

Confessions of an Environmental Racist

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Environment

April 11, 2017

Toxic Racism

- Concerns over environmental racism emerged in the 1980s when hazardous waste and toxic disposal policies intersected with civil rights.



- Environmental Justice
 - “**fair treatment** of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of all environmental laws and policies and their **meaningful involvement** in the decision making processes of the government.”



- Environmental racism
 - The unfair treatment and meaningless involvement of people in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies because of their race.



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My Racial Illiteracy



- 1987, I interned at [Stewart Warner Southwind](#) in Indianapolis, IN.







STATE AND LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Cleaning Up the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers

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Since 1970, much of state and local activity in environmental protection involved implementing or enforcing national mandates. Recent developments in the United States suggest that some subnational jurisdictions have taken and are taking significant steps to address local environmental problems within, and beyond, national mandates. This suggests that there may be opportunities for state and local governments to address emerging local environmental policy issues. With any opportunity to address emerging local environmental policy issues is the question, Can state and local governments effectively implement new strategies to address emerging environmental issues? This article examines two cases where state and local governments have taken and are taking a prominent role in addressing water quality problems. The cases, although different in time and focus, argue that state and local governments can, and have, provided leadership on such issues. Much of the early effort to push for national environmental mandates was based on the assumption that state and local governments were incapable of addressing the environmental challenges facing them. The two cases presented in this article suggest that more than national mandates are required to overcome local limits. Among the required components for successful state and local government efforts suggested by these cases are experimentation, innovative combinations of public and private organizations at the local and state levels, and flexible federal support for local action.



Photo: Brooke Dudek

A Tale of Two Rivers: Environmental Injustice in D.C.

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By Editorial Board on April 22, 2016

Editorials

Opinion

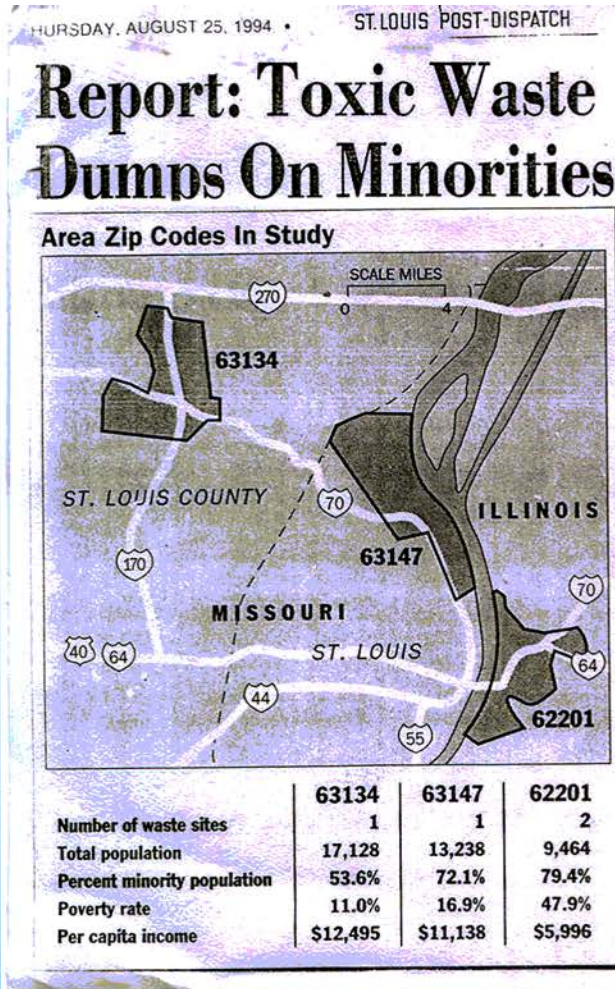
A Tale of Two Rivers

The Charles and the Mystic, two of America's most historic waterways, are located just miles apart. Why did one flourish while the other suffered?

By [Chris Sweeney](#) | [Boston Magazine](#) | October 2016



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB O'CONNOR



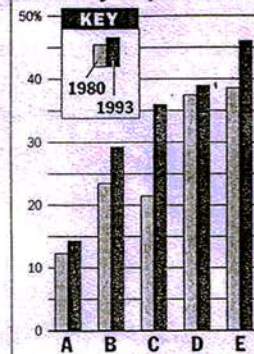
have little power to resist them.

"People of color may have moved into areas with existing waste facilities or whites may have moved out," the report says.

In a breakdown by cities, the study says St. Louis and East St. Louis have a total of five waste sites in ZIP codes that have a majority nonwhite population. In statewide rankings, the study zone designations.

■ Tracking health effects of people over time.

Average Percent Minority Population



ZIP-Code groups

- A. No hazardous waste facilities.
- B. One facility, not a landfill.
- C. One landfill, not among five largest.
- D. More than one facility or one of five largest landfills.
- E. Three facilities, an incinerator or one of five largest landfills.

- Goldman and Fitton (1994) updated an earlier UCC study and concluded that environmental injustice grew worse because their statistics indicated that the chance of nonwhites living near landfills was 47 percent higher than whites; an increase of 16 percent over the findings of the 1987 study. They made national headlines.

1980s

1980

Environmental justice movement takes off.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act creates the Superfund to pay for the identification and cleanup of severely polluted sites.

October 1982

More than 500 protesters are arrested after trying to block a landfill being created for soil laced with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Warren County, N.C., the poorest county in the state. The landfill project goes ahead, but the state agrees to build no more landfills there.

1983

The General Accounting Office finds that three of four hazardous-waste facilities in the Southeast are in black communities.

1987

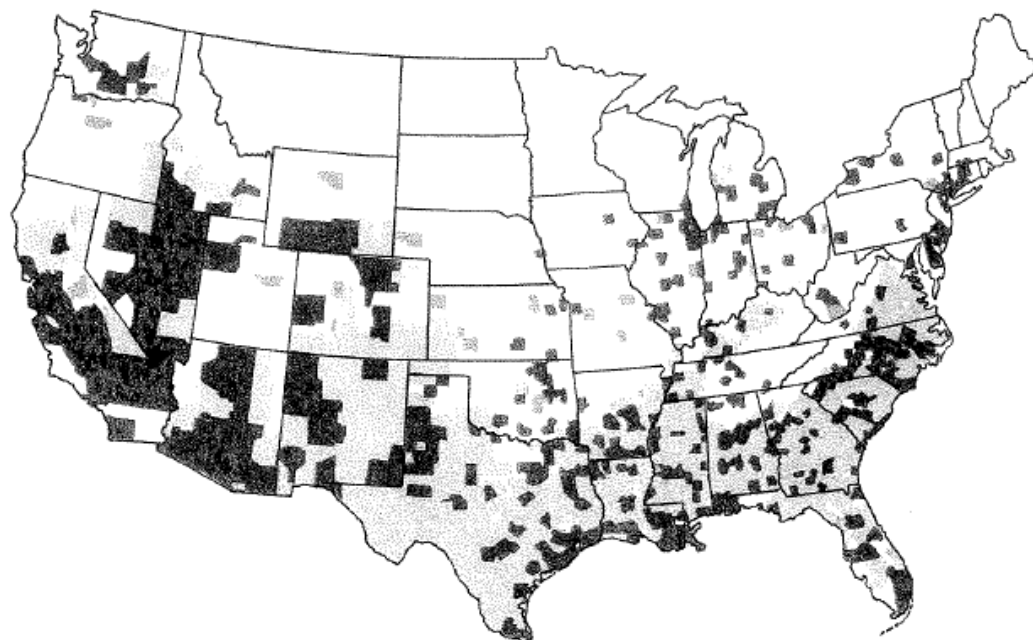
The United Church of Christ issues a study showing that landfills, incinerators and other waste facilities are sited disproportionately in or near poor or minority communities.

TOXIC WASTES AND RACE

In The United States

Active Minds Changing Lives

**A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic
Characteristics of Communities
with Hazardous Waste Sites**



COMMISSION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE
United Church of Christ
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**3
th Greatest Percentage
ommunities With
c Waste Sites
eatest percentages)**

**Percentage Of Population Which
Lives In Waste Site Areas**

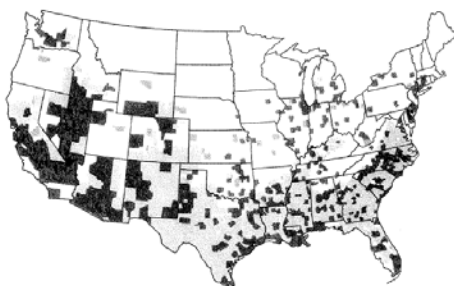
Black	White
99.8	99.6
99.5	79.2
97.0	45.7
95.5	72.9
95.3	44.0
95.2	74.4
94.9	74.6
92.9	65.1
92.9	84.8
92.7	56.6

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Table 3
Ten Metropolitan Areas With Greatest Percentage
Of Blacks Living In Communities With
Uncontrolled Toxic Waste Sites
(ranked in order of greatest percentages)

Metropolitan Area	Percentage Of Population Which Lives In Waste Site Areas	
	Black	White
1. MEMPHIS, TN	99.8	99.6
2. CHATTANOOGA, TN	99.5	79.2
3. FT. LAUDERDALE, FL	97.0	45.7
4. CHARLOTTE, NC	95.5	72.9
5. FLINT, MI	95.3	44.0
6. SEATTLE, WA	95.2	74.4
7. RALEIGH, NC	94.9	74.6
8. WINSTON-SALEM, NC	92.9	65.1
9. GREENSBORO, NC	92.9	84.8
10. LOUISVILLE, KY	92.7	56.6

1990s

November 1992

Environmental justice gains federal support.

President George Bush creates the Office of Environmental Equity within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

1993

Newly appointed EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner renames the Office of Environmental Equity the Office of **Environmental Justice** and promises to promote environmental protection for all Americans.

Feb. 11, 1994

President Clinton issues Executive Order 12898 directing all federal agencies with a public health or environmental mission to make **environmental justice** an integral part of their policies.

Sept. 10, 1997

The EPA delays permission for Shintech Inc. to build a new plastics plant in St. James Parish, La., a highly industrialized, largely African-American area.

Feb. 5, 1998

Browner issues “interim guidance” to provide a framework for processing claims of environmental injustice, based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

June 8, 1998

The U.S. Supreme Court agrees to decide whether lawsuits alleging environmental racism can be brought in federal court.

- Although social scientists have pursued [environmental racism] with the stated goal of contributing to more informed policy making, unspoken political projects lurk beneath the surface of scientific inquiry" (p. 142).
- Pulido, Laura. 1996. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM RESEARCH. *Antipode* 28(2): 142-159.

- “Instead, the power to claim the existence of [env. Racism] has been appropriated by academics, who by the process of operationalization and adherence to methodological rigor have transformed an inherently complex and contradictory [paradoxical] ideology and set of practices (racism) in an either/or situation....a monolithic understanding of racism” (p. 148).
- Pulido, Laura. 1996. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM RESEARCH. *Antipode* 28(2): 142-159.

Environmental Management (2008) 42:232–248

DOI 10.1007/s00267-008-9126-2

RESEARCH

Skewed Risksapes and Environmental Injustice: A Case Study of Metropolitan St. Louis

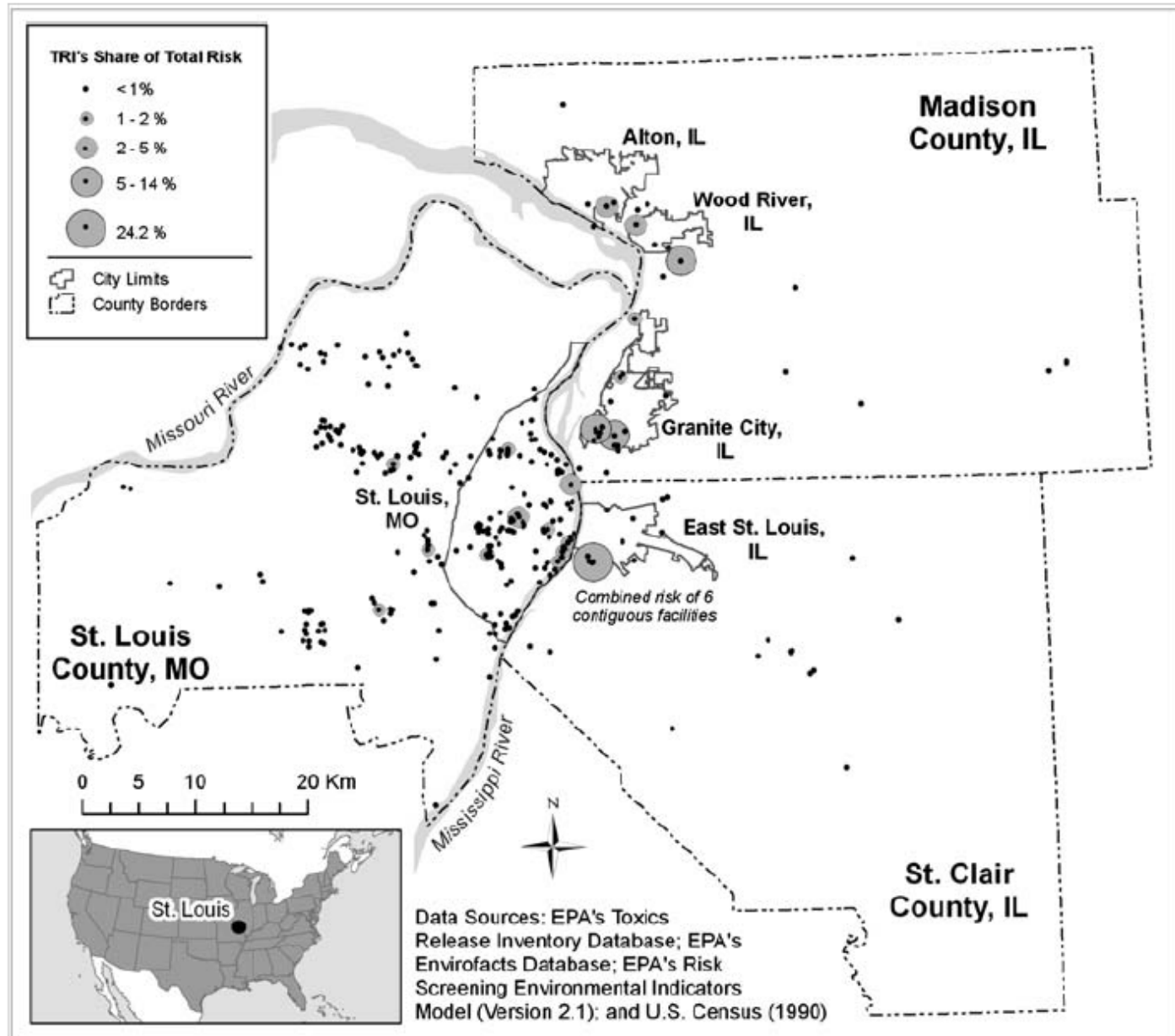
Troy D. Abel

ificance levels. Spatial concentrations of minority residents averaged nearly 40% within one kilometer of St. Louis TRI sites compared to 25% elsewhere. However, one-fifth of the region's air pollution exposure risk over a decade was spatially concentrated among only six facilities on the southwestern border of East St. Louis. This disproportionate concentration of some of the greatest pollution risk would never be considered in most conventional environmental justice analyses. Not all pollution exposure risk is average, and the worst risks deserve more attention from environmental managers assessing and mitigating environmental injustices.

A tale of two riversides

Active Minds Changing Lives

Fig. 3 Top pollution exposure risk producers in Metropolitan St. Louis



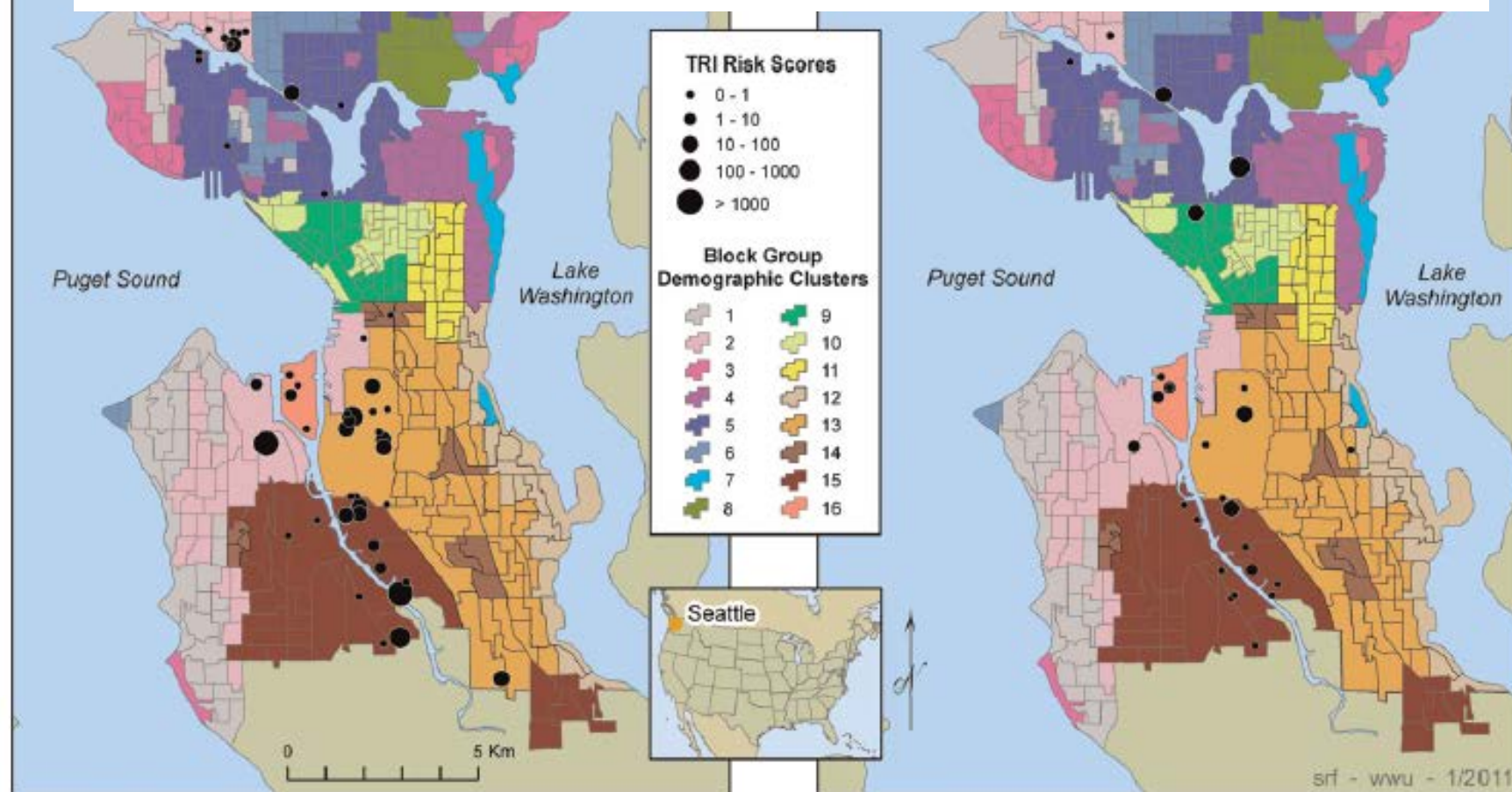
Not all pollution is
Created equally.

a

b

Skewed Risksapes and Gentrified Inequities: Environmental Exposure Disparities in Seattle, Washington

Troy D. Abel, PhD, and Jonah White, BA



Lives

Active Minds Changing Lives



WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER
WASHINGTON, DC

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Concurrent Data and Methodology Sessions

3:00 – 3:40 p.m. *Poster Review*

3:40 – 5:00 p.m. *Presentation and Discussion*—Participants discuss the posters as a panel; focus is on methods, data sources, and results as related to methods.

- Data and Methodology Needs: Proximity (Poster Discussion Format) (Room 150A)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to explore methodological approaches used in proximity analysis, environmental and health effects studies using such approaches as the development and application of novel proximity measures, and the application of proximity analysis in environmental policy decision making.

Session Co-Chairs:

Brad Schultz, Chief, Exposure Modeling Research Branch, National Exposure Research Laboratory, EPA

Robin Saha, Associate Professor, Environmental Health, Justice and Policy, University of Montana

Poster Presenters:

Troy Abel, Assistant Professor of Environmental Policy, Department of Environmental Studies, Western Washington University

Mark Corrales, Regulatory Policy Analyst, Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation, Office of the Administrator, EPA

Mary Collins, Bren School of Environmental Sciences and Management, University of California, Santa Barbara

Angela Gilbert, University of South Florida

William McDonnell, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Adjunct Professor of Law, Department of Pediatrics, University of Utah and Director, Center for Children's Environmental Health Law and Policy

Arlene Rosenbaum, Technical Director, ICF International

- Data and Methodology Needs: Multiple and Cumulative Impacts/Effects (Poster Discussion Format) (Room 152AB)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to explore data needs and methodological approaches for assessing cumulative impacts/burdens/exposures/risks among minority, low-income, tribal, and other population groups. This session also explores the development and application of novel cumulative impact measures, and the application of information on cumulative impact/risk analysis in environmental/environmental health policy decision making.

Session Co-Chairs:

Russ Lopez, Senior Research Associate, Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Northeastern University

Irene Dankwa-Mullan, Acting Director, Office of Innovation and Program Coordination

March 18, 2010 (continued)

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Data and Methodology Sessions and Community-Based Tools Session (continued)

- Data and Methodology Needs: Community Capacity To Participate in Environmental Decision Making (Poster Discussion Format) (150B)

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to explore approaches for enhancing community capacity in the decision-making process, and also to identify data or indicators to design better public involvement processes in decision making.

Session Co-Chairs:

Liam R. O'Fallon, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIH

Yolanda Anita Sanchez, Environmental Scientist, Superfund Community Involvement and Program Initiatives Branch, EPA

Poster Presenters:

Diane Ballerino-Regan, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Office of Occupational Medicine Resident/Duke University

Steven Fischbach, Community Lawyer, Rhode Island Legal Services

Claire Franklin, The LifeLine Group

Myra Immings, Community Planner, Planning and Program Development, Atlanta Regional Office, Federal Transit Administration

Don Yellowman, President, Forgotten People Community Development Corporation

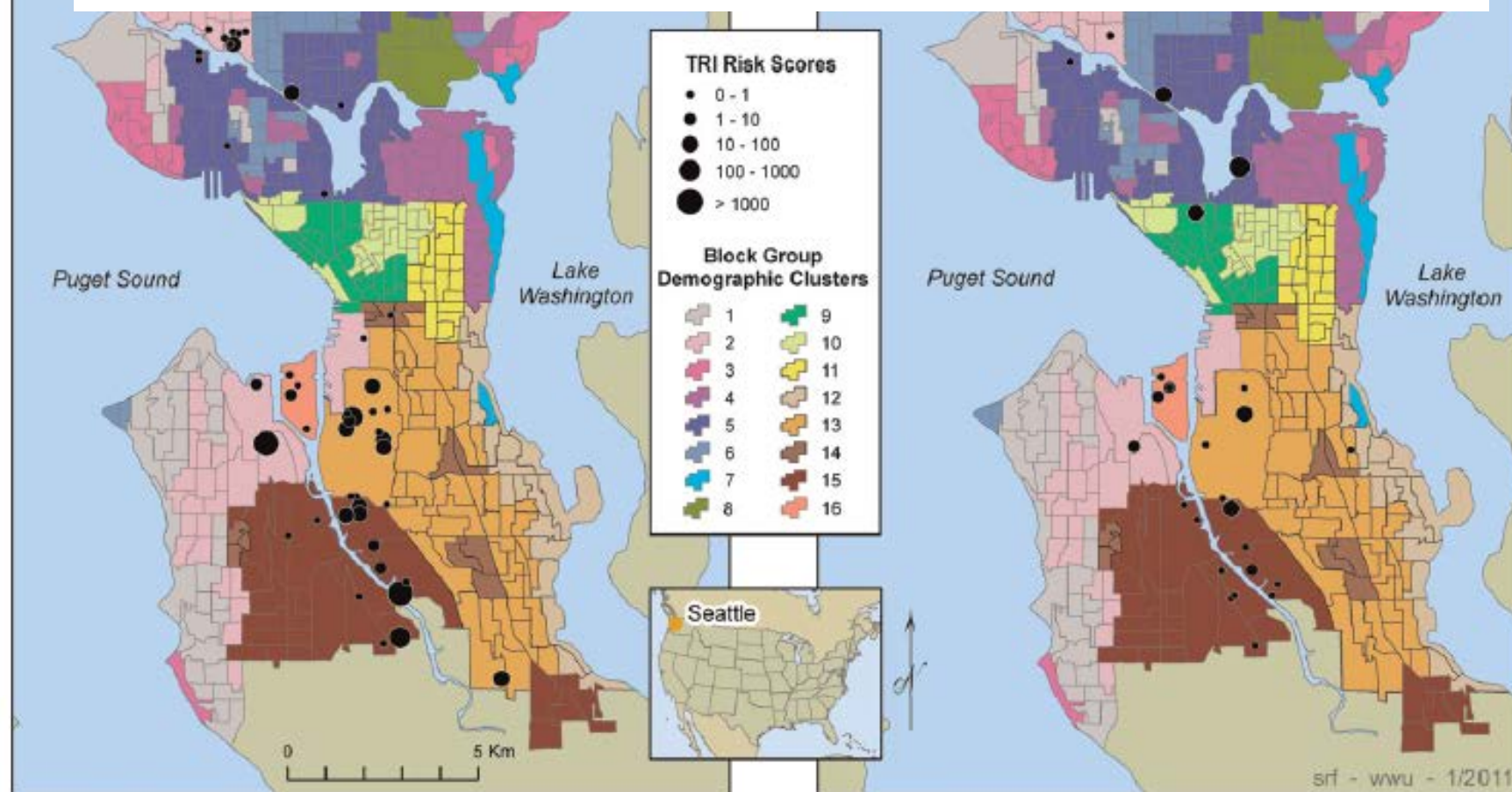
Marsha Monestersky, Program Director, Forgotten People Community Development Corporation

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b

Skewed Risksapes and Gentrified Inequities: Environmental Exposure Disparities in Seattle, Washington

Troy D. Abel, PhD, and Jonah White, BA



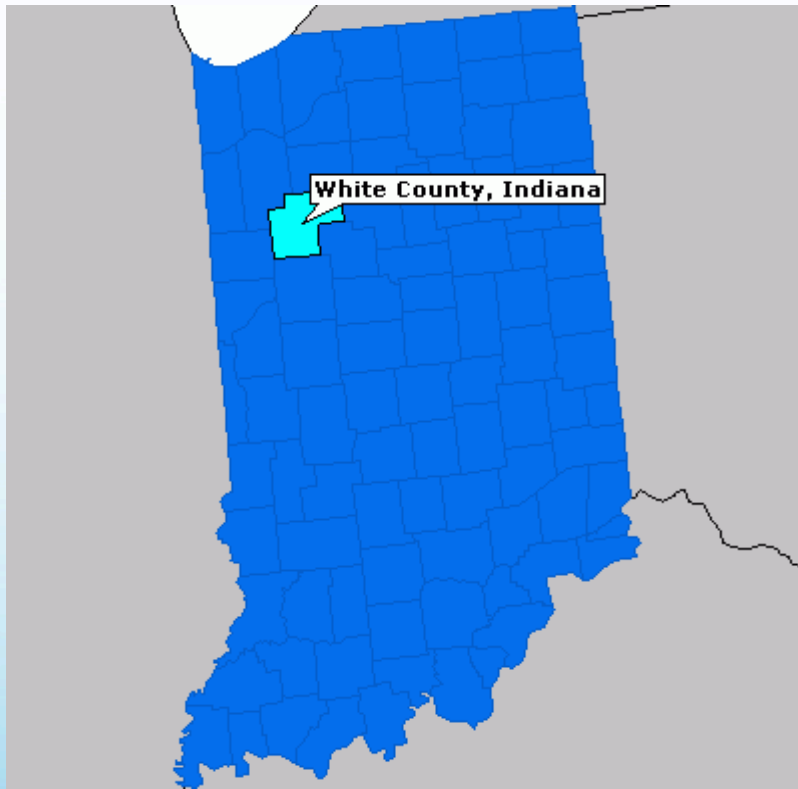
Lives

Where we're from exercise

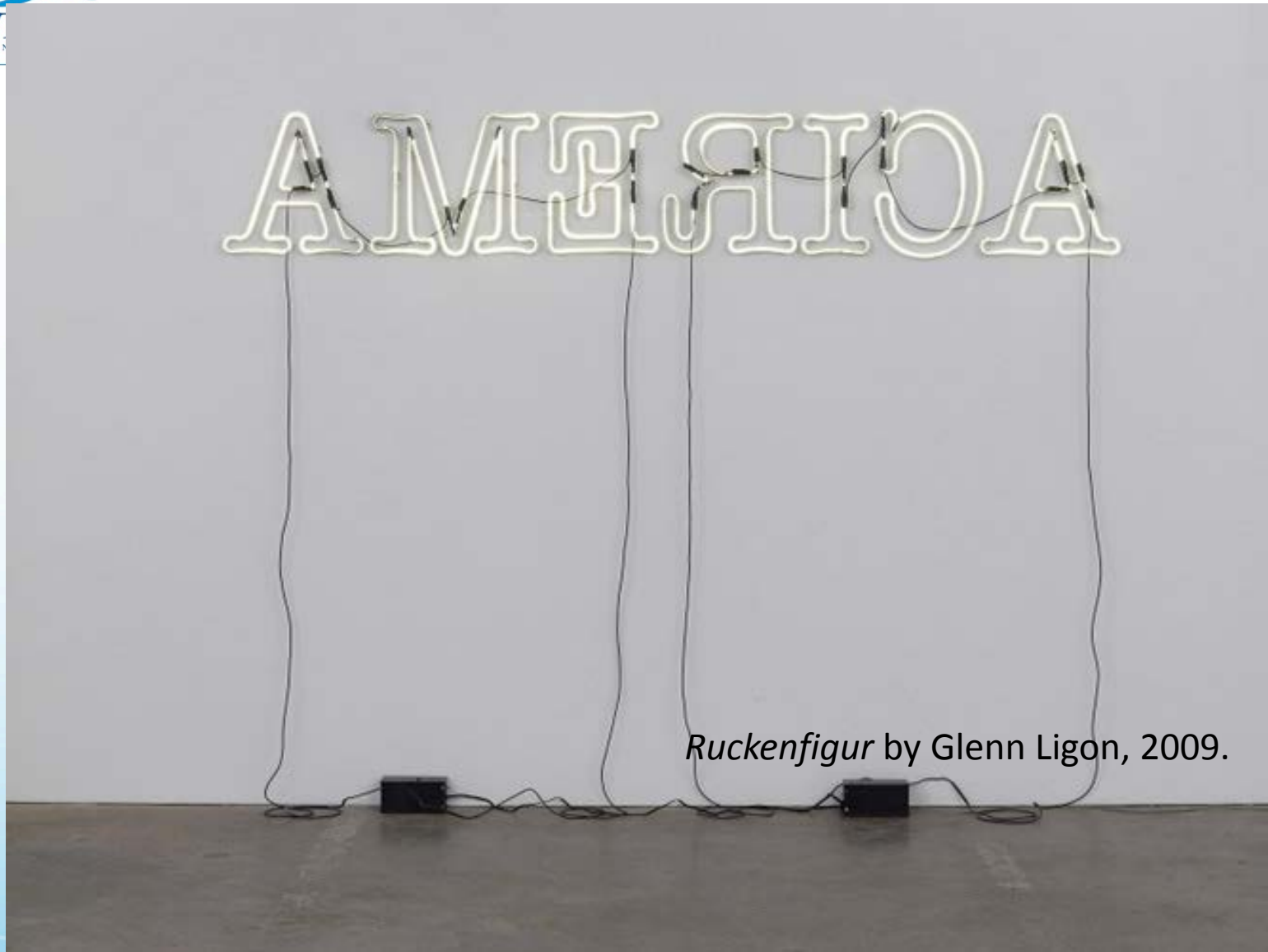


- Past experiences shape our perceptions and reactions.
- Understanding your unique background and others can help us see how diversity is a positive asset for our organization.

Where we're from exercise



- I am from the _____ (home description... adjective, adjective, sensory detail).
- I am from _____ (family tradition) and _____ (family trait), from _____ (name of family member) and _____ (another family name) and _____ (family name).
- I'm from _____ (place of birth and family ancestry), _____ (two food items representing your family).



Rückenfigur by Glenn Ligon, 2009.

