

### h11.368 Response Paper 3

This week's readings delve further into the development of a theory of environmental justice from moral, political, and sociological standpoints. The Schlosberg piece succinctly describes a three-part meaning of justice, as: equity, recognition, and participation. He states that all three of these conceptualizations of justice are simultaneously incorporated into the environmental justice movement in practice, though past writing in the field has had an over-emphasis on the equity (or distributive) issues related to siting of noxious facilities. I appreciated this piece's nuanced approach to demonstrating the interactions between these three definitions of justice (e.g. how a lack of recognition can lead to unequal distribution as well as obstacles to political participation). Schlosberg states: "inequitable distribution, a lack of recognition, and limited participation all work to produce injustice, and claims for justice can—some would say *must*—be integrated into a comprehensive political project" (87). Moreover, his political approach ties EJ to theory (Mills, Walzer), and helps us to position it for critical comparison to other movements such as the civil rights movement; rather than simply stating that civil rights issues are a contributing stream to environmental justice. This piece also gives context to the writings of the prior week, particularly on issues like local self-determination. Some of the calls to action made in the 1991 Summit, which seemed to have a spurious relationship to EJ, now make intuitive sense when cast in this expanded definition of justice. The right to "cultural survival" and the need to "come into a voice" are aspects of the right to recognition, while an "expansion of the concept and practice of democracy to be more inclusive of community input" is also occurring (90,93). Finally, one issue that Schlosberg raises that I hope to explore further in future readings is the concept of health risk as physical abuse, or a violation of a person's body. I do not think toxic exposure is by any means analogous to rape or torture, but the moral argument offers interesting avenues for EJ advocates.

Pellow's environmental inequality formation (EIF) theory offers a useful frame for thinking about EJ case studies, focusing on "broader dimensions of the intersection between environmental quality and social hierarchies" (582). Moving the literature beyond the existence of unequal outcomes, Pellow and other researchers on environmental inequality attempt to investigate the mechanisms behind those outcomes (587). He unpacks the notion of the "perpetrator-victim" narrative by highlighting multiple stakeholder relationships and viewing inequality as a process rather than a moment in time (588). As such, Pellow has clearly carved out a role for sociologists in this discourse, as well as historians, psychologists, and network theorists. His framework helps me to position the Checker article from last week within the discipline, and inspires me in thinking about my potential research project for this course. While the "life cycle" analysis would seem to be the most complete mechanism for analyzing injustice, I question its practical applicability in framing feasible research questions. In terms of his substantive discussion of the recycling facility case study, Pellow raises the issue of neighborhoods being torn between advocating for jobs and economic development, while also wanting to protect workers' rights and prevent the deepening of patterns of environmental injustice. He also distinguishes between different branches of the "state" and investigates the multi-faceted relationship between state and corporate actors. Although I appreciate the depth of such historical studies, or organizational ethnographies, I wonder what lessons they transfer to practice, how comparisons can be made between them, and what new patterns or theories are beginning to emerge from them.