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This thesis examines a controversy in Greensboro, North Carolina over proposals to reopen a municipal landfill to household waste. Key elements include how the outcome of the dispute was influenced by anti- and pro-landfill leaders and groups, or lack thereof, the formation of coalitions and alliances, each side's perspectives and arguments, and various historical factors. The primary data source was semi-structured interviews with 19 people who were directly involved in the landfill controversy. Other information came from local newspapers, public records, and documents, such as agendas and flyers from the grassroots environmental justice organization's meetings and rallies. Participant observation at several meetings and rallies was also used as a supplemental data source. The study's key findings provide insight into the importance of organization, the benefits of the alliances and coalitions formed among anti-landfill individuals and groups, how certain arguments were used to attract support and counter the opposing side's claims, and how local history, culture, and traditions played a role in the controversy.

WHITE STREET LANDFILL CONTROVERSY: A CASE STUDY IN  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND HOW EXPERIENCE  
OVERPOWERED ASCENDANT BUT  
UN-MOBILIZED TEA  
PARTY IDEALS

by

Rachel S. Madsen

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Most research suggests that sites for locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) in the United States have been disproportionately located in racial/ethnic minority and low socio-economic status communities, and these sites have frequently become sources of political controversy. Typically, large corporations or various levels of the government propose the construction of facilities such as landfills, incinerators, or chemical plants, and the government is closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the siting. While few city government or corporate officials would admit that a community's political power balance influences their decisions regarding siting environmental hazards, they are undoubtedly aware of which districts have the most potential to resist LULUs and which have little economic and political clout. Residents in the threatened communities, for their part, have increasingly adopted the NIMBY (Not-In-My-BackYard) response to these proposed sitings. In the early 1980s, NIMBY responses led to organized community opposition and activism that sparked a grassroots environmental justice movement. In one such case, Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982, the term "environmental racism" was coined to describe the unequal distribution of environmental hazards on the basis of race.

In 2009, a superficially similar controversy erupted regarding the potential reopening of a municipal landfill site in Greensboro, North Carolina. This case was similar to other environmental justice disputes in some ways, but differed from them in key respects. First, it involved not a new facility, but reopening an existing landfill in a low income, minority neighborhood to save money. Second, it was prompted by the election of a new city council with a majority supported by conservative, “tea party” oriented individuals and groups. Third, opposition to reopening the landfill involved a coalition of grassroots African American and neighborhood activists and moderate whites concerned about the city’s image, racial harmony, and economic development. The purpose of this case study was to examine how the outcome of the dispute was influenced by the leaders and groups on both sides, the formation of coalitions and alliances, each side’s perspectives and arguments, and the effects of historical and contextual factors.

The White Street Landfill is located in an area of northeast Greensboro inhabited mainly by people of lower socio-economic status, the vast majority of whom are African American. It has existed since the 1940s. In the late 1990s, discussions began about the problem the city would face when the currently permitted parts of the landfill reached capacity in eight to ten years, and the City Council began to consider the options of using another landfill to dispose of the waste or expanding the existing landfill. The latter option was met by strong opposition from local residents, who had begun voicing complaints about the landfill as early as 1995, citing health problems, blowing trash, foul-smelling odors, garbage truck traffic, and the racial discrimination they believed the landfill symbolized. As a result, the City Council decided in 2001 to close the landfill to



all municipal solid (household) waste. The landfill continued to take construction waste and was used for a small volume of household waste in order to keep its permit valid.

After 2006, household waste was transported approximately 62 miles to Republic Services' Uwharrie Environmental Landfill in Montgomery County, costing the city a total of around 12 million dollars a year (Green 2011). After the 2009 municipal election brought a conservative majority, backed by the tea party, to power on the platform of cutting spending and keeping taxes low, the City Council began soliciting proposals from several private companies to reopen the landfill to household waste. This led to the revitalization of opposition to the landfill, comprised of an alliance of environmental justice proponents, neighborhood residents, former mayors and other politicians of moderate persuasion, and white progressives, which ultimately managed to block the proposed reopening

Over a period of two years, local activists opposed to the landfill came together to form the main social movement organization of this movement, the Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ). By early 2011, this social movement organization had become the major force behind the opposition movement. Coalitions were also formed between it and other local groups, including the League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad, making for an unusual coalition between traditional proponents of environmental justice and "modernizer" whites (Luebke 1998). The modernizers, although not directly concerned with environmental justice, were concerned about the landfill hindering economic development in the northeast district, as well as the

possibility of racial tensions making Greensboro an unattractive destination for potential businesses and residents.

Several key factors thus distinguish this case from typical disputes over siting environmental hazards. In the typical case, a large corporation or government agency attempts to develop an environmentally hazardous site in a predominantly poor or minority neighborhood. Opposition arises, with the residents of the area, often with progressive groups or organizations as allies, opposing the development forces. In this case, however, opponents of the landfill were not battling a large corporation that wanted to construct a new environmental hazard; the site for the landfill already existed. Instead, the movement against the White Street Landfill arose as a countermovement to the local wing of a national movement to keep taxes low and cut government spending, sometimes referred to as the “tea party” movement. This means that the local movement to keep the landfill closed was pitted against the effects of a competing movement focused on cutting the municipal spending and taxes, which had brought a conservative majority to Greensboro’s City Council.

The main research question this thesis examines is: how did the grassroots environmental justice movement in Greensboro manage to block the reopening of the White Street Landfill? In particular, how did the movement utilize social movement strategies, mobilize resources, form coalitions, and combine environmental justice and other framings of the issue? Moreover, how effective or ineffective was each of these aspects of the movement in achieving its goal, and what were the main obstacles (e.g.

local conservative groups, the media, the economic state of the country/city) that the movement had to overcome and what strategies did it use?

Of particular interest are the arguments and framings used. One of the movement's main arguments focused on the belief that environmental (in)justice and environmental racism were at work in the reopening of the landfill. The neighboring residents and activist groups opposed to reopening the landfill claimed that the reopening would result in numerous problems (health issues, loud noise, blowing trash, foul odors) and discrimination against the majority African American population inhabiting this district. They also claimed it would damage the city's image and hinder economic growth. On the other side, right-wing media outlets, politically conservative City Council members, and other politically conservative individuals denied or ignored claims of environmental racism and emphasized that the reopening of the landfill would save the city millions of dollars by cutting municipal spending, as well as keeping taxes low. They also sometimes countered the argument by residents of the White Street area that the reopening represented housing discrimination by noting that the landfill existed prior to the neighborhood being established in the area.

This case also reveals how the arguments of local social movements and governmental policies are shaped by local history, culture, and traditions. While Greensboro's white leaders have often touted the city's progressive stance on racial issues (Chafe 1980), recurring racial conflicts have called the city's progressive image into question. While the historic sit-in by four A&T University students at the downtown Greensboro Woolworth's counter helped to ignite the civil rights movement in the early

1960s, the Ku Klux Klan/Nazi shooting of five members of The Communist Worker's Party, a biracial group, in 1979 compromised the city's racial relations image. The Greensboro Police Department's lack of response to the shootout, followed by the acquittal of all the gunmen, emphasized how racial discrimination and injustices still persisted in the city. Racial conflict in the Greensboro Police Department has also emerged recently, as a former chief of police was accused of discriminating against a group of black police officers. The White Street Landfill controversy thus simultaneously heightened racial and class tensions against the backdrop of Greensboro's history and manifested some aspects of the city's progressive image. (For further historical details, see Appendix A.)

The primary data source was semi-structured interviews with 19 people who were directly involved in the landfill controversy. Other information came from local newspapers, public records, and other documents, including video recordings of the City Council meetings and agendas from the grassroots environmental justice organization's meetings and rallies. Participant observation at several meetings and rallies was also used as a supplemental data source.

Chapter two summarizes the relevant bodies of literature about urban politics, social movement theory, and grassroots environmental justice movements. Chapter three describes the research methods used in this study. Chapters four and five summarize and discuss the interview findings. Chapter six summarizes the landfill controversy and overarching conclusions, and discusses implications for theory and further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Within the social science literature, three bodies of literature are particularly relevant to understanding the White Street Landfill controversy: theory and research about urban politics, theory and research about social movements, and literature about grassroots environmental justice movements. This chapter reviews each of these bodies of literature, which guided the development of research questions for the study.

#### **Urban Politics**

##### **North Carolina Politics**

In *Tar Heel Politics 2000* (1998), Paul Luebke, sociologist and representative in North Carolina's state legislature, provides the most comprehensive available sociological analysis of the state's politics. Luebke notes the state's progressive image and policies relative to other southern states on economic and political change. He emphasizes, however, that the state's political picture is more complex than its image might suggest. The state does have a small number of modern day "progressives," who incline toward the politics of the left. However, "beginning in the 1960s and continuing until the present, [most of] North Carolina's politicians and business leaders have chosen policies consistent with one of two competing ideologies: modernism and traditionalism" (Luebke 1998:19). While traditionalists feel "threatened by change and growth," modernizers "expect to benefit from change and growth" (Luebke 1998:viii). "The

competing ideals do not correlate neatly with party label” (Luebke 1998:19); however, southern traditionalists tend to be Republicans, while modernizers and progressives tend to be Democrats.

### **Traditionalists**

The main emphasis of North Carolina traditionalists has been reinforcement of the “established social order” in the state (Luebke 1998:20). Traditionalists, therefore, do not typically support political and economic changes that could provide everyone with equal rights and dilute the power of white, native-born, heterosexual, males. For example, they oppose policies that support affirmative action for blacks or women, immigration, and gay marriage. Traditionalists are also typically against increased government spending and tax increases, favoring small government with a limited mandate (Luebke 1998). Traditionalists are typically native-born, white males who subscribe to the fundamentalism of “the Baptist-based culture of North Carolina’s small towns and rural areas” (Luebke 1998:20). Tobacco farmers, other agriculturalists, and textile, furniture, or apparel industrialists are often traditionalists (Luebke 1998).

### **Modernizers**

The main emphasis of the modernizers, by contrast, is economic expansion. Modernizers encourage bringing in industries that will create jobs for North Carolinians and bring people into the state, which, in turn, benefits the state’s economy. The modernizer’s ideal society is “dynamic and growing” (Luebke 1998:24), so they “continually seek to diversify the state’s economy” (p.23). Consequently, their stances on minority (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation) rights and taxation differ

greatly from the traditionalists'. For the state to grow economically, modernizers believe that opportunity must be available for minorities to be active in the labor force and have their voices heard in politics. While "modernizer ideology has been shaped by educated and affluent white males," (Luebke 1998:23) it is not as devoted to maintaining the established social order in relationships among white men, women, and blacks, especially when that established order hinders economic growth. In addition, modernizers are not rigidly opposed to increased taxation as are the traditionalists. When economic growth is at stake, modernizers will choose increased taxation over policies that would hinder the economic development. They also oppose policies that might tarnish the positive image of the state and keep it from attracting outside investment or new residents. Modernizers are typically white males and females, more secular than traditionalists, who reside in major cities in the North Carolina Piedmont (Luebke 1998). "Bankers, developers, retailers, merchants, the news media, and other representatives of the business community" are often modernizers (Luebke 1998:viii).

### **Progressives**

The main emphasis of progressives, the smallest of the three political groupings, has been promoting economic and political change for the benefit of the middle- and low-income majority. Since the late 1940s, progressive ideology in North Carolina has also included advocating for racial justice (Luebke 1998). Today, progressivism emphasizes both racial justice and economic populism. It "oppose[s] tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations and advocate[s] more direct tax benefits and government spending for middle- and low-income citizens" (Luebke 1998:26). Blacks politicians are typically

progressives, as are a small number of whites from liberal districts, although many black politicians have conservative views on social issues (Luebke 1998).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Luebke's analysis indicates that traditionalists support policies that maintain the established social and moral order of the state, while modernizers focus their attention on policies that enable continued economic growth. Progressives emphasize the importance of racial, political, and economic equality. Modernizers acknowledge the necessity of having women and blacks participating in politics and having the opportunity to contribute to the expansion of the state's economy, and they are not afraid to support policies that require municipal spending and an increase in taxes, as long as the policies will be contributing to a dynamic and economically expanding state. Traditionalists, for their part, generally strongly oppose taxes and favor small government, while progressives favor a tax structure that promotes equality and an activist government.

Luebke's typology proves very revealing when applied to the White Street Landfill controversy. Representing the traditionalists, the tea party-oriented and conservative citizens, media, and City Council members wanted to reopen the landfill in order to cut taxes. They also proved to be relatively insensitive to the city's racial politics. In contrast, the core of the opposition to the landfill reopening came from the progressives, mainly black Greensboro residents. These progressives saw the reopening as racial and class discrimination, and supported the higher taxes required in order to keep the landfill closed. Some prominent Greensboro modernizers also played a key role in the grassroots movement to keep the landfill closed. Several recent mayors and current



City Council members, in particular, clearly subscribed to the modernizer ideal that emphasizes economic growth over holding taxes down and saw smooth race relations as a way to attract business. Although reopening the landfill would clearly have reduced municipal spending, the modernizers insisted that it would hinder economic expansion not only in Greensboro's northeast district, but in the city as a whole. Thus, these modernizers, whether or not they directly related the landfill issue to social justice, were strongly opposed to reopening the landfill to household waste.

Luebke's analysis suggests a close look at how the landfill issue was interpreted and presented by various leaders and interest groups. Several questions in the interview addressed this topic, beginning with asking respondents to identify particular leaders and groups that clearly opposed or supported a reopening of the landfill and about the kinds of leaders or groups that opposed or supported it. There were also questions about the perceived motivations and priorities of these leaders, particularly about why the respondent thought these leaders opposed or supported the landfill reopening.

### **Urban Politics**

Luebke's analysis is useful for defining the parameters within which urban politics operate, but other literature is more useful for analyzing the dynamics of urban politics. Researchers studying urban politics in the United States have developed three major models for understanding urban politics: the elite model, the growth machine model, and the pluralist model. The elite model holds that a small group of economically and/or socially elite citizens controls decision-making in a city. This model was first developed in Floyd Hunter's (1953) study of Atlanta. He claimed that a core group of

people, the city's elite, more or less dictated decisions about almost all of the core issues facing the city, including how tax dollars were spent on economic development, from behind the scenes. Hunter found that the elite mainly came from the top of the corporate ladder and that its members were tightly intertwined. They had often attended the same schools, sat on each other's corporate boards, joined the same elite clubs and organizations, and generally married people of the same social standing. They could thus exert great influence over major political decisions.

Hunter's model of community power was supported by many other urban power structure researchers (e.g. Miller 1970); however, Hunter's (1980) restudy and Stone's (1989) study of Atlanta criticized it. According to both Stone and Domhoff, it is "largely inevitable" (Stone 1989:87) that these governing coalitions will include business-led insiders, whom Domhoff (2007) sees as mainly the downtown land owners and developers in the city.

### **The Pluralist Model**

The pluralist model argues that "community power is not held by a small, cohesive elite. Rather, power is shared among different local elites" (Phillips 1996:317). The key study in the development of the model and its application to local politics was Robert Dahl's (1961) study of New Haven, Connecticut. In New Haven, Dahl found that the city had numerous interest groups focusing on issues such as education, urban redevelopment, and political elections. These groups focused only on the issues of specific interest to them in order to exert power over decisions involving those particular issues. While Dahl's study on New Haven was criticized by Domhoff (1978), who

reexamined Dahl's findings and argued against their support of a pluralist power structure, it remains a classic and oft-cited case study offering evidence of a contrasting power structure to the elite model.

### **Interest Groups in the Pluralist Model**

In the pluralist model, "the fundamental unit of analysis is the 'interest group'" (Knoke 1990:16). Truman (1971) defines an interest group as "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in society" (p. 33). Interest groups may focus on various issues, including economic development, social and economic justice, nature conservation, and environmental justice. Typically, interest groups do not try to influence decisions that are irrelevant to them, so as to avoid using up their resources. The pluralist model, therefore, emphasizes that "each group pursues issues that are of narrow interest to its organization," (p. 70) and each is usually able to exert at least some influence in its specialized area (Hurst 2009).

According to Knoke (1990), the focus of interest group efforts is government. As each of these groups pursues its interests, it "interacts through various political processes" (Knoke 1990:16) to exert pressure on the government to make policy decisions it favors. These political processes include "competitive elections, incremental group negotiations and bargaining, and legislative lobbying" (Knoke 1990:16). Specific interest group tactics include obtaining signatures and sending petitions to local city council members or state representatives, lobbying politicians, organizing demonstrations outside of government buildings, making campaign contributions to political candidates

who support their cause, and/or publicly endorsing candidates whom they believe will support policies that align with their interests.

Pluralists believe that effective political engagement primarily means working through particular interest groups (Dahl 1967; Petracca 1992; Hurst 2009), as individuals acting alone are rarely effective. In fact, individual citizens have little direct role “in the processes of agenda-building, policy formation, or policy resolution, except insofar as they voted in competitive elections” (Petracca 1992:5).

The ability of various interest groups to attract support for their causes, including building opposition to policies that conflict with their goals, is the key factor in influencing policy decisions. In particular, it is important for these groups to build “informal networks of collective action, such as coalitions” (Diani 1992:16). In coalitions, groups with separate foci establish alliances with one another in order to maximize the support for specific issues (Diani 1992). Contending coalitions of interest groups are the main contenders in most political controversies. Most decisions made in response to such competing interests “are compromises fought out within the political system” (Markham 2008:16) and reflect the relative power of these contending coalitions.

According to the pluralist model, it is often important for weaker interest groups to demonstrate mass support for their cause because mass support can influence elections and norms of democracy call for considering the wishes of the majority. As Knoke (1990) put it, “perhaps public officials take dust raised by policy battles as a sign that fundamental values are at stake, and that resolution requires concessions by all sides” (p. 231). Thus, the pluralist model suggests that

associations that can demonstrate mass backing for their policy proposals can better persuade public officials that something important is at stake. Flooding congressional offices with bags of mail or stacking district meetings with constituent supporters can effectively convince vote- and dollar-conscious legislators to treat demands seriously (Knoke 1990:231).

### **The Growth Machine**

A much more recent model of urban politics is what Harvey Molotch (1976) termed “the growth machine” model. Molotch (1976) noted that most urban political controversies center around a city’s growth and economic development. The growth machine is the set of interest groups, such business owners and real estate developers, that often form a coalition to support economic growth, which these groups see as the most important factor in the city’s well-being. They are usually able to get their way because opposition comes only from a smaller number of weaker groups, such as environmentalists or neighborhood associations.

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Each of these models might well help to explain some aspects of Greensboro politics, such as decisions to expand the Greensboro Coliseum or offer tax breaks to attract new employers, but they are also relevant to the White Street Landfill dispute in particular. The growth machine is relevant because some Greensboro residents opposed the reopening particularly because they believed it would hinder the city’s growth and economic development. Aspects of the elite model might be relevant if there was behind the scenes activity by local business elite to try to get the landfill reopened. The pluralist model, however, is most directly applicable to this controversy because of the interest groups involved and the anti-landfill movement’s influence on the dispute’s outcome.

The literature about the pluralist model of power in politics argues that no central elite influences all policy-making; instead, various groups with particular interests are able to exert at least some influence over decisions relevant to their interests. The literature suggests that by supporting interest groups, ordinary citizens are able to influence policy decisions; otherwise they are usually ineffectual. As the interest group engages in various political processes, such as circulating petitions or endorsing political candidates, it emphasizes its support and ability to help or hurt the politicians who are making the decisions. Government then considers the demands and relative strength of competing coalitions of interest groups and reflects their relative strength in its decisions.

In the White Street Landfill controversy, various Greensboro interest groups aligned with the views of the progressives and the modernizers sought to keep the landfill closed, while “tea party” oriented conservatives, aligned with the traditionalist ideology, attempted to get the landfill reopened. Through interviews with knowledgeable persons and participants in the controversy, this thesis examines the roles, relative influence, and degree of success of key leaders and groups in the controversy.

Several questions in the interview schedule address the effect of community power structure. I asked interviewees to identify key leaders and groups in the controversy and about their perceptions of the leaders’ and groups’ motivations and interests in opposing or supporting the landfill reopening. Other questions addressed how much influence these leaders and groups had and how they exerted it, including questions about the strategies and tactics the leaders and groups used to try to influence the media, the City Council, and the companies that were bidding for the management of the landfill.

## **Social Movement Theory**

### **Social Movements**

Diani (1992) defines social movements as consisting of a network of “individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political and/or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity” (p. 3). This definition includes counter movements, which arise to try to oppose goals of another movement. Various theories of social movements exist; however, those most relevant for this study are resource mobilization theory and social constructionism and framing.

### **Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) focuses on how resources are acquired and mobilized to found and continue movements, as well as the importance of social movement organizations (SMOs) for the maintenance and success of movements. RMT was developed in the United States following the movements and waves of protest that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s (Klandermans 1986). Refuting claims that social movements were based on irrational actions, “resource mobilization offered an alternative perspective by arguing that collective action is a rational response that only can occur when adequate resources are available” (Caniglia and Carmin 2005:202). RMT argues that movement goals, objectives, and strategies need to be selected to attract resources and widespread support without completely alienating powerful actors who could block the movement.

The major role of SMOs is to serve as coordinating nodes for movements (Soule and Snow 2009). According to RMT, this involves bringing together a group of people

with common concerns to work together within the framework of a formally established organization to work for the particular change the movement desires. RMT scholars emphasize that the successful functioning of an SMO involves establishing clear goals, mobilizing resources, selecting and utilizing effective strategies and tactics, and forming cooperative relationships with other groups (Soule and Snow 2009).

### **Strategic Leadership, Ideology, and Goals**

RMT emphasizes the key role of leaders in creating social movement ideology, obtaining and managing movement and SMO resources, and choosing goals, strategies, and tactics. According to Edwards and McCarthy (2004), coordination, strategic effort, and effective organizational skills are all required to acquire and pool resources and create collective action.

Leadership is particularly important in the initial stages of a movement when forming the movement's ideology. "Ideology" is defined broadly as the movement's "set of beliefs" about a problem's nature, causes, and possible solutions. A movement's ideology guides its strategies and is the basis of its participants' "collective identity" (Diani 1992:8). Although "'collective identity' does not imply complete homogeneity of ideas and orientations within social movement networks" (p. 9), movement ideology does embody the shared beliefs of movement participants and can help to attract additional support.

According to Soule and Snow (2009), social movement organization leadership can be either a single person, often with a charismatic personality, or a group of members who have a clear and shared sense of the organization's mission. In the case of a group of



leaders, the leadership structure is often non-hierarchical, and at times less formal. Such leadership structures sometimes emerge when a group consciously establishes a non-hierarchical organization that has neither formal leaders nor a centralized operational style. Instead, such organizations purposefully “develop a participatory democratic style that encourages the development of leadership skills in all members and decision making through consensus” (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000:579), but it can also slow decision-making. As Caniglia and Carmin (2005) note, a higher degree of SMO formalization can facilitate goal attainment, resource acquisition, and mobilization capacity. Greater formalization can also increase the operational efficiency and legitimacy of the group. On the other hand, SMOs with looser leadership structures can often change course more easily to deal with emerging issues or changing circumstances.

### **Mobilizing Resources**

According to RMT scholars, the greater the access a movement’s constituents have to resources, and the movement’s ability to get them to contribute these resources, the greater chance it has to succeed (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Klandermans 1986). Resources, such as time and money, can come from those who stand to benefit from the movement, but SMOs often obtain financial support from conscience constituents, such as foundations and wealthy individuals, who support the movement financially even though they do not stand to directly benefit from its efforts (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Resources are not limited to financial contributions. Volunteer labor, as well as “moral” resources, such as legitimacy, solidarity, and sympathetic support from politicians or celebrities, and cultural resources, such as specialized knowledge, technological abilities,

and media/cultural products related to movement, are also needed (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Interorganizational cooperation and coalition building, can provide SMOs with additional access to resources (Soule and Snow 2009).

### **Strategies and Tactics**

Leadership, organizational structure, and ideology are all essential factors in selecting movement strategies and tactics. As Markham (2008) noted in his study of German environmental organizations, “constituencies inside and outside of the organization often differ about...their assessments of the efficacy and acceptability of various strategies” (p. 289). For instance, movements must decide how radical or confrontational to be, as well as whether the potential societal benefits of the movement’s activities outweigh the risk to the activists (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Environmental organizations, in particular, often face the dilemma of using confrontational strategies, such as “noisy or violent demonstrations” (p. 290) or boycotts, versus cooperation with government and business (Markham 2008). In some cases, organizational constraints, such as lacking the knowledge or means to rally large groups of people, may lead the group to use less confrontational tactics (Soule and Snow 2009), and a costs/benefit analysis may be necessary to determine which approach will be most advantageous in achieving the organization’s goals.

Groups lacking political connections, economic clout, and skills with coping with bureaucracy tend to use more confrontational tactics when trying to influence policy decisions. Soule and Snow (2009) provide an example of how confrontational, non-violent tactics and strategic planning by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the civil rights

movement led to the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Upon reaching Birmingham, Alabama, King's peaceful demonstration was met by brutal attacks by police, which, upon being televised for the entire nation to see, forced the government to respond and begin to change policies that discriminated against African Americans.

An SMO's organizational structure and ideology can also influence strategies and tactics. The underlying values of the movement's major constituents influence the campaign tactics and type of language it uses in articulating its cause (Soule and Snow 2009). For instance, historically, peace and civil rights activists have based their tactics on their underlying principles of pacifism and religious values, which led them to use nonviolent protest tactics and, in cases like the civil rights movement, to employ biblical references in their arguments (Soule and Snow 2009).

While present day social movements continue to use tactics and strategies from the protest wave of the 1960s, such as sit-ins, marches, and demonstrations, tactical innovation and adaptation are often needed to adapt to changed circumstances. Advanced technology, for instance, plays an ever larger role in modern SMO networking, accumulation of resources, and mobilization of actors (Soule and Snow 2009). In particular, many modern social movements use the Internet as a tactical innovation to attract constituents, cyber-social network, strategize, and communicate with other groups, both local and abroad. The uprising in the Middle East and North Africa, known as the Arab Spring, and the Occupy X protests across the United States illustrate how large-scale cyber-social networking can work to ignite a movement. In Tunisia in January, 2011, for example, organized unions, social activists, journalists, professors, students,

and hundreds of thousands of others had joined forces on the social media website known as Facebook, one of the few networking and video-sharing sites that had not yet been censored by the Tunisian government (Coll 2011). Within the next month, this cyber-social networking led to such massive riots and revolts that Tunisia's dictator fled the country.

### **Building and Coordinating Coalitions**

Coalition formation can often be beneficial to organizations in a social movement, although there can also be disadvantages. Alliances and collaboration can increase the success of an SMO because of the pool of resources and skills made available to the group, which also allows for sharing responsibilities and dividing labor among the groups (Klandermans 1986; Soule and Snow 2009). However, Zald and McCarthy (1977) believe that having more organizations involved can also increase competition and conflicts among the SMOs (Soule and Snow 2009), particularly when there are differences in the goals, constituencies, and organizational styles among the groups. Such conflict can lead the groups to try to create distinct identities for themselves as to not be in direct competition with one another for funding and resources (Soule and Snow 2009).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Literature about resource mobilization theory indicates that the key processes involved in an SMO's success include having strong organizational leadership, an ideology that attracts support and leads to workable strategies, defining clear goals, attracting constituents and mobilizing resources, and choosing effective strategies and tactics. The literature suggests that a strong leader, or group of leaders, is often key for

the successful functioning of an SMO and is responsible for developing an initial ideology of the group. Clear goals also need to be defined in the early stages of the SMO formation in order to attract constituents and obtain resources. Generally, these goals will be based on the views of the leader and the common concerns of the group.

An SMO's ideology and goals serve to attract constituents to the group and guide the choices of strategies and tactics. The constituents play a major role in delivering resources to the movement. They may make financial contributions, attract additional support through networking, help form coalitions with other groups, which often provide additional resources, and/or participate in the SMO's public action events. The constituents may, however, not always agree on the kinds of strategies and tactics that should be utilized. Strategic leadership is often needed in these decisions, and the ideology and goals of the SMO, in addition to costs/benefits analysis, typically guide the decision-making process.

The interview schedule included items about how various organizations formed in opposition to or support of the White Street Landfill, including questions about leadership, constituents, and how resources were mobilized. I inquired about the founding member(s) of the organization, the relationship among the founding members, the demographics of the supporters, and how the organization attracted members. Regarding the organization's resources, the interview included questions about the various kinds of resources to which it had access, including financial, volunteer labor, and others.

Questions about the organization's goals, strategies, and tactics were also included, including questions about the main goals of the organization, how the goals

were selected, whether the goals have changed since the organization first began, and how the goals guided the organization's involvement in the landfill dispute. Also included were questions about the specific strategies that the organization used and how the organization chose these strategies, and whether there was internal opposition to any of the proposed the strategies/actions. Furthermore, there were questions about the perceived effectiveness of various strategies and actions.

During the dispute over the landfill, various local groups and media supported the effort to keep the landfill closed or have it reopened. Thus, questions about the formation of coalitions among these groups were also included, including questions about how the groups established contact, similarities and differences among the goals of the two groups, the problems these differences caused, and whether and how such conflicts were resolved.

### **Social Constructionism and Framing**

The theory of social constructionism helps to understand how particular conditions come to be defined as social problems in need of solution. It is based on the assumption that acts, conditions, or occurrences are not inherently "social problems;" they become so only when others, especially the media and politicians, deem them to be "problems" and convince the public, media, and politicians to define them that way (Schneider 1985). As Blumer (1971) put it years ago, social problems are "products of a process of collective definition rather than objective conditions and social arrangements" (p. 298). Clearly, persuading the public, media, and politicians to define existing conditions as problems in need of solution is a key aspect of building social movements.

## **Claims and Claimsmaking**

Spector and Kitsuse (1973) linked this argument to social movements by defining social problems as the result of “the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims to organizations, agencies and institutions about some putative conditions” (p. 146). They and other social constructionists explain the creation of social problems, such as environmental problems, as the result of successful “claims,” which are often put forward by social movements. According to Hannigan (2006), there are “three primary foci for studying claimsmaking from a social constructionist perspective: the claims themselves; the claims-makers; and the claims-making process” (p. 64).

Social movement actors “use *claims* to legitimate and advance their agendas” (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007:16; emphasis in original). Past research suggests that successful claims-making depends partly on the characteristics of the set of social actors making the claim (Hannigan 2006). For environmental problems, this set often includes scientists and experts, politicians, activists, and local citizens, each of whom must be viewed as “legitimate and authoritative sources of information” (p. 72) in order for their claims to be successful (Hannigan 2006). Scientists have been some of the most influential claims-makers due to their apparent expert knowledge and authority. In general, persuasive claims-makers are viewed as not making the claim based on their own self-interests but as working for the general good.

One strategy for effective claimsmaking is to use evocative language and visual imagery and (Hannigan 2006). For example, Hannigan (2006) notes how the imagery of a “hole” (p. 70) in the ozone layer has created a meaningful way for people to understand

the damages to the atmosphere. While the processes involved with chlorofluorocarbons damaging the ozone layer may be difficult for non-scientists to comprehend, the image of the hole makes the damage easily understandable. The hole provides a framework in which people can then think about the ozone layer in terms that they understand.

The media often play a key role in legitimizing or contesting claims (Schneider1985), as they can support, delegitimize, or change the definition of a claim. How much the media cover the issue and whether or not they are sympathetic to the movement or counter-movement claims-makers can also factor into the persuasiveness of the claims-makers and the popularity of a claim.

### **Frames and Framing**

Also relevant to making movement claims “stick” is framing. The concept of a frame, first introduced in Goffman’s (1974) *Frame Analysis*, refers to broad “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21) aspects of the world around them. A “primary framework,” is “one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful” (Goffman 1974:21).

Social movements engage in framing in order to create an appealing context for their claims. To be successful, frames need to resonate with potential constituents, the media, and politicians. That is, in order for the claim to be perceived as involving a legitimate problem and proposed movement strategies to be seen as workable, it must fit into existing cultural values, beliefs, and narratives of the audience (Benford and Snow 2000). As Benford and Snow (2000) state, “the more culturally believable the claimed



evidence...the more credible the framing and the broader its appeal” (p. 620). General framings used by many social movements, such as wasteful government spending and social justice, are referred to as “master frames” (Benford and Snow 2000:620).

It is especially important that frames resonate with the media. According to Hannigan (2006), for social problems to be taken seriously by a wide audience, they “must receive media attention in which the relevant claim is ‘framed’” in a way that makes it seem “both real and important” (p. 77). The media can also create its own framing in order to “help both the journalist and the public make sense of issues and events and thereby inject them with meaning” (Hannigan 2006:81). With the media having the power to reach a wide variety of audiences, “both claims-makers and their opponents routinely compete to promote their favoured frames to journalists as well as to potential supporters” (Hannigan 2006:81).

“Counterframes,” are used to present the issue in a different light that leads to their rejection and provides a rationale for opponents’ own arguments (Benford and Snow 2000). When counterframes are presented, the frame-makers on either side compete in what are generally referred to as “framing contests.” Such opposing framing can make movement activists defensive about their own framing. It can also force the movement “to develop and elaborate prognoses more clearly than otherwise might have been the case” (Benford and Snow 2000:617), as happens when opponents of the pro-choice movement frame abortion as murder and force the proponents to elaborate their arguments about when life begins. According to Benford and Snow (2000), however,

relatively few studies have “shed much light on the factors that shape the outcomes of these framing contests” (p. 626).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Literature about social constructionism and framing indicates that conditions or events become problems when various social actors succeed in successfully designating them as such through claims-making and framing. Social movement actors thus claim that some situation or event is a problem and try to present their claim to others within a framework that gives the problem meaning and appeal. Social movements and SMOs can thus use claims-making and framing as a strategic tool to attract supporters and, ultimately, to influence political decisions and bring about change. For frames to gain widespread support, they must resonate with the audience to which they are presented and successfully compete with counter-frames, so movements need to use framings that are culturally relevant and appealing to their constituents and community at large. Other social actors, especially the media, can serve to reinforce or delegitimize an SMO’s framing of the issue, and they can frame it in new ways. These various framings all play a role in attracting support to either side of the issue and in the eventual outcome of the controversy.

To analyze the role of claims-making and framing in the White Street Landfill dispute, I used interview questions that addressed the strategies, tactics, themes and arguments used by both the opposition and supporters of the proposed landfill reopening, as well as newspaper reports and other public documents for supplemental data. While it is fairly easy to ask people about their strategies for getting their ideas across, questions

about framing had to be more indirect, as it is a fairly abstract concept. I included questions about the claims made by the organizations involved, as well as the way in which the various SMOs and individuals presented the issue to others. In particular, there were questions about the common themes/arguments of the various social movement actors. The way in which the various actors presented the landfill issue were addressed by inquiring about whether there were certain phrases that the various actors used. Finally, the interviewees were asked if they believed that the way in which the organization presented the issue affected the outcome of the dispute.

### **Grassroots Environmental Justice Movements**

#### **Environmental Justice**

In terms of the research questions for this thesis, an especially important part of the social movements literature is literature about grassroots environmental justice movements. In such movements, claims about environmental justice are claims about the intersection of ecological hazards and social inequalities (Pellow 2004). According to Bullard (1996), environmental justice is the principle that “all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations” (p. 495). Thus, when locally unwanted land uses (LULUs), such as toxic dumps, landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries, are disproportionately located in low socio-economic status and/or minority communities, justice, i.e., the right of all people to a safe and healthy environment, is compromised.

## **Environmental Injustice in Toxic Waste Dumping**

In his classic study *Dumping in Dixie*, Bullard (1990) defines environmental discrimination as involving the “disparate treatment of a group or community based on race, class, or some other distinguishing characteristic” (p. 9) – the opposite of environmental justice. Through multiple case studies, he highlighted how low-income minority communities were targeted for toxic dumping across the southern United States. He found that such communities not only lacked the financial resources to fight the construction of an environmentally hazardous site through strategies such as hiring lawyers to file suit against the developer or government officials, but were also victims of institutional racism (Bullard 1990). That is, the history of denying minorities, especially African Americans, inheritance, property, and voting rights, the history of discrimination in educational opportunities and employment, and the racial segregation of neighborhoods all contributed to the environmental injustices minorities have faced (Brulle and Pellow 2006).

Bullard’s research in *Dumping in Dixie* supported the findings of the most influential studies conducted during the 1980s. Comprehensive studies were also conducted by the General Accounting Office in 1986, the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice in 1986, and Mohai and Bryant in 1992 to examine the linkages between the placement of hazardous treatment, storage, and disposal facilities and the racial composition of communities (Anderton, Douglas L., Andy B. Anderson, John Michael Oakes, and Michael R. Fraser 1994; Pellow 2004). The General Accounting Office study showed that the majority of the population surrounding three of

the four hazardous landfills studied was black, and the United Church of Christ (UCC) study concluded that “race proved to be the most significant variables tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities” (Commission, UCC 1987:xiii as cited in Anderton et al. 1994:231). The findings of these studies exemplify a specific form of environmental injustice, “environmental racism” (Agyeman 2002:35; Edelstein 2004; Brulle and Pellow 2006), which the Reverend Benjamin Chavis, Jr. referred to in 1982 as “any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color” (Brulle and Pellow 2006).

Some studies, such as Mohai and Bryant’s systematic meta-analysis of empirical studies (1992; see also Brulle and Pellow 2006), concluded that “race is more importantly related to the distribution of hazards than income” (p. 174), but there are also many examples of discrimination based on class, including Levine’s (1982) study of the toxic dumpsite in Love Canal, Niagara Falls, New York, and much research since then has supported the claim that both “communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately burdened with a range of environmental hazards” (Pellow 2004:511). Indeed, “scholars have produced an extensive and sophisticated literature on the dimensions of differential environmental risks based on race and socio-economic position” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:105). Reviews of empirical evidence and relevant literature by Brown in 1995, Szasz and Meuser in 1997, and Evans and Kantrowitz in 2002 each demonstrated that “significant relationships exist between the ethnic and class characteristics of a community and levels of exposure to environmental risk” (Brulle and

Pellow 2006:105). These environmental risks included such components as “proximity to hazardous waste sites, exposures to air and water pollution, high levels of ambient noise, residential crowding, quality of housing, quality of local schools, and the work environment” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:105). More recently, Ringquist (2005) found that this pattern has been evident throughout the past two decades, as well.

Evidence for discrimination based on color and class in the siting of toxic dumps is relatively persuasive. However, several of the key studies have been questioned and criticized. Bowen (2002) asserts that the oft-cited General Accounting Office and United Church of Christ studies were deficient in their methodologies. The GAO study contained “no formal comparisons with other areas, no manipulations, and no controls” (p. 5), and the UCC’s use of zip code areas were “clearly too large a geographical area for such a study and are apt to lead to erroneous inferences” (p. 6). On the other hand, Kriesel and Centner’s 1996 study of the exposure of minorities to environmental risks, which was based on census blocks groups in Georgia and Ohio, showed differences in the significance of race according to the independent variables included in the analysis. While race was significant when only race and poverty were included, Kriesel and Centner (1996) did not find it to be significant when education, transportation, and industrial location were included in the analysis. In a similar national study based on census tracts, Anderson et al. (1994) did not find consistent, statistically significant patterns in the location of the environmentally hazardous sites. Still, the weight of the evidence suggests that environmental injustice is a widespread and significant phenomenon.

### **Environmental Injustice in Siting Sanitary Landfills**

In looking at these studies, it is important to distinguish “toxic waste sites” from “solid waste” sites, generally referred to as “dumps” or, “euphemistically, sanitary landfills” (Szasz and Meuser 1997:102). While most of the literature is about toxic dumps, studies of sanitary landfills have also shown environmental discrimination based on race and class. In Bullard’s earlier work in 1983, he had examined solid waste disposal in Houston to find the percentage of African Americans living near the vicinity of these disposal sites. Of the 25 sites Bullard identified, “six of the eight incinerators and 15 out of 17 landfills were in predominately black neighborhoods” (Bowen 2002:5). Been, using improved research methods, confirmed that eight out of the nine solid waste sites in Houston were “located in neighborhoods with higher, often much higher proportion of African Americans than the rest of the city” (Szasz and Meuser 1997:102-103).

On the other hand, a national-level study conducted by the General Accounting Office in 1995 found that “neither minorities nor low-income people...overrepresented near landfills in any consistent manner” (General Accounting Office 1995:20). Also, Markham and Rufa’s (1997) study, which used census tracts to analyze the demographics of the recipients of municipal solid waste and “sewer streams” in a sample of U.S. cities, reports similar findings. Their results “provide little support for the hypotheses that cities direct their solid waste and sewage to landfills, incinerators, and sewage treatment plants in census tracts with higher proportions of minority and low-socioeconomic status residents than are found in the cities themselves” (Markham and Rufa 1997:242). In

general, studies about environmental discrimination in siting sanitary landfill show mixed results, often varying according to the research methods used.

### **Explanations for Environmental Inequities**

Over the past three decades, researchers have offered various explanations for environmental injustice, including actions of businesses and local governments that put private profit before public and environmental health and pick the path of least resistance, siting LULUs in neighborhoods they believe will offer the least resistance (Bullard 1990; Roberts and Toffolon-Weiss 2001). The majority of these studies have presumed racial and class discrimination to be reasons behind siting toxic dumps and sanitary landfills in poor and minority neighborhoods. Intentionality of such discrimination is difficult to prove, however.

The history of institutional racism in the US (Bullard 1990, 1996) also contributes to environmental injustices. Throughout the history of the United States, institutional racism has helped to create barriers that prevent equal protection from environmental hazards in minority communities. People still today are steered by real estate agents into certain neighborhoods based on their race/ethnicity, which typically increases the aggregate of political and economic clout for white communities and decreases it for non-white communities (Pellow 2004). As Pellow (2004) emphasizes, a combination of these factors, in addition to corporations and local governments putting profit over environmental health, must be taken into account. That is, when corporations and government officials are seeking out the path of least resistance when locating a site for



an environmentally hazardous facility, the neighborhoods that typically emerge are those with minority and lower socio-economic status populations (Brulle and Pellow 2006).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Literature about environmental (in)justice indicates that minorities and the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards in the US, although this conclusion has been questioned, especially in the case of sanitary landfills. The literature suggests that corporate and government officials often target poor and minority communities for these sites because they are seen as the “paths of least resistance.” Compared to white and higher socio-economic status areas, these communities typically lack the political and economic power to keep the sites out of their neighborhoods.

Information was obtained from newspapers and other historical and public documents to address whether institutional racism may have led to the concentrations of minorities in the part of town where the landfill is located. It was expected that questions about whether race/class were factors in the decision to reopen the landfill would be answered in the negative by proponents; however, I asked the opponents these questions to see whether they perceive this as a case of environmental racism. I also asked the proponents about why they thought reopening the landfill was a good idea.

### **NIMBY and Environmental Justice Movements**

The siting of LULUs has often stirred up resistance from nearby communities, leading to so-called NIMBY (Not-In-My-BackYard) disputes. Opposition is typically strongest among residents who live in or near the area of the site. In some cases, the residents are not opposed to the facility per se – so long as it is located elsewhere. Their

concern is the threat it poses to their lives and the health of their families if placed in their neighborhood (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007). Opposition groups typically “begin by attempting to document a hazard and link it to a current or potential health problem, such as a cluster of cancer cases or a series of adverse reproductive outcomes” (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1992:29). The groups often use scientists, public health officials, and lawyers to legitimize their efforts to keep the facility out of their neighborhoods (Freudenberg 1984; Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1992). Such actions have occurred for decades.

Environmental justice movements, described above, are a subset of NIMBY crusades conducted by less privileged communities making claims that they are disadvantaged on the basis of class or color, and they share many characteristics with NIMBY movements. Environmental justice movements began to form in the US around 1980 (Brulle and Pellow 2006). Neighborhoods in these communities had been disproportionately affected by sitings of environmental hazards, and community organizations began to emerge to build opposition against the corporations and/or government officials responsible for the sitings. The framework of the environmental justice movement involved demanding equal protection from these hazards for all individuals and for those responsible for environmental discrimination to redress the “disproportionate risk burdens” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:110) to minority and lower socio-economic status communities.

Two classic environmental justice cases, Love Canal, New York in 1980 and Warren County, North Carolina in 1982, illustrate how citizens’ demands for equal

protection can jumpstart a grassroots environmental justice movement. Following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) announcement that "toxic vapors in people's basements suggested a serious health threat," (Brown 5/15/78; NYDOH 9/78 as cited in Levine 1982:21) residents near Love Canal hoped that government officials would offer instruction or a plan to remedy the situation immediately. However, the unorganized and uninformative city council meetings that followed left the residents more concerned about the threats to their health and increasingly "distrustful and disdainful of city and county officials" (Levine 1982:22). Led by homemaker Lois Gibbs, residents of Love Canal then formed the Love Canal Homeowners Association and organized constituents and mobilized resources to put pressure on the federal government to become involved in cleaning up the toxic-waste dumpsite and relocating citizens living near the area (Levine 1982).

Similarly, when state officials announced that a poor, minority community in Warren County would become the dumping site for highly toxic, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated roadside dirt, residents organized an opposition movement that attracted nationwide support (Szasz and Meuser 1997; McGurty 2000; Edelstein 2004). The state government was taking "the path of least resistance" (Bullard 1990:4) by locating this toxic dumpsite in a poor, black community with little political or economic clout. To protest this LULU, the residents utilized activist strategies borrowed from the civil rights movement to try to keep the dump from being constructed (McGurty 2000). After meetings with local government officials failed to stop the plans for proceeding

with the landfill, the opposition then filed lawsuits and organized protests and mass demonstrations (Szasz and Meuser 1997).

Although the activists were not able to keep the toxic site out of Warren County, this, along with the Love Canal crusade, helped to ignite the grassroots environmental movement (Agyeman 2002). Unlike older environmental movements this grassroots environmental movement focused on issues of “justice, equity, and rights” (Agyeman 2002:36), the distinctive focus of the environmental justice movement. New local movements and grassroots groups emerged that built on lessons learned from Love Canal and Warren County, and environmental justice activists began to form networks with one another and convene “at regional and national gatherings to exchange ideas, tactics, and strategies” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:110). By forming into networks such as the Citizen’s Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste and the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, local community groups were able to “engage in coordinated joint actions at the state, regional, and national scales” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:110).

Not all of these cases involved toxic waste dumps. Environmental justice movements have emerged in response to sanitary landfills as well. For example, a movement formed in Columbia County, Pennsylvania in 1989 to successfully keep a development company from constructing a new sanitary landfill (Couch and Kroll-Smith 1994). Opposition movements in Los Angeles and Chicago in the late 1990s were also successful in getting major incinerators and landfills closed (Brulle and Pellow 2006).

As more environmental justice movements and groups emerged over the past few decades, it became “extremely difficult for firms to locate incinerators, landfills, and

related LULUs anywhere in the nation without a political struggle” (Brulle and Pellow 2006:113). Moreover, by the mid-1990s, environmental justice had become a subject of high-level policy and administrative actions (Bowen and Wells 2002:690). In 1992, the EPA officially acknowledged the disproportionate pollution burdens faced by communities of color. The Agency’s report, *Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All Communities*, not only “lent legitimacy to environmental justice activists’ claims,” (p.112) but included the first set of federal policy proposals focused on these issues and led to the formation of an Office of Environmental Justice in the EPA and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) in the EPA (Brulle and Pellow 2006). Environmental equity bills were passed in 12 states (Oakes, Anderton, and Anderson 1996), and, in 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” (Bowen and Wells 2002). Under this Order, all federal agencies were required to consider environmental justice consequences in their decision-making and to address cases of environmental inequity in relation to their programs, policies, and activities (Brulle and Pellow 2006). In short, environmental justice had become a well institutionalized and successful social movement.

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

The literature about NIMBY cases indicates that opposition to an environmental hazard builds typically among the residents of the threatened neighborhood and that these are apt to become environmental justice movements in cases where disproportionate environmental burdens fall on racial/ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic status

communities. The wave of environmental justice movements in the United States over the past few decades resulted in the partial legitimization of such concerns and the enactment of various local, state, and federal policies that provide communities with information about environmentally hazardous sites in their area. These movements have also made it much more difficult for such sites to be constructed without experiencing strong opposition from the surrounding community. This model is only partly applicable to the White Street Landfill case, as the landfill site existed prior to the emergence of a grassroots environmental justice movement. The movement arose not because a new site was to be constructed, but as a counter-movement to proposals to reopen the landfill. However, the literature nevertheless provided some guidance about questions to ask.

There were questions in the interview schedule that addressed the similarities and differences between the White Street Landfill case, typical NIMBY cases, and environmental justice movements. Specifically, questions were included about why Greensboro residents opposed the reopening of the landfill and their opinions about where instead the trash should be disposed.

There were also questions in the interview schedule about the opposition leaders' motivation to form a grassroots group and whether the leaders were inspired by Greensboro's own complex race relations history. In addition, there were questions about the goals of the opposition movement and the demands that were made of government or corporate officials. These questions aided me in determining how prominent redress of environmental injustice concerns was in the local movement's goals.

## **Leadership in Grassroots Environmental Justice Groups**

Resource mobilization stresses the key role of leaders in the creation and maintenance of SMOs, so it is important to address the characteristics and motivations of leaders of local environmental justice groups. Past studies have shown that such leaders have often been motivated by experiences of family illnesses or perceptions of widespread illness in their communities. This perceived threat to the health has frequently caused leaders such as Lois Gibbs, who have not otherwise shown leadership characteristics nor an interest in environmentalism, to emerge. As Dowie (1995) notes, many leaders in environmental justice groups do not characterize themselves as environmentalists at all, and will not refer to the movement or SMO as *environmental* “without carefully adding the word *justice*” (p. 144).

As insiders in the community, these leaders are able to represent the residents’ concerns and plight well because of their own experiences. Gibbs, for example, became the entrepreneur for the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA) by connecting with other families in the neighborhood that shared similar health experiences and concerns about health problems (Levine 1982). As Couch and Kroll-Smith (1994) suggest, the real or perceived threat of health hazards and negative effects for the community encourage “the development of coherent and common beliefs about danger that work to create a strong social tie among residents” (p. 36). As in the Beaver Township case, alliances among residents often lead to the formation of a grassroots group and subsequent coalitions with other groups both inside and outside of the community (Couch and Kroll-Smith 1994).

The leadership structures of grassroots environmental justice groups typically include either a single primary leader or a small, non-hierarchical leadership group. In the early stages of a movement, leadership is essential in organizing constituents and resources. Social movement theory suggests that a strong leader or group of leaders with effective organizational skills and a charismatic personality can also provide credibility to the movement and the organization (Soule and Snow 2009). As in many other types of movements, such as anti-war, feminist, and non-environmental justice NIMBY, alternative leadership structures can emerge that divide leadership and responsibility among each of the group members instead of one leader or group of leaders (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000:579).

### **Goals in Grassroots Environmental Justice Movements**

In contrast to other branches of the environmental movement, which pursue a wide range of goals, the central concerns of the activists in almost all environmental justice movements are health and the protection of their neighborhoods. That is, activists are focused on matters very significant to their daily lives and the lives of their families (Dowie 1995; Edelstein 2004). The immediate goal that usually follows is therefore keeping a hazardous site from being constructed or getting an existing site closed.

Like other grassroots movements in the US, environmental justice struggles often manifest a “strong belief in the right of citizens to participate in environmental decision making” (Dowie 1995:135). For instance, there are many grassroots demands for the local government and corporations to obtain local input in regards to sitings and waste



management. Grassroots groups may also want community right-to-know laws enacted to obtain information on existing sites or proposed sites in the future (Dowie 1995).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Concerns in local communities about environmental hazards often lead to the emergence of a leader or leadership group that organizes concerned citizens into a grassroots group. Leaders typically live in the threatened neighborhood and may have personal experiences with health problems related to the environmental hazard. Leaders develop the group's ideology, build networks, and have an influential role in goal setting.

Interview questions and examination of relevant news reports aimed to address the backgrounds of the group leaders and their roles in the White Street Landfill case. If there were multiple leaders, questions were asked about how the leaders came to know one another and how they came to work on the issue together. In addition, questions were asked about why the leader/s were interested in the landfill issue, what their specific goals were, how they attracted support for their side of the issue, and how they acquired and used resources for the group.

### **Strategies and Tactics in Grassroots Environmental Justice Movements**

Compared to the more general environmental movement, research suggests that the grassroots environmental justice movement has typically chosen more direct action and confrontational strategies and tactics (Dowie 1995; Edelstein 2004). The civil rights movement has led many environmental justice activists to borrow its strategies and tactics (Bullard 1994; Edelstein 2004), as it is also a movement of the politically weak (Bullard 1990). Typically, people involved with these movements do not have political

connections, are less likely to vote, and have limited skills in coping with bureaucracy. Often, Southern black communities facing environmental threats have been distrustful of government officials and lacked faith in the democratic process due to the history of institutionalized discrimination. Instead of trusting that the democratic process would render fair decision-making, they have chosen tactics that directly and publicly challenged the legitimacy of government officials and policies in an effort to build broader support and force change, such as sit-ins, rallies, and marches (Edelstein 2004).

These considerations have channeled local environmental justice groups toward particular kinds of strategies. In order to influence political officials, movement supporters may call or write letters to local, state, and federal government officials. The organization may also endorse political candidates who support their cause and voice opposition to those who do not (Edelstein 2004). Often, however, environmental justice movements move away from such mainstream movement tactics such as these. Indeed, a key and distinctive strategy of grassroots environmental justice movements has been to use more dramatic and confrontational tactics such as protests, marches, sit-ins, and demonstrations (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1992).

In other cases, a grassroots movement and/or social movement organization may direct its actions towards influencing a corporation's decisions directly, instead of focusing on politicians and policy-making. For example, some groups may target their efforts specifically at corporate-level decision-making. In these cases, they may choose to not get involved in political debate about particular siting proposals (Dowie 1995) and

instead focus on such tactics as calling corporate officials, presenting them signed petitions, or organizing protests outside of the corporate headquarters.

### **Claimsmaking and Framing Strategies of Environmental Justice Movements**

Key to the definition of an environmental justice movement is its use of the environmental justice frame as a mobilizing tool and a part of movement ideology (Capek 1993). Capek's study of a grassroots group in Texarkana, Texas fighting underground toxic waste in a minority community, for example, highlighted how "the significance of naming the social problem helps to create solidarity among the people who feel that they are being discriminated against environmentally" (p. 5). In this case, the community in Texarkana, which was largely African American, adopted the rhetoric of environmental justice and environmental racism in order to lobby to local politicians for the residents' relocation.

The environmental justice frame tends to resonate with racial and ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic status populations because it is consistent with the existing narratives, or "master frames," of the culture (Benford and Snow 2000). Historically, these groups have experienced various forms of discrimination. Thus, "framing environmental problems in terms of environmental justice fits into the widely used master frame that people at the bottom are not treated equally" (Markham 2008:24).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Grassroots environmental justice movements incorporate an environmental justice framing and typically use direct action tactics. In contrast to traditional environmentalists, they are less likely to work "within the system" through lobbying, and utilize instead

more confrontational tactics, such as protests, rallies, and public demonstrations that threaten the legitimacy of the governmental officials. In addition, environmental justice rhetoric is adopted by these groups and used as a mobilizing tool to attract supporters and media attention to ultimately influence policy decision-making. Controversies that involve the siting of an environmental hazard in a minority community may also adopt the rhetoric of environmental justice.

To investigate the strategies and framings used in the Greensboro case, I used interview questions that addressed the strategies, tactics, themes and arguments used by both the opposition of the proposed landfill reopening, as well as newspaper reports and documents for supplemental information. The interview questions asked about the strategies, tactics, arguments, and phrases used and how and why they were selected. In addition, I asked interviewees about the effectiveness of each of the various strategies, tactics, arguments, and phrases in influencing the outcome of the controversy.

### **Alliances in Grassroots Environmental Justice Movements**

Past research also suggests that the threatened placement of a LULU in a community can lead to alliances both among NIMBY groups and with groups outside the area. Freudenberg and Steinsapir (1992) mention several factors that can “spur local groups to join together in networks and coalitions,” (p. 30) including a need for allies, scientific and technical expertise, and increased recognition of how the environmental issues relate to politics. These networks and coalitions can also “provide a forum for exchanging experiences and developing new strategies, and enable local groups to advocate jointly for new policies and programs” (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1992:30).

Forming alliances with other community organizations or leaders to fight off LULUs has also frequently proven beneficial to grassroots environmental justice organizations (Duffy 2003). Alliances are often formed with other local or national environmental groups, sympathetic government or regulatory agencies, sympathetic political leaders, church groups, and, although less frequently, with for-profit businesses. According to Duffy (2003), developing such alliances with groups and individuals with a variety of skills, expertise, contacts, and perspectives allows for different groups or persons to take the lead on different issues while working together on common projects. In large coalitions, “point people” from the various groups are often chose to play specific roles, such as being the spokesperson to the media, organizing constituents, or mobilizing resources (Duffy 2003).

For example, the Beaver Township in Columbia County, Pennsylvania, experienced a siting dispute when a development company applied for a permit to set up a sanitary landfill in the county in 1989. While the development company claimed that the landfill would bring increased revenue into the city, two groups, the Township Board of Supervisors (TBS) and Save Our Innocent Land (SOIL), built a strong alliance against the proposal. Supporting the TBS’s concern that the landfill would threaten local wetlands and increase truck traffic, SOIL raised money to hire attorneys, experts, and run media campaigns. Eventually, the collaboration of the two groups was successful in stopping the landfill from being developed (Couch and Kroll-Smith 1994).

One issue that has been brought increasingly to the attention of environmental justice organizations by leaders of the local groups is the need to include these groups

and local grassroots organizations in their coalitions. Particular emphasis has been placed on the inclusion of the communities of color that are experiencing environmental injustices in coalitions and alliances with mainstream environmental organizations. While such national groups as the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW) have supported grassroots struggles in communities of color, there has historically been a lack of minority representation in these national networks and a lack of alliances with the local communities and grassroots groups. Further efforts to form these alliances and have larger organizations advocate *with* rather than *for* communities of color are, therefore, still needed (Dowie 1995).

### **Summary and Implications for Research**

Literature about alliances in grassroots environmental justice movements indicates that the grassroots group typically forms alliances with other environmental groups inside and outside of the community, political leaders and groups, and non-environmental groups. These alliances are often beneficial to the grassroots group in gaining a wider base of constituents, resources, and skills. Support from established environmental groups can also be beneficial to the grassroots group.

The interview schedule included questions to obtain information about the formation of alliances among the main groups involved in the White Street Landfill case and other groups inside and outside of Greensboro. I also asked about the similarities and differences among the goals of the various groups, any conflicts or problems that arose because of the differences, and whether and how such conflicts were resolved. There were also questions about other aspects of the relationships among the various groups,

such as whether and how the groups helped one another to decide on goals and strategies, recruit new members, attract support at rallies or demonstrations, or connect with leaders/influential people in the city or community.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This thesis includes a brief history on the landfill controversy from the mid-1990s up to the Greensboro City Council's September, 2009 announcement that it intended to solicit proposals from companies to reopen and operate the landfill. However, the major focus of the study, reported in the remaining results chapters, involves the events following this announcement and ending with the City Council elections of November, 2011, which opponents of the landfill reopening won decisively. (For additional historical details, see Appendix A.)

The major data source for this reason was semi-structured interviews with members of the landfill opposition movement, individual landfill supporters, former mayors, current and former members of Greensboro's City Council, and journalists who covered the story. In order to gather background information and better understand the history of, and controversy around, the White Street Landfill, I also reviewed local newspaper articles, press releases from the City of Greensboro and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and minutes of City Council meetings. In addition, I drew on information that I obtained from observation of selected CEEJ meetings and rallies and City Council meetings.



I obtained the newspaper articles, press releases, and City Council meeting minutes primarily from the Internet. The newspapers on which I drew include the *Greensboro News and Record*, *The Rhinoceros Times*, *The Carolina Peacemaker*, and *YES! Weekly*. The *Greensboro News and Record* is a daily newspaper with the largest circulation in the Greensboro metropolitan area (Greensboro News and Record 2011). *The Rhinoceros Times*, founded in Greensboro in 1991 (*The Rhinoceros Times* 2011), is a free, weekly news and opinion paper with a politically conservative viewpoint. *YES! Weekly*, founded in Greensboro in 2005, is a free, alternative newspaper that is devoted to local politics, arts and entertainment in the Piedmont Triad (YES! Weekly 2011). *The Carolina Peacemaker*, founded in Greensboro in 1967, is a minority-owned, weekly news publication with a focus on the African-American community (*The Carolina Peacemaker* 2011).

The selection of the newspaper articles used were based on the dates of publication and keywords in the titles and text of the articles. Recent editions of the each of these newspapers are available on the newspapers' websites at no cost, and older editions of some publications are available for a fee of two to three dollars apiece. I used online newspaper databases such as LexisNexis, online news search engines such as GoogleNews, and the newspapers' website to search for these articles, using keywords and phrases such as "White Street Landfill," "Greensboro landfill," and "Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice."

In reviewing the articles, I focused especially on how various leaders and groups in Greensboro viewed the landfill, its closing in 2006, and its proposed reopening in 2009

and who took strong positions on each side. I also looked at reports of the actions they took to try to influence the outcome of the controversy and the contents of their arguments. These might include speaking out at City Council meetings, speaking directly to the press, organizing and/or being actively involved in groups in their communities, and/or participating in rallies and demonstrations regarding the landfill. I also looked for reports about cooperation and coordination with other groups. To learn more about which City Council members and community leaders supported or opposed the landfill and the nature of their arguments, I also looked at the minutes and video recordings of the City Council meetings, which are available to download from the City of Greensboro website.

To obtain my interview sample, I began with the information from local newspapers, documents from the CEEJ meetings and/or rallies, and suggestions from knowledgeable sources, such as Dr. Bill Markham, a local environmental sociologist, and former mayor Keith Holliday to identify key leaders and knowledgeable persons. I sought interviews first with people mentioned in these documents, including the leaders of the organizations, former mayors, and former and/or current City Council members who expressed opposition or support for the reopening of the landfill. The nature of interview questions allowed the interviewees to discuss people in the community who they believed played a major role in the dispute; therefore, following the first round of interviews, I researched key actors mentioned and obtained necessary contact information through their online voter registration information and online telephone directories.

Twenty interviews were projected. To allow for persons who could not be contacted or who declined my interview request, I drew an initial sample of

approximately 40 people and ranked them in order of priority. I eventually narrowed this list down to 30 potential interviewees based on their apparent depth of involvement in the dispute and recommendations from other interviewees.

In order to set up interviews with the participants, Dr. Markham, my thesis supervisor, and I first sent a formal letter of request to each potential interviewee and then followed-up with a phone call, as well as in email in a few cases. I used various public records, such as online telephone directories, voter registration records, and the relevant organizations' websites to locate mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers. Upon receiving a statement of agreement to participate in the study, I then set up a time to meet with the interviewees at a location of their choice.

I contacted potential interviewees in five different rounds. I tried to contact six in round one (with five agreeing to be interviewed and one non-responsive), six in round two (with five agreeing to be interviewed and one declining), seven in round three (with three agreeing to be interviewed, one declining, and three non-responsive), seven in round four (with five agreeing to be interviewed, one declining, and one non-responsive), and four in round five (with two agreeing to be interviewed and two declining). Four out of the five who declined to be interviewed were supporters of the landfill reopening. Three out of the four who declined are former City Council members, and one is a member of the Conservatives for Guilford County. The fifth person is a local journalist who frequently covered the landfill issue – she declined the interview at the instruction of her editor.

Including all five rounds of interviews, I had attempted to locate and interview a total of 30 people. I interviewed 19 persons, received five refusals, and could not reach six potential interviewees for whom I had correct numbers to schedule the interview. Of course, the people for whom I left voicemail messages but did not return my calls may have been indirectly refusing to participate. The response rate for all persons I attempted to contact was thus 63 percent, for those I actually contacted 79 percent.

The demographics of the 19 interviewees can be described as follows: 11 females, 8 males; 5 African Americans, 14 Caucasians; ages ranging from approximately 40- to 70-years-old; and socio-economic status ranging from lower-middle income to middle-higher income. The data on sex, race, and age, were based on the interviewees' appearances and their personal narratives. Estimates of socio-economic status was also based on personal narratives, as well as the interviewees' occupations and/or education.

The interviewees' involvement with the landfill dispute varied in depth and association. Overall, 15 of the interviewees expressed opposition to the landfill reopening, and four expressed support for the reopening. The number of landfill supporters who declined to be interviewed helps to account for their lower representation in the interview sample. Out of these four interviewees, one was a local press member, one a former City Council member, one a former mayor, and one a member of the Conservatives for Guilford County. Out of the 15 anti-landfill interviewees, nine were CEEJ members, two were League of Women Voters members, one a member of the Nealtown Neighborhood Association, one a current mayor, and two were local press members. Out of the CEEJ members interviewed, three were former mayors, one current

City Council member, one a former City Council member, one a member of the Pulpit Forum, one a lawyer from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and one a New Garden Friends Meeting member.

There are of course representation and bias issues inherent in my interviewee sample. For example, I interviewed three times as many Caucasians as African Americans. Although the majority of the Caucasian interviewees opposed the landfill, the majority of the people most directly involved with the landfill opposition movement were African American. However, my aim was to include in the sample the key Caucasian leaders who joined or formed alliances with the CEEJ, along with key leaders and ground-level members of the CEEJ, and I was able to achieve this in my sample. In addition, because of its strong coalition with the CEEJ, I included members of the League of Women Voters, whose membership has a Caucasian majority. Another issue is that my sample does not include the younger cohort of college students who joined forces with the CEEJ in the march to the plaza of the Municipal Building, the last major act of protest before the City Council announced that it would not be reopening the landfill. Thus, it is not certain that the interviewees' viewpoints fully reflect those of the younger individuals involved; however, their involvement seemed to be intermittent, and their views largely in line with the CEEJ.

I used semi-structured interviews to collect the data. Because the interviewees possessed different pools of information, the interviews were custom constructed for each interviewee using questions from a larger pool of items (see Appendix B for the full interview schedule). The interview questions were primarily be open-ended, but included

a few closed ended (generally yes/no) questions. Most questions allowed the interviewees to elaborate and for me to ask follow-up questions. In order to gain more complete information from the respondents, I included probes with my questions where appropriate.

Section A included general questions designed to obtain factual background information about the history of the landfill dispute and each interviewee's perceptions of the dispute. The questions in Section B were designed to obtain information from local leaders involved in the dispute who were not active members of groups/organizations that opposed or supported the reopening the landfill. If the interviewee was active in a particular group, then this section was skipped. These questions examined the individual's goals, themes, framing, strategies, and tactics. I also asked about whether certain arguments or phrases were used by the individual to describe the issue, the kinds of actions the individual took to show opposition or support for reopening the landfill, and whether specific actions were seen as effective in influencing the outcome. Last, I asked about the individual's perceptions of and alliances with other local leaders and groups that supported or opposed the reopening.

Section C was designed to look at the groups in which the interviewee actively participated. If the interviewee was not active in a particular group, then this section was skipped. In this section, I examined the group's leadership, demographics, and resources. For example, I inquired about the priorities and motivations of the founding member(s) of the organization, the demographics of the supporters, how the organization attracted members, and the kinds of resources to which it had access, such as funding and meeting

space. This section also examined the various groups' goals, themes, framing, strategies, and tactics. It included questions similar to Section B, but focused on the group instead of the individual. Last, I asked about the group's alliances/coalitions with other local leaders and groups that supported or opposed the reopening.

Questions in sections D, E, and F were asked of all interviewees. Section D examined the effect the leaders and groups had on the local news media, as well as the role of the media outlets in the dispute. Questions in Section E examined the obstacles and advantages the individuals and groups faced in achieving their goals. Questions in Section F addressed the interviewees' personal opinions about the future of the landfill. For example, I asked whether, and why or why not, the interviewee thought reopening the landfill would be racial discrimination against the majority African Americans population in the neighborhood. I also asked whether there were things about Greensboro's history or the past disputes about the landfill that the interviewee thought have affected people's perceptions of the recent dispute.

During the interviews, I recorded handwritten notes and used an audio recorder. After the completion of each interview, I prepared a full summary of the interview based on my notes, using the recordings to fill in details about any responses that I marked as especially significant or problematic during my note taking.

Before coding the data, I constructed a list of codes to identify nine key topics for analysis: historical factors involved in the dispute, leaders and groups, goals, coalitions and alliances, obstacles, strategies and tactics, arguments and counter-arguments, role of the media, and advantages. I ranked these folders in the order in which I would analyze

the topics, with “1” being the highest rank and the first topic I planned to analyze, and “9” being the lowest rank and the last topic I planned to analyze. Bits of related information were often in various places throughout the interview, as the respondents often provided extensive details about issues that related to more than one topic. Therefore, in order to sort the data, I printed copies of all completed interviews and divided the questions and answers according to their related topics. If the provided responses related to more than one key topic, I first put them in the highest-ranking relevant folder and then, once I completed analysis of that topic, I put them in the next-highest-ranking related folder. I then sorted the contents of each folder into smaller stacks, coding for similar responses. For example, I grouped all relevant responses about interviewees’ perceptions of why people supported or opposed the landfill reopening into categories according to their individual opinions on whether or not the landfill should be reopened.

The main descriptor codes assigned to each individual response related to the interviewees’ stance on the landfill reopening. Additional codes related to the interviewees’ involvement in the dispute and their association with various groups. Specifically, these descriptor codes included whether or not the interviewees were leaders or “ground-level” members of the landfill opposition movement, former or current Greensboro City Council members, former or current Greensboro mayors, leaders or members of a local tea party-related group, or members of the local press.

The main drawbacks of using interviews as my main data source involve anonymity issues. Although I promised not to use names in my report, some interviewees



who see their positions and roles as identifying features of themselves may have withheld some of their thoughts and perspective on the landfill issue to avoid further controversy or feelings of ill-will. Several of the respondents are also in local government positions and may not have wanted to say anything that could potentially create rifts in their constituencies and jeopardize their future re-elections.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION PART I**

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first summarizes the interviewees' perspectives on how Greensboro's racial history influenced the landfill dispute. The second section summarizes the interviewees' views about the key leaders and groups among the landfill opposition and landfill supporters. The third summarizes the goals of the landfill opposition and landfill supporters. The fourth section looks at the coalitions and alliances, or lack thereof, among the landfill opponents and landfill supporters.

#### **Greensboro's Racial History as Backdrop for the Landfill Controversy**

The majority of the respondents viewed Greensboro's history of race and class relations as a key factor in the landfill dispute. These relations laid the basis for landfill opponents' framing it as an environmental justice dispute. Many interviewees spoke about how the landfill issue illustrated how many African American residents are "still dealing with trust issues" with the city's white political and business leaders. The respondents referred to several issues to highlight the trust problems. Some of these involved what they saw as the City Council's consistent lack of effort in helping northeast Greensboro to attract more businesses, such as a grocery store and other shops, while other major trust issues center around deeply ingrained memories of past civil and workers' rights conflicts.

Difficult race relations in Greensboro's history are the bases of many African American residents' distrust of the local government and white political and business leaders. Literature on environmental controversies has shown trust and betrayal to be common concerns among communities dealing with a locally unwanted land use (e.g., Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007). In this case, the landfill dispute seemed to reignite the long-standing trust issues between many African American residents and the city's local government, which has historically consisted of a majority white City Council.

Many referred to civil rights struggles and the 1979 Klan/Nazi protest-turned-shooting and its aftermath as major sources of these deep-rooted feelings of distrust (see Appendix A for details about this event). As one interviewee noted,

The fact that Greensboro's involvement with the sit-ins ended up leading to citizens becoming involved in the Civil Rights Movement on the national scale – people are aware of the sit-ins and the Civil Rights museum continues awareness of our history and African Americans' contribution to changing the position of African Americans and changing history. The second event that affects how we look at ourselves in history is the march in which labor members, who were social liberals politically, the Communist Workers' Party, were demonstrating for increased rights and were opposed by members of the KKK, and members were injured and killed and this event. That is very important.

Another interviewee mentioned the recent alleged racial profiling and discrimination by the Greensboro Police Department, which he said “kind of ratcheted up distrust within the community and the Council and led to this kind of gamesmanship in the Council and trying to out-manuever the other side.” (See Appendix A for additional historical detail.)

Several interviewees opposed to reopening the landfill distinguished between the superficial and underlying factors in the controversy. As one interviewee put it,

The public reason was to save money. It was clear early on that the Council had very little concern about the northeast area. The race factor was significant and always has been. The majority of that Council had the sense that no one would care if the landfill was reopened....There is much history of black settlements in Greensboro being near hazards, such as the treatment plant. There has been an absence of gas lines in their communities, paved streets, all kinds of ignoring of the African American community in Greensboro.

All of the interviewees involved in the anti-landfill movement mentioned that residents of the landfill district saw the potential reopening as a breach of trust and a broken promise by the City Council. All believed that northeast residents expected the landfill closure to be permanent, and that those who had moved into the area since the landfill closed were operating under that assumption as well. As one interviewee said, “They felt like they had been promised...people were being told the landfill was closed and not going to reopen; that they were not going to have to worry. And they felt betrayed.”

Greensboro’s history of race relations and, subsequently, many African Americans’ distrust of the city’s white leaders might lead one to expect that the two sides in the landfill dispute would form along racial lines. However, while there were evident racial divides at the beginning of the dispute, it did not end this way. As I will later discuss, an interesting outcome involves how racial lines became blurred through the formation of anti-landfill coalitions and alliances.

## **Key Leaders and Groups**

### **Key Leaders among the Landfill Opposition**

The interviewees were almost unanimous in nominating Goldie Wells, a former City Council representative for the district in which the landfill is located, as the leader of the opposition. A well-known and respected resident of this district, Dr. Wells was the social movement entrepreneur who organized the main social movement organization (SMO), a grassroots environmental justice group called the Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ).

Several interviewees mentioned how essential leadership was to the movement's existence and operations. Based on her long history of community organizing, Goldie Wells had the know-how to attract support and acquire the necessary resources for such things as court filing fees and transportation costs for the group's lawyers. She also had her followers' loyalty and her community's trust.

Many interviewees also mentioned current and former mayors and City Council members as key leaders. Most notably, the two mayors who served between 1999 and 2009, Keith Holliday and Yvonne Johnson, were frequently said to have been very influential. Several interviewees listed a half-dozen or more names of those they believed played a major role, including the main leader's "right-hand woman," several women from the League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad (hereafter "the League"), and a couple women from the New Garden Friends Meeting ("NGFM," a local Quaker group).

Dr. Wells seems to have personified the strong, charismatic, and organized leader depicted in social movement theory. Many anti-landfill interviewees described her role

using such terms as “organizer,” “motivator,” “mentor,” “inspiration,” and “passion.” She was the most visible spokesperson for the opposition movement, many said. She “kept the goal and mission in the forefront,” kept the movement’s supporters focused on the issue, and set clear goals and objectives.

Mr. Holliday’s leadership role was generally viewed as complementary to Goldie Wells’. In one anti-landfill interviewee’s opinion, he had made the first and most extensive critique of the landfill and had great background knowledge of the issue. Thus, he provided the movement with information and guidance about the political implications and financial impact of reopening the landfill. As a white male leader in Greensboro, he was also an unexpected ally for the movement. He “brought a different face to the fight,” as one interviewee put it. In the words of another:

People couldn’t look past that he was a white male not from the area of the landfill and he stood against it. There were people who were not from the community who were against it, and he articulated that.

Interviewees who supported the reopening frequently mentioned Yvonne Johnson, a prominent community organizer and Greensboro’s first African American mayor, joining Goldie Wells as a key leader. The ways these interviewees described those two leaders’ roles were similar to the anti-landfill interviewees’ responses in some ways, but noticeably different in others. Several of the interviewees who supported the landfill mentioned that Wells and Johnson had a “recognition factor” as a result of being leaders in predominantly African American east Greensboro and having served on the City Council, which contributed to their ability to lead and influence the opposition

movement. One interviewee referred to Goldie Wells as the “torchbearer” for the opposition – a term which connotes a very different image than “motivator” and “mentor.” Another interviewee made a similar contrast by describing her role as “more of an agitator than an informer.”

### **Key Groups among the Landfill Opposition**

Overall, the anti-landfill interviewees identified two groups that were most influential among those that opposed to the reopening and two additional groups that also provided strong support to the movement. In general, the interviewees’ description of the organizations involved in the opposition movement is consistent with pluralist models. Not surprisingly, almost all the interviewees said that the most influential group was Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ), the local social movement organization (SMO) formed by Wells. In some cases, interviewees referred to this group as the Concerned Citizens of Northeast Greensboro, and, in others, interviewees referred to it as the CEEJ. These two groups have heavily overlapping membership, as the latter group was formed out of the former explicitly for the purpose of fighting the landfill reopening. The two names, therefore, were often used synonymously, even by those who were members of both groups, and I will follow that practice here, referring to the CEEJ as the main grassroots group opposing the landfill.

According to most of the CEEJ members interviewed, the group had over 200 people on its email list and approximately 50-75 people who attended meetings, which took place regularly on the last Monday of each month. Females, African Americans, and senior citizens predominated among the active members, but most of the members

interviewed noted the presence of dedicated male and white members, as well as a broad range of ages, from college-age to 85-years-olds who attended meetings regularly. Most described the majority socio-economic status to be lower-middle income, while some said that it ranged from low to high income.

The CEEJ's role in the dispute was to provide a forum for opponents to discuss the landfill issue and work together to keep the landfill from being reopened to household waste, the classic role of a social movement organization. As one interviewee remarked, it "gave a framework for people to attach to, a way to express their position." As "the central core opponent" to the landfill reopening, that is, the central SMO in the movement, the CEEJ reflected the key role of its leader by making the issue known to a larger community that just one section of east Greensboro.

The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad (the League) was the second most frequently mentioned group opposed to the landfill reopening. Compared to the CEEJ, the League is a much older organization with a much broader agenda. The majority of the anti-landfill respondents said that the group provided strong support to the CEEJ, especially by signing on to the lawsuit to prevent the reopening. Several interviewees also mentioned that the group "brought in another segment of the population." As a press member put it, the League "represented a more city-wide faction" for the opposition and was "really the mobilizer of whites against the landfill."

Several other groups were mentioned as playing a peripheral role in the movement, including the Simkins Political Action Committee (PAC), the Human Relations Commission, the Pulpit Forum, and the New Garden Friends Meeting (NGFM).



The extremely influential Simkins PAC, whose recommendations are mailed out to African American voters city-wide, endorsed candidates for the 2011 City Council election who opposed the landfill reopening or whom they believed would give future support to the African American community. The Human Relations Commission, a unit of Greensboro's city government concerned with fair treatment and respect for all citizens, "took a stand early on," according to an interviewee. The Commission passed a resolution that helped in the lawsuit against reopening – an action that the interviewee believed "really galvanized the community-wide sentiment against the landfill." Members of the Pulpit Forum, a group of area pastors involved in social justice issues, were said to have "worked on the frontline with residents," and the NGFM, like the League, was said to have helped get the west side of town involved in the issue. One member of the opposition movement also mentioned the Beloved Community Center, a local grassroots organization dedicated to racial and economic justice and community-building, and the local chapter of the NAACP, but it was not clear what their specific roles were in the dispute.

The pro-landfill interviewees had views similar to the anti-landfill interviewees about the key groups among those that opposed the landfill. A former elected official who was very knowledgeable about the CEEJ and its key role in the dispute noted the organization and structure that it gave the movement. As he recalled, members of the group "came to the City Council meetings with t-shirts saying 'don't dump,' so that was something that clearly had to be planned out. It didn't just happen at the local convenience store." Other than the CEEJ, the only other group mentioned by a pro-

landfill interviewee was the Simkins PAC, but the interviewee did not elaborate on its particular role in the dispute. It is worth noting that none of the pro-landfill interviewees mentioned the League as being influential in the opposition movement. This perspective may be indicative of their view that the landfill opponents mainly consisted of northeast Greensboro residents, perhaps reflecting a “racialization” of the dispute. A lack of understanding of the wider concerns about the landfill may have resulted in the landfill advocates overlooking or neglecting to recognize the importance of the League’s involvement in the dispute.

### **Key Leaders among the Landfill Supporters**

There was a general consensus among the interviewees opposed to the reopening in naming four key individual leaders who supported the reopening. Three of these individuals, Trudy Wade, Mary Rakestraw, and Danny Thompson, were white, politically conservative, City Council members (all but Wade were voted out of office in 2011) who represented majority white, middle-to-higher income districts. The fourth leader was the mayor Bill Knight (also later voted out of office in 2011), also white and politically conservative, who served only a single term as mayor. The vast majority of the anti-landfill interviewees cited all four as the key leaders; a few did not list them all, but listed two or three of the four.

Three of these four individuals were most frequently cited by these respondents as the most influential leaders supporting the reopening, Knight, Thompson, and Wade. One respondent referred to them as the “pushers,” who “were very adamant that [reopening the landfill] would save Greensboro millions of dollars because we were in an economic

crisis.” A few of these interviewees described their role as being the “faces” of the push for reopening, but not necessarily the only major instigators behind it. None of these individuals functioned as SMO leader or movement entrepreneurs. As one interviewee put it, they were the ones “who were out in front, but I do think they were getting pressure from private companies.” Another interviewee added that “they thought they were doing what their constituency wanted.” Thus, they were exerting influence from a different base than the anti-landfill social movements leaders or former elected officials. The pro-landfill leaders were exerting influence as elected officials; indeed, two of them had come to power on the coattails of the conservative sweep in the 2009 election.

A few interviewees mentioned other key landfill supporters, whose behind-the-scenes leadership, if true, might partly support Floyd Hunter’s (1953) elite model of power structure. Three respondents said that there was another former City Councilman, Mike Barber, who was heavily involved behind the scenes in the pro-landfill initiative. Barber was often credited by the local press, as well as by interviewees in this study, for initiating the discussion in 2008 about reopening the landfill to household waste while he was on the City Council. He did not seek re-election in 2009, but some interviewees believed that he was thereafter a “backroom motivator” in trying to get the landfill reopened. One interviewee mentioned that many people thought Barber was involved with private haulers and acting on their behalf, although that was never publicly stated. Interestingly, four respondents also listed local private waste management companies as influential actors among those supporting the reopening.

A local journalist described another former City Council member, Bill Burckley, who now works as a political consultant, as a behind the scenes operator. The journalist believed he played a major behind the scenes role by researching and providing his clients – among them the four key leaders supporting the reopening – with information about the waste management policy issue, costs of transporting the trash, and the positions they should take to appeal to their electorates. This journalist also gave more weight to Dr. Wade’s role and influence in the dispute. In this respondent’s view, “out of the four Council members who supported the landfill, she was the most articulate...she stuck her neck out more for articulating the cause.” Another interviewee also listed *The Rhinoceros Times*, a local conservative-leaning news publication, as a key leader in supporting the reopening. No one, however, mentioned members of Greensboro’s traditional elite, such as Jim Melvin, Mike Weaver, or the foundations with which they work.

Compared to the anti-landfill interviewees, the pro-landfill interviewees were far less inclined to give specifics about whom they viewed as the key individual leaders among those supporting the landfill reopening. One respondent simply stated that “it was a mixed bag.” Another gave a few more qualifiers: the key leaders were “elected officials” and “their constituencies.” According to this respondent, the elected officials and their constituencies “were trying to be fair to all concerned – doing the homework and due diligence to be responsible to all.” Greensboro residents who supported the reopening did not, however, turn out to the City Council meetings en masse. This respondent believed that the landfill supporters were turned off by the “screaming and

yelling” from members of the landfill opposition movement and, therefore, chose not to come to the meetings. The editor of a conservative-leaning publication also considered the four current and former City Council members as being most influential. Specifically, he viewed Mr. Knight to be a leader in the reopening efforts because of his time spent performing cost analyses to try to save the city money.

Providing the most, yet still little, detail, an elected official who was in office during the controversy said that “there were four members who favored it – several from the previous Council, who I won’t name, who provided invaluable assistance. They said it [reopening the landfill] was ‘a no-brainer.’” Later on, this respondent did mention specific names of those thought to be most influential. Danny Thompson “spent days and hours researching the issue and could speak very fluently about it,” and Trudy Wade “did her homework very well too.” The former official’s self-reflection about his involvement was subdued. “I was less outspoken,” the respondent said, “It is more of my nature to defer to others in discussions on these kinds of issues.”

### **Key Groups among the Landfill Supporters**

There was consensus among all the interviewees that, to their knowledge, no prominent organized groups supported the landfill reopening. Three interviewees did mention that the local tea party-related group (Conservatives for Guilford County) may have been involved, but they said that they did not know to what extent. Two respondents said that the supporters were “Republicans in general” or “just Republicans and ultra-conservative citizens,” while two others mentioned that, while there were not organized groups, there was considerable support from citizens “from other parts of the city [i.e.,

not from east Greensboro].” Another interviewee mentioned that the pro-landfill City Council members often tried to emphasize that “there were just as many supporters of the landfill as those who opposed it,” but those numbers were not reflected by their attendance at City Council meetings. According to this interviewee, it seemed that the landfill supporters did not organize themselves because “they didn’t feel the need.”

Two members of the press explicitly mentioned the lack of formal organization by landfill supporters. One member of the local press, “thought Republican groups would have been in support of it, but there wasn’t any kind of organizing rallies or anything in favor of it.” The tea party, while vocal in electing the City Council, did not function as an SMO for a reopening movement. Another reporter, suggested that online pontification took the place of formal organization, to the detriment of the pro-landfill movement:

There are very vocal, ultra-conservatives that were active in the “blog-o-sphere.” There were a lot of comments on the *Greensboro News and Record*, probably from mostly elderly Greensboro citizens. There was an assumption that [the supporters] were the majority, so they didn’t really try to organize or mobilize, and they took it for granted that the City Council would accommodate their wishes and they would prevail....[The pro-landfill bloggers and commentators in the media] ultimately defeated themselves because they created an “echo-chamber” and were unable to kind of co-opt the arguments of the opposition and isolated themselves from the community. They may have given the conservative City Council members a false sense of confidence.

## **Goals**

This section looks at the goals of the landfill opponents and the landfill supporters. Landfill opponents frequently worked through organizations to try to keep the landfill closed. Indeed, some interviewees said that they first became involved as an

individuals, but then went on to join an anti-landfill organization, or that their initiative led a group to which they already belonged to join the movement. Indeed, the anti-landfill movement was a well organized movement centered on SMOs; only a small number of interviewees emphasized that they represented themselves only and did not act on behalf of any organization or group. In contrast, most of the landfill supporters acted as individuals and evidently not through organizations, although some were involved in informal networks.

### **Landfill Opposition SMOs**

The SMOs and individuals involved in the landfill opposition, for the most part, all adopted goals related to Greensboro's future waste management system.

### **The Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ)**

The CEEJ, the core SMO in the anti-landfill movement, had one primary goal and several secondary goals. Every CEEJ member interviewed, as well as some non-members who were knowledgeable about the group's mission, said that the group's main goal was to keep the White Street Landfill closed to solid waste. According to several CEEJ members, a secondary goal was "to inform the City Council and help seek other alternatives for waste management," such as a regional landfill. In addition, as is true of many environmental justice organizations, the CEEJ wanted to explore the possible health issues related to the locally unwanted land use.

Other interviewees mentioned the group's goals related to economic development and the 2011 City Council elections. They said that the CEEJ wanted to stress the importance of east Greensboro's economic development to the City Council and that it

“had a clear goal of [defeating in the next election] particular people in [the City Council],” as one non-member commented. A couple members also mentioned the group’s effort to promote voter registration and getting people from the community to the polls.

Most CEEJ respondents mentioned their aim of influencing the November 2011 City Council elections. As a CEEJ member and former elected official stated, “the strategy was making it to the election, to reseal Council members who wanted it opened.” Another member, and former elected official, said the strategy was “to engage as many people as possible and make the City Council as uncomfortable as possible.”

#### **Nealtown Neighborhood Association**

The Nealtown Neighborhood Association is an organization made up of residents living in the neighborhood nearest to the White Street Landfill. A leader of the Association, which organized in response to the potential reopening, stated the group’s goals as, simply, “to build a stronger community and to keep the landfill closed.” She added,

It was almost a year ago that we formed the Nealtown Neighborhood Association after we found out about the landfill and now we have meetings still once a month with the CEEJ and we have our own meetings once a month. We are working to make sure it doesn’t reopen. We have a team of people now that are working to try to find alternatives to the landfill.

#### **New Garden Friends Meeting (NGFM)**

According to a New Garden Friends Meeting (NGFM) member interviewed, the NGFM as a group did not develop a formal position regarding the landfill. While this



interviewee was also a CEEJ member and acted on its behalf, she emphasized that she and other individual NGFM members, not the church as a whole, actively opposed the landfill reopening. “The NGFM does not involve itself in politics,” she said.

### **The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad**

The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad has various goals aligned with their environmental policies, which are based “on fairness, and stewardship of our resources.” Regarding the landfill issue, the respondents mentioned their aim of getting “the City Council to not move so precipitously.” By signing onto the lawsuit to block the city’s effort to reopen the landfill to household waste, it seemed that the League’s aim was to keep the landfill closed; however, one League member clarified its position on the landfill as follows:

It is important to know that the official position of the League was not that the landfill should not be reopened, but that there needed to be time taken to explore alternatives thoroughly. We believed there was a lack of transparency with the city government. We sat and watched the issue for about a year before we got involved. Our official position was that they should wait two years and during that time study alternatives. They were rushing into it. So it was not accurate to say that we opposed the landfill....There needed to be a waiting period and we focused a lot on the process and the public involvement that needed to take place with public hearings. So it was different that just don’t open the landfill. But as it went on, it became important to stop it.

Some interviewees mentioned that members of the League were interested in “protecting the image of Greensboro,” and that, because many of its members saw the reopening as environmental racism and a hindrance to economic development. Consequently, reopening the landfill would not be good for the city. Others noted that the

League wanted “to maintain trust and cohesion in the community. It didn’t want the racial division [the reopening] would cause.”

### **Individual Actors**

Two landfill opponents interviewed said that they, or some of their fellow group members, acted as individuals and not as part of a group. One, a current elected official, said that it was his position to oppose the reopening because it would not be “the right thing” for the community and would hinder economic development. Although not explicitly stated, the actions of several NGFM members implied that their efforts were aimed at keeping the landfill closed to household waste.

### **The Landfill Supporters**

The landfill supporters’ goals in becoming involved in the dispute did not seem as straightforward as the landfill opposition’s. Perhaps this vagueness existed, in part, because the landfill supporters worked as individuals and not through organizations. Whereas the landfill opponents unambiguously pushed for their goal of keeping the landfill closed to household waste, no interviewee in favor of the reopening said that his or her goal simply as getting the landfill reopened.

Most pro-landfill interviewees, instead, referred to their goals as fulfilling their obligation to continue the Request for Proposals (RFP) process with waste management companies interested in operating the landfill, to use the landfill, a valuable resource, wisely, or to save money for the city’s taxpayers. One elected official who strongly favored reopening the landfill but was defeated for reelection described his main reason for supporting the reopening as follows: “I was accountable for all Greensboro citizens

financially. I was obligated to protect the interests of the city in that respect.” Another former City Council member also said that she got involved because it was her responsibility as an elected official. A member of the Conservatives for Guilford County said that he became involved because he thought keeping the landfill closed to household waste “was unfair to the taxpayers of Greensboro.” Taken together, these responses seem to be indirect ways of saying that the landfill supporters’ chief goal was to cut expenses and taxes. Reopening the landfill, therefore, could be understood as a means to this end rather than an end in itself.

### **Coalitions and Alliances**

On the landfill opposition side, informal coalitions formed among the CEEJ, the League, the NGFM, the Nealtown Neighborhood Association, and others. Alliances also formed between the CEEJ and individual leaders, several of whom emphasized economic development issues related to the landfill. While these coalitions were broad-based, they did not come close to representing all of Greensboro. On the pro-landfill side, conservative City Council members and other individual citizens informally allied themselves in supporting the reopening.

### **Among the Landfill Opposition**

The main group opposing the landfill, the CEEJ, formed coalitions with several non-environmental justice-focused groups, as well as with several prominent individual political and community leaders. As many interviewees noted, these alliances served many and varied purposes in the movement. While participants may have had different reasons for joining the movement, they were united in their goal to stop the reopening, at

least until the City Council had performed adequate due diligence about alternative waste management. Ultimately, as social movement theory suggests, these coalitions and alliances were very important in maximizing support, as they helped make the landfill a city-wide issue instead of just an east Greensboro issue. Yet like all alliances, they also involved some tensions.

Interviewees most frequently mentioned the League as the most influential group that allied itself with the CEEJ to oppose the landfill. Several interviewees mentioned that CEEJ members spoke to some leaders in the League about the issue prior to the League members becoming heavily involved. One CEEJ member said that she helped get word about the landfill to the League, but that the League already knew about the issue before she spoke to the Board of Directors about it. This interviewee's "aim was to let them know about the efforts of the CEEJ, and they got involved right away." She emphasized, though, that several members were already involved, and they already had an environmental committee; they just then "really got involved" once she had spoken with them directly. One of the League members said that she became aware of the landfill issue because "the League on a systematic basis monitors what goes on in the city government." She said they "have some people always watching the televised City Council meetings."

Another key movement leader said that the two main groups with which the CEEJ cooperated were the League and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, a non-profit legal based in Durham, North Carolina. After being contacted by a CEEJ member, a SCSJ staff attorney first met with the CEEJ member in March, 2011. They began having

phone conversations in February of that year, and, thereafter, the case was “one of [his] primary, if not [his] primary,” responsibilities. According to this interviewee, she and a co-leader were in contact with the SCSJ attorney daily via email or text message. The attorney said that the SCSJ took on this case because it fit their mission, as they were involved in “environmental justice work,” as well as “fighting for communities,” such as low-income and minority communities. For such communities and local SMOs that lack deep expertise, seeking expert support as the CEEJ did has often been found important. In researching the issue, the SCSJ staff attorney said that

there is literature that is established that shows that [landfills] end up in poor communities, and also African American communities even when you control for wealth. We looked at where the trash was sent in Greensboro to see if there would be human impact in other areas. Uwharrie has close to zero....So it fit our mission. So we were trying to minimize the impact. Uwharrie is a good location. There is less than 100 people within a one-mile radius of the landfill; there is about 7500 in a one-mile radius in Greensboro. These are not comparable impacts.

The NGFM seemed to be peripherally involved in the movement because of the key involvement of several of its members. One of these members said that she initially became involved in the landfill issue as “a private individual.” She attended CEEJ meetings on her own behalf, not on behalf of the NGFM, but she “reported back to the New Garden Friends, though, and other individuals who had gone to the meetings did too.” These NGFM members ended up spearheading the caravan and rally at the landfill, because, as this interviewee said, “it kept being said that this was just an east Greensboro issue and other people in Greensboro didn’t care. And we wanted to show that other

districts cared too.” In order to organize the rally, these members spoke to their social concerns committee and asked them to donate money so that they could rent “Port-O-Johns and other things like that.” This joint member also arranged for a former mayor to come to speak to her and other NGFM members about the landfill so that they could have more information about the issue.

The Nealtown Neighborhood Association also seemed to be involved in the movement primarily through several of its leaders. One NNA leader told me that she first became aware of the landfill issue at a CEEJ meeting. She then started looking into the issue more in-depth and reading newspaper articles about it. She said that she first got involved with the CEEJ, and formed the NNA thereafter.

A Pulpit Forum member said that he was asked to join the CEEJ by several people, including the main movement leader, whom he said he often has contact with. They had the similar goal of keeping the landfill closed, and he started becoming involved in the dispute by going to the CEEJ meetings. He said the Reverend at Laughlin Memorial United Methodist Church (UMC), where the meetings took place, was also very much involved. Other interviewees mentioned that several local churches supported the movement’s efforts to keep the landfill closed. Reminiscent of recruitment methods in the Civil Rights Movements, several said that their church congregations were one of the main avenues through which CEEJ members recruited support. Laughlin UMC also always served as the CEEJ’s meeting place, at no cost to the group. For new, underfunded grassroots movements, obtaining resources like these can prove invaluable.

Several interviewees also said that students from local colleges and universities got involved as well.

In addition to coalitions among local groups, there were also several key alliances between CEEJ, the core SMO, and prominent political and community leaders. Many interviewees mentioned the strong alliance between the CEEJ and three former mayors, all of whom also considered themselves CEEJ members. One of the former mayors initially became involved with the CEEJ as an advisor, but that led to becoming “an active, dedicated member.” Another contributed to the CEEJ efforts by donating to the group, helping with strategy and understanding the issue, and acting as a spokesperson to the press. “Diametrically opposed” to the reopening of the landfill, this former mayor “believed that there was strength in numbers” and that would provide the best opportunity to stop the effort to reopen it. The former mayor began urging people to get involved, which led him to work with the main movement leader to organize an informational meeting and the issue. NGFM members, some of whom are also in the League, contacted the former mayor as well. A main movement leader echoed this former mayor’s description about his involvement. She reported that she and the former mayor got in touch early on in the dispute when the City Council began talking about submitting RFPs for the landfill. Thereafter, they met twice, and the former mayor continued to provide advice throughout the dispute.

Another former mayor was involved with the CEEJ and also the NGFM, but really, “just by supporting their efforts” and trying to regularly attend CEEJ meetings, giving it money and collecting information on the tax parcels around the landfill,

although it turned out that they really did not need that information. A current elected official, who did not affiliate himself with the CEEJ, also said that he cooperated closely with the main movement leader and a former mayor to oppose the landfill reopening. He said they met frequently and spoke on the phone probably once a week and met in person about once a month. Other elected officials opposed the reopening publicly, but were not said to be actively involved in the anti-landfill SMOs or in close cooperation with their leaders. Nonetheless, the division among the elected officials gave the landfill opponents a better chance of succeeding.

### **Landfill Supporters**

Other than certain City Council members jointly supporting the landfill reopening, there do not seem to have been formal coalitions or alliances among the landfill supporters. When asked whether they cooperated closely with any local leaders and/or groups in their efforts to have the landfill reopened, the pro-landfill interviewees mainly referred to their dealings with other supporters in City Council meetings. One commented on the ambiguous stance on the landfill issue that some Council members took, saying that they “received a lot of mixed signals from people on the Council. There were people who had been for opening it and then were against it.” The Conservatives for Guilford County member interviewed did not mention other people or groups that he worked closely with, saying only that he and the former mayor had similar views on the issue. Moreover, he said that he spoke to the Council as an individual businessman and resident, not on behalf of the tea party group.



## **Theoretical Discussion and Summary**

The findings presented in this chapter show many differences, and some similarities, between the groups and individuals who made up the anti-landfill movement and the landfill supporters. The results illustrate insights from various theories; however, the most relevant connections are to Luebke's writing about North Carolina politics, to the community power structure literature, and to theory and research about social movements, especially grassroots environmental justice movements.

In line with Luebke's (1998) typology of North Carolina politics, the landfill supporters can be characterized generally as "traditionalists," and the landfill opponents as an alliance of "progressives" and "modernizers." Among the landfill supporters, the four City Council members in particular – Thompson, Rakestraw, Wade, and Knight – aligned themselves with the traditionalist ideals of limiting government spending and keeping taxes low. Although they vehemently denied assertions that they did not care about the rights of the lower socio-economic, African American population living near the landfill, the landfill supporters arguably fit a traditionalist stereotype of white, native-born citizens for whom civil rights is far from the top of the agenda (Luebke 1998). From the perspective of many landfill opponents, of course, the pro-landfill stance of these political leaders showed their support for a policy that would deny a minority population the right to a safe and healthy environment and run roughshod their opinions.

The landfill opposition consisted of a combination of progressives and modernizers. With the Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice as the core of the anti-landfill movement, progressives, many of them African Americans, were very

well represented. Members of this group emphasized racial justice, a key aspect of progressivism (Luebke 1998). Racial justice was also emphasized by the Nealtown Neighborhood Association, members of the Pulpit Forum, and other landfill opponents. Especially interesting, however, are, the CEEJ's key coalitions and alliances with groups better characterized as "modernizers," specifically, members of the League of Women Voters and prominent political leaders. While these landfill opponents sympathized with the progressives' environmental justice concerns, their primary emphasis was on the modernizer ideals of economic development and maintaining a positive image for the city (Luebke 1998). Typical of modernizers, these individuals were willing to accept using tax revenues to support trucking the city's waste elsewhere rather than accept a policy they believed would create further racial disharmony in the city and hinder economic expansion.

Several other differences between the characteristic and strategies of groups and individuals in the anti-landfill movement and the landfill supporters can be linked to theories about community power structure and social movements. As mentioned, the most vocal and visible landfill supporters were four conservative City Council members; yet, several interviewees mentioned that they believed other individuals, particularly those connected with waste management companies, also exerted influence from behind the scenes. This suspected behind the scenes involvement of several prominent businessmen and political leaders resembles some elements of Hunter's (1953) elite model of community power structure; however, I could find no evidence that Greensboro's traditional business-based power elite was involved in the reopening

efforts. On the other hand, the lack of direct evidence does not prove that the old elite were *not* involved, as such involvement is often secret. In any case, if an elite was in fact operating behind the scenes to reopen the landfill, then the attempts to control governmental decisions through an elite power structure clearly failed in this case.

Overall, the results concerning the White Street Landfill appear to better fit the pluralist model of decision-making process. In line with the pluralist model, the anti-landfill alliance was able to influence the government and win the day, working to a significant extent through fairly conventional interest groups strategies to influence government policy (Dahl 1967; Petracca 1992; Hurst 2009). Such strategies included regularly attending and speaking from the floor at the City Council meetings, emailing and calling City Council members, writing letters to local newspaper editors, signing petitions, holding City Council candidate forums, and putting on “get out the vote” drives. The anti-landfill alliance proved quite effective in encouraging some City Council members to publicly oppose the reopening, as well as in influencing which members of the Council were reelected in the November, 2011 elections.

While the pluralist model helps to understand the role of anti-landfill forces in influencing governmental decisions, social movement theories help explain to a) explain cases in which their tactics pushed a bit beyond conventional interest group tactics into rancorous confrontation and b) explain *how* the anti-landfill movement was able to influence the local government, as many of their tactics were those common for social movements. In particular, resource mobilization theory (RMT) emphasizes the importance of a) social movement entrepreneurs, b) clearly defined ideology and goals,

c) forming coalitions and alliances, d) mobilization of resources, and e) developing effective strategy and tactics. In the landfill case, it is evident that the landfill opponents were able to organize a movement by accomplishing each of these while the landfill supporters never mobilized to form a movement focus directly on the landfill. Clearly, the movement had an extremely effective social movement entrepreneur (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Indeed, Goldie Wells was the embodiment of what social movement theorists (e.g., Soule and Snow 2009) consider an effective movement organizer. She had a clear sense of the movement's mission and established one clear, overarching goal for the CEEJ: keep the White Street Landfill closed to household waste. She also possessed skills in attracting supporters, mobilizing resources, and building coalitions. RMT scholars (e.g., McCarthy and Zald 1977; Klandermans 1986; Soule and Snow 2009) have widely recognized the importance of each of these qualities for leading a successful movement.

As resource mobilization theory and past literature on grassroots environmental justice movements (e.g., Duffy 2003) suggest, forming coalitions and alliances proved to be particularly advantageous for the anti-landfill movement. The CEEJ's alliances with several key groups and prominent individuals allowed for pooling resources, skills, and expertise, a benefit RMT scholars have widely noted (e.g., Klandermans 1986; Soule and Snow 2009). Such collaborations are often particularly important for grassroots groups, whose members may not have as many resources as long established, well-funded organizations (Duffy 2003), or the technical expertise needed to take legal action. The CEEJ's close collaborations with members of the League of Women Voters, NGFM,

Nealtown Neighborhood Association, Pulpit Forum, Human Relations Commission, and of several other groups increased the available range of skills. It also provided further legitimacy for the movement by showing that the landfill was a concern for more than just northeast Greensboro residents. The CEEJ's and the League's collaboration with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice also provided the movement with the legal expertise necessary to file a lawsuit against the city and successfully delay the reopening proceedings. Furthermore, the CEEJ's support from prominent political leaders like former mayors Holliday, Allen, and Johnson served as a "moral" resource (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). These coalitions and alliances helped to provide the anti-landfill movement with increased legitimacy and solidarity, which are also examples of non-monetary, moral resources that can greatly benefit social movements (Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

The lack of pro-landfill SMOs and alliances, on the other hand, offers insight into why the landfill supporters ultimately failed. None of my interviewees, including the Conservatives for Guilford County member I interviewed, could identify any formal groups that were organized to support the reopening, nor any extant groups, such as the local tea party group, that publicly announced an official position on the issue. Individuals who favored reopening did express their opinions to the City Council, and some of them were known to be members of groups like the Conservatives for Guilford County; however, they were not officially representing these groups. The pro-landfill individuals thus did not use all of the tools available to obtain support for their cause; that is, if they did not form an SMO or "networks of collective action, such as coalitions"

(Diani 1992:16). It is particularly ironic in this context that the reopening proponents on City Council were swept into office partly by a local wing of the tea party movement, which then chose not to mobilize for the landfill controversy.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION PART II**

This chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section examines the interviewees' views about the obstacles for the individuals and groups on each side of the landfill dispute. The second summarizes the strategies and tactics of the landfill opponents and supporters. The third summarizes the main arguments of the landfill opponents about why the landfill should not be reopened to household waste and the arguments of the landfill supporters for why it should be reopened. The fourth section discusses the interviewees' perspectives on the role of media in the dispute. The fifth section examines the interviewees' views about the advantages for the individuals and groups on each side of the landfill dispute.

#### **Obstacles Faced by the Two Sides**

This section looks first at the obstacles landfill opponents faced in trying to keep the landfill closed, followed by those faced by landfill supporters trying to get it reopened.

#### **Obstacles Facing the Landfill Opposition**

In general, interviewees said the groups and individuals trying to keep the landfill closed faced an interrelated set of obstacles. The three most cited were 1) the city and country's poor economic state, which made saving money by reopening the landfill attractive 2) getting enough City Council votes against the reopening, and 3) broadening

their support by making the landfill a city-wide issue. These obstacles were interrelated because the second and third were affected by the first. That is, the poor state of the economy was a major reason why it was difficult to broaden support when the reopening was being presented as a cost-saving measure, and, subsequently, to get the City Council votes to keep the landfill closed.

Several interviewees explicitly said that the economy was an obstacle for those trying to keep the landfill closed. As a League member put it, there was decreasing revenue for the government, and landfill supporters argued that keeping the landfill closed was increasing costs. A former mayor added that, due to the “sorry state of the economy,” this argument about saving money “loomed very large” for some people. It was also difficult for the landfill opposition to combat the claim that reopening the landfill would be more cost effective. As one of the main movement leaders put it, “when taxpayers think that their money is being taken away, they don’t want that thing [that they believe is taking their money].”

About half of the interviewees said that a major obstacle was getting enough support from the City Council to keep the landfill closed. At first, the Council members who wanted the landfill reopened “had a functional majority over people who wanted it closed,” said a League member. A City Council member explained that “there were four City Council members who wanted it reopened, and with two people not able to vote, that put it at four-to-three in favor of reopening.” According to several anti-landfill interviewees, the four in favor of reopening were “unpersuadable” and unwilling to listen to the northeast residents. In addition, there was no way of knowing whether the other



two, who had been recused because of apparent conflicts of interest, would eventually be able to vote on it (See Appendix A for more information about the recusals).

Approximately two-thirds of the interviewees said that major obstacles facing the landfill opposition included the need to broaden concern about the landfill and build support in the northeast district and in other parts of Greensboro. Several anti-landfill interviewees and one pro-landfill interviewee commented about the opposition movement's struggles to build deep support in neighborhoods near the landfill. A CEEJ member described a "lack of participation by the neighborhood...many thought that the Council would do what they wanted and open it anyway, that their voice didn't matter." She added that "the fight was very draining and people got tired with the issue continuing to come up. We lost people in the battle."

The landfill opposition also "had to overcome the perception that the majority of citizens wanted the landfill reopened; the perception of the issue as being a quote/unquote 'black' or 'east Greensboro' issue," as one reporter described it. Several interviewees mentioned how it could seem as though "most of Greensboro didn't care one way or the other," or that "people who don't live in the area could see it as something that they didn't need to worry about." This is a common problem of environmental justice movements; it was difficult for the landfill opposition to try "to broaden the scope of how it could affect the city of Greensboro" and show that a reopening would also hurt the city's economic development, as one CEEJ member said.

## **Obstacles for the Landfill Supporters**

The three most cited obstacles the groups and individuals trying to get the landfill reopened faced were that the supporters, mainly the pro-landfill City Council members, 1) were not convincing enough about the cost-savings from reopening the landfill, 2) were often perceived to be inconsiderate of the African American community neighboring the landfill, and 3) faced a very vocal and passionate opposition.

Several interviewees, including all but one of the pro-landfill interviewees, mentioned that a major obstacle for the supporters was convincing people about the cost-savings. From the anti-landfill interviewees' perspective, "they didn't have enough facts" to back up their argument with the public. Moreover, they never came to a clear consensus about the exact dollar amount of savings that reopening the landfill would bring. As one landfill proponent stated, the numbers provided seemed to be exaggerated, "which really made people question the motives of the conservatives." From the pro-landfill interviewees' perspective, the supporters were unable to convince the public because people "would not listen to the facts." The landfill opponents, according a Conservatives for Guilford County member, "would spin the math" and "dilute [the cost-savings] down to three million dollars" instead of the ten million dollars he calculated or the seven million dollars the conservative mayor had calculated.

Some interviewees said that one of the major obstacles for the landfill supporters was that reopening the landfill seemed inconsiderate of neighboring residents and "like an attack on the African American community." All three anti-landfill former mayors mentioned that the pro-landfill City Council members did not seem to listen to, respect,

or have empathy for the neighboring residents of the landfill. “Those who wanted the reopening refused to take the Black community into consideration. They didn’t appreciate the problems that it would cause,” said one. Another added,

...it seemed like it was Whites trying to impose this on Blacks and there is so much history in Greensboro about us claiming that we do not want to do that. They wanted to keep it a financial argument and didn’t want to say that it was about human rights or demographics.

An important movement leader echoed these sentiments. She said she believed the supporters’ claims about cost-saving measures were false. But beyond this, “their ugliness showed through and that it was more than just about the money; it was an attack on the citizens.”

Most interviewees also mentioned the very vocal and passionate landfill opposition as a major obstacle for the landfill supporters. Several CEEJ members said that their group’s outspokenness, strength, and passion, as well as the support they received from other groups, were obstacles for the supporters. Another CEEJ and NGFM member said that the former mayor who had worked for the landfill while in office called them the “troublemakers,” and “said that they would have gotten it opened if it had not been for the troublemakers.” An elected official who was defeated mainly because of his opposition to the landfill agreed that the “very vocal opposition” was an obstacle for the landfill supporters.

## **Strategies and Tactics**

This section looks first at the landfill opponents' strategies and tactics in trying to influence the outcome of the dispute, followed by the landfill supporters' strategies and tactics .

### **Landfill Opposition SMOs**

There were many common strategies and tactics used in the anti-landfill efforts, although some did vary by SMO and individual.

### **The Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ)**

The CEEJ took many kinds of actions, both direct and indirect, to prevent reopening the landfill. Many of its tactics were standard interest group tactics for influencing governmental decision-making and elections. These included regularly attending and speaking from the floor at the City Council meetings, e-mailing and calling City Council members, writing letters to the editors of local newspapers, caravanning from the west side of Greensboro to the landfill, marching to the plaza of the Municipal Building, organizing rallies, speaking to church congregations and other local groups, informing residents door-to-door, signing petitions, and hiring legal counsel to represent them in a suit against the city.

These actions were typically decided upon during the group's meetings in a democratic style common of many social movement organizations. According to one of the CEEJ's main leaders, the floor would be open for people's ideas, and a committee of a few members would then discuss the ideas and choose which ones to pursue. This often involved coordinating with other local groups. For example, a CEEJ member and the

New Garden Friends Meetings (NGFM) member worked with both groups to organize the caravan, and the CEEJ worked with a local student group to organize the march to the Municipal Building and with the Beloved Community Center, a local grassroots group focused on economic and social justice and community-building, helped with “getting out the vote.”

A few respondents commented on how the development of strategy was a process. Plans evolved with time, another member and current City Council member stated, as “it was a growing and evolving process.” Still another interviewee, a CEEJ member and former elected official saw the group becoming much more organized and strategic once the Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ) got involved. Thereafter, the group was “a well-oiled machine with moving parts.”

Many CEEJ member interviewees agreed about the actions that were most effective in influencing the outcome of the controversy. Keeping the City Council chambers packed with citizens opposed to the landfill was the one most often cited. One CEEJ member and current City Council member, for example, emphasized the importance of having large numbers of people at the City Council meetings and showing the Council “that we were not going away.” She added,

[the Council] mostly ignored us, and they thought that doing so would make us go away eventually, but we didn’t. We had more and more people come to the meetings each time. We kept the chambers active. And now more people watch the meetings and attend the meetings. There are a lot of things that you don’t get to see by just watching it on TV, the little subtleties and comments.

Other oft-cited successful strategies were obtaining legal counsel from the SCSJ, and highlighting the health and economic development implications for the entire city if the landfill were reopened. One interviewee commented that “the landfill would be in operation right now if we hadn’t had Chris Brook [the SCSJ staff attorney].” As the movement leader commented, filing the lawsuit on the city was effective because it not only “baffled them all and showed that we would go far,” but it also attracted a good deal of the media attention. One CEEJ member thought the caravan to have been particularly effective in doing this by getting people from all over the city involved, as well as attracting media attention. Many respondents said that the various actions all came together to influence the controversy.

When asked whether there were any actions that were least effective or weakened their side’s influence in the dispute, about half of the CEEJ member respondents said that they could not think of any. Nonetheless, a few went on to mention such. One interviewee said that she did not think there were any particular actions that weakened her side’s influence, but that her husband did not approve of people speaking out or yelling during the City Council meetings. “There is a fine line with emotions getting involved,” she said, “and this may have turned off City Council members.” She went on to say that she understood the emotions, particularly anger, of some who spoke out at the meetings, but that she thought that “you get more flies with honey.” Another CEEJ member and former elected official referred to the same actions as potentially weakening her side’s influence. She believed that the group’s actions strengthened its influence overall, but the group also experienced the common social movement strategy dilemma

of how confrontational to be. This interviewee added that “there were times in the City Council meetings when people may have acted out of line and that may have weakened it a bit.”

One key movement leader also mentioned that she did not think it was very effective to have the “No Dumping” yard signs posted in the northeast area of the city. She said that she and the initial group members “thought that [they] could head off the [potential reopening] at the beginning,” but that putting these yard signs in the northeast area was like “preaching to the choir.” As the dispute went on, they “realized that it was going to take a lot more than [putting signs in people’s yards].”

#### **Nealtown Neighborhood Association**

The actions the group took to try to achieve these goals [“to build a stronger community and to keep the landfill closed.”], specifically the latter, included having press conferences at UNC Greensboro and a shopping center in east Greensboro, speaking at City Council meetings, “walking the streets” to try to keep people informed in the neighborhood, and getting support from students at A&T University and Bennett College. Her main focus, the leader said, was to inform. She said she “was determined, if [she] had to get out of work early everyday and go around door to door to get people informed.” She found most of these actions to be effective, as well as attracting attention in a local newspaper and on two local radio stations.

#### **The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad**

The two League members interviewed mentioned various actions the League took to show their opposition to any quick landfill reopening. Most of these included typical

interest group strategies and relatively little confrontational social movement strategy. The main actions the interviewees mentioned were reaching out to “political people,” playing “the media game,” writing letters to editors of local newspapers, speaking out at City Council meetings, forming an informal coalition with the CEEJ and attending its meetings and helping sponsor the rallies, and, finally, becoming a litigant (they filed an amicus brief and attended court sessions) in the lawsuit against the city. The members also listed actions the group took to educate its members about the issue, such as communicating through the group’s newsletter and having various events in which they brought in a person to speak about environmental justice, a person in the waste management business to speak about waste management issues, and City Council candidates to speak about their stance on the landfill.

One respondent viewed the League members’ community organizing as being the most effective tactic in influencing the dispute. She said, simply, “we just outgunned the City Council with our community organizing. We out-maneuvered them with our experience.” Such experience involved knowing how to work together with other groups to accomplish what one could not alone. For example, one member noted how the Southern Coalition for Social Justice did not have the ties with the local press but that she did, so she acted as the main contact for the press. On the other hand, the League cannot endorse political candidates, whereas the CEEJ could and did. Thus, the League’s key focus seemed to be on working with other groups in their efforts.

The other League member interviewed also noted that the League’s strategy, along with the SCSJ’s, involved emphasizing the argument that reopening the landfill



would be a form of discrimination. She explained that the SCSJ emphasized this argument in the lawsuit and that the League would have continued to highlight this issue if “those in favor had won one battle and gotten the first phases to go through.” She continued,

We would have made sure that they could not go through with the phases that would have expanded the landfill. In the law, there are things about the racial compositions of the area, and all we would have to show is that there are other areas in the county that have enough space and are not inhabited by a majority of a racial minority. And it is clearly why the Southern Coalition for Social Justice saw it as such. They have a very specific mission to address issues of discrimination. And they developed a legal strategy around that and saw it as that kind of issue, and going that way was important for the case.

Both League members also noted the Board approval process required when members speak out on a certain issue. As one member explained, everything she “said publicly was related to the League,” and that when members “are speaking on behalf of the League then it has to be reviewed by our Board of Directors. The intent has to be approved.” This process, along with the context and history of the issue, affected the way she presented her stance to the public. As she put it,

that process affects the tone of what I say. My tone was more cerebral, whereas others were more emotional, and you need both. It wouldn’t have been appropriate for me to get up there and be emotional not living in that area.

Both League interviewees also commented on how their members’ stance on the landfill issue was not unanimous; consequently, they had to discuss their position with the Board several different times. This situation represents a common problem among

organizations whose main goal is not supporting a social movement in which they have become involved. As one member said, “many thought that we should have stayed off of it.” In particular, joining the lawsuit caused some conflict among members, as some “did not understand the importance of [the League] joining.” Some of the members worried that it might make the League responsible financially for the lawsuit and obligated to pay the costs if the landfill opposition lost. Going to the extent of joining a lawsuit was “new territory” for the League, and, and one respondent said, members were also “concerned about this damaging our relationship with City Council and make us less effective on other issues that are really important to us like education and healthcare.” Another member described in some detail the group members’ internal conflict and the eventual resolution about the issue of joining the lawsuit:

...ultimately we got the majority of the Board members on board and we weathered the heat from the others. And one thing was that I couldn’t share everything with the members at large, like the legal aspects of it. Had I been able to do that, the controversy could have possibly been avoided. But eventually people came around, and we had to go back to them again to get approval to enter into the lawsuit about the county map and redistricting. So people began to see that sometimes it may be the best tool.

### **Individual Actors**

One anti-landfill interviewee acted as an individual and not as a part of any organized group, other than being a member of City Council. As an elected official at the time of the dispute and currently, his actions mainly consisted of speaking out against the reopening “early and often” at City Council meetings and to the press. In addition, he

also consistently voted to keep the landfill closed when the City Council voted on the issue.

The NGFM members who became involved in the anti-landfill movement also said that they acted as individuals, although they received moral support from other Friends Meeting members and monetary support from their social concerns committee. The primary actions these NGFM members took were organizing the caravan and rally at the landfill, and attending CEEJ meetings. Later on in the controversy, they also “started focusing on getting the people off Council who supported it.”

### **The Landfill Supporters**

Most of the pro-landfill interviewees mentioned various ways that they were involved in the dispute and the actions they took to show their support for the reopening. These actions mainly took place during City Council meetings. Two previous Council members mentioned that they were involved with the Request For Proposals (RFP) process, in which the Council would evaluate proposals from waste management companies interested in operating the landfill, and attending the City Council work sessions. Both said that they put much work into researching the landfill issue. Another mentioned that he made presentations about landfills to other groups and that he spoke to the press about his support for the reopening. He commented that his interview with the press “didn’t see the light of day,” though. Moreover, he did not think that his actions had any influence on the outcome of the dispute.

A member of the Conservatives for Guilford County (C4GC), a local tea party-related group, was also involved primarily as an individual. Although a dedicated

member of C4GC, this interviewee did not act explicitly as a tea party representative, and the C4CG did not become much involved in the dispute. Like the other pro-landfill interviewees, he said that he did a great deal of research on the issue. He described the actions he took to show his support for the reopening as making “a lot of noise” and speaking out at the City Council meetings. He mentioned that he was not well-received by one of the anti-landfill Council members, who he said told him that he should “stick [his] head in one of those green [garbage] bins.”

### **Arguments and Counter-Arguments**

#### **Main Arguments among the Landfill Opposition**

Three central arguments constituted the core of the main grassroots group’s opposition to the landfill reopening. Two of the arguments, characteristic of grassroots environmental justice movements, focused on justice, equity, and rights (Agyeman 2002). First, framing the dispute in terms of widely accepted norms, the moral argument cited a betrayal of trust by the city government, along with unfairness, and injustice. Second, a quality of life argument pointed to health concerns, smells, noises, and diminished property values for the close neighbors because of the landfill. Third, an economic development argument, framed this issue in terms of the common good. A counterframe to the save tax dollars argument, it said that reopening and expanding the landfill would greatly hinder the city’s growth. This argument framed the landfill as a city-wide issue about which all Greensboro citizens should be concerned.

The interviewees were largely in agreement that members of the CEEJ believed that it would be morally unjust to reopen the landfill. Many anti-landfill interviewees

emphasized that members of the City Council had broken their promise to them that the landfill would not be reopened, and, by doing so, had betrayed their trust. Although several pro-landfill interviewees commented that they did not remember the City Council making any promises that the landfill would not ever be reopened to household waste, most conceded that many neighboring residents believed that the landfill was a closed issue.

The belief that there was a breach of trust exacerbated many of the northeast residents' feelings of mistreatment by their city government. As one interviewee stated,

[some members of the City Council] didn't consider the negative effects. They acted like it didn't matter. To me, that told me that they didn't give a damn. They said they wanted to save money and they didn't care about the ramifications.

A key aspect of an environmental justice movement's framing of environmental disputes is the idea that all people have the right to a safe and healthy environment and that this right is being denied. In line with this argument, many anti-landfill interviewees claimed that reopening the landfill would constitute "discrimination," "environmental injustice," "racial injustice," and "environmental racism." As one interviewee explained, these terms reflected their assumption that "there would not even be a question about reopening the landfill if it were in a white neighborhood." This claim also fits within the master frame that minorities are not treated equally in the United States.

Fairness and justice were intertwined with the quality of life argument. Whether themselves pro- or anti-landfill, the majority of the interviewees listed many quality of life issues as being used in arguments against the landfill reopening. As in many other

environmental justice movements, landfill opponents argued that the landfill was hazardous to its neighbors' health. Many said that cancer and asthma rates were higher in this area due to toxic substances and poor air quality the landfill produced. Many also argued that the landfill, when opened to household waste, made it unpleasant for neighbors to be outside or have their windows open due to the smells and the loud noises of garbage trucks traveling to and from the site on small, residential roads. Furthermore, landfill opponents emphasized that the landfill drove down their property values and made the area unattractive for businesses and shopping centers, which residents would like to have nearby. (The shortage of such facilities in the area was a longstanding community grievance.)

One Pulpit Forum member said that it seemed to him that race relations had improved in the city, but the issue "did have a connotation of racism and classism." According to another League member, these feelings of discrimination were present in past disputes about the landfill, as well. The recent dispute was similar to those in the past, she said, because "it was emblematic of the feeling of the people in that community. They felt like they were being treated like second class citizens because they would say that it wouldn't happen in other neighborhoods."

When asked whether reopening the landfill would be environmental racism, the Pulpit Forum member and one League member replied "yes." Another League member implied that it would be, by stating: "Most landfill are environmentally racist. Landfills are not going to be sited in Irving Park [a majority white, affluent neighborhood]. Most

likely they are not going to be sited in northwest Greensboro [the city's most prosperous quadrant].”

Several landfill opponents also explicitly pointed out the role that redlining played in the demographics of the landfill area. As one CEEJ member – who is also a current City Council member – commented,

The race relations aspect is huge. The area is where African American families were basically told to live, which is an environmental justice issue. Within a one-mile parameter of the landfill it is 85 percent African American....The race relations issue was a national issue too with redlining neighborhoods.

Arguing along the same lines, a League member noted how the race and class demographics of northeast Greensboro are typical of waste disposal facility sites. The dispute “had racial undertones,” she stated, “and certainly it is true that most facilities are in lower socio-economic communities and those that are less able to resist. So there were feelings that they were being discriminated by two standards – race and wealth.” These sentiments were clearly reflected in a current City Council member’s view. She said that it is no accident that “landfills are mainly in poor and minority communities.”

A NGFM member also commented on the city’s racial segregation and discrimination. She stated:

It is no accident that east of downtown Greensboro has been predominantly African American and west of downtown has been predominantly white. The east part of town has not only the landfill, but they’ve got water treatment plants, and other things that aren’t very savory.

This interviewee agreed with the others that reopening the landfill would be environmental racism, but she said that she never used those terms in the letters she wrote to newspaper editors. Although she thinks “there was environmental racism in this whole thing,” she did not think that “throwing ugly words” at people can change their minds. A League member also pointed out that she rarely explicitly used the term “environmental racism” in her arguments. She said that “it seemed to not be as powerful, so it was a secondary argument.” However, it is evident that the environmental justice framing and argument had appeal to some segments of Greensboro’s white population.

Two local journalists also saw race as a central issue in the dispute, and emphatically argued that City Council members would never even consider reopening the landfill if it were in a different part of town. Both said that the reopening would be environmental racism and just another example of neglect and “racial insensitivity” on the part of the “fiscally conservative members of the City Council who wanted to cut costs of local government.” As one said, they “didn’t seem to think about the businesses that were there and the residents not wanting it.” The other stated that there was a “strong degree of racial insensitivity to the insult and real worries about health by the community.”

Other anti-landfill arguments emphasized that reopening the landfill would not be good for Greensboro as a whole. Many interviewees mentioned that members of the League focused on the health and economic development factors. Its members involved in the dispute argued that the landfill would pose health risks to the neighboring residents and hurt economic development because of its close proximity to downtown. According



to several interviewees, the Human Relations Commission and the NGFM echoed these key arguments in their opposition to the landfill reopening.

The crux of the economic development framing involved the landfill's effect on the area's attractiveness, plus the landfill's physical location in one of the few areas in Greensboro left for growth. CEEJ members emphasized that businesses would not want to move into an area with a landfill nearby. Some also noted that increased racial tensions are not inviting to new residents or businesses. One of the former mayors stated the importance of fairness in a city, and added: "What does this say to the rest of the world about our desire to grow, and what does it say about our fairness and diversity?" Moreover, CEEJ members argued that these issues would repel businesses, which would affect more than just northeast Greensboro; it would hinder economic development for the entire city. Several often mentioned how the landfill is inside Greensboro's "urban loop" and only a few miles from the city's downtown area, which is very rare for US cities today.

Characteristic of Luebke's (1998) "modernizer politician," one former mayor, as well as a current elected official, zeroed in on the economic development argument in opposing the landfill reopening. Particularly because of the emphatic stance of the former mayor, a well known moderate, the economic development argument, more so than any other, got whites from other parts of the city involved in opposing the landfill. As a member of the press noted, when the issue of economic development came to the forefront, "this was the turning point. It gave whites permission to be against the landfill because they weren't seen then as 'bleeding hearts.'" Referring to Greensboro "as a

desert with five wells,” – as in, five areas for economic development – the former mayor made clear that east Greensboro was the only “well” left in the city limits. The former mayor argued that, if the landfill were reopened, and, subsequently, expanded, it “would dry up the last well we have left [for growth].”

### **Main Arguments among the Landfill Supporters**

At the root of the landfill supporters’ main arguments was a single issue: saving money and reducing taxes. There were also secondary arguments, such as not wanting to waste the landfill property and the landfill’s benefits to Greensboro, but each of these pointed back to cost-saving and keeping municipal taxes low. Without exception, the interviewees said that the landfill supporters – most notably, the four City Council members – emphasized this point above all others. In this sense, the supporters represented “traditionalist” ideals of small government and low taxes.

Landfill supporters often spoke about how Greensboro would benefit from saving money and from economic development spurred by reopening the landfill. One conservative former elected official argued that reopening the landfill would increase economic development in the northeast quadrant, not hinder it. He said that the money saved “could help fund the project that was supposed to happen out on Cone Boulevard – a connector between Nealtown Road that has been talked about for years.” He added that “we could use the money and employ people at the landfill or the other things that could be built out there and allocate it back to [the people in east Greensboro].” He argued that it could also “benefit all of Greensboro” by providing funds for libraries and parks.

A common argument from many landfill supporters, which was also related to the cost-saving argument, was that the landfill was a “valuable resource.” One former elected official emphasized that the landfill was an award-winning landfill and a “multi-million dollar investment” that should be used. A member of the Conservatives for Guilford County, the local tea party-related group, shared this sentiment, and criticized the city’s handling of the landfill issue. He argued that,

strategically speaking, [the city] did not have a viable, feasible option with closing the landfill. They didn’t do their homework. And they were spending taxpayers’ money. So they closed down one of the most valuable assets of the city. They didn’t have a strategic plan. It was so reckless.

### **Landfill Supporters’ Critiques of the Opponents’ Arguments**

Landfill supporters often countered anti-landfill arguments about residents’ health and quality of life by saying either that there were no proven health hazards or that the neighbors made the choice to live in the area. Several pro-landfill interviewees said it was a misunderstanding or denial of facts to believe that the landfill caused health problems. As one commented,

If there are health issues then why would the city allow to live them there if there were those things? I think that there is misunderstanding or misinformation of true fact....Once people go into emotional mode, the information that is disseminated is not always as accurate and doesn’t tell the whole story.

A member of the Conservatives for Guilford County also claimed that there was a difference between the reality of the landfill and neighbors’ perceptions of it. As he stated, “there are minorities living around the landfill. They may have consciously,

genuinely had concerns about health, but that doesn't mean that it necessarily is a health hazard." This interviewee also argued that "the city was not twisting anyone's arm to buy houses near the landfill." Countering the environmental justice argument, he said that it "annoyed" him that residents "stood up and said that they didn't have a choice and that there were health hazards."

All the pro-landfill interviewees noted that nearby residents believed there were health hazards, but they attempted to invoke science to show that these claims were unfounded. A former elected official who had supported reopening the landfill also disputed the claims that the landfill posed a health hazard to the neighboring residents and that reopening would be environmental racism. Two former City Council members and a member of the Conservatives for Guilford County each pointed out that the landfill was approved by the necessary authorities, such as the State Health Department, which would not have happened if the landfill were a health hazard. As the Conservatives for Guilford County member stated,

There was the notion by people who lived there that the landfill was a health hazard. They would say that they knew people who died from pancreatic cancer who lived near the landfill. Well I know people in Irving Park [a majority white, affluent neighborhood] who have died from pancreatic cancer too. The state Health Department came out to investigate and Greensboro was given high marks for the landfill. So the claims about health hazards couldn't be linked. Those filing the suit probably wanted the health department to support their claims about the hazards, but they said that there were no links. But that didn't stop them.

The pro-landfill interviewees' views also differed greatly from the opponents' on the role Greensboro's racial history played in the dispute. Every pro-landfill interviewee

disputed the environmental justice argument and emphasized that the landfill has been around since the 1940s, with the large majority of the African American residents moving into the area much later. While all of the proponents interviewed recognized that the landfill opposition believed there were racial issues involved, they gave various reasons for why they did *not* believe there was environmental racism. In the view of an elected official who was defeated partly because of supporting the reopening,

Some could try to make the case that there were racial factors in this; however, the other landfills in Winston-Salem and Raleigh are surrounded by Caucasians. So the racial element, I just can't. I grew up out there. I just take that out of it. Many people who grew up in Greensboro share that same sentiment. It's just not an issue. I guess living near the landfill has that connotation with it of people who live around the area not being as good – regardless of it being an award-winning, world class facility.

This interviewee went on to say that the idea of the landfill reopening being environmental racism was “baloney.” Along the same lines, a former City Council member asked how could the proposed reopening could be environmental racism when there was an African American environmental expert on staff who said that the landfill should be reopened.

Another proponent of reopening agreed that the dispute was not about environmental racism. He seemed to follow a common line of argument that accuses someone who raises the issue of race as just inventing discrimination and instrumentalizing race. From his perspective, the dispute was a political and economic issue that “was turned into a racial issue.” He too emphasized that the neighboring residents were not forced to live beside the landfill, so he did not understand how the

reopening would be environmental racism. As he stated, “people can buy a house anywhere by the law, but neighborhoods continue to be divided racially – that’s the housing pattern people have chosen.” This interviewee also saw the housing circumstances of the landfill area as an important factor in understanding the dispute. To him, the Nealtown Farms neighborhood “started the balling rolling” with making the landfill a racial issue. He added that, when the landfill was first constructed and before Nealtown Farms came to be, “the area had both black and white families there....But it turned into a racial issue because politics in Greensboro is very racial.”

### **Counter Arguments from the Landfill Opposition**

Members of the anti-landfill movement frequently attempted to counter the pro-landfill argument that residents had simply chosen to live in the area and that the reopening would result in huge cost-savings.

Arguments that people had chosen to live near the landfill were countered with the argument that the residents believed the landfill was permanently closed to household waste, as well as by arguments referencing Greensboro’s racial history. As one anti-landfill interviewee stated,

[landfill supporters] said people chose to live there and they knew the landfill was there. To that, our argument was that they may have known it was there, but they knew it would be closed. And we threw back, would you want it in your backyard? And they responded point blank: “no”.

One NGFM member also spoke to the systemic racism that she believed factored into the placement of certain groups of people around the landfill. As she explained,

when the landfill was first constructed in the 1940s, the area was much more rural. When more people did start to move into the area, however, they were mostly African American, which the interviewee did not see as coincidental. She recalled the following:

I remember being told by some African Americans that they were asked why they didn't go other places since the landfill was there, but he said they really couldn't. I think there has been some sorts of systemic or institutional racism that allowed African Americans to live right beside a landfill. And they were limited in where they could live in a way that the white community was not. And I know that area is not totally African American, but there is a sizable number of people in the area who are African American.

Many opposed to the landfill also argued that the cost-saving argument was exaggerated. As one interviewee noted,

[pro-landfill City Council members] were very adamant that this would save Greensboro millions of dollars because we were in an economic crisis. But the CEEJ and Chris Brook [their attorney from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice] came back with very valid arguments that disputed that.

Several other anti-landfill interviewees mentioned that, according to their cost analysis, the savings “would not really be that much.” One reporter also noted that the difference in municipal spending “turned out to be inconsequential in the amount of cost savings” to taxpayers because there would still be operating costs with reopening the landfill. Concurring about the exaggerated cost-savings of the reopening, a current elected official stated:

I think the saving money argument was blown out of proportion because the City Council had closed the White Street Landfill. That put restrictions on the land that

proponents of the expansion didn't know about until later in the process...so all the talk about savings millions of dollars weren't correct.

According to him, the pro-landfill City Council members "didn't want to think about other alternatives...They didn't take others into consideration." Like several other interviewees, he alluded to the City Council members having a sense of entitlement in making the decision to reopen the landfill. "They took the cram-it-down approach," he said, "and seemed to want to do it because they thought they could, instead of what was right for the community."

### **Role of the Media**

Over half of the interviewees said that they personally received media attention as a result of their involvement in the landfill dispute, and a few others said that they might have been interviewed or been in the news because of the caravan or rallies, but they could not recall with certainty. The media outlets most frequently mentioned as covering the landfill dispute were the *Greensboro New and Record*, a daily newspaper with the largest circulation in the Greensboro metropolitan area, *Yes! Weekly*, an alternative weekly newspaper devoted to local politics, arts and entertainment, *The Rhinoceros Times*, a weekly news and opinion paper with a politically conservative viewpoint, and several local television stations. A few interviewees also mentioned the *Carolina Peacemaker*, a weekly newspaper oriented to the African American community, and one mentioned *The Greensboro Times*, a dedicated news outlet for Greensboro's African American community.



Most of the interviewees said that the media influenced the outcome of the landfill dispute in some way. Several anti-landfill interviewees said that the media helped to get information about the issue out to a wider community. “Not everyone shows up at the rallies,” one interviewee said, “but they may have a media outlet that they follow.” The majority of the interviewees mentioned numerous media outlets that covered the landfill dispute, although the newspapers listed above were said to have covered the dispute more consistently than others. Many CEEJ respondents said that journalists from the *Greensboro News and Record* and *The Rhinoceros Times* regularly attended the group’s meetings. Television news stations such as News 14 Carolina, WXII News Channel 12, and WFMY News 2 were also said to have covered CEEJ meetings on occasion, as well as the group’s rallies and demonstrations. Consistent with literature on social constructionism, a CEEJ member said that having the press at the group’s meetings also provided legitimacy for the movement. The press coverage “showed that we were organized,” she said, “and we had someone who could talk about the issue and [show] that we were not going to get rolled over.”

Interestingly, several interviewees at first said that they did not think the media played a major role in the dispute, but then followed up by mentioning ways in which it did have a role. One CEEJ member, for example, said that it is a “hard call” as to whether or not the media influenced the outcome, but also said that the media “kept it alive as an issue.” Another member said that the media did not play a huge part, “but it did bring increased awareness and showed who cared about the issue in Greensboro. So perhaps they did to a degree.” The SCSJ attorney said that the media, “in a narrow fashion,” did

not play a role in the outcome of the dispute. Interestingly, undoubtedly in part because of his perspective as a lawyer, he saw the outcome in relation to the landfill expansion as primarily a legal matter. He said, however, that the media coverage “helped with the long-term and composition of the City Council.” He added that “the coverage was so negative and folks lost seats because of it....But without the injunction and the restraining order, [the landfill] probably would have been expanded.”

While one interviewee did say that the media reported on the landfill issue in a fair way, almost all the rest of the interviewees said that the main media outlets showed bias regarding the issue. As literature on social constructionism suggests, these media outlets supported some claims while delegitimizing others. Several anti-landfill interviewees spoke specifically about *The Rhinoceros Times*' bias toward having the landfill reopened. The SCSJ attorney mentioned that this media outlet “routinely belittled” one of the anti-landfill City Council members, but that it also “hammered” the pro-landfill mayor at the time for his poor handling of the situation.

Among the interviewees who thought the media influenced the outcome of the controversy, most saw the *Greensboro News and Record* as having the greatest impact. Several anti-landfill interviewees commented on the positive contributions they believed the *News and Record* made to their cause, such as supporting the northeast community, disapproving of some pro-landfill City Council members' alleged mistreatment of the landfill opposition at City Council meetings, and reporting on governmental transparency issues. A League member detailed the *News and Record*'s diligence in obtaining public records from the City Council, and its persistent coverage of the issue. As she described,

...They often had to get their attorney involved because they would ask for documents and not get them. So they would have their attorney get in touch with them to remind them of what the laws say. There was regular covering of the community meetings. They kept it in the headlines and were important in keeping the community engaged. One of the concerns of the coalitions was how to help people understand. We needed to get people to the polls. They needed to know that you need to vote in May *and* in November, and that was hard with a community that often doesn't vote at all, or just in presidential elections. The *News and Record* definitely took a stance, in their editorial division, and kept the issue in the headlines.

On the other side, all of the pro-landfill interviewees criticized the *News and Record* for taking a stance on the landfill issue. Two complained that this media outlet “would take out a word here and a word there” or “one sentence here and there” and distort things, which led both to stop speaking with their reporters. One of these interviewees said that it was clear that the *News and Record* reports were one-sided but that they would call him if they wanted an opposing view. He added that there was nothing in the newspaper that explored possible alternatives to reopening the landfill. They simply pushed their position and “the *Rhino* just pushed the other way. There was no balance, no realistic planning.”

Overall, most interviewees provided very brief commentary on *particular* media outlets. The interviewees mainly commented on how the media assisted in getting their message about the landfill out to a larger audience, and local newspapers covered the issue with distinctly different slants, with *The Rhinoceros Times* strongly advocating reopening the landfill and *Yes! Weekly* and the *Carolina Peacemaker* expressing opposition. The *News and Record* leaned against the reopening, but seemed to be more balanced than the other publications. Other than mentioning these biases, there was not

extensive discussion about the role of specific local newspapers and television news stations; instead, many interviewees said the landfill issue was covered, in general, by all the local media. It is likely that people's ideas about the landfill were influenced by these media outlets. However, without an extensive content analysis, additional information from interviewees, and public opinion poll data, the media's influence in the dispute cannot be known exactly. (For additional information on the media's coverage of the landfill issue, see Appendix A.)

### **Advantages of the Two Sides**

This section looks first at the landfill opponents' advantages in keeping the landfill closed, followed by the landfill supporters' advantages in trying to get it reopened.

#### **Advantages of the Landfill Opposition**

The interviewees mentioned a number of advantages for the groups and individuals trying to keep the landfill closed. Many of these related to the power of the grassroots movements and the personal attributes of its members. The main factors mentioned included the movement members' community organizing experience, their sense of community and shared identity, and their determination. A few interviewees also mentioned the movement's rhetoric as an advantage, while a couple mentioned its securing outside and expert legal counsel as an advantage.

The advantages of community organizing experience included having mobilizing skills, political savvy, media access, and the skill to build alliances and form coalitions. Both League members emphasized the advantage of going into the movement already

well-versed in community organizing. They knew they needed to have a strategy for keeping the landfill closed, and, as one member explained, they had a “two-pronged attack” to do so. First, they needed to take legal action to hinder the reopening, and, second, they needed to get people to the polls to change the makeup of the City Council members. While the CEEJ supporters’ strategy entailed somewhat of a different kind of community organizing focused more on confrontational and direct action tactics, several CEEJ members agreed that having the know-how to accomplish tasks such as these was a major advantage. CEEJ members also knew they needed to take legal action, which they did through hiring the SCSJ. They also knew they needed to attract support from the community and get people to the polls, which they did mainly through their churches. Moreover, several interviewees also said an advantage for members of the opposition movement was their ability to build alliances and form coalitions, such as the one between the CEEJ and the League.

Building alliances and forming coalitions also had, in many cases, a reciprocally causal relationship with people’s sense of community and shared identity. Several interviewees mentioned as a key advantage the fact that many of the movement members shared an identity through living in the same neighborhoods and attending the same churches. Gaining this community support was an advantage, one interviewee from the neighborhood said, along with gaining city-wide support and support from former City Council members. As one former mayor put it, the landfill issue “really unified many segments of our community because many people from other districts came together...we

built friendships, relationships, respect. And the League getting involved was really the icing on the cake.”

The movement members’ determination to keep the landfill closed was also mentioned as a key advantage. Two interviewees used the term “passion” to describe the landfill opposition’s advantage. In the same vein, the main movement leader described their “persistence” and “perseverance.” And a CEEJ and NGFM member stated that “there was never any question that we would keep on going.” A press member also said their advantage was that they “never wavered” and they “didn’t allow themselves to be co-opted.” Several mentioned the key role the movement leader played. The leader’s “energy and determination made a huge difference,” said one respondent. She “always said that we will never give up,” said another.

A few interviewees said the rhetoric the landfill opponents used about the potential reopening gave the movement an advantage. As framing theory suggests, the movement was able to create a context for its claims, environmental justice, that resonated with many potential supporters and the media. A former mayor described the term “environmental racism” as “a low-hanging fruit that you could grab a hold of, and what the media grabbed.” He added that “it is a tool even if you can’t prove it, because the other side can’t prove that it is otherwise.” Another former mayor said that it was an advantage for the movement to use rhetoric “about [the landfill] being bad for health reasons, although,” he added, “it is an award-winning landfill.”

Two pro-landfill reopening interviewees – one a press member and one a Conservatives for Guilford County member – said that the opposition movement’s main

advantages involved legal facts. The land around the landfill had been re-zoned so that it could not be used for landfill expansion, the press member reported, which the City Council did not know. The City Council “got bad legal advice and continued to get bad legal advice,” he said, and the opposition’s “advantage turned out to be the legal system, the law.” The Conservatives for Guilford County member did not mention these details, but said that it was an advantage that “they were able to secure a pro-bono law firm.”

### **Advantages of the Landfill Supporters**

The main advantages interviewees attributed to the groups and individuals trying to get the landfill reopened were generally the same as the obstacles the landfill opposition faced. The main advantage mentioned was that the state of the economy buttressed the supporters’ argument that the landfill should be reopened to save taxpayer dollars. In addition, the supporters were thought to be at an advantage because of their strong political position, as the most visible supporters were the pro-landfill City Council members who had a basis for power.

While some interviewees said that the landfill supporters’ claims about cost-saving were not convincing, about an equal number said the opposite. “They had a compelling argument,” one reporter said, as they could argue that they simply wanted to get municipal costs down in a time of economic crisis. “Going to people’s pocketbooks was a plus on their side,” as a CEEJ member put it. Another added that the *Rhino Times* often reported that the landfill would save money, and “it was a huge advantage for [the supporters] to get all that press.” One elected official who served at the time of the controversy said that offering to provide a “very definite economic boost to city’s budget

process” was a clear advantage for his side. As elected officials, they had visibility and political clout, one movement leader said. Several other CEEJ members also mentioned the advantage of the advocates being well represented on the Council, and how some had strong support from their voting constituencies.

In some interviewees’ opinions, the landfill supporters’ positions of power were exercised, as well as abused, in the landfill dispute. A CEEJ member, a former mayor, and a member of the press all said that the supporters also had a monetary advantage by being on the Council. “They could take advantage of the legal arm of the city,” one said. Another commented, however, that “this is the government of the people and abusing power will backfire. It is a classic example of not using power correctly.”

### **Theoretical Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings presented in this chapter show how various strategies, tactics, arguments, framings, and media influenced the outcome of the landfill dispute. The results illustrate many relevant connections to theory and research about interest groups, social movements – especially grassroots environmental justice movements – as well as to social constructionism and framing.

The main anti-landfill movement SMO, along with members of other groups, used strategies and tactics typical of interest groups and social movements. CEEJ, for example, used tactics such as e-mailing and sending petitions to City Council members, organizing demonstrations outside of the municipal building and in the Council chambers, attempting to get their message into the press, and publicly endorsing City Council candidates who opposed the reopening (Knoke 1990). To the interviewees’



knowledge, the CEEJ did not, however, use other common interest group tactics such as lobbying politicians or making campaign contributions. The group's tactics were a hybrid, illustrative of it being on the border between an interest group working within the system and a social movement working mainly from outside.

As Soule and Snow (2009) note, tactical choices are often influenced by a group's political connections and economic clout. Groups with fewer political connections and less economic clout typically use more confrontational tactics to try to influence governmental policy decisions. This is evident by the newly formed CEEJ's use of rallies and marches, demonstrations outside of the municipal building, attending the City Council meetings en masse, and at times being disruptive. In contrast, members of the League, a long established and well-funded group, focused at first on less confrontational strategy such as holding candidate forums and informational lunches to inform people about the landfill issue.

In choosing these tactics, these groups undoubtedly had to weigh the benefits versus the costs of various strategies (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). As several CEEJ members mentioned, some group members were put off by the more confrontational tactics, especially loud and arguably inappropriate behavior by some members during City Council meetings. Environmental organizations often face this dilemma in strategic and tactical decision-making (Markham 2008). For their part, not all members of the League initially supported the decision to join the lawsuit. As one League interviewee pointed out, it was not until after the injunction successfully delayed the reopening proceedings that some members became convinced that signing onto the suit was the best

thing for the group to do. Overall, it proved advantageous for the movement that the groups had varying strategies and used a combination of more and less confrontational tactics. Many interviewees agreed that a major reason why the movement was able to influence the outcome of the controversy because members of these groups, as well as others, worked together, through both standard interest group tactics and direct action, confrontational tactics.

The landfill proponents' main strategy was to influence the local government decision-making. This is hardly surprising, as the most visible pro-landfill individuals were the four City Council members, who primarily attempted to influence the outcome through their participation in the City Council. Specifically, they voted in favor of reopening the landfill and publicly expressed their support for it to Greensboro citizens. Other pro-landfill individuals, including the Conservatives for Guilford County member interviewed, expressed their support for the reopening to the Council during its meetings when the floor was opened to citizens. Like the C4GC member interviewed, several of the key supporters not on the Council were local small business people. Their tactics were neither radical nor confrontational; instead, it appears they were trying to work within the system to influence the policy decision-making.

Both the landfill supporters and opponents used claimsmaking and framing as a strategy to attract support. Both sides made various claims about the landfill and tried to frame the issue in a way that would appeal to potential supporters and legitimize their positions and persuade other people to view the issue in a way that would attract their support. As social constructionists and advocates of framing theory have explained, such

claims often reflect how groups define an issue as a social problem (Spector and Kitsuse 1973). For landfill supporters, the social problem was that the landfill's closure to household waste had caused an increased financial burden for taxpayers and unnecessary government spending. By arguing these points, the landfill supporters appealed to a conservative master frame of minimizing governmental spending and keeping taxes low, and, consequently, to North Carolina traditionalists and tea party members. Indeed, this theme was extremely prominent in the 2009 City Council elections that swept the four conservative, pro-landfill officials into office. During a time in which people were already suffering from the nation's economic recession, framing the landfill issue as being an economic issue also made these claims more "culturally believable" and more broadly appealing (Benford and Snow 2000:620).

For landfill opponents, the relevant social problems were that reopening the landfill to household waste would represent racial and class discrimination, pose health risks to neighboring residents, devalue surrounding properties, increase racial tensions, deter potential future residents and businesses, and obstruct the city's expansion. While different opposing groups emphasized differing arguments, they, as a movement, framed the potential reopening variously as an environmental justice, quality of life, and economic development issue. However, not all of the anti-landfill movement actors used all three of these frames to attract support. As Benford and Snow (2000) suggest, they used the frame(s) that best fit within potential supporters' cultural values and beliefs. For example, some people did not believe that the reopening would constitute environmental racism because they believed it was the residents' choice to live near the landfill. Yet,

they agreed with the claims, which local leaders like Keith Holliday and Robbie Perkins had emphasized, that the landfill's geographic location would greatly hinder the city's growth.

This circumstance illustrates how well-respected politicians can legitimize claims (Hannigan 2006) and provide more credibility to frames to broaden their appeal (Benford and Snow 2000). For some Greensboro citizens, reopening the landfill did not initially seem to be a problem. They were dubious of claims about environmental racism, and they were convinced that the landfill did not pose health concerns for the neighboring residents. However, when Holliday and Perkins explained in detail how the landfill's geographic location would hinder the city's expansion, they came to view the reopening as a problem and opposed it because of the implications for Greensboro's economic development.

Framing and social movement scholars have also noted the importance of choosing frames that resonate with the media (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000, Hannigan 2006). In the landfill case, it was apparent that anti- and pro-landfill frames each resonated with certain media outlets, particularly with some local newspapers. Many interviewees said that they believed the *Greensboro News and Record* and *The Rhinoceros Times* played important roles in the dispute by promoting one side or the other, with the former adopting some of the anti-landfill frames and arguments and the latter adopting the pro-landfill framing and arguments. While one news publication legitimized one side's claims, the other delegitimized them and undermined their credibility.

Both the landfill supporters and opponents developed counterclaims and counterframes in an effort to undermine the other side's claims and frames. For example, some landfill supporters countered the environmental justice frame by arguing that residents were not forced to live near the landfill. In contrast to the idea that reopening the landfill would represent environmental discrimination, these supporters interpreted the residents' proximity to the landfill as a result of the residents' choice. As Benford and Snow (2000) suggest, such strategies often lead to framing contests. This counterclaim provoked members of the anti-landfill movement to further elaborate on their environmental justice argument. They emphasized that institutional racism played a major role in African Americans moving into the landfill area and that those who recently moved into the area did so on the premise that the landfill was permanently closed to household waste.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first summarizes the controversy surrounding the White Street Landfill. The second section discusses several overarching conclusions of the study. To conclude, the last section discusses the implications for theory and further research offered from this study's findings.

#### **Summary of the Controversy**

While this thesis focuses on the most recent dispute about the White Street Landfill, controversy surrounding it goes back many years. In the early- to mid-1990s, a push began to get the landfill closed. At this time, the land surrounding the White Street Landfill became the neighborhood known as Nealtown Farms. Residents living near the landfill were experiencing the smells, sounds, and potential health hazards from it. Thus, the district two City Council representative at the time, the late Claudette Burroughs-White, took up this issue with Greensboro's City Council. The mayor at the time, Keith Holliday, began to research other waste management alternatives and weigh the costs and benefits of expanding or closing the landfill.

The key factor in former Mayor Holliday's cost/benefit analysis of the landfill was the future economic development of the city of Greensboro. Holliday argued that, due to the geographic location of the landfill, keeping the landfill opened, and eventually expanding it when it reached capacity, would be a major hindrance to the city's economic

development. Not only would the landfill deter people or businesses from moving into the northeast Greensboro area, but it would leave only the land to the southeast of the city open for growth. This is because the east is the only direction where Greensboro has adequate potential for growth. To the west, growth is limited by the airport. To the south, southwest, and northwest, the city is limited by the annexation agreements with Pleasant Garden, Jamestown, High Point, Oak Ridge, and Summerfield. And to the north are city reservoirs, which constrict growth in that direction. Holliday, therefore, proposed that a long-term plan for Greensboro's waste disposal involve a regional landfill in one of the city's neighboring rural counties.

On the premise of developing a 10-year plan for a regional landfill site, the landfill was closed in 2006. The landfill continued to take construction waste, however, and was used for a small volume of household waste in order to keep its permit valid. After 2006, household waste was transported to the Republic Services' Uwharrie Environmental Landfill in Montgomery County. At this point, controversy over the landfill seemed to have died down; however, the conservative-leaning newspaper, *The Rhinoceros Times*, continued to keep the costs of closing the landfill in the headlines, claiming that transferring the city's waste was costing the city around 12 million dollars a year. After the 2009 election, in which the tea party-fueled conservative sweep brought a conservative majority to power on the platform of cutting spending and keeping taxes low, the City Council began soliciting proposals from several private companies to reopen the landfill to household waste.

In response to these proposals, a grassroots movement formed in opposition to the landfill. The main movement leader, Dr. Goldie Wells, personified the effectual social movement entrepreneur, organizing the Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ) and maintaining a clear focus on keeping the landfill closed to household waste. The group never wavered from this goal. Members worked to attract support in northeast Greensboro neighborhood and cooperated with members of non-environmental groups to broaden and diversify their support base. These groups used a combination of typical interest group and social movement strategies and tactics to influence the local government. As social movement theory suggests, support from these groups, as well as from several prominent political and community leaders, helped give the anti-landfill movement increased legitimacy and solidarity.

CEEJ members, many of whom resided in northeast Greensboro, consistently spoke from the floor at City Council meetings to voice their concerns about the landfill to elected officials. The group also spread its message distributing flyers at rallies and demonstrations, social networking through Facebook, creating a website, and speaking with members of the press regularly. CEEJ allies, such as members of the League of Women Voters, the New Garden Friends Meeting, Nealtown Neighborhood Association, and the Pulpit Forum, also made their opposition known by speaking from the floor at City Council meetings and to local media. The League, the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and Greensboro's Human Relations Commission also made their official positions publicly available on their websites.



Some landfill opponents, particularly members of the CEEJ and Nealtown Neighborhood Association, insisted that the landfill should not be reopened under any circumstances. They believed that doing so would be unfair to northeast residents, an act of environmental racism and threat to their health, and would hinder economic development in northeast Greensboro and the city at large. Other landfill opponents, such as League members, Friends Meeting members, and white “modernizers” (Luebke 1998), emphasized the economic development argument and expressed concerns that reopening the landfill would heighten racial tensions and damage the city’s image. The official stance of some of these opponents, such as the League, was that the city needed to further investigate waste management alternatives before reopening the landfill.

In addition, the CEEJ gained legal support from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, based in Durham, North Carolina. This legal support led to lawsuits filed against the city and injunctions placed against the expansion of the landfill to include new segments due to lack of proper zoning and permits. However, the injunction only limited expanding the landfill, and the City Council continued with the bidding process for a company to reopen and operate the landfill with the existing cells. Gate City Waste Management company eventually won the bid to operate the existing landfill, though the City Council still needed to vote to finalize the contract.

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the day the City Council would have had its last vote on the company’s contract, the CEEJ held a demonstration at the plaza of the Municipal Building. Students marched from A&T University’s campus to the Municipal Building to join the rally and stood outside the doors prior to the City Council meeting. An hour

before the meeting began, Gate City Waste Management withdrew its bid. During the bidding process, both City Council members Nancy Vaughan and Zach Matheny had been recused from voting due to their ties with the bidding companies (Vaughn's husband had a business connection with one of the companies that bid on the contract but lost). However, despite a lawsuit by Gate City Waste Management to keep Vaughn from voting in this final vote, interim City Attorney Tom Pollard later decided that Vaughn did not have a conflict of interest and allowed Vaughn to participate. With her vote, and Matheny still recused, there would not be a majority vote to pass the motion for Gate City Waste Management to operate the landfill.

The Council would have had to go back through the bidding process all over again for the landfill to be reopened, which was not possible before the November, 2011 elections. By that point, members of the CEEJ had already formed the Greensboro Voters' Alliance, a non-partisan group focused on voter registration, educating citizens about local issues, and unseating the pro-landfill City Council members. Only one supporter of reopening the landfill remained after the election, and the new Council made clear that reopening it was no longer on the agenda. With that, all signs point to the landfill not being reopened in the near future and a continued search for a regional solution, but the possibility of a future reopening continues to be discussed and advocated by some.

### **Overarching Conclusions**

Several overarching conclusions about the landfill dispute emerged from this research. First, it is apparent that the anti- and pro-landfill forces' contrasting arguments

derived, in part, from their embracing very different “truths” about the landfill. Second, the interviews provided much insight about how gaining a broader, more racially diverse support base benefitted the anti-landfill movement, whereas the pro-landfill side, to its detriment, failed to mobilize and gain organized support. Third, economic conditions played a major role the dispute. Fourth, various aspects of Greensboro’s history clearly influenced the dispute.

### **Perceptions and Cultural Beliefs**

A theme commonly voiced by pro-landfill interviewees was that the landfill opponents’ perceptions about various aspects of the landfill issue did not match “reality.” Those involved in the two sides of the landfill dispute typically had divergent beliefs about the history of the landfill, such as the promise that was – or was not – made to keep it closed to household waste, the presence or absence of health hazards, the origins of the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood, and whether or not reopening the landfill would constitute environmental racism. This disconnect between what the landfill supporters and landfill opponents believed to be true, the difference between the side’s “realities,” provides insight into why the potential reopening led to such controversy.

A recurring theme in the landfill opponents’ understanding of what the landfill dispute was all about was their belief that the advocates of reopening were proposing to break a promise that the landfill would never be reopened to household waste. According to many, the landfill was supposed to become a “closed issue” once it was closed to household waste in 2006. The plan, they claimed, was for the city to begin working on a plan for a regional landfill, using the transfer station and the Uwharrie landfill in the

meantime. The option to reopen the White Street Landfill was off the table, many of them thought. Proposals to reopen it therefore came as a shock

This perception of betrayal rested as well on longstanding views among Greensboro blacks that African Americans could not trust white government officials. Framing the issue as yet another betrayal of trust was credible, as Benford and Snow (2000) might suggest, precisely because the claim fit within existing beliefs and cultural narratives. On a national level, lack of trust in white politicians was a prevalent cultural belief throughout the civil rights movements, and it has continued to be so on a local level, in part because of the city's handling of the 1979 Klan/Nazi shooting, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings about this event, and recent allegations of racism in the Greensboro Police Department.

The most visible landfill supporters, city government officials, not surprisingly rejected the claim that they were untrustworthy. Indeed, several pro-landfill interviewees claimed that the city had made no promise to keep the landfill closed to household waste permanently. They said that one of the reasons why the landfill remained open to non-household waste was in order to keep its permits valid so that the city would have the option to reopen it to household waste if need be.

The "facts" concerning health issues related to the landfill were also hotly contested. As is true in many environmental justice disputes, many anti-landfill interviewees cited family members and friends who had suffered from respiratory problems and pancreatic cancer, which they believed were caused, in part, by the landfill. The pro-landfill interviewees refuted these claims by referring to scientific authorities, a

typical strategy in environmental controversies (Hannigan 2006). They referenced studies that had found no health hazards related to the landfill, and several interviewees said that they had family and friends living in areas outside the landfill district who also suffered from these health problems. Another mentioned that he knew that the northeast residents believed the landfill to be hazardous to their health, but that, because the fact that some people believed it did not make it true. As in many similar situations (Yearley 2005), science proved a relatively ineffective instrument for resolving the dispute.

Another set of divergent beliefs involved whether residents “chose” to live in the White Street area knowing the landfill was nearby. Several pro-landfill interviewees emphasized that residents had not been forced to choose homes near the landfill; therefore, they did not understand how reopening the landfill could be an act of environmental racism. On the other hand, several anti-landfill interviewees said that institutional racism helped to explain a majority African American population inhabiting the area. They noted how redlining and steering had contributed to housing segregation, with minorities typically being directed into less desirable neighborhoods. Thus, they viewed the efforts to reopen it as being representative of the city’s white political leaders’ disregard of the health and well-being of the neighboring African American residents, which they believed would not happen if they were white.

### **Importance of Organization**

A second major conclusion evident in this study was the importance of organization for the victory of the landfill opposition. The leadership of a social movement entrepreneur jump started the anti-landfill movement, providing the

organizational and motivational skills to build a strong and broad support base. One local journalist, who believed that Goldie Wells was opposing something that would benefit the city, nevertheless described her role this way, incorporating all the key tasks a successful social movement entrepreneur must do well:

She led the organization of the opposition group. She did a great job of getting people involved. She got a great attorney. She got the community involved. When it comes to grassroots organizing, it was really textbook. She kept people active. She really did an outstanding job.

The strength of the CEEJ, the main anti-landfill SMO, and its coalitions and alliances were undoubtedly major advantages for the movement. The alliances provided the movement with a range of skills, including community organizing, political savvy, media access, and networking ability to build alliances and form coalitions.

In contrast to the landfill opposition, the landfill supporters did not mobilize themselves as a social movement to target the landfill issue. I found no evidence of a social movement entrepreneur, pro-landfill SMOs, coalitions, or alliances, although there may have been people in favor of the reopening who worked together behind the scenes. Landfill supporters acted mainly within the political system and through the media to try to influence the local government to reopen the landfill. Some individual citizens in favor of the reopening, like those opposed, sent in letters to editors of local newspapers and spoke from the floor at City Council meetings to express their concerns. In general, these speakers reiterated arguments made by the pro-landfill Council members. They stressed the urgent need for fiscal responsibility and the city's wasting of a valuable resource.

These individuals, however, did not speak on behalf of any organized group. The proponents on the Council evidently did not try to build coalitions with other organizations, or if they did, they did so behind the scenes and failed.

These City Council members, especially the first-time Mayor, Bill Knight, received solid support from conservative voters and the tea party organization during their candidacy, but were not backed with the same fervor in their efforts to reopen the landfill. Ironically, the very voters who subscribed to the ideals of the tea party movement and had pushed for the election of these officials on the premise of their desire to cut municipal spending and lower taxes did not organize or turn out en masse to support the reopening. As the controversy progressed, the landfill supporters' lack of formal organization seemed to leave the conservative City Council members outnumbered and overpowered by the anti-landfill movement's successful community organizing.

### **Coalition Building**

A third key conclusion concerns the success of the two sides in building broad coalitions. Almost all of my interviewees agreed that, in order to succeed, the anti-landfill movement needed to expand its support base beyond northeast Greensboro. Without support from other parts of Greensboro and white residents, the landfill supporters could have easily claimed that only a small portion of the city's population actually opposed the reopening--and that this small group opposed reopening because of false or distorted perceptions about the landfill. They could argue that, if the opponents *really* understood the situation, they would see that reopening an existing landfill was not environmental

racism and that reopening it would economically benefit all of Greensboro's citizens. Thus, it was essential for the northeast Greensboro opponents to gain the support of other, non-environmental justice groups and some prominent white leaders. As resource mobilization theory suggests, doing so gave the movement additional manpower, skills, and resources, but most importantly it gave them additional legitimacy and the economic development argument needed to diversify their support base.

Several non-environmental justice groups and individual leaders became important allies of the CEEJ. In particular, many interviewees noted that support from the League of Women Voters, New Garden Friends Meeting members, and prominent white leaders greatly strengthened the anti-landfill movement. Some of these groups' and individuals' actions were frequently cited as very consequential for the success of the movement, including the League signing on as a litigant in the lawsuit against the city, members of the NGFM organizing the caravan and rally at the landfill site, and leaders such as former mayors Keith Holliday and Carolyn Allen providing advice to the CEEJ and speaking at the group's meetings and rallies and to the media. In addition, several interviewees mentioned how student involvement at local colleges and universities aided the movement, especially by joining the caravan to the landfill and the march from A&T University to the Municipal Building. As in other local environmental movements (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1992; Duffy 2003), this broad network brought varied and necessary resources for the anti-landfill movement. It also demonstrated to the landfill supporters that the potential reopening was more than just a northeast Greensboro or African American concern.



The adoption of the economic development framing proved to be a particularly powerful way of broadening the opponents' support base. It is also an example of how framings can emerge not only out of people's underlying beliefs about reality, but out of their desire to prevail politically. As many anti-landfill interviewees stated, claims about the reopening being environmental racism did not resonate with a wider audience as well as claims that the landfill would greatly hinder economic development for the city as a whole. Many interviewees thought some white residents who disagreed with the argument that landfill supporters did not care about African American residents could not argue with prominent leaders, such as former mayor Keith Holliday and long time Council member and later Mayor Robbie Perkins, who said that east Greensboro is the only place left for the city to grow. The *Greensboro News and Record* also gave this economic development argument considerable attention. Some interviewees also thought that many residents did not doubt the reopening would lead to heightened racial tensions in Greensboro, making the city less desirable for new residents and businesses.

### **Economic Conditions**

Current economic conditions weighed heavily in the landfill dispute. At the time of the controversy, the US was in the depths of the greatest economic crisis since The Great Depression. Thus, the reasoning behind reopening the landfill seemed, for the proponents, to be quite clear: the city has a landfill with valid permits and reopening it would save the city a great deal of money during a time of economic recession. In this context, it is hardly surprising that many Greensboro citizens were open to arguments about cutting taxes and reducing municipal expenditures. This opened the door for the

reopening proponents to argue that citizens would be in jeopardy if municipal spending remained high while tax revenues were falling, leading directly to tax rate increases.

When viewed from this perspective, it is not hard to understand why tea party rhetoric proved appealing and how support could have grown for the reopening. In effect, the US economic situation helped to legitimize the pro-landfill argument.

### **Historical Factors**

Amid tough economic conditions, the nation's – and Greensboro's – history of discrimination and racism was not to be forgotten, for no matter how much landfill supporters emphasized that their desire for reopening was solely based in economics, the social and psychological impacts of discrimination – whether past or present, real or perceived – played a major role in why the reopening was fought so vehemently. Many African American residents saw the push for the reopening as just another example of “traditionalist” (Luebke 1998) white political leaders not caring about them. They viewed the push for the reopening as part of a familiar pattern of putting their desire to save tax dollars and maintain the standard of living of white residents ahead to the health and well-being of African American residents in northeast Greensboro. It is no accident, many anti-landfill respondents claimed, that the area around the landfill is inhabited largely by African Americans. One can look at a demographic map of Greensboro and see that housing segregation continues still today. Some may say that this is the housing structure that people have chosen for themselves; however, such decisions are rarely made arbitrarily.

According to the east Greensboro opponents of the landfill, claims that African American residents *chose* to live around the landfill brazenly disregard the history of white dominance in the US and in Greensboro. Some landfill supporters pointed out that the landfill had been in existence since the 1940s, but African American residents did not really begin moving to the area in great numbers until the Nealtown Farms neighborhood was constructed in the early 1990s. They argued that no one was forced to live in Nealtown Farms and that those who did so had willingly chosen to move there, all the while knowing that a landfill nearby was down the street. While one can argue that no one forced people to move to Nealtown Farms, there is generally accepted knowledge about the history of redlining neighborhoods to segregate them according to race, and the steering practices that still occur today, with real estate agents showing homes in different areas according to a potential buyer's race or ethnicity (Pellow 2004). Nealtown Farms was constructed to provide more affordable housing in Greensboro. It offered new homes, many with sizable yards, in a quiet, neighborhood setting for people who would have not likely been able to afford them in most areas of Greensboro. In Greensboro, as elsewhere in the US, African Americans still face major obstacles to becoming homeowners due to the lower incomes and lack of assets resulting from centuries of discrimination in housing, educational opportunities and employment (Brulle and Pellow 2006). Thus, it is difficult to believe that some of these factors did not come into play as Nealtown Farms became increasingly inhabited by African Americans.

Beyond this, Greensboro's racial history played a major role in the landfill dispute. Longtime Greensboro residents have a deep understanding of the city's racial

tensions and the recurring events that have comprised its progressive image. Thus, no matter what the intentions of the proponents, proposals to reopen a landfill in a majority African American community reopened wounds left from a history of being treated as second-class citizens. As much environmental justice research shows, such history is also often called upon in organizing and mobilizing threatened minority communities. In this case, many anti-landfill movement members had lived experiences of the civil rights movements and successfully utilized its organizing models, strategies, and tactics to influence the outcome of the landfill dispute.

### **Implications for Theory and Further Research**

This study's findings are, for the most part, consistent with Luebke's (1998) description of major factions in North Carolina politics, some elements of elite and pluralist theories of community power structure, social movement theory, and literature on environmental justice movements. However, the case also contains some interesting and atypical elements that offer implications for theory and point to several broad issues for further consideration and research. The most interesting of these involve the potential of the current US economic crisis and budget cutting emphasis to spawn other, similar controversies in other US cities.

Existing literature about environmental justice disputes provides limited insight into movements that spring from newly ascendant tea party ideals. Past environmental justice controversies have typically stemmed from effort by a government agency or corporation to construct an environmentally hazardous site. This case was different. Not only did the landfill site already exist, but proposals to reopen it were launched primarily

because of the increasing influence of the tea party movement, which focused on minimizing government spending and cutting taxes. The conservative majority was swept into office in Greensboro's City Council in 2009 in part due to the mobilization of this movement, and, although the group did not mobilize for the landfill controversy, the newly elected officials based their argument for reopening the landfill on its ideals.

Arguments about saving money, cutting spending, and lowering taxes are sure to remain a staple of local political and economic debates for the foreseeable future. And it is not unlikely that there will be other situations in which such controversies produce rancorous controversies like the landfill dispute in Greensboro that go beyond routine complaints from neighborhoods that suffer from delayed street paving or reduced services. Typically, tea party members, operating within longstanding conservative framings of wasteful government spending, suggest cutting, or seriously altering, public programs and services they view as unnecessary government expenditures in order to cut taxes. It is thus likely that such programs and services, including welfare, public health, public housing, and public education, will continue to be threatened especially if the budget pressures resulting from the Great recession continue. In this context, it would be interesting to develop theory and conduct research about the conditions under which tea party-inspired budgets cuts lead to other local social movements and how those movements fare in their struggles.

The White Street landfill controversy illustrates that grassroots movements can succeed in turning back cost cutting measures that threaten local communities, but it also suggests that some special conditions might be necessary for success. Indeed, it is far

from certain that the CEEJ would have successfully kept the landfill closed had it not had a skilled and experienced leader, organized effective SMOs, developed attractive framings, and formed coalitions and alliances with well-established groups. Further research might thus look at how groups with a history of organizing, such as those focused on education or women's reproductive rights, fare against tea party-proposed program cuts in comparison with groups that have to organize from scratch, as might be the case for cuts in welfare services or public transit. Also of interest is the ability of such groups to develop appealing framings and form alliances.

This case also shows that budget cutting decisions are not made in a vacuum, devoid of history and local idiosyncrasies. The pro-landfill argument about cost-savings was unable to stand on its economic merits alone against the anti-landfill movement for this reason. This suggests that budget decisions that connect to a history of social division, seem unfair or to break past promises are especially apt to evoke bitter conflict. An issue to explore further is how can local governments might better engage with communities about policy issues prior to policy formation.

Such conflicts may also reignite in the Greensboro area. Signaling the inevitably of future social, political, and economic debate, Republicans, again fueled in part by the Conservatives for Guilford County, took control of the Guilford County (the county in which Greensboro is located) Board of Commissioners in the November, 2012 elections. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the landfill dispute, a chasm evidently remains between the anti-landfill movement and those who subscribe to the tea party, and proposals for reopening the landfill continue to circulate. How great might the chasm have been if the

landfill supporters had won? Had African American residents living around the landfill come to believe that they had been denied their right to a safe and healthy environment would Greensboro be healing the wounds of its racist history?

On the other hand, many residents in northeast Greensboro and other parts of the city were drawn together by their fight against the reopening. Some interviewees said that it actually strengthened their community, as well as ties with other groups and individuals in other districts. Does the African American community now feel more a part of the larger Greensboro community? Or did the controversy deepen the racial divide in Greensboro? It would be interesting to study how the city's race relations fares currently and to study the effects of ascendant tea party ideals on inter- and intra-racial relations.

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**APPENDIX A**

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE WHITE STREET LANDFILL**

**CONTROVERSY**

**Introduction**

Greensboro, North Carolina has a long history of civil rights activism. Most notably, the first sit-in of the civil rights movement took place at Greensboro's Woolworth's drugstore in 1960. Due in part to the city's iconic role in the movement, Greensboro's white leaders have often touted the city's progressive stance on racial issues (Chafe 1980); however, there have also been recurring racial conflicts over the last half century.

In 1979, the Ku Klux Klan/Nazi shooting of five members of The Communist Worker's Party, a biracial group, considerably tarnished Greensboro's racial relations reputation. The Greensboro Police Department failed to respond promptly to the shootout, and all of the gunmen were later acquitted. Racial conflicts in the police department have characterized the past decade, as the former chief of police was accused of discriminating against a group of black police officers because of racial prejudice.

The recent White Street Landfill case represents a continuation of both traditions. Racial and class tensions were heightened by the plan of a conservative majority of the City Council to reopen the landfill, but other white leaders argued for keeping it closed in order to ensure racial justice and harmony .

### **Initial Stages of Controversy about the White Street Landfill**

The White Street Landfill was first constructed in the 1940s. For 50 years, the surrounding approximately 500 acres were used as a buffer zone to insulate neighborhoods from the noise, smells, and traffic caused by the landfill. However, in the early- to mid-1990s, affordable housing and land were becoming a major issue in Greensboro, which, like other cities around the South, was experiencing high rates of immigration. The push for affordable housing in Greensboro led the city to sell cheaply this land for the construction of new homes. Because of the proximity to the landfill, the houses were affordably priced for working to middle class buyers. Thus, even though it was located beside of the landfill, people, many of whom were African American, moved into the new homes in the Nealtown Farms neighborhood. Some residents later said that they were unaware of their close proximity to the landfill when they purchased their homes. Subsequently, the city bought back some homes in Nealtown Farms and then resold them, with a covenant stating that the landfill was down the street.

A 1995 Greensboro City Council proposal to expand the landfill led to protests by neighboring residents, who began their push to have the landfill closed. Residents claimed that living near the landfill was not only subjecting them to unpleasant smells and noises, but to serious health hazards. Many also claimed that expanding the landfill would be an act of environmental racism.

### **Greensboro City Council Deliberates over Closing the Landfill**

A 10-month study on the landfill's capacity was conducted in 1996. The study concluded that the City Council should begin looking for a 600-acre site for a new



landfill immediately, as the White Street Landfill would be reaching capacity in the next ten to fifteen years. However, no decision was made, and it was not until three years later that the Council began considering the city's waste management options seriously. Throughout 1999 and 2000, three main underlying factors were affecting the City Council's decision making, or lack thereof: how much time remained until the landfill would be full, how important it would be for the candidates to address the issue in the upcoming Council elections, and how great the opposition to the expansion from certain Council members and residents of the northeast Greensboro district was. The two most prominent solutions were finding another location for a landfill or expanding the existing White Street landfill. Several Council members, as well as residents of northeast Greensboro, had expressed strong opposition to the possibility of expanding the White Street Landfill.

The City Council representative from the affected district, the late Claudette Burroughs-White, played a prominent role in the opposition. She supported the residents' demands that the landfill be closed, and she persistently presented the issue to the Council in an effort to build support. Because of these efforts, the mayor at the time, Keith Holliday, began to explore other waste management alternatives and weigh the costs and benefits of expanding or closing the landfill. Nevertheless, as of June 2001, frustrated northeast residents were continuing to express their dissatisfaction with the City Council's handling of this issue.

During the second half of 2001, the City Council finally went from having no solution to the city's waste management problem to deciding upon a definitive plan. The

City Council election of November, 2001, brought the topic back into focus. The White Street Landfill was an important issue, as it related to budget concerns, the appeal and attractiveness of the city, and the livelihoods of northeast Greensboro residents. Much was at stake in the November elections, especially for the District Two residents, who lived near the landfill.

One of the key factors in Mayor Holliday's cost/benefit analysis of the landfill involved Greensboro's economic development. Holliday argued that, due to the geographic location of the landfill, keeping it open and expanding it on land the city already owned at the site when it reached capacity would be a major hindrance to the city's economic development. Currently, the landfill is situated on approximately 500 acres of land. In order to sustain waste disposal for another 40-50 years, it would need to be expanded at least another 500 acres. In addition, it would need, ideally, an additional 500 acres of buffer land surrounding it. Moreover, the presence of the landfill would discourage people or businesses from moving into the northeast Greensboro area, leaving only the area to the southeast open for expansion, as other incorporated communities and the airport blocked expansion in other directions.

### **City Council Proposes Closing the Landfill**

A week before the 2001 elections, the City Council tentatively decided not to expand the landfill, claiming that the pollution the expansion would cause, was not only bad for the residents, but also made Greensboro seem an unattractive place to live. At the end of October, 2001 the City Council and the majority of candidates seemed to have reached a consensus that the landfill needed to go.

In May, 2002 the first significant action of the year took place in regards to the landfill. On a five to three vote, the Zoning Commission members decided “against creating a so-called borrow pit, an area from which dirt would be taken to cover trash placed in the landfill” (*GNR*). About 40 residents from the northeast Greensboro area attended the Council meeting to express their opposition to the potential borrow pit. The ruling was a relief to these residents, whose organization over this issue foreshadowed the grassroots environmental movement that would form almost a decade later.

### ***Greensboro News and Record Accentuates Divergent Perspectives about the Landfill Closing***

In June, 2002 the issue of municipal spending and higher taxes began to appear in the *GNR* headlines. Two headlines, appearing within just three days of each other, highlighted the predicted costs of closing the landfill. The articles mentioned how residents might have to pay higher taxes and fees if the landfill were to be closed, as a transfer station might cost twice as much to operate. A conservative weekly newspaper with a large circulation, *The Rhinoceros Times*, also emphasized this issue.

During the couple months following, the antagonism between those who preferred having the landfill closed versus those who favored cutting back on spending and keeping taxes low began to take shape. While residents of District Two reminded the Council that it needed to be actively working on getting the landfill closed, other reports in the press kept the conversation about rising taxes that would accompany the closing going. Readers were reminded that there were “budget woes” that Greensboro citizens needed to be aware of not only regarding their own city, but also for the United States as a whole.

As one article stated that there was “no end in sight to the current economic malaise of the entire country,” while another detailed the potential cost increase from closing the landfill and transferring the city’s household waste. If the landfill closed earlier than it expected, “residential garbage collection rates could jump to between \$19.87 and \$23.10 a month” (*GNR*).

Some debate participants argued that keeping the landfill open could not be considered environmental racism because the landfill existed before the neighborhoods in the White Street area. Many residents of northeast Greensboro disagree with this statement, however, as some residents had lived on White Street since the 1920s, and the landfill was not constructed until the 1940s. The author of one opinion piece in the *GNR* distinguished between a waste disposal site that is built in an established community versus a hazardous site that existed before a community formed in the area. It appears that this opinion piece may have been in response to counterclaims by residents in an August, 2002 hearing. One day after this piece appeared in the *GNR*, another article commented on the public hearing, stating how those on both sides of the issue were had been articulate in presenting their support or opposition in closing the landfill.

### **The Landfill is Closed to Household Waste**

The City Council made its final decision in December, 2002 to close the landfill. Mayor Holliday proposed that a long-term plan for Greensboro’s waste disposal involve a regional landfill in one of the city’s neighboring rural counties. Operating on the premise of development of a 10-year plan for a regional landfill site, the landfill was finally closed in 2006. Since then, Greensboro’s household waste has been transported

approximately 62 miles to the Republic Services' Uwharrie Environmental Landfill in Montgomery County. The landfill has continued to take construction waste and is used for a very small amount of household waste in order to keep its permit valid.

### ***The Rhinoceros Times Keeps Waste Management Costs in Headlines***

Throughout the years following the City Council's decision to close the landfill to household waste, the *GNR* continued to periodically present the opposing sides of the White Street landfill issue – those who wanted the landfill to be closed and those who wanted the city to take the cheapest option in its waste disposal, reopening and expanding the existing landfill. On the one side, some residents saw the landfill as an environmental racism issue; on the other, many residents worried about the increased taxes they were having to pay for shipping the household waste out of Greensboro. Nevertheless, by 2006, controversy over the landfill seemed to have died down. Residents in northeast Greensboro who had been energized by the closing of the landfill were now working on other ways to better their community, such as improving housing conditions.

The exception was the conservative-leaning newspaper, *The Rhinoceros Times*, which continued to keep the costs of closing the landfill in the headlines, emphasizing that transferring the city's waste was costing the city around 12 million dollars a year. (However, it is important to note that later reports would show the net amount that the city could save is not 12 million, but closer to two and a half to three million dollars.)

### **City Council Considers Reopening the Landfill**

In March, 2008 City Councilman Mike Barber suggested that the landfill be reopened to household waste. According to Barber, "the city is wasting millions," with

the costs estimated at around \$3 million per year to ship Greensboro's household waste to Montgomery County. Soon, the dispute picked up right where it left off, begging the questions: does the city keep the landfill closed and have higher taxes or does it reopen the landfill to cut spending and lower taxes?

Neighbors of the landfill voiced their opposition to Barber's suggestion loudly. They emphasized that the City Council knew when it decided to close the landfill that it would be cheaper to keep it open than to transport the trash, but there were other reasons to close it that trumped the costs. One of the most important was that the landfill would be approaching its capacity in the near future anyway. On April 1, 2008 the deputy city manager reiterated this fact. (It is important to note, however, that the life of the landfill was very much in dispute, as its capacity depended on how many new cells were opened.) The next night the City Council voted 6-3 to keep the White Street Landfill closed to municipal waste.

In July, 2009 the *GNR* predicted the major themes for the candidates in the November elections of that year. One major theme suggested was avoiding a tax increase. Although the *GNR* did not mention the issue of reopening the landfill directly, it was clear that the national economic crisis that began in 2008 and was especially severe in Greensboro was beginning to shape Greensboro's political agenda. On the other hand, in mid-September, Councilman Robbie Perkins, a strong advocate of keeping the landfill closed, suggested that a long-term solution was needed for the city's waste. He argued that resorting to reopening the White Street Landfill would only provide a short-term solution. At the next meeting, however, "the council decided it wanted to talk yet again

about the possibility of once again dumping household waste there” (*GNR*). Proposals were also made to construct a very advanced waste recovery system at the site. While Goldie Wells, City Council representative for District 2 at the time, emphatically stated that “the landfill was supposed to be a closed issue,” a majority of the Council asked for proposals the following week about options for Greensboro’s waste management.

### **A Conservative Majority Wins Council Seats and Vows to Cut Spending and Hold Taxes**

The November, 2009 election brought a conservative majority to power on the platform of cutting spending and keeping taxes low. The conservatives enjoyed strong turnout from affluent, predominantly white northwest Greensboro and tea party advocates, while voter turnout in Greensboro’s predominately African American precincts was low. In an unexpected mayoral victory, conservative Bill Knight ousted the incumbent mayor Yvonne Johnson, who had served on the City Council for the 16 years. Knight, a retired certified public accountant, had promised to make severe budget cuts the focus of the new City Council, which many voters favored in light of the country’s economic recession. Knight had also been a supporter of the former Greensboro police chief David Wray, who had been fired on account of a racial discrimination controversy with some of the police force’s black officers. Thus, the win for Knight also exacerbated racial tensions in the city.

The new City Council began soliciting proposals from several private companies to reopen the landfill to household waste, and no more than a week after the elections, citizens of northeast Greensboro came before the Council to discuss the landfill issue.

During this same time, both the *GNR* and *YES! Weekly* reported that cancer cases had been found to be higher in the area around the landfill (although the *GNR* later states that this information is flawed and needs more investigation).

## **Controversy Heightens between Opposition and Supporters of the Landfill**

### **Reopening**

The dispute between the opposition and supporters of the reopening of the landfill deepened in early 2010 as residents of northeast Greensboro continued to fight against reopening the landfill. They were joined by some prominent white moderate politicians who continued to argue that Greensboro's northeast district was one of the few areas left available in which the city could expand, and that reopening the landfill would hinder future expansion. They also claimed that neither businesses nor future residents would want to move to a city with an operating landfill within its city limits. Finally, they said that reopening the landfill would represent racial discrimination, which would make Greensboro unappealing for future companies and residents. Nevertheless, several members of the City Council, including Trudy Wade, Mary Rakestraw, Danny Thompson, and Bill Knight, conservative citizens, and *The Rhinoceros Times* continued to push for spending cuts and low taxes, which they said reopening the landfill could help facilitate.

In the northeast district, a grassroots environmental justice group with the goal of keeping the landfill closed emerged. In March, 2011, Goldie Wells, a former City Council member, formally organized residents and activists in opposition to the reopening of the landfill into the Citizens for Economic and Environmental Justice



(CEEJ). CEEJ was able to form informal coalitions with other local groups, such as the Nealtown Neighborhood Association and the League of Women Voters. The CEEJ held rallies, protests, and meetings in local churches to get out its message about the further destruction and discrimination it believed that reopening the landfill would cause. In addition, it gained legal support from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, based in Durham, North Carolina. This legal support led to lawsuits filed against the city and injunctions placed against the expansion of the landfill to include new segments due to lack of proper zoning and permits. However, the injunction only limited expanding the landfill, and the City Council continued with the bidding process for a company to operate the landfill with the existing cells. Gate City Waste Management company eventually won the bid to operate the existing landfill, though the City Council still needed to vote to finalize the contract.

### **Likelihood Diminishes of the Landfill Reopening in the Near Future**

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the day the City Council would have had its last vote on the company's contract, the CEEJ held a demonstration at the plaza of the Municipal Building. Students marched from A&T University's campus to the Municipal Building to join the rally and stood outside the doors prior to the City Council meeting. An hour before the meeting began, Gate City Waste Management withdrew its bid. During the bidding process, both City Council members Nancy Vaughan and Zach Matheny had been recused from voting due to their ties with the bidding companies (Vaughn's husband had a business connection with one of the companies that bid on the contract but lost). However, despite a lawsuit by Gate City Waste Management to keep Vaughn from

voting in this final vote, interim City Attorney Tom Pollard later decided that Vaughn did not have a conflict of interest and allowed Vaughn to participate. With her vote, and Matheny still recused, there would not be a majority vote to pass the motion for Gate City Waste Management to operate the landfill.

The Council would have had to go back through the bidding process all over again for the landfill to be reopened, which was not possible before the November, 2011 elections. By that point, members of the CEEJ had already formed the Greensboro Voters' Alliance, a non-partisan group focused on voter registration, educating citizens about local issues, and unseating the pro-landfill City Council members. The high voter turnout in east Greensboro reflected the citizens' desire to keep the landfill closed. Voter turnout there was much higher than in the 2009 elections, and higher than the voter turnout rate in northwest Greensboro. In the 2009 elections, northwest Greensboro voters made their concern and anger about government spending evident at the polls. In 2011, they had less of a vested interest than east Greensboro citizens in one of the key issues of the election: the White Street Landfill. Only one supporter of reopening the landfill remained after the election, and the new Council made clear that reopening it was no longer on the agenda. With that, all signs point to the landfill not being reopened and the City Council going back to working on a long-term solution to handling the city's waste.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

*Thank you for speaking with me today about the White Street Landfill. I want to talk with you about the recent controversy that began around September, 2009 when the City Council announced that it would begin soliciting proposals to reopen the landfill and ended when the new City Council that was elected in November, 2011 announced that it would not reopen the landfill.*

#### SECTION A **ASK TO ALL INTERVIEWEES**

##### **General questions about the interviewee's understanding of and involvement in the White Street Landfill dispute**

When and how did you first become aware that there was a new dispute about the landfill?

Could you briefly describe your view of what the recent dispute around the landfill was all about?

Probes: What kinds of arguments arose about the landfill?

Are you familiar with past disputes about the landfill?

*[If yes]*: Was the recent dispute similar to past disputes about the landfill or different?

Probe: How was it different?

#### **IF PRESS, SKIP NOW TO SECTION B, PART II**

Were you an active member of any group or organization that supported or opposed reopening the landfill?

#### **IF NO, PROCEED TO SECTION B**

#### **IF YES, SKIP TO SECTION C**

## SECTION B

### **Part I. Individual's Goals, Themes, Strategies, and Tactics** DO NOT ASK TO MEMBERS OF GROUPS OR PRESS

Why did you become involved in the recent landfill dispute?

What were your main goals in becoming involved?

What kinds of arguments did you personally make for or against reopening the landfill?

Were there any key words or phrases that you used repeatedly in your arguments?

If so, what were they?

Probes: What did these words or phrases emphasize about the landfill?

What kinds of actions did you take to show your opposition to/support for reopening the landfill?

How did you decide upon these actions?

Probes: Were these actions part of an overall strategy?

If so, what was the strategy?

Which persons or groups were you trying to influence with your actions?

Why did you want to influence these people/groups?

Do you think that your actions actually influenced the outcome of the landfill dispute?

Which action(s) had the most impact?

Which action(s) had the least impact?

Did any of your actions turn out to weaken your side's influence?

Which ones?

### **Part II. Other Local Leaders and Groups that Opposed the Reopening; Alliances** PROCEED HERE WITH PRESS

Who do you see as the key individual leaders among those who **opposed** the reopening? I am asking here about individuals, not organized groups.

Probes: Were any current or former members of the City Council leaders in opposing the reopening?

Who were the two most important individual leaders?

Which particular groups opposed the reopening?

Probes: Did any other political or activist groups in Greensboro oppose the reopening?

Which were the two most important groups?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What role do you think \_\_\_\_\_ played in the recent dispute over reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Role in landfill dispute</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ opposed the landfill reopening?

Probe: What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ had to gain by the landfill staying closed?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Reason for opposing the reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What kinds of arguments did \_\_\_\_\_ make against reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Arguments against reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Were there certain phrases or words that \_\_\_\_\_ used in his/her/their arguments?

If so, what were they?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Phrases or key words in arguments</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

In your opinion were the individuals who were influential in trying to keep the landfill closed part of Greensboro's elite?

Probe: Do you see the push to keep the landfill closed as issue for Greensboro's elite?

**DO NOT ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO SUPPORTERS OR PRESS;**

**IF SUPPORTERS OR PRESS, SKIP TO PART III**

Did you cooperate closely with any of these leaders or groups, or any other key people in Greensboro, in your efforts to keep the landfill closed?

Which were the two most important leaders/key people with whom you cooperated?

Which were the two most important groups with which you cooperated?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

How did you make contact with \_\_\_\_\_?

How often did you meet with \_\_\_\_\_ or representatives of \_\_\_\_\_ when you first started working together on the issue?

Did this increase or decrease over time?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>How contacted</b>	<b>Meeting Freq.</b>	<b>Increased? (Y/N)</b>
L1.			
L2.			
G1.			
G2.			

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

*[If not already mentioned]:* What similar goals did you and \_\_\_\_\_ have?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Similar Goals</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	

G2.	
-----	--

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did you and \_\_\_\_\_ have any dissimilar or conflicting goals about the landfill?

Probes: If so, what were they?

Leader/Group	Dissimilar goals
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did this ever create a conflict between you and \_\_\_\_\_?

If so, did this affect the success of either you or \_\_\_\_\_ in achieving your goals?

Was the conflict ever resolved?

Probe: If so, how?

Leader/Group	Conflict? (Y/N)	Affect? (Y/N)	Resolved? (Y/N)	If conflict resolved, how?
L1.				
L2.				
G1.				
G2.				



**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What do you think were the main benefits of your cooperation with \_\_\_\_\_?

Benefits for you?

Benefits for \_\_\_\_\_?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Benefits for interviewee</b>	<b>Benefits for other leader/group</b>
L1.		
L2.		
G1.		
G2.		

**Part III. Other Local Leaders and Groups that Supported the Reopening; Alliances**  
**PROCEED HERE WITH SUPPORTERS AND PRESS**

Who do you see as the key individual leaders among those who **supported** the reopening? I am asking here about individuals, not organized groups.

Probes: Were any current or former members of the City Council leaders in supporting the reopening?

Who were the two most important leaders?

Which particular groups in Greensboro supported the reopening?

Probes: Did any political or activist groups in Greensboro support the reopening?

What were the two most important groups?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What role do you think \_\_\_\_\_ played in the recent dispute?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Role in landfill dispute</b>
L1.	
L2.	

G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ supported the landfill reopening?

Probe: What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ had to gain by the landfill reopening?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Reason for supporting the reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What kinds of arguments did \_\_\_\_\_ use for reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Arguments for reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Were there certain phrases or key words that \_\_\_\_\_ used in his/her/their arguments?

If so, what were they?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Phrases or key words in arguments</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

In your opinion were the individuals who were influential in trying to get the landfill reopened part of Greensboro's elite?

Probe: Do you see the push to get the landfill reopened as an elite issue?

***DO NOT ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO OPPOSITION OR PRESS;***

***IF OPPOSITION, SKIP TO SECTION D***

***IF PRESS, SKIP TO SECTION E***

Did you cooperate closely with any of these or other local leaders or groups/organizations in your efforts to have the landfill reopened?

Which were the two most important leaders with whom you cooperated?

Which were the two most important group with which you cooperated?

***ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP***

How did you make contact with \_\_\_\_\_?

How often did you meet with \_\_\_\_\_ or representatives of \_\_\_\_\_ when you first started working together?

Did this increase or decrease over time?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>How contacted</b>	<b>Meeting Freq.</b>	<b>Increased? (Y/N)</b>
L1.			
L2.			

G1.			
G2.			

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

[If not already mentioned]: What similar goals did you and \_\_\_\_\_ have?

Leader/Group	Similar Goals
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did you and \_\_\_\_\_ have any dissimilar or conflicting goals about the landfill?

Probes: If so, what were they?

Leader/Group	Dissimilar goals
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did this ever create a conflict between you and \_\_\_\_\_?

If so, did this affect the success of either you or \_\_\_\_\_ in achieving your goals?

Was the conflict ever resolved?

Probe: If so, how?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Conflict? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Affect? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Resolved? (Y/N)</b>	<b>If conflict resolved, how?</b>
L1.				
L2.				
G1.				
G2.				

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What do you think were the main benefits of the cooperation with \_\_\_\_\_?

Benefits for you?

Benefits for \_\_\_\_\_?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Benefits for interviewee</b>	<b>Benefits for other leader/group</b>
L1.		
L2.		
G1.		
G2.		

**IF PREVIOUS SECTION ASKED, SKIP NOW TO SECTION D**

**SECTION C ASK ONLY TO MEMBERS OF GROUPS**

**Part I. Group/Organizational Leadership, Demographics, and Resources**

In which group(s) were you an active member?

If involved with more than one group, in which group were you most active?

What was <NAME OF GROUP/ORGANIZATION>'s stance on the landfill being reopened?

What did you personally do as a member of \_\_\_\_\_?

Who were the founding member(s) of this group?

*[If multiple founding members]:* How did the founding members know one another before forming \_\_\_\_\_?

Why did the founding member(s) oppose/support the landfill reopening?

*[Ask to non-founding members:]* Why did you become interested in the issue/joining the group?

About how many supporters did \_\_\_\_\_ have at the time it was most active?

About how many people attended meetings regularly at the time the group was most active?

Did the membership increase, decline, or remain stable as the dispute went on?

What kinds of people supported \_\_\_\_\_?

Probes: Was the majority male or female?

Was there a majority race? If so, what?

Was there a majority socio-economic class, such as well-to-do or ordinary working people? If so, what?

Was there a main age-range? If so, what?

How did the group attract supporters?

Probes: Was any kind of publicity used (flyers, websites, newspapers)?

Did the group have enough money to do its work well?

What was its major source of money?

Did the group have good access to the media?

Did the group have access to office and/or meeting space? How did the group get its meeting and office space?

Did the group have support from prominent politicians or other well known and respected persons?

Did the group have enough volunteer labor?

Who in the group typically decided how these resources would be used?

## **Part II. Group/Organization's Goals, Themes, Strategies, and Tactics**

What were the main goals of \_\_\_\_\_?

How were these goals selected?

What kinds of arguments did \_\_\_\_\_ make for/against reopening the landfill?

Were there certain phrases or key words that it used in its arguments?

If so, what were they?

What did these phrases or key words emphasize about the landfill?

What kinds of actions did \_\_\_\_\_ take to show opposition to/support for reopening the landfill?

How did \_\_\_\_\_ decide upon these actions?

Probes: Were these actions part of an overall strategy? If so, what was the strategy?

Do you think these actions were effective in helping \_\_\_\_\_ reach its goal(s)?

Which action(s) do you think were the most effective?

Which do you think were the least effective?

Overall, were the group's actions effective in attracting media attention?

Which action(s) were the most effective?

Which were ineffective?

Do you think that the actions actually influenced the outcome of the landfill dispute?

Which action(s) had the most impact?

Which action(s) had the least impact?

Did any actions turn out to weaken your side's influence?

Which ones?

**Part III. Local Leaders and Groups that Opposed the Reopening;  
Alliances/Coalitions**

Who do you see as the key individual leaders among those who **opposed** the reopening? I am asking here about individuals, not organized groups.

Probes: Were any former or current members of the City Council leaders in opposing the reopening?

In your opinion were the individuals who were influential in trying to keep the landfill closed part of Greensboro's elite?

Probe: Do you see the push to keep the landfill closed as an issue for Greensboro's elite?

Who were the two most important leaders?

Which particular groups opposed the reopening?

Probes: Did any political or activist groups in Greensboro oppose the reopening?

Which were the two most important groups?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What role did \_\_\_\_\_ play in the recent dispute over reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Role in dispute</b>
L1.	
L2.	



G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ opposed the landfill reopening?

Probe: What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ had to gain by the landfill staying closed?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Reason for opposing the reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What kinds of arguments did \_\_\_\_\_ make against reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Arguments against reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Were there certain phrases or key words that \_\_\_\_\_ used in his/her/their arguments?

If so, what were they?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Phrases or key words</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

***ASK ONLY IF INTERVIEWEE'S GROUP OPPOSED REOPENING;***

***IF SUPPORTED, SKIP TO PART IV***

Did your group/organization cooperate closely with any local leaders or groups/organizations in its efforts to keep the landfill closed?

Which were the two most important leaders with whom you cooperated?

Which were the two most important groups with which you cooperated?

***ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP***

How did your group/organization make contact with \_\_\_\_\_?

How often did representatives of your group/organization and \_\_\_\_\_ meet with one another when they first started working together?

Did this increase or decrease over time?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>How contacted</b>	<b>Meeting Freq.</b>	<b>Increased? (Y/N)</b>
L1.			
L2.			
G1.			
G2.			

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

*[If not already mentioned]*: What similar goals did your group/organization and \_\_\_\_\_ have?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Similar Goals</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did \_\_\_\_\_ have any dissimilar or conflicting goals about the landfill?

Probes: If so, what were they?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Dissimilar goals</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

Did this ever create a conflict between the groups or groups and leaders?

If so, with which particular group or leader did your group/organization have conflicts?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did the conflict with \_\_\_\_\_ affect the success of either group or leader in achieving its goals?

Was the conflict ever resolved?

Probe: If so, how?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Conflict? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Affect? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Resolved? (Y/N)</b>	<b>If conflict resolved, how?</b>
L1.				
L2.				
G1.				
G2.				

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What do you think were the main benefits of the cooperation?

Benefits for your group/organization?

Benefits for \_\_\_\_\_?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Benefits for interviewee' groups</b>	<b>Benefits for other leader/group</b>
L1.		
L2.		
G1.		
G2.		

**Part IV. Local Leaders and Groups that Supported the Reopening: Alliances/Coalitions**

Who do you see as the key individual leaders among those who **supported** the reopening? I am asking here about individuals, not organized groups.

Probes: Were any former or current members of the City Council leaders in supporting the reopening?

In your opinion were the individuals who were influential in trying to get the landfill reopened part of Greensboro's elite?

Probe: Do you see the push to get the landfill reopened as issue for Greensboro's elite?

Who were the two most important leaders?

Which particular groups supported the reopening?

Probes: Did any political or activist groups in Greensboro support the reopening?

Which were the two most important groups?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What role do you think \_\_\_\_\_ played in the recent dispute?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Role in dispute</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ supported the landfill reopening?

Probe: What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ had to gain by the landfill reopening?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Reason for supporting the reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What kinds of arguments did \_\_\_\_\_ use for reopening the landfill?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Arguments in support of reopening</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Were there certain phrases or key words that \_\_\_\_\_ used in his/her/their arguments?

If so, what were they?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Phrases or Buzzwords</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ONLY IF INTERVIEWEE'S GROUP SUPPORTED REOPENING;**

**IF OPPOSED, SKIP TO SECTION D**

Did your group cooperate closely with any other local leaders or groups/organizations in its efforts to have the landfill reopened?

Which were the two most important leaders with whom you cooperated?

Which were the two most important group with which you cooperated?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

How did your group/organization make contact with \_\_\_\_\_?

How often did representatives of your group/organization and \_\_\_\_\_ meet with one another when they first started working together?

Did this increase or decrease over time?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>How contacted</b>	<b>Meeting Freq. Increased? (Y/N)</b>	
L1.			
L2.			
G1.			
G2.			

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

[If not already mentioned]: What similar goals did your group/organization and \_\_\_\_\_ have?

<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Similar Goals</b>
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did \_\_\_\_\_ have any dissimilar or conflicting goals about the landfill?

Probes: If so, what were they?

Leader/Group	Dissimilar goals
L1.	
L2.	
G1.	
G2.	

Did this ever create a conflict between the groups or groups and leaders?

If so, with which particular group or leader did your group/organization have conflicts?

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

Did the conflict with \_\_\_\_\_ affect the success of either group or leader in achieving its goals?

Was the conflict ever resolved?

Probe: If so, how?

Leader/Group	Conflict? (Y/N)	Affect? (Y/N)	Resolved? (Y/N)	If conflict resolved, how?
L1.				
L2.				
G1.				
G2.				

**ASK ABOUT EACH LEADER AND GROUP**

What do you think were the main benefits of the cooperation?

Benefits for your group/organization?

Benefits for \_\_\_\_\_?



<b>Leader/Group</b>	<b>Benefits for interviewee' groups</b>	<b>Benefits for other leader/group</b>
L1.		
L2.		
G1.		
G2.		

**SECTION D**

**Local News Media ASK TO ALL INTERVIEWEES EXCEPT PRESS**

Did you personally receive media attention for your involvement in the dispute?

If yes, from which media outlets in Greensboro?

*[If member of a group/organization]* Did <NAME OF GROUP/ORGANIZATION> receive any media attention for its involvement in the dispute?

If yes, from which media outlets in Greensboro?

*[If cooperated with other groups/leaders]* Did any of the groups or leaders you cooperated with receive any media attention for their involvement in the dispute?

Do you think that the media actually influenced the outcome of the landfill dispute?

Which media outlets had the most impact?

Which media outlets had the least impact?

**SECTION E**

**Obstacles and Advantages ASK TO ALL INTERVIEWEES**

What do you think were the main obstacles facing the groups and individuals trying to **keep the landfill closed?**

What do you think were the main advantages the groups and individuals that were trying to keep the landfill closed had in their fight?

What do you think were the main obstacles for the groups and individuals trying to **get the landfill reopened**?

In general, what do you think were the main advantages the groups and individuals that were trying to get the landfill reopened had?

## **SECTION F**

### **Interviewee's Opinions on the Landfill Reopening **ASK TO ALL INTERVIEWEES****

*[If not answered previously]:* Do you personally think reopening the landfill is a good idea?

Why or why not?

*[If not answered previously]:* Are there any better solutions to Greensboro's waste management problem than reopening the landfill?

If no, why not?

If yes, what might those solutions be?

Are there things about Greensboro's history that you see as important to understanding the landfill controversy?

Are there things about Greensboro's history or the past disputes about the landfill that you think have affected people's perceptions of the recent dispute?

In your opinion, would reopening the landfill be environmental racism?

Why or why not?

That concludes the interview. Thank you so much for your time and patience in helping me with my study.

(MARK ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE)

Gender

Race