Priority 4 Summary

Highlights:

Current Knowledge Systems:

-Selective/biased viewpoints currently represented in decision-making processes (Biedenweg et al., 2017)

-The overwhelming majority of attendants/perspectives of environmental planning agendas and scientific fields are higher-income, educated, and white (Olsen et al., 2018; Crowley et al., 2004)

-Internal information is often prioritized over other forms of information (e.g., Indigenous Knowledge, peer-reviewed papers, grey literature; Lemieux et al., 2018)

-Indigenous Knowledge is the least utilized form of information in decision-making (Lemieux et al., 2018)

-Only 12% of U.S. environmental staff (governmental & nongovernmental) represent ethnic and racial minorities, despite making up 40% of the population (Pearson et al., 2018); BIPOC are also extremely underrepresented in the sciences & academia (Crowley et al., 2004)

-The majority of attendants to environmental planning meetings in the mid-Atlantic were English-only speaking, higher-income, educated, and over the age of 64 (Olsen et al., 2018)

Barriers to Inclusive Representation:

-Trade-offs between political and social information (e.g., transparency/trust & privacy with Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Biedenweg et al., 2017)

-A large proportion of the U.S. population underestimates the environmental concerns of non-white and low-income Americans (Pearson et al., 2018)

-Stereotypes can drive environmentalist behaviors by association with one's social group (Pearson et al., 2018)

-Low-income, minority, and Indigenous communities experience disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards, pollution, and heat islands (Schell et al., 2020; King, 2020).

-The "luxury effect"

-Wealthier communities have higher amounts of greenspace and biodiversity (Schell et al., 2020)

-Vegetation aids in heat dispersal/absorption and carbon sequestration; larger amounts of impermeable surfaces (e.g., concrete, asphalt) results in higher ambient temperatures (Schell et al., 2020)

-Structural racism, e.g., "redlining":

-Effects still apparent today in regards to allocation of greenspaces, tree cover and biodiversity (Schell et al., 2020).

-Current Policies (e.g., Clinton's 1997 Executive Order) lack universal legislation for all states therefore interpretations and enforcement is different across the U.S., and in many cases lacks funding (King, 2020)

-Lack of representation/access to participate in decision-making contributes to disproportionate allocation of environmental hazards- primarily near BIPOC & low-income communities (Burger, 2011)

-*Barriers to inclusion of social science in policy:* scheduling/temporal differences (policy timelines vs social science surveys) & incongruous goals (enforcement time frame vs. long-term effects)(Biedenweg et al., 2017)

-*Barriers to minority attendance/involvement in meetings*: Lack of trust, language/communication barriers, cultural norms, limited funding/resources, logistical challenges, social barriers (Olsen et al., 2018; Leach et al., 2002; King, 2020; Burger, 2011); cultural stereotypes/assumptions (Pearson et al., 2018)

-*Barriers to incorporation of diverse evidence in decision-making*: insufficient funds, time constraints, limited staff, absence of monitoring programs, division between researchers and decision makers, institutional barriers (Lemieux et al., 2018)

Promoting Inclusivity:

-Increase diversity at meetings: different communication styles (e.g., verbal), translators/multiple languages, access to meeting place (e.g., public transportation, carpooling, multiple locations), compensation, accessible language/terminology

-Increase scholastic social climate (Crowley et al., 2004)

-psychological, behavioral, structural and historical institutional associations (Crowley et al., 2004)

-Increased benefits/awareness of benefits for all users increases effectiveness of environmental regulations (Jones et al., 2013)

Encompassing Themes:

-Human wellbeing is connected to the environment and human actions affect the environment, therefore environmental decision-making should involve diverse perspectives and values (Wellman et al., 2014; Biedenweg et al., 2017)

-Those most affected by environmental changes and policy also experience the most barriers to participation in decision-making, and are perceived as the least-concerned despite their higher levels of awareness and concerns (Pearson et al., 2018)

-There are significant social and institutional barriers to participation from ethnic and racial minorities and Indigenous peoples

Implications for Policy/Management:

-Future outreach efforts for environmental planning should be adapted to target lower-income earners, non-English/non-science speakers, and younger adults (Olsen et al., 2018); compensation for attendance, acknowledging past failures, providing a welcoming atmosphere, and including a large diversity of participants (King, 2020)

-Stakeholders and Indigenous Knowledge holders should be involved in the decision-making process from beginning to end (not treated as an afterthought)

-Governance should allocate proper funding and resources to address these disparities through policy and institutional changes

Limitations/Knowledge Gaps:

-Major lack of general demographic data of current Salish Sea environmental decision-making groups and diversity/inclusion of minority groups in policy and decision-making

-No data on immigrant communities in decision-making process

Suggested Future Research:

-Demographic trends for attendance of local environmental planning meetings

-What are the barriers? (Translators present? Meeting location?)

-How often are Traditional Ecological Knowledge and peer-reviewed literature used in decision-making in organizations and at different levels of government?

-Do misconceptions and stereotypes influence actionability on environmental concern?