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Mobilizing Voices: A Discussion of Leadership In An Environmentally Contaminated Community

Abstract

Leadership is a key factor in successful social movement mobilization. Without a grasp of leadership dynamics in a community, it is difficult to explain how individuals come to occupy leadership roles and what impact this has on the overall success of a movement effort. In this study, I use the qualitative approach to investigate how leadership is framed in a community facing the existence of environmental contamination. I follow the development of leadership among actors and particularly the relationships that they create and maintain with expert environmental activists. Using interview data from 35 community residents and activists, I establish how leadership frames were presented to the community and how these frames impacted mobilization efforts and outcomes.

Leadership is an aspect of social movement development that has been relatively unexplored in social movement research (Barker, Johnson, and Lavalette 2001). Although many scholars have included leadership when theorizing mobilization, the deeper tenets of leadership development have yet to be observed empirically (Staggenborg and Morris 2004). I add to a small, but growing body of literature that analyzes the particular ways in which grassroots leadership impacts community mobilization. In this research, I address how individuals develop leadership skills through social networking with other activists and how this experience is framed to movement participants. I then address the effects of this activity on movement outcomes. I use a case of an environmentally contaminated community to address how individuals gain prominence to lead a community effort to resolve the contamination issues.

I focus on leadership as a component of an overall social movement mobilization process. I argue this serves as a social movement because community members have mobilized and worked with other social movement organizations to promote a specific aspect of social change. Rather than focusing on the community as a whole, I am analyzing the impact of leadership development within a structured

effort towards social change in this community. In order to fully understand the emergence of leadership surrounding the contamination issues, I analyze leadership in the community separate from what was occurring at the existing neighborhood block club. I focus on the development of leadership through the specific actions of two neighborhood residents and their connections to expert activists as they occurred within the development of this social movement effort. I rely on social movement literature to best situate my argument and ethnographic field methods to measure this phenomenon.

The Hickory Woods community in Buffalo, New York faced uncertainty surrounding the extent and effects of ground water and soil contamination. A detailed history of this community is provided in subsequent sections. Leaders were provoked by uncertainty. They needed to develop a sense of concrete knowledge in order to arm themselves against the "powers that be," primarily local and state government agencies. Framing theory (Snow and Benford 1988) helps identify the development of leadership and subsequent perceptions that existed in the community. I draw on the framing perspective to trace how leadership was presented to the community and how leadership frames impacted mobilization efforts. Benford and Snow (2000) refer to collective action frames as action-oriented "sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organizations." Individuals frame movement objectives and ideas in order to present a certain picture of reality for constituents and participants. Framing is helpful in presenting viewpoints for others to consider, yet it is not sufficient to ensure participation in social movement activities (Weinberg 1997). Leaders hold status positions that give their frames power. Often, these frames are supported by networks of scientific and community experts. In cases of environmental contamination, the role that scientific experts play in framing these problems has been well documented in the research (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007; Brown and Mikkelson 1990; Brown, Kroll-Smithand Gunter 2000; Beck 1995; Allen 2003). In my research, I investigate the role that expert activists play in establishing frameworks of community leadership. A level of trust has been established through face work between activists and experts. Citizens are socialized to believe that what these individuals say about the nature of their community reflects an accurate picture of reality.

This results in leadership frames that have consequences for community organizing. The social constructionist perspective allows us to understand how these frames were created, circulated, accepted and sometimes rejected. As a framing strategy, in connecting with expert, experienced activists, leaders gave the impression that they too were experts in these areas. This had two primary effects. First, it served as a benefit to legitimize their position to outsiders and stakeholders, or those who had a stake in the outcomes of the mobilization effort, such as local and state governments. Second, it created a rift in community relations, between those who felt that the leadership was overstating the issue and those who supported the mobilization effort. Community rapport suffered as a consequence.

The goal of this research is to identify the emergence of grassroots leadership in a contaminated community. Following this, I ask what effects particular leadership strategies had on outcomes of mobilization. These findings contribute to the growing research on leadership in social movements, towards empirical studies that focus on the incorporation of agency on behalf of movement leaders away from the solely organizational models that once dominated social movement literature.

Influences of Leadership in Social Movement Efforts

The shift away from the individual psychological and collective behavior theories of mobilization towards structural explanations, beginning in the1970s with resource mobilization and political process, led to leadership being under-theorized in social movement literature. The focus has been on structural variables and less on individual agency. Framing in social movements is an area that has been heavily drawn on and allows us to analyze modes of agency among individuals, yet frames specific to leadership emergence have been under investigated. Leadership in mobilization efforts is a prime place to study this dimension as it bridges structure and agency dimensions of social movement organizations. This key area of investigation serves to explore community relations in grassroots mobilization efforts. Individual agency and structural factors are both relied on for successful movement endeavors, yet the key is to empirically identify these factors as visible in movement efforts. Although there has been much research on mobilization efforts in contaminated communities, few studies empirically investigate leadership processes aside from a brief mention. Usually, characteristics of social movement actors are mentioned, but little attention has been paid to those who emerge in leadership roles (Cable 1992; Levine 1982). It is this call in the literature that I respond to, the need for an empirical investigation of leadership processes in a community social movement organization (Staggenborg and Morris 2004).

Leadership is a critical component of social movement success. It is important to acknowledge that leaders play different roles in social movement organizations. While responsible for agenda setting, they are also accountable for success and failure that the organization endures. Members look towards leaders for guidance and often consider them experts in the issue area. This is not necessarily the case however, and can lead to unrealistic expectations of leaders by members. Leaders often assume positions because they may have more time than other participants or simply because there are few other willing participants. Ethnographies of small groups and communities relay these interactions (Brown-Saracino, Thurk and Fine 2008). Fine's (2003) work in peopled ethnographies allows for micro-sociological processes to be connected to the macro-sociological structures in which they reside. Ethnographies of this type offer a holistic approach to the community, while social movement research offers this in the context of the overall mobilization effort.

Once in leadership positions, leaders must continue to promote the mission of the organization. Without a clear vision of the movement agenda, leaders can unintentionally misrepresent movement goals as personal goals. Members mistakenly assume this as a concerted effort on behalf of leadership, when in reality it may stem from an unclear frame of movement initiatives.

Leaders are ultimately responsible for framing the issue to social movement members and the outside community. They can do this more effectively if working within the given structure of resources- drawing on expertise of groups, willingness to give assistance to other groups, networking with scientists and professional activists. Studies have focused on movement leaders who are organizing mass or national movements. Little attention has been given to grassroots community leaders who are developing leadership skills for the first time and to the networks they connect with to learn these skills. Nepsted and Clifford (2006) acknowledge the importance of building social capital and its connection to successful leadership. Their work reflects the need of social movement scholars to investigate consequences of leadership forms in both national and transnational movements.

Ganz (2000) refers to the importance of strategic capacity for successful mobilization. This study focuses on how leadership developed through networking with expert activists and the impact this had on the course of social movement mobilization in an environmentally contaminated community. Movement success or failure depends to a large extent on leadership presence or absence. Without a strong understanding of leadership, we have yet to fully understand the dynamics of movement organizing. Research on leadership has focused on leadership types, but little empirical evidence has been collected to investigate the development of leadership or its consequences on community relationships. Few studies focus on empirical observations of leadership primarily because leadership development is difficult to capture conceptually (Earle 2007; Campbell 2005; Staggenborg and Morris 2004). Staggenborg and Morris (2004) argue that this is evident due to a lack of integration between agency and structural explanations in social movement theory. Framing offers an agency perspective to the primarily structural explanations for mobilization efforts. In this case, I look at how networking with "expert" activists influenced mobilization. Agency becomes important to consider within the structure of this community effort and framing helps to explain the effectiveness of movement leaders who are defined as "strategic decision makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements" (Staggenborg and Morris 2004:171).

Charismatic leadership qualities are often referred to as factors of effective leadership and have been addressed in social movement literature. If a leader has charisma, it is likely that she or he will generate publicity surrounding a given cause. Charisma works towards opposite intentions of structure. The success of a charismatic leader depends on personality, rather than a specified type of formal leadership position. Della Porta and Diani (1999) state that neither traditional nor legal rational charisma is completely viable way of interpreting leadership success, they see this as manipulation of ideological resources by those in leadership positions. Couto (1993) argues that it is the undetected, invisible aspects of community, such as narratives, circulated by people in less visible roles that influence successful mobilization. The development and circulation of these frames or narratives influence social movement actor behavior. Morris (1984) acknowledges the role of free spaces open and encouraging discussion of daily experiences in his work in the civil rights movement. Eichler (1977) points to the overstated nature of charisma- it is not enough to have a charismatic leader, but that leader must have the commitment of their followers in order to be effective. Socio-psychological analyses of charisma consider connections and liaisons that leaders may develop during their tenure. Emphasis on the structure within which these relationships are developed is less emphasized in the literature. It is this connection between charisma and the structure of the organization that also factors in to the circulation of a successful message on behalf of movement actors.

Ganz's (2000) reference to strategic capacity directs attention to the strength of leadership capacities and influence in a community. He argues that the inclusion of movement insiders and outsiders contributes to stronger strategic capacity and the ability to drive institutional goals. A combination of strong and weak community ties offers a variety of resources to draw on throughout the mobilization process. Purkis (2001) states the importance of cultural capital even in leaderless situations, where members are still reaching out and drawing on social networks and existing cultural resources to strengthen their likelihood of successful organizing.

Tilly (1978) defines mobilization as a process where a group goes from a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life. However,

leadership is a vital part of this process- leadership creates structure through which individuals can mobilize in a given framework. In this paper I attempt to assess the dynamics of leadership and discuss how resulting leadership frames potentially impact possibilities for successful mobilization. I pay particular attention to how leaders draw on other outside sources and how this influence impacts success of the movement.

The concept of leadership serves to bridge structure and agency as explanations for social movement emergence. It is in this aspect of mobilization where individuals rely both on agency and how that can be developed within the given structure of a social movement organization. This interplay is interesting because individuals must rely on their existing knowledge and decision making skills within a set of organizational boundaries. Leadership focuses on the development of agency or how people act in a given institutional framework (Staggenborg and Morris 2004).

Using ethnographic field methods, I illustrate how social movement actors framed their notions and definitions of leadership and how this affected the outcome of mobilization. I focus on the strategies used to develop leadership in the community, specifically the close relationship between community leaders and outside expert activists. These relationships bring attention to agency on behalf of individual leaders and the societal structure in which organizational hierarchy exists.

The Western New York community of Hickory Woods serves as an interesting setting to observe leadership development. Various forms of leadership existed in this community and individuals maintained different interpretative frames about leadership. Additionally, some residents even disputed the form of leadership that existed in the community. As community members were introduced to forms of leadership, interpretations or frames changed and other frames developed. Different interpretations of leadership are evident in the analysis of interview data. Residents referred to both informal and formal models of leadership. They also discussed the transformation of leadership presence from a block club focused on neighborhood beautification to a community organization solely interested in resolving the contamination issue. These changes led me to ask: How was leadership developed in Hickory Woods? How was mobilization affected as a consequence of how leadership was framed to community residents?

Data and Methods

My methodological framework is developed around the qualitative measurement process. Primarily, I focus my data collection on in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and document collection and analysis. Using ethnographic processes, I was able to see how issues were framed and reframed over time. I was able to witness community members' interpretations of how information was presented to them and follow up with in-depth interviews. Instead of retrospectively assuming how things unfolded, I was able to observe how frames were interpreted by community members at meetings and community events.

In May 2000 I began carrying out in-depth interviews with neighborhood residents. The director of the Western New York Citizen's Environmental Coalition gave me the name of a leader in the Hickory Woods community and I began my interviewing with this gatekeeper. He made available names of residents in the

community from a neighborhood roster, inclusive of the study area. He became an influential gatekeeper for me in this study. Establishing this was crucial to building strong rapport in the community. This also helped establish lasting contacts in the field and the building of social capital over time (Berg 2007). Initial contact was made with other residents through a letter introducing myself and my research ideas.

I received callbacks from five interested individuals. After these interviews, I followed up with phone calls to the other residents I had solicited. In-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with 35 neighborhood residents. Of this, four interviews were conducted with individuals who were not community residents. These interviews included: directors of local and national environmental organizations working with the community, a representative from the City of Buffalo Common Council, and a representative from the Western New York regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Thirty interviews were conducted face to face. The remaining five interviews were telephone interviews for convenience to the respondent. I spent on average, one and half-hours interviewing each respondent. All respondents were assigned pseudonyms in order to ensure confidentiality.

Because I wanted to be present during the mobilization process, it was imperative to locate myself as a researcher in the community in the early stages of development of the problem. I began attending meetings and neighborhood events, as well as introducing myself to neighborhood residents and having many informal conversations in order to become familiar with the community and its residents. I also attended numerous press conferences, rallies, and protests that were held by residents.

In addition to in-depth interviewing and participant observation, I began a secondary document collection. This collection includes correspondence, state and city sponsored studies, Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, and other material collected by residents; publications from the State of New York and the City of Buffalo regarding the history of Hickory Woods, City of Buffalo Common Council meeting transcripts; and television news stories and a newspaper archive that I developed including both mainstream and alternative local print publications. Triangulation or using multiple data collection sources strengthens the core collection of data as well as includes multiple perspectives of the story in the analysis (Berg 2007).

Field research took place over 18 months. I began attending meetings for exploratory information in December 1999, and continued field research in the form of participant observation through May 2001. In-depth interviewing took place from May 2000 to December 2000. My rationale for the timeline of the study is as follows.

This 18-month period encompasses the formation of the problem in the community as well as the formation and growth of the neighborhood association. I was also able to witness the development of the organization as the issue was brought to the attention of media and policymakers.

My objective was to interview residents prior to the release of the "official" United States Environmental Protection Agency results. My reasoning for this was twofold. First, I did not want residents to give me their interpretation of EPA results. I wanted to understand their perception of the issues apart from any influence that a published government document may have. Secondly, I began my research while the Homeowners' Association was in formation and organization plans were being formed. This gave me a unique window in the mobilization process in that residents had already constructed their early notions of the problem, but those notions were not yet legitimized or denied by any official means. I wanted to become informed of

how that original construction of the problem arose, therefore leading to the emergence of mobilization in the community.

Data was analyzed using NUDIST, QSR software for qualitative analysis. Interviews were analyzed by open coding according to thematic categories based on frames of mobilization. Data were analyzed based on themes and how they serve to explain the aspects of mobilization. For this paper, I focus on the data that led me to an understanding of leadership in Hickory Woods. Data from interviews and other sources such as participant observations, local news articles and television newscasts, meeting minutes, and historical documents were organized by leadership theme and analyzed according to emergent patterns.

Hickory Woods: A History

The brief history of Hickory Woods provides a backdrop for understanding the sequence of events and how the events affect one another. The selective history is better described as my story of Hickory Woods. History often implies a comprehensive, agreed upon notion of events. In my story, groups see the history of how things came to be differently. This chronology of events has been drawn from interviews and major events publicized through media such as local print media. Because my point of analysis is social movement organization development, not neighborhood development, I am interested in the challenges of understanding social movement processes of leadership and mobilization--what happened, how it happened, and why.

Before I tell the story of Hickory Woods, I want to situate myself in the history itself and explain my perspective. Writing the history of a community, or even a single issue or event is a complicated process. Because it is nearly impossible to recreate the full story of a specific time or event, most history that is written is selective history. Therefore, most written histories focus on limited aspects of the more complete story. I do not propose to write a comprehensive history of Hickory Woods. Instead, I provide a slice of community history guided by my involvement with the community. Perspectives on leadership development are discussed in the analysis section.

Different histories may exist regarding the same subject. The history of a community can be perceived differently according to different groups. I encountered this early in my interviews. Constructions of community history differed greatly among residents. Historical methodologists often encounter this problem when trying to represent a historical time or place. For example, validity of the account may be affected because individuals' memories of events may change over time. In addition, people may have different versions of the history to tell based on their placement or role in the story. Foucault (1970) discusses the near impossibility of comprehensive history. His solution to this is the method of genealogy. Through this, he calls for tracing the problem to its source and then comprehensively analyzing all possible influences and circumstances through time. My attempt at a partial genealogy begins with a discussion of the Hickory Woods neighborhood just prior to contamination discovery and social movement development. I provide information pertaining to the demographics of the community as well as a brief description of the community before contamination was discovered. The story of Hickory Woods begins in 1998 as a neighborhood of families in newly built homes and other established homes discovered a possible danger existing among them.

In 1986, the City of Buffalo acquired land from the Republic Steel Corporation for the newly created South Buffalo Redevelopment Plan. Republic Steel, now known

as LTV Steel Corporation, sold the parcels of vacant industrial land to the city for $30,000. Under this plan, subsidized loans were offered to potential buyers willing to purchase homes in this area. As a result of the plan, groupings of new homes were built in this neighborhood beginning in 1986.

The Hickory Woods subdivision, comprised of primarily lower-middle and middle class homes, provided comfortable living space for about 80 families. Census 2000 zip code data for the Hickory Woods area reveals that household income ranged from $20,000- $50,000, with currently employed and retired families resided in the area. Racial characteristics reveal that 95% of the area identify as White (non-Hispanic), 1% African American, and 4% consider themselves Hispanic (of any race). Census housing tenure data reveals that 65% of the residents own their homes and 35% rent.

In 1998 concerns about the safety of the properties emerged as the last four homes were being constructed. Construction was halted when contractors hit a large metal object while digging the foundation of the first of the four homes. After excavating the object, contractors realized it was a gasoline tank. Further tests, performed by a testing service hired by the City of Buffalo, indicated traces of benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) on the tank and in the surrounding soil. Both chemicals are documented carcinogens. Contractors for the city explained at block club meetings that traces of benzene were natural by-products of gasoline; therefore it was not usual that benzene was detected in the neighborhood.

The City of Buffalo circulated results to these four homeowners separately, acknowledging the potential seriousness of the contamination and allocated $800,000 for remediation of the four lots. Hearing this, block club members requested that further testing be done in the neighborhood, fearing that if the parcels were developed atop former industrial land, they may contain dangerous chemical pollution. The city hired a separate environmental testing firm to complete soil sampling for other residential property in the neighborhood.

Following testing, Hickory Woods residents received a letter from the City informing them that although polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were present, "In no instance has any level of PAH or other contaminant been discovered in the extensive Abby Street residential yard testing program that poses any immediate danger to any individual" (Letter from City of Buffalo Department of Environment, August 30, 1999). Furthermore, "we advised residents [in the original four lots] that such concentrations if touched repeatedly over the very long term, might cause an elevated risk of disease." With this notification, concerned residents contacted the city through phone calls and letters to ask what the city Department of Environment considered "very long term" and "elevated risk." Initial concerns were propelled by these vague determinants of safety and risk.

An organized effort began in the community in October 1999 when two homeowners who lived only few houses away from the affected lots called a meeting. To notify residents, they canvassed the neighborhood with flyers. At this meeting, residents created the Hickory Woods Concerned Homeowners Association (HWCHA). Throughout the following months, group members met with representatives of the City of Buffalo Common Council to discuss the contamination problems.

In December 1999, the Common Council agreed to hold a special session of the council solely to discuss Hickory Woods. The following is the resolution that was passed at this meeting.

This Common Council recognizes that some residents of the Abby Street/Hickory Woods neighborhood have suffered financial losses as a result of purchasing homes in the City-sponsored development; and also recognizes that the health concerns of the residents of this area are legitimate and need to be fully addressed in a way that satisfies the residents, and requests that the Mayor propose a plan to provide justice for the residents of Abby Street/Hickory Woods that addresses the following issues:

- Relocating the residents who would like to leave
- Remediating the contamination in a comprehensive fashion
- Developing a formula for making up financial losses of the residents with resources provided by LTV, Inc., and various levels of government, including the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York State (perhaps through the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act) and the Federal Government
- Providing adequate avenues for full public input on this issue (Press Release for December 8, 1999 Common Council Meeting)

In response to these resolutions, the Common Council President called a public hearing because "[he] believe[d] a full public airing of the issues involved is an important first step in deciding an intelligent course of action." At this meeting, residents were invited to speak on public record about specific concerns regarding the issues of soil testing and contamination. About 50 residents gave public testimony of their concerns. Many residents voiced concerns about family health and illness in the neighborhood. Others were concerned about rumors of redlined real estate in the community and plummeting home values.

The Common Council ended the meeting assuring the residents that more public hearings would follow and the problem would stay on the priority list to be resolved. With resolutions passed, the Common Council could present the information to the Mayor's office and ask that he support the relocation of Hickory Woods residents. However, resolutions only have the power of suggestion. Until the Mayor agrees to the suggestions posed by the resolutions, the resolution simply sits, inactive.

The Citizen's Environmental Coalition in Buffalo (CEC) became involved in the issue by providing members of the Homeowners Association with documentation and supporting information about the potential risks associated with PAH contamination. The CEC is a statewide coalition with offices in three districts in New York. They have access to resources and a staff of organizers (including lobbyists and canvassing) to promote local environmental issues in their respective districts. They began working closely with the group in spring 2000. At the request of CEC and association members, Lois Gibbs visited the site in March 2000. A renowned environmental activist, Lois Gibbs publicly announced her support for the relocation of the people of Hickory Woods. Her presence became even more important as a strategic action on behalf of the homeowners' association because of her history of achieving relocation for the residents of the nearby Love Canal community[1].

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[1] Lois Gibbs was the president of the Love Canal Homeowners Association in Niagara Falls, New York. Niagara Falls is located about 20 miles upriver from Buffalo, NY. She is currently the director of the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. The goal of this organization is to provide communities faced with environmental contamination with the strategic tools necessary to resolve the problems.

Beginning in spring 2000, at the request of the Mayor of Buffalo, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) officials undertook a full investigation of the public health concerns. Specifically, the EPA developed a soil sampling plan that would cover about 40–60 houses in the neighborhood. The houses were chosen based on proximity to LTV parcels.

Soil sampling took place during May and June 2000. While this was taking place, EPA officials acknowledged that some of the properties tested in the earlier 1999 city-contracted study contained "hot spots" of PAH. Hot spots were defined as areas containing concentrations of PAH that were significantly higher than the average throughout the community. The EPA arranged a remediation plan with LTV Steel. LTV/Republic Steel agreed to pay $500,000.00 to clean up the hot spots, but only if they were located on vacant property. Residents did not accept this plan. They did not think that it was fair to clean only the vacant areas. They felt it was irresponsible that LTV would not provide cleanup funds for the areas where people actually lived. Remediation was scheduled to take place July 2000.

LTV would not provide funds for the cleanup in these areas—to do so would be admitting responsibility for any physical harm that people living on the lots endured including any future effects of the pollution, (for example, thirty years in the future for children born after their parents moved to Hickory Woods). Residents proposed that the EPA wait until the broader soil sample results were compiled, rather than approaching a piece-meal remediation. These complaints stopped the cleanup plan for the vacant lots in the proposal stage.

Results from the June 2000 EPA soil samples were finally released in December 2000. The results were not made public, but instead each individual homeowner was given a confidential report of their soil/contamination level readings. Residents called for full disclosure of the results. Most residents shared their information with neighbors, those at City Hall, and the media, in an effort to further publicize their cause. The EPA study concluded that even though chemical hot spots did exist throughout the community, the level of contamination did not constitute a public health threat and did not warrant remediation of occupied lots.

In February 2001, the Common Council held another full session solely devoted the soil results in Hickory Woods. Community environmental leaders, politicians, and concerned residents from Hickory Woods came to the meeting with agenda items that included evidence of chemical contamination and relocation plans. They argued that more contamination existed throughout the neighborhood, but might have been overlooked. They also demanded that action be taken on the relocation resolution that was passed at the December 2000 Common Council meeting.

A New York State Department of Health study undertaken at the same time as the EPA soil study concluded that even though health problems existed in the community, they were not statistically significantly different from other Western New York communities. Health officials offered the meeting as an opportunity for public comment on the study. However, because residents were only given the results four hours prior to the meeting, they boycotted the comment period and the evening began with a protest rally and a march to the meeting site. Once at the meeting site, residents refused to cooperate with health officials. The remainder of the evening consisted of residents yelling and shouting at health department officials. Nonetheless, little was resolved.

In a review of the NYS Department of Health study, University of Buffalo's Environment and Society Institute (ESI) concluded that serious problems existed in the methodology and research construction of the NYSDOH study. Furthermore they

stated that the conclusions drawn in the study could not be valid based on the information that was collected for the study. For example (ESI Review of NYSDOH Health Consultation 2001)

> Through the Health Consultation, the term "average" is frequently used to refer to soil concentrations and exposure to contaminants. Relevant aspects of the report should be reworked to clarify the meaning of this term in a particular context, and discuss the magnitude and significance of any difference between "average" and "maximum" exposure scenarios. Effort should be directed toward assessing the geographic distribution of both contamination and calculated health risk. (p.2)

Because ESI representatives had been working with HWCHA in the past, the City of Buffalo felt that they were not neutral in giving their assessment of the exposure study. This banter back and forth resulted in City officials finally agreeing on an outside neutral party to review both the original and the peer review of the exposure study. The results of this second peer review were released in February 2002. They contradicted the ESI report and concluded that despite minor methodological confusion, the NYSDOH report was both accurate and valid based on the measures they used in the study.

From 2002 through 2007, homeowners were waiting to hear whether the Mayor would approve the Common Council resolution for relocation. Many homeowners filed suit with the city privately to ensure some settlement. In January 2008, the city announced a $7.2 million settlement for homeowners. The chronology of this mobilization effort, from initial claim to filing for settlement, serves as an empirical tool I use to identify the relationship between how leadership was developed and how leadership frames affected social movement mobilization.

Emergence of Organized Leadership in Hickory Woods: Findings and Analysis

Leadership forms differ among different social movement organizations. Leadership has also been defined in numerous ways, making conceptualization of the idea difficult to capture let alone compare across empirical studies (Earl 2007). Most often, community based social movements have informal leadership networks with leaders who may not have been visible or have little experience in past mobilization efforts (Russell 2007). Leadership may also be highly unstable with high burnout rates. Tactical choices that leaders make are essential to cycles and types of activism (Reger and Staggenborg 2006). Here I analyze particular patterns of leadership development from initial emergence to the connections made with expert activists.

Leadership in Hickory Woods consisted of residents who initially knew very little about environmental problems and organizing in general and had no prior community organizing experience. Short of participants reading Alinsky's (1971) strategy for activism laid out in *Rules for Radicals,* much of what transpired in the early days of organizing was based on instinct and uncertainty. Often established community movement organizations will lend their expertise to those they see struggling with neighborhood injustices (Russell 2007). Leaders were not certain of the impacts of their leadership strategies, nor did they have a full understanding of the extent of the problem they were addressing. They did not know the outcome of their actions, but

still proceeded to learn about leadership styles through networks of professional activists. Much of their initial strategy came in the form of outreach to other environmental activists. In order to understand the story of leadership, I discuss examples of leadership frames in Hickory Woods, focusing on the emergence of leadership and tracing the changes in leadership form through connections with expert activists. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of how these processes influenced mobilization.

The emergence of leadership in a community is a vital piece of the mobilization process. As with the emergence of an issue or grievance, there are instances through time that affect and change the mode of leadership and its development. In most grassroots social movements, some individuals are more likely than others to gravitate towards leadership positions. Leadership can be determined by who is willing to take charge of a situation, who has knowledge about the situation, who has the time and necessary resources to devote to the cause, and who has the incentive to address the problem (Barker et al. 2001). Leadership can also be measured by observing who makes decisions on behalf of the larger group, who acts as a contact for the media, and literally, who is elected to an office in the group, such as president. Many of these qualities were evident in the leadership in Hickory Woods.

In Hickory Woods, most residents were familiar with each other, or at least recognized each other by name or face. Still, like any other neighborhood, not everyone knew each other personally. At first, residents were not even aware that an organized effort existed to address the environmental problems. Leadership was not immediately evident in the community, even though the issues were publicized through print articles and television news stories.

Leadership did exist in the block club, but the block club president decided not to pursue taking charge of the contamination problems. He felt that it was too big of an issue for the block club to handle and that a different leader should investigate the community environmental problems. This decision left a void in community discussion concerning the contamination issues. It opened the door to a new form of community leadership. Residents were used to neighborhood block club leadership, concerned with Neighborhood Watch and beautification issues, but knew little of this new organized effort.

The first sign of leadership, though informal, was evident soon after the City of Buffalo notified residents of the contamination problems. Two male neighbors, Robert Jones and John Anderton, decided to spread information they had received from the City of Buffalo regarding chemical levels in the soil. Because they were unaware of what others knew of the extent of information, they launched an informal door-to-door campaign. One resident, Nora, later an active movement participant, describes how she learned that someone was taking charge in the neighborhood.

> It was the second paper we had got from him, but we didn't know who he was. I see this guy walking down the sidewalk. I said, "Do you want to know if I am coming to the meeting?" He said, "Yes." I said, "My husband will be there, I am going into the hospital." (Interview with Nora, Hickory Woods resident and movement participant)

Nora was actually heading to the hospital with an asthma attack. The tone in her interview was one of relief that someone was taking up this effort. Her family was committed, even though she was obviously dealing with a serious health issue. She expressed feeling anxious to see the direction that the community would take after this first meeting.

Residents who attended the meeting expressed that the community needed an organized effort, separate from the block club, to address the contamination problems. By forming the Hickory Woods Concerned Homeowners' Association, the group felt unified in their effort. They could also address city officials under a unified title. Through what seemed like a small effort on their part, in a short period of time Anderton and Jones became official spokesmen for the community.

Leadership Liaisons with Expert Activists

Although unclear about their overall strategy, Anderton and Jones immediately took charge in their leadership roles. Neither had previous leadership experience and neither had been politically active in the past. They began by collecting documentation to develop a history about the contamination issue. However, it was truly the relationships that leaders formed with expert activists from the beginning that contributed to their progress in Hickory Woods.

Influences from Activist Networking

After publicizing their story in the local newspaper and television news, Hickory Woods leaders were able to draw on support from outside the immediate community. Gunter and Kroll-Smith (2007) refer to this as bridging capital, a strategy to build meaningful relationships with other community groups and individuals. Citizen's Environmental Coalition of Western New York, (CEC), was aware of the problems facing the community and offered to help leaders develop the skills needed in social movement organizing. The regional director of the CEC became a close mentor to the leaders in Hickory Woods. She made her objectives clear in an interview with me when I asked her about the CEC's role in Hickory Woods.

> They were very well organized. But I came in and gave them more of the grassroots organizing. I also gave them a little information about the neighborhood. That was the first time that a lot of them had learned through me and the work that CEC did that they were living across the street from a Superfund site. There was some alarm in that regard, but I think after that time it became really clear that they appreciated what I had to say and were really welcoming of that information. They were clear that my agenda was simply to empower them to do what they wanted to do, not to drive an agenda that my organization had. And from then till now, I and my office, our office, has been really closely involved. (Interview with CEC Western New York Director, Jane F.)

CEC was ready and willing to directly assist and support mobilization efforts Hickory Woods. This relationship was mutually beneficial. Hickory Woods residents were able to learn direct action practices and CEC activists were able to direct their efforts towards a local community in need. Leaders needed more history about the problem and the community in general to become well-versed and state their claims to the city. Jane and other CEC volunteers trained association officers and participants from the community in leadership skills such as letter writing, meeting facilitation, organizing protest marches and rallies, and how to contact government officials. Skill workshops were held with small groups of participants at a time. Soon

after their involvement with the CEC, movement participants were able to put their skills into practice. In March, 2000, together with the CEC, HWCHA hosted a neighborhood rally. Lois Gibbs was invited because of her background at Love Canal in Niagara Falls, NY and her current involvement in contaminated communities with her Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. Love Canal served as an infamous case in the environmental history of Western New York. Still fresh in the minds of WNY residents, Love Canal represented the worst of environmental tragedies, one in which public and corporate officials were held responsible for contaminating a local community. Gibbs and Anderton led neighborhood residents on a march to the various hot spots in the community, while showcasing the 219-acre Superfund site, which lay only 20 feet from some residents' front doors. Even though the afternoon was a success in that the local press was present and aired the event on the 5:00, 6:00 and 11:00 news, members felt that the real reward was the opportunity to meet with Gibbs. After the rally, Anderton and a small group of members met privately with Gibbs to discuss strategy and leadership skills.

> It was a shot in the arm just the fact that she came down here. Just the fact that she was here. That she made the press hit for one and she was here in my house, and we sat and spoke with her on her ideas on what would work here and it was pretty much the same idea. . . So yea, Lois Gibbs's real advice to us was to be as obstinate as stubborn, and remember the government lies all the time and you have to be real militant. They took pride in the fact that they took hostages, EPA hostages. I mean, if this thing, if something doesn't break, I'm sure people will become that militant, I don't know that it has gotten that bad yet. I know that there are a lot of angry people, but … (Interview with John Anderton, HWCHA President).

> Those poor people had steaming bubbles coming up out of the ground and they were told, oh, there is nothing to worry about. Lois told us they would take this stance. She told us what to expect—what they would try to pull. The thing that really upsets me and hurts my feelings is that we saved for a long time to get this house. (Interview with June, Hickory Woods resident, movement participant)

Hickory Woods activists used the momentum and excitement from Gibbs's visit to stay motivated to move towards a plan of direct action. They based their hope for success on Gibbs's successful organizing efforts in Love Canal and other communities across the country. Activists started promoting Hickory Woods as "Love Canal 2" to draw on the emotional appeal from a previous time in Western New York's environmental history. Even though the issues at Love Canal had been front page news nearly 20 years prior to Hickory Woods, the memory of one of the most infamous toxic waste sites was still fresh in the minds of most Western New Yorkers. Local media began to refer to Hickory Woods as "Love Canal 2" as well which promoted the serious of the discussion. Love Canal residents were offered a voluntary relocation plan in 1980 and Hickory Woods residents hoped that this would inevitably be their fate as well.
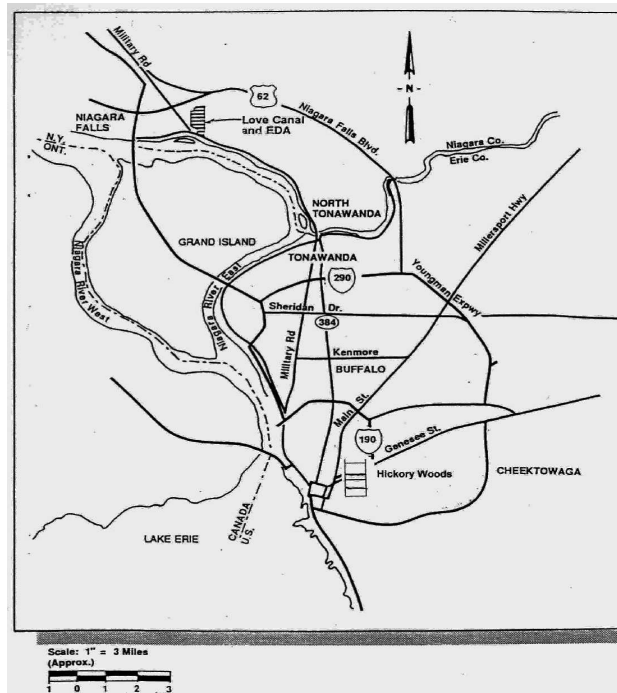
Figure 1. Map of Western New York: Proximity Between Love Canal and Hickory Woods
Source: Love Canal EDA Habitability Study, September 1988, USEPA and NYSDOH.

Figure 2. Flyer Circulated by Hickory Woods Homeowners Association Leaders.
Source: Hickory Woods Homeowners Association

Figure 3. Social movement activity during the March 2000 Lois Gibbs rally and protest.
Source: Researcher's field work collection of photographs.

Gibbs impressed upon community members that strong leadership skills would convey to the general public that residents were in control of the situation. She told participants that they needed the support of the greater surrounding community. She felt that having strong leadership presence in the area provided publicity and legitimacy that the community needed to be listened to by those that lived outside of the Hickory Woods neighborhood. From her experience in Love Canal, she learned the more pressure that the government received from those supporting the affected residents; the more legitimate the issue became.

Similarities in Leadership Development

Anderton's leadership skills developed similarly to how Gibbs's began in Love Canal. Through her door-to-door campaign, alone at first and then accompanied by a few neighbors, she spread the word of the possible chemical contamination throughout her community. She was also elected president of the community homeowners' association soon after her initial quest for neighborhood input.

Gibbs did not have prior organizing experience. She was driven by her desire to gather information about a chemical contamination problem. Lois Gibbs has stated on numerous press and public occasions that her priority was her children's health and safety. Adopting a modern day precautionary principle (Brown 2007; Brown, Kroll-Smith and Gunter 2000), if there was something in the soil, or at that school that could make her children sick, she wanted them removed from the situation to avoid any potential exposure. In the introduction to *Love Canal: The Story Continues*, Murray Levine writes, "Lois Gibbs once described herself as a housewife who went to Washington" (Levine 1998:13). She recognized that the everyday person can stand up for and affect social change. It was no coincidence that she became the leader of the homeowners' association in her community and later went on to become the founder of a national grassroots environmental organization, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. She was driven to find the truth behind what was happening in her community. To this end, she developed the necessary skills and understanding of how to navigate the political system. She developed these skills through practice, not by referring to a handbook or attending a class. She continues to teach these skills to members of impacted communities across the country.

Members of HWCHA benefited from this experience. Here, she explains her reasons for getting involved and her first steps towards organizing in the community.

> I was disappointed and angry. School would open again in two months and I wasn't going to let my child go back to that school. I didn't care what I had to do to prevent it. I wasn't going to send him to a private school, either. First of all, we couldn't afford it; and second, I thought parents had the right to send their children to schools that were safe.
>
> I decided to go door-to-door with a petition. It seemed like a good idea to start near the school, to talk to the mothers nearest it. I had never done anything like this, however, and I was frightened. I was afraid a lot of doors would be slammed in my face, that people would think I was some crazy fanatic. But I decided to do it anyway. I went to 99th and Wheatfield and knocked on my first door. There was no answer. I just stood there, not knowing what to do. I thought: What am I doing here? I must be crazy. People are going to think I am. Go home, you fool! And that's just what I did. . . I decided to wait until the next day—partly to figure out exactly how I was going to do this, but more, I think to build my self-confidence. The next day, I went out on my own street to talk to people I knew. It was a little easier to be brave with them. If I could convince people I knew-friends—maybe it would be less difficult to convince others. (Gibbs 1998:30–31)

This is the strategy Anderton wanted to employ in Hickory Woods- a way to motivate people by engaging them directly. It was thought that face to face interaction about the environmental realities in the neighborhood encourages individuals to seek information and answers about potential problems. Gibbs and Anderton were both moved to action because of a desire to seek answers to questions about health and safety of their family and friends. They sought out information and approached others to assist in their efforts. Gibbs was able to garner support from others inside and outside of her immediate community. Due to the intense national media coverage of Love Canal, actor-activists and politicians, such as Jane Fonda and Ed Begley Jr. and then Congressman Al Gore, visited Love Canal and assisted in mobilizing efforts.

Though the Hickory Woods homeowners worked with Gibbs and the CEC for leadership development, the initial development of mobilization in the community was also a solo effort. Anderton was later able to approach Gibbs and her organization, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, in order to ask for her expertise. She brought intense publicity to the area with her presence. This publicity initially helped Hickory Woods get noticed in the news, but later became a point of contention in the community. On a talk radio program, Gibbs shared her opinions about organizing and Hickory Woods.

> It's over 20 years since Love Canal, we should have known better. Now we have brownfields, and the people are not wealthy, they are starter homes for first time buyers. [They are] crawling up the American dream only by having it devastated by falling apart. We all grow up with the belief that if there is a problem, especially a public health problem, that the government will respond with public health response—which is to remove the problem and save the health of the people. It's really hard for people to jump from the sense of how the government is supposed to work—to if you want to get out and you want to be relocated, as the people in South Buffalo should be. I've walked that neighborhood. They

> are going to have to get in their [government officials] faces and they are going to have to behave in ways that they wouldn't normally feel proud of. (WBEN Talk Radio 930, July 2000)

As evidenced in this selection of interview, Lois Gibbs's presence and visible support of the Hickory Woods homeowners legitimated the problem to the media and to some in the community. I do not generalize that all in Hickory Woods felt her presence was positive and empowering, though. Some expressed concern that her presence was just another strategy to focus media attention on the contamination problem that they felt didn't even exist. These were the residents who felt the chemical contamination problem was not the primary problem in the community, but instead the real problem was over exaggerated media claims of contamination. Their position was a follows: scientific experts could not verify the presence of widespread chemical waste in the community. Where it was present, scientists could not verify that it would cause any harm to nearby residents. Therefore, they held that the claims by Anderton and Gibbs were not based on verifiable evidence, but hearsay. Gibbs reflects on the differences among community members.

> There are some people who clearly don't want to move, maybe the elderly. Or there are those who clearly don't believe there is a problem. The will work against you unless you find a way to include them in your overall goals. We talked a little about what that would look like, as far as people who wanted to be relocated, people who wanted to remain behind would have some governance policy on the table about future land use, and house taxes, property taxes. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001).

She along with other activists acknowledged differences in the community, but also saw that the division could serve as a distraction from the overall mobilization effort. To social movement activists though, Gibbs herself represented a victory in a chemically contaminated community. They saw their plight as very similar to what occurred at Love Canal twenty years prior, and twenty miles north. They also felt that if relocation occurred in the case of Love Canal, by following her advice and adopting similar strategies, relocation would be possible in Hickory Woods too. Gibbs's very presence gave reassurance that they would be relocated. They believed this and it motivated them towards some resolve.

The connection between the homeowners and Citizen's Environmental Coalition and Lois Gibbs helped HWCHA gain more public and community support for their cause. Although she warned of the effects of her presence, Gibbs felt her involvement served as a positive step towards relocation of community members.

> It doesn't have the heavy weight of; well Lois Gibbs said this so it is godlike. That is often the response that people take. Even when I offer ideas, they are really open brainstorming. The ideas become *the idea*, without a whole lot of thought, because I said it. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001).

She warned of the expert effect her presence could bring, yet activists continued to take her advice. They were proud of her connection to Western New York and overwhelmingly felt her presence to be a positive impact on mobilization efforts. The effectiveness of leadership strategies increased due to a close relationship with CEC and especially Gibbs. In a very short time, everyday residents of a community,

with little knowledge of grassroots organizing or environmental problems, were speaking at public meetings and to the press—they became lay experts.

Effects of Leadership Development

In general, more community residents began coming to meetings and participating in events. Therefore, mobilization was positively affected by the presence of leadership in the community. Although some residents did withdraw from participation, overall the group gained members and moved forward towards their goal of relocation. Specifically, three primary mobilization effects emerged: Anderton was viewed by the community as a lay expert, membership withdrawal led to new leadership, and community strife emerged in reaction to further political decisions in the community.

Developing Lay Expertise

The March 2000 meeting with Gibbs represented a turning point. Some members withdrew from participation while others were committed to moving forward. HCWHA members met monthly to discuss strategy and continued to frame the issue through periodic press releases to local media. Leadership did a good job of publicizing meetings and recruiting an ever-growing membership base even though Jones, as the vice president, had not been able to be actively involved with the group. He was less visible at organizational meetings and had discussed possibly stepping down from his position to take a backseat from his leadership role. Anderton expressed concerns about being able to keep up the current level of organizing, even though they were meeting their organizational goals of publicizing the issue and increasing membership successfully.

In April 2000, only months after Anderton had been elected as association president, his leadership experience was called on. He was asked to testify to a congressional sub panel on brownfield development by a national environmental group to discuss his situation in Hickory Woods. Having only recently learned about the impacts of chemical waste, Anderton was not considered a scientific professional expert by any means. Instead, he was framed as a community expert because he knew what was happening in his neighborhood better than any other residents.

Brownfields are known as vacant land, formerly used for industrial purposes. The toxicity of the land varies, in that brownfields can range from highly toxic, to containing very little chemical waste. Anderton discussed how his community was built on top of and next to former industrial land. He told the story of Hickory Woods, including the factors that allowed for the community to be built in this specific area. He went on to discuss the fear and anxiety that residents felt because of the uncertainty associated with chemical health risks. Other representatives of communities across the country such as Midway Village, California, where testifying on the nature of urban environmental contamination as well. Here, Anderton expressed his concern about the similarities among Hickory Woods and other communities.

> When I was in Washington, we meet a group of people from Section 8 housing development, a place called Midway Village. They were dealing with the same self-toxins. There was a coal gas plant run by Pacific Gas and Electric. And they have PAHs and other chemicals in abundance in

their soil. They still haven't moved anyone. Now they've lived, and it kind of mimics this, but they have lived there another 10–15 years compared to the people living here. And the amount of sickness there… you wouldn't believe. What do we know? Anyway, we think of Midway village and how it seems to have matured in that community. We are talking stillbirths, birth defects, cancer upon cancer, and sudden infant death syndrome. Is this process maturing in this neighborhood? Are we going to be another Midway Village? (Interview with John Anderton, Hickory Woods Homeowners' Association President).

The very act of testifying before Congress elevated Anderton's status as a leader in the eyes of his peers. Other social movement participants began to contact him with questions and concerns and relied on him for information. Having no prior organizing experience, Anderton was called on to speak about his situation only shortly after entering into a leadership role in the community. In my interview with him, he discussed the fact that he had really never been political in his life. It was the seriousness of the issue and his desire to find out information about how to protect his family that propelled him into a leadership position.

Anderton rose to the occasion. He was quickly able to clearly articulate to others the problem the community was facing. He was able to express his concern using language similar to that of the scientific and government officials who had initially informed him of the problem. This experience is known as lay expertise in community organizing. By being able to communicate using the same language as the experts, he increased the legitimacy of his leadership position, as well as the awareness about the seriousness of the problem in the community. Anderton discussed the importance of being on the same "level" as those in charge politically.

To be honest with you, of all the entities we've dealt with EPA has probably been the most forthcoming and open with what they're doing. That's want we want. We have the right to have that. So anyway we have this call and I know I am going to be talked into the ground by a bunch of PhD's (no offense) but I am going to be talked under the ground buy a couple of PhD's because what do I know about this stuff after all, but what I want is something in writing. If you can't give me levels, give me a formula. Tell me what you do, how do you do it. They are going to tell me I can't understand. Well, I can't understand if you won't tell me. I'm not the brightest, but I'm not the dumbest either. There's people here that would like to see what your plans are (Interview with John Anderton, HWCHA President).

These statements represent a strong sentiment in the community that residents felt intimidated by EPA "expert" officials. This standing presented a social status barrier and a feeling that activists were working against, not with officials who held the potential solution to their problems. Anderton used his newly found confidence to prepare the June 2000 meeting with the EPA. This meeting was to cover the proposed remediation of selected, nonresidential contaminated hot-spots in the community. Participants met during May and the beginning of June to review strategy for the meeting and discuss possible responses to the EPA.

New Leadership Forms

At this meeting, one resident in particular stood out because he clearly and forcefully stated his concerns about remediating the vacant lot hot spots. I had not recognized him at many other community events and he did not seem to know many of the other residents at the meeting. He was extremely well spoken about the specifics of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons contamination. The media descended on him when the meeting ended and his words dominated the local news coverage. Anderton was unaware of this man's presence in the community prior to hearing him that evening, but quickly recruited him to fill the much needed leadership role that Jones had emotionally vacated months earlier. Steve Emmet joined the leadership ranks in Hickory Woods and worked closely to fulfill the goals Anderton and Gibbs had set forth.

However, not all Hickory Woods residents supported the new leadership. Membership constituted active social movement participants in the community, but not all residents were members of the organization. Leadership was continually framed by this group as strong, resilient to government pressure, expert, and moving ahead toward resolution of the problem. However, when Anderton decided to run for Common Council, the leadership frame shifted to one of uneasiness. It was at this point that social movement participants began to reframe leadership based on Anderton's decision.

Division After Unity

Anderton decided to run for the South District Common Council seat in 2001. His skills as a leader were developed over time, from someone with no grassroots organizing experience, to someone testifying before Congress and taking on the incumbent for his district's Common Council seat. His decision to run for Common Council affected mobilization outcomes due to the divisiveness of the political campaign. Specifically, a close relative of an active social movement participant also planned on running for the council seat. After discussions among the candidates, they agreed that the community would be split in whom to support if they both ran in the election. Even though the two men had an informal agreement that one candidate would step down, both continued their bids for Common Council. Because there were two candidates with similar platforms, the association felt split between whom they should support. Loyalties were tested and the community became more clearly divided.

The division in support, on the surface, had nothing to do with the problems of contamination. A closer look revealed that residents began to use the Common Council run as an excuse to support the current president or not. Those who chose not to support Anderton did so because they felt he was using the publicity of running for office to further the cause for Hickory Woods and not addressing the wider community he would be representing. They also felt that with his recent congressional testimony, he was preparing for bigger and better opportunities. Running for political office was a means to meet what they thought were self-centered goals.

However, those who supported him as a candidate were excited about the prospect of having a direct link to City Hall. They felt that this could only help their cause in the end. Primarily, the division in support was based in community politics. Support by activists came down to whomever was more willing to use the

contamination problems in Hickory Woods as the main campaign issue. Anderton won the primary as the Republican candidate, though in this victory, he lost the support of those who backed the other candidate. This group of activists withdrew from the homeowners' association and no longer participated in community events. The development of his leadership skill that gave him the confidence to run for office had a direct effect on the mode and path of mobilization.

In the end, Anderton lost the election to the incumbent with 25% to her 75% of the popular vote. After the election, however, the homeowners' group remained divided, though no official leader emerged from the group that broke away. Anderton remained the president of the original group and restructured the organization. Prior to the Common Council campaign, some of the participants felt that the leadership was no longer looking out for their needs Some felt the group was too radical, while others felt they weren't doing enough. It was as if the election gave residents an excuse to drop support for the current leadership altogether. To many, the election justified their withdraw and dislike of how things were being handled in the community.

> That was the conflict. You can't do this; one of you has got to back down. You are splitting the group. There were real arguments as it relates to outside politics. That was [what was] stalling them on internal their strategies from moving the relocation forward. It just shut off, and people were so busy and angry in some cases that they couldn't focus on the business at hand that was how do we get relocated. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001)

Gibbs acknowledges the main problem with this campaign. Attention was shifted from the relocation effort towards a angry political campaign that served to divide rather than unite the community. Mobilization was affected in that former participants withdrew support from the leadership and organization in an effort to create a separate group. Even though the media and government did not officially recognize the group, they existed in the community. In the following section, I discuss the influence that leadership frames had on mobilization.

Discussion: Influencing Mobilization

Because the development of leadership is important to the process of mobilization, the ways in which leadership is framed in the community affect mobilization (Staggenborg and Morris 2004; Aminzade, Goldstone and Perry 2001). Mobilization efforts can hinge on whether leadership is present and how it is constructed among groups in the community. Status perception of the leader also has implications to the development of leadership in the community, along with the type and intensity of leadership. Leadership in the form of a committee chairperson brings with it different interpretations than leadership in the form of the president of an organization. Most often, the president of a group will be seen to have more power than someone labeled a committee chairperson.

Outcomes in this mobilization effort took a few different primary forms. First, support grew and second, dissent and withdrawal from participation occurred. Leadership roles were legitimized through bridged capital opportunities and connections with prominent local and national experts. Many rallied behind these leaders. Because the two men were the first to initiate an organized response to the

city, supporters came to see them as leading a charismatic effort to find out more information about the chemical issues and save their community. Yet, those who disagreed with the leaders were sometimes ridiculed in their community.

Second, in an initial effort to mobilize the community, some began to join by participating in events and actions planned in the community, but in the end withdrew from participation. Those who withdrew felt that attention given to contamination claims was not warranted. They did not however, organize against the other group. No leader had emerged from this group, yet many of the nonparticipants were former leaders of the community block club. Some were questioned about their decisions to withdraw from the group and not support the current leadership. One woman recalled being heckled as she went grocery shopping in a neighborhood store. While placing her order at the deli counter, she was questioned about her stance on the issues. She expressed feeling embarrassed, but mostly angry that she couldn't even go to the store without facing this issue. She simply did not agree with the way the leaders were emphasizing the contamination issues in Hickory Woods. She felt that attention to the problem was unwarranted and the leaders were acting out of self-promotion. The stance she took affected her everyday actions and interactions with others.

Further divides were present in the community as well. The notion that leadership was self-selected drove possible participants from the group. Even given Gibbs's connection, nonparticipants questioned the leaders' authority to pursue the problems of contamination, since the community already had an active block club. The block club had been successful in developing a neighborhood watch program and provided residents with updates on neighborhood news. These residents questioned the legitimacy of the HWCHA leaders, telling themselves, "If what the city said is true, the problem is already being addressed." In their minds, there was no need to devote community effort to this problem. They felt that the leaders were creating more of a problem by devoting so much time to the chemical waste issue. Therefore, intense attention to the chemical contamination issue allowed the very issue to snowball out of control.

Leadership was initially framed as two men, with help from expert environmental activists in outside the community, making decisions for the larger community. To further explain the initial divide in the community, nonparticipants began to resent the idea that the community had a leader to guide them towards some goal that not everyone agreed upon. A resident who held this belief shared how she resented the development of leadership in the community.

> There are maybe three different opinions that contradict the other, no yes, no yes. You are not finding anything concrete. I hold him [the president of the homeowners' group] solely responsible for this whole mess, the whole negativity. I think you get more done if you sat and talked [versus] attacked, that [attacked] is what he has done. I don't think he has the right to put fear in people. There is an emergency meeting. You better get here. When I call my council member, she doesn't know anything about it. He doesn't have that right. No one person has that right. They shouldn't have that much power to put fear in anybody. He's got people convinced two blocks down that they are going to be bought out. (Interview with Fran, nonparticipant)

Residents who shared this view blamed the negative publicity that the neighborhood was receiving on the leaders. They hated the idea that this form of leadership put a few people in charge of an entire neighborhood's fate. These residents expressed that they wished the problem would just disappear. They felt that

the leaders were uninformed of the facts, therefore leading the community in the wrong direction. However, they had few facts of their own that they could use to dispute the leadership publicly. They also expressed dismay at the divisions that were appearing in a community that was once very close-knit. Emmet, the second vice president, explained the impacts of the division in the community.

> There are still some people in the neighborhood while they agree that something probably ought to be done, they don't agree with the way we are doing it. Fair enough. I can understand that. My contention there would be maybe the association has not done a good enough job transmitting the proper information to those people. Because it, perhaps if those people knew a little more about the minutia about what is going on, maybe they would understand that the only way to get what we have gotten so far is to open your mouth and speak and talk to the media. Those folks will say and I know that they do say, well you are bringing the property values down in the area. Instead, I would say no. We didn't bring the property values down; the responsible parties brought the property values down. (Interview with Steve Emmet, vice president)

Leaders were generally self-proclaimed in that they took the initiative to run a meeting and decided to formally appoint nominees for officers of a group that was barely in formation. Those attending the meeting elected them, appointing them to lead the effort towards some solution. Bill and June, two social movement participants, spoke of the role of the leaders.

> Some of the residents, beginning with Anderton and his next door neighbor started to get together and talked about what they should do about this. They started talking about what they ought to do and started to quietly make some inquiries and not raise too much of a raucous, but let's find out what is going on. It became readily apparent that no one wanted to talk about it. No one was going to give them any information and their only recourse was to take it to the public. Which is a gutsy move because while you want to make sure that your family is safe, you don't have enough information to really point any fingers, and really have anything solid to go on. You got neighbors who are going to be nearby saying "hey you are lowering the property values talking about this." (Interview with June, a social movement participant)
> Anderton and Jones started the Homeowners' group. Everybody was kind of on their own at first. Then the meetings were just to keep everybody informed, when there are meetings. He is good at it. He puts a lot of time into it, I give him credit. It's not easy. (Interview with Bill, a social movement participant)

All of the residents in Hickory Woods started out with the same base knowledge of the problem. They all received the same infamous letter from the city vaguely describing the contamination issues, dated August 30, 1999. It wasn't that some had more information than others that would have enabled them to become leaders. Instead, it was a drive towards more and better knowledge about the problem that propelled Anderton and Jones into leadership roles. Gibbs's involvement intended to make their tasks easier, but in the end, led to a series of divisiveness and unexpected consequences. It was the combination of individual initiative and the structural realities of the community that contributed to the consequences experienced by community residents, activists and non-activists alike.

Conclusion

The case of Hickory Woods provides a backdrop for the exploration of classic social movement themes. For instance, sometimes, an unwanted condition or physical problem may exist in a community, yet no one in the community acknowledges it by mobilizing to resolve the condition. Until the problem is identified through claims-making activities, it may exist as a problem yet no one labels is as a grievance to acknowledge the conditions and take responsibility to resolve it (Tesh 2000). Once actors do engage in claims-making people may begin to mobilize and strategize their next steps. Many times problems are only defined as such when they are noticed and cause negative consequences in the community. However, there have been many instances in social movement research where communities fail to mobilize in the presence of an unwanted condition. Someone needs to voice these complaints and without the development of leadership in a community it is even more likely that the problem will remain unaddressed. When a community is engaged in a grassroots campaign, leadership is a vital factor in the early stages and throughout mobilizing efforts.

Previous research has identified Weberian explanations for successful leadership including charisma and its role in effective leadership. This quality is important in the beginning stages of mobilization, but seems to have less overall impact on the long term success of a movement. Gender, social class and other variables have also been correlated with leadership strength, but little evidence supports why these variables may be correlates with the exception of those connected to social networking. Unless individuals have connections and draw on broad base community support, movement initiatives are not as likely to succeed.

Leaders must also frame their positions to the community. It is in this effort that they draw on resources to legitimize their positions. Often leaders will look towards similar cares of success from which to learn "tricks of the trade." Brown and Mikkelson (1990) address this with community activists tracing the source of childhood leukemia in Woburn, MA. Levine (1982) addresses this in Love Canal. Kroll-Smith and Couch (2000) argue that citizens can become experts by training with others already active in the field. From this research, it is evident that this occurred in Hickory Woods as well. Bridging capital (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007) techniques serve to benefit movement effort. In this research I was able to follow leadership development from a firsthand account as the movement was growing and gaining momentum. Leaders' reliance on "expert" activists provided a particular legitimacy for mobilization efforts. By enlisting the help of Lois Gibbs, movement leaders drew on a local hero to build the case for hopeful legal settlements and eventual relocation.

Leadership frames affect mobilizing efforts. In this case, the progression of a "two-man" effort to a combined effort with well-known environmental experts helped formalize their roles as leaders. The dimension of individual agency that leaders exert must not be overlooked. It is not only the form of leadership present in a community, but also how that frame is viewed among social movement actors that influences mobilization. Actors' impressions of leadership change throughout the life of a social movement. It is equally important to acknowledge not just that the frames change, but how these frames affect mobilization outcomes. The frames of leadership addressed in this paper illustrate a piece of the complex mobilization picture.

Leadership affected the path of mobilization in the end by causing a division in the main organization. Yet, among those who continued to support the leaders, by

framing them as experts, the support they received continued to increase. Leadership in and of itself does not guide the path or guarantee mobilization in a community. Frames that residents held of leadership affected how they acted and whether they participated in the mobilization effort.

Limitations of this study stem from the overall scope of this study and leadership being but one component of a much broader view of social movement mobilization. The research design focused on leadership as but one component of how mobilization is conceptualized. As with many qualitative studies, I relied on a grounded theory approach and found leadership to be a theoretically motivating idea to explore. Other empirical studies focusing on leadership processes are called for to test the "expert effect" and lead to a better understanding of leadership dynamics in grassroots community social movement organizations.

This research documents the outcomes of a particular leadership strategy-connecting with experienced activists. Although one cannot state Gibbs's involvement was the only factor affecting mobilization, the evidence in my data reflects the influence of her presence. As in Love Canal, individuals interpret leaders' goals and motivations differently. In the end it is the relationship that leaders have with community members that truly influences mobilization outcomes.

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