Environmental Justice: Connections to One Criminologist

Carole Gibbs, PhD
Associate Professor
School of Criminal Justice
A Bit of Background

Criminology

• Studying “Street” Crime
  • Who commits it?
  • Why? Where?
  • How do we reduce it?

• Studying Criminal Justice
  • What’s Working?
  • What Isn’t?

My Focus

• Race/Gender/Class and Crime
• White-Collar/Corporate Crime with Environmental Impacts
  • Businesses
  • Deception/fraud
Issue 1: Electronic Waste (E-waste)

- “Old” computers, cell phones, video game consoles, etc
  - Obsolete, broken, or irreparable electronic equipment (Luther, 2007)
  - Electronics destined for reuse or recycling

(Grossman, 2006; Luther 2007; Gibbs et al., 2010; Pellow, 2007; Puckett et al., 2002, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, 2008; U.S. EPA, 2007; UNEP, 2009; World Custom’s Organization, 2007)
How Much?

• United States: 7 million tons/year

• Worldwide: 7-40 million tons/year

(Grossman, 2006; Pellow, 2007; Puckett et al., 2002, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, 2008; U.S. EPA, 2007; UNEP, 2009; World Custom’s Organization, 2007)
Where Does E-waste Go?

- Domestic Landfills
- Exported
Developed to Developing Countries

*Image created by BBC based on Greenpeace and Basel Action Network
E-Waste & Environmental Injustice: China

*Photos by the Basel Action Network (BAN)*
E-waste & Environmental Injustice: Ghana

*Photos by the Basel Action Network (BAN)
E-waste & Environmental Injustice: Nigeria

*Photos by the Basel Action Network (BAN)*
Human & Environmental Risks

Toxic Substances

- Lead (4-8 lbs per computer display)
- Selenium
- Beryllium
- Mercury
- Hexavalent chromium
- Arsenic
- PCBs

Consequences

- Brain damage
- Kidney damage
- Cancer
- Immune suppression
- Groundwater contamination
- Ozone depletion

Risk = Probability (Exposure to a Hazard) x Expected Consequence
Why?

- $$$
- Limited Regulation/Enforcement

(Gibbs, McGarell, Axelrod and Rivers, 2011; Gibbs, McGarrell and Axelrod, 2010)
Limited Federal Regulation

- **International**
  - Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal
  - Organization on Economic Cooperation and Development

- **Federal (Environmental Protection Agency, EPA)**
  - Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)
    - E-waste Exemptions
    - Export Requirements
      - Notification
      - Cannot Export to Countries that Prohibit Import
What Can WE Do?

“Each of us, right here, right now—we are the resistance.”

~Jaye L. Knight

• Support federal change
• Don’t upgrade so fast!
• Buy “green” electronics (Greenpeace)
• Find reputable recyclers

(Gibbs, McGarrell and Sullivan, 2015; Gibbs, 2016)
Issue 2: Climate Change & Greenhouse Gas Regulation

- Greenhouse Gases → Global Warming → Climate Change

*Without urgent action to slash greenhouse gas emissions, the new report says, "warming by the end of the 21st century will lead to high to very high risk of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts globally."

(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014)
Environmental Impacts

• Melting ice caps/Rising sea levels
• More frequent intense & extreme weather events (e.g., hurricanes, droughts)
• Coastal flooding
• Habitat loss
• Altered migration and reproduction patterns
• Altered growing seasons

(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014)
*new edition soon available
Human Impacts & Environmental Injustice

• “Climate Refugees”

• “Globally and in the U.S., individuals that are already vulnerable are likely to suffer disproportionately as a result of the changing climate” (National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Columbia University, 2016).
Limited Federal Regulation

- International Treaties
  - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
  - The Kyoto Protocol/The Marrakesh Accords
  - The Paris Agreement
- Clean Power Plan (Obama Administration)
  - Trump: Proposal to Repeal
- Renewable Fuel Standard Program
  - Trump: Moving Targets

The Age, Australia, 2017
Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) Program

- 2005/2007
  - Increase biofuel use
  - Refiners/importers of petroleum-based gasoline
- Market
  - Obligations
  - Biofuel Credits
  - Trading
Crimes Have Undermined the Market

- Crimes
  - Fraudulent Biofuel Credits
  - Fraudulently Labeled Credits
- Prosecutions
  - 8 Cases: $9 - $100 million in profits
  - Sentences:
    - 5-20 years in prison
    - Up to $87 million in restitution
## Opportunities for Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts of the System</th>
<th>How It Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>OTAQ Registration System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Generation</td>
<td>Generated by Market Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Verification</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading Notifications</td>
<td>Moderated Transaction System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Verification Process</td>
<td>Comparison of Trading Records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Gibbs and Pugh, 2016)
What does this mean?

• Challenges for Detection
  • Changes to Program

• Problematic Federal Legislation/Effort
What Can WE Do?

“Each of us, right here, right now—we are the resistance.”
~Jaye L. Knight

• Reduce use of oil-based products (e.g., plastic bags, plastic wrap)
• Bike/walk/use public transit
• Carry a refillable coffee mug/water bottle
• Eat less meat
Issue 3: Building the EJ/Criminology Connection

- MSU’s Conservation Criminology Program
  - Research & Teaching
  - Environmental & Natural Resource Crimes and Risks
  - “Criminology Plus”
Fisheries Management in South Africa

• Hangklip-Kleinmond Fishing Community

• Apartheid Government
  • Traditional Fishers Moved/Access to Fishery Restricted
  • White-Owned Corporations Permitted

• Today
  • Recreational Seasonal Permits
  • Enforcement

(Hauck, 2008; Rivers and Gibbs, 2011)
Themes from the “Poachers”

• Discriminatory Action/Criminalization

• Mistrust of Government/Fisheries Officials
Examples of Criminological Connections

• Reduce Disparate Impacts & Improve Perceptions
  • Implicit Bias
  • Organizational Justice (e.g., Wolfe and Piquero, 2011)
  • Procedural Justice
Environmental Justice

• “Refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities, where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive. Environmental justice is served when people can realize their highest potential, without experiencing the "isms." Environmental justice is supported by decent paying and safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty. These are communities where both cultural and biological diversity are respected and highly revered and where distributed justice prevails.” (Bryant 1995:6).
Examples of Criminological Connections

- Improving Schools (McGarrell et al., ongoing)
  - Implementing Restorative Practices/Reduce the School-to-Prison Pipeline
  - Environmental Design/Learning
- Crime Reduction
Where I Propose to Go

• Multi- & Interdisciplinary Collaborations

• Working Toward Environmental & Social Justice
Thank you!

- Carole Gibbs
- gibbsca1@msu.edu