

Diana Stuart
Environmental Sociology

Chapter 2:
 The Social Dimensions of
 Environmental Impacts

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Stuart explains that environmental
 problems/impacts are socially
 constructed.

What does this mean?

How the problem is perceived, framed,
 and understood.

What about science? Is science socially
 constructed and if yes how?

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Scientists decide what they want
 to investigate, the methods to be
 used, interpretations of the
 findings, and conclusions to be
 reached. Examples?

Funding sources and vested
 interests also influence what is
 studied and how the findings are
 presented if at all.

Results from environmental studies
 can have multiple interpretations.

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Does this mean we should be skeptical
 of scientific findings? If yes, how
 should we "approach" scientific
 findings?

YES

Consider the motivation of the
 scientist, who paid for the research
 done and who will benefit from the
 findings

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What are some of the goals of
 environmental sociologists?"

Using science to identify and
 understand environmental
 impacts affecting people

Being a reflexive and observant
 participant where environmental
 injustice occurs

To discover contamination sites
 often found in or near
 neighborhoods

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What would you guess is meant by "critical Realism?"

Social views (and socialization) shape one's perception of the biophysical (or could we say "real") world.

If the climate change, reported to occur, doesn't appear to be affecting "Jim", maybe Jim decides it mustn't be a serious or "real" issue.

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Another example applying critical realism: How much is too much chemical contamination or global warming, etc?

Stuart (and Hannigan) believe the answer is a social one determined by power, economics, and values.

How might one's values affect one's views of global warming? Which values are likely to come into play—that is, have an effect?

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Individualism? Capitalism?
The findings reported by many climate scientists have been disputed and attacked by fossil fuel companies, others making money from fossil fuels, those dependent on fossil fuels, and others.

They deny the findings of the "overzealous" climate scientists declaring the findings unclear (and besides the scientists are just trying to get an article published, right?, so the skeptics say).

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What is public sociology?
(In the past, referred to as "applied sociology.")

Sociologists conducting research with the specific purpose of helping policy makers to make informed decisions based on facts.

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"Risk" is an important concept in environmental sociology. Risk is viewed as being socially constructed.

How would you define "risk" as it is related to the environment? What risks are we taking?

Why is the idea of "risk" important to environmental sociologists?

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"Risk" has been defined as: a situation involving exposure to danger.

People define (socially construct) what is considered high risk. Stuart portrays "risk" as being as much an emotional response as a scientific finding.

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Do you agree that risk is socially constructed? If you think so, how can this be and by whom?

Businesses and interest groups interpret scientific findings and the subsequent risks differently.

Not surprisingly, interpretations have been found to favor the organization doing the interpreting.

Social, political, and economic forces define the level of risk, i.e., how "risky" something is.

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Stuart, and also Ulrich Beck who wrote *Risk Society*, argue that with the advent of emerging new technologies, society is taking more risks than ever.

Do you agree?
Can you think of an example?

Toxic chemicals found in everyday products (e.g., shampoos, cleaning supplies, electronics) are often not allowed in Europe but are in the U.S. These may be causing birth defects, hormonal disruption, neurological damage, etc.

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What factors cause a person to feel s/he is at risk (i.e., in danger)?

- Factors that we know little about and are difficult to observe are considered more risky
- Activities that are perceived to happen at any time as opposed to far in the future or over a very long time period are considered more risky
- Factors that we have little control over are considered more risky
- Factors that point to danger

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Stuart summarizes Hannigan's steps that must be accomplished for the public to define environmental conditions as highly risky such as a climate "crisis".

What steps are these (We've covered these in Hannigan's book)?

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1. Assembling the scientific evidence
2. Making the evidence understandable
3. Presenting or "framing" evidence to/for the public in an understandable way via media, public figures, etc.
4. "Contesting" or having public debates that gains the public's attention

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What is the difference between the terms climate "change" and climate "crisis"?

How are the terms related to the social construction of ideas?

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What is environmental injustice? Can you think of an example?

Negative environmental impacts that are disproportionately distributed to a particular group of people, such as those with low-income or a minority group.

Placing an asphalt plant near a low-income neighborhood.

Why does environmental injustice exist? What contributes to it?

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"Path of least resistance" --What does this mean?

Racism (e.g., housing)

Economics

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How is it related to environmental racism?

When environmental impacts are overlooked, accepted, or justified based on race.

Can you think of an example?

Flint Michigan where pollutants were dumped into a local community of predominantly Black residents.

No attention was provided to California migrant workers who were experiencing "pesticide drift" and the health problems resulting.

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Why are the impacts of global warming more harmful to lower-income people and people in the Global south? Is this environmental injustice?

The infrastructure for these groups is not as safe, e.g., buildings are not built as well and so offer less resistance to hurricanes, tornadoes, etc..

Low-income persons lack the funds to repair damage to their ecosystems which might affect their livelihood such as farming or getting to a job.

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Nuclear micro reactors to hit the market

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z8btELDwBs>

Bill Gates on How we're doing on the path to zero emissions, 2022 (3 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipkPcrNsCv8>

Out of Thin Air (Start at 26:30) (13 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZeJZxjvFng>

Why most Americans support the EPA (4:07)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2Nmhesxf2k>

Sackett v. EPA: How One Couple's Battle Against the Feds Might Protect Your Land (7:38)

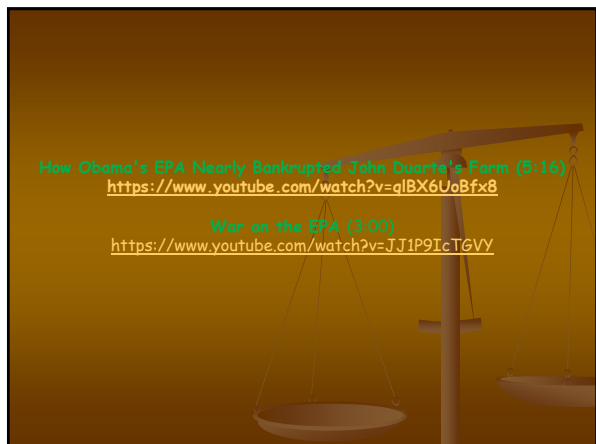
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40IHXAQjJ3U>

The Reasoning and Impact of the Supreme Court's Ruling in Sackett v. EPA (First 3 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMOSEoUy1pI>


Supreme Court decision weakens EPA authority, scales back scope of Clean Water Act

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-ZBkxeCvEQ>



How Obama's EPA Nearly Bankrupted John Duarte's Farm (3:14)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlBX6UoBfx8>


War on the EPA (3:00)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ1P9IcTGVY>



The Future Of Nuclear Power - Holtec SMR 160 (8 min)
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=The+Future+Of+Nuclear+Power++Holtec+SMR+160

Nuclear micro reactors to hit the market (2:40)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z8btEldwBs>

The tiny reactors carry some of the same challenges as large-scale nuclear, such as how to dispose of radioactive waste and how to make sure they are secure. Supporters say those issues can be managed and the benefits outweigh any risks.



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 5:00; goes until 11:05—6 minutes total)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69jwIw4JeVk>



Innovating to zero! | Bill Gates, 2010 (18:00/29:32)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaF-fq2ZnZI>

The Future Of Nuclear Power - Holtec SMR 160 (8 min)
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=The+Future+Of+Nuclear+Power++Holtec+SMR+160

Bill Gates' Terrapower and the Natrium Reactor | Rock Logic | 2022 (start at 1 min - 6 mins)
<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-e&q=rocklogic+and+terra#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:d6a53627,vld:3mZiPO6Ozw>

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"Path of least resistance" --What does this mean?

Racism (e.g., housing)

Economics

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