

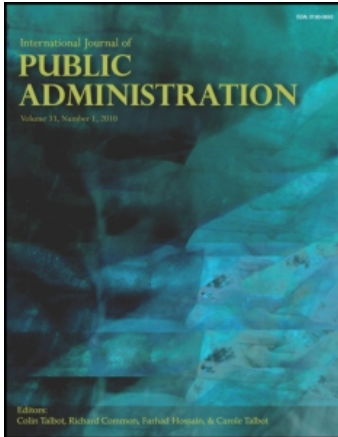
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### BLAMING THE VICTIM; THE ROLE OF DECISION-MAKERS IN THE OCCURRENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

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**BLAMING THE VICTIM; THE ROLE  
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INJUSTICE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Past research on environmental justice concerns has focused primarily on the siting of hazardous waste facilities. Less research has been done on other aspects of environmental policy in which concerns of racial or other injustices arise. This study shows that environmental injustice is not limited to the siting of hazardous facilities or the occurrence of pollution, but occurs also at the policy formation and implementation stages in other areas such as solid waste management. To study this issue, this study focuses on the implementation of the Illinois Solid Waste Management Act of 1988, in two counties in north-eastern Illinois, Kankakee and Will. In neither of the two counties were minorities included in the planning process, and out of a total of 91 advisory committee members, minority interests were

represented by only one black male. At the same time racial minorities made up about 15 percent of the total population in the two counties.

The study shows that the main reason for this lack of representation is not a lack of environmental concern among blacks. Nor can it be explained by a lack of interest in participation in environmental decision-making among blacks. Rather, the study shows that the process is led by misconceptions among planners and decision-makers who generally believe that blacks are not interested in environmental issues and therefore not interested in participating in environmental decision-making. The conclusion of this study is that it is the belief held by local planners and decision-makers that there is a lack of interest in environmental issues among blacks, that produced a planning process in which the interest of minorities were not represented.

### INTRODUCTION

In the mid 1980s, environmental justice issues began receiving increasingly scholarly attention. Most environmental justice research since then has focused on the siting of environmentally hazardous facilities and the occurrence of urban air pollution. Current research on environmental justice issues focuses on the process behind environmental 'injustices.' This research has focused on economic and political explanations and generally assumes a deliberate targeting of minority communities because of social, political or economic interests.<sup>(1)</sup> Despite the increasing proliferation of studies on environmental justice, extant research has not addressed the following issues: First, there has been no analysis of the processes behind environmental injustice in a setting where there are no obvious social, political, or economic reasons to target minority communities. Second, existing research has failed to adequately address environmental injustice concerns at the policy formulation and implementation stages in areas such as solid waste management. Finally existing research has focused primarily on the negative effects and outcomes of environmentally hazardous activities and not at the provision of environmental services, such as garbage collection and adequate sewers. The last issue is particularly noteworthy since, as early as 1968, the U.S. National Advisory Commission of Civil Disorders stated that racial minorities did not receive the same environmental services as whites.<sup>(2)</sup>



To address these issues neglected in existing research, this study looks at the implementation of the Illinois Solid Waste Management Act of 1988 (ISWMA), in Kankakee and Will counties in northeastern Illinois. Section 4 of the ISWMA requires counties to make a solid waste management plan that includes a recycling program. It also requires counties to establish a citizen advisory committee to provide feedback from the community. A close look at the implementation of the ISWMA contributes to a better understanding of environmental justice and the process behind environmental justice for two reasons. First, in contrast with siting issues (in both counties, the siting of new landfills or incinerators was left out of the plan), the making of a solid waste management plan does not have consequences for property values. If the occurrence of environmental injustices would be solely due to economic processes, as indicated in some of the literature on environmental justice,<sup>(3)</sup> environmental injustice should not occur in this situation. Second, the development of a solid waste management plan that does not include the siting of landfills or incinerators does not have a direct link to environmental quality, but mainly deals with the provision of environmental services. If environmental injustice occurs during the plan formulation, this indicates that minorities not only are disproportionately burdened with environmentally hazardous facilities but also do not receive the same environmental services.

### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Historically, solid waste management in the United States has been the preserve and the responsibility of local governments. However, the increasing importance and severity of the solid waste problem has led to increasing federal intervention in this area. Other issues such as the cross-jurisdictional (solid waste does not recognize local and state boundaries) nature of solid waste, the changing relationship between local governments and the 'feds,' and the preferences of business and environmental interest groups have led to an increasing emphasis on federal policies in this area.<sup>(4)</sup> Federal legislation in this area began with the passage of the Solid Waste Disposal Act in 1965, which was designed to encourage local governments to develop alternatives to the open burning of garbage in dumps. Subsequent amendments followed from this act. The most predominant and important of these were the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976, which was amended by the Solid Waste Disposal Act



Amendments of 1980 and the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments (HSWA) of 1984. In addition to these laws, laws dealing with hazardous waste such as the 1980 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act or CERCLA and the 1986 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act or SARA, along with numerous laws dealing with water quality and air pollution have had a significant impact on solid waste issues at the federal, state, and local level. These laws have been supplemented with regulations issued by the National Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and rulings from the federal courts in cases involving interstate commerce and the scope of EPA's authority in implementing laws passed by Congress.<sup>(5)</sup>

These laws, regulations, and court interventions at the federal level have regulated the management of solid waste management in various ways. While these laws and regulations do not explicitly address the issue of equity or environmental justice in solid waste regulation, they are implicitly and unequivocally 'inclusive' in principle. Federal laws and regulations dealing with solid waste may not directly specify the manner in which committees are to be composed in particular states or local jurisdictions; however, the spirit of all federal regulations are consonant with the National Environmental Policy Act, which declares that it is the responsibility of the federal government to assure for *all Americans* safe, healthful, productive, and pleasing surroundings. In relation to this study then, it is important to note that the exclusion of minorities from the planning process is not conformant with federal legislation and regulation in the area of solid waste. Moreover, laws dealing with solid waste at the local level in the state of Illinois, which is the subject of this study, specify clearly the inclusion of all citizens on advisory committees at the time of plan formulation. It is to this legislation that we turn to next.

### Solid Waste Management in Illinois

In the period from 1985 to 1992, 23 pieces of legislation directly related to solid waste management were enacted in Illinois. The acts addressed such varied issues as county solid waste management plans, a state-wide households hazardous waste plan, composting, siting of landfills, regulation of specific waste streams and transportation of waste. In the context of this study three Acts are relevant, the *Local Solid Waste Disposal Act*, the *Solid Waste Management Act* and the *Solid Waste Management and Recycling Act*.

The *Local Solid Waste Disposal Act* of 1985 gave different units of local government the authority to prepare and implement a solid waste management plan (P.A. 84-963, Chap 85, ¶5901 et seq.). The Act allows



a unit of local government to delegate this power to another unit of local government. This Act was followed by the *Solid Waste Management Act* of 1986 (P.A. 84–1319 Chap 111 $\frac{1}{2}$ , ¶7051 et seq.). The main goal of this Act was to reduce the reliance on landfills for waste disposal and encourage alternative methods of waste management. The Solid Waste Management Act established a hierarchy of preferred waste management alternatives for Illinois:

- 1) Volume reduction at the source,
- 2) Recycling and reuse,
- 3) Incineration with energy recovery,
- 4) Incineration for volume reduction, and
- 5) Disposal in landfill facilities.

The *Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act* of 1988 (P.A. 85–1198, Chap 85, ¶5951 et seq.) required that each county in Illinois officially adopts a plan “*for the management of municipal waste generated within its boundaries*” in accordance with the hierarchy of waste management alternatives of the Solid Waste Management Act (ISWPRA, ¶5954, §4). The plan had to include a recycling program that was designed to have at least 15 percent recycling within three years of adoption of the plan and at least 25 percent within five years. The Act also acknowledged the importance of citizen input in solid waste management planning and required that prior to adapting a waste management plan, the county organizes an advisory committee to review the plan during its preparation. According to the Act, the advisory committee had to include: “*representatives from municipalities within the county, citizen organizations, industry, the private solid waste management industry operating within the county, local recyclers and any other persons deemed appropriate by the county*” (ISWPRA, ¶5955 §5). With this section, the Act acknowledged that citizen input is essential for developing successful solutions for solid waste issues.

### Involvement in Solid Waste Issues

Although minority communities organized themselves in the 1980s and 1990s and became active in environmental issues, most of the environmental activism by minorities has been retroactive, namely the minority communities react to an undesirable land use that is imposing a direct threat to the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Taylor argues that many of the environmental problems that minorities face are immediate and life threatening, thereby placing them on the top of priority lists. In these situations, communities have little choice but to become active.<sup>(6)</sup> With the



exception of environmental justice issues, minorities are generally less involved in environmental policy.<sup>(7)</sup> There is general agreement among researchers that there is a difference in participation levels between whites and racial minorities in environmental issues. Furthermore, researchers agree that there is a gap between environmental concern and environmental activism among racial minorities.<sup>(8)</sup> Explanations for the difference in participation levels of racial minorities and other categories of the population in environmental issues have focused on four points: 1) a possible disparity in levels of concern for environmental issues; 2) differences in personal and political efficacy; 3) the availability of resources and; 4) structural barriers to participation in the planning process.

The first explanation states that racial minorities are less concerned about (general) environmental issues and are therefore also less active in environmental issues.<sup>(9)</sup> There are a number of studies about environmental concerns among blacks, but these studies have contradictory results. Some research suggests that blacks are less concerned about environmental problems than whites. For example, Mitchell<sup>(10)</sup> found that a lower percentage of blacks considered themselves sympathetic toward or active in the environmental movement (as traditional defined) than do whites. Kellert<sup>(11)</sup> found that blacks were less interested, concerned and informed about the natural environment than whites. On the other hand, some research shows that blacks are, just as, or more concerned about environmental problems than whites. In an attitudinal survey of 603 southern, urban blacks, Caron<sup>(12)</sup> concluded "blacks are just as concerned as whites about environmental issues; they differ only on some specific points." Cutter<sup>(13)</sup> found that those areas in Chicago with high percentages of blacks were also the most concerned about pollution. In a 1986 article, Morrison and Dunlap argue that it is clear that other factors besides level of concern for environmental issues contribute to a difference in participation levels.<sup>(14)</sup>

The second explanation says that persons from minority communities are less likely than persons from predominately white communities to become actively involved in environmental issues, because there is a general suffering from low self-esteem and a low level of personal efficacy on the part of racial minorities.<sup>(15)</sup> Mohai demonstrated that minorities have a lower sense of personal efficacy, less knowledge about the political decision-making system and fewer economic assets. He argued that the gap between environmental concern and environmental activism among racial minorities is not a function of race, but can be explained by the general lower participation levels of persons in the lower social economic strata.<sup>(16)</sup>

The third explanation focuses on the relative availability of resources such as time, money, leadership and expertise. Taylor argues that racial



minorities simply lack the resources necessary to mobilize.<sup>(17)</sup> Mohai points out that it is not so much an absolute lack of resources but rather the relative amount of resources that is available for environmental activism. He states that minorities are faced with so many other social and economic problems that the relative amount of personal and organizational resources available for environmental activism, is limited.<sup>(18)</sup>

The last explanation focuses on structural barriers in the planning process itself. Checkoway<sup>(19)</sup> demonstrated that notices in the legal section of newspapers, meetings held in locations away from public transport opportunities and during daytime and weekday hours, technical language in documents, and procedural rules for public hearings and meetings that constrain two-way communication, all worked against adequate representation of minorities in public participation activities. Lazarus<sup>(20)</sup> found that policy makers seldom solicit racial minorities for environmental planning and decision-making boards. Other researchers found that the domination of whites on environmental planning and decision-making bodies form an invisible color and class barrier for racial minorities to get involved in environmental decision-making.<sup>(21)</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to analyze the four aforementioned explanations for the level of minority involvement in environmental justice issues with respect to Illinois. To do this, secondary data as well as primary data sources are used. Given that the focus of this study is on policy formulation and implementation, secondary data sources are based primarily on archival information, while primary data sources included a survey and interviews that were administered between 1992 and 1994, the period in which the plans were formulated in the study sites. These three sources of information are discussed in greater detail below.

The archival information included minutes from advisory committee meetings, newspaper clippings, background information that was provided to advisory committee members and the solid waste management plans and supporting documents. The archival information provided data about the process that led to the solid waste management plan, the composition of the citizen advisory committees and the outcome of the planning process: the solid waste management plan.

The interviews with local decision-makers provided additional information about the planning process. The interviews also provided data about the beliefs and perceptions of local decision-makers as to the representativeness of the planning process and the role of racial minorities in





solid waste management planning. In the fall of 1992, in depth open-ended interviews were conducted with the county planner, solid waste planner, and four advisory committee members in Kankakee County. In the spring and summer of 1993, people in the same positions in Will County were interviewed.

The self-administered questionnaire provided data about the perceptions of citizens on major issues in their communities, information about their garbage pick-up and their attitudes about and understanding of local and global environmental issues. The survey was developed in the fall of 1993 and was based on interviews with citizens and community leaders as well as a survey done in an earlier investigation, the Illinois Resource Management Study (ILRMS) that was conducted in 1988 in four Illinois communities.<sup>(22)</sup>

The goal was to obtain 250 usable questionnaires from each of the two counties. A secondary goal was that at least 50 questionnaires from each county would be filled out by racial and ethnic minorities. For that reason, a proportional clustered random sampling technique was employed. Each county was divided into 20 clusters with approximately the same number of people. Within each cluster, one starting point was selected, using a random sequential process. To insure adequate representation of ethnic and racial minorities, an additional 5 starting points were selected in areas with a high percentage of minorities. At each starting point 15 questionnaires were distributed with the goal of obtaining at least 10 usable surveys from each starting point. This procedure would give at least 200 questionnaires that would provide a representative sample of the entire population in each county and an additional 50 questionnaires that over sampled ethnic and racial minorities. A total of 574 usable questionnaires were received from the two counties (Table 1).

The total response rate was 57 percent, with the response rate in Kankakee slightly higher (60%) than the response rate in Will (55%). The

*Table 1.* Response Rates

	Kankakee	Will	Total
Reachable Sample	494	510	1004
Usable Return	294	280	574
Return Rate (%)	60	55	57
% Minority	22.4	27.9	25.2
% Hispanic	1.7	4.3	3.0
% Black	19.0	22.1	20.6
% White	77.6	72.1	74.8



lower response rate in Will County was partly caused by a very low response rate in Hispanic neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods, the language posed a problem for many respondents. The same problem occurred in Kankakee County in the rural community of St. Anne which also has a high percentage of Hispanics. In both counties, around one percent of the respondents belonged to a minority group other than blacks or Hispanics (Native American, Asian).

**DESCRIPTION OF STUDY SITES**

Will County has a population of 357,313<sup>(23)</sup> and is located adjacent to Cook County (Chicago) and includes the City of Joliet, the County seat. The County is classified as heavy industrial with activities focused along the Illinois River. According to the 1990 Census about 18% of the County's population is listed as a racial minority. Eleven percent of the population is black, making them the largest minority population in Will County. There is also a large Hispanic community in Will County, which makes up 5.6% of the total population.<sup>(24)</sup>

Kankakee County has a population of 96,255<sup>(25)</sup> and is located immediately south of Will County. Approximately half of the population in the County lives in the Metro area, composed of the adjacent communities of Kankakee, Bradley, Bourbonnais and Aroma Park.<sup>(26)</sup> The County contains 15 other municipalities. About 22% of the County's population is black with about 79 percent of them living in the eastern portions of the City of Kankakee and the remaining 21 percent in Pembroke Township. Pembroke Township is located in the southeastern corner of the County and 92 percent of the population is black.

Kankakee County has one rather unusual waste problem. Over the past forty years, an estimated 3 to 4 million used rubber tires have been dumped in Pembroke Township. The County and the Township are presently in the process of cleaning up the tires that are scattered over multiple sites within the township.

**The Solid Waste Management Plan in Will County**

The Will County Solid Waste Management Plan consists of five technical reports and the actual solid waste plan. Four of the technical reports were prepared by consulting firms and one was prepared by the County staff. The technical reports addressed:

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- 1) the generation of waste,
- 2) the possible reduction of waste generation,
- 3) recycling,
- 4) the feasibility of incineration with energy production, and
- 5) the criteria and process for the siting of a landfill.

The waste management plan was based on the information from the technical reports. The goal of the waste management plan is to achieve a five percent volume reduction of waste, 30 percent recycling within five years after implementation of the plan and 40 percent recycling within ten years. The plan considers incineration not feasible in the short term and the remainder of the waste will therefore be landfilled. Since the County expected to run out of landfill space around the year 2000, the plan calls for the development of a sanitary landfill and the need for a transfer station in combination with the landfill. The solid waste management plan announces the start of the siting process for the landfill and briefly notes that the decision for the location for transfer stations is a “purely economic decision.”<sup>(27)</sup> Other points in the plan are:

- development of educational and awareness programs for the collection of household hazardous waste, together with three drop-off programs a year,
- development of a recycling education program,
- franchising of collection in unincorporated areas,
- development of Solid Waste Agreement with municipalities which states that they recognize the County’s authority in solid waste decision-making,
- consideration of a ‘pay by the bag’ collection system in unincorporated areas.

### **The Solid Waste Management Process in Will County**

The Will County solid waste management plan was prepared by the Solid Waste Division of the County’s Land Use Department. The County appointed an independent Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to review and comment on the elements of the plan. The MAC was composed of 33 elected or appointed officials from the largest cities and villages in Will County (5 females, 28 males, 1 black male). The TAC consisted of 31 people, 10 females, 21 males and no minorities. Six members of the TAC were directly affiliated with the solid waste industry, five were representatives of industries within the County, seven were members of environmental groups, eleven were



government officials and there was one interested citizen. Analysis of the composition of the TAC shows that most of the members were either from government agencies and organizations of public officials (40%), or from (solid waste) industry (35%).

After sessions with the TAC and the MAC on policy guidelines, the County contracted with consulting firms to produce the technical reports. In a study of the waste management process in Will County, Lee concluded that the advisory committees were involved in all technical reports, but had focused their efforts on in the development of the landfill/ashfill siting criteria.<sup>(28)</sup> This report establishes the criteria that Will County will use for the siting of a new landfill. After analysis of this document, Lee concluded that the report only established technical and economical criteria and does not address any other issues that might play a role in a siting decision.<sup>(29)</sup> This conclusion is supported by a statement in the solid waste management plan which states that the decision for the location of a transfer station is purely economic.<sup>(30)</sup>

### The Solid Waste Management Plan in Kankakee County

The Kankakee County Solid Waste Management Plan consists of a needs assessment study which identified the County's waste generation per sector (commercial, residential and industrial)<sup>(31)</sup> and a technological review which assessed the available waste management technologies and the feasibility of these technologies in Kankakee County.<sup>(32)</sup> The plan builds on Illinois' waste management hierarchy: volume reduction, recycling and reuse, incineration and disposal in landfill facilities. The goal of the plan is to reduce waste at the source by 4 to 10 percent, recycle 30 percent of municipal solid waste by 2002 and 40 percent by 2012, and landfill the remainder in existing county facilities. The plan does not propose new disposal facilities since the county projected that the existing waste facility, owned and operated by Waste Management Inc., would provide enough capacity for the next 20 years. The county wants to keep relying on the private sector for disposal of all non-recycled waste and achieve the four percent reduction of waste and the 30 percent recycling by:

- the establishment of a recyclable materials processing facility in cooperation with private haulers and the County Training Center,
- the establishment of a recycling program in the three cities of Kankakee, Bradley and Bourbonnais,
- the design of recycling programs for unincorporated areas,
- the development of a waste reduction and recycling program for county buildings and area businesses,



- consumer education and information programs and on site landscape processing.

The county's responsibilities under the plan are to develop inter-governmental agreements with municipalities, design and implement recycling programs in unincorporated areas, and assist municipalities in establishing recycling and waste reduction programs. The three to four million discarded tires in Pembroke Township are not mentioned in the plan and neither is the complete lack of garbage pick-up in that township.

### **The Solid Waste Management Process in Kankakee County**

The Kankakee County Solid Waste Management Plan was prepared by the Advance Planning Division of the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission. In accordance with the *Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act*, the county board appointed a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). Besides the CAC the county established an Independent governmental Task Force (ITF) to review, comment and advise on the plan. The CAC was composed of fourteen members, none of whom was a minority. Two members were representatives for the solid waste industry, three were affiliated with county industries, two represented organized citizen interests and three were government officials.

The ITF consisted of thirteen members and included the mayors of the seven largest municipalities (Bradley, Kankakee, Bourbonnais, Manteno, Herscher, Momence, St. Anne), the chair of the county regional planning commission and the directors of the county regional planning commission, the county health department, the farm bureau, the soil conservation service and the forest preserve district. All members were males and none of them belonged to a minority group.<sup>(33)</sup>

### **Selection of Advisory Committee Members in the Two Counties**

Analysis of the advisory committees in both counties showed that minority representation in the solid waste management process was limited to one black male, out of a total of 91 advisory committee members. Furthermore, that member was selected based on his function as trustee and not because of his race. The data also showed that both the Citizen Advisory Committee in Kankakee and the Technical Advisory Committee in Will, were dominated by (solid waste) industry. The Technical Advisory Committee in Will also included a large group of government officials.



In the interviews with advisory committee members in both counties, committee members were asked how they were selected for the advisory committee. After analysis of this data, Lee, Burdge and Vos concluded that advisory committee members were selected because of their involvement in environmental issues or business-related interests.<sup>(34)</sup> Most of the members were called by the county to participate based on prior involvement in environmental decision-making. Other members had heard about the State mandate and offered their help. According to one of the solid waste planners involved, he had put a notice in the newspaper soliciting volunteers and accepted anybody who responded. However, none of the citizen advisory committee members that were interviewed had seen the notice. After analyzing the data from the interviews with advisory committee members, Lee, Burdge and Vos concluded: “*The solid waste citizen advisory committees in each county represented an embedded case of exclusion. Seemingly no efforts were made to recruit minority participation in the planning process.*”<sup>(35)</sup> When one of the solid waste planners was asked about minority involvement he answered: “*Most minorities are low income and poor and are concerned about economic problems, they don’t have time to worry about issues like the niceties of recycling.*”<sup>(36)</sup>

The lack of minority involvement in the advisory committees was only seen as a problem by one member of the Independent Governmental Task Force in Kankakee. This member, the county health inspector, specifically mentioned that the people from Pembroke Township, a predominately black township, were not represented and neither were the people dealing with the 3 million discarded tires in that township. He stated that he had asked the advisory committee why the lack of trash pick up in this township and the tire problem were not mentioned in the plan and was told by the solid waste planner that the State did not want to know about the problems in Pembroke Township.<sup>(37)</sup>

The results of the analysis of all available information about the solid waste management plans and the processes that led to the plans, clearly show that minorities were not involved in the planning process. Not only were they not involved, they also were not asked to become involved since the general perception within the advisory committees seemed to be that minorities were not interested in the issue.<sup>(38)</sup>

### The Environmental Concern Explanation

The general perception of both the advisory committee members and local decision-makers was that blacks simply did not care much about environmental issues. In order to test the validity of this ‘low environmental



concern' explanation for the lack of participation in the two study sites, the citizen survey asked several questions about environmental concern. The first set of questions asked general questions about environmental concern. Respondents were confronted with a list of ten environmental issues and asked to indicate the seriousness of each issue. The list of problems was set up to represent a variety of environmental concerns, ranging from local to global, from wilderness issues to health threats and covering water, air and soil problems. A second set of environmental issues was included in a question that asked respondents about problems in their neighborhood. This second set of environmental issues focussed on local environmental issues and, more specifically, on environmental problems in the respondent's neighborhood.

An overall difference between black and white environmental concern was found with MANOVA (Hotellings  $T = .375$ ,  $F = 9.75$ ,  $df = (1,458)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 2 shows the differences between white and black

**Table 2.** Results of Univariate F-tests Showing Differences in Environmental Concern Among Whites and Blacks, in Descending Order of Seriousness for Whites (N = 458)

	Whites	Blacks	F	p
Pollution of local streams and rivers	3.48	3.41	.59	.441
Illegal dumping of garbage	3.37	3.44	.57	.448
Cutting of tropical rain forest	3.35	3.12	4.20	.041
Preservation of wilderness land	3.25	3.14	.92	.336
Destruction of the ozone layer	3.22	3.24	.04	.835
An accident at a nuclear power plant	3.17	3.22	.13	.718
Air pollution from cars/trucks <sup>1)</sup>	3.15	3.24	.75	.385
"Acid rain"	3.11	3.11	.00	.946
Location of landfills	3.00	3.10	.71	.397
The "greenhouse effect"	3.06	2.90	1.93	.164
Odors from factories <sup>1)</sup>	2.92	3.08	2.21	.137
Litter in streets, roads and parks	1.90	2.52	40.40	< .001
Air pollution from cars/trucks <sup>2)</sup>	1.84	2.25	14.65	< .001
Odors from factories <sup>2)</sup>	1.73	1.95	3.63	.057
Abandoned or boarded up houses	1.69	2.82	89.41	< .001
Lacks of parks and green space	1.65	2.57	73.72	< .001
Unsightly and smelly garbage dumps	1.43	1.88	22.19	< .001

Notes: 1 = not a problem; 2 = small problem; 3 = medium problem; 4 = serious problem

<sup>1)</sup> framed in environmental context

<sup>2)</sup> framed in community context

environmental concern. It is clear that the scores of whites and blacks for the general environmental issues were almost identical. Whites were only significantly more concerned about one general environmental issue: “*Cutting of tropical rain forest*”. Even though there is a significant difference, both groups thought it was a medium to serious environmental problem. The real difference between white and black environmental concern occurred for the environmental problems that related to respondents’ own neighborhood. Blacks were considerably more concerned than whites for all but one (“*odors from factories*”) of the environmental issues that were framed within a community context. Furthermore, the differences between white and black scores were considerable.

In other research, socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and years of formal educational level have been used to explain differences in levels of environmental concern.<sup>(39)</sup> Although, the relationship between these variables and environmental concern is not clear, it is possible that the differences that were found between black and white environmental concern are attributable to socio-economic differences other than race.

Comparison of the sample with 1990 US Census data showed that both groups were representative for blacks and whites in the two counties, but that compared to whites home-ownership among the blacks was lower, as well as the years of education and income level. Furthermore the black sample had a higher percentage of women.

To correct for the influence of demographic characteristics, a MANOVA was performed for all environmental items with income, education, gender and home ownership as covariates. After controlling for these characteristics there remained an overall difference between white and black environmental concern (Hotellings  $T = .263$ ,  $F = 5.12$ ,  $df = (1,347)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 3 shows the scores for blacks and whites for all environmental concern items after controlling for the influence of gender, home ownership, education and income. For the general environmental issues there was no longer a significant difference in the perceived seriousness of the issue “*Cutting of tropical rainforest*” which means that the difference that was found earlier was attributable to differences in demographic characteristics. At the same time, a significant statistical difference was found between blacks and whites for the issue “*Location of landfills.*” Blacks perceived this as a much more serious problems than whites. Considering the research about the disproportionate burden of blacks with waste facilities this is not a surprising finding. For the environmental issues framed within a community context, there was no longer a significant difference between the score of whites and blacks on the perceived seriousness of “*Air pollution from cars/trucks.*”

The analysis of the questions about environmental concern show that blacks are just as concerned about environmental problems as whites when





**Table 3.** Results of Univariate F-tests for Whites and Blacks on Environmental Concern, Controlling for Gender, Home Ownership, Education, and Income, in Descending Order of Perceived Seriousness for Whites (N = 349)

	Whites	Blacks	F	p
Destruction of the ozone layer	3.22	3.43	2.56	.110
An accident at a nuclear power plant	3.19	3.31	.62	.430
Cutting of tropical rain forest	3.32	3.26	.21	.646
Odors from factories <sup>1)</sup>	2.97	3.12	1.34	.247
Pollution of local streams and rivers	3.46	3.54	.52	.468
Location of landfills	2.92	3.52	6.01	.015
The "greenhouse effect"	3.03	3.04	.00	.937
Illegal dumping of garbage	3.33	3.46	1.20	.273
"Acid rain"	3.07	3.21	.87	.350
Preservation of wilderness land	3.19	3.30	.63	.425
Air pollution from cars/trucks <sup>1)</sup>	3.17	3.35	2.21	.138
Litter in streets, roads and parks	2.06	2.39	8.13	.005
Unsightly and smelly garbage dumps	1.55	1.84	6.02	.015
Odors from factories <sup>2)</sup>	1.90	1.81	.43	.508
Air pollution from cars/trucks <sup>2)</sup>	1.99	2.11	.78	.375
Lacks of parks and green space	1.71	2.60	41.33	< .001
Abandoned or boarded up houses	1.87	2.62	26.67	< .001

Notes: 1 = not a problem; 2 = small problem; 3 = medium problem; 4 = serious problem

<sup>1)</sup> framed in environmental context

<sup>2)</sup> framed in community context

these problems are framed within an environmental context and more concerned when environmental problems are framed in a local context. Furthermore, the differences in environmental concerns between blacks and whites for the environmental issues framed within a community context that remained after correcting for other differences between the two groups, all related to the appearance of the neighborhood. Where most other researchers found that blacks were more concerned about local health related issues, these results indicate that blacks are more concerned than whites about those environmental issues that have to do with the appearance of their physical surroundings.

These results support recent findings from Mohai and Bryant, who found in a 1992 study in the Detroit area that blacks were not only just as likely as whites to mention wilderness issues but also more likely to mention neighborhood environmental problems.<sup>(40)</sup> The results partly support findings from the 1988 study in Kankakee County in which it was found that blacks were less concerned about general environmental issues than



whites but more concerned about environmental issues that had to do with “immediate surroundings.”<sup>(41)</sup>

The results of the survey clearly show that local decision-makers are wrong in assuming that blacks are not concerned about environmental issues in the study area. Blacks are equally concerned as whites about general environmental problems and they are more concerned than their white counterparts about environmental problems in their neighborhoods. If the level of environmental concern would indeed have played a role in the composition of the advisory committees for solid waste management planning, blacks should have been asked to participate.

### The Priority Explanation

The analysis of the survey data has shown that lack of environmental concern cannot be the reason for a lack of black participation in environmental planning. An alternative explanation would be that although blacks are concerned about environmental issues, they are faced with so many other pressing social and economic problems in their neighborhoods that they lack the relative resources and the leadership to be involved in solid waste management planning.<sup>(42)</sup> In other words, blacks are faced with so many social and economic problems that they lack the time and money to become active in less pressing issues such as solid waste management.

To be able to measure differences in the amount and seriousness of social and economic problems in black and white neighborhoods, the questionnaire listed 21 possible problems in respondent’s community. The questionnaire asked, “. . .how do you feel about the size of the problem in your community or neighborhood?” The respondent could circle one of four answer categories, ‘not’, ‘small’, ‘medium’ and ‘serious’. The problems in this question ranged from socio-economic issues such as unemployment and increasing property taxes/rent, to the provision of public services such as garbage collection and the repair of local streets, to community planning and participation issues and local environmental problems. The problems were chosen to represent a wide range of problems and selection was based on both the previous study and personal interviews with local residents and community leaders in both Kankakee and Will County. Based on the literature review, the expectation was that blacks would rate more problems as more serious than whites, but would rate community planning and participation issues as less important.

A MANOVA was performed that included all 21 problems. An overall significant difference between blacks and whites was found (Hotellings  $T = .733$ ,  $F = 8.33$ ,  $df = (1,382)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The univariate statistics showed



that blacks perceived 17 out of the 21 community problems as significantly more serious than whites did. Table 4 shows the means and differences between the means for whites and blacks for all the community problems. The problems are ranked in order of importance for blacks.

The results in Table 5 suggest that the quality of living (as measured by the perceived seriousness of community problems) in predominately white neighborhoods is higher than the quality of living in predominately black neighborhoods. Although the table shows that blacks are confronted with more and more serious problems in their neighborhoods than whites, this does not necessarily imply that there is a direct relationship between the quality of the neighborhood and race. Just as with environmental concern, the differences in perceived seriousness of community problems between the two categories of respondents could be attributable to socio-demographic differences other than race. To correct for the effects of differences in socio-economic status, an additional MANOVA was performed with income,

**Table 4.** Results of Univariate F-tests Showing Differences Between Whites and Blacks in Perceived Seriousness of Community Problems (N = 384)

Problem	Blacks	Whites	F	p
Unemployment (among people in my neighborhood)	3.10	1.96	86.3	< .001
Lack of citizen participation in community decision-making	3.05	2.34	35.5	< .001
Abandoned or boarded up houses	2.83	1.64	88.4	< .001
Lack of attention to citizen complaints about local govt.	2.78	2.10	34.4	< .001
Repair of local roads and streets	2.77	2.13	24.8	< .001
Safety in local schools	2.73	1.97	32.6	< .001
Lack of parks and green space	2.66	1.64	74.8	< .001
Litter in streets, roads and parks	2.55	1.89	42.4	< .001
Place where citizens can take complaints	2.52	1.95	21.6	< .001
Enough places to recycle	2.47	2.17	4.5	.033
Storm sewers to control flooding	2.40	2.09	5.2	.023
Adequate sewage treatment facilities	2.36	1.71	28.8	< .001
Adequate zoning regulations/building regulations	2.28	1.81	16.1	< .001
Air pollution from cars/trucks	2.25	1.81	15.1	< .001
Odors from factories	1.95	1.70	4.0	.044
Unightly and smelly garbage dumps	1.94	1.40	28.1	< .001
Garbage collection and disposal	1.86	1.40	22.4	< .001

Notes: 1 = not a problem; 2 = small problem; 3 = medium problem; 4 = serious problem

**Table 5.** Results of Univariate F-tests Showing Differences Between Whites and Blacks in Perceived Seriousness of Community Problems Controlling for Income, Education, Gender, and Home Ownership ( $P \leq .05$ ) (N = 298)

ISSUES	Observed Mean		Adjusted Mean	
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Lack of citizen participation in community decision-making	3.14	2.34	3.08	2.40
Unemployment (among people in my neighborhood)	3.12	1.98	2.96	2.13
Repair of local roads and streets	2.87	2.18	2.83	2.22
Lack of attention to citizen complaints about local government	2.76	2.10	2.70	2.16
Lack of parks and green space	2.67	1.66	2.62	1.70
Abandoned or boarded up houses	2.79	1.65	2.64	1.80
Safety in local schools	2.60	1.98	2.48	2.10
Place where citizens can take complaints	2.40	1.96	2.37	2.00
Litter in streets, roads and parks	2.50	1.90	2.35	2.05
Adequate zoning regulations/building regulations	2.27	1.84	2.29	1.82
Adequate sewage treatment facilities	2.29	1.73	2.22	1.79
Unsightly and smelly garbage dumps	1.96	1.40	1.85	1.52
Community growing too fast	1.87	2.14	1.83	2.17
Garbage collection and disposal	1.83	1.40	1.77	1.47

Notes: 1 = not a problem; 2 = small problem; 3 = medium problem; 4 = serious problem

education, gender and home ownership as covariates. Income, home ownership and to a lesser extent education, proved to be important factors in explaining differences in the perceived seriousness of community problems.

After controlling for the influence of these variables, there remained a significant difference between blacks and whites (Hotellings  $T = .669$ ,  $F = 5.74$ ,  $df = (1,296)$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but only 13 of the 21 community issues were perceived as significantly more serious by blacks. Table 5 shows the mean scores, adjusted for income, educational level, gender and home ownership, for blacks and whites on the community issues where there was a significant difference between the two groups. The effect of controlling for the influence of socio-demographic characteristics generally brought the

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means of the two groups slightly closer together. However, one of the community issues that was not significantly different before was different when controlling for income, education and home ownership, “*Community growing too fast*”.

Analysis of the differences between whites and blacks in the perceived seriousness of community problems leads to some interesting conclusions. First of all the differences between the responses of whites and blacks remained considerable after correcting for socio-economic characteristics other than race. This shows that race in and of itself plays an important role in the quality of the neighborhood. Second, “*lack of citizen participation in community decision-making*” and “*lack of attention to citizen complaints about local government*” ranked among the top problems perceived by blacks. Blacks also considered this much more important than whites which seems to indicate that blacks would like to be more involved in local decision-making about solid waste management. Third, both Table 4 and Table 5 show that for both whites and blacks environmental issues (garbage) had a low priority when compared to other community problems. However, blacks perceived garbage related problems as more than twice as serious as whites did. In other words, although both blacks and whites gave a low priority to garbage related problems, blacks perceived garbage problems as much more serious in their neighborhoods than did whites. Although these results support the hypothesis that blacks are faced with other more pressing social and economic problems in their neighborhoods, the results also show that while waste problems have a low priority when compared to other problems, waste related problems are nevertheless of more concern to blacks than they are to whites. This finding combined with the concern among blacks about the lack of citizen participation in local decision-making, indicate that blacks would be more interested in participating in solid waste management planning than whites.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that blacks were not represented in the solid waste management process in either Kankakee or Will County. In Will County, the Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) did include one black committee member, but this person was on the MAC because he was an elected official and represented the interests of his community rather than the interests of blacks in general. The conclusion can only be that out of a total of 91 advisory committee members in the two counties, minority interests were represented by one black male. At the same time, blacks made up 19 percent of the total population in Kankakee County and almost 11



percent in Will County (US Census 1990). Although not the focus of this study, in Will County, Hispanics were also not represented on the advisory committees, although they made up 5.6 percent of the total population in Will County at the time of the study.<sup>(43)</sup>

The interviews with advisory committee members and local decision-makers also show that local decision-makers and advisory committee members assumed that blacks were not interested in participating in solid waste management decision-making. Both planners and advisory committee members perceived that blacks were not interested in environmental issues and therefore were presumed to have other priorities. Therefore, blacks and minorities in general, were not asked to become involved in the solid waste decision-making process. Even more disturbing than the fact that blacks were not involved in the solid waste management process, was the ease with which the issue was set aside under the guise of a lack of black interest. With only one exception, a white Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) member in Kankakee County, advisory committee members felt that the committee represented all interests in the county.<sup>(44)</sup> None of the advisory committee members thought the lack of black involvement was an issue. Rather, committee members and local officials both thought that the two committees represented all interests in the county. The Kankakee Solid Waste Management Plan even specifically mentioned that the CAC was representative of all interests in the County, “*members of the CAC were chosen to ensure that the interests of the entire county were represented and the requirements of SWPRA were met.*”<sup>(45)</sup> The interviews with the advisory committee members showed that they were selected because of their past involvement in environmental issues or because of business related interests. Although the population of both counties had a high percentage of blacks, race was not an issue in the selection of advisory committee members and there was a general belief among committee members and planners in both counties that blacks simply did not care about the environment. One CAC member in Kankakee County, expressed this clearly when she stated “*The people on the committee involved in picking up garbage said that their [referring to Blacks] garbage is always messy. If you can’t get them to put it in the can you can’t get to them recycle.*”<sup>(46)</sup>

The results of the survey show clearly that local decision makers were wrong in assuming that blacks were not concerned in environmental issues and therefore not interested in participating in the advisory committees. Not only were blacks just as concerned about general environmental issues as whites, they were also significantly more concerned about environmental and solid waste issues in their neighborhood. The results even indicate that blacks perceive the lack of participation in decision-making as a serious problem in their community.



Based on the present research it is clear that lack of environmental concern in general or lack of specific concern for solid waste issues does not explain why blacks were not involved in the solid waste decision-making process in either Kankakee or Will County. The analyses provide some support for the argument that blacks are faced with other, more pressing, problems in their neighborhoods and that they lack the resources to become involved in a seemingly low priority issue such as solid waste management. The research showed that blacks perceived problems in their neighborhood as much more serious than whites and solid waste issues ranked at the bottom of the list. However, at the same time blacks perceived solid waste issues as more serious than did white respondents.

More important than any of the other reasons why blacks were not involved, was the fact that blacks were simply never asked to become active in the solid waste management planning process. In both counties, the general belief of both planners and advisory committee members was that blacks were not interested in environmental and solid waste management issues and thus should not be asked to participate. This assumption of lack of environmental concern and interest in environmental issues, more than any other explanation, as supported by our research, explains why blacks were not involved in solid waste decision-making in Kankakee and Will County. This finding supports other research on the participation of ethnic and racial minorities in environmental decision-making. In an article in the *Northwestern University Law Review*, Lazarus stated that people routinely make stereotypical judgements based on racial identity. He concluded that *“while such judgements may appear less threatening than those based on outright racial hostility, their adverse impact may in fact be more potent because of their pervasiveness and masked nature, which makes them so difficult to identify and root out.”*<sup>(47)</sup> In Kankakee and Will County, this stereotypical judgement led to the exclusion of blacks from the solid waste management decision-making process.

From a legislative point of view, local decision-makers followed the mandate and did what they were supposed to do. The legal mandate only required the formation of a citizen advisory committee and did not require that the committee be representative of all interests in each County. Quite to the contrary, the legal mandate focuses on the representation of the solid waste industry and solid waste haulers. The mandate does require the input of *“interest groups”* and *“other persons deemed appropriate by the County,”* but nowhere in the legislation is there an indication of whom should be considered an *‘appropriate person’* or how the different interests together would make up a balanced citizen advisory committee. Lack of representation does not necessarily mean that the planning outcomes are inequitable. The exclusion of blacks from the solid waste management planning process



does not pose a direct threat to the black community such as is the case with the siting of hazardous facilities. However, in Kankakee, the lack of black participation in the solid waste management planning process enabled local decision-makers to ignore the tremendous waste problems in Pembroke Township, a predominately black, rural area in the Eastern portion of the County. Although there were three million tires discarded in this township and there is no garbage collection, neither the Township, nor the tires, nor the lack of garbage collection, were mentioned in the Kankakee County solid waste management plan.

In Will County, the technical report about Landfill/Ashfill criteria established the criteria that will be used for the siting of a new landfill and transfer stations. Most of the effort of the two advisory committees in Will County focused on this document. The criteria in this document are strictly technical and economic. Issues, such as the disproportionate burden of hazardous facilities on low income and minority neighborhoods, are not even touched upon. The report even states that the siting of transfer stations is a purely economic decision.<sup>(48)</sup> By not having minority input during the first phase of the siting process, environmental justice issues that can occur during the siting of a new landfill or transfer stations were not addressed in the solid waste management plan. Thereby leaving the door wide open for another environmental injustice to occur!

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