

Barbara Herr Harthorn

Title: How Evidence-Based Risk Perception and Communication Can Contribute to Ethical and Socially Sustainable Nanotechnology

Abstract: Social sustainability is a critical dimension of technological development, environment, and sustainability. This presentation provides evidence, from CNS-UCSB and other research in the field, on best practices for risk communication under varying knowledge conditions and what is known and unknown about the effects of different types and content of risk communication on public judgments about nanomaterials, nanotechnologies' benefits and risks, and responsible development. The talk will show that social scientific understanding and knowledge indicate that an array of factors in addition to level of knowledge about nanoscience and nanotechnology drive public perceptions, and that ethical risk communication efforts need to be founded on knowledge of the effects of the different approaches to risk, uncertainty, and public responses to nanotechnology.

Bio: Professor Barbara Herr Harthorn is a cultural, medical, and psychological anthropologist at University of California at Santa Barbara who studies risk and perception, the gendered and raced social production of health inequality, responsible development of new technologies, and public participation in technoscientific systems. Since 2005, she has served as the Director of the NSEC: Center for Nanotechnology in Society at UCSB (CNS-UCSB), as well as a group leader and executive committee member in the NSF/EPA-funded UC Center for Environmental Implications of Nanotechnology (UC CEIN) at UCLA. She was elected to fellowship in AAAS in 2007.