Introduction: A Twenty-First Century Public Environmental Sociology

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Welcome to the *Handbook of Environmental Sociology*. This volume offers a comprehensive overview of environmental sociology, while also endeavoring to expand the public relevance of the field. Given the fundamental and timely lessons of environmental sociology, we are excited to share the major findings of leading scholars working in this area. As a whole, their research provides a roadmap to help us navigate this moment of great global uncertainty, marked by climate change and disaster, natural resource depletion, pandemic, and record levels of economic inequality. The chapters presented here focus on communicating the major insights of environmental sociology, while also setting a future research agenda and an action-oriented approach to inform readers how to use environmental sociology's major lessons to help support pathways to more sustainable, just, and democratic futures. This work is relevant for public policy, people's lives, and the well-being of all species.

Formally established in 1976 with the creation of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Section on Environmental Sociology, the subdiscipline has matured and evolved over the decades (for overviews see, Buttel, 1987; Catton & Dunlap, 1978; Dietz et al., 2020; Dunlap & Michelson, 2001; Pellow & Brehm, 2013). Environmental sociology has grown from a series of conversations and debates among a relatively small group of scholars in the U.S. to its present status as a diverse and vibrant global community producing new knowledge, training new generations of students and professionals, and inspiring action across multiple scales (Legun et al., 2020a, 2020b; Redclift & Woodgate, 2010; White, 2004). Through the years, the subfield has increasingly influenced researchers, policy makers, and civil society on every continent and in every sector (Laska, 1993).

Environmental sociology has grown by leaps and bounds, with scholars producing impactful research that appears in leading generalist and interdisciplinary journals and as research monographs published by prestigious university presses. The subdiscipline has experienced remarkable internal growth, while simultaneously

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creating and strengthening bridges with other subfields within sociology such as criminology, sociology of development, women and gender studies, racial and ethnic studies, collective behavior and social movements, and global and transnational sociology. Equally important, great strides have been made to bring environmental sociology into interdisciplinary conversations concerning the study of socio-environmental relationships—aligning environmental sociologists with scholars and researchers working in public health, epidemiology, climate science, political science, geography, anthropology, urban planning, law, civil engineering, and various other scientific and applied disciplines and fields (Jorgenson et al., 2019).

Environmental sociology courses are now regularly taught at the undergraduate and graduate level at colleges and universities around the world as part of disciplinary curricula. They are also offered as foundational courses for interdisciplinary programs, such as environmental studies and sustainability studies. As global and regional environmental crises continue to unfold, and youth take a leading role in advocating for climate justice, demand for these classes only continues to rise.

Broader Contributions

This *Handbook of Environmental Sociology* brings together a spectrum of emerging scholars and leading thinkers in the field to present chapters that define the contours and further push the boundaries of environmental sociology. As editors, we asked the contributors to provide historical, theoretical, and methodological context for their chapters. This means that we encouraged authors to look to the past to help identify what is already well established. This process has clarified gaps and allowed the authors to envision what issues, questions, and needs will be most pressing in the future.

We convened a group of contributors whose work and outlooks are broad and deep to ensure that each chapter provides a thorough, yet concise, overview of the selected topic, along with a richly textured understanding of the nuances of the subject area. In this way, this volume will serve as an overview and introduction for students of the field, as well as an insightful treatment that experts can use in their own research and publications.

In working with the authors to develop their chapters, we were especially interested in advancing areas of environmental sociology that offer the most generative frameworks for explaining and responding to today's pressing socio-environmental problems. What sets this volume apart from most environmental sociology collections is our emphasis on much-needed interventions that respond to the environmental impacts of social inequalities. To achieve this goal, authors have identified various social fault lines—such as those based on race, class, gender, and geographic location—that often translate into environmental conflict and deepen pre-existing injustices. From there, many of the contributors have begun to advance what Prasad (2018) refers to as a vision for problem-solving sociology.

From the outset, our collective goal has been to provide an overview of environmental sociology that takes significant heed of the nexus of environmental degradation and structural inequality. The importance of inequality and power is a central theme across much of the discipline of sociology. However, environmental sociology has tended to relegate attention to inequality to the subfield to environmental justice or the study of disasters or climate change. In this volume, we have endeavored to unify scholarship that examines the role of inequality at multiple scales across the realm of environmental sociology. As such, readers will find chapters that focus not only on the ways that racial, ethnic, gender, and other positionalities predict personal environmental outcomes, but also on how organizations, institutions, and socio-ecological systems channel environmental harms and benefits. This emphasis is intentional, and we hope this collection will provide guidance to public and private sector decision-makers who wish to foster justice and equity—which are necessary to advance sustainability goals—in the communities and organizations that they lead. We also believe

these chapters will be helpful to members of the public who are engaged in these issues, or who wish to become so.

This collection is further distinguished by its emphasis on the implications and elements of praxis that can lessen or resolve environmental problems through addressing their biophysical, political-economic, and socio-cultural causes and outcomes. In that regard, this book reflects our commitment not only to policy-relevant sociology, but to *public sociology*. When he was President of the ASA, Michael Burawoy et al. (2004: 104) defined public sociology as a "sociology that seeks to bring sociology to publics beyond the academy, promoting a dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society, placing the values to which we adhere under a microscope." Three decades earlier, Alfred McClung Lee served as the ASA President and wrote that "The great challenge of social science is the development and wide dissemination of social wisdom. . ." (Lee, 1973: 6). Given the enormity of what is at stake for humankind and the Earth—with regard to anthropogenic climate change in particular and environmental risks across a wide spectrum—the importance of sharing sociological knowledge with the public is paramount to all of our survival. The recent global COVID-19 pandemic and the asymmetric social impacts has brought that point into sharp and deadly relief.

Extending Burawoy and Lee's ideas, one of our goals with this volume is to help promote a new form of public environmental sociology. While environmental sociology has experienced measured success in influencing policy makers and within academic circles, we aim for this volume to begin making the sub-field even more accessible to members of the public, so that the research can influence public discourses and inform policy (also see Jorgenson, 2018; Picou, 2008). Why not see environmental sociologists consulted on the nightly news alongside economists and legal analysts, for example? Or consider, why aren't environmental sociologists tapped to lead major environmental agencies? Sociologists have the methodological skill sets, theoretical lenses, and institutional knowledge that could help inform public opinion and shape broader policy making. If we are to move toward more resilient futures, this century will need to see not just more scholarly publications from environmental sociologists, but more scholarly leadership in major social and institutional spheres of influence. The work included in this volume can facilitate reasoned and evidence-informed choices that can advance collective social and environmental well-being.

This volume also features writings that will appeal to a multidisciplinary audience. While almost all of the authors are sociologists by training, most of them have extensive experience working across disciplinary borders with scholars from a range of other fields both within and outside the social sciences. Many of the environmental issues identified in this *Handbook* require the collaboration of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary teams working from a convergence research framework to fully characterize and respond to the threats at hand (Peek et al., 2020b). Another hallmark of this book is that we have brought together scholars who are used to traversing a wide range of epistemologies, methodologies, and ontologies which is also a hallmark of sociology and the social sciences more broadly (Frailing & Brown, 2020; Peek et al., 2020a). In other words, we've assembled a group of scholars whose contributions reflect a rich diversity of concepts, theories, ways of knowing, and research approaches.

The author lineup purposely includes a mix of more seasoned academics as well as rising next generation scholars in the field. Regardless of career stage, however, all have made important contributions in their particular area, or areas, of environmental sociology. The chapters in this volume were peer-reviewed by leading experts, and one or more editors helped to shepherd each chapter through the process. In the end, many people contributed generously to the content in this volume.

Major Themes Across Chapters

The *Handbook* speaks to several themes in sociology that are of enduring interest and part of

emerging areas of scholarship. We grouped the chapters into four thematic areas: (1) Inequality, Political Economy, and Justice; (2) Climate, Energy, and Health; (3) Culture, the State, and Institutions; and (4) Population, Place, and Possibilities. We offer an overview of each of these themes, in turn, below. It is important to note, however, that while these themes provide an organizational framework for the edited volume, they are certainly not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are meant to be broad and cross-cutting, since many of the chapters transcend multiple themes. All, however, exist at the nexus of sociology and the study of the environment.

Part I: Inequality, Political Economy, and Justice

The first section offers theoretical and methodological alternatives to explore drivers and impacts of environmental issues that remain under examined. Traditionally, much environmental studies scholarship has focused on the ways individual choices and behaviors, combined with cultural practices, produce strains on our ecosystems. While those factors clearly play a role in environmental outcomes and change, they often overlook the importance of *sociological systems* and especially the ways that *social and structural inequality* play foundational roles in shaping environmental harms, environmental injustices, and potential solutions. This section considers such systems and inequalities while also exploring markets, states, and other political-economic structures that condition environmental outcomes as well as considerations of just transitions.

In this section the chapters consider, for example, how indigeneity, race, class, gender, and other social categories place individuals and entire groups of people at greater risk of exposure to a range of environmental threats. The chapters also interrogate how global political-economic conditions and structural relationships between societies can lead to the unequal distribution of environmental harms. Moreover, the chapters highlight methodological approaches that have allowed for rich micro-interactional as well as macro-structural analyses of the environment (also see Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2015).

In their Intersectionality and the Environment chapter, Ergas, McKinney, and Bell weave together major lessons from across social science perspectives, including critical race theory, feminist political ecology, and Indigenous studies, to showcase "the myriad ways in which social location, privilege, and disadvantage intersect to create very different effects on and experiences of the natural environment within society." They advocate for future sociological scholarship to more meaningfully recognize intersecting forms of inequality.

In their chapter on Environmental Justice, Maung and Pellow review the field's rich history of multidisciplinary scholarship; its consistent links to advocacy research, community-based research methods, and grounded activism and action; and the multiple threads of equity that comprise environmental justice. The authors identify how the field can become even more inclusive, intersectional, and critical through nuanced analyses of power, social inequality, and social difference. They also argue that change will be made possible through stronger linkages to a range of social and racial justice movements.

Givens and Huang, in their chapter on Ecologically Unequal Exchange and Environmental Load Displacement, provide a systematic overview of how global production and trade networks can create and maintain substantial environmental inequalities between nations. In addition to summarizing past theoretical and empirical work, they highlight future directions for research that could enrich these perspectives while leading to a greater understanding of the complex relationships between the world-economy and vast socio-environmental inequities.

In their chapter on Consumption, Rieger and Schor explore the value and implications of centering consumption in environmental sociology, which has generally placed far greater emphasis on the effects of industrial production and government activity on the environment. They report on a wide range of studies that reveal the numerous ways in which unequal household

consumption patterns around the globe produce harm to ecosystems, and they consider the evidence concerning pathways toward sustainable consumption.

In their chapter on corporations and the roles they play in environmental degradation, Pulver and Manski chart a course that pushes beyond the Treadmill of Production and Ecological Modernization approaches, which remain two dominant frameworks within environmental sociology. Findings from organizational theory, political sociology, and economic sociology suggest that corporations' impacts on the environment are augmented by states, markets, and societal dynamics that define the limits and freedoms accorded to corporations—which, importantly, vary widely in their contributions to environmental degradation.

In their chapter on Just Transitions, Kojola and Agyeman provide an historical overview of the demand for equity in the transition to more sustainable economies. An emerging consensus observes that the green economy transition favors the existing capitalist class and stands to perpetuate and potentially deepen existing inequalities without intentional interventions. The authors conclude by examining these issues in the questionable likelihood of achieving an equitable "Green New Deal."

Part II: Energy, Climate, and Health

The second section features chapters that tackle a range of pressing issues related to energy access, risk and disaster, and health disparities rooted in environmental disparities. Contributors engage with the ways that myriad sources of energy and other material inputs to industrial systems and societies impact ecosystems and people—often in highly uneven ways. Our bodies, institutions, communities, economies, nation-states, and the world-system are all reliant on sources of energy that are taxed and distributed unsustainably and unjustly. These processes result in vastly uneven environmental and human health costs and impacts on local and global ecosystems. As with all sections of this *Handbook*, social inequalities play a significant role in the distribution of harms and privileges associated with political-economic systems. Fortunately, those inequalities also offer opportunities for scholars, policymakers, and members of the public to think more productively about how to center the experiences of economically and socially marginalized groups when addressing 'wicked problems' like global climate change that drive increased risk and more disaster losses.

Malin, Mayer, and Harrison call for a formal Sociology of Energy in their chapter, observing that the absence of a coherent sociological approach to the study of energy is paradoxical given energy's central role in our societies and lives. This chapter ties together energy-related topics interspersed through the environmental sociology literature. The authors focus on issues of power and inequality in studies of fossil fuels and nuclear energy systems, as well as renewables.

Cordner's chapter on Risk distills major definitions of risk, theoretical approaches, and policy-related outcomes—all while recognizing that risk is socially constructed and deeply contested. Cordner argues that definitions of risk mirror society's power dynamics, wherein institutions that generate risks often control the very definitions of what is, and is not, "safe." The chapter envisions how environmental sociologists can more meaningfully incorporate social and environmental justice concerns into research on risk by attending to questions of scale, welcoming transdisciplinary scholarship, and focusing on social responses to risk.

After providing a thorough review of sociology's contributions to understanding socio-cultural dynamics of climate change, Falzon, Roberts, and Brulle elaborate on the need for further analyses of just transitions, the role of multi-level governance, and the impacts of social movements and other non-state actors in the climate change and energy policy arenas. They call for a more intentional public environmental sociology, which supports tenure and promotion policies that recognize public sociology and reward scholars for building collaborative relationships with policymakers as well as

practitioners in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, and other relevant institutions.

Sociologists have been systematically researching the root causes and social consequences of disasters since the late 1940s. In their chapter on the Sociology of Disasters, Peek, Wachtendorf, and Meyer describe why sociologists study extreme events, what this work has revealed regarding human behavior during times of crisis and collective upheaval, and how disasters reflect the existing social order but also may serve to change it. They conclude by offering recommendations for advancing the field of disaster research in an ever more turbulent and unequal world.

In their chapter on Environmental Factors in Health, Wilder and Brown illustrate how health is multi-level, multi-scalar, and deeply tied to social disparities and power dynamics. They focus on major threads of environmental health research related to chemical exposures and identify paths forward for environmental sociologists to more systematically incorporate environmental health and public sociology goals.

Taylor, in her chapter on Food Insecurity, suggests that researchers need to examine the innovative places where people find food in order to understand community agency, assets, and strengths. While food insecurity is associated with access to traditional food sources, such as grocery stores, Taylor shows how schools, community gardens, foodbanks, and many other sources of daily food intake have been overlooked in current food security research.

Part III: Culture, the State, and Institutions

In the third section, the contributors grapple with questions related to structure and agency, culture, and institutions. While these chapters engage with contemporary issues and modern social problems, they also reach deep into the roots of the discipline to inform their arguments regarding long-standing issues in terms of human-environment connections and broader social structural conditions. Three of the founders of sociology—Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber—had much to say about conflicts and functions related to religion, crime, organizations, and capitalism in shaping and reflecting social values, hierarchies, and opportunities for societal stability versus transformation. The chapters in this section build on foundational theoretical debates and push us into radically different territory through their careful consideration of the environment. Indeed, the contributors offer compelling ways to rethink these core sociological topics from an environmental perspective, while reflecting the diverse conceptual, theoretical, and methodological advances of twenty-first century environmental sociology.

Kalof and Whitley, in their chapter on Animals in Environmental Sociology, ask readers to engage with a perspective of "thinking from the animal," an orientation that invites others to consider the ever-present significance of nonhumans in human society. While environmental sociology has emphasized relationships between humans and the 'natural' world—and even worked to problematize that division—until recently, limited work has extended that examination to more-than-human animals. This chapter serves as an important corrective.

From the time the discipline was established, sociologists have focused on social facts and struggled to make sociological sense of how humans generate meaning, values, and beliefs about the sacred and the profane. Hempel, in her chapter on Religion and the Environment, illuminates this area of inquiry through her exploration of religious worldviews, practices, and expressions and their intersections with social and ecological systems. Her chapter illustrates the powerful role that multiple religious traditions have played in shaping contemporary environmental action and, in turn, how environmentalism has influenced faith communities.

In their chapter on Environmental Governance, Fisher, Jasny, Redmond, and Heaume tackle the longstanding question regarding the role of the state in lessening environmental degradation while expanding access to environmental benefits. Drawing on their extensive research in

this area, their chapter offers new methodological approaches for studying the role of the state in shaping environmental outcomes.

Lynch, Stretesky, and Long illustrate the power of merging two major sociological subdisciplines—environmental sociology and criminology—in their chapter on Green Criminology. Their work extends an invitation to environmental sociologists to consider how political-economic and class structures shape the legal system's responses, or lack thereof, to ecologically destructive activity.

In their chapter on War and the Environment, Lengefeld, Hooks, and Smith trace environmental sociologists' interrogations of links between environmental destruction, inequity, and acts of war and other large-scale organized violence over time. They invite more rigorous scholarship going forward, identifying gaps in this area of research and especially places where sociologists can examine internal logics or variations in how war is organized. They also invite readers to consider war's socio-ecological outcomes across space and time.

Part IV: Population, Place, and Possibilities

The book's fourth and final section highlights scholarship that is revolutionizing the way social scientists think about pivotal concepts and debates in the field. These chapters are concerned with changing population dynamics, and spatial and temporal relationships between humans and our varied political-economic systems. They also consider the social and ecological implications of technological and scientific changes, and interrogate the complexities inherent in how governments and civil society organizations address environmental challenges. The work represented in this section has been critical to the growth and influence of environmental sociology, and the discipline of sociology more generally. These chapters, as with several of the others in the volume, represent the power and possibility of multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to problem generation, theory, and method. They also highlight how the groups often most susceptible to environmental harms have responded to risk and chronic disaster through activism meant to advance more ecologically resilient and socially equitable futures.

In their chapter on Environmental Demography, Hunter and Simon focus on three core demographic processes—fertility, mortality, and migration. They illustrate how human population dynamics are both key drivers and outcomes of environmental change. Throughout, they offer poignant examples of the utility of the sociological perspective regarding issues of inequality, sociocultural context, and environmental perceptions in shaping population-environment connections.

Rudel details the most important land use changes of the past century in his chapter on Land Use and Land Use Change. Drawing extensively from Polanyi's foundational writings on double movements, Rudel illustrates how the turmoil and environmental abuse from various land use changes led to a countervailing set of changes aimed at protecting landscapes, both in remote frontier forests of the Global South and in peri-urban settings in the Global North.

In their chapter on Structural Human Ecology (SHE), Dietz and York provide a far-reaching summary of this 'evolving theory group', or network of linked papers and scholars who share common concerns. The chapter summarizes six themes within SHE: advancing evolutionary thinking, connecting the micro and the macro, using risk as a framework for considering environmental and sustainability issues, examining the tension between reform and transformation, thinking about all drivers of change in consort, and taking account of non-humans.

In their chapter on Environmental Science and Technology Studies, Frickel and Arancibia identify common ground between two subdisciplines often marked by tensions and rifts: environmental sociology and science and technology studies. The authors aim to strengthen materialist frameworks for understanding the interactions between human societies and the more-than-human world.

In their chapter, Toward an Indigenous Environmental Sociology, Norgaard and Fenelon offer a bold and ambitious proposal to move environmental sociology toward a deeper, more direct, and ethical engagement with the field of Indigenous Studies. The authors contend that this will only be possible through directly confronting our scholarly and institutional entanglements with histories and contemporary practices associated with genocide, colonialism, and conquest of Indigenous people.

Johnson and Burke's chapter on Environmental Movements in the United States considers the historical origins and evolution of environmental movements in the nation's history. The authors delve into the broad sociological significance of these movements with respect to their influence on the state, markets, culture, and environmental outcomes.

In the book's final chapter, Caniglia and Mayer review three frameworks where systems approaches can advance environment, equity, and economic prosperity. They review the scholarship on sustainability, resilience building, and regenerative approaches and argue that, without a systems approach, all three are likely to fail to achieve their proposed goals.

Insights and Intended Impacts

This collection advances environmental sociology by identifying new theoretical lenses for understanding social processes that influence environmental outcomes, new methodological approaches for studying the environment, and new frontiers for exploration. Throughout, the chapters focus attention on the effects of power and inequality in shaping socio-environmental problems and solutions. They also demonstrate that as the field of environmental sociology has expanded, so too has its theoretical and methodological pluralism.

Each chapter draws on the cumulative knowledge generated through the work of environmental sociologists across various areas of inquiry. The authors in this volume assess where key paths forward exist and highlight the bridges that need to be built or traversed. The chapters also help advance a vision of public environmental sociology by identifying the ways the subdiscipline can contribute to ongoing policy debates and public discourses. In this way, we invite readers to actively engage with the scientific knowledge and prescriptions offered in every chapter.

Ultimately, we hope this volume illuminates the rich science conducted by environmental sociologists and that this information can be utilized to deepen and expand our field's evidence base and public presence (Blau & Iyall Smith, 2006; Piven, 2007). Environmental sociologists and their collaborators have generated knowledge that can inform everything from local land use planning to global climate adaptation strategies. With each new human-caused environmental disaster, the public is reminded of just how high the stakes are when multiple, layered socio-environmental risks are not attended to in a timely and just manner.

The collective findings of environmental sociology, highlighted so thoughtfully by the authors in this volume, suggest that structural changes over time have accumulated advantage toward traditionally privileged groups, leaving Indigenous people, communities of color, children, the elderly, single women, and people of the global South to bear the burden of environmental pollution, pandemics, climate change, and disasters.

The data suggest that local and regional policies have great potential to correct these inequities, due to the sense of community and common destiny shared at the state and local levels (Agyeman, 2008; Caniglia, 2018; Warner, 2002). Local authorities have emerged as significant leaders in efforts to develop equitable and sustainable climate policies, often going beyond ecological solutions to incorporate initiatives that address broader urban and peri-urban infrastructure such as transit-oriented development, affordable housing, access to health care, public green spaces and the importance of rural spaces. As the chapters illustrate, environmental sociologists can and should provide guidance to local leaders in their efforts to create communities that are not only sustainable, but desirable and equitable

places to live (Agger, 2007; Burawoy et al., 2004; Burawoy, 2005; Gans, 1989; Nickel, 2013). This is the promise and possibility of a public environmental sociology that is problem-focused and solutions-based.

Yet, even in light of their importance, for many and varied reasons, such discussions have typically remained within the confines of journals, conferences, and academic debates that include mostly environmental sociologists. Part of making sociology more relevant to the public involves offering rigorous and firm assessments about where to go next and how to use our scientific findings. This can feel risky, particularly for social scientists trained to make prescriptions sparingly (Fox, 2018), especially when they involve highly charged and politicized topics. The findings from environmental sociology, however, implicate our current economic, political, and cultural systems in creating, or at least helping to sustain, some of the most serious social and environmental problems in contemporary societies (Pellow, 2019), from massive economic inequality, to political instability, to existential crises such as global climate change and lack of biodiversity (Ciplet et al., 2015; Kolbert, 2015). We have a moral and ethical responsibility to share environmental sociology's insights—they are critical for informing and institutionalizing change during this moment of planetary peril.

Suggesting changes to our current inequitable political and economic systems remains perhaps the most difficult terrain to explore. Still, one theme echoed across multiple chapters is that our current society is designed in a way that puts human and natural capital in service to the prevailing economic system. An important assumption that justifies the dominance of the market system is that the market will favor functional system-wide outcomes, including outcomes that support human and ecological wellbeing (see Caniglia & Frank, 2017; Malin, 2015). That assumption has consistently proven itself incorrect (Dietz et al., 2012; Jorgenson, 2014; Mazur & Rosa, 1974; Roberts et al., 2020), and the resulting market prominence has in fact increased human and ecological suffering—as many chapters in this volume showcase.

Economic, environmental, and social injustices are powerfully linked through common structural dimensions of society, and are often experienced by individuals and entire groups, further concentrating privilege and disadvantage throughout the lifecourse and across generations (Fothergill & Peek, 2015; King & McCarthy, 2009; Korgen et al., 2011; Nyden et al., 2012; Pellow, 2017, 2019). Put plainly, environmental sociologists should use our rigorous findings to challenge the current economic status quo and the suffering experienced each day by billions of people globally (Piven, 2007). This problem-focused and action-oriented convergence approach to research (Peek et al., 2020b) is as relevant as ever, as proposals emerge for sweeping changes amidst the global pandemic, uprisings over racial and economic injustice, global climate change, and the necessary just transitions begin from fossil fuel-based economies. Public environmental sociology can help express and amplify the most equitable and resilient paths for just transitions, macro-level responses to catastrophes such as the COVID-19 pandemic, large-scale economic impacts of global climate change, and increasingly intense disasters.

Part of this next big step involves advocacy research and scholar-activist models where we can retain our scientific legitimacy while also creating a robust environmental public sociology. As environmental justice scholar Shrader-Frechette (2002) reminds us, we can be objective without being neutral in the face of deep injustices.

We see environmental sociologists standing at a crossroads with different paths that we could follow: We can help put out the flames of a world on fire. We can stand there counting the rate at which the fire burns. Or we can prevent the fire from starting in the first place. In the fleeting time we have left to build more equitable and just social systems, we strongly advocate for the third path. We would prefer to use our robust

and rigorous science to prevent the flames, using the tools of our social science to become the mitigation practitioners who help to avert the crisis in the first place and to ultimately build something better. This is why we suggest so strongly the need for public environmental sociology. This book will be a core part of our toolkit for change.

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