

Stuart:
What Is Environmental
Sociology?
Chapter 1

What comes to your mind when
you think of the term the
"environment"?

Some people refer to it as the
"ecosystem" or the living and non-
living components of an area.

How about "sociology"?
What come to your mind?

Sociology is sometimes defined
as the scientific study of how
society functions and how
people act or relate to one
another

If sociology is the study of societies,
how do we go about studying societies?

Does "science" play a part?

Sociology is a Social Science.

What do we mean by "science?"
What are its two major
components?

Science is the testing of theories (what
we believe to be true or real) through
the use of "sound" research methods.

Why do I "enjoy"
contributing to
social theory?

Putting the terms together:

What is Environmental Sociology?

Stuart defines it as:

"the study of how social systems
interact with ecosystems."

Ecosystem has been defined as: a
geographic area where plants, animals,
and other organisms, as well as
weather and landscape, work together
to form a bubble of life

Why study the environment from a sociological perspective?

- Review how people (and organizations) have interacted with their environments in the past,
- Identify how they may have and are causing environmental changes
- Consider what might be done to improve the environment and prevent its continued degradation

What is "public sociology" (also referred as "applied sociology" in the past)?

Sociological research with the purpose of addressing public issues such as climate change. Research findings that can be applied to solve social problems.

Stuart makes the argument that there are two major environmental problems that we are facing.

What might they be?

Climate crisis

and

Threats to biodiversity

What would you guess is the basic problem or crisis regarding the climate?

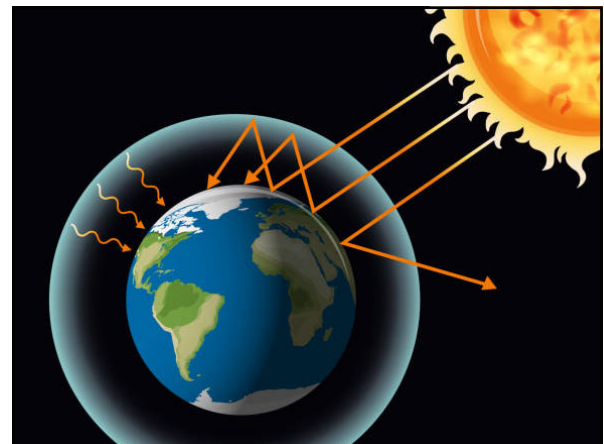
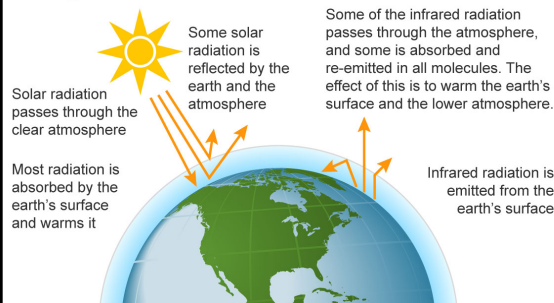
Increased temperatures around the world are causing global climate change.

What is causing the earth's temperature to increase?

The green house effect.

What is this?

The greenhouse effect



Typical day in Hong Kong or Beijing.



What are some of the effects of global warming?

- The Ocean Is Getting Warmer.
- The Ice Sheets Are Shrinking.
- Glaciers Are Retreating.
- Snow Cover Is Decreasing.
- Sea Level Is Rising.
- Arctic Sea Ice Is Declining.
- Extreme Events Are Increasing in Frequency

- Fires and desert
- Floods and draughts
- Hurricanes
- Destruction of forests

What about "acid rain"?
What is it?

Gases produced from the burning of fuels react with the oxygen in the air and water vapor,

transforming into acids that fall onto the earth's surface with rain.

(sum: gases produce both global warming and acid rain)

What are the effects of acid rain?

Acid rain has detrimental effects on trees, freshwaters and soils, destroys insects and aquatic life-forms.

It causes paint to peel, corrosion of steel structures such as bridges, and weathering of stone buildings and sculptures, as well as impacts on human health.

Stuart discusses two competing explanations for higher global temperatures:

human choices/behaviors
and
social structures

How might each of these affect the environment?
Which is most important?

Social structures that affect the environment include:

- Transportation systems
- Industries that pollute the air and water
- Media that argue that there is no environmental problem or helps uncover the problems
- Political system that argues against there being a problem or highlights the problems

Human choices/behaviors that affect the environment include:

- Driving large automobiles and recreational vehicles that require lots of gasoline
- Use of lawn mowers with no protection from gas escaping during filling
- Political and sport figures, movie stars who announce that there is no problem or highlight the problems

What is meant by environmental injustice?

The disproportionate exposure of communities of color and the poor to pollution.

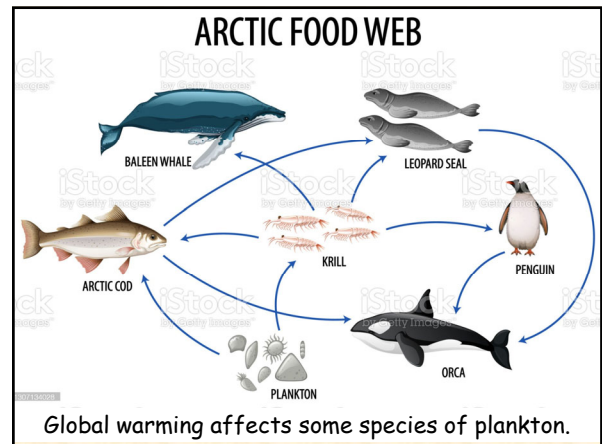
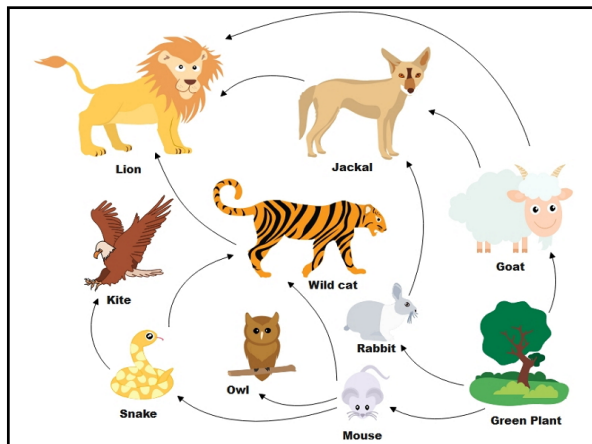
The subsequent negative effects on these people's health, well-being, happiness, etc.

For example: placement of air-polluting asphalt plants. Landfills located near minority neighborhoods
—how could landfills be harmful?

What is the biodiversity problem?

- Loss of life to animals, insects, etc.
- Some insects (e.g., bees) are crucial to the food chain and these are being threatened
- Extinction of animal species

How might extinction of a species affect the animal chain?





Global Warming
By Al Gore
(show 17minutes; next time show rest ~8 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVfgkFaswn4>

Study of toxins in lakes that may cause
alzheimers (3 mins)
<https://www.unh.edu/unhtoday/2014/07/are-toxins-escaping-our-lakes>

Robert J. Sampson: Neighborhood Effects and the
City_(start at 8:00 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnKLIvyFOzc>

What Is the Most Sustainable City in the
World?(2020: 7:48)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsWrOLfM_uQ

5 Most Polluted Cities on Earth
(start at 6:00; goes until 11:05—5 minutes total)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69jwIw4JeVK>

Innovating to zero! | Bill Gates
(18:00/29:32)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaF-fq2Zn7I>