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Environmental Justice: Improving Inclusion of Minorities in Environmental Work in Bloomington-Normal, IL

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Improving Inclusion of Minorities in Environmental Work in Bloomington-Normal, IL**

Abstract

The Ecology Action Center provides environmental education, information and outreach for McLean County, Illinois. In an effort to make services accessible to the entire county, the Ecology Action Center realizes the need to better reach the minority community in Bloomington-Normal. This study examines the environmental justice concerns in relation to minority involvement in environmental work; environmental concerns among minorities; and environmental outreach to minorities and low-income people. This project reveals that regardless of race, all people share environmental concerns; however, the kinds of concerns may differ. The culmination of this project provides suggestions for how the Ecology Action Center can improve and tailor its outreach to disadvantaged communities.

Introduction

The Ecology Action Center (EAC) in Normal, Illinois strives to “inspire and assist residents of McLean County in creating, strengthening, and preserving a healthy environment” (“Mission Statement”). However, past surveying conducted by the EAC indicates that this message is not reaching the minority community comprising approximately 14 percent of McLean County (Slattery 14, 2009; “Fact Sheet” 2008). This is of concern to the EAC for two reasons: it is failing to get its message to a portion of the population, but also, the fact that the minority community as a whole is not receiving this message raises an environmental justice issue.

The concept of environmental justice incorporates many elements. The United States Environmental Protection Agency’s comprehensive definition of environmental justice is

the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, culture, education, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair Treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal environmental programs and policies (“Frequently Asked Questions: Environmental Justice: US EPA” 2010).

Thus, environmental justice concerns consist of two main components: The disproportionate exposure of minorities and low-income people to environmental harms and the exclusion of

minorities and low-income people from the environmental policy process. The former component of equal protection is what started the environmental justice movement (Bullard 2005). Early studies, such as the 1987 United Church of Christ environmental justice study, showed that race and environmental disparities are strongly linked. Further, they showed that even when income is held constant, non-whites bare more environmental burdens than whites. This led to the development of the concept of environmental racism (Bullard, Mahai, Saha and Wright 1987).

Environmental injustices, in the form of disproportionate exposure to environmental harms, have existed for centuries in the United States. Starting with the maltreatment of the Native Americans with the arrival of the Europeans, into the turn of the twentieth century with African-Americans and Eastern and Southern European immigrants forced into dangerous factory jobs during the early 1900s, as well as Latino and Asian immigrants working in the agriculture sector. All these groups faced environmental hazards, long workdays and nights and inhumane living conditions. This history lays the framework for how minorities and economically challenged people are treated in the present day (Taylor 2005).

Besides the minority community's disproportionate exposure to environmental harms, this community has also been left out of traditional environmentalism. This component is of particular interest to my study because it pertains to the inclusion of minorities in environmental work. The environmental movement was historically comprised of mostly upper-middle class, whites concerned with land conservation. For some, the interest was fueled by the desire for sport hunting and others, like John Muir, advocated for preservation. Because this socio-economic group did not face the same health concerns as the minorities or working class, environmental health issues were never brought up. Neither the conservationists nor the preservationists considered the concerns of people not in their "in-group." This is not to say that minority and low-income groups did not attempt to voice their concerns, nor that they did not face environmental problems. Rather, their attempts had little success, due to the fact that their basic human rights were not even met because of racial oppression (Taylor 2005). By the 1960s and 1970s, pollution and chemical exposure were concerns of the general public, due in large part to the works of Rachel Carson¹¹. However, as environmental organizations in this country rapidly grew, the number of minorities in these groups did not. Instead, many people of color organized their own environmental groups to take action (Taylor 2005). It was not until the 1990s that environmental justice issues were more openly recognized by the mainstream environmental organizations. This mostly was a result of major environmental organizations being under fire for the exclusion of minorities (Navarro 2009). Still today, while 33 percent of the United States' population are racial minorities, a survey in 2002 found that less than 13 percent of environmental organizations' staff are minorities (Gentile 2009). The average environmental club member continues to be white, college-educated and over 40 years old. Even prominent activist Jerome Ringo often feels that he is "the only environmentalist in the room

¹ Rachel Carson was a writer and biologist who wrote many articles and books, most notably *Silent Spring* in 1962. *Silent Spring* questions the use of chemicals and warns the public about the health effects. This was the first time that someone openly questioned scientists, industry and the government. Many call her the founder of the contemporary environmental movement (Lear 1998).

who is not white” (Navarro 1, 2009). Although environmental groups are actively trying to be more inclusive and listen to the concerns of the minority and low-income communities, some minorities believe they are not pursuing this actively enough (Nararro 2009). Thus, the Ecology Action Center is not alone in having difficulties reaching the minority community.

My study examines environmental concerns among minorities in Bloomington-Normal, IL and identifies outreach strategies that will aide the EAC in better serving the minority and low-income community. In order to better understand how to include people of color in environmental organizations, I first explore existing literature on environmental behaviors and beliefs among minorities. I then review the literature on important factors for better environmental outreach to communities that face environmental injustices, including information on both minority ethnic groups and low-income people because both are greatly affected by environmental injustices. However, I focus more on people of color because past EAC surveys show that minorities are particularly missing the EAC’s message. The largest minority groups in Bloomington-Normal are African-Americans and Latinos, thus they are my focus populations (“Fact Sheet” 2008). After surveying the literature and conducting interviews and surveys within the community, I demonstrate how these outreach ideas can be applied to the concerns of the minority and low-income communities in Bloomington-Normal. Finally, I compiled my findings and developed a handbook for the Ecology Action Center. Included are outreach strategies that address minorities’ environmental concerns as well as marketing ideas geared specifically to the minority and low-income communities for the EAC’s existing programs on recycling and storm water management.

Literature Review

As stated earlier, environmental justice covers a variety of areas. The failure to include minorities in environmental groups and listen to their concerns is often an area of environmental justice that is left out or overlooked. Generally, as an outsider to the minority and low-income communities, many environmental groups are unfamiliar with concerns in minority and low-income neighborhoods. Because of this, there are many misconceptions of minorities’ environmental attitudes. Thus it is very important to fully understand the environmental needs and concerns of minorities in order to connect with the minority and low-income communities.

Minorities and environmental behaviors

Many studies indicate that minorities are not as involved in traditional environmental actions like recycling as are whites (Johnson, Bowker and Cordell 2004). Two such studies (Peretz, Tonn and Folz’s (2005) and Clark and Maantay’s (2005)) indicate that low recycling rates are consistently reported among minorities. However, to understand why this is the case, many factors need to be considered. The literature suggests that access to services is a contributor to this lack of environmental behavior. For example, Clarke and Maantay (2005) note that recycling services often are not provided for public housing units. Yet, minorities often make up a large portion of public housing residents. (For example, only about ten percent of

Chicago's Housing Choice Voucher Program²² participants are white ("Chicago Housing Choice Voucher Demographics" 2008).) Widening this disparity is that "a majority of African-American public housing residents live in poverty-concentrated neighborhoods, while their white counterparts live in more affluent areas' ("The Location and Racial Composition of Public Housing in the United States" 1). This suggests that the lack of recycling services for public housing, which clearly houses low-income people, a high percentage of whom are minorities, is an indicator of an environmental injustice. More research in this specific area would be necessary to determine the strength of this correlation.

Consideration needs to be given to aspects of environmental behaviors besides recycling, as minorities may participate more in other environmental activities. That is, basing environmental behaviors on mainstream actions may not accurately represent the whole population. As noted by Whittaker, Segura and Bowler, minorities may be more apt to be involved with issues that focus on environmental problems at the community level, such as pollution and waste, and less with global environmental issues (Whittaker, Segura and Bowler 2005). Evidence from this idea comes from studies of environmental attitudes.

Minorities and environmental attitudes

There have been several studies conducted on environmental attitudes of racial minorities. Initial thoughts by some in the environmental movement were to assume that minorities did not care about the environment or environmental issues (Gentile 2009). According to Robert Jones, this assumption has been widely spread among the media, policymakers and even academic circles. The results of the studies have been conflicting, with various degrees of environmental attitudes expressed among ethnic groups (Johnson, Bowker and Cordell 2004). A New Ecological Paradigm³³ (NEP) study that looked at environmental views and behavior of different ethnicities shows that whites have a higher NEP score than non-whites. However, this may be related to the fact that scores are based on certain attitudes and behaviors traditionally associated with environmentalism in the United States, such as recycling, outdoor enjoyment and reading environmental magazines or newspapers. The NEP study acknowledges that had different environmental topics been included in the study, the results may have turned out differently (Johnson et al. 2004). Other authors point out that more traditional environmental campaigns such as saving endangered species may not be a priority for low-income people because more immediate and closer to home needs require their attention (Agyeman, Doppelt, Lynn and Hatic 2007). Jones also points out that African-Americans "consider environmental concerns as a serious set of concerns among a set of utterly grave ones (i.e. conditions of blacks, crime, substance abuse, and health care)" (Jones 212, 1998). A common viewpoint among minorities is that environmental organizations focus too much on land conservation and do not devote enough attention to public health issues that disproportionately

² The Housing Choice Voucher Program was formerly known as Section 8. Eligible low-income individuals receive vouchers to lease or buy affordable housing that should be "safe and decent" ("About the Housing Choice Voucher Program")

³ The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale is used to measure generalized environmental beliefs. Each item is measured on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the most pro-environmental stance. 15 items is standard, however this study only used 10 items (Johnson et al. 2004).

affect their communities. Thus, minorities do not have interest in participating in traditional environmental campaigns (Gentile 2009). Contrary to some studies that say whites care more about the environment, Jones' comprehensive study shows minorities are supportive of environmental issues, sometimes even more than whites. For example, the study reveals that African-Americans are more supportive of increased environmental funding than whites. Overall, the literature shows that environmental beliefs and attitudes vary among all people, but that in the big picture Americans, regardless of race, show a high level of environmental concern.

Outreach to minority communities

From the above studies, it is apparent that minorities' environmental interests often differ from that of mainstream environmental groups. Thus, it is important that environmental organizations recognize minorities' interests and concerns in order to engage the community. Once those interests, concerns and needs are recognized, it is important that they are presented in an appropriate way. The literature suggests that attention should be paid to language of communication, framing of message, and delivery of message.

Language is often the main barrier for outreach services. Any information intended for a non-English speaking part of the community needs to be translated. If information is only presented in English, non-English speakers may assume that the information is not important or relevant to them (Leroux 2000). Translations should always be looked over by a native speaker to ensure that literal translations do not lose the message (Hosack 2010). Additionally, organizations may want to consider translating information from English to the foreign language and then back to English to ensure validity (Zelezny, Chua, and Aldrich 2000).

In addition to the language used, visuals should also be included as they help portray messages effectively. Information should also be fairly simple and straightforward (Hosack 2010). Scientific terminology should be avoided and terms should be defined if necessary ("Tailoring Outreach Programs to Minority and Disadvantaged Communities and Children" 2006). Smaller details like colors and numbers are also important. For example, in some Chinese cultures, red symbolizes good luck and yellow does not, while certain numbers are luckier than others (Leroux 2000). A report prepared by the state of Maryland suggests that images, sounds and ideas unique to minority communities are used to draw people's attention ("Task Force for Minority Participation in the Environmental Community" 2007).

Beyond language issues, messages must be framed properly, preferably relating the topic back to the community. The "Task Force for Minority Participation in the Environmental Community" report from the state of Maryland suggests themes such as "the environment is close to home," or connections to health issues, blight in neighborhoods, or safety. Messages must relate to the views and priorities of communities ("Task Force for Minority Participation in the Environmental Community" 2007). If possible, the target audience should know what the direct benefit would be from participating ("Tailoring Outreach Programs to Minority and Disadvantaged Communities and Children" 2006). Sometimes direct environmental messages are not the most effective. Different factors also motivate different people. For example, a public relations and consulting firm in San Diego found that convenience and legal issues were motivational factors in the Hispanic community. Thus, for their oil-recycling program they

focused on how convenient oil recycling can be and on illegal dumping fines. Other recycling campaigns emphasized keeping the streets clean and the connection to children's future (Leroux 2000). Agyeman et al. (2007) highlight the need for framing issues or problems so that they "tap into people's dreams and fears in their homes and local communities and address their concerns" (Agyeman et al. 134, 2007). It is important that messages are empowering and informative, but that they do not increase fear. Agyeman et al. (2007) and McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (2000) caution that over-threatening messages may cause more fear and result in people ignoring the issue.

Finally, the way that the message is delivered is also important. For media messages, it is important to find out what television stations and radio stations are most used by people in the targeted community. Take advantage of minority oriented media ("Tailoring Outreach Programs to Minority and Disadvantaged Communities and Children" 2006). In Bloomington, Illinois, the West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan⁴⁴ reports that most residents receive neighborhood information from the newspaper (69 percent), neighbors (60 percent), television (40 percent) and the radio (38 percent) (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008). Notice that a print source is at the top, while more "hit-and-miss" sources are at the bottom. Also notice that the Internet is not a major source of community information for this population. This topic will be further explored below.

In Jane Catherine Dailey's (2008) dissertation on Internet use and environmental justice, as in the case of West Bloomington, participants also expressed traditional communication sources as means of finding out neighborhood information and saw the Internet as more of a research tool. As more environmental information becomes web-based, it is important to consider what this means for different groups of people. The Internet can be a useful tool because of the wealth of information, but only if you have access to it. Many studies have looked into the affects of the Digital Divide⁵⁵ on minority and low-income populations. The overall findings are that the same groups that face environmental injustices often are left out of the Internet world. Physical barriers play a role in this from the costs of owning a computer, to the costs of access to the Internet, and upgrades. However, Dailey (2008) believes that skills and social and cultural factors are important variables in the limitation of Internet use, too. The lack of computer skills appears to be a major deterrent from participating in the online community. Most users in Dailey's study reported receiving computer training in their schooling or at work, which could leave out sectors of the population. In her dissertation, the author references a study that found that among "working class and poor Hispanics and African Americans*social and cultural barriers remained in place despite computer access centers, Internet-connected schools and libraries, and computer training programs" (Dailey 19, 2008). Additionally, Dailey (2008) notes that the historical distrust of technology among African-Americans may be attributed to the

⁴ The West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan was compiled by Teska Associates Inc. with the help of the West Bloomington Task Force, which is now the West Bloomington Revitalization Partnership. The plan identifies areas that are functioning well and areas that could be improved in West Bloomington. Topics include greening, youth, safety and well-being, economic development, housing, and education (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008).

⁵ The Digital Divide refers to the gap among Internet users. The most affected groups include minorities, low-income people, and children in a single-parent household residing in cities and sometimes rural areas (Dailey 2008).

lower numbers of African-Americans online (57 percent of African-Americans compared to 70 percent of whites). Her research further notes that some African-Americans express concerns about cyber-racism and about not being accurately represented online. Concerns also include that the Internet is tailored to the white, middle class population. Moreover, many ethnic communities value the opinions and actions of their family and friends. Thus by the social diffusion theory⁶⁶, their friends and family's usage often influences their Internet use – both in the amount of use and the purpose. Another study in the dissertation found that African-Americans are particular in what they use the Internet for; what they use the Internet for is usually related to their own cultural experiences including spiritual information, sports and music (Dailey 2008). This suggests that although there is a plethora of environmental information online, including environmental justice information, minority and low-income groups may not seek it out. Because of this clear divide between the use of the Internet by middle class/whites and low-income groups/minority groups, environmental organizations need to be careful in their reliance on the Internet.

The literature further demonstrates that besides the use of the media, other ways of delivering messages are very effective. Agyeman et al. (2007) notes that sometimes the messenger is more important than the actual message. The messenger should “understand the socio-cultural values of the stakeholders...and be able to engage in an open and equal dialogue between stakeholders” (Agyeman et al. 135, 2007). A scholarly person may not be the best messenger even though he or she is very knowledgeable on the issues. The “Task Force on Minority Participation in the Environmental Community” report notes that “[t]he message coming from a member of the same minority community is better received than the same message from an outsider” (“Task Force on Minority Participation in the Environmental Community” 2007). Agyeman et al. (2007) also point out that target audiences may be skeptical of people and programs from outside of their community. For this reason, Agyeman et al. (2007) and Hosack (2010) stress the importance of building trust. Hosack (2010) argues that establishing trust takes time, effort, patience, and persistence with the Latino community. The best way to do this is to engage with this community, attend local events, and visit with people to further understand Latino culture. Once a connection has been made, it is important to maintain that connection and follow through. Moreover, “[i]f Latinos feel that an agency truly cares about them and wants to help them, they are more likely to return” (Hosack 3, 2010). Hosack also notes that most Latinos hear about events or organizations by word of mouth.

An added issue to consider when dealing with ethnic populations is the immigration status of individuals in these groups. Important considerations when interacting with undocumented Latinos include the following: organizations need to ensure that any personal information (if necessary) is kept strictly confidential. Many Latinos also do not have driver's licenses or car insurance, so events need to be easily accessible to them. If possible, bringing information directly to them is most effective (Hosack 2010).

For all these reasons, Agyeman et al. (2007) and Hosack (2010) suggest that perhaps the best way to utilize the above measures to reach members of the minority community is to

⁶⁶ Social diffusion is a theory in social psychology that suggests that people change their behaviors to mimic the actions of their peers (Koger and Du Nann Winter 2010).

collaborate with existing organizations in the community. If local community members already have a relationship and have developed trust with other organizations, they will be more receptive to a new program. The Maryland report suggests partnering with places of worship, as does Hosack (2010). Furthermore, Dailey (2008) reports that religious organizations have ties with positive influence for environmental activism. Environmentally active ministers and environmentally active congregants were correlated. More influential was the actions of the minister or leader and not just his or her words. If the minister or leader practiced environmental behaviors, this strongly impacted the congregants' actions (Dailey 2008). Overall, partnering with other community organizations is one of the most effective ways of reaching communities most affected by environmental injustices.

From the review of the literature, it is apparent that ethnic minorities and economically challenged people and white and economically stable people value the environment, but have different lenses for viewing environmental issues. Because of this, it is important that the concerns of everyone are addressed by environmental organizations. In order to do so, environmental out-reach groups must identify areas of environmental concern in minority and low-income communities, by engaging in an open dialogue that will also develop a sense of trust. Careful use of messages and outreach should be considered to account for cultural differences. Organizations should also choose messengers that will be a good fit for the community. Collaborating with other community organizations is very beneficial to further gain the trust of community members and to better reach the population.

Research Design and Methodology

My primary goal of this research project was to find out what the environmental needs are of the minority community in Bloomington-Normal and how to effectively address them. This information was compiled into a handbook for the Ecology Action Center that included outreach and marketing suggestions. In order to obtain this goal of learning about the environmental needs of the minority and low-income communities, I familiarized myself with the general concerns of the West Side of Bloomington and the Latino communities. I also tried to understand areas of pride in these communities to better connect with them.

I began my research by analyzing recent reports that identify several areas of concern in Bloomington-Normal. The first report that I looked at is called the "West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan" compiled by the West Bloomington Revitalization Partnership (WBRP). The West Side is home to many low income and minority community members, particularly African Americans. The plan highlights key issues in the community and possible projects in the areas of greening, youth, safety, economic development, housing and education (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008). I discuss how tying these topics to the EAC's goals can be done in the next section.

I also analyzed two reports by the Hispanic Families Work Group⁷⁷ – “Hispanic and Latino Community Study: Needs and Assets” and “Confianza: Hispanic and Latino Community Report: Building Trust.” The first report identifies the top eleven needs of the Latino community in Bloomington-Normal and the latter highlights outreach methods. Additionally, I reviewed a report compiled by a State Farm Intern, Heather DeLong, entitled, “Connecting Hispanics to the Green Initiative.” These, too, are discussed in more detail in the following section.

In addition to surveying literature specific to Bloomington-Normal, I spoke with community leaders to gain insight on better outreach. First, I met with Valerie Dumser, the WBRP President. Ms. Dumser is also very involved with the WBRP Greening Committee, which does various landscaping projects on the Westside and has founded three community gardens. She shared outreach suggestions, challenges to implementing programs and how the EAC can utilize the WBRP. I also met with Alex Cardona, Chairman of the Hispanic Families Work Group and member of HERO (Hispanic Employee Resource Organization) at State Farm, where he works in the Environmental Affairs Department. Mr. Cardona shared various ideas for marketing and message framing.

To better understand environmental concerns for each major minority group in this community, Latinos and African-Americans, I developed two focus groups and planned to ask them the same questions, but in two different languages. One focus group was for Spanish speakers and the other was for English speakers. The focus group for the Spanish speakers was intended for an English class taught at the Western Avenue Community Center in Bloomington, Illinois. I ran into difficulties with the Spanish speaking focus group in that only two people attended class on the day of the focus group. Thus, instead of the focus group I distributed surveys to Latino class members.

Beni Kawakita from the Multicultural Leadership Program helped me organize the minority English speaking focus group. However, the individuals who agreed to participate were all highly educated professionals that did not represent the educational demographics of the average population. Scheduling among participants was also difficult making it not possible to hold a focus group. To get feedback from English speaking minorities, namely African-Americans, I distributed surveys at the Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington-Normal.

Lastly, my literature review indicated that certain types of housing may not offer recycling services. I spoke with Rob Henson, Director of Public Works for the City of Bloomington, to clarify who can participate in the recycling program.

Due to the difficulties of distributing surveys, both the Spanish-speaking sample size and English-speaking minority sample size were small. For this reason, survey data used is not intended to be an absolute representation of the Latino and African-American communities in Bloomington-Normal.

⁷⁷ “The Hispanic Families Work Group is a non-profit organization consisting of volunteers who share a passion for improving and creating opportunities for Hispanic families in McLean County since September 2004” (Bliss).

Throughout my research, I was concerned that as an outsider who does not fit in with the ethnic or socio-economic status of the population I was studying, residents might feel uncomfortable sharing concerns with me because I could not empathize with them. I found that this did not present a serious issue because I was a familiar face to some of the Spanish speakers who took the survey. Additionally, the Boys and Girls Club in Bloomington was my liaison for distributing surveys to the English-speaking participants.

Summary of the Research

Examination of West Bloomington Residents and African-Americans in Bloomington-Normal

West Bloomington consists of Olde Towne (south of Market Street), and Gridley, Allin and Prickett (GAP – north of Market Street). It is racially diverse and is comprised of about 24 percent African-Americans and 8.6 percent Latinos. The median household income is \$26,740 and 17.4 percent live in poverty (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008). When I refer to West Bloomington, it is important to note that the information refers to all West Bloomington residents unless specifically noted, both white and non-white, many of whom are low-income. West Bloomington takes much pride in its diverse and historic community and values its strong sense of community maintained through the various social service agencies and places of worship. The West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan shows that most West Bloomington residents receive neighborhood information via the newspaper (69 percent), from neighbors (60 percent), from the television (40 percent) and from the radio (39 percent). Of those surveyed at the Boys and Girls Club, namely African-Americans from Bloomington and Normal, most received community information from family and friends, followed by community centers, television and radio, then newspapers and the Internet and lastly churches. This information from the Neighborhood Plan and the surveys indicates the importance of utilizing multiple media sources for outreach.

The Neighborhood Plan highlights areas of concern in the community as well as characteristics of the community that residents enjoy. Of particular interest to my research, the West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan reveals that community members enjoy the mature trees and the green spaces in West Bloomington as well as access to the Constitution Trail. Overall, they are also satisfied with the public library, the garbage and recycling services and public transportation. It is interesting to note that although the community is satisfied with recycling as noted in the Neighborhood Plan, the EAC feels that there can be improvement based on the McLean County Recycling and Waste Assessment compiled by the EAC in May 2009 (Slattery 2009). This shows that what West Bloomington desires and what the EAC wants do not coincide and addressing this issue may be more challenging. From the Neighborhood Plan, it is apparent that the biggest concern for West Bloomington is clearly safety. Residents would like to see more monitoring of parks by the police and improved lighting along streets, sidewalks and alleys. Another aspect that links crime and the environment is blight. Residents would also like better maintenance of the streets, sidewalks and buildings (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008).

This local interest is supported by scholarly findings in the literature, which indicates that crime and the natural environment are linked. A study by Frances E. Kuo and William C.

Sullivan from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign indicates that vegetation is a crime-reducing factor (Kuo and Sullivan 2001). Kuo and Sullivan surveyed literature and conducted research that suggests that vegetation can lower crime in poor urban areas. Greenery can reduce property damage and violent crime in several ways. The first is that more greenery in neighborhoods encourages people to spend more time outdoors. This in turn results in an increase of surveillance in the community. Kuo and Sullivan's literature review revealed that criminals tend to avoid areas with a higher level of surveillance. In addition, vegetation can serve as a territorial marker, which makes burglaries less attractive for criminals, even if there is no actual increase in surveillance. Kuo and Sullivan further point to vegetation as a factor that reduces symptoms of mitigating mental fatigue, which is linked to violent actions. Their research and study concludes that with other crime factors constant, areas with high vegetation corresponded with low crime incidences and that areas with low levels of vegetation corresponded with high crime rates (Kuo and Sullivan 2001). However, it is important to point out that areas with very dense vegetation may increase the perception of crime, so vegetation must not be view obstructing.

West Bloomington residents indicated that they would like to see more trees planted in the neighborhood as well as more beautification projects. The previous paragraph demonstrates that more well maintained vegetation can increase safety and improve the aesthetics of West Bloomington, while also enhancing other environmental goals by contributing to a carbon sink⁸⁸. More greenery may also encourage residents to take advantage of the outdoors. The West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan indicates that residents would like to be able to walk to work, schools and stores more (Teska Associates, Inc. 2008). A heightened sense of security along with sidewalk repairs and appropriate lighting would allow residence to utilize walking.

The broken window theory also suggests that when punishments for small crimes are enforced, larger crimes are less likely to occur (Gladwell 2002). Reducing blight by keeping up with repairs and cleaning up the community may reduce crime. Again, by social diffusion when people see their peers engaging in pro-environmental actions, such as not littering, they are more likely to do so as well. Currently, the City of Bloomington is considering a "Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance" which would crack down on vacant and derelict buildings and could contribute to a cleaner and safer environment ("Proposed Draft" Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance" 2010).

Of those surveyed at the Boys and Girls Club in Bloomington, specifically African-Americans, many enjoyed the services and events in the community, especially for children. Responses for concerns in Bloomington-Normal varied with most people interested in more community events, particularly for teenagers and young adults. One respondent noted that more cultural events for people of color would also be a good addition to community events. Some were also concerned with theft and better policing and job security. These issues may be addressed by more greenery and better maintenance as suggested above. One topic that overlapped with general concerns and environmental concerns was public transit. Multiple people reported that there needs to be more public transportation with better bus routes. One

⁸ Carbon sinks are natural features that absorb carbon dioxide and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

respondent noted specifically the lack of public transit in West Bloomington. Most people also highlighted that the bus should run later in the evening and more frequently and provide service on Sundays. These changes to the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System would make public transportation more convenient for residents and help move towards a more public transit oriented community, which benefits the environment.

The African-American survey results for recycling indicate that there can be more improvement. About half of respondents reported recycling and that they have recycling services available where they live. When asked what makes recycling difficult, several said that it is not hard and they do not recycle because of apathy or busyness. Some indicated that there is not a drop off location close to where they live, they do not know the schedule, they do not own blue recycling bins and that curbside pick up would make recycling easier. From this information, it is clear that recycling information concerning locations and schedules can be better distributed. Drop off locations and recycling bins may need to be further examined to determine how they can be more effective. The other topic that the EAC was interested in was water. The survey respondents shared that they feel the water quality ranges from poor to good. Most people were at least slightly worried about water quality. Their concerns about the sources of pollution were first from industry, followed by individuals, and then agriculture and cars. More education can be done to inform individuals of the sources of pollution and the actual quality of water.

Examination of Latinos in Bloomington-Normal

There are an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 documented and undocumented Latinos living in McLean Country (Bliss). The “Hispanic and Latino Community Study: Needs and Assets” report primarily focuses on “blue collar” Latinos from various generations⁹. They reside in six general areas. In Bloomington: the south side (South Hill), far south side, near west side (Downtown), far west side, and the east side (Veterans Parkway). In Normal, most Latinos live on the far north side (Bliss). The “Confianza: Hispanic and Latino Community Report: Building Trust” reveals that many Latinos receive information from family and friends. Of the Latinos that I surveyed, newspaper, church, radio and television were the top sources of community news. Using these means of media may be more effective in reaching Latinos.

The HFWG report highlights eleven top issues among Latinos in Bloomington-Normal. Primary concerns deal with immigration and legal issues such as obtaining a driver’s license, insurance and healthcare. Responses regarding community concerns varied considerably among

⁹ The Latinos in Bloomington-Normal can be categorized into three general groups. First-generation immigrants are people who immigrated to the United States and tend to have arrived in the past ten years as small families or individuals. Second-generation are usually children born to immigrants and can refer to children who immigrated when they were very young, but mostly grew up in the United States. They also usually consist of small extended families that arrived in the 1980s. Third-generation immigrants are grandchildren of immigrants that have lived in the United States more than thirty years and have grown to a large extended family (Hosack; Bliss).

the Latinos that I surveyed. Concerns and improvements can be categorized into the general topics including crime, city maintenance (i.e. streets and sidewalks), legal issues, employment, and recreational. However, when asked what aspects they liked about Bloomington-Normal, many Latinos indicated that they enjoyed the safety and calmness of the community. Some of the aforementioned issues may be addressed by improving city infrastructure and more greenery as mentioned earlier.

One of the main concerns identified in the HFWG report that can tie into the environment is transportation. Because many Latinos do not have either drivers' licenses or car insurance they are unable to drive. However, public transportation is not always a viable option either. As noted above, many Latinos live on the city outskirts where the bus lines do not travel, so they cannot utilize public transportation. Expansion of the bus schedule and hours would allow more Latinos to take advantage of public transportation, while at the same time further advancing the community environmental goal of increasing use of public transit.

Specific areas of environmental concern expressed among the Latinos surveyed also varied. Responses included overall pollution, inconvenience of public transportation, litter, and planting more trees. As stated earlier, these issues may be addressed by better city maintenance, increased vegetation and an improved public transit system.

One of the EAC's main programs is recycling. Of the Latinos surveyed, most said recycling is available where they live. All reported that they recycle ranging from sometimes to always. In response to how to make recycling easier, recycling bins was the most common answer. Some suggested labeling bins, different colored bins and separate bins. This indicates that recycling bins should be more uniform and distinct from garbage receptacles. Concerning water quality, almost all of the Latinos surveyed felt that the water quality is good. When asked more specifically about water pollution, responses varied with most indicating concerns about pollution from industry followed by agriculture, pesticides, chemicals and trash. This indicates that more education can be done to increase awareness of household contributors to water pollution.

Latinos and Outreach

After speaking with Mr. Cardona and reviewing the State Farm report prepared by Heather DeLong, "Connecting Hispanics to the Environment," several considerations should be taken when marketing to the Latino community. Terming something as "green" does not resonate with Latinos, especially the first generation (DeLong). Doing something because it is "green" and creates a "feel good feeling" is not something that many Latinos identify with. Rather, environmental actions should be framed in other ways that do not necessarily have a direct environmental focus. Mr. Cardona highlights that anything that will allow people to save money is a draw. Another area that is very important to Latinos is family. Emphasis on children and providing for future generations is another good frame for messages. Mr. Cardona also suggested the idea of "greenvenience." Marketing an activity as simple and easy will make people consider it more seriously (Cardona).

Mr. Cardona also stressed that having a Latino staff member at the EAC would be very helpful. A familiar face is more welcoming and Latinos are more likely to engage with someone that is more similar to them (Cardona; Hosack 2010). The “Task Force for Minority Participation in the Environmental Community” report from the state of Maryland also suggests hiring a minority to act as a liaison. Mr. Cardona also emphasized taking advantage of the Latino radio shows in the community and attending community events.

Overall minority outreach

Sometimes a “green” frame is not the most effective. Ms. Dumser mentioned that WBRP hosted a few composting and recycling workshops at one of the community garden, but no one attended them. However, children’s projects at the garden that did not necessarily have an environmental theme have been shown to be successful. Mr. Cardona also shared the concept of avoiding “green” as a subject and rather as a theme under the larger topic. He used State Farm’s green driving initiative as an example. Instead of “green” as the main topic, green driving suggestions are under the big topic of driving and are weaved throughout the program.

Both Mr. Cardona and Ms. Dumser suggested targeting youth. Several studies show that younger people have stronger pro-environmental attitudes (Klineberg, McKeever and Rothenbach). Targeting a group that is more receptive to environmental messages may help spread educational messages. Youth may then share environmental messages with their parents and friends and encourage them to take action. This approach is also used by the EAC for its general programs. Ms. Dumser expressed that with kids making programs and activities fun can be difficult with the competition of the computer and Internet. Creative use of social media, however, may be useful in spreading environmental messages. Both mentioned that incentives and give aways would be more likely to get people’s attention and have environmental messages stick with people.

Proposals

General Information

All information provided by the Ecology Action Center should be translated into Spanish. Next, information should be distributed through appropriate sources. It is important that the EAC does not rely on the Internet and its website too much for distributing information. The EAC should take advantage of media sources tailored to African-Americans and Latinos. Posting information in places that minorities and low-income people visit frequently and partnering with organizations are also useful. Establishing trust is very important as an outsider. Collaborating with other organizations will help the EAC become a familiar face in the community. See attached directory of minority organizations.

If possible, the EAC should hire minority staff members or interns. Familiar faces are more welcoming and can help encourage interaction between the targeted minority groups and the EAC. More minorities on the Board of Directors would also ensure that there is more minority inclusion within the organization.

The EAC already provides many environmental education programs for young people, but targeting youth in other ways may be beneficial as well. The use of social media is one way to reach out to youth. RE3.org is an organization based out of North Carolina that uses social media to promote recycling. The video and sound clips are creative and clever, which captures people's attention and presents a new face to recycling.

Addressing Latino's Concerns

Transportation

Transportation seems to be the main concern that overlaps with Latino's needs and the environment. Currently, the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System website is not Spanish-user friendly. Translation of the bus information and the distribution of the map and schedule to appropriate locations would be beneficial. Highlighting the bus is a convenient alternative if you do not have a driver's license draws on the suggestion made by Mr. Cardona of presenting an action as convenient and beneficial to the individual. Also mentioning the potential money savings by using public transportation would be a draw - no upfront costs of purchasing a car and no repair costs. Other savings include the monthly pass and that children under 5 years old ride free. Additionally, senior citizens age 65 or older can ride the fixed route lines for free. To obtain a Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System (B-N PTS) ID, one needs to go to the B-N PTS office and show some kind of identification that verifies their age. The EAC may consider co-hosting a program with a community center that would help older Latinos obtain a bus pass.

Recycling

The EAC's website offers a lot of recycling information in Spanish. Because many Latinos do not have recycling services where they live, as indicated by the waste audit conducted by the EAC, creating a map with drop off locations and distributing it would be helpful along with the information about what can and cannot be recycled. Emphasis should be given to how convenient recycling can be. For example, highlighting that you can drop off your recyclables while you are already out doing errands at one of the larger stores with a drop off would demonstrate that recycling is not a hassle. Additionally, because monetary incentives are attractive, providing information on companies that pay individuals for larger amounts of some recyclables may encourage some people to recycle. Lastly, as indicated by the responses to my survey, distinct recycling containers may make recycling easier.

According to the Superintendent of Waste Management for the City of Bloomington, Rob Henson, all areas of Bloomington except businesses have the opportunity to participate in the recycling program. He said that the trucks go to all the public housing units as well as the trailer parks, where many Latinos live. For many apartment complexes however, it is more cost effective for the landlord to pay a single waste-hauling fee than to pay for each individual unit. Thus, unless landlords decide to participate in a recycling program, the best way for individuals to recycle is through the drop off locations. Distributing this information to apartments and the trailer parks as well as community centers would be beneficial.

Another suggestion by Mr. Cardona is to somehow provide recycling at the soccer fields in Normal where many Latinos play in soccer leagues during the summer. Because of the large number of water bottles and sports drink there would be a need for recycling. Additionally, the EAC could provide reusable water bottles that had information in both English and Spanish that would encourage people to seek out more information about the EAC.

Water

Of the Latinos surveyed, the majority did not express great concern about water quality. However, from the survey it is clear that more education can be done about the sources of pollution. The EAC already has a translated cartoon poster about storm water management that should be more widely distributed in the community. Additionally, framing storm water management as a children's health issue and providing a healthy environment for future generations would be beneficial. Another aspect related to water quality is mercury in fish. Half of the Latinos surveyed fish and eat their catch in local waters. There should be proper signage that is translated at Evergreen Lake that informs fishermen of fishing advisories for certain populations. This information may be a useful addition to the EAC's website. The EAC could also collaborate with the Community Health Care Clinic in Normal to share mercury information with Latino patients.

Addressing West Bloomington and African-Americans' Concerns

Blight

Crime and blight seem to be the main concerns for residents on the West Side. Several groups have already taken initiatives to help beautify the area. The Greening Committee of the West Bloomington Revitalization Partnership continues to provide plantings on street corners, particularly Market Street. EAC members could take part in their greening efforts to show involvement in the community. The EAC may even consider a "Sponsor a Tree" project for EAC members to support the Greening Committee. Several groups including the Citizens Beautification Committee from the City of Bloomington and a few neighborhood associations have hosted community cleans ups to encourage keeping the area free of litter. The EAC could co-host a clean up and provide information about its programs.

Transportation

Similar to the responses from the Latino survey and from the HFWG report, transportation is an area that the African-Americans surveyed would like to see improvements. Many believe that the routes and hours should be expanded and more efficient. These changes would take time and thought out planning. The EAC could partner with the Transportation committee on the Town of Normal's Sustainability Plan Task Force¹⁰¹⁰ and hold a forum.

¹⁰ The Town of Normal Community-Wide Sustainability Task Force is a group of dedicated community members that have formed several committees regarding community development. Each committee developed strategies to further Normal's sustainability initiatives for the next twenty-five years ("Community-Wide Sustainability Plan and 2035 Report" 2010).

Concerned community members could provide input for new routes and hours of operation. Seeking information from African-Americans and residents of West Bloomington can help foster a relationship that can lead to more interactions in the future.

Youth Programs

The West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan and the African-Americans surveyed indicated that youth programs are an important aspect of living in Bloomington-Normal. The EAC offers many environmental programs for kids in the community. Distributing information about the programs to a variety of locations and through various means will inform more minorities of the programs available. The EAC may also want to consider expanding its after school program to more community centers to reach more minority and low-income youth. Increased environmental involvement of children may also increase environmental interests among parents.

Recycling

Ms. Dumser observed that since Bloomington switched to single stream recycling, it appears that more people in West Bloomington are recycling. Making sure that more people are aware of single stream recycling may increase recycling rates. Additionally, the survey responses from African-Americans indicate that the recycling schedule should be made more available. Thus, distributing recycling information to community centers and churches and by means of other media may be helpful. The City of Bloomington no longer provides blue recycling bins to residents, however they will pick up any container that is labeled as recycling. Although this appears to be more convenient, distinct bins provide more continuity. On garbage/recycling day, when neighbors see that other people have their blue bins out, it serves as a reminder that they should be recycling, too. Of the African-Americans surveyed, recycling bins were also mentioned as a way to make recycling easier. If the EAC were able to secure a grant that provided recycling bins to residence this may encourage recycling.

Ms. Dumser also mentioned that the WBRP has a new youth ambassador program. The program is still in its early stages, but it is made up of five high school students from West Bloomington. The goal is for the ambassadors to be involved with the community and share information such as distributing the West Word, WBRP's newsletter. Using the ambassador program to distribute environmental information may be beneficial.

Water

Among the African-Americans surveyed, more than half indicated that they believe the water quality is poor or fair. Because many respondents believe the water quality is poor or fair, it is important to find out if the water is actually poor or if it is an issue of perception. The EAC could co-sponsor an event with a local community center to distribute water quality test kits. If it is a matter of perception, the EAC should provide information on the facts and myths of the local water supply. More education can be done on the sources of water pollution and how to prevent household pollution. Many of those surveyed answered questions in relation to children. For this reason, framing water pollution prevention as way to keep children healthy may make more

people think about water quality. Additionally, the EAC can share information about mercury in fish. None of the survey respondents fished in local waters, however about half said their family eats local fish. Fishing advisories should be posted at various locations so that everyone is aware of the health dangers of mercury and fish consumption. The EAC should utilize a variety of media and partner with other community organizations to ensure that their storm water management message and other water information is reaching all residents.

Proposal Conclusions

These proposals are intended to begin to address the concerns of minorities and low-income people in Bloomington-Normal. From my research, few environmental concerns are unique to one ethnic group or social class. Many of the community and environmental concerns of Latinos, African-Americans, and West Bloomington are shared by all groups. Several proposed events and projects would benefit not only the targeted group, but the community as a whole. I hope that these proposals impact the community and that they are the beginning to future projects that will allow minorities and low-income people to be more involved in the environmental community in Bloomington-Normal.

Conclusion

As environmental justice receives more attention from mainstream environmental groups, it is important that the Ecology Action Center takes steps to better its outreach to serve the low-income and minority communities in Bloomington-Normal. With the number of racial and ethnic minorities expected to rise in the coming decades, it is especially vital that the EAC takes measures now to ensure that minorities are included in the organization. The literature and my research indicate that the environment is important to minorities and low-income people, but how they perceive the environment and environmental issues differs. In order to better reach the economically challenged and minorities it is imperative that the EAC understands their general community concerns and environmental concerns. Collaborating with other community organizations can help engage the targeted groups. Because the sample sizes in my research were small, future research with larger sample sizes would provide more insight into learning more about environmental concerns among the minority and low-income communities. Additionally, the EAC may consider finding out more about other minority groups' environmental concerns in Bloomington-Normal besides African-Americans and Latinos to ensure that all ethnic and racial groups are accounted for. Another useful study would be to examine the relationship between socio-economic status and environmental concerns in Bloomington-Normal to better understand the environmental concerns of the economically challenged. Research should be conducted regularly to see how environmental concerns change and how to address the changes. I hope that my project provided basis for how the Ecology Action Center can further their efforts in including minorities in its organization and programs.

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Outreach Resources

Organizations for Collaboration

Directory of Minority Businesses, Churches and Organizations – Spring 2009
http://themixonline.net/MinorityBusinessDirectory_2006.htm

Media

WJBC en Español

Radio Latina

WXRJ 94.9 – owned and operated by the Black Business Alliance

Survey

Hello, my name is Emmy Grace and I am a student at Illinois Wesleyan University. I am researching environmental concerns in the community and how to better address them. I appreciate your feedback. Thanks!

Hola, me llamo Emmy Grace y soy estudiante en Illinois Wesleyan University. Hago investigaciones sobre las preocupaciones ambientales en la comunidad y como podemos mejorarlas. Aprecio sus opiniones. Gracias!

1. Do you live in Bloomington or Normal?

¿Vive en Bloomington o en Normal?

- a. Bloomington b. Normal c. Other town/otro pueblo

2. Where or how do you get your receive news about community events?

¿Dónde o cómo recibe noticias sobre eventos en la comunidad?

- a. Television/la televisión d. Church/la Iglesia g.
Internet
- b. Radio/la radio e. Community Centers/los centros social h.
Other/ otro:
- c. Newspaper/el periódico f. Friends or family/los amigos o la familia
-

3. What are things you like about Bloomington-Normal/where you live?

¿Que le gusta sobre Bloomington-Normal/donde vive?

4. What are your concerns about Bloomington-Normal/where you live?

¿Cuales son sus preocupaciones en Bloomington-Normal/donde vive?

5. What are things that can be improved or what changes would you like to see in Bloomington-Normal?

¿Cuales cosas pueden ser mejoradas o que cambios les gustaría ver en Bloomington-Normal?

6. Do you have any local environmental concerns? (For example, lack of public transportation, litter on the ground, recycling, water and air pollution, something else?)

¿Tiene preocupaciones ambientales locales en Bloomington-Normal? (Por ejemplo, la falta de transportación pública, la basura en el terreno, la reciclaje, la contaminación del aire o del agua algo más?)

1. **Have you heard of the Ecology Action Center? Do you know what it does?**
¿Ha oído del Ecology Action Center o el Centro de Acción Ecológica? ¿Sabe que hace?
 - a. Yes/sí
 - b. No
- a. Yes/sí :
- b. No
2. **Is recycling available where you live?**
¿El reciclaje es disponible dónde vive?
 - a. Yes/sí
 - b. No
3. **Do you recycle?**
¿Recicla?
 - a. Yes/sí
 - b. No
4. **How often do you recycle?**
¿Con qué frecuencia recicla?
 - a. Always/siempre
 - b. Often/ a menudo
 - c. Sometimes/ a veces
 - d. Rarely/ casi nunca
 - e. Never/ nunca
5. **What is difficult about recycling?**
¿Qué es lo que hace difícil reciclar?
6. **What would make recycling easier?**
¿Qué facilitaría el reciclaje?

In Bloomington, the drinking water comes from the local lakes – Lake Bloomington and Lake Evergreen.

El agua potable en Bloomington viene de los lagos locales – Lago Bloomington y Lago Evergreen.

1. **Overall, how do you feel about the water quality in Bloomington?**

¿En general, ¿qué piensa de la calidad del agua en Bloomington?

- a. Excellent/ *excelente*
- b. Good/ *bien*
- c. Fair/ *así así*
- d. Poor/ *mala*

2. Do you fish in local waters?

¿Pesca en las aguas locales? (Lago Bloomington o Lago Evergreen)

- a. Yes/Sí
- b. No

3. Do you or do people in your family eat the fish you catch?

¿Come usted o come la familia el pescado que pescó?

- a. Yes/sí
- b. No

4. Are you concerned about water pollution? If so, what kind of pollution are you most concerned about? (such as agriculture, industry, the home – paint, pesticides, something else?)

¿Tiene preocupaciones sobre la contaminación del agua? ¿Qué tipos de contaminaciones son las que preocupan más? (por ejemplo de la agricultura, la industria, el hogar – la pintura, las pesticidas algo más?)

5. Would you or anyone else you know be interested in learning more about environmental issues in the community?

¿Usted tiene interés o alguien que conoce tiene interés en aprender más sobre los asuntos ambientales en la comunidad?

- a. Yes/sí
- b. No

If you would like to receive environmental information, provide your email address/ *Si le gustaría más información ambiental, deja su email:*