Building Social Resilience in Great Lakes Areas of Concern Communities

Impacts of Marginalization

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Elements of Environmental Justice

- ▶ Distributional justice.
- ▶ Procedural justice.
- ▶ Interactional justice.

Recognitional justice.

Rigolon, Alessandro, Mariela Fernandez, Brandon Harris, and William Stewart. "An ecological model of environmental justice for recreation." *Leisure Sciences* (2019): 5-13.

Preston, Christopher, and Wylie Carr. "Recognitional justice, climate engineering, and the care approach." Ethics, Policy & Environment 21, no. 3 (2018): 308-323.

Great Lakes Areas of Concern (GL-AOCs)

Established in 1987 under Annex 1of the bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) to protect and restore the health of the Great Lakes

What?

- Mitigate or eliminate specific historical contamination

Why?

- Restore specific beneficial uses to the area

    (e.g. beaches and swimming areas open for use, fish that are safe to consume, healthy wildlife populations, and so on)

Great Lakes Areas of Concern (GL-AOCs) - continued

How does an AOC-community benefit?

- Physical remediation and restoration presumably increases benefit and well-being by eliminating or reducing harmful exposure to hazardous contaminants.
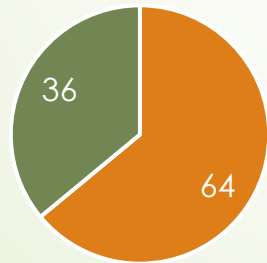
Who engages in the process?

- Remedial Action Plans (RAPs)
- Partnership-driven and collaboratively developed:
  - state, federal, tribal, city, business, organizations and residents
  - Members of the community - CACS
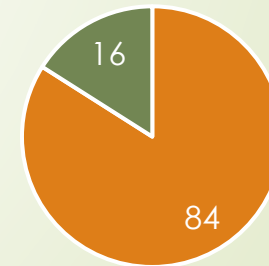
Equity: engagement and benefits

➡ Who participates in the CACs?

➡ Why does it matter?

- Under-represented voices in environmental organizations
- Whose values, interests, concerns, priorities, goals are represented?

Representation in U.S. Environmental Initiatives
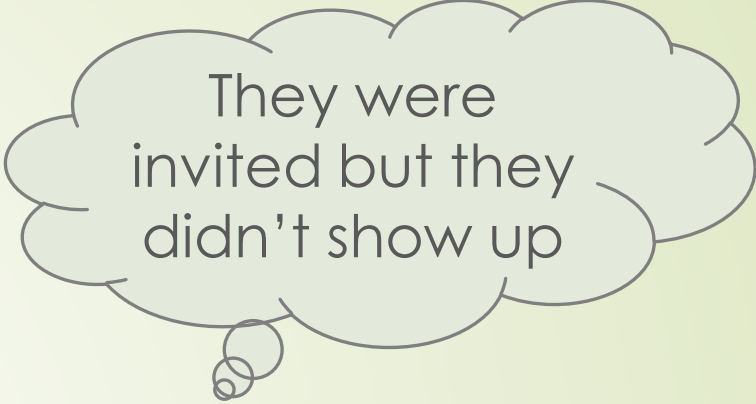
U.S. Population

■ White
■ People of color

36
64

16
84

Taylor, Dorceta E. *The state of diversity in environmental organizations*. Green 2.0 working group, 2014.

Barriers to Engagement:

They were invited but they didn't show up

➡ We're familiar with practical reasons that people miss meetings:

- disinterest, schedule conflicts, transportation barriers, childcare issues

➡ What are some barriers that are less talked about?

- Privileged professional spaces
- Privileged recreational spaces
- Previous adverse experiences
- Lack of trust

Examples of Harmful Discrimination

- racial profiling and privileged entitlement to public spaces and recreational activities

- hiring and promotion bias

- inequitable service or access to high-quality food

- non-inclusive language and style of communication in meetings and workshops

- lack of access to high-quality educational resources

- intimidation and physical violence

- poor access to healthcare

Communities in AOCs -
Disproportionate exposure to harmful contaminants

► Other disproportionate exposures?

In just healthcare alone, discriminatory treatment has been well-documented from clinical care to major surgical or advanced procedural interventions.

It's not just mortality that is affected when healthcare is inequitable. The conditions that lead to early mortality live with the individual and with the community and add to the burdens they bear daily; the conditions that allow discriminatory treatment

Geiger, H. Jack. "Health disparities: What do we know? What do we need to know? What should we do?." (2006).

Negative Impacts - Some examples

Historical Trauma is linked to:

- Depression, anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, fatigue, rage

- Heart disease, negative auto-immune response

- Substance abuse, suicide

Potential Impact of Historical Trauma

- physiological, chemical and neurological processes

- capacity to trust, learn, plan, act, hope, remember, and thrive

- conditions to meet universal human needs:

  - Physical conditions to survive.

  - Safe, stable environment.

  - Opportunities to develop self-esteem and social support.

Contextual Challenges of **Environmental Justice** in AOCs

- Unique worldviews
- Unique cultural and community experiences
- Complexity of
  - under-representation,
  - disproportionate burden, and
  - marginalization

Integrating worldviews, methods and "sound science"

Whose traditions, knowledge systems, values and interests are considered?

Considerations of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Western Science

- How do we validate data methods, collection and analysis?

- What criteria is used to define the boundaries of ecosystem approaches?

- What are some assumptions regarding knowledge transmission and translation?

Divergent or Integrative Sciences?

- Article 2 of the GLWQA refers to

  "science-based management [that is] based on best available science, research and knowledge, as well as traditional ecological knowledge, when available"

EPA's Environmental Justice: defined

~Interactional Justice

➤ The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies".

EPA. "Environmental Justice". <epa.gov/environmentaljustice>.

EPA, < https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

Environmental Justice – defined

Equitable distribution of burden
…and benefit?

~Distributional justice.

➧ No group of people…should bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies".

Procedural Justice

➤ Meaningful involvement means that " decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected", and that all community residents be given "appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions…that will affect their environment and/or health", so that their "contribution(s) can influence the regulatory agency's decisions".

Bridging Initiative

Cream City Conservation

A Milwaukee organization offering consultation workshops and trainings for local environmental industries interested in increasing internal equity and inclusion.

Cream City Consultation is also addressing the diversity gap in environmental initiatives through a training-to-employment program for young adults from under-represented populations.

Bridging Initiatives

N.E.A.R.

- **N**eurobiology
- **E**pigenetics,
- **A**dverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and
- **R**esiliency

NEAR Science & Community Wisdom Project

- A collaborative project to build the capacity of their communities to address the challenging Indigenous health and social issues related to ACEs.

Bridging Initiative

Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership

It endeavors to restore and protect the environment through the complementary models of Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing.

Practicing an Ethical Space approach fosters deep respect for different knowledge systems and worldviews, and it rewards transparent, honest, and authentic dialogue.

Two-Eyed Seeing is the practice of learning and using multiple learning systems, reconciling indigenous local knowledge with Western science.

Conclusion

- AOC projects link community health, well-being, and benefits directly to remediated and restored environmental conditions.

- Conditions that create and support marginalization can diminish benefit distribution, inhibit community engagement in decision-making (e.g. RAP processes), and enable harmful discrimination that negatively impacts health and well-being of marginalized populations.

- Identifying when, where, how and why harmful discrimination occurs and co-create strategies to break the cycle of marginalization is a critical step towards creating equitable and just environments.

- A genuine commitment to inclusive community collaborations requires new innovative ways of engaging individuals and communities across a broad spectrum of socio-economic and cultural differences.

Thank you.