**Engaging Students in Research-Led Learning on Environmental Justice**

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I prefer to teach and learn about environmental justice by having students engage in active research in the local community. By doing research, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up findings, I like to think that students learn more about environmental justice issues in their local communities, connect with issues that are significant for them, develop research skills, and learn how to connect with community partners.

This semester, I am teaching a course in which the class is running as a research group, charged with assessing our state’s water security. We used archives to investigate the development of water services and infrastructure, policies related to freshwater protection, and practices of wastewater treatment. Students are now working in smaller research groups to map water quality and freshwater storage, to survey local people about their water conservation practices and concern for local water quality and environmental health, and to interview local officials on key causes of water pollution in our state.

Through hands-on research students are introduced to “fieldwork” as an important element of their geographic education. Locally based research is particularly appealing to students who are attracted to the discipline because they are interested in engaging in the world around them. In our northern Baltimore communities, dynamic cases of both environmental injustice and struggles for environmental justice are never hard to find or to feature in a variety of geography courses.

In the next few months, I will receive training in media and community engagement so that I am able to guide students in my ‘Ethics of Participation and Waste’ course to conduct video-recorded surveys on public attitudes toward various types of waste and pollution in our communities. My aim is for students to gain experience with the processes of research, to learn more about their local communities and their attitudes towards human relationships with nature and waste, and to get a better sense of how people across our local area are differently affected by waste and waste treatment.

As a largely qualitatively-trained geographer, I am interested in exploring new methods for incorporating geosciences into research-led learning activities in my classes, and to hearing from other EJ professors on how you bring local environmental justice issues into your classes.