marine Science Center, and Center for Renewable Energy Technology.

We have very extensive course offerings for environmental sociology students, most in our own department and a few in other departments: Contested Environmental Illnesses, Health Social Movements, Environmental Health, Environmental Justice, Environment and Society, Political Ecology of Global Capitalism, Political Economy of Global Capitalism, Community Environmental Monitoring, Environmental Ethics, Environmental Philosophy, Technology and Human Values, Bioethics, Environmental Law, and Environment & Technology.

For more details contact Graduate Director Matthew Hunt at m.hunt@neu.edu, 617.373.2686, Daniel Faber at d.faber@neu.edu, or Phil Brown at p.brown@neu.edu

Conferences, Calls for Papers and Program Advertisements

Gender and Disaster Webinar Series

This series is brought to you through the Gender and Disaster Resilience Alliance and EPI Global. Both organizations are committed to building awareness about the importance of gender in disaster vulnerability and resilience.

Gender and Disaster Webinar Series (*cont.*)

Speakers, subtopic, and registration details will be announced on our websites. Visit EPI Global at <http://www.epiglobal.org/>; and GDRA at www.usgdra.org. Registration for the event is free. Future webinars include:

Gender and Disaster Webinar #2: Gender-Based Violence

Wednesday, October 10, 2012, at 1pm EST

Gender and Disaster Webinar #3: Gender and Emergency Health

Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2013, at 1pm EST

Gender and Disaster Webinar #4: Gender and Climate Change

Wednesday, April 10, 2013, at 1pm EST

Gender and Disaster Webinar #5: Gender, Disaster, Policies & Politics

Wednesday, July 10, 2013, at 1pm EST

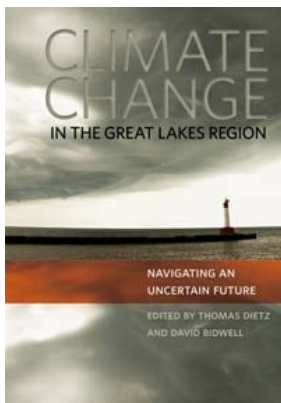


Publications

Books

Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region: Navigating an Uncertain Future

Thomas Dietz and David Bidwell
Michigan State University Press (2012).
<http://msupress.msu.edu/bookTemplate.php?bookID=4269>



People living in the Great Lakes region are already feeling the effects of a changing climate. Shifts in seasonal temperatures and precipitation patterns could have dramatic impacts on the economy, ecology, and quality of life. In this illuminating and thorough volume, leading scholars address the challenge of preparing for climate change

in the region, where decision makers from various sectors — government, agriculture, recreation, and tourism — must increasingly be aware of the need to

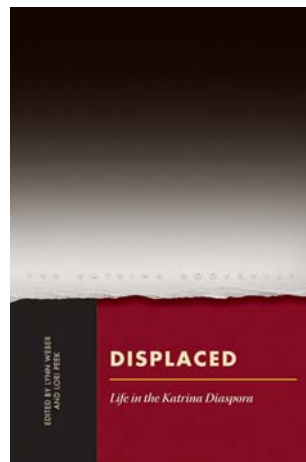
incorporate climate change into their short- and long-term planning. The chapters in this revealing book, written by some of the foremost climate change scholars in North America, outline the major trends in the climate of the Great Lakes region, how humans might cope with the uncertainty of climate change impacts, and examples of on-the-ground projects that have addressed these issues.

"Climate change becomes 'real' only in a local and regional context...this book has great immediate value with vital insights into the changing world of the Great Lakes Region. A critical contribution." —Thomas E. Lovejoy, George Mason University

"This engaging and well-written book brings climate change and its impacts home to the Great Lakes region, but its lessons are relevant far beyond. In their discussions of what is known about climate change, of uncertainties (and why they need not get in the way of action), and of ways of deliberately linking scientific knowledge with decision making processes, the authors set out a strategy that is sensible in the Great Lakes as well as many other regions of the world." —Pamela Matson, Chester Naramore Dean of the School of Earth Sciences, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Professor in Environmental Studies, and Senior Fellow at Woods Institute for the Environment, Stanford University

Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora

Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, eds
University of Texas Press (2012).
<http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/webdis.html>



Hurricane Katrina forced the largest and most abrupt displacement in U.S. history. About 1.5 million people evacuated from the Gulf Coast preceding Katrina's landfall. New Orleans, a city of 500,000, was nearly emptied of life after the hurricane and flooding. Katrina survivors eventually scattered across all fifty states, and tens of thousands still

remain displaced. Some are desperate to return to the Gulf Coast but cannot find the means. Others have chosen to make their homes elsewhere. Still others found a way to return home but were unable to stay

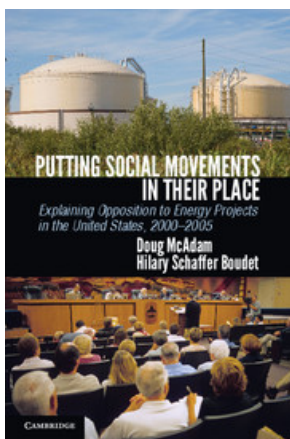
due to the limited availability of social services, educational opportunities, health care options, and affordable housing.

The contributors to *Displaced* have been following the lives of Katrina evacuees since 2005. In this illuminating book, they offer the first comprehensive analysis of the experiences of the displaced. Drawing on research in thirteen communities in seven states across the country, the contributors describe the struggles that evacuees have faced in securing life-sustaining resources and rebuilding their lives. They also recount the impact that the displaced have had on communities that initially welcomed them and then later experienced "Katrina fatigue" as the ongoing needs of evacuees strained local resources. *Displaced* reveals that Katrina took a particularly heavy toll on households headed by low-income African American women who lost the support provided by local networks of family and friends. It also shows the resilience and resourcefulness of Katrina evacuees who have built new networks and partnered with community organizations and religious institutions to create new lives in the diaspora.

Putting Social Movements in their Place: Explaining Opposition to Energy Projects in the United States, 2000-2005

Doug McAdam and Hilary Schaffer Boudet
Cambridge University Press

<http://www.cambridge.org/aus/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9781107650312>



The field of social movement studies has expanded dramatically over the past three decades. But as it has done so, its focus has become increasingly narrow and "movement-centric." When combined with the tendency to select successful struggles for study, the conceptual and methodological conventions of the field conduce to a decidedly Ptolemaic view of

social movements: one that exaggerates the frequency and causal significance of movements as a form of politics. This book reports the results of a comparative study, not of movements, but of 20 communities earmarked for environmentally risky energy projects. In stark contrast to the central thrust of the social movement literature, the authors find that the overall level of emergent opposition to the projects

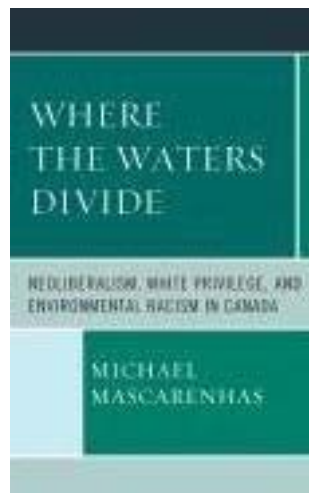
to have been very low, and they seek to explain that variation and the impact, if any, it had on the ultimate fate of the proposed projects.

Where the Waters Divide: Neoliberalism, White Privilege, and Environmental Racism in Canada.

Michael Mascarenhas

Lexington Books (2009).

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780739168271>



This timely and important scholarship advances an empirical understanding of Canada's contemporary "Indian" problem. *Where the Waters Divide* is one of the few book monographs that analyze how contemporary neoliberal reforms (in the manner of de-regulation, austerity measures, common sense policies, privatization, etc.) are woven through and shape contemporary racial inequality in Canadian society. Using recent controversies in drinking water contamination and solid waste and sewage pollution, *Where the Waters Divide* illustrates in concrete ways how cherished notions of liberalism and common sense reform—neoliberalism—also constitute a particular form of racial oppression and white privilege.

Where the Waters Divide brings together theories and concepts from four disciplines—sociology, geography, Aboriginal studies, and environmental studies—to build critical insights into the race relational aspects of neoliberal reform. In particular, the book argues that neoliberalism represents a key moment in time for the racial formation in Canada, one that functions not through overt forms of state sanctioned racism, as in the past, but via the morality of the marketplace and the primacy of individual solutions to modern environmental and social problems. Furthermore, Mascarenhas argues, because most Canadians are not aware of this pattern of laissez faire racism, and because racism continues to be associated with intentional and hostile acts, Canadians can dissociate themselves from this form of economic racism, all the while ignoring their investment in white privilege.

Where the Waters Divide stands at a provocative crossroads. Disciplinarily, it is where the social construction of water, an emerging theme within

Cultural Studies and Environmental Sociology, meets the social construction of expertise—one of the most contentious areas within the social sciences. It is also where the political economy of natural resources, an emerging theme in Development and Globalization Studies, meets the Politics of Race Relations—an often-understudied area within Environmental Studies. Conceptually, the book stands where the racial formation associated with natural resources reform is *made* and *re-made*, and where the dominant form of white privilege is contrasted with anti-neoliberal social movements in Canada and across the globe.



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Richard York

Richard York has been promoted to Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon.

Jill L. Harrison

Jill Lindsey Harrison has been awarded the The Fred Buttel Outstanding Scholarly Achievement Award by the Rural Sociological Society for her book, *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice* (MIT Press, 2011). The RSS explains that this award "is intended to recognize outstanding scholarship in the form of a book or article (alternating years for each format) that demonstrates excellence in scholarly work in the same spirit as that exemplified by the late Fred Buttel. This year the committee seeks nominations for outstanding scholarly books that advance the field of rural sociological knowledge."

Timmons Roberts

Timmons Roberts is spending sabbatical during 2012-13 as Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. He will be in the think-tank's Global Economy and Development unit, helping develop a ranking of contributor nations on their funding for adaptation to climate change. The work is funded by the Norwegian government. Continuing to live in Providence, he'll also be working on two co-authored book manuscripts. He'll return to Brown in fall 2013 in the Center for Environmental Studies as Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology.