

## ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY NEWS

 Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's  
 Section on Environmental Sociology

Spring 2021

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## SECTION CHAIR'S MESSAGE

I hope this letter finds you all healthy and resilient in these challenging days. I have been so impressed by how section leadership and members continue to engage with the important issues of our field and society. Drs. Jill Harrison and Norah Mackendrick of Environmental Sociology Section's Council has been working diligently to ensure the formation of the Committee on Racial Equity and Exclusion (CREE). The committee is now co-chaired by Rachel McKane (Post-doctoral fellow, Vanderbilt) and Devparna Roy (Assistant Professor, Nazareth College). Additional members include Jennifer Carrera (Associate Professor, Michigan State University), Yao Li (Assistant Professor, University of Florida), Roger Renteria (Graduate student, University of Utah) and Yasi Shaker (Graduate student, University of Utah). This committee will help council generate ideas and provide feedback to council about how it can make the section a more welcoming and inclusive space and challenge



the white supremacist logics and structures within the section. I invite all of us to wrestle with these questions in our teaching, research and service as we seek to transform environmental sociology. CREE and the Environmental Sociology council welcome ideas from the membership.

In addition, Norah Mackendrick has been busy building a great program for our section for the annual meeting, which will take place virtually this year. The section will feature sessions on Climate change and Social Transformation, Environmental Justice: Critical and Multi-Scalar Perspectives, Environmental Sociology, Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations, along with an open session and roundtables. Sessions are scheduled for Tuesday August 10<sup>th</sup> so be sure to keep that day open to engage with our fellow environmental sociologists!

With warm regards,

Rachael Shwom  
 Chair, Environmental Sociology Section of the  
 American Sociological Association  
 Associate Professor, Department of Human  
 Ecology, Rutgers University

## FEATURE ESSAYS

### Reflections on Teaching and Mentoring: Using Blank Sheets of Paper

Professor Sandy Marquart-Pyatt  
Michigan State University

Being an effective teacher and mentor requires a commitment to doing good work and a willingness to continue to learn through revision and experimentation when things may not go as planned. It requires, for instance, patience, perseverance, reflection, observation, the capacity to share perspective, willingness to listen, and being able to operate at a time scale that simultaneously notices and overlooks how much time it requires. Being effective means setting the tone early that demonstrates how unique perspectives are valued and contribute to collective goals of knowledge transfers and gains. There is always more to learn, and it often starts with a blank sheet of paper.

Recently, most of my teaching has been at the graduate level in quantitative methods, statistics, and data analysis courses. This is in part because of my appointment structure, and an institutional context where modeling is central given the importance of working in interdisciplinary contexts on environmental issues. To navigate these settings, a strong quantitative background is necessary but not sufficient. At the same time, a substantive focus in environment is also necessary but not sufficient. To work effectively and efficiently, other skills are needed. As a result, given my background in statistical modeling I am motivated by reproducibility, transferability, and scalability (Long 2009). Combined, these technical skills comprise a scaffolding that facilitates knowledge and information transfers within and across disciplines. My work in environmental sociology is thus infused in courses I teach as appropriate and as often as possible. In teaching and mentoring, therefore, in addition to gaining substantive knowledge, I encourage students to reflect on developing technical and interpersonal skills that foster their professional development. Given space considerations, here I describe three essential skills for fostering future success:

quantitative methods skills, communicating social science to various audiences, and collaboration.

Ensuring an appropriate match between a research question and an empirical approach forms the basis of scientific inquiry. Being able to describe your work regarding why you chose the route you did is central to your scholarly development. Data analysis is integral to what I do as a sociologist, and I infuse quantitative methods and examples into substantive courses so students can better appreciate its benefits. From examining data tables using public opinion surveys and data visualization examples from polling and news media, students in courses I teach focus on data interpretation and critical thinking skills along with active learning, research skills, doing sociology, analytical thinking, and integrated reasoning. Replication and extension are foundations that bolster reproducibility, ensure confidence in the robustness of our findings, and enable us as scientists to grapple with model uncertainty (Young 2009). Since the social world is our observatory, we need to refine our strategies for how we showcase its empirical basis.

Communicating social science to multiple audiences is necessary, challenging, and rewarding. It also takes practice and continued refinement. From a simple 'know your audience', we can build expectations about the content and the arc of the talk. What is the story we want to tell, and what information is necessary to effectively accomplish this? I am fortunate to have colleagues in the social sciences and the natural sciences who are always willing to provide insights and feedback. I continue to learn strategies from them for effective communication in diverse audiences. Recently, I have been working on strategies for reducing the use of words on slides to convey key points and take-aways. Being willing to work on and rework the material to craft the message matters. As scientists, revision is familiar given our anonymous review process.

Collaboration is becoming increasingly important as team science approaches gain traction in many disciplines (Elliott et al. 2017; National Research Council 2015; Settles et al. 2020). Sociologists are well-placed to engage in these conversations and

opportunities given disciplinary breadth and depth alongside a tradition of citing other disciplinary fields in our work (Jacobs and Frickel 2009; Ziliak and McCloskey 2008). Having a supportive working environment is paramount, and ensuring our diverse perspectives are included is critical. As a system, academia can be full of disincentives related to collaboration and working with students. Rewards prioritize individual accomplishments and milestones, posing systemic challenges to how we think about advancing the discipline and creating legacies. I have benefited from working in teams during my career, especially in the last several years, and I look forward to continuing this work. As a mentor, I view my role as one of producing the next generation of scholars who will continue to improve our understanding of pressing social issues that may be directly or indirectly related to my primary areas of scholarship. I strive to inspire scholars who share research interests in the application of quantitative techniques to pressing global environmental and socio-political issues while emphasizing comparison across spatial and temporal scales.

As a scholar, I have benefitted from countless examples of individuals who give selflessly of their time to provide perspective and insights, which form the ethos of dedication and generosity that I strive to emulate in my teaching and mentoring. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize my mentors from graduate school: Kazimierz (Maciek) Słomczyński, Pam Paxton, and Ed Crenshaw. Each has played a unique role in shaping my scholarly trajectory by challenging me to work hard, learn, and be present. And all three were willing to temporarily ignore the clock and focus on the task at hand. In doing so, they not only did the work, they demonstrated resilience. One memorable example of Maciek's unassuming mentorship style was when, during an advising meeting, he would remove a few blank sheets of paper from his printer tray and reach for a pen. After careful reflection, Maciek would transform the sheet of paper based on our conversation; and, Maciek rarely looked at the clock.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of our colleagues in the section's awards committees, leadership, and

members who have created a community of scholars and an inclusive environment where we can do good science. I would like to recognize and again thank my colleagues who nominated me for the 2020 Teaching and Mentoring Award of the American Sociological Association's Section on Environmental Sociology: Riva Denny, Matt Houser, Jennifer Lai, and Hui (Chloe) Qian. They are the ones best-placed to ask about my effectiveness as a mentor. I also gratefully acknowledge individuals who wrote in support of my nomination packet. And, I would also like to give special thanks to colleagues from whom I continue to learn: Soma Chaudhuri, Christy Glass, Jen Lau, Stephanie Nawyn, and Peggy Petrzela.

Promoting the next generation of scholars means using your platform to allow them to thrive and to champion their ideas and their work to support their training and professional development. It is more than putting aside your email and cell phone during meetings; it is being fully engaged in the moment and ensuring everyone's voices are heard, recognized, and validated. There's always more to learn, which is central to how I approach teaching and mentoring. We have only scratched the surface of our contributions to future scholarship, and I am excited to continue our work.

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## CALLS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ASA Environmental Sociology Section Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award

Announcement from our Past-Chair  
Jill Lindsey Harrison

Dear all,

On behalf of the entire ASA Environmental Sociology Section Council, I am honored and delighted to announce that the winner of this year's Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award is Dr. Lori Peek. Congratulations, Dr. Peek! The Environmental Sociology Section's Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award honors 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.

(For a list of the highly esteemed previous winners of this award and other ASA Environmental Sociology Section awards, please see here: <http://envirosoc.org/wordpress/section-awards/>.)

Dr. Peek was nominated by colleagues across the United States for her truly exemplary contributions to service, research, and teaching. To give you a sense of the nominations, here are a few of the nominators' comments:

"Dr. Peek has made many important contributions to the subfield of environmental sociology, as evidenced through her impressive publication record, numerous awards, and the stunning number of grants and collaborations she has led. These achievements alone make Dr. Peek worthy of the Buttel Award. But her contributions to environmental sociology reach far beyond her remarkable professional achievements. Professor Lori Peek is a gifted and generous builder. Throughout her career, she has worked tirelessly to build transdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations, to build programs within her

university and the Natural Hazards Center that she directs, to build relationships between academia and communities, and to build goodwill, positive feelings, and confidence among all the colleagues and mentees who have been so lucky to have the opportunity to work with her.... Professor Lori Peek is a bright light in our field. Her research has been innovative, her teaching and mentorship have been inspirational, and her service has been generous. Her contributions as an environmental sociologist have been nothing short of extraordinary."

"Her service to the discipline has been exemplary, and her published work brings empathy and vision to the literature on hazards, disasters, and environmental sociology. But Lori's unique presence in environmental sociology goes beyond her stellar service, innovative research designs, and exemplary publication record. She brings warmth, humanity, humor, and diplomacy and always has a kind, genuine word for people. Lori makes each person she knows feel like the most amazing person in the world. Her work in communities and for communities gives us the best examples of what environmental sociology can aspire to be."

"Dr. Peek's service to the profession and the community is unmatched. And she has earned well-deserved recognition and critical acclaim for her scholarly and pedagogical innovation. She is in a class of her own and I cannot think of a better candidate for this award."

Thank you, Dr. Peek, for all that you have done for your students, colleagues, and so many communities over the years. You are truly a ray of light and an inspiration. I know I speak for many when I say that it is an honor to be your colleague!

## **CONVERGE Broader Ethical Considerations for Hazards and Disaster Researchers Training Module and Demonstration Webinar**

The CONVERGE facility, headquartered at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder, is so pleased to announce the release of a seventh CONVERGE Training Module. This online course, which was supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Science Foundation, focuses on Broader Ethical Considerations for Hazards and Disaster Researchers. You can register and access the free module here:

<https://converge.colorado.edu/training-modules>.

This new module is part of a larger series designed to accelerate the education of a diverse hazards and disaster workforce. The new module focuses on the ethical challenges that arise throughout the research process and provides recommendations for facilitating ethical decision-making and action in disaster research. This module, like the others in the series, concludes with a 10-question quiz. Upon successful completion of the quiz, users receive a certificate, which is worth one contact hour of general management training through the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) certification program. These modules can be useful for classroom assignments as well as other activities. Please see the CONVERGE Assignment Bank for sample activities:

<https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/training-modules/assignment-bank>.

You can sign up for additional free resources and updates at the CONVERGE website at: <https://converge.colorado.edu/signup>. Thank you!

**Acknowledgements:** The CONVERGE Training Modules are based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation Natural Hazards Engineering Research Infrastructure (NSF Award #1841338) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF or CDC.

## **Understanding and Ending Gender-Based Violence in Fieldwork Training Module**

The CONVERGE facility, headquartered at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder, is excited to announce the release of a sixth CONVERGE Training Module. This online course, which was developed in partnership with The Fieldwork Initiative, focuses on Understanding and Ending Gender-Based Violence in Fieldwork. You can register and access the free module here:

<https://converge.colorado.edu/training-modules>.

To learn more, please access the recorded demonstration webinar at:

<https://converge.colorado.edu/communications/webinar-series/understanding-and-ending-gender-based-violence-in-fieldwork-training-module>.

This new module is part of a larger series designed to accelerate the training of a diverse hazards and disaster workforce. The new module focuses on the understanding and recognizing gender-based violence in fieldwork and helps researchers learn how to prevent and address these issues in the field. This module, like the others in the series, concludes with a 10-question quiz. Upon successful completion of the quiz, users receive a certificate. These modules can be useful for classroom assignments as well as other activities. Please see the CONVERGE Assignment Bank for sample activities:

<https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/training-modules/assignment-bank>.

You can sign up for additional free resources and updates at the CONVERGE website at: <https://converge.colorado.edu/signup>.

**Acknowledgements:** The CONVERGE Training Modules are based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF Award #1841338). Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Attention graduate students!

If you are interested in connecting with other graduate students in the section, contact Lourdes Vera at [l.vera@northeastern.edu](mailto:l.vera@northeastern.edu) to sign up for the graduate student listserv.

## Section Officers (2020-2021)

### Chair

Rachael Shwom  
Rutgers University

### Chair-Elect

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Rutgers University

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### Award Committees Chairs

#### Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication

Sara Elizabeth Grineski

#### Marvin Olsen Student Paper

Sara Elizabeth Grineski

#### Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution

Jill Harrison

#### Teaching and Mentorship Award

Janet Lorenzen

#### Practice and Outreach Award

Janet Lorenzen

#### Robert Boguslaw Award for Technology and Humanism

Norah MacKendrick

### Communications

**Newsletter Editor:** John Chung-En Liu

**Website Manager:** Michelle L. Edwards

**Listserv Manager:** Jean Boucher

**Social Media:** Tim Haney

**Section Website:**

<http://www.envirosoc.org/wordpress/>

**Section Listserv:** [envirosoc@listserv.neu.edu](mailto:envirosoc@listserv.neu.edu)

**Grad Listserv:** [envirograds@listserv.neu.edu](mailto:envirograds@listserv.neu.edu)

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