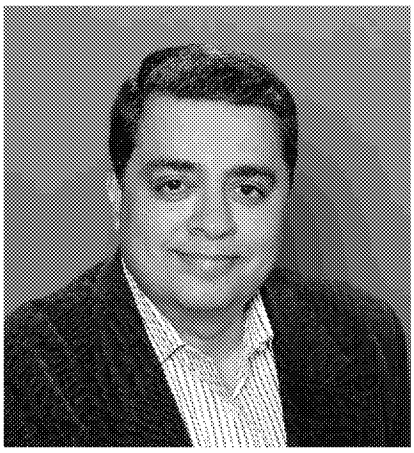
Cumulative Impacts Webinar:
Environmental Injustice and Disabilities
June 7, 2023 (12:00-1:00 pm ET)
Access Link (Webinar is for EPA Staff only)

Abstract

President Biden's new Executive Order 14096 on "Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All defines environmental justice as "the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability." While the inclusion of disabilities in the definition of environmental justice may be new, the intersection of social inequities and disability is not. Moreover, evidence of the intersection between disability, social inequity and natural disaster places the intensifying impacts of climate change at the center of this set of issues. Professor Jayajit Chakraborty of the University of Texas at El Paso and a member of the EPA Science Advisory Board has been the engine behind an emerging body of important and prescient work that examines the intersection of these three areas. His work covers a wide range of issues related to disability and the spatial distribution of air quality (PM2.5), pollution burdens (RMP, TSD, NPL and traffic), natural disasters (hurricanes, winter storms, and heatwaves), subsidized housing, and COVID-19 mortality and morbidity. Most of this research centers on Harris County, Texas, an epicenter for disproportionate environmental burden. Indeed, this research merely scratches the surface of an important set of issues for environmental justice. Dr. Chakraborty's research results highlight the need to consider disability issues in future research on environmental injustice and related health risk, in addition to commonly used categories such and race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The presentation will cover the various assumptions, methods and findings related to these studies. The intersectionality of this research speaks to the cumulative dimensions of issues of environmental injustice and disabilities, as well as the disproportionate nature of such impacts.

Biography



Dr. Jayajit Chakraborty is a Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology and the Founding Director of the Socio-Environmental & Geospatial Analysis (SEGA) Lab at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). He is also an Affiliate Professor in the UTEP Department of Earth, Environmental and Resource Sciences. He is currently serving as a member of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisory Board, Work Group for Review of Science Supporting EPA Decisions, and the first EPA Environmental Justice Science Committee. He was recently appointed to serve as the Chair of the Scientific Review Panel for the EPA's Environmental Justice Screen (EJScreen) Mapping and Screening Tool and a member of a National Academies Committee to support the White House Justice40 Initiative. As a broadly trained social scientist, Dr. Chakraborty's research interests encompass a wide range of contemporary environmental and public health issues. Specific topics include environmental justice, climate justice, social vulnerability to hazards/disasters, health equity, food security, and disability studies. His research utilizes a variety of traditional and emerging methodologies, including applications of GIS science and spatial statistical techniques, as well as social surveys and mixed-methods approaches. Information on his ongoing research projects is available here. Dr. Chakraborty has (co)authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications, including *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*.

Selected Articles on Disproportionate Impacts and Disabilities

- Chakraborty J, 2023 "COVID-19 and People with Disabilities: Social Inequalities in the Distribution of Pandemic Vulnerability" In Carey AC, Green SE, and Mauldin L (eds.) Disability in the Time of Pandemic (Research in Social Science and Disability). Emerald Publishing Limited: Bingley, UK; 15-29. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-354720230000013002
- Chakraborty J, Collins T W, and Grineski S E, 2022 "Disability and Subsidized Housing Residency: The Adverse Impacts of Winter Storm Uri in Metropolitan Texas" Disability and Health Journal, 101403; https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2022.101403
- Chakraborty J, 2022 "Disparities in Exposure to Fine Particulate Air Pollution for People with Disabilities in the US" Science of the Total Environment, 156791; https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.156791
- Chakraborty J, Collins T W, Grineski S E, and Aun J J, 2022 "Air Pollution Exposure Disparities in US Public Housing Developments" Scientific Reports-Nature, 12, 9887; https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598 -022-13942-3
- Chakraborty J, 2020 "Unequal Proximity to Environmental Pollution: An Intersectional Analysis of People with Disabilities in Harris County, Texas" The Professional Geographer, 72:4, 521-534; https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2020.1787181
- Chakraborty, J, 2020 "Social Inequities in the Distribution of COVID-19: An Intra-categorical Analysis of People with Disabilities in the U.S." Disability and Health Journal, 2021 Jan;14(1):101007; https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2020.101007
- Chakraborty J, Collins T W, Grineski S E, 2019 "Hurricane Harvey and people with disabilities: Disproportionate exposure to flooding in Houston, Texas" Social Science & Medicine, 226:4l, 176-181; https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.02.039
- Chakraborty J, 2019 "Proximity to extremely hazardous substances for people with disabilities: A case study in Houston, Texas" Disability and Health Journal, 12:1 121-125; https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2018.08.004