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From Lobbying to Lockdowns:
Tactical Choices among Environmental Justice Organizations

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology
2014

Abstract

From Lobbying to Lockdowns:
Tactical Choices among Environmental Justice Organizations
By
Christie L. Parris

What factors affect social movement organizations' tactics? In this project, I examine how factors both internal and external to social movement organizations influence their institutional (i.e., letter-writing, lobbying, lawsuits, and leafleting) and disruptive (i.e., sit-ins, lockdowns, and other civil disobedience) tactical choices. Fusing quantitative and qualitative data, this mixed-methods project addresses two main research questions. First, I ask what structural factors affect organizational-level tactical choices. Second, I examine how activists' personal histories and their perceptions of structural factors influence the processes through which organizational tactical choices are made. To answer these questions, I first collect survey data from several social movement organizations. Interviews with organizational members will serve as the data for this question. I draw upon the environmental justice movement as the subject of this research endeavor. The environmental justice movement emerged in the 1980s in reaction to the presence of environmentally toxic emissions occurring in working-class neighborhoods.

Survey findings indicate that high membership levels of men, as well as the presence of lobbyists, and a liberal citizenry, affect institutional tactics. Factors affecting disruptive tactics include high membership levels of minorities and women, high levels of collaboration with other environmental organizations, and the absence of a paid staff. Finally, the presence of a Democratic governor predicts institutional and disruptive tactics, while a Republican majority in the state legislature predicts disruptive tactics. Interview findings, on the other hand, indicate that environmental justice activists' previous experiences with activism, as well as their perceptions of the community and political context in which they work, play a large role in how their organizations make decisions regarding tactics.

From Lobbying to Lockdowns:
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Acknowledgements

I would like to take the opportunity to thank several people who played unique and instrumental roles in helping me along in my graduate school career.

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Karen Hegtvedt, for her seemingly endless supply of support, feedback, and all-around helpfulness. Over the past several years, Karen has worn many hats, including Chair of the Sociology Department and Editor of *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Regardless of her countless other obligations, however, Karen made herself available for feedback, questions, and importantly, time for tangents and laughter.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee. First, Regina Werum pushed me further than any professor ever has, and I am all the better for it. Tracy Scott taught me not only how to "do" qualitative research, but also the importance of pursuing it. Second, Tim Dowd consistently reminded me that social movement organizations are, after all, organizations, and operate accordingly. Finally, Tom Shriver provided me the opportunity to work with a fellow environmental sociologist whose interests align closely with my own. That he was kind and supportive along the way was a great bonus.

I am also grateful for other members of the Emory community, both individual and institutional. First, I have shared much more than just an office with Lesley Watson, my "pace car" and friend throughout this whole experience. Additionally, I received funding through Emory's Laney Graduate School Professional Development Support Funds for this project, with which I was able

For my family,

and for the tree-huggers

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

What factors affect social movement organizations' tactical choices? Social movement scholars have grappled with this classic question for decades. Since several groundbreaking studies in the 1970s, researchers investigating tactical choices have argued the importance of various factors including access to resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977), political opportunities (Meyer 2004; Tilly 1978), cultural receptivity (Borland 2004; Faupel and Werum 2011), activist demographics (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004), and activists' personal ties to tactics (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Fusing quantitative and qualitative data, this mixed-methods project addresses two main research questions. First, I ask what structural factors affect organizational-level tactical choices.[1] Second, I examine how activists' personal histories and their perceptions of structural factors influence the processes through which organizational tactical choices are made.

Tactics are the actions in which SMOs engage to attempt to meet their goals (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Tactics and strategies differ in that strategies are long-term plans to meet a specific goal (e.g., stricter legislation and accountability for greenhouse gas emissions), while tactics are shorter-term behavior-oriented plans (e.g., community education workshops on the effects of greenhouse gases). Previous research focuses on two categories of tactics aimed at political and social change: institutional and disruptive. Institutional tactics

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[1] Structural factors consist of broad institutional social arrangements such as political and economic systems, as well as institutional racism and sexism.

include activities aimed at both the polity and the public, including letter-writing, lobbying, legislative initiatives, filing lawsuits, and leafleting. Disruptive tactics, on the other hand, include sit-ins, lockdowns, and demonstrations. This research investigates whether differing patterns emerge for EJOs engaging in institutional tactics in comparison to those engaging in disruptive tactics.

To answer my research questions, I first collect survey data from several social movement organizations (SMOs). Interviews with organizational members will serve as the data for this question. I draw upon the environmental justice movement as the subject of this research endeavor. The environmental justice movement (EJM) emerged in the 1980s in reaction to the presence of environmentally toxic emissions occurring in working-class neighborhoods. This provides a unique case for social movement mobilization research, as most existing scholarship focuses on the role members of the middle class play in social movements.

This study offers contributions to both the environmental justice and social movements literature. First, because the EJM is both under-researched and a somewhat new phenomenon, previous research in the area is comprised primarily of documenting the existence of environmental injustices (e.g., Bullard 1983, 1993, 1994, 2000) and individual case studies examining small numbers of environmental justice organizations (EJOs) (Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009). While these studies have provided crucial information for the development of environmental justice research as an academic field, we do not know the general trends operating across a broad sample of EJOs. As Andrews and Edwards assert, "Despite their considerable strengths, case studies cannot answer key questions

concerning the prevalence of particular issues, strategies, or practices in the broader movement and may over-represent novel strategies or organizational forms" (2005: 217). In response, this study is designed to ascertain the general trends that occur across EJO tactical choices. Specifically, I apply several social movement theories, as well as empirical studies, to the investigation of how factors both internal and external to environmental justice organizations affect their tactical choices.

Second, this project provides the opportunity to examine the tactics of a contemporary working class movement. Previous research demonstrates that instead of being chosen at random, tactical choices among SMOs are "a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice" (Tilly 1992:7). The bulk of this research, however, stems from middle class members of social movements such as the suffrage movement (McCammon 2003), civil rights movement (McAdam 1982), and gay rights movement (Werum and Winders 2001). This project provides the occasion to determine whether these established patterns of tactical choices operate within a contemporary working class movement as well.[2]

Third, this project brings together macro and micro level research of SMOs. While the bulk of previous social movement research either investigates the objective structural conditions in which social movement organizations operate or the subjective reasons activists give for joining organizations, I combine both objective and subjective factors to determine the structural

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[2] Piven and Cloward (1977) provide an analysis of working class movements that have taken place historically, including depression-era unemployed and industrial workers' movements, and the welfare rights movement of the 1960s.

influences on tactical choices *and* activists' perceptions of those structural factors. Linking these two methods and investigating this 'black box' of organizational decision-making processes is a critical next step in social movement organizational research (Minkoff and McCarthy 2005).

Finally, environmental justice issues are growing in both scope and seriousness of consequences, leading toxic waste issues to become a hot-button political topic. With the expansion of environmental justice issues, as well as the heightened social movement response to them (Mix 2011), the issues that EJOs fight against have gained national and even international attention (Cole and Foster 2001; Faber 2008). As environmental justice issues become more complex and multi-faceted, understanding the factors that impact EJO tactics brings us closer to findings ways to potentially resolve environmental justice disputes. I now turn to a more detailed discussion of the environmental justice movement.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Sharp differences persist across neighborhoods in terms of emissions, storage, and risk of exposure to dangerous toxins (Grant et al. 2010). The EJM takes up this issue of the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, claiming that minority, working class neighborhoods are exposed to much higher levels of toxins emitted into the soil, air, and water of their communities than their white, middle/upper class counterparts (Pais, Crowder, and Downey 2014). Pellow and Brulle argue, "Access to a healthy and clean environment is increasingly distributed by power, class, and race. Where one can afford to live has a major effect on the nature and extent of one's exposure to toxic pollutants" (2005:2). These claims have been confirmed by scholars across

several fields, including sociology, public health, and governmental organizations (see Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009 for a review). Indeed, advocates of environmental justice argue that, "social, political, economic, and environmental issues are inextricably bound together and must be analyzed and understood as a complex whole" (Dorsey 1998: 501). Importantly, proponents of environmental justice both within and outside of academia define the environment not just as "nature" or "natural settings," but also the environments in which people live, work, play, worship, and learn (Bullard 1993, 1994, 2000).

The Beginnings of the Movement

While environmental justice issues have existed for centuries (Taylor 2000), the environmental justice movement emerged in the 1980s in response to several factors.[3] First, several human-caused environmental disasters occurred in the late 1970s, bringing international media attention to the downside of industrial capitalist society: environmental toxins in working class/minority neighborhoods. The national spotlight on environmental degradation in several locations led to the recognition that environmental injustice issues are not isolated incidents, but are in fact quite common. Among these locations was Love Canal, a neighborhood in Niagara Falls, NY, in which 21,000 tons of toxic waste was buried by Hooker Chemical. The local school board purchased the land in the 1950s for $1.00, and built a school on the waste site. A development of low-income housing was also built there. In 1976, the toxins were "discovered," and

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[3]It is important to note that although research on environmental injustice has unfolded over the course of the past 4 decades, instantiations of environmental injustices have existed for centuries. Pellow and Brehm note that, "at the core of colonialism were many environmental injustices, as people and land were exploited for the benefit of colonizers" (2013:235). Also see DuBois (1977 [1935]).

over 800 families were relocated. Another news-making event regarding environmental injustice was the partial core meltdown at the nuclear generating station at Three Mile Island in Dauphin County, PA, in 1979.

The incident most widely cited as the official beginning of the contemporary EJM occurred in Warren County, NC in late 1970s and early 1980s. After a disposal contractor leaked over 10,000 gallons of fluid tainted with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) over a 200-mile stretch of road in 1978, the state proposed a landfill in the working class, predominantly black community of Warren County. Although the residents engaged in tactics ranging from filing lawsuits to lying in the road in front of the bulldozers (and over 500 people were arrested, including members of the United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice), the landfill was completed in 1982. The site was not decontaminated until 2004. These incidents shook the public's faith in the doctrine of economic growth at the expense of the environment (Cable and Cable 1995).

<u>The Characteristics of the Movement</u>

The EJM is fundamentally different from the mainstream environmental movement. While the mainstream environmental movement tends to focus on conservation, the EJM recognizes that, "environmental inequality is first and foremost a social problem, driven and legitimated by social structures and discourses" (Pellow and Brehm 2013:235). Instead of only focusing on environmental degradation, advocates of environmental justice recognize that environmental benefits and burdens are distributed throughout society unequally, just like other social benefits and harms.

Moreover, many environmental justice advocates argue that the mainstream environmental movement focuses solely on the environmental concerns of the white middle class (i.e., conservation for the sake of the environment and the enjoyment of nature enthusiasts) at the expense of environmental issues affecting the working class and minorities (i.e., exposure to toxins in neighborhoods). These perceived inadequacies of the mainstream environmental movement led to a common accusation that the "big ten" reformist organizations were too inflexible, overly professionalized and centralized, and too willing to compromise with polluting industries (Maniates 2002; Taylor 1997).[4] Cable and Cable argue that the, "history of the twentieth-century environmental movement is overwhelmingly a portrait of formal organizations composed of white, educated, middle- and upper-class males engaged in lobbying the federal government to preserve pristine portions of the environment for recreational or scientific purposes, with some concern since the 1960s directed toward the improvement of environmental quality" (1995:74). In response, many EJOs cosigned a letter to the big 10 organizations in 1990, accusing them of racial bias in hiring, policy development, and the composition of their boards, and challenged them to address environmental injustices in the communities and workplaces of people of color and the poor.

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[4] These are heavily-staffed, well-funded non-profit organizations each with budgets in the tens of millions of dollars a year, offices in Washington, DC and other major cities, highly paid executive directors, and a staff of lobbyists, analysts, and marketers. Combined, these environmental groups raise and spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year, most of it contributed by non-profit foundations and individual donors. The organizations are Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, Greenpeace, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and World Wildlife Fund.

According to Pellow and Brulle (2005), "The EJ movement has sought to redefine environmentalism as much more integrated with the social needs of human populations, and, in contrast with the more eco-centric environmental movement, its fundamental goals include challenging the capitalist growth economy as well" (p. 3). In contrast to the mainstream environmental movement, grassroots EJOs have cropped up in communities across the country. EJOs tend to be highly localized groups of community members concerned with the effects of toxins on environmental and human health in their neighborhoods. They mobilize against the sources of the emitted toxins (e.g., coal-fired power plants and toxic waste storage facilities). They call upon local, state, and federal government officials to stop not only the siting of these industries in their neighborhoods, but also to put an end to the production of toxins in the first place.[5]

<u>Research on Responses to Environmental Injustice</u>

Academic and governmental research of environmental justice issues developed alongside the EJM. Demographic studies of the characteristics of communities in close proximity to hazardous waste facilities conducted by government organizations and concerned community organizations emerged. In 1983, at the urging of many involved with the Warren County incident, the US General Accounting Office researched and published of *Siting of Hazardous*

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[5] Critics of the EJM characterize it with the pejorative label of NIMBYism ("not in my backyard"), and while the movement may have started that way, it is no longer an accurate label (Szasz 1994). NIMBY philosophy essentially posits that, "So long as the problem does not affect me, it is not a problem." Szasz (1994) argues, however, that as the EJM has grown over the past three decades, it has taken on a more global perspective. Instead of focusing solely on toxins in one community, many EJOs address the much larger problems of production, consumption, and the distribution of toxic hazards nationwide (Szasz 1994). The focus has shifted, then, from NIMBY to NIABY, or "not in anyone's backyard."

Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities, marking the first study of environmental injustice. The report found that 3 out of 4 the off-site commercial hazardous waste facilities in EPA Region IV are located in African American communities.[6] In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice followed up with *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*, the first national study to establish a correlation between waste facility citing and race. The UCC replicated the survey in 2007, and found that environmental injustices had become even more concentrated in poor, nonwhite neighborhoods than what the original study found in 1987.

Following the dissemination of this public research, academic researchers took notice of the increased attention to environmental injustice issues and began to pursue scholarship on the topic in the 1980s and 1990s. The most prolific of these researchers is Robert Bullard, considered by many to be the "father" of the environmental justice movement. Other academic environmental justice research sheds light on specific neighborhoods that exist in close proximity to toxic waste sites (e.g., Čapek 1993), as well as polluted air and water (Li and Wehr 2007). In general, research in this area tends to take the form of qualitative case studies of neighborhoods that exist in close proximity to environmental hazards (Bullard 1983; Cable, Shriver, and Mix 2008; Čapek 1993; Kurtz 2007; Downey 2006; Messer, Shriver, and Kennedy 2010; Picou 2008; Roberts and Toffolon-Weiss 2001; Shriver and Webb 2009). Often, these case studies focus on one of two

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[6] EPA Region IV consists of areas in the southeast including 8 states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) and 6 Native American Tribes (Miccosukee Tribe of Indians, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Seminole Tribe, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Catawba Indian Nation).

types of communities: those eligible for the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program or those fighting a proposal to construct a toxin-emitting site in their neighborhood. These studies evaluate both the consequences of the environmental burdens residents face, as well as the community responses to the issues, and are the building blocks upon which this project is built.

As such, this project seeks to expand previous research by determining both the structural-level factors operating across a broad sample EJOs and the subjective individual-level factors among a smaller sample of EJO activists themselves that affect EJOs' tactical choices.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In the following chapter, I provide an overview of how previous research has conceptualized tactics and tactical choices, including information on the various factors that affect tactical choices and my hypotheses. I also give a description of my qualitative research cases, EJO activists in Appalachia fighting an invasive form of strip mining known as mountaintop removal.

In chapter 3 I discuss my data sources and methodological approach for both the survey and the in-depth interviews. For the survey portion of this project, I describe the operationalization of each variable in the survey. I also explain the statistical analysis I employed to analyze the data. For the in-depth interview portion of this project, I discuss the process of selecting two EJOs for further investigation, the establishment of rapport and recruitment, and the process through which I conducted the interviews. I also include an overview of the topics I focused on in the interviews.

Chapters 4 and 5 contain the quantitative and qualitative findings, respectively. Chapter 4 focuses on the ways in which factors both internal and external to EJOs affect their institutional and disruptive tactical choices. I also include a discussion of the meaning of the results. Chapter 5 discusses the results from the in-depth interviews. I provide an overview of the ways in which activists from two EJOs discussed various topics, including their history of activism and their perceptions of the political and community context in which they work. I also describe the processes through which their EJOs make tactical choices, as well as the specific tactics their EJOs employ.

Finally, Chapter 6, the conclusion, provides a reflection on this project, including the ways in which it adds to the literature on both social movements generally and the environmental justice movement specifically. I also discuss the limitations of this research and suggest future directions.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ORGANIZATIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE, AND TACTICAL CHOICES

In this project, I examine how factors both internal and external to social movement organizations (SMOs) influence their tactical choices. My study differentiates between institutional (i.e., letter-writing, lobbying, lawsuits, and leafleting) and disruptive (i.e., sit-ins, lockdowns, and other civil disobedience) tactical choices. I also investigate the individual-level factors that affect the processes through which SMOs make tactical decisions. These factors include activists' histories, and their perceptions of the community and political contexts in which they operate. I draw upon the environmental justice movement (EJM) to answer these questions. The EJM emerged in the 1980s in reaction to the disproportionate presence of environmentally toxins in working-class neighborhoods. Environmental justice organizations (EJOs) mainly consist of working-class minorities, and as such, contrast with most existing SMO scholarship that focuses on middle-class movements and thus provides a unique context in which to examine social movement tactics.

Below, I situate my project in previous social movement research, including the broad trends that have characterized the field over the course of the previous four decades. Next, I discuss how previous research has conceptualized tactics and tactical repertoires, including information on the various factors that affect them. I then turn to a synopsis of my case, the environmental justice movement. Next, I provide a more detailed description on how prior studies have

approached the various factors that affect tactical choices and offer rationale for my hypotheses. Finally, I discuss my qualitative case study, EJOs in the Appalachian coalfields.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In this project, I use Tarrow's definition of social movements as "sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which deploy the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (1998:2). As such, social movements are broad phenomena that rely heavily on social movement organizations. A social movement organization is "a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1218). For example, the environmental movement consists of hundreds of environmental organizations such as The Sierra Club, The Audubon Society, and Greenpeace. Accordingly, SMOs are the sites at which social movements operate.

Previous research regarding social movements can be categorized loosely into three areas of interest: mobilization, outcomes, and operations. The crux of social movement research is based on investigating the factors that affect social movement mobilization. Throughout the history of the field, scholars have looked to several factors to explain mobilization. Early research focused on the role of grievances, arguing that individuals will join in collective behavior when they feel a sense of deprivation or discontent (e.g., Gurr 1970). In the mid-1970s, a paradigm shift occurred in which researchers began to reject the focus on

grievances, arguing that while they are a necessary precondition to mobilization, individuals must also have access to resources and political opportunities in order to mobilize (e.g., Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Oberschall 1978; Tilly 1978).[7]

The second broad area of social movement research pertains to outcomes. Research in this area focuses on social movement goals, as well as how to define and measure a successful movement. The political consequences of social movements are central to research in this area, with some scholars arguing that social movements often create meaningful political change (e.g., Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005; Piven 2006) and others arguing that social movements rarely "matter" in politics (e.g., Skocpol 2003; Giugni 2007). Studies investigate various factors regarding the antecedents of social movement outcomes, including resources, political context, and strategy (Amenta et al. 2010). "Success" in this area of research is defined broadly, and may include various accomplishments at different stages in the policy process, including agenda-setting, legislative content, passage, and enforcement (Amenta et al. 2010).

The third broad area of social movement research examines social movement organizational operations. Research in this area includes issues such as member recruitment, organizational leadership, strategies, and tactics. This focus on day-to-day activities considers how social movement organizations go about the process of "doing" social movement activity. It is in this area that my research is based.

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[7] Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of work looking at grievances (e.g., Biggs 2006; Lim 2012; Peterson et al. 2012).

As discussed in chapter 1, SMOs engage in tactics to work towards their goals (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Tactics are distinguished from strategies in that strategies consist of long-term plans to meet a specific goal (e.g., stricter legislation and accountability for greenhouse gas emissions), while tactics are shorter-term behavior-oriented plans (e.g., community education workshops on the effects of greenhouse gases). The concept of repertoires of contention refers to "the recurrent, predictable, and fairly narrow 'toolkit' of specific protest tactics used by a set of collective actors in a particular campaign" (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004:266). Scholars have described these tactical repertoires as strategic (Tilly 1978, 1995; Tarrow 1998; Traugott 1995), as well as recurrent, predictable, and fairly narrow in scope (Beckwith 2000; della Port and Diani 1999; McAdam and Snow 1997; Mueller 1999). Taylor and Van Dyke (2004) add that they can be both historically specific and transcendent, as they can be drawn upon by various SMOs fighting different contenders (e.g., similar repertoires are found in both the environmental movement and the feminist movement).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES: SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Basic Theoretical Argument

As discussed in chapter 1, previous research focuses on two categories of tactics: institutional and disruptive. Institutional tactics include activities such as letter-writing, lobbying, legislative initiatives, filing lawsuits, and leafleting. Disruptive tactics, on the other hand, include sit-ins, lockdowns, and demonstrations. Over time, SMOs develop repertoires of contention, or, "distinctive constellations of tactics and strategies developed over time and used

by protest groups to act collectively in order to make claims on individuals and groups" (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004:265). These repertoires are often created through a process of rational choices (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978), as most SMOs will, "adopt the form of claims-making that they believe to be most effective and least costly" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998:22).[8]

Research regarding SMO tactics largely borrows from previous work on social movement mobilization and success. Several studies have found that factors both internal and external to SMOs are relevant to social movement tactical choices (e.g., Faupel and Werum 2011; McAdam 1982; Minkoff 1999; Staggenborg 1988; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Tilly 1978). Internal factors include aggregate member demographics, organizational characteristics, and organizational resources, while external factors include the political and cultural climate in which the organizations are embedded. Moreover, within SMOs, tactical choices are affected by activists' preferences, as well as their perceptions of the political and cultural context in which they operate (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Although researchers have made inroads into disentangling the *factors* affecting SMO tactical choice, theoretical development regarding *why* these factors matter remains limited. I argue that that the underlying mechanism operating in these relationships is inherently based on dynamics of power. Simply stated, power is the "ability to produce intended effects" (Russell 1938). SMOs have varying levels of access to power, and as such, their ability to engage

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[8] It is important to note, however, that not all SMOs follow such a "rational choice" path. Scholars have found that sometimes, SMOs do not alter their tactical choices, even in the face of failure (e.g., Beckwith 2009; Martin 2007; McCammon et al. 2008). This is perhaps because SMOs, in addition to being groups of people and resources, are also collections of shared norms, rules, beliefs, and identities (Clemens 1997). These subjective aspects of SMOs may indeed guide SMO tactical choice, and I examine them in the qualitative portion of this project.

in specific types of tactics is dependent upon their ability to garner enough power to do so. For example, if the necessary resources to engage in a specific type of tactic (e.g., the financial means to retain a lobbyist to engage in legislative lobbying on behalf of the SMO) are unavailable, that organization will not be able to engage in that specific tactic. While tactics are the actions in which SMOs often engage, access to power underwrites SMOs' ability to engage in these actions.

"Power" in social movements may be understood on a continuum as opposed to something SMOs either possess or do not possess, and can be operationalized in a variety of ways. For example, degree of power exists in the extent to which SMOs are able to secure financial and social capital, as well as the extent to which the political and cultural context in which they are embedded are open to SMO claimsmaking. I focus on several factors that may provide SMOs with various types of power both internal and external to the organizations themselves (e.g., political power, "power in numbers," and financial power). In turn, these types of power, along with the degree to which SMOs possess them, informs SMOs' tactical choices. I provide an examination of these factors in greater detail below.

Several studies focus on various internal aspects of SMOs to determine tactical choice. Among these factors are the structural power of participants (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004), the organizational form of the SMO (Piven and Cloward 1977; Staggenborg 1988), and access to various types of financial and non-financial resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Mix 2011).

Organizational Member Demographics

Economically and socially disadvantaged classes are most likely to engage in disruptive tactics (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Due to their lack of access to political and financial power, members of these classes (i.e., minorities, women, and the working class) often find they have no institutionalized avenue through which to voice their concerns. Moreover, Piven and Cloward (1977) argue that members of these marginalized groups (in their study, the unemployed following the Great Depression), have less to lose in the face of the consequences of disruptive action (e.g., beatings and arrests). Within the EJM, such positionality becomes particularly relevant, as scholars have demonstrated that toxic facilities are most likely to be placed in low-income, nonwhite neighborhoods (Bullard 1993, 1994, 2000; United Church of Christ 1987, 2007), and that EJ activists are populated primarily women (Di Chiro 1992; Rainey and Johnson 2009). Thus, I predict:

> *Hypothesis 1a*: Level of female membership is positively related to engagement in disruptive tactics and negatively related to engagement in institutional tactics.
>
> *Hypothesis 1b*: Level of minority membership is positively related to engagement in disruptive tactics and negatively related to engagement in institutional tactics.

Organizational Characteristics

Previous research has found that organizational form affects the types of tactics SMOs select. Many scholars (Piven and Cloward 1977; Rucht 1999; Staggenborg 1988, 1989) have found evidence supporting the "iron law" process

of institutionalization (Michels [1911] 1962). This process of formalization evolves over time, and involves SMO power becoming increasingly concentrated in a small cadre of oligarchical leaders. These leaders, in turn, become increasingly interested in maintaining the SMO and their position within it, and thus forfeit their oppositional politics in order to ensure their SMO's continued existence. According to Rucht, eventually, SMOs "become players in the conventional political process, thereby losing their initial character as challengers to the status quo and the forces in power" (1999:153). Moreover, this process leads to more institutional tactics because they are more compatible with a formalized structure and schedules of professional activists (Staggenborg 1988). Furthermore, although Staggenborg (1988) does not state it explicitly, I argue that institutional tactics are more aligned with the increasing levels of political power many of the leaders come to possess.

Previous research has found that this process eventually inhibits the original goals of the organization (Piven and Cloward 1977), as leaders focus their efforts on fundraising and other efforts to expand the organization (Staggenborg 1988). Piven and Cloward (1977) go so far as to argue that structuring social movements into formal SMOs inadvertently provides politicians with a mechanism for containing oppositional claimsmaking. Characteristics of institutionalized SMOs include the presence of a paid staff, a board of directors, and the employment of lobbyists.

Other scholars have found that this iron law process is not universal, and that organizational transformation occurs under a variety of circumstances. This may include expanding political opportunities and resources (Minkoff 1999), the

emergence of countermovement activities (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Staggenborg 1991; Zald and Useem 1987), and a change in SMO leadership (Voss and Sherman 2000). Moreover, Tarrow (1995, 1998) argues that protest activities occur in a cycle, or "a phase of heightened conflict and contention across the social system" (1994: 153). At the height of these cycles is an expansion of contention across social groups and changes in SMO strategies, tactics, and other operations. As a whole, this body of research contends that there is no one single path that SMOs follow in their development, and incentives for organizational transformation may be affected by many different factors.

In their research on institutional tactical choices of SMOs, Werum and Winders (2001) suggest that this existing literature regarding characteristics of SMOs is too simplistic, and that a more nuanced approach is needed to understand organizational form and SMO tactical choices. Their work finds that both proponents and opponents for gay rights focus on state and local government initiatives, but they use different tactics in their pursuits. Opponents focused on ballot initiatives, a "marginal channel" depending on popular support for success. Proponents, however, focused on local ordinances, choosing to pursue their goals through more central legislative political arenas.

Given the previous research on the role of organizational characteristics, I offer the following hypothesis:[9]

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[9]Although there is a current debate in the literature, I do not have the data to test an opposing hypothesis, as I do not have measures for countermovement activities, changes in SMO leadership, or longitudinal data to measure protest cycles.

Hypothesis 2: Level of institutional characteristics (i.e., organizational age, paid staff, lobbyists) is positively related to engagement in institutional tactics and negatively related to engagement in disruptive tactics.

Resources

As stated above, research regarding SMO tactics largely borrows from previous work on social movement mobilization and success. One such instance is resource mobilization theory (RMT). RMT argues that social movements emerge as a result of the availability and access to resources (e.g., funding, membership, etc) (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). This view of social movements considers grievances as a necessary but insufficient precondition of social movement mobilization. Interestingly, early work often measured social movement mobilization via counts of protest events (i.e., instantiations of tactics) such as strikes, riots, violent incidents, and other contentious gatherings (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

More recently, research has begun to consider the role resources play in determining SMO tactics. While scholars recognize that SMOs pursue resources in part to be able to engage in tactics (Larson 2013), the types of resources and tactical choices across different SMOs may vary greatly. Recent research specifies different types of resources and how resource type may affect SMOs' operations differently, with several categories of resources emerging (e.g., moral, cultural, socio-organizational, human, and material) (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Here, I focus on two of the most common types of resources: financial and social capital. Financial resources consist of monetary resources such as donations,

grants, and dues. Social resources consist of coalition-building and collaborations. According to Levi and Murphy, "Coalitions of SMOs are collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change" (2006:654).

Previous research has clearly demonstrated the necessity of resources for SMO survival. Moreover, possession of resources of any type bestows power on the organizations possessing them. Without resources, SMOs would not have the power to engage in any type of political action. Organizations, however, differ regarding level of access to financial and social capital. Formalized organizations tend to have higher levels of access to all types of resources, including financial and social capital. The *types* of financial resources available to such SMOs, however, may constrain their tactical choices. For example, if an SMO receives financial resources via governmental or NGO grants, they are likely contractually obligated through that grant to adhere to strict guidelines regarding tactics. Many disruptive tactics, including lockdowns, sit-ins, and other types of civil disobedience, are illegal activities and verboten by granting institutions. If SMOs receiving these types of grants engage in such activities, they risk jeopardizing their tax status and their ability to apply for grants. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3a: Level of financial capital (i.e., grants) is positively related to engagement in institutional tactics and negatively related to engagement in disruptive tactics.

While financial resources such as grants may constrain SMO activity, SMO acquisition social capital may operate quite differently. Informal organizations or organizations with financially limited members may only have access to social

capital, such as coalition-building and collaborations. EJOs especially may benefit from this type of social capital, as most members are located in a disadvantaged position in the broader social structure and may find it difficult to garner organizational resources. Indeed, Mix (2011) found that members of EJOs perceive coalition-building as a highly favorable activity, and engage in coalition building activities with other EJOs as well as other types of organizations (e.g., local businesses, schools, economic advocacy groups, and community organizations). Therefore:

> *Hypothesis 3b*: Level of social capital (i.e., collaborations) is positively related to engagement in disruptive tactics and negatively related to engagement in institutional tactics.

While previous work has clearly illustrated the importance of *internal* factors to SMOs, scholars also argue that *external* factors affect SMOs in meaningful ways. As such, it is not only the capacity to act that matters; the opportunity to act also affects SMOs (Tilly 1978). I turn now to a discussion of these external factors.

Political Context

Social movement activities are also dependent upon the accessibility of political and economic elite allies comprising the political opportunity structure (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tilly 1978). As such, political opportunities shape the origin, development, and influence of social movements (Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1988). Research on the impact of political opportunities can be traced to Tilly's work (1978, 1995). Through his elaboration of the polity model, Tilly's work was instrumental in illustrating that social movements are profoundly affected by

factors external to the movement itself. The polity model argues that social
control and/or repression affects the level of power possessed by challengers in
collective action in an inverted U curve model.[10] If the government structure is
closed, meaning constituents have little room for political power, protest activity
is unlikely to occur. Likewise, if the government structure is very open in nature,
meaning the polity is fully responsive to the political concerns of constituents,
protests are rendered unnecessary. If, however, the government is somewhat
open, protests are much more likely to occur. Protestors choose to act, then,
when they perceive their actions are both necessary and potentially effective. The
U.S. states, however, are not highly oppressive regimes that disallow all political
protest (i.e., a closed government structure), nor are they completely open,
leaving protest unnecessary. Instead, political openness exists on a sliding scale,
differing from state to state. As such, I draw upon a truncated version of Tilly's
original model. Instead of hypothesizing relationships based on his inverted U
curve model, I focus on the *degree to which* state polities are open (see Image
2.1).

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[10] Gurr (1970) also introduced an inverted U curve model related to the relationship between
political repression and political violence. His work, however, was initially more narrowly
conceived, based on differing degrees of relative depravation.

Image 2.1 Truncated Polity Model

Occurrence of Political Protest (y-axis)

United
States

Degree of Political Openness
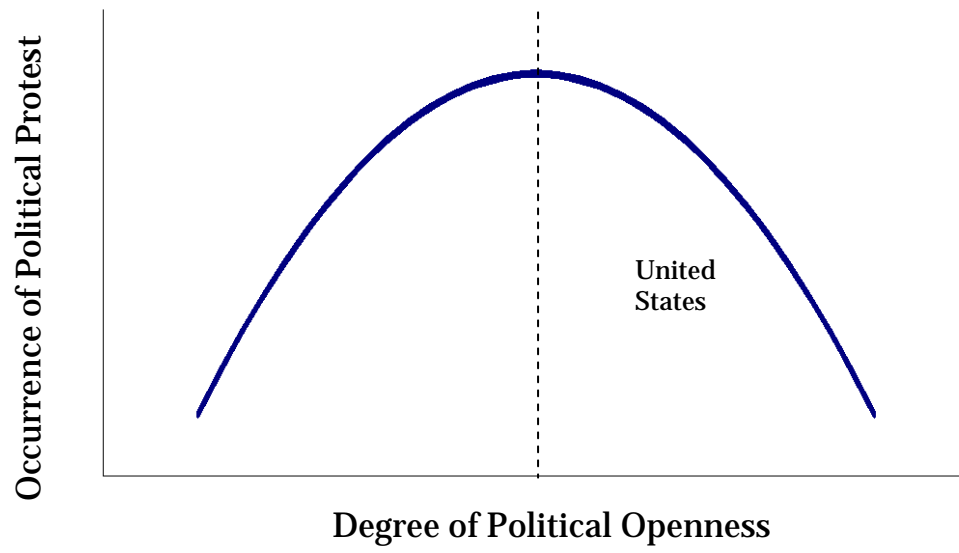
McAdam's work on factors affecting the civil rights movement explicitly lays out a political process model that accounts for "a favorable confluence of factors internal and external to the movement" (1982:2) necessary for social movement activity. McAdam (1996) identifies four factors of the political opportunity structure: increasing popular access to the political system; divisions among the elite (e.g., government instability); the availability of elite allies; and decreasing state repression. Each of these factors gives challengers political power in the form of opportunities to enter into the political system to voice their grievances, rendering more disruptive tactics less necessary. Here, I focus on two of McAdam's (1996) factors: the availability of elite allies and divisions among the elite (e.g., government instability).[11] Elite allies are influential members of the political and economic structures who are sympathetic to protestors' concerns and may power to sponsor or support movement efforts (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Historically, the Democratic Party has been more sympathetic to environmental justice issues.[12] Therefore:

> *Hypothesis 4a*: Presence of elite allies (i.e., a Democratic governor or
> legislative majority) is positively related to engagement in institutional
> tactics and negatively related to engagement in disruptive tactics.

Division among the elite, also referred to as government instability, includes disagreements among elite groups. This may occur horizontally (e.g.,

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[11] I exclude increasing popular access to the political system and decreasing state repression because I do not have adequate measures to include them.

[12] For example, in 2005, twenty-five Democrats in the legislature co-signed a letter condemning the EPA for its lack of compliance with Executive Order 12898 (signed by President Clinton, regarding specific federal actions to be taken to alleviate environmental injustices across minority and low-income populations) (Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2011). More recently, the Obama Administration's EPA created *Plan EJ 2014*, a "roadmap that will help EPA integrate environmental justice into the Agency's programs, policies, and activities" (US EPA 2014).

between state-level organizations such as the Department of Environmental

Protection and the Legislature) or vertically (e.g., between junior and senior

representatives), and also occurs on a continuous as opposed to a categorical

scale. The presence of an unstable government leads to an opportunity wedge in

which social movement participants can attempt to gain access to political power.

Accordingly:

> *Hypothesis 4b*: Level of government stability is positively related to
>
> engagement in disruptive tactics and negatively related to engagement in
>
> institutional tactics.

More recently, Amenta and colleagues (Amenta et al., 1992; Amenta et al.

2005; Amenta 2006) developed a political mediation model that argues it is not

simply factors internal or external to SMOs that determine their success, but that

it is a combination of both. Specifically, Amenta et al. state, "the political

mediation argument holds that challengers need to alter strategies and forms to

address specific political contexts, such as the level of democratization in the

polity, the partisan regime in power, and the development of bureaucratic

authority surrounding the issue at hand" (2010:299). Accordingly, SMOs must

alter their tactics in order to best meet their goals in a given political context.[13]

Cultural Context

Recently, social movement scholars have considered effects of the cultural

opportunity structure (Borland 2004; Faupel and Werum 2011; Frank and

McEneaney 1999; Williams 2004). Research in this area is newer and less

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[13] While I do not offer specific hypotheses regarding the political mediation model, I do test a number of additional models with interaction terms between political opportunity and resource variables.

codified than that regarding political opportunities, and considers aspects of
culture ranging from the resonance of SMO claims with the general public
(Benford and Snow 2000; Jasper 1997; Williams and Benford 2000) to
prominent norms, values, and ideals within a culture (Inglehart 1990). Benford
and Snow (2000) argue that the aspects of culture most relevant to SMO
claimsmaking "include the extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices,
values, myths, narratives, and the like" (p. 629). The receptivity of the culture in
which SMOs are embedded, then, affects SMO tactical choices.

I focus on how one aspect of culture, state citizens' ideology, impacts EJOs'
tactical choices. Previous research has documented that political liberalism is
linked to higher levels of environmental concerns than conservatism (Dunlap
1991; Dunlap and McCright 2008, 2011; Mobley et al. 2010; Neumayer 2004; Olli
et al. 2001; Van Liere and Dunlap 1980; Xiao and McCright 2007). As such,
states with more liberal citizens may be more receptive to EJO claims than states
with more conservative citizens, rendering disruptive tactics less necessary.

Hypothesis 5: Level of liberal citizenry is positively related to engagement
in institutional tactics and negatively related to engagement in disruptive
tactics.

I test these hypotheses using data drawn from a national-level survey, as
well as supplementary state-level data from various sources (see hapter 3 for
more details on data sources).

In addition to considering SMO tactics at the organizational level, I also
consider factors affecting tactical choices on the individual level. I do this via a
case study of two organizations in Central Appalachia working against an invasive

form of coal mining known as mountaintop removal. The need to investigate the empirical reality in coalfield communities in central Appalachia is ever more important, as we live in an increasingly global society dependent on their regional coal reserves. I turn now to a discussion of this particular case study, and how individual activists' perceptions may impact their organizations' decision-making processes regarding the tactics in which they engage.

CASE STUDY: ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA

<u>Description of Case</u>

In 2011, Americans consumed 1.003 billion short tons of coal (US EIA 2014).[14] In order to fuel this demand, coal corporations are altering the way they mine, searching for cheaper, faster ways to get to the coal. In West Virginia, home to approximately 41 billion tons of coal reserves (Nyden 2009), coal corporations have implemented the use of mountaintop removal (MTR), a particularly invasive form of strip mining.[15] The practice of MTR was designed to access coal seams deep within the mountains. Coal corporations adopted MTR in the past 20 years as an alternative to underground mines because of the ease with which it is practiced. The process of MTR includes using explosives to blast up to 1,000 feet off the tops of mountains in order to access the coal seams deep below the surface. Once the coal is collected, mining companies push the "overburden," soil, rock, and ecosystem of the mountaintop, into surrounding valleys via a dragline, a machine as high as a 20 story building. This process, known as "valley fills," buries the surrounding streams, wildlife habitats, and communities.

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[14] This total reflects all usage of coal, including residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, and electric power.

[15] The Central Appalachian Mountains are second only to Wyoming's Powder River Basin in coal production (Baller and Pantilat 2007).

In spite of coal corporations' claims that their practices are not environmentally harmful, researchers have found that the effects of MTR are detrimental to the natural environment, the local social fabric and culture, and public health (Barry 2001, 2008; Burns 2007; Erikson 1978; Fox 1999; Hendryx and Ahern 2008, 2009; Hendryx, O'Donnell, and Horn 2008; Palmer et al. 2010; United States EPA 2005). Due to these effects, MTR has become a contested practice among coalfield residents. The clash over MTR has split families and neighbors over the issue, with proponents claiming that mining is an important source of income for most in the region, and opponents claiming that the practice of MTR destroys Appalachian ecology and culture.

In response to the destruction of the coalfield communities, EJOs have mobilized to protest the industry and the coal-friendly polity. As with most EJOs, local working class community members are responsible for the formation of many of these organizations, and comprise the leadership and rank and file members of the organizations. While previous research investigating anti-MTR organizations in West Virginia has tended to focus on the role locals, particularly local women, play in organizing against MTR (e.g., Barry 2008; Bell 2013; Bell and Braun 2010), in this project I examine the role that these "outsiders" play in the dispute over MTR.[16] As the anti-MTR movement has gained national attention in recent years, there has been an influx of EJO activists into the areas where MTR is practiced. These outsiders have specifically travelled to Central Appalachia to participate in the anti-MTR movement and as such, do not reflect

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[16] While many of these "outsiders" have lived in Central Appalachia for several years now, they are still perceived as outsiders by those who have lived in the area for several generations.

the typical highly localized EJ activist. Oftentimes, though, locals and outsiders work together in coordinated efforts to stop MTR. Their organizations pursue both institutional and radical tactics in their mission of ceasing MTR mining. These outsiders have played a prominent role in the anti-MTR movement in Central Appalachia, and thus provide an opportunity to investigate the tactical motivations of non-local EJ activists.

<u>Consequences of Mountaintop Removal</u>

Environmental Consequences of Mountaintop Removal

Academic researchers and local activists focus their work on the environmental consequences impact of MTR, of which there are many (Barry 2008; Burns 2007; Erikson 1976; Fox 1999; Grubbs 2009; Palmer et al. 2010; United States EPA 2005). MTR leads to forest fragmentation and the inability to regrow trees and wooded plants in compacted soil. It also destroys streams and increases minerals in the water of existing streams, which results in less diverse and more pollutant-tolerant species (United States EPA 2005). Between 1985 and 2001, 724 miles of Appalachian streams were buried by valley fills. Today, over 2,000 miles of headwater streams have been buried and/or polluted (Grubbs 2009). In fact, recent research finds that 22 percent of streams in southern West Virginia have damage from MTR "extensive enough to be classified as biologically impaired based on state criteria, while an even greater extent of the river network (32% of stream length) drains catchments with enough mining influence to lead to the losses of many intolerant taxa" (Bernhardt et al. 2012). The environmental changes produced by MTR, including clear-cutting forests and exposing rock, create conditions much more susceptible to

flooding (Fox 1999). Additionally, this topographical change has resulted in landslides, killing people in the towns located adjacent to the coal fields (National Public Radio 2005). The most recent data indicate that over 400,000 acres have been destroyed by MTR between 1993 and 2003. This accounts for about 3 percent of the 12 million acres across which MTR is practiced in West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia (US EPA 2003).

A second environmental consequence of MTR is related to the process of cleaning the coal. Before coal can be sold, it must be washed to separate it from the connected soil and rocks. Coupled with the solid waste left behind from MTR, this washing process generates massive volumes of liquid waste known as "sludge" or "slurry." Coal corporations dispose of this waste by constructing a dam, or impoundment pond, with the solid refuse, mainly rocks and soil, to hold the liquid waste. These unlined coal sludge impoundments store billions of gallons of liquid coal waste, and contain the carcinogenic chemicals found in coal.[17] In the past, sludge dams have failed, and, in the most notorious case, the 1972 Buffalo Creek flood in Logan County, West Virginia, 125 people were killed, 1,121 were injured, and over 4,000 were left homeless (Erikson 1976). Additionally, on 24 December 2008, a spill in Tennessee released over 1 billion gallons of sludge (48 times worse than the Exxon Valdez spill by volume), burying homes and contaminating the water supply for millions of people in Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky (McDermott 2008).

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[17] Coal contains carcinogenic impurities including zinc, cadmium, nickel, arsenic and many others (Hendryx et al. 2008).

In the first two months of 2014, several other spills occurred in West Virginia and North Carolina. First, on January 9, Freedom Industries leaked 7,500 gallons of 4-Methylcyclohexanemethanol (MCHM, a chemical used in the coal cleaning process) into West Virginia's Elk River, rendering potable water unavailable for 300,000 citizens of 9 counties (Schwartz 2014). Second, on February 11, more than 100,000 gallons of slurry spilled into Fields Creek and the Kanawha River from a Patriot Coal mining complex in Kanawha County, West Virginia (Ward and Gutman 2014). Due to these incidents, over a month later, residents still do not have access to potable water. In North Carolina, on February 2, Duke Energy spilled 39,000 tons of coal ash into the Dan River, contaminating over 70 miles of the river and rendering the water unsafe. After weeks of federal investigations into Duke Energy, officials found that Duke Energy has routinely pumped up to 61 million gallons of coal slurry in the Cape Fear River between September 2013 and March 2014. Both the accidental and deliberate releases of this waste into the rivers occurred "not far upstream from municipal drinking-water intakes" (Wine 2014).

Health Consequences of Coal Mining and Mountaintop Removal

Coalfield residents have long argued that coal-processing chemicals, equipment powered by diesel engines, explosives, toxic impurities in coals, and even dust from uncovered coal trucks can cause environmental pollution that could have a negative effect on public health. Recently, research conducted at the West Virginia University Institute for Health Policy has begun to confirm and document these outcomes for people living near mining sites (Hendryx and Ahern 2008, 2009; Hendryx et al. 2008). Controlling for smoking, obesity, age,

gender, income, education, and access to health insurance, their research finds

that across the board, as coal production increases, health status decreases.

People living in coalfield communities have an increased risk for developing

cardiopulmonary disease, lung disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and

kidney disease (Hendryx and Ahern 2008). Specifically, chronic obstructive

pulmonary disease (COPD), black lung disease, and hypertension are strongly

associated with proximity to coal production (Hendryx and Ahern 2008). In a

study focused on lung cancer mortality, Hendryx et al. (2008) find that, after

controlling for the same variables as previously mentioned, high levels of coal

mining has a statistically significant impact on lung cancer mortality for the years

2000 to 2004. Lung cancer mortality was highest in heavy coal-mining areas

(74.21 per 100,000), followed by all other areas of Appalachia (65.70) and the

nation (56.55). The authors conclude that, "Higher mortality may be the result of

exposure to environmental contaminates associated with the coal-mining

industry, although smoking and poverty are also contributing factors" (Hendryx

et al. 2008).

Cultural and Social Consequences of Mountaintop Removal

While the environmental consequences are certainly a cause for immediate

response, these environmental outcomes unquestionably spill over into the social

and cultural lives of people living in mining communities. With previous

researchers' intense focus on environmental outcomes, however, they tend to

overlook these social and cultural ramifications (although see Burns 2007 and

Erikson 1976 for exceptions). To understand how MTR affects local people and

their way of life requires an understanding of Appalachian culture prior to MTR.

The Appalachian Mountain way of life, misunderstood and often stereotyped, has historically been heavily dependent upon a cohesive family and community. In a 2003 draft of the Federal EPA's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Mountaintop Mining/Valley Fills in Appalachia (United States EPA 2003), the agency states that

> There is a cultural tradition in the region of reliance upon the harvesting of non-traditional forest products and subsistence gardens rather than welfare or other public assistance... This reliance upon the natural environment becomes part of a work ethic of sorts which centers around frequently isolated and tightly knit communities... The natural environment, specifically small patches of rich soils, further contributes to the livelihood of people within this region... [O]fficial sources with the Soil Conservation Service report as much organic matter as any prime farmland in the Midwest occurs in Appalachia. Land is used for community and private subsistence gardening... A history of public admittance to this land is referred to as "the commons" or "the mountains," by which the population traditionally had understood access to the land... *This identity with common geography creates a culture that is closely tied to mountains, which are by tradition a common asset* (p. III T6-T7, italics added).

The impact of MTR mining on mountain communities, then, becomes an issue of disrupting this tie to the land and to the close-knit way of life.

Two researchers (Burns 2007 and Erikson 1978) have investigated the social and cultural impacts along with the environmental consequences of MTR on communities in West Virginia. Erikson (1978) focuses on one mining disaster, the Buffalo Creek Flood of 1972, while Burns (2007) discusses more general social impacts of MTR. Both contend that these effects are just as deleterious as the environmental impacts. Indeed, Erikson (1978) concludes that "The worst damage, though, was done to the minds and the spirits of the people who survived the disaster" (p. 135). The Buffalo Creek flood, in which an impoundment holding the black sludge failed during the night, unleashed a million tons of waste through the valley floor, destroying communities for over 15

miles. Erikson writes that the locals reported consistently the same feelings of anxiety, depression, insomnia, apathy, survival guilt, and "bad nerves." Entire communities were going to bed fully clothed years after the flood, "just in case."

After the flood, people reported feelings of disconnection to central aspects of mountain culture, including their communities, their land, and to one another. Erikson (1978) states, "the fear and apathy and demoralization one encounters along the entire length of the hollow are derived from the shock of being ripped out of a meaningful community setting as well as the shock of meeting that cruel black water" (p. 194). Because many of the survivors lost houses and land that they had lived on for generations, and because entire communities were destroyed, individuals lost their sense of "home" not only in connection to their own land, but also to the sense of long-established community with their neighbors.

Burns (2007) discusses a similar, if not as immediate, effect on contemporary mountain communities. She describes an environment in which once blasting commences, unlike conventional strip mining with blasting lasting a few weeks or months, MTR blasting lasts for years in the same location. The blasting has caused local buildings, including homes, schools, and churches, to fall apart. Foundations crack, windows fall or are blown out, and wells dry up. Coal dust builds up in sums of inches every single day on cars, buildings, and schoolyard playground equipment. Additionally, as companies haul the coal out of the communities, they cause substantial noise pollution for the inhabitants of their route; often keeping them awake all hours of the night. The behemoth trucks, with tires measuring 12 feet tall, have caused numerous accidents with

local motorists, killing several. Finally, these trucks blithely disregard road weight limits, and have destroyed many of the local roads. When communities attempted to take the matter of road weight limits to court, the legislature simply made legal what was illegally practiced for years previously.

Coalfield residents often believe that "their people, particularly their young children, their communities, and homes were not deemed worthy of saving by the politicians and coal companies. Anger was apparent when each spoke of the potential loss of life and the hazards the children in their towns were encountering" (Burns 2007:79). Indeed the West Virginian state government and portions of the United States federal government (e.g., the Army Corps of Engineers) have been longtime allies of coal corporations (Geller 2009).[18] Environmental policy regulating water pollution, mining waste, and land reclamation is seldom enforced at the state or federal level, as this would translate into the need for a drastic overhaul in actual mining processes. In 2003, the federal Environmental Protection Agency even "changed the definition of 'fill' in its Clean Water Act rules to legalize mine waste dumping in waterways. The Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining is eliminating the Stream buffer zone rule altogether" (Motavalli 2007; also see Copeland 2013). Residents are aware of this loosening of state and federal MTR policies, and feel that the government is not protecting its constituency (Burns 2007).

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[18] The Army Corps of Engineers is the governing body responsible for reviewing and granting MTR permits, although the federal and state Environmental Protection Agency may intervene if they find it necessary. Additionally, the Governor's office also has the ability to rescind any and all MTR permits in the state.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISTS

Although the overarching trend in previous research on social movements and political opportunities has focused on the role objective political conditions play in shaping social movements, there also exists literature regarding SMOs and *perceptions* of political opportunities. First, McAdam (1982) argued early on that political opportunities are merely a "structural potential" for social movement mobilization. He argues that equally important is the concept of "cognitive liberation," in which constituents must come to realize their capability to incite political change. McAdam argues, "Mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations" (1982:48). Additionally, Gamson and Meyer (1996) insist that movement activists often purposefully overestimate the degree of political opportunities in order to recruit more movement participants. Roscigno and Danaher (2001) argue that media play an important role in shaping perceptions of political opportunities. As a whole, this literature suggests that political opportunities are not "clear and easily read" (Benford and Snow 2000:631), but are in fact subject to interpretation. As such, EJO activists' perceptions of political opportunities (or lack thereof) may affect their perceptions of organizational decision-making processes. That is to say, the ways in which activists perceive the political context, and the ways in which those perceptions affect their beliefs regarding their organizations' capacity to act, may affect how EJOs decide what tactics to implement.

Similar to activists' perceptions of political opportunities, the ways in which they view the receptivity of the culture in which they are embedded may

affect EJO tactical decision-making processes as well. For example, if activists perceive the culture to be open to her EJO's claims, they may encourage tactical activities such as recruitment and community education. If, however, they perceives to culture to be closed off, they may push for tactics geared towards litigation.

Building on these influential studies, scholars have recently called for more research investigating the ways in which perceptions of political opportunities affect social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; McAdam et al. 2001). Researchers have begun to heed this call (e.g., Banaszak 1996; Faupel and Werum 2011; Lee 2010; Suh 2001). This focus shifts the academic attention from purely macro-level analyses of social movement formation, arguing instead that it is the combination of macro level and individual level processes that predict social movement activity most accurately. Indeed, Staggenborg argues, "Outcomes are influenced not only by political opportunities, but also by the ability to *recognize and take advantage of opportunities*" (2002: 137, italics added).

Finally, Taylor and Van Dyke (2004) argue that activists often draw upon specific tactics because they resonate with their ideals and beliefs. They state, "Activists choose options that conform to their ideological visions, are congruent with their collective identities, and embody the cultural schemas that provide meanings, motives, and templates for action" (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004:277). For instance, Polletta and Jasper (2001) argue that "strategic options may also be intrinsically appealing. They reflect what we believe, what we are comfortable with, what we like, who we are" (p. 284). Indeed, Jasper (1997) goes so far as to

identify "tactical identities" in which activists define themselves through a particular type of activism, ranging from nonviolent civil disobedience to lobbying.

To summarize, in this project, I seek to determine the dynamics shaping tactics of environmental justice organizations. Specifically, I ask two research questions. First, what structural factors influence EJOs' tactical choices? Second, what individual-level factors affect the processes through which EJOs make tactical decisions? I approach the question of tactics with a mixed-methods design, drawing on both a national-level survey with EJOs and in-depth interviews with EJO activists. I turn now to a discussion of the research design.

CHAPTER 3:

DATA AND METHODS

This research seeks to answer two primary research questions. First, how do structural factors affect tactical choices among EJOs? Second, what factors affect the processes through which EJOs make tactical choices? To answer the first research question, I conducted an online survey with 78 environmental justice organizations. To answer the second question, I carried out 20 interviews with environmental justice activists. The resulting quantitative and qualitative data are complementary and provide a basis for providing a fuller picture of EJO tactics. While the survey provides understanding of the broader patterns of EJO tactics, the interviews supply insight into the factors affecting the processes through which EJOs determine and plan a tactical action or event, as well as a picture of those processes themselves.

QUANTITATIVE DATA AND METHODS

The data for the quantitative portion of this project are drawn from survey responses of American environmental justice organizations. To ensure a robust list of EJOs, I obtained contact information for EJOs via two national directories. The first, housed at the University of Michigan, is the Multicultural Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI). The MELDI archive includes listings of nearly 800 environmental justice organizations nationwide, both current and defunct.[19] I cross-referenced this listing with the *People of Color*

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[19] These lists are organized by state, which provided me the information needed for the state-level secondary data I collected, as noted below.

Environmental Groups Directory (POCEGD), published by the Environmental

Justice Research Center housed at Clark Atlanta University. From these

directories, I obtained email and/or phone contact information for 224 active

EJOs.[20] I solicited participation during the fall of 2011 via email, explaining my

research project and including a hyperlink to the survey. I contacted

organizations that did not list email addresses via phone. In the weeks following

the initial contact, I sent three follow-up emails or phone calls reminding

potential participants of the study.

A total of 78 organizations participated in the survey, for a 35 percent

response rate. This response rate falls just below the average organizational

response rate for organizational surveys, which ranges from 18 to 57 percent

(Dobbin and Kelly 2007). I excluded five of the 78 organizations from my analysis

because they were located in Washington D.C., and the state-level data I use for

political and cultural context do not include information for the capital. The other

organizations that participated in the survey were located in 26 states (see Image

3.1). They are involved in various environmental injustice issues, including

mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia, public health issues linked to

industrial pollution in Texas, brownfields in New Jersey, health and healthcare

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[20] As I investigated each EJO listed in both the MELDI archive and the POCEGD, I came to realize
that these lists function more as a historical archive rather than a listing of active EJOs. Hundreds
of the organizations listed were active at some point over the course of the last 20 years, but had
either discontinued their work because they met their specific goal (e.g., won a court case for
Superfund financial support) or disbanded after defeat. The 224 active organizations are
characterized as EJOs that, at the time of the survey, was currently pursuing goals aligned with
the Environmental Justice Movement.

access disparities in disadvantaged communities in Washington state, and

human and environmental health implications of pesticides in Illinois.[21]

      The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Questions

include measures of organizational characteristics, membership, resources, and

institutional and disruptive tactics. To compensate each organization for their

time, I emailed them a $15 Amazon gift card. In addition to the survey responses,

I collected secondary data for several factors external to organizations (i.e., the

state-level political, cultural, and environmental context) from various sources, as

outlined below. Table 3.1 lists all quantitative variables and data sources.

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[21] A brownfield is "an industrial or commercial property that remains abandoned or underutilized in part because of environmental contamination or the fear of such contamination" (Environmental Law Institute 2014).

Image 3.1: EJO Survey Participants by State

Table 3.1 Quantitative Variables and Data Sources

Independent Variable	Concept Measured	Source
Percent Female	Member Demographics	Survey
Percent Minority	Member Demographics	Survey
Organizational Age	Org Characteristic	Survey
Presence of Paid Staff	Org Characteristic	Survey
Lobbyists	Org Characteristic	Survey
Grants	Resources (financial)	Survey
Collaboration	Resources (social)	Survey
Government Ideology	Political Context	Berry et al. 2010
Government Stability	Political Context	Beyle 2007
Democratic Governor	Political Context	Nat'l Governor's Assoc.
Democratic Legislature	Political Context	Statistical Abstracts
Citizen Ideology	Cultural Context	Berry et al. 2010
Community Type	Control	Survey
Toxic Chemicals Released	Control	Statistical Abstracts
Dependent Variable	**Concept Measured**	**Source**
Public Awareness Raising	Institutional Tactics	Survey
Letter Writing Campaigns	Institutional Tactics	Survey
Lobbying Agencies	Institutional Tactics	Survey
Lobbying Legislators	Institutional Tactics	Survey
Filing Lawsuits	Institutional Tactics	Survey
Sit-Ins	Disruptive Tactics	Survey
Lockdowns	Disruptive Tactics	Survey
Demonstrations	Disruptive Tactics	Survey
Purposeful Arrests	Disruptive Tactics	Survey
Other Civil Disobedience	Disruptive Tactics	Survey

Independent Variables

Member Demographics

As discussed in chapter two, historically oppressed groups tend to lack access to political and economic power. Accordingly, members of these groups possess less access to institutional political avenues to voice their concerns. As a result, I included two measures of organizational member demographics. I coded for *female membership* and *nonwhite membership.* The survey questions for these measures are: "What percentage of your organization's members is female?" and "What percentage of your organization's members is nonwhite?" Answers for these questions range from 0 to 100 percent, using 5 percent intervals. I use the decimal form of these raw percentages in my analysis.

Organizational Characteristics

Three items measure organizational characteristics: *organizational age*, the presence of *paid staff*, and *lobbyists.* The presence of each of these characteristics usually indicates that the organization will be more likely to engage in institutional tactics. To measure organizational age, the survey asked, "In what year was your organization founded?" Next, to measure the presence of a paid staff and/or lobbyists, the survey asked, "Does your organization employ paid staff members?" and "Does your organization employ lobbyists?" I use a dummy variable (0=No, 1=Yes) for the presence or absence of lobbyists in my analysis.

Resources

Resources fall into two categories: financial and social capital. As discussed in chapter 2, organizations with more financial resources may be

limited in the activities they can engage in legally, based on their funding sources.

Accordingly, I measured *financial resources* in the survey with questions

regarding the type(s) of funding the organizations receive. Specifically, the survey

asked, "What percentage of your organization's yearly budget is derived from

each of the following..." Answer categories donations, dues, and grants.[22] In my

analysis, I use the decimal version of the percentage of each organization's

reported budget derived from grants.

The second type of resource I measured is *social resources.* Specifically,

the survey asked about collaborations with the question, "How often does your

organization collaborate with...?" Options included local, state, and federal

environmental organizations, with responses measured on a Likert scale ranging

from Never (1) to Frequently (5). In my analysis, I use a standardized additive

scale of these three options (α = .734). I included a measure of collaboration in

my research because organizations that may be limited financially may depend

on opportunities to share knowledge and expertise with other organizations.

In addition to information gathered via the survey, I also drew upon

secondary data gathered from a variety of sources, outlined below.

Political Context

I measured aspects of the state-level political context in four ways. First, to

determine the presence or absence of political allies, I included two measures of

government ideology. As noted earlier, higher levels of liberalism are correlated

with higher levels of environmental concerns (McCright and Dunlap 2000,

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[22] I did not include dues or donations in my analysis because of very little variation in these variables. I also included a measure of whether the EJO is tax exempt, but as 98.6 percent of the organizations responded "yes" to this question, I dropped it from the analysis due to lack of variation.

2003). I borrow a measure of state-level *political ideology*, from Berry et al.

(2010), which assesses how liberal or conservative state political leaders are on a

scale from zero to one hundred (with higher numbers indicating a higher level of

liberalism, see Berry et al. 1998).[23] This widely used measure is considered

invaluable to political science (Enns and Koch 2013), although it is not without its

detractors.[24] Sociologists have recently begun to integrate it into their work,

ranging from state-level investigations of the factors affecting welfare reform

(Mead 2004), same-sex marriage bans (Soule and Olzak 2004), tobacco laws

(Givel 2009), gendered earnings inequality (Ryu 2010), and homeschooling

(Kronberg and Werum 2011). I included a dummy measure of the *legislative*

majority party in the state legislature in the year 2011. This variable is comprised

of raw counts of members of the upper and lower houses of the state legislature,

transformed into a dummy variable (0=Republican, 1=Democratic), drawn from

the Statistical Abstracts of the United States.[25] I also included a dummy variable

of whether the state has a *Democratic governor* (0=Republican, 1=Democratic),

also for the year 2011.[26] This information was drawn from The National

Governors Association.

The last measure of political context is *government stability*. According to

research in the political opportunity school of thought, political challengers may

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[23] The methodology for collecting this longitudinal measure, first introduced in 1998, was updated in 2010 after several critiques of the validity and reliability of the measure (e.g., Brace et al. 2007). I use the updated 2010 version of the measure here.

[24] For instance, Shor, Berry, and McCarty (2010) argue that while the measure captures the ideology of the government as a whole, it cannot provide information regarding individual legislators' ideology.

[25] Due to Nebraska's nonpartisan state legislature, I was unable to collect data on this measure for that state. This did not affect any of the results, however, as EJOs working in Nebraska did not respond to requests for participation in this project.

[26] Rhode Island governor Lincoln Chafee, while an Independent in 2011, has since become a member of the Democratic Party. I therefore code him as a Democrat in my analysis.

take advantage of divisions among elites in order to gain political power

(McAdam 1996). This may include changes in political leaders, a mismatch

between elite leaders (e.g., the state governor and the state legislative majority),

or disagreements among political organizations (e.g., the state Department of

Environmental Protection and the state legislature). These situations may

provide the opportunity needed for EJOs to enter into political institutions.

Accordingly, I used a measure of gubernatorial institutional powers borrowed

from Beyle (2007). Beyle (2007) includes several measures in the scale, including

governors' tenure potential, their power over the state budget, their veto power,

and the degree to which their party controls the state legislature. The scale ranges

from one to five, with higher numbers indicating a higher degree of political

stability. Beyle's measure is "the most recognized method for measuring the

formal and informal powers of state governors" (Reisinger 2008:1). Indeed,

political scientists have used the measure in a variety of areas, including

investigations of legislative agendas (Taylor 2010), public health (Elligers 2007),

and states' success in meeting goals (Doehrman 2007).

Cultural Context

I also examined cultural opportunities that potentially affect EJO tactics.

To assess cultural support for EJ issues, I included a measure of *citizen ideology*,

or the general liberalness and conservativeness of state citizens, also drawn from

Berry et al. (2010). This measure ranges on a scale from zero to 100, with higher

numbers indicating a higher level of liberalism (see Berry et al. 1998 for a more

detailed discussion). As with the political opportunities measure from Berry et al.

(2010), political scientists have capitalized on this measure much more so than

sociologists (e.g., Camobreco and Barnello 2003). Again, previous research has documented that politically liberal individuals are more likely to possess higher levels of concern for a variety of social justice issues, including feminist initiatives (McCammon et al. 2001), LGBT rights (Haider-Markel and Meier 2003), and environmental issues (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003). As such, when combined into a state citizenry, they will comprise a cultural context more open to combating environmental issues.

Controls

I controlled for two factors. First, I included a measure of urban/rural setting. I inquired about the organization's setting, with answers including urban, suburban, and rural. I create dummy variables for suburban and rural, comparing both to urban. Additionally, as the EJM has emerged in response to various types of toxic environmental conditions (including toxins emitted into land, air, and water from power plants, industry, and landfills), I controlled for state-level environmental conditions. I used a measure, drawn from Statistical Abstracts of the United States, of the amount of toxic chemical released by state and outlying area (measured in millions of pounds).

Dependent Variables

Tactics

Each survey question regarding tactics took the following form: "In the past 2 years, how often did you organization engage in...?" Options included awareness-raising, letter writing campaigns, lobbying, filing lawsuits, sit-ins, lock-downs, demonstrations, purposeful arrests, and other civil disobedience. Available answers took the form of a Likert scale, ranging from Never (1) to

Frequently (5). I employed principal component factor analysis with Varimax

rotation to assess the survey items measuring tactical choices. (See Table 3.2 for

full factor analysis). The ten items loaded on two factors, one indicating

institutional tactics and one indicating disruptive tactics. For both, I created

additive scales, standardized by the number of constituent items.

The institutional tactics scale consisted of five items (Eigenvalues in

parentheses): public awareness raising (.491), letter writing campaigns (.830),

lobbying agencies (.883), lobbying legislators (.859), and filing lawsuits (.615).

Cronbach's Alpha is .801, indicating a high reliability for the scale. The disruptive

tactics scale also consisted of five items, including sit-ins (.870), lock-downs

(.849), demonstrations (.831), purposeful arrests (.853), and other civil

disobedience (.817). Cronbach's Alpha for this scale is also high, at .868.

Table 3.2 Factor Analysis

Factor	Item	Eigenvalue	Cronbach's Alpha
Institutional Tactics	Public Awareness Raising	.491	.801
	Letter Writing Campaigns	.830	
	Lobbying Agencies	.883	
	Lobbying Legislators	.859	
	Filing Lawsuits	.615	
Disruptive Tactics	Sit-Ins	.870	.868
	Lockdowns	.849	
	Demonstrations	.831	
	Purposeful Arrests	.853	
	Other Civil Disobedience	.817	

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

I used seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) to examine how the independent variables affect EJO's tactical behaviors. Seemingly unrelated regression is appropriate here because it takes into account the non-independence of the dependent variables (Minnotte, Mannon, Stevens, and Kilger 2008; Timm 2002). In other words, while the two types of tactics are conceptually distinct, in reality organizations often engage in both types of tactics. Seemingly unrelated regression considers the correlation among the errors between the institutional and disruptive tactics models, and uses those errors to improve the estimates (Timm 2002). The model also tests whether the independent variables operate differently for institutional and disruptive tactics.[27] Results for seemingly unrelated regression are interpreted in the same way as those from ordinary least squares. I also centered each non-dummy independent variable, and clustered based on whether the organization was located in Central Appalachia and working against mountaintop removal.

QUALITATIVE DATA AND METHODS

To unveil the "black box" of SMOs' decision-making processes (Minkoff and McCarthy 2005), I pursued interviews with environmental justice activists to facilitate complementary understanding of the patterns my quantitative analysis generates. I designed the interview questions to assess processes and perceptions that survey questions cannot access. While the quantitative analysis illustrated what factors affect tactical choices, the qualitative analysis determined how

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[27] I also ran the analyses using OLS regression, and did not find any significant differences between the OLS and SUR models.

organizational members perceive both the factors influencing and the actual

processes through which tactical choices are made. The qualitative analysis, then,

complements the quantitative data by pinpointing the mechanisms through

which tactical choices are made. These mechanisms are the "nuts, bolts, cogs, and

wheels that link causes with effects" (Campbell 2005:42).

<u>Selecting Two Environmental Justice Organizations</u>

      The intention of qualitative research is to "gain detailed understanding of

a certain phenomenon, to identify socially constructed meanings of the

phenomenon and the context in which a phenomenon occurs" (Hennink, Hutter,

and Bailey 2011:84). To that end, I engaged in purposive sampling in selecting

two EJOs of interest. Purposive sampling is deliberate sampling in that the

participants are chosen for the appropriateness of their characteristics,

experiences, and knowledge on the topic of interest (Hennink et al. 2011). I

selected two EJOs that work towards similar goals (ceasing mountaintop removal

in Central Appalachia), are located in the same region of the country (Central

Appalachia), and possess similar member demographics. Their tactics, however,

vary drastically. While one engages primarily in disruptive tactics, the other

chooses to pursue strictly institutional tactics.

      I selected these EJOs based on both theoretical and logistical

considerations. Theoretically, the research questions were driven by an interest

in the factors affecting tactics. Interviewing activists with differing opinions on

appropriateness of tactics provided a window on understanding of why some

activists choose to pursue change through institutional channels such as lobbying

legislators, while others engage in illegal and sometimes dangerous tactics such

as tree sits. It is imperative to this study, then, to interview members of two EJOs with radically differing tactical repertoires.

Logistically, I selected one EJO (Coal Disruption, located in West Virginia) with which I could easily establish rapport, as I was already acquainted with two activists affiliated with the organization. As part of a broader coalition of EJOs working against mountaintop removal in Appalachia, Coal Disruption introduced me to members of the second organization (Concerned Mountain Citizens, located in Tennessee), also a coalition member.[28] Additionally, I chose these EJOs based on location, as they both operate in regions I could reach in less than a day's travel, and thus had the opportunity to conduct interviews face-to-face multiple times a year. I conducted the interviews during 2012 and 2013, after the survey was complete.

Establishing Rapport and Recruitment

I established contact with Coal Disruption regarding this study via the email I sent requesting their participation in the quantitative aspect of this project. I provided detailed information regarding the qualitative data collection and analysis. In addition to the correspondence regarding the quantitative data collection, I was able to gain entry into Coal Disruption through activist acquaintances I had established prior to the start of this project. Specifically, I met two environmental justice activists while volunteering for another social movement on a university campus. Through these affiliations, I was able to create initial rapport with other members of Coal Disruption. In order to strengthen rapport, I attended many of their events over the course of several months,

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[28] Both of these organizational names are pseudonyms.

including rallies, social gatherings, and week-long educational camps. During this time, I established relationships with two key informants.

These key informants, as well as several members of Coal Disruption I interviewed, suggested that I also interview members of Concerned Mountain Citizens. Although Concerned Mountain Citizens is a member of the regional coalition of organizations operating in Appalachia to address mountaintop removal issues, the organization was not listed in either the MELDI or the POCEGD. As such, I took the opportunity to explore an organization working "under the radar." Instead of selecting a "known" EJO, I chose to investigate one working quietly through political channels in their attempt to stop MTR in their area. I hoped that comparing such different EJOs would be a fruitful way to build theoretical arguments regarding each type of organization.

Within each organization, I drew upon a snowball method for finding interview participants. Traditional snowball sampling involves asking key informants and/or research participants to suggest other community members who fit the study criteria. The participant refers this person to the researcher, and then the researcher in turn asks that person for referrals, and so on (Hennink et al. 2011). This type of sampling tends to capture individuals in the same social network, which can be troublesome in some research designs. It is particularly useful, however, in studying EJO activists, as they have relationships with other EJO members and can make suggestions based on specific criteria. Another advantage to snowball sampling is that participants are typically linked to the research through a trusted friend. This potentially allows the participants to feel more comfortable in speaking candidly during the interview.

I conducted interviews with both male and female environmental justice activists associated with the two EJOs. (See Table 3.3 for summary of interview participants.) Prior to each of my three research trips, I sent an email to each organization's listserv to remind them of my upcoming presence. During each trip, I spent the first day simply spending time with organizational members, taking time to introduce myself in person (as we had only communicated via email up to this point), explain my research project face-to-face, answer any questions they had, and ask general questions about their organization's day-to-day operations and the community in which they worked. I began with scheduling three to five interviewees with each organization, and from those participants obtained information about other members who were willing to participate as well. I spent the next several days (each trip lasted three to six days) interviewing individual members. At the end of each interview, I asked each participant to suggest other activists present who might be interested in participating in my project.

Table 3.3 Summary of Interview Participants (using Pseudonyms)

Name (Pseudonym)	Organization	Gender
Tess	Coal Disruption	Female
Joan	Coal Disruption	Female
Jane	Coal Disruption	Female
Rachel	Coal Disruption	Female
Eve	Coal Disruption	Female
Kevin	Coal Disruption	Male
Nathan	Coal Disruption	Male
Hunter	Coal Disruption	Male
Dylan	Coal Disruption	Male
James	Coal Disruption	Male
Lucy	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Female
Hannah	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Female
Sydney	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Female
Madelyn	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Female
Sophia	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Female
Henry	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Male
Ethan	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Male
Ben	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Male
Kent	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Male
David	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Male

<u>In-Depth Interviews</u>

I conducted a total of 20 interviews, 10 with each organization. I included questions regarding the respondent's history of activism, as well as her/his perceptions of the political and community context in which their organization operates.

The interviews took place over the course of several months, from May 2012 to March 2013. After establishing contact with the EJOs, I traveled to Appalachia to conduct the interviews. The interviews took place at two community centers located in West Virginia and one in Tennessee. At each location, I conducted interviews in a variety of places, including private meeting rooms and various outdoor locations around the centers. Each was held away from the general public and other EJO members to ensure respondents' candor. I provided $20 to respondents as compensation for their time. Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

I conducted no more than three interviews per day for several reasons. First, this allowed me ample time to talk with each respondent. Second, it minimized the time drain on the organizations my presence may have caused, as I did not wish to pull too many of them away from their work on any given day. Finally, limiting the number of interviews to three per day allowed me sufficient time to reflect on each interview once completed, make any needed changes to the interview questions, and keep detailed notes on my general impression of the interview while it was fresh in my mind.

<u>Independent Variables</u>

History of Activism

The first set of interview questions tapped into activists' *previous experience with activism* and *affinity for tactics.* These questions include: "What other advocacy/volunteer/activist organizations have you worked with in the past?"; "How did you get into activist work?"; "What kinds of tactics do you like the best? Least?" and "What has been your favorite action/event that you have been a part of with [name of organization]?"

Perceptions of Political Context

I drew on the interviews to evaluate how organizational members' *perceptions of political opportunities* affect their organization's decision making processes. Specifically, I asked about how local and state politicians, as well as county and state police, respond to and interact with the EJO activists in the area.

Perceptions of Community Context

Similarly, I investigated activists' *perceptions of community opportunities* in their region. These questions include items such as "How do local folks respond to [name of organization]?"; "How do executives of the coal industry respond to [name of organization]?"; "How do coal miners or other coal employees respond to [name of organization]?" One topic that emerged from the interviews was the notion of silent support, in which community members provided both organizations with non-financial resources including food from family gardens, moral support in the form of anonymous notes expressing thanks, and firewood. Once I learned of this silent support, I questioned each

subsequent interviewee about both their experience with it and knowledge of it occurring.

<u>Dependent Variables</u>

Tactical Decision-Making Processes

The interviews were designed to establish what factors into the process of selecting tactics for EJOs. Once I had asked respondents to discuss their perceptions of the political and community context, I asked a series of questions to determine how these perceptions affected tactical choices. These questions included: "You mentioned that the politicians around here [fill in with what respondent said earlier about perceptions of political context]. How does that affect how [name of organization] goes about deciding on what tactics to use?" "You've talked some about how the local folks around here have responded to [name of organization]. How do those responses affect how [name of organization] goes about deciding on what tactics to use?" "Earlier you mentioned your favorite action/event that you have been involved with. How did [name of organization] decide upon that event? Who was involved in the planning? Where did the resources come from?" and "Is there a standard process for how event-planning works? How does [name of organization] usually go about deciding upon a tactic and planning it out?"

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Each interview was transcribed verbatim, including any laughs, sighs, pauses, and fillers (e.g., "um," "uh"), as these may convey meaning and give context to what is being said (Hennink et al. 2011). All interviews were deidenified in order to protect participant anonymity. After reading through the

transcriptions, I created a codebook using both deductive and inductive codes. In qualitative research, a code refers to "an issue, topic, idea, opinion, etc., that is evident in the data" (Hennink et al. 2011). In other words, codes are labels applied to the varying topics interview participants discuss. There are two types of codes in qualitative research. First, deductive codes are those derived from the theoretical constructs that guide research questions and hypotheses (Hennink et al. 2011). These codes are topics that researchers specifically ask about during the in-depth interview. Deductive codes in this project are related to respondents' history of activism, and their perceptions of the political and community environment. Inductive codes, on the other hand, are those that come directly from the interview data and represent things important to interviewees that the researcher had not theorized a priori (Hennink et al. 2011). Inductive codes in this project included silent support (as discussed above), the centrality of collaboration and trainings with other activists and organizations, and a general fear for safety with regard to speaking out against the coal industry I used MAXQDA to organize and code all interviews.

Once I coded the interviews, I compared Concerned Mountain Citizens and Coal Disruption activists' histories, along with their perceptions of the political and community context in which they work. I also examined how the activists discussed these factors in regard to their organizations' tactical decision-making processes. This allowed me to determine the differences between the different types of activists, and the factors that they consider important to their tactical decisions. Additionally, I compared the findings from the survey data analysis to the qualitative data in order to determine whether they are consistent.

That is to say, I determined how both structural conditions and activists' perceptions of structural affect tactical decisions of environmental justice organizations. Interestingly, collaborations play a central role in both the quantitative and qualitative data. In the following chapter, I outline the findings on the quantitative data.

CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: GENERAL TACTICAL TRENDS

ACROSS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

I set out to determine what factors affect EJOs' tactical choices. I expected

factors both internal (i.e., member demographics, organizational characteristics,

and resources) and external (i.e., the political and cultural context) to the

organizations to affect whether they engage in institutional or disruptive tactics.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

Table 4.1 presents a correlation matrix of the variables (with means and

standard deviations on the diagonal). Unsurprisingly, some of the factors relating

to the political and cultural climate are significantly correlated. For example,

government ideology is correlated with government stability (b=.559, p≤.001)

and a Democratic majority in the state legislature (b=.533, p≤.001), while the

presence of a Democratic governor is correlated with a Democratic majority in

the state legislature (b=.608, p≤.001). Moreover, citizen ideology is correlated

with each political context variable, including government stability (b=.465,

p≤.001), government ideology (b=.610, p≤.001), a Democratic majority in the

state legislature (b=.421, p≤.001), and the presence of a Democratic governor

(b=.315, p≤.001). Finally, the measure of state-level environmental conditions

(the amount of toxic chemicals released by state and outlying area measured in

millions of pounds) is negatively correlated with government ideology (b= -.330,

p≤.001), Democratic majority in the legislature (b= -.504, p≤.001), the presence

of a Democratic governor (b= -.346, p≤.01), and citizen ideology (b= -.281, p≤.05). This indicates that in states with higher levels of liberalism, toxic emissions are lower.

      Based on these correlations, I ran Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) tests for each model to test for possible multicollinearity. While researchers vary in their judgment of acceptable VIF thresholds, ranging from 10 (Hair et al. 1995) to as low as 4 (Pan and Jackson 2008), I found VIF scores ranging from 1.09 to 3.37, with most scores falling below 2.0. This indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue in my models.

Table 4.1 Correlation Matrix with Means (and Standard Deviations) on the Diagonal

	Percent Female	Percent Minority	Organization Age	Percent Paid Staff	Lobbyists	Grants	Collaboration
Percent Female	.596 (.228)						
Percent Minority	.200	.450 (.360)					
Organizational Age	.199	.006	28.42 (30.51)				
Percent Paid Staff	.237	-.018	.231	.838 (.371)			
Lobbyists	.095	-.178	-.028	.172	.130 (.339)		
Grants	.251*	.273*	-.063	.109	.178	.483 (.366)	
Collaboration	.023	-.411***	.117	.161	.179	-.054	3.85 (.893)
Government Stability	-.083	.066	-.047	-.109	-.224+	-.250*	.036
Government Ideology	-.055	-.123	-.118	-.057	.089	-.151	-.023
Democratic Legislature	.053	.030	-.082	-.055	.111	.044	.051
Democratic Governor	.097	-.062	-.023	.093	.102	-.056	.155
Citizen Ideology	-.137	-.006	-.198	-.145	-.039	-.119	.026
Rural Community	-.200	-.314**	.005	-.055	.005	-.110	.142
Suburban Community	-.287*	.000	-.014	-.160	-.067	-.159	-.102
Toxic Chemicals	.084	-.058	-.040	.080	-.055	.123	.172
Institutional Tactics	-.056	-.112	-.048	.190	.352**	-.126	.471***
Disruptive Tactics	.070	.411***	-.108	-.224+	-.190	-.190	.080

+ $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$, ***$p \leq .001$

Table 4.1 Correlation Matrix with Means (and Standard Deviations) on the Diagonal (Continued)

	Govern Stability	Govern Ideology	Democrat Legislature	Democrat Governor	Citizen Ideology	Rural Comm	Suburban Comm	Toxic Chemicals	Institution Tactics	Disruptive Tactics
Government Stability	3.59 (.426)									
Government Ideology	.559***	71.87 (23.08)								
Democratic Legislature	.131	.533***	.768 (.425)							
Democratic Governor	.009	.144	.608***	.652 (.480)						
Citizen Ideology	.465***	.610***	.421***	.315**	65.14 (13.28)					
Rural Community	-.027	.062	.040	-.058	-.110	.217 (.416)				
Suburban Community	.189	.118	-.110	-.055	.209[+]	-.091	.029 (.169)			
Toxic Chemicals	.089	-.330**	-.504***	-.346**	-.281*	-.062	-.012	72.89 (119.56)		
Institutional Tactics	.104	-.104	-.024	.150	.063	.016	-.216[+]	.276*	3.21 (1.05)	
Disruptive Tactics	.219[+]	-.069	-.087	.042	.063	-.018	-.100	.106	.278*	1.65 (.846)

[+] p≤.10, * p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

MODELS

Table 4.2 presents three models, one using only EJO internal factors (Model 1), one using only factors external to the EJOs (Model 2), and the full model, including both types of factors (Model 3). The first set of hypotheses address the relationship between organizational member demographics and tactical behaviors. Hypothesis 1a predicts that higher levels of *female membership* will predict the occurrence of disruptive tactics, and higher levels of male membership will predict the occurrence of institutional tactics. Hypothesis 1a is supported, as female membership is negatively correlated with institutional tactics in both the partial (*b*= -.776, p≤.001) and full (*b*= -.598, p≤.001) models. Additionally, female membership is positively correlated with disruptive tactics in the partial (*b*=.820, p≤.01) and full (*b*=.808, p≤.001) models. These findings indicate that EJOs with more female members engage in more disruptive tactics, while organizations with more male members engage in more institutional tactics.

Table 4.2 Centered Seemingly Unrelated Regression Standardized Coefficients for the Effects of Internal and External Organizational Factors on Institutional and Disruptive Tactics (with Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model 1– Internal Factors		Model 2– External Factors		Model 3– Full Model	
	Institutional Tactics	Disruptive Tactics	Institutional Tactics	Disruptive Tactics	Institutional Tactics	Disruptive Tactics
Member Demographics						
Percent Female (0=M, 1=F)	-.776*** (.115)	.820** (.289)			-.598*** (.051)	.808*** (.174)
Percent Minority (0=W, 1=M)	.579*** (.172)	1.460*** (.008)			.424 (.332)	1.573*** (.141)
Org Characteristics						
Organization Age	-.017*** (.004)	-.016* (.007)			-.019*** (.001)	-.016 (.009)
Paid Staff (0=no, 1=yes)	.447 (.416)	-.563* (.293)			.500 (.444)	-.694* (.301)
Lobbyists (0=no, 1=yes)	1.113** (.446)	-.152 (.145)			1.292*** (.331)	-.187 (.264)
Resources						
Grants (as pct of budget)	-.008*** (.001)	-.007* (.003)			-.007*** (.000)	-.007** (.003)
Collaboration	.347* (.158)	.322*** (.061)			.279 (.170)	.342*** (.008)
Political Context						
Government Stability (lo=unstable, hi=stable)			.103 (.654)	.596** (.191)	.434 (.479)	-.008 (.294)
Government Ideology (lo=con, hi=lib)			-.008 (.012)	-.009** (.003)	-.014 (.008)	.002 (.006)
Legislative Majority (0=R, 1=D)			-.127 (.683)	-.298** (.118)	.055 (.794)	-.301*** (.081)
Democratic Governor (0=No, 1=Yes)			.498*** (.105)	.207 (.137)	.234*** (.014)	.499*** (.016)
Cultural Context						
Citizen ideology (low=con, high=lib)			.022*** (.002)	.007 (.013)	.023*** (.005)	.001 (.013)
Controls						
Rural	-.089 (.120)	.359 (.322)	.192*** (.025)	.128 (.423)	.021* (.010)	.432 (.277)
Suburban	-1.655*** (.303)	.805*** (.237)	-1.408*** (.103)	-.880*** (.125)	-1.628*** (.264)	.976*** (.301)
Toxic Chemicals Released	.002*** (.001)	.001*** (.000)	.003*** (.000)	.000 (.000)	.002** (.001)	.001*** (.000)
Constant	1.814*** (.308)	1.179*** (.207)	2.166*** (.481)	.748*** (.091)	1.538*** (.297)	1.229*** (.323)
Adjusted R^2	.388	.369	.094	.023	.436	.351

* p≤.05   **p≤.01   ***p≤.001

Hypothesis 1b predicts that higher levels of *minority membership* will predict the occurrence of disruptive tactics, and higher levels of white membership will predict the occurrence of institutional tactics. Unexpectedly, percent minority is positively correlated with institutional tactics in the partial model (b=.579, p≤.001), yet it fails to maintain significance in the full model. Percent minority is positively correlated with disruptive tactics in both Model 1 (b=1.460, p≤.001) and Model 3 (b=1.573, p≤.001), indicating support for hypothesis 1b. Overall, then, I find that gender and race both affect EJO tactical choices.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that higher levels of institutionalization will correlate with the likelihood of EJOs engaging in institutional tactics, while lower levels of institutionalization will correlate with the likelihood of EJOs engaging in disruptive tactics. I find partial support for this hypothesis. *Organizational age* is negatively correlated with institutional tactics in both the partial (b= -.017, p≤.001) and full (b= -.019, p≤.001) models, indicating that as organizations become older, they engage in less institutional tactics. This is counter to the general relationship between organizational characteristics and tactics proposed in Hypothesis 2, although not entire surprising. The relationship suggests that as organizations age, they engage in less "activist" activities overall, and instead choose to focus on organizational maintenance activities such as fundraising (Staggenborg 1988). The presence of *paid staff* is negatively correlated with disruptive tactics in Model 1 (b= -.563, p≤.05) and Model 3 (b= -.694, p≤.05). This negative relationship indicates that the absence of a paid staff is correlated

with EJOs' engagement in disruptive tactics. The final indicator of institutionalization, the presence of *lobbyists*, is highly significant for institutional tactics in both Model 1 (b=1.113, p≤.001) and Model 3 (b=1.292, p≤.001). The presence of lobbyists, therefore, is strongly correlated with EJOs' engagement in institutional tactics. Overall, these findings generally indicate support for hypothesis 2.

The third set of hypotheses address the relationship between resources and tactics. Hypothesis 3a predicts that organizations with more financial resources will engage in more institutional tactics. The findings indicate mixed results for this hypothesis. Financial resources garnered through *grants* have a negative correlation for disruptive tactics in both the partial (b= -.007, p≤.05) and full (b= -.007, p≤.01) models, lending support for Hypothesis 3a. Surprisingly, however, grants also have a negative correlation to institutional tactics in both the partial (b= -.008, p≤.001) and full (b= -.007, p≤.01) models. This indicates that EJO with more grants are less active in general. I discuss these findings in more detail below.

According to hypothesis 3b, organizations with more social capital resources are more likely to engage in more disruptive tactics. Indeed, *collaboration* with other environmental organizations is correlated to disruptive tactics in both Model 1 (b=.322, p≤.001) and Model 3 (b=.342, p≤.001). Unexpectedly, collaborations also have a positive correlation with institutional tactics in Model 1 (b=.347, p≤.05). This relationship, however, fails to reach significance in the full model. Again, I discuss these findings in more detail below.

Hypothesis 4a and 4b predict the relationship between tactics and state government. Specifically, Hypothesis 4a states that EJOs working in states with more political allies will be more likely to engage in institutional rather than disruptive tactics, while organizations working in states with few elite allies will be more likely to engage in disruptive rather than institutional tactics. I employed several measures to determine the presence of political allies. First, the results indicate that *government ideology* does not reach significance in Model 3. The presence of a *Democratic legislative majority*, however, is strongly negatively correlated with disruptive tactics in the partial ($b= -.298$, $p\leq.01$) and full ($b= -.301$, $p\leq.001$) models indicating that a Republican majority in the legislature is associated with higher levels of disruptive tactics. The presence of a *Democratic governor* is correlated with both institutional ($b=.234$, $p\leq.001$) and disruptive ($b=.499$, $p\leq.001$) tactics in Model 3. These results indicate mixed support for hypotheses 4a.

Hypothesis 4b expects that organizations working in states with lower levels of *government stability* will engage in more institutional rather than disruptive tactics, while organizations working in states with higher levels of government stability will engage in more disruptive rather than institutional tactics. Although the data provide sufficient variation (with scores ranging from 2.6 to 4.3 on a total scale of 1 to 5), the results do not indicate support for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5 addresses the relationship between EJO tactics and the degree of liberalism or conservatism of the state citizenry. Specifically, Hypothesis 5 suggests that EJOs working in states with a predominately liberal

citizenry will be more likely to engage in institutional rather than disruptive

tactics because liberal citizens are more likely to care about environmental

concerns (Mohai et al. 2009). This hypothesis is supported in the partial model

(b=.022, p≤.001) and in the full model (b=.023, p≤.001). Conversely, no support

emerges for the expectation that EJOs working in states with a predominately

conservative citizenry will be more likely to engage in disruptive rather than

institutional tactics.

Finally, I controlled for both community type and the levels of toxic

chemicals released in the state. Rural location is significant for disruptive tactics

in the full model (b=.021, p≤.05). Interestingly, a suburban setting is negatively

correlated to institutional tactics (b= -1.628, p≤.001) and positively correlated to

disruptive tactics (b= .976, p≤.001) in Model 3. This indicates that EJOs located

in suburban areas engage in institutional tactics *less* often and disruptive tactics

more often than their urban counterparts. Last, in Model 3, the release of toxic

chemicals is positively correlated to both institutional (b=.003, p≤.01) and

disruptive tactics (b=.001, p≤.001), indicating that EJOs located in states with

higher levels of toxic chemicals are, perhaps not surprisingly, more likely to

engage in both types of tactics.

DISCUSSION

Internal Factors

My results largely support findings from previous research concerning

factors internal to EJOs. Organizations consisting mainly of males tend to engage

in more institutional tactics, while organizations consisting of more minorities

and women engage in more disruptive tactics. This reflects the notion that, owing

to their lack of political and economic power, members of socially disadvantaged classes are most likely to engage in disruptive tactics (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

Additionally, the results indicate support for the notion that higher levels of institutionalization within EJOs correlates to higher levels of institutional tactics. As expected, EJOs with institutionalized characteristics (i.e., lobbyists) are more likely to engage in institutional tactics and less likely to engage in disruptive tactics. The more an EJO has access to formalized structures of funding (i.e., grants), though, the fewer institutionalized tactics it will engage in. This relationship is the opposite of what Hypothesis 3a predicts. This relationship may be due to specific details of the grants for which EJOs apply, as some granting agencies may prefer to support organizations that do not engage in any type of overly political activity, including lobbying and pursuing legislative initiatives. Interestingly, I do not find evidence that EJOs progress along a path of institutionalization, parting with their disruptive politics in order to ensure their continued existence (Skocpol 2003). In fact, my results indicate that older EJOs engage in fewer institutional activities.

As predicted in Hypothesis 3b, EJOs that frequently engage in collaborations with other SMOs engage in more disruptive rather than institutional tactics. This finding is of particular importance to the literature on the pursuit of environmental justice. Members of EJOs may find coalition-building to be of particular importance, as most of these organizations operate with very few financial resources. Indeed, previous research indicates that members of EJOs perceive coalition-building as a highly favorable activity, and

engage in coalition-building activities with several type or organizations, ranging from other EJOs to local businesses, schools, economic advocacy groups, and community organizations (Mix 2011).

My findings indicate that this coalition-building process leads EJOs to broaden their own tactical repertoires to engage more frequently in disruptive tactics. Perhaps this can be attributed to how EJOs learn to "do" the tactics they engage in. To learn more about institutional tactics, members of EJOs can easily peruse the materials used in letter-writing campaigns and leafleting initiatives of large environmental organizations via public websites, without contacting the organization. The learning process for how to engage in disruptive tactics, however, may require EJOs to establish trusting relationships with organizations that engage in such illegal activity. Most organizations, even if they engage in disruptive tactics often, do not make public information of how they go about these planning and executing these events. Thus, a more personal relationship is required to acquire this kind of knowledge.

<u>External Factors</u>

I examine several types of political opportunities. First, I consider the role political parties play in EJO tactical choices. I find that the presence of a Democratic governor increases the likelihood of both institutional and disruptive tactics, while a majority of Republicans in the state legislature predicts disruptive tactics. These findings largely support the findings of previous work investigating middle-class movements. As discussed earlier, environmental concerns are correlated with a liberal/Democratic mindset than that of a conservative/Republican one. Accordingly, the presence of a Democratic

governor represents a possible elite ally with whom EJOs may work. Conversely, the presence of Republicans in the state legislature may indicate a state polity less concerned about environmental issues, leading EJOs to engage in more disruptive tactics.

SUMMARY

The findings of this project add to the literature in both the environmental justice and social movements. While environmental justice research tends to be comprised of case studies examining EJOs (Mohai et al. 2009), this is the first study to investigate the tactical trends across a broad sample of EJOs. The results confirm that while there are some similarities between EJOs and the SMOs of middle-class movements regarding tactical choices (i.e., factors internal to EJOs), there are meaningful differences as well (i.e., the effects of the political climate).

In the following chapter, I present the qualitative findings of this project. While the quantitative data provides insight into the EJO operations across a large sample of organizations, the qualitative illustrates how EJO activists operate with two specific EJOs.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: COMMUNITY INPUT, POLITICAL CONTEXT, AND

TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The interview portion of this project was meant to investigate the factors

affecting the processes through which environmental justice organizations

(EJOs) and activists decide on their tactical choices. While the quantitative

portion of this project was designed to ascertain the structural-level factors

affecting EJO tactical choices, the interviews were designed to determine the

"black box" of how activists' histories of activism, as well as their *perceptions* of

structural factors, affect organizational decision-making processes (Minkoff and

McCarthy 2005). Whereas previous research has focused on the role of locals,

particularly local women (e.g., Bell and Braun 2010), in the environmental justice

movement in Central Appalachia, I focused on the role "outsiders" play in the

dispute over mountaintop removal (MTR). Over the past ten years, there has

been an influx of environmental justice activists into Central Appalachia, with

their sole focus on joining the battle to stop MTR. Although locals and outsiders

often work together in coordinated efforts to stop MTR in the impacted

communities, I spoke almost exclusively with non-native activists for this

research. In the interviews, I focused on the activists' previous experiences with

activism, their perceptions on the community and political context in which their

EJO operated, and the general processes through which their organization made

tactical decisions. I interviewed ten EJO activists affiliated with one of two EJOs,

for a total of twenty interviews. Table 5.1 indicates each respondent's duration of time affiliated with their EJO, as well as the role that they play in it.

In what follows, I first provide background on each of the communities in which the two EJOs, Concerned Mountain Citizens and Coal Disruption, are located, followed by an overview of my respondents' previous experiences with activism. Next, I examine the activists' perceptions of the community and political contexts in which their EJOs operate, and argue that these perceptions of circumstances shape the tactical decision-making processes of each EJO.

Table 5.1 Interview Participants' Position in their EJO

Name (Pseudonym)	Organization	Duration with EJO (at time of interview)	Position
Tess	Coal Disruption	3.5 years	Volunteer
Joan	Coal Disruption	1 year	Volunteer
Jane	Coal Disruption	3 years	Volunteer
Rachel	Coal Disruption	6 months	Volunteer
Eve	Coal Disruption	4 years	Volunteer
Kevin	Coal Disruption	6 years	Volunteer
Nathan	Coal Disruption	3 years	Volunteer
Hunter	Coal Disruption	6 years	Volunteer
Dylan	Coal Disruption	4 years	Volunteer
James	Coal Disruption	1 year	Volunteer
Lucy	Concerned Mountain Citizens	8 years	Co-Director (paid)
Hannah	Concerned Mountain Citizens	2 years	Volunteer
Sydney	Concerned Mountain Citizens	8 years	Paid Staff
Madelyn	Concerned Mountain Citizens	5 years	Volunteer
Sophia	Concerned Mountain Citizens	8 years	Co-Director (paid)
Henry	Concerned Mountain Citizens	8 years	Volunteer
Ethan	Concerned Mountain Citizens	3.5 years	Volunteer
Ben	Concerned Mountain Citizens	3 years	Volunteer
Kent	Concerned Mountain Citizens	3 years	Volunteer
David	Concerned Mountain Citizens	7 months	Volunteer

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION: SETTING THE SCENES

Coal mining in Tennessee occurs on a small scale compared to other coal-producing states (i.e., West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and Wyoming). Only three counties in Tennessee actively mine coal: the neighboring counties of Anderson, Campbell, and Claiborne, clustered on the Cumberland Plateau in northeast Tennessee. These three rural, somewhat isolated counties produce coal via MTR. Concerned Mountain Citizens (CMC) was formed to address community issues in the area, including MTR, unemployment, drug use, and education. It is the only organization of its kind operating in the area, and consists of two levels of membership: a core group of paid staff members responsible for deciding on the tactics in which the organization engages, and volunteers who assist in carrying out day-to-day operations and tactics activities. CMC engages solely in institutional tactics focused on policy initiatives and lawsuits.

Coal mining in West Virginia has been occurring on a large scale for hundreds of years. Although coal is produced in most West Virginian counties, MTR operations are particularly prominent in five counties: Logan, Boone, Mingo, Kanawha, and Raleigh, all located in the southern region of the state. Many EJOs have cropped up in the area in direct response to the practice of MTR. While some are founded and operated mainly by local women, others are comprised of "outsiders," or transplants who have immigrated to the region specifically to work against the practice of MTR. Coal Disruption (CD) is one such

"outsider" organization.[29] CD engages in both institutional and disruptive tactics, and its tactical decision-making processes occur on two levels. While a core group of volunteer members are responsible for the majority of institutional tactics (mainly focused on education and awareness-raising), CD members break into small autonomous "affinity groups" when deciding on disruptive tactics (e.g., tree sits and lockdowns). (I discuss these groups in more detail below.)

ACTIVISTS' HISTORIES

As discussed in chapter 2, activists may pursue a specific tactic because it resonates with their identity, ideals, and beliefs (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Jasper (1997) argues that activists define themselves through a particular form of activism, resulting in a type of "tactical identity." As such, members of EJOs with a history of activism may have cultivated a type of tactical identity that informs their opinions on the types of tactics in which their EJO should engage. For example, if a member of CMC had worked previously on legislative initiatives and found that work to be rewarding and fruitful, she may push for CMC to engage in similar initiatives.

Concerned Mountain Citizens

As Tables 5.2 indicates, half of the CMC activists I interviewed had engaged in activism prior to their affiliation with CMC. This previous activist work consisted of participation in the feminist and mainstream environmental movements. All five of these activists had engaged in a variety of different institutional tactics, including awareness-raising, grant-writing, water testing,

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[29] As mentioned in Chapter 2, many of these "outsiders" have lived in Central Appalachia for several years now, but they are still perceived as outsiders to those who have lived in the area for several generations.

fundraising, litigation, and economic development. Of the five who had previous

social movement experience, four had been involved directly with CD at some

point throughout their activist career, but chose to stay within the realm of

institutional tactics with that organization as well. As such, all five members of

CMC with activist histories preferred institutional tactics, and pursued them with

both CD and CMC. Interestingly, however, the specific type of institutional tactics

in which they engaged varied slightly from one EJO to the other. While with CD

they engaged in outreach and education, their focus with CMC was ceasing MTR

in Tennessee by working directly through the political system via legislative

initiatives and lawsuits.

The other five members of CMC I interviewed did not have a history of any

type of activism (See Table 5.3). All five of them became involved with the

organization through Lucy or Sophia, long-time members and co-directors of

CMC who spearhead other community-building projects at CMC such as

unemployment and education initiatives. Through this work, Lucy in particular

enjoys recruiting new members to work on CMC's anti-MTR campaign. After first

meeting these women and hearing about the community impacts of MTR, all five

of these individuals decided to volunteer with CMC's efforts to stop MTR.

Table 5.2 Members of Concerned Mountain Citizens Prior Activism

Name (Pseudonym)	Organization	History of Prior Activism
Lucy	Concerned Mountain Citizens	40+ years experience with the feminist and environmental movements, including CD
Hannah	Concerned Mountain Citizens	None
Sydney	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Became active when she attended a CD event in 2004 while she was in college; worked with CD and Earth First! until 2007 when she moved to TN and became involved with CMC
Madelyn	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Learned about CD in 2006 and attended some events; Began working with CMC in 2007
Sophia	Concerned Mountain Citizens	40+ years experience with the feminist and environmental movements
Henry	Concerned Mountain Citizens	Began working with Earth First! in 2003; worked with CD since 2005
Ethan	Concerned Mountain Citizens	None
Ben	Concerned Mountain Citizens	None
Kent	Concerned Mountain Citizens	None
David	Concerned Mountain Citizens	None

Table 5.3 Members of Coal Disruption Prior Activism

Name (Pseudonym)	Organization	History of Prior Activism
Tess	Coal Disruption	Became involved with Katrina relief in 2006; met CD activists through that work in New Orleans and moved to WV in 2009
Joan	Coal Disruption	Some activism in high school; joined Rainforest Action Network, where she heard about CD; Moved to WV in 2011
Jane	Coal Disruption	Began activist work in high school that continued through college; engaged in direct action campaigns regarding timber practices in the Pacific NW; joined CD in 2009
Rachel	Coal Disruption	Became active after she attended a CD event in 2011 while she was in college
Eve	Coal Disruption	Became active after she attended a CD event in 2008 while she was in college
Kevin	Coal Disruption	Worked with environmental group on his college campus; learned of CD there and became active after attending a CD event in 2005
Nathan	Coal Disruption	Advocated for several social justice issues in college; learned of CD via a listserv in 2009 and has been involved ever since
Hunter	Coal Disruption	Involved with Sierra Club during college; learned of CD through that in 2006; has been involved ever since
Dylan	Coal Disruption	First memory at age 4 was on an activist march; began Katrina relief in 2006 with Common Ground; met CD activists in New Orleans and moved to WV in 2008
James	Coal Disruption	Joined Earth First! in 2008; Learned of CD in 2011; involved ever since

These histories align with previous work regarding both tactical identities and environmental justice activists. First, the five members of CMC with activism history all chose to pursue similar tactics throughout their activist careers. They all chose to engage in institutional tactics, regardless of the organization they were affiliated with at the time. Although the specific types of tactics may have changed (e.g., shifting from education and awareness-raising to political initiatives), the general *category* of tactics (i.e., institutional) remained the same. Moreover, previous research in environmental justice issues finds that most EJ activists have not been politically active prior to their involvement in the environmental justice movement (Barry 2008). Instead, EJ activists are moved to participate because of the direct impact of environmental harms in their communities. This is consistent with what I found regarding the nascent volunteer activists affiliated with CMC.

<u>Coal Disruption</u>

Conversely, all ten CD activists I interviewed had engaged in previous activist work, all related to environmental issues. Two had engaged in Hurricane Katrina relief, two had been involved with larger environmental organizations (i.e., Sierra Club and Rainforest Action Network), two had worked with smaller regional or local environmental organizations, one had worked with the radical environmental group Earth First!, and three had been active in their college campuses' environmental organizations. Through these various affiliations, these activists had been involved in a variety of both institutional and disruptive tactics, which they continued to pursue after joining CD.

Similar to the histories of CMC members, the histories of CD activists indicate that personal affinity for certain tactics may in fact dictate the tactics in which EJO activists engage. These histories are not the only factors that played a role in the EJOs' tactical decision-making processes, however. All twenty of my respondents spoke about the ways in which the community and political contexts in which their organizations worked affected their tactical decision-making processes as well.

PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The activists I interviewed defined the community context in which they worked in two ways: local community members directly impacted by coal mining operations, and the presence of other EJOs in the area. First, members of both CMC and CD discussed the activities in which they engaged to familiarize themselves with impacted locals. They also discussed the presence (CD) or absence (CMC) of other EJOs in the area, and how those dynamics affected how their organizations made decisions regarding tactical choices.

<u>Getting to Know Impacted Locals</u>

Throughout my interviews, EJO activists affiliated with both CMC and CD spoke at length about the importance of cultivating relationships with the impacted locals. They believed strongly that the stories, experiences, and wishes of the members of the impacted communities should be at the forefront of their tactical decision-making. This strong conviction for connection to community was evident in all 20 of the interviews I conducted. In fact, at the inception of each EJO, both CMC and CD engaged in "listening projects" in each area. Henry, one of the founders of CMC, explained,

Listening projects is generally about the first step that happens, when we go into a new community, unless it's the water monitoring. And the listening projects... guide probably about 90 percent of the work that we do... So, you know... we use the listening projects to identify supporters within the community. We use listening projects to identify people that don't want to work with us. We use the listening projects to identify local impacts or problems that are happening, and we're able to kind of help fill those information gaps, fill the training gaps, fill the technology gaps, you know? We're able to help fill those gaps by doing those listening projects... [CMC] is a reflective organizing model, and so we are able to respond to the local communities' concerns and needs based on that listening project work.

Similarly, Tess, a member of CD, talked about the importance of creating connections with impacted locals:

I think it's about having a lot of honest conversations with people about where they're at and what they want... and what's actually impacting them right now in the moment. And it's also about like, respecting, being really conscious whenever you're doing this work of, like, history as a factor and [sighs] just that there are really complex dynamics around coal in general... And so that looks like just being really honest with people if they ask [about her opinions regarding coal], but mostly just listening and taking direction about where people are comfortable and what they're comfortable with in terms of like, even like messaging or you know, what your campaign is. So I feel like I just negotiate that with folks and typically just take direction from the folks that I'm working with in communities around that... So it's sort of just about like being really respectful and really listening, being open to listening to people and figuring things out from there. Because it's different for every person, right?

As the organizations became established in their respective locations over time, this connection to impacted locals in the community became even stronger and more important to the activists. For example, when I asked Jane, a member of CD, about her favorite tactics, she responded,

I have great joy and a lot of energy with community organizing, most particularly through a participatory model or popular education model aligned with community endorsed/instigated action of many sorts. I guess I don't actually care if it's legislative, if it's locking our bodies to something, if it's having a big march, as long as it's rooted in place and really run and designed by the people who are going to be most impacted by the effects of those actions. That is why I've been involved in so many different things.

These listening projects became the foundation on which members of CMC and CD came to understand the communities in which they worked.

Concerned Mountain Citizens: The Only EJO in Town

While there are other EJOs in Tennessee that actively work on MTR issues, CMC is the only EJO in the rural area where MTR is actually practiced in the state. Accordingly, a majority of CMC members with whom I spoke discussed a delicacy to their organization's work. They believed that they must negotiate a fine line between making inroads in the community and speaking out against MTR. The main reason for this is the history of violence (and threats of violence) that have plagued activists attempting to redress coal-related issues, poverty, and unemployment in the area over the past forty years. Six of the CMC activists interviewed discussed this history of violence, including firing gunshots into the homes of activists, threats of burning down activists' homes, and even threats of murder. In reflecting on her long history of activism in the area, Sophia said,

> They [local miners] also mentioned that someone needed to "deal with me," because I was the one that initiated all this stuff. Well, of course I was honored [laughs] for them to think that I had this kind of power... So, the first thing they did was kind of shoot into the house a few times. No. I guess the first thing was they did something to the brakes in my car and something to the brakes in [speaking to self] who else's car... [speaking to interviewer] But my car did get messed up and the volunteer who was using my car at the time [laughs] left town immediately. And then there were other things. They shot into the house. That was the next thing. And so I had several, you know, holes in the house and windows... And then at one point when the locals threatened to burn my place down, I thought it might be wise to disappear for a little while.

Due to these types of threats, members of CMC agreed that it would be best to take the concerns of the impacted locals and use those to make their case with state-level politicians.

Even with the history of violence in the area, when I asked members of CMC to describe the specific ways in which community members have responded to their presence, two categories of impacted locals emerged: friendly confidant

and standoffish skeptics**.** The friendly confidants, while not necessarily active participants in CMC, were open with members of CMC regarding the ways in which the coal industry has impacted their community. The standoffish skeptics, on the other hand, were more wary of CMC activists, and did not interact with them.

Friendly Confidants

Seven of the CMC activists interviewed discussed impacted locals who stay in regular contact with CMC. These community members, often participants of the original listening projects, keep in touch regarding their views on the coal industry and how it has shaped the area over the years. For example, Sydney stated,

> There are – yeah, people are totally comfortable, but they have to trust you first, and I think if it [conversations about MTR] was happening for the right reasons, I don't think people would have a problem with it. They would just have to feel safe and not threatened... The people who are more like borderline-y, will say, you know, "Man, it sucks, but it's our electricity and I turn my light switch on." Or like, "My uncle raised his whole family on that and he's retired and they never have to want for nothing." You know? And things like that. But people are also like, "But my family's cemetery is gone now" ... And so, you'll just walk into conversations with people who are like, "It's really sad, I used to swim here," or "Imagine this mountain 400 feet above your head and all the layers of earth under it." A lot of people take me to cemeteries that they want me to see that are half destroyed.

These confidants also discuss current coal operations or issues they are facing with members of CMC. Ethan said,

> So like people wouldn't feel comfortable filing a citizens complaint against the coal mine, but they'll tell you the violations that are happening, so you can file that citizens complaint. Um, because they wouldn't feel comfortable doing that, because then they would be, you know, known by the coal company or known by local people that they're doing that.

Similarly, Sydney described,

> A lot of people quietly come up to me and tell me things about where there's like orange water. A lot of people like consult me on like access that they might have

> to different people [politicians] and how to get to them... And the conversations are really interesting. Because the majority of people would not say that they're against coal, but a majority of people would also express how much they don't like it.

These confidants, then, provide CMC with information that they readily use (e.g., coal industry permit violations) in their work to stop MTR in the area.

Standoffish Skeptics

The other type of community member CMC activists described was standoffish skeptics. These individuals, while not overtly hostile, were leery of the organization and its members. For instance, when I asked Sydney about community openness to conversations about coal, she said:

> I think when I first moved here, you know, I would be at like a bar having a beer, and like a woman would be like, "Are you an environmentalist?" And I'd be like, "Uh, I think that depends on how you define that word." [laughs] You know? And she's like [whispering], "I hate littering. Don't tell anyone." You know? And like that's just like littering. You know?

Members of CMC employed two specific approaches in an attempt to gain the trust of these standoffish skeptics. First, CMC activists have worked to engage more skeptical members of the community is to use language focused on being "for" positive changes for the future, as opposed to being "against" MTR. Through this, six CMC activists spoke of "transition work" focused on creating a more sustainable environment in the area. Sydney explained,

> What I have in my brain right here is like this difference between transition work and resistance work, so like I've been really, really involved in resistance work, right, and that work needs to happen. However, if there's not an equally strong movement for transitioning our economies and transitioning our energy systems at the same time, then it doesn't matter. If we abolish coal, how is this community – literally, this community we're sitting in right now, how do they feed their kids? How do they survive? So that work needs to happen simultaneously and I think both of them have to happen on a local level, like I don't think that, you know, one bill for all of Appalachia is going to fix the economy issue. I think people in this valley have to figure out what jobs look viable here and do that work themselves.

Similarly, Lucy stated,

> My role with CMC is not about being against mountain top removal, however. My role with CMC as with any entity that I'm with, is to talk more about other possibilities, not – If you stop one behavior, you have to have something else in its place. And we needed other kinds of work and jobs and education before people decided that MTR is a problem. We needed other jobs. We needed education more relevant to us and our cultures. Then, even before this became a visible movement. So my role has always been, as I said, build from your strengths. Yes, we have needs and this is what we have and this is what we can do. So, I'm kind of like, the one who talks about other possibilities, because it can't just be about stopping. The way to get something to stop is to create a better future, a more viable, more options in it.

Sophia explained the situation in terms of CMC having "vision." She stated,

> I decided that it was good to advocate for people to empower themselves to do some positive things. Because I was concerned about, even if we got to stop strip mining, what next? If we had no vision, somebody else would just take over. So, I thought, we've got to really nurture some hope and some vision.

The second approach, interestingly, was that technology had emerged as a way of communication among impacted locals with varying opinions. In speaking with Madelyn, she described a scenario in which locals engaged in dialogue via Facebook:

> You have, you know, people in the same house who don't agree on it [MTR], people in the same family that don't agree on it. People – you know, it's like, it's a heated issue. Last month, there was a permit hearing called [Name of Community] Surface Mine, and I created a Facebook [page] to let people know about the permit hearing, that they could go... It was me working with community who wanted to go through the public process. And then, you know, one of the questions was like, do we just want to invite local people to this permit hearing or do we want to like do a big push where we ask everyone, you know, to submit comments and the answer was like, let's just let people know. So it was one of the first times that we've done public outreach about an MTR permit in Tennessee, groups just aren't working on that. I created this Facebook event that was like, you know, come to this permit hearing, or here's the address, or the email if you want to submit comments about it. And it just became this space for community dialogue, and there were over – there were thousands of comments back and forth and people respectfully, but aggressively, having dialogue about the mining in Tennessee. You could go and get an inside look at what different people who live on the same street, what their thoughts are.

Five other members of CMC discussed the possibility of using Facebook or other online forums in the future to provide a space for impacted locals to discuss coal-related issues as well.

Given the violent history towards anti-coal activists in the area, the rather secretive support for CMC on behalf of some members of the community, and the outright avoidance on the part of other locals, the local community context played a very large role in the tactical choices made by activists working with CMC. Members of the organization discussed how hard they had worked to establish themselves in the area, and the incremental inroads they had gained in terms of locals trusting them, and they did not, under any circumstances, want to risk their standing in the community. They believed that opportunities within the community for them to engage in more disruptive tactics simply did not exist. Members of CMC felt that engaging in disruptive tactics would put their safety at risk and undo any progress and sense of trust they had established with the friendly confidants. When I asked Sydney why CMC does not engage in more disruptive tactics she stated matter-of-factly, "Because it [the CMC office] would get burnt down in like a day, literally." This, in part, led to the organization adhering to strictly institutional tactics.

Coal Disruption: An EJO among Many

In West Virginia, CD activists perceived the community in which they worked to be quite different than that of CMC in Tennessee. Just as the coal industry has had a strong presence in southern West Virginia over the past several hundred years, so too has resistance to the industry. As such, CD is only one of several EJOs currently operating in the area. Moreover, several of these

other organizations are comprised of local West Virginians who are eager to work with CD on a variety of projects. As such, members of CD perceive more support and opportunity for collaborations than activists working with CMC. Of the ten interviews I conducted with members of CD, all of them discussed working with other EJOs in the area on a range of projects. Each respondent emphasized strongly that the only way EJOs in the area are able to accomplish as much as they do is because they work together. Moreover, Rachel specifically spoke about how these collaborations lend legitimacy to the whole of the anti-MTR movement in West Virginia:

> [We have] reached out to other organizations because if it's just one organization, you can discredit one organization. It may not be accurate, but they [the coal industry] can try. But you have multiple organizations working on a single campaign though, that gives it more validity.

In addition to support from other EJOs, many CD respondents discussed the role of community members' support, and how that support informed CD tactical choices.

Members of CD were very clear from the beginning: locals either embraced them or hated them. There was no middle ground, no feelings of apathy. Community members who chose to support CD, though, did so in one of two ways. As such, CD respondents spoke of three distinct types of such community members: vocal objectors, vocal supporters, and silent supporters. Vocal objectors disliked the EJO activists, and would sometimes attend EJO events to counter-protest. Seven CD respondents talked about how these vocal objectors believed that the "hippies" and "tree huggers" were there to take their coal mining jobs away. The second type of community member was the vocal supporter.

These community members believed in the mission of CD (stopping MTR) and would join in with the organizations' activities. Finally, silent supporters were those who wished to support CD, but felt it was too risky to do so publically. Based on previous incidents, they believed that their family members would lose their jobs in the mining industry if they spoke out against MTR. Instead, these silent supporters leave gifts and notes of support for CD at members' homes. Below, I offer more details on each of these categories.

Vocal Objectors

All 10 CD interviewees said that some members of the community do not like the anti-MTR presence in the West Virginia coalfields. The locals who disliked to the presence of CD and other anti-MTR organizations in the area were quite vocal about their disapproval, and in some cases made members of CD feel unsafe. Of the 10 members interviewed, 8 reflected on how they had feared for their safety or the safety of others at least once during their activist work with CD. Eve stated simply, "This is, you know, coal activism in southern West Virginia and it's scary, and it's hostile, and it's dangerous." Others made similar comments. In reflecting on his previous work scouting mining operations, Hunter stated,

> I always perceived my risk level as relatively high. Most of the work that I did was back woods work and scouting around mine sites and stuff. And so there are times, I was hiding in the bushes when four angry miners were coming in the woods looking for me, and I felt in a very vulnerable position then. And you know, it's really easy to make people disappear in the mountains around there, there are a lot of deep mine cracks riddled all over the hills that I would spend most of my time in. But then at the same time, I'm a large, intimidating able-bodied person who can defend myself. [pause] But yeah, I kind of always felt it was just a matter of time until there was very overt violence against somebody I

was living with [other members of CD], like there had been in the earlier strip mining fights in the 60s and 70s when organizers were murdered.[30]

Recently, CD held a disruptive tactical action at which several counter-protestors showed up. These vocal objectors were able to yell at, curse, threaten, and physically block members of CD from trying to leave, even with the police present. This event left several CD members shaken up. As Nathan explained,

> I had a personally very traumatic experience with [it] and a lot of people, a lot of people had traumatic experiences. It's not to say that I was at all exceptional. But it scared the shit out of me, and traumatized me for a long time afterward. And there are still pieces of trauma from that… The kind of abuse, that extra special, vicious, vitriolic, ugly – They were treating people who I love and who I care about, they were treating them hideously, awfully, viciously… When they do and say things like that, when they spew racial epithets and racial abuse at people… and homophobic and transphobic hatred, you know, when that kind of viciousness is coming out of their mouth, I don't care why. I really don't. I don't care why it's coming out of their mouth. They're spewing it to somebody that I care about.

Although members of CD discussed experiencing fear for their safety at some point during their activist work, they did not let it stop them from pursuing disruptive tactics. They believed that, although at times quite forceful, the vocal objectors in fact held the minority opinion in the community. As Hunter described,

> There was a vocal minority that really despised us and would do us personal violence if they had an opportunity. Living in Rock Creek, we had four houses in a row, right along the Coal River, which Route 3 would fly past. And so, every coal miner in the area knew that's where all the hippies live and were campaigning to steal their jobs. So, you know, we would constantly have middle fingers stuck out the windows and yells and shouts coming at us, and now and then we would have beer bottles tossed through vehicle windows and such there, but, you know, that's the vocal minority.

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[30] The purpose of scouting mine sites is to determine if the coal companies are complying with federal and state regulations regarding the boundaries in which they have been permitted to operate, as well as monitoring the disposal of toxic waste into the land and water.

Vocal Supporters

Opposite of vocal objectors, it was actually quite common for impacted

locals to interact with and support CD activists. This involved openly talking with

activists in public spaces, attending a CD rally or workshop, or even taking a

leadership position during a CD event.

> When I started living there, CD and affiliated groups had already been working for a solid five years or more, and building community contacts and allies and getting local people strongly on our side, and so we had a good core of local folks who were deep supporters, and would help us out in any way they possibly could. (Hunter)

> We've had everything from people who will like just come and openly hang out with us or attend like rallies, and like who are openly supportive of us in the communities, which I think is useful and great and important, and shifts some of those dynamics around and makes things a little more complicated, so that people have to think about it more. (Tess)

> But the most important thing we did was inspire people and give people hope and get people active. And so, you know, there are West Virginians that are, you know, very active in the movement now that will get up on panels [to discuss the repercussions of MTR] and be like, "You know, I lived around this my whole life, I thought, you know, I was against it my whole life and it wasn't until those kids from [CD] were out there getting arrested and going to jail, that I looked at myself and I was ashamed. Because here were these people coming, you know, and they were putting everything – they were risking their lives and freedom to defend my home, and what the hell was I doing?" [One particular active supporter] will tell you that every time… You know? So I really think that in a lot of ways, a lot of people were like, "Oh, you're finally doing something – you're finally like not asking us to go like, go to D.C., which we think is stupid. Like, you're finally like doing something that's real, that we understand, that's accessible to us." So it certainly was – it helped continue to make a polarized atmosphere more polarized, I guess, but I mean, it was hard to get any more polarized than it already was. But what it really did was like inspire people that were on our side to take bigger risks. And now we're seeing like, folks that were not – wouldn't contemplate – you know, like last year at Week in Washington, people did sit-ins in the congressional offices and some of them were like carried out of their representative's offices. (Dylan)

This process of locals working with outsiders served to legitimate outsiders

and their activist work against MTR. Contrary to previous research that argues

that social movement organizations may compete with one another for legitimacy

(and thus, donations) in times of economic hardships (Zald and McCarthy 1980),

the opposite was the case here. CD's collaborations with local EJOs, as well as vocal supporters' willingness to publically speak about their positive view of CD, led to CD, even as a group of outsiders, gaining traction among the community. Not one interviewee discussed competition between the EJOs in the region. Moreover, as Joan states, "We couldn't do the things we do with so much legitimacy if it wasn't for some local people willing to be affiliated with us. That's for sure."

Silent Supporters

Eight of the CD activists I interviewed spoke at length of silent support within the community. This type of support came via private, sometimes anonymous, donations to the organization. These donators felt strongly that they could not publicly refute the coal industry, due to several reasons. Some had family who worked for the mines. Others feared being ostracized from their community. As Eve put it:

> So it's very dicey to provide direct support to us, but there have been people who come out and said, "Look, I don't want my name associated, but here you go." And they've helped out in various ways, like you know, if we have problems with the community, they've helped us out... Food resources, offering bottles of water, calling, saying, "Hey, this is what I heard, be careful."

When I asked Jane if she knew of any instances of such silent support, her response was simple and straightforward: "All the time. We'll often find food on the door step, you know? There's a lot of that."

Give the high level of vocal and silent support, as well as the presence of other like-minded EJOs, CD members felt emboldened to engage in a variety of tactics – both institutional and disruptive. CD activists believed that they had a majority of support from impacted locals, whereas the coal industry's support

was simply a vocal minority.

PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to community contexts, activists affiliated with both CMC and CD felt that the political context in which they operated played a role in their tactical decisions. In previous social movement research, political opportunities are defined as factors that grant social movement organizations power to navigate the political system in order to achieve their goals, making disruptive tactics unnecessary. These opportunities may take the form of increased access to the political system, divisions among politicians, and the availability of political allies (McAdam 1996). The activists working with CMC and CD had vastly different ideas regarding the political opportunities in their respective states. While CMC felt they had ample political opportunities, CD felt their state political structure was corrupted by corporate coal interests.

<u>Concerned Mountain Citizens: Working the System</u>

Instead of a sole focus on MTR issues, as discussed above, CMC pursues a small number of community development initiatives as well. Their holistic approach to achieving a "healthy community" includes addressing such issues as unemployment, drug abuse, education, and healthcare. As such, members of CMC believed they could stop the practice of MTR the same way they pursue their other initiatives – via state and federal politics. Sydney discussed what she felt were significant accomplishments working through the state political system:

> And then in like 2009, 2010, you had these huge regulatory wins where there was – through putting pressure on the EPA – you had, like over 100 permits that were stalled. And out of those permits, the EPA, you know, did not go through with a few of them, for various reasons, like there was a huge number of permits that got stopped or delayed or cancelled. So that felt like a huge movement win, right? Like we work on legislation, we work on putting pressure on regulatory agencies,

and it leads to the EPA actually taking some amount of significant effort, not like ending mountaintop removal, but like – what's felt like a really significant win. So you have that, and at the same time, you have Congress kind of stalling out, so the Clean Water Protection Act, like we continue to lobby for it as a movement because it's a way to continue to build relationships so that when you have a window of opportunity to push legislation, those relationships are there.

This statement clearly demonstrates her belief that Tennessee provides opportunities for CMC to pursue access to the political system, as well as cultivate relationships with political allies. Additionally, Hannah discussed how CMC had to educate state politicians regarding mining operations in the state. She said,

> Nobody even realized it [MTR] was happening here, and we've had to take pictures to prove it. You know, even [Senators] Corker and Alexander didn't know it was going on, or at least they say they didn't know it was going on. And they might have tried to hide it from Alexander, because he really didn't like them being blowed up. I seen him... stand up out over a lobby meeting and go in and get the Clean Water Protection Act introduced on the floor. He couldn't believe it hadn't been introduced yet. He just assumed it was. He had been told it was, and he got down there while we was there. We heard him and the next thing we knew it's alright, he did it. [laughs] He was our hero on that. But I still ain't happy with the nuclear stuff on his part.

While Hannah does not perceive the senators to be in complete agreement with CMC, she does consider Senator Alexander to be an ally.

Speaking more generally, members of CMC felt they had favorable state-level political opportunities to pursue their goals. Seven interviewees thought that the Tennessee state legislature is much more open to regulating the coal industry than the West Virginian legislature. Henry spoke plainly about the political connections the coal industry has in West Virginia, and how that is not a reality in Tennessee:

> [The coal industry] just have less political pull in Tennessee, because they don't employ as many people, and you know, Tennessee has like, tourism is a huge industry there. And I think that the politicians maybe, some of the politicians may see that infringement on tourism as like something really bad. So, yeah, I think that that may be part of it. I mean, basically, it all comes down to money for the politicians and if the coal companies have enough sway then they can just buy the politicians. ... And I think that there's that sort of idea, that, you know, we

don't want Tennessee to look like the other states in Appalachia and don't want all the mountains to be blown up and stuff, so – And you do have the Great Smokies, which is like a huge, huge tourist draw, like the most visited national park in the entire country is like right there in east Tennessee, and 9 million visitors a year, and you know, so just protecting that sort of alternative industries in Tennessee, I think is probably the main reason.

These statements illustrate CMC activists' belief that they are working in a rather favorable political context that they can use to pursue their goals. While most said that it was not easy, they nonetheless did believe that making meaningful change in stopping MTR via state politics is possible.

Coal Disruption: Politics Polluted with Coal Industry Executives

Members of CD held a very different view of the political regime in West Virginia. Whereas favorable politics played a role in determining institutional tactics for CMC, the perception of an indifferent, or even hostile, state legislature led CD activists to believe that pursuing legislation, lobbying, or lawsuits would be fairly useless endeavors. There were two general responses from all ten interviewees when I asked about politics in the state. First, CD activists spoke of politicians disliking them or purely ignoring them. Tess said simply, "In terms of like government, the governor has been pretty consistently oppositional, and a lot of the legislature has been pretty consistently oppositional to us." Others stated:

I am not aware of CD doing any real lobbying work. I've never experienced politicians wanting to come to these events and speak to people. And, at least in West Virginia, there is very, very little interest from politicians [laughs] in this sort of [anti-MTR] work. (Joan)

And then, you know, the response of politicians and such [pause] I think was radio silence by and large, and branding all resistance just as outside agitation and such. And not really addressing any of the root issues or messages that we were bringing up. (Hunter)

We're a pain in their ass. I mean, we're calling them on their inequities, I mean, they do bad things and we're the watch dogs and we call attention to them, like – do you know how like, how when you were as a kid, but how you kind of did something, like maybe you shouldn't have been doing? And someone saw you and

they're like, "So and so did this," and they draw attention. And you're like, "Aw crap, I got busted. Now I've got to deal with the ramifications." Well, that's how we are with the politicians. We're watching them, closely. And when they screw up though, we let them know… And we're not easily swayed by the reactions of politicians. Because they lie. You know, that's it. You can't trust them. (James)

Nathan went so far as to say that the federal government would never be interested in ceasing MTR:

But if you think that the EPA of the Barack Obama administration is going to ban coal – The Obama administration loves, loves clean coal. Loves the shit out of it. And MTR produces extremely pure coal, which is incredibly filthy. If you think that region three of the EPA is actually going to pass regulations and is going to enforce the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act in a meaningful way so as to harm mountaintop removal mining, you're not paying attention.[31]

Second, the activists spoke of a deep connection between the West Virginia political system and the coal industry. Dylan's response sums up this view succinctly, "So, the political powers that be don't care for us. This state is owned [by the coal industry] lock, stock, and barrel."

I'm not sure if it's politicians or the coal industry or somewhere in the middle there, so the lobbyists mainly, industry spin doctors have put a lot of effort into labeling us as like an outsiders outside group, and hence, irrelevant. (Jane)

For the most part, they're not really interested in what we have to say. You know, their campaign money and what not all comes from the coal industry. (Joan)

The coal industry really has a stranglehold on the economy and the politics of a lot of these areas that we work in. (Eve)

The coal industry is what has a stranglehold on the state. And even in terms of like economic diversification, the biggest road block to that is like coal mining and fracking now, too, these industries that like sort of control people and their lives and are able to like, shape cultures around that. (Tess)

Considering these strong statements regarding West Virginia politics, CD activists did not perceive any of the criteria for political opportunities. Not one

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[31] Here, Nathan is referring to the fact that "clean" coal comes from the coal cleaning process that occurs in coal processing plants near the mines in West Virginia. He is pointing to the irony that the MTR process produces coal that can be "cleaned" of many impurities, thus making it a prime candidate to burn and stay within the parameters of the Clean Air Act, which requires burning coal with lower sulfur content. The result is "clean coal" produced from MTR mining.

member discussed favorable access to the political system or the availability of political allies, nor did they discuss attempting to abolish MTR via traditional political channels. While eight of the ten CD activists I interviewed had engaged in institutional tactics with other organizations in different circumstances, they did not see the point in pursuing it in West Virginia with CD. It simply was not a viable option.

In comparing the perceptions of political opportunities between CMC and CD, an important difference emerges regarding the power dynamics of the coal industry. While CMC members perceive the coal industry to have a strong influence in the area where MTR is conducted, they do not feel the industry has strong political power in the state as a whole. Of the ninety-five counties in Tennessee, MTR only occurs in 3. As such, neither the state nor state citizens feel dependent upon the coal industry to provide tax revenue or jobs for Tennessee. This renders the coal industry's power to influence politics in Tennessee rather low. On the other hand, of the fifty-five counties in West Virginia, 43 possess mineable coal reserves (Bell 2009). The coal industry has long had a powerful influence on West Virginian politics (Burns 2007), and 6 of my interviews discussed the "mono-economy" of the state. Jane stated,

> When we talk about mono-economy, it's because the industry of coal doesn't really want other industries to come in, and they do a great job of making that not happen by way of really, really whacky tax laws, and it's just, it's hard to start a business.

As such, even with increases in mechanization and decreases in mining employment, West Virginians perceive mining to be the only job in town. This grants the coal industry tremendous amounts of power.

TACTICAL DECISIONS

The factors discussed above – activists' histories with activism, community input via listening projects, and the perceptions of the community and political context – all played a role in each EJO's tactical decision-making processes. In general, the data suggest that activists continue the types of tactics in which they have engaged previously, attempt to work with impacted locals and put those voices at the forefront of their initiatives, and adjust their tactical repertoire based on the perceived realities in which they are embedded. Below, I discuss their specific tactical choices in more detail, and provide the context in which EJOs made decisions regarding these tactical choices.

<u>Institutional Tactics</u>

Both organizations engaged in institutional tactics, although the frequency and type varied markedly for each location. While CMC focused almost solely on legislative initiatives and lawsuits, CD engaged in many efforts focused on awareness-raising, education, and train-the-trainer workshops. CD focused heavily on bringing in outsiders, mainly college students, via educational workshops and MTR site tours. Their goal was for these students to return to their campuses and share what they had learned in West Virginia, and possibly recruit people to return to CD fulltime after graduation. Both organizations engaged in monitoring water quality, as well as other aspects of the MTR process, including valley fills, slurry impoundment ponds, and potential permit violations. Below I discuss each organization's institutional tactics in more detail.

Concerned Mountain Citizens

Anti-MTR activists affiliated with CMC discussed at length about working with the state and federal government in an attempt to cease MTR in Tennessee. Members of CMC spoke of trips to Washington DC and working with the Tennessee state legislature to pass and enforce policy regarding MTR. Specifically, they were working on passing anti-MTR legislation (The Scenic Vistas Act, which would ban MTR above 2,000 feet) and enforcing current environmental laws (e.g., The Clean Water Act, Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act).[32] Of the ten CMC activists with whom I spoke, eight of them had been to either the Tennessee State Capitol or Washington DC to lobby against MTR operations. Moreover, while most had never been involved in activist work previously, Lucy, a long-time social justice activist involved with the organization, taught others how to work through the political system in an attempt to make meaningful change. She perceived her role to be focused on educating and training community members and activists, preparing them to pursue work in the legislative and legal arenas. She believed that this, "gives my young people a reason to become part of the change... My role is to make sure that I am not going by myself [to the Capitol], that I take young people with me."

CMC's policy approach, however, was not just focused on MTR. As discussed above, they also worked on transitioning the community into a new economy. Eight of the CMC activists I interviewed discussed the importance of transitioning away from the coal economy in the area, and they believed state

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[32] Voting on The Scenic Vistas Act has been postponed several times since its introduction in 2012. Most recently, it appeared on the March 12, 2014 agenda for the Senate Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee in Tennessee. On that day, its hearing was postponed until March 19, 2014.

politicians could assist in that process. Moreover, this transition would lessen the power of the coal industry in the area, providing opportunities for new employers to enter the area. Given this reality, members of CMC believed that pursuing holistic community development goals was the best way to meet their goals.

To bolster their work in the political system, members of CMC also engaged in water testing and monitoring, as well as generally scouting the coal mining operations in their area. This tracking and documentation is meant to bolster their political work. As one of the founders of CMC, Henry speaks to the overall vision of their political work:

> So we do the scientific monitoring, so we're doing air and water monitoring around, you know, mountaintop removal sites and other sort of energy extractive sites, including oil and gas. We've also been doing, we participate in the permitting process to make it that much harder to get permits. So we've been learning the law, the Surface Mining Control Reclamation Act law and Clean Water Act and providing trainings in what the citizen's rights of those laws are, so, they can be more empowered to start taking action and getting involved in that process. We also do legal work. So, you know, actually filing lawsuits and stuff. And a lot of this is also based on the permitting process, where we would be requesting public hearings and participating in that process, you know, and then going out and doing the site visits, which gives us legal standing, and going out and doing the water monitoring and stuff, and then being able to file lawsuits because we've generated the groundwork to be able to do that.

Overall, then, the institutional tactics in which CMC engages is geared to making legislative and legal changes at the state and federal level regarding MTR mining practices. As discussed previously, the community and political context in which they operated largely shaped this decision.

The process for making these tactical decisions largely consisted of meetings in which all members of CMC came together to discuss tactical next steps. Although every person in the room was free to offer suggestions and explain why they wanted to pursue a particular tactic, the final decision

principally rested on the paid staff members. They were the ones who would

decide what legislation to pursue, how to cultivate and maintain relationships

with political allies, and how to monitor the activities of the mining operations.

Once these decisions had been made, they would delegate tasks accordingly.

Coal Disruption

Members of CD took a very different tack regarding institutional tactics.

Instead of pursuing change via the political system, CD activists preferred to

engage in institutional tactics focused on education. It was not that members of

CD did not appreciate working within the political system. On the contrary, of the

ten CD activists I interviewed, seven of them had worked on lobbying, legislative,

or legal campaigns as activists in the past (e.g., as members of historical

preservation societies, Black Mesa activists, or petitioning with Sierra Club while

in college). Their work with CD, however, did not include such activities. Instead,

the organization chose to focus its institutional tactical pursuits on a strong

commitment to education and awareness-raising. The organization hosts several

week-long workshops each year focused on education and awareness-raising.

These workshops cover a variety of events and activities, including general

education regarding MTR and its consequences, the history of coal and resistance

in Appalachia, energy divestment, a panel of impacted locals, and MTR site tours.

Moreover, these workshops offer activist training in areas such as online

organizing, nonviolent direct action tactics, de-escalation techniques, water

testing, listening projects, and activist self-care. Overall, these awareness-raising

forums were designed to bring outsiders into the southern West Virginian

coalfields in order to educate them on the practice and consequences of MTR.

Members of CD felt that if they could not go up against the political power of the

coal industry via institutional political channels, they would educate everyone

who would listen regarding the numerous negative impacts of MTR. Moreover,

they would train these visitors in how to engage in both institutional and

disruptive anti-MTR activism in their own communities. As Tess said,

> The education piece, I think is just – It's one of my favorite pieces because it's so fundamental to like sustaining a movement, bringing in new people, education around like those issues is a way to give voice and empowerment to communities that are being impacted, so that sort of all ties together for me.

Every CD activist with whom I spoke played an active role in planning and

executing every meeting each year. When I asked Tess about her role in some of

the big events CD does every year, she replied,

> Well, I've helped put together a lot of educational camps and have through the years become like a trainer for certain things like de-escalation and just like, gaining skills and then learning to use those skills and show other people those skills, so a lot of that. But just mostly training and education work... I really enjoy it. I like coming to camps and like kind of bringing people a greater awareness of that kind of stuff. I like that... And then eventually being able to connect that to broader movements, and to connect, like, different kinds of movements together. That has been some of my favorite stuff.

When asked of her role, another CD activist, Joan, stated,

> You know, I just kind of taking care of everybody and their needs in that respect during what I call tourist season, [laughs] which is the Spring Break season. For about six weeks we constantly have groups visiting, high school groups, college groups, and all kinds. So from the middle of February to the middle of April, my job largely involved touring people around, and showing them, you know – basically just show and tell about mountain top removal.

The primary way CD activists planned these training workshops was via

planning meetings. These meetings are held on a bi-weekly basis, and anyone is

free to attend. CD is strongly committed to a non-hierarchical organizational

structure, and as such, makes decisions via consensus or majority vote. Members

encourage each other to make suggestions about everything from the location of

the workshops to the specific topics to be covered in each breakout session. Members are acutely aware of the importance of allowing everyone "room" in the conversation, and discussed their philosophy of "step up, step back" in one of the workshops I attended.[33] The basic premise of this philosophy is that, during group conversations, it is important to evaluate your personal level of input and adjust your behavior accordingly. For example, if one person tends to dominate the conversation, this philosophy would encourage that person to take a step back to allow others to speak. Conversely, if a person is not participating, this philosophy would encourage them to contribute. This encouragement of equal participation among members was central to the decision-making processes regarding CD's engagement in institutional tactics.

Disruptive Tactics

As discussed earlier, CMC does not engage in disruptive tactics. This section, therefore, focuses solely on the disruptive tactics of CD.

Coal Disruption

Members of CD engaged in myriad disruptive tactics. Importantly, CD perceives a main goal of these tactics to be awareness-raising regarding MTR. They understand that the process of being arrested will often bring national news coverage, which, they believe, provides the potential to place MTR on a national stage. As such, the tactics discussed below, while disruptive in terms of behavior, contain an element of institutional tactics regarding the goal to bring awareness to MTR. The disruptive tactics in which CD engages can be broken down into roughly three categories: simple trespassing, tree sits, and lockdowns.

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[33] This philosophy is also popular among the Occupy Movement.

First, CD frequently engages in trespassing onto MTR mine sites. In its simplest form, this involves simply walking onto active sites. Seven of the CD activists I interviewed have engaged in such action. When asked to explain why CD engages in such an action, activists agreed that it was a symbolic action meant to garner media attention:

> I've been a part of several direct actions that have included line crossing type of actions where we'll just like cross the line onto a mine site and be arrested for civil disobedience and charged with trespassing. That's a pretty symbolic type of action to just draw attention to the issue. (Kevin)

> Yeah, I mean like, the action that we did on Kayford [Mountain, in which several activists trespassed onto an active MTR site to plant trees]… where we went and did a replanting of, you know, one of the mine sites, that was fun. We had a lot of people who potentially could be arrested on that action and nobody got arrested on that action [laughs] so that was a fun one. But even like everything, I mean, every one is different and has a deeper story tied to it and so it's been really fun to sort of explore how you do that, and creating narrative, and like empowering people's voices, again, is like one of the fun parts of it for me. (Tess)

The purpose of this type of simple trespassing is not to interfere with MTR operations during the visit. Instead, the goal is to bring media attention to the negative impact of MTR, in the hope of garnering support and resources for EJOs fighting against it. As Hunter explained,

> Like an example of a symbolic action would be a banner drop on a mountaintop removal mine where folks are able to take pictures, maybe get arrested, have a lot of media publicity about it, but it's a – you're symbolically showing that this is something you don't like, but you're not actually stopping it. It's about the media frenzy and raising awareness and education.

The second type of disruptive tactic in which CD activists engaged was tree-sits. While CD members have engaged in more than one tree sit over the years, the first one they did stood out for many of my respondents as a favorite. Dylan described the event as follows:

> First tree sit in West Virginia history. First tree sit ever used to stop strip mining that we're aware of. Nobody had ever used the technique on strip mining before. Been used on road building, been used on logging, it'd been used on a lot of

things, but no one had thought of doing it with strip mining. Turns out, it's the most effective use of a tree sit ever invented because you protect a 1,500 foot radius, according to MSHA [Mine Safety Health Act] regulations. Can't blast within 1,500 feet of a person. We put somebody in a tree and there's a 1,500 foot radius that doesn't get blown up... But the first tree sit was like – it's interesting. And the reason it was the best one is partly because like we just, you know, pushed the envelope and they discovered a brand new tactic, but we were all convinced they've got so much big, heavy machinery up there, they're going to be able to take somebody out so fast. Like we did not plan for it to be sustained. And then we put it up and we realized, they [the coal company and local police] had no idea what to do... And what was so special about it was that one of the two people that was in the trees, Beth, who's here now, had been doing organizing in the community below where the blasting was, and had actually done the whole deal, you know? I mean, they had complained to DEP [Department of Environmental Protection], they got inspectors out, they had done violation, but they couldn't get them. They, you know, tried to get a lawyer to file blasting claims, tried to do all this – and nothing was working. And so she went up in the tree and stopped the blasting. It was only for a week but it was the first time anything had worked. And we got so much more community support... You know what I mean, like – not people that we didn't know at all, but not people that came around, you know? People really came out of the woodwork, they really respected holding space and – they were much – local people were much more excited about a sustained thing than just like, you know, get arrested, get your picture taken, you're gone in two hours. Common attitude was like, that's not worth going to jail over to be locked in a machine for three hours. But stopping blasting for a week, now that's worth doing. And it's gutsy.

Similarly, James discussed the event in terms of its outcome, specifically the ability to stop mining on the site for nine days:

You know, the – I enjoyed the tree sit because of the longevity of it. I believe that if you're going to put energy into events like that, they should be more long-term, because they are a drain on resources though and you've got to do a cost/benefit analysis, like you're putting all this energy into it, what you're going to get out of it. And the more, the bigger the action, the more you're going to get from it. But unfortunately, the bigger the action though, the bigger the cost. Not just financial cost, but like time costs and energy costs, like you know, people directly supporting it and putting their personal energy, physical energy, emotional energy into this, and their personal risk. So you've got – so yes, I believe that the tree sit was a really good one.

This tree sit, as James says, expended an incredibly high level of resources. While there were only two people in two trees, there was a 24-hour crew on the ground providing food, supplies, and emotional support.

Other CD activists discussed what it meant for the activists who participated in the event. As Kevin put it,

> I was in a tree sit in January of 2010 in West Virginia that stopped blasting at a certain area of a mine site for nine days, so me and another person were sitting in trees for nine days so they couldn't blast in this particular area... I think the tree sit would have to be my favorite because it was just like a really powerful, intense experience and also it stopped work and seemed to be most effective for the longest period of time. Stopped work for the longest period of time, and for that reason, seemed to be the most effective and got lots of media attention. And it was just a really empowering experience, too, to be able to go up to the edge of the mine site and get in the way so that they can't do what they're trying to do, you know, just a few people with limited resources going up against this multi-billion dollar industry and stopping them in their tracks in this one area.

Moreover, James explained that there was a highly personal aspect to the tree sit:

> [During the tree sit], one of the direct supporters was [name of local EJ activist affiliated with CD and other EJOs in the area] who was displaced by the [name of mine] permit. You know, directly removed, and he was fighting for his land, fighting for his culture, fighting for his heritage and his livelihood, so it was very personal to them. And people fight when it's something personal.

The 6 members of CD who had participated in tree-sits (either as sitting in the trees themselves or providing support on the ground), perceived them to be a powerful, immediate way to stop MTR. They believed that, as policy initiatives and lawsuits could not cease MTR, placing their bodies within the blasting range of active MTR sites could have a powerful, immediate impact of mining operations. As discussed above, members of CD did not feel that pursuing change via institutional political channels, and instead chose to circumvent the political system to stop MTR. The spoke proudly of their ability to shut down MTR mining at the particular mine site for over a week.

Finally, members of CD discussed engaging in various lockdowns. Several were quick to discuss the difference between "soft" and "hard" lockdowns. As Nathan explained,

The difference the way I would define it is that hard lockdowns involve equipment, so they involve apparatus. They involve, you know, lock boxes, which are PVC tubes where you hold onto an inside piece and sometimes clip your hand to it, so it involves some sort of piece of equipment. It might be a kryptonite lock, a u-lock around your neck locking yourself to some object, you know, a gate, a fence, a door, where a soft lockdown is generally not involving equipment. So it's going to be linking arms, or it's going to be holding hands and kind of using your body as the only block or the only kind of stoppage thing. Where, yeah, hard lockdown is you use equipment or physical things to assist with that.

Members of CD had engaged in countless lockdowns over the course of the past eight years, sometimes managing up to five separate lockdowns per month. These took a variety of forms, including soft lockdowns at the Governor's Office, hard lockdowns to MTR mining equipment on active mine sites, a blockade interfering with trains hauling coal, and a blockade at the entrance to the headquarters of the largest coal corporation operating in Appalachia. Every CD activist I interviewed had been involved with several lockdowns.

And then there was a soft blockade of people that I was a part of, just standing on the other side of the coal truck, just you know, blocking the road with our bodies, just standing there locking arms. And we had the coal plant blocked for over five hours. (Kevin)

I lived in the Coal River Valley for a solid year and a half. And in that time, we pulled off a six day tree sit, a nine day winter tree sit, a lock down on a drill rig for a few hours, a lock down on a longwall miner for a few hours, [pause] I think those were – those four at least were definite work stop actions. And then we did a lot of other disruptive actions. Those are probably more four favorite that I helped with. Oh, and also, I blockaded a haul road for valley fill for four hours. (Hunter)

Similar to tree-sits, CD's goal in engaging in lockdowns was to stop mining operations directly. Again, the idea was to place their bodies in strategic places such that mining activities, whether it be bulldozing an active mine site or blocking coal haul trucks, trains, or barges, had to stop immediately. Seven of the CD activists spoke of these tactics as in terms of exercising the power they

possessed to make what they believed to be meaningful progress in stopping

MTR. In discussing the tactics in which CD has engaged over the years, Tess said,

> We have so many wins and so much power built up behind us, and I feel like we're like on this plateau where we have all that power, and we have all that resources and strategy and understanding and like, deep connection to people and the issue. And so we've been doing this a really long time and we're still doing it.

Overall, then, CD's tactical repertoire was broader than that of CMC.

Members of CD engaged in awareness-raising institutional tactics as well as

several different types of disruptive tactics. Moreover, the input from vocal and

silent supporters was so important to members of CD that the organization would

not engage in a disruptive tactic action without first gaining their approval. Joan

explains,

> Well, when working with a direct action campaign, we do not take on actions without talking to local people and getting their support, and you know, talking through any of the scenarios with them... We always make sure we have local support... So we definitely have sort of the local people giving us somewhat of our direction [in our tactical decision-making process].

In order to plan these disruptive tactics, members of CD broke into

"affinity groups." These small groups consist of activists who know each other

quite well, trust in each other, and only share the details of the disruptive tactic

on a "need to know" basis. For example, members of CD recently planned a

lockdown on a coal barge in West Virginia. To plan this action, the larger

organization broke down into smaller groups, and each group focused on one

aspect of the action. These aspects included media messaging, jail support, ways

to participate in the event legally (i.e., holding protest signs on nearby coal access

roads), and the logistics of boarding and locking down to a coal barge. Members

of this last group did not share the details of their plans with others, not even that

they planned to board the barge. Instead, members of the other groups only knew that the "arrestable" group was planning to trespass somewhere, somehow. According to the CD activists, the point of this secrecy is to contain knowledge and therefore lessen the possibility of law enforcement or the coal industry to learn of the disruptive action beforehand.

As a whole, members of CD engaged in a quite diverse tactical repertoire. Their activities ranged from small-scale community outreach and water testing to large-scale civil disobedience. CD activists were aware of the range of their tactical activities, and often spoke of the importance of tactical diversity throughout their interviews. In fact, of the activists I interviewed, six members of CD (and two activists from CMC who work with CD on their own time), discussed the importance of using "every tool in the toolbox" to fight against MTR.

> There's no single path to victory. You know, every social movement that's ever won anything has used pretty much every tool they had available to them. And so the tactics themselves are not very important, in the sense that like, which tactics you use shouldn't be defining. You have a strategy to achieve your goal and you use whatever tactics – there's a right way and a wrong way to use any tactic. There's a right time and a wrong time, right place and a wrong place to use every tactic. And so this was a movement that really looked at tactics, you know, everything was on the table, everything. (Dylan)

> Diversity of tactics, I think, is necessary for the success of any movement. (Joan)

> We incorporate all the tools in the toolbox of water quality testing and air quality testing and community door to door health surveys, and population education style community organizing, and hosting, and pulling off protests, and direct actions, and big mobilizations. (Jane)

> I actually love a ton of what Audre Lorde has to say... but I think that she's wrong about the master's house not being able to be torn down with the master's tools. I think that the master's tools are one tool in a big tool box, and this gets into diversity of tactic, which... includes diversity of tools, and of course we should use the master's tools if they're available, and if they might tear down the master's house. (Nathan)

> I absolutely think in my lifetime, mountaintop removal will be abolished. And I think that it will take multiple tactics, it's not going to happen purely through

> legislation or purely through litigation or purely through direct action, like I think all of those tools in the toolbox are super important and they all need to be happening simultaneously in order to reach abolition. (Madelyn)

SUMMARY

The only time activists affiliated with CMC engaged in disruptive tactics is when they travelled (on their own time) to West Virginia to work directly with CD. Not one member of CMC had engaged in, or even knew anyone who had engaged in, disruptive tactics as members of CMC in Tennessee. The reason why was rather straightforward: they were concerned about the ability to maintain an anti-MTR presence in the area. CMC is the only organization in the region that fights against MTR, and has been the recipient of many violent threats. They felt the only viable option available to them in terms of redressing MTR was to operate through purely legal channels.

Coal Disruption, on the other hand, is solely focused on abolishing MTR, steep slope strip mining, and all other forms of surface mining. Moreover, the presence of other like-minded individuals and EJOs in the area bolstered CD's legitimacy and ability to engage in collaborations. In fact, all ten members of CD that I interviewed discussed at length their relationships with other EJOs in the region. This finding lends strong support to previous research indicating that members of EJOs perceive coalition-building as a highly favorable activity, and engage in coalition building activities with other EJOs (Mix 2011).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Environmental justice organizations (EJOs) have employed a variety of tactics in hopes of preventing and/or redressing the presence of toxins in their communities. This dissertation was propelled by two central research questions regarding EJO tactics. First, I ask what structural factors affect organizational-level tactical choices. Second, I examine how activists' personal histories and their perceptions of structural factors influence the tactical choices EJOs make. I draw upon social movement theories and research regarding organizational characteristics and form, access to resources, political and cultural opportunities, activists' histories with political activism, and activists' perceptions of political opportunities to answer these questions.

While previous research has focused on case studies of EJOs to understand how they operate, this project considered EJO tactics from two methodological perspectives. First, I collected data via a national-level survey, as well as secondary sources, to uncover the broad patterns of tactical choices across several EJOs. Second, I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 EJO activists working with two EJOs, Concerned Mountain Citizens (CMC) and Coal Disruption (CD), to determine the factors affecting the EJO tactical decision-making. When compared to findings of previous research regarding other social movement organizations' tactical choices, data patterns in the current project indicate that EJOs operate somewhat similarly. Additionally, however, they reveal some unique patterns of operation.

Below, I first outline the main findings of this project, including the ways in which the survey and in-depth interview results complement and contradict one another. Then I move on to a discussion of theoretical implications, including how my findings add to both the social movement and environmental justice literatures. I conclude with a discussion of limitations and directions for future research.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall, the survey findings indicate that internal characteristics matter more for tactical decisions among EJOs than external factors. Specifically, member demographics, organizational characteristics, and resources play a large role in shaping EJOs' tactical choices. EJOs comprised of more women are more likely to engage in both institutional and disruptive tactics, whereas organizations comprised of more minorities are more likely to engage in disruptive tactics. The employment of lobbyists has a strong impact on the likelihood of EJOs engaging in institutional tactics, while collaborations with other EJOs are highly correlated with disruptive tactics. The findings regarding internal factors largely support hypothesized relationships and illustrate similarities between EJO tactical choices and patterns regarding tactical choices found in previous research examining environmental justice and other types of social movements (Mix 2011; Staggenborg 1988; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

Survey findings regarding external factors prove less compelling. Neither government stability nor government ideology reaches significance in the full model. The presence of a Democratic governor is positively correlated with both institutional and disruptive tactics, while the presence of a Democratic majority

in the state legislature is negatively correlated with disruptive tactics. This suggests that EJOs are more likely to engage in disruptive tactics with a Republican legislative majority, which fits with the hypothesized relationship and previous research. Finally, citizen ideology is positively correlated with institutional tactics, indicating that when EJOs perceive their states' citizens to be receptive to their cause, they will engage in institutional tactics to meet their goals. This relationship provides support for the burgeoning research on cultural opportunities (e.g., Faupel and Werum 2011).

Qualitatively, results from the in-depth interviews indicate that histories of activism, as well as perceptions of the political and community context, inform EJO tactical decision-making processes. EJO activists in Tennessee believed the context in which they worked was not conducive to disruptive tactics, and those beliefs in turn shaped CMC's tactical choices. Alternately, CD activists in West Virginia felt that their comparatively supportive community environment enabled them to pursue both institutional and disruptive tactics.

Complementary Results

Both the survey and interview results indicate that EJO activists who engage in disruptive tactics care deeply about collaborations. The survey results illustrate a strong correlation between collaborations and disruptive tactics (p<.001), and the activists involved with CD who engaged in disruptive tactics spoke about collaborating with other EJ organizations and activists on numerous disruptive tactical actions. These results are consistent with previous research that shows EJO activists consider coalition-building and collaborations an important resource (e.g., Mix 2011). Moreover, the CD activists I interviewed

viewed these collaborations, especially the trainings they held, as ways to teach other EJ activists the ins and outs of disruptive tactical actions in West Virginia. Although CD states publically that it engages in nonviolent civil disobedience, specific information regarding how, what, where, and when, was not freely discussed with just anyone. Only members of affinity groups planning to be directly engaged with a disruptive tactical action knew the details of the event. These findings illustrate that EJO activists in my sample must engage in collaborations to pursue disruptive tactics.

Another complementary finding between the survey results and the in-depth interviews is the role of state-level politicians. The survey results indicate that the presence of a Democratic governor is positively correlated with both types of tactics. The governor of West Virginia (Earl Tomblin), where CD engaged in both institutional and disruptive tactics, is a Democrat. In fact, West Virginia has not had a Republican governor since 2001. While these results do not support the hypothesized relationship (i.e., that the presence of elite allies such as a Democratic governor would be positively related to engagement in institutional tactics and negatively related to engagement in disruptive tactics), the pattern remains consistent across the quantitative and qualitative findings.

<u>Contradictory Results</u>

Along with the complementary findings, the survey and interviews produced interesting contradictory results as well. The contradiction stems from the measure of citizen ideology in the survey and perceptions of community context in the interviews.

The survey results confirm an expected positive correlation between citizen ideology and institutional tactical choices. The measure for citizen ideology, drawn from Berry et al. (2010), considers the general degree to which state citizens are politically liberal or conservative. The measure ranges on a scale from zero to 100, with higher numbers indicating a higher level of liberalism. Specifically, ideology is operationalized as, "interest group ratings of members of Congress and the distribution of votes for candidates in congressional elections, using the assumption that voters choose the candidate whose ideology is closest to their own" (Berry et al. 2007:113).

The positive correlation found in my survey results indicates that a receptive cultural context renders disruptive tactics less necessary. The relationship between citizen ideology and institutional tactical choices, however, is not evident in the qualitative findings. Members of CMC pursued only institutional tactics, yet they felt their cultural environment, as reflected in their community, was not receptive of their anti-MTR stance. This may be due, however, to differing levels of analysis. While many direct community members were not supportive of CMC's work, perhaps the ideology of Tennesseans, on average, is more accepting of stopping MTR in the state. Moreover, members of CD perceived a relatively open cultural context in West Virginia (reflected in the vocal and silent supporters), yet CD engaged in both institutional *and* disruptive tactics.

These contradictory results may also be linked to the *type* of environmentalism politically liberal individuals tend to endorse. While previous research has illustrated a strong relationship between political liberalism and

environmental concerns (Dunlap and McCright 2008, 2011), this may reflect that liberal individuals support *mainstream* environmentalism. As discussed in the introduction, the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement are two fundamentally different social movements, with the former focused mainly on conservation and the latter on social justice issues regarding the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits (Pellow and Brehm 2013). Accordingly, politically liberal individuals may or may not support the eradication of environmental injustices, or may simply not be aware of environmental justice issues.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

As discussed in chapter 2, most research in social movements can be categorized into one of three areas: mobilization, outcomes, and operations. Theorizing regarding these areas of interest considers access to resources (McCarth and Zald 1973, 1977), political opportunities (McAdam 1982, 1996; Meyer 2004; Tilly 1978), and cultural opportunities (Borland 2004; Faupel and Werum 2011; Frank and McEneaney 1999; Williams 2004) as the main forces shaping social movements. Accordingly, I drew upon each of these theoretical areas in the current project.

Theory Testing

Originally, resource mobilization theory (RMT) considered the ways in which access to resources predicted social movement mobilization. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) argued that social movements emerge as a result of the availability and access to resources (e.g., funding, membership, etc). More recently, scholars have applied RMT to social movement tactics, arguing that

differing types of resources may lead to differing tactical choices (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). For example, financial resources may constrict social movement organizations' activities based on the source of funding, while social movement organizations (SMOs) with limited financial resources may turn to other types of resources, such as social capital, to pursue their goals.

My findings indicate general support for these hypotheses. Financial resources, measured as grants as a percentage of total SMO budget, was strongly negatively correlated with both institutional and disruptive tactics. Although the hypothesized relationship predicted a negative relationship only between financial resources and disruptive tactics, this finding is not entirely surprising. As access to financial resources increases, SMOs tend to engage in less "activist" activities in general, instead focusing on organizational maintenance and job security. As these goals become more important, the original goals of the SMO decrease in level of importance (Piven and Cloward 1977; Rucht 1999; Staggenborg 1988, 1989).

Moreover, my findings indicate that collaborations with other SMOs are highly correlated with disruptive tactics. This suggests that EJOs, usually comprised of working-class individuals, draw upon social capital to pursue disruptive tactics. While previous research has found that EJOs consider collaborations and coalition-building as highly favorable activities (Mix 2011), researchers have not theorized why access to social capital contributes to the use of disruptive tactics. My qualitative findings suggest this relationship can be attributed to how EJOs learn disruptive tactics. While information regarding the ins and outs of institutional tactics is publically available on several

environmental organizations' websites, information regarding how to break the law is generally not the type of information shared publically. As such, EJOs must establish trusting relationships with EJOs engaging in disruptive tactics in order to learn how to "do" disruptive tactical actions.

Social movement activities are also shaped by political opportunities, specifically the accessibility of political and economic elite allies and divisions among the elite (e.g., government instability) (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McAdam 1996; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1988; Tilly 1978). The presence of an unstable government leads to an opportunity wedge in which social movement participants can attempt to gain access to political power. Elite allies are influential members of the political and economic structures who are sympathetic to SMOs' concerns and may have the power to sponsor or support movement efforts (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). For the environmental justice movement, the Democratic Party has been more sympathetic to their concerns than the Republican Party. Accordingly, I tested hypotheses regarding the relationship between several measures of political opportunities and EJO tactical choices.

My findings indicate that although government stability and government ideology were insignificant, the presence of a Democratic governor was positively correlated with both categories of tactics, while a Democratic legislative majority was negatively related to disruptive tactics. The latter finding is consistent with previous research, as the absence of allies in the state legislature provides EJOs with fewer opportunities to enter into the political system to voice their grievances. The former finding is partially aligned with previous research regarding political opportunities. While it was expected that the presence of a

Democratic governor would encourage institutional tactics (via the potential for

an elite ally in institutional politics), my finding that a Democratic governor also

encourages disruptive tactics is inconsistent with previous theorizing or research.

This may be due to the fact that, according to Cable and Cable (1995), EJOs

follow a typical progression as time passes. After initially mobilizing around an

environmental injustice, EJOs appeal to political and economic authorities. If this

does not address the issue, they then turn to litigation. Finally, if litigation does

not work, a diminished faith in government will cause EJOs to turn to more

disruptive activities. As such, EJO activists, "begin to see that the patterns

revealed in environmental conflict reflect broader inequities of economic and

political power in society, with the result that the concept of environmental

justice emerges and guides them to raise questions, not only about public health,

but also about political power in general" (Cable and Cable 1995:114).

Accordingly, EJOs in states with Democratic governors may have attempted to

resolve an environmental injustice via institutional politics, only to find that the

political system is more concerned about economic growth and development as

opposed to environmental protection. This, in turn, may lead EJOs to pursue

their goals via disruptive tactics.

Finally, a newer area of theoretical development regarding social

movements is the role of cultural opportunities play in SMO activities. In this

vein, researchers consider various aspects of culture, including the resonance of

SMO claims with the general public (Benford and Snow 2000; Jasper 1997;

Williams and Benford 2000) and prominent norms, values, and ideals within a

culture (Inglehart 1990). In this project, I measured cultural receptivity via

citizen ideology, discussed above. Previous research has overwhelmingly document that political liberalism is correlated with higher levels of environmental concerns than conservatism (Dunlap 1991; Dunlap and McCright 2008, 2011; Mobley et al. 2010; Neumayer 2004; Olli et al. 2001; Van Liere and Dunlap 1980; Xiao and McCright 2007). This project found that citizen ideology is highly correlated with EJOs' engagement in institutional tactics. Accordingly, my results confirm previous work regarding cultural opportunities.

Theory Building

As discussed in chapter 2, while previous research has developed models on the relationships between variables in the social movement literature on tactics, actual theorizing regarding these relationships remains limited. Researchers may begin to address this omission by engaging in more qualitative research regarding social movement tactics. Indeed, a central task of such research is the iterative process of theory building, testing, and verifying (Hennink et al. 2011). A major aim of this project, then, is to contribute to this process of tactical theory development in the social movements literature by identifying underlying mechanisms that animate relationships between variables.

The findings of this project suggest that one such mechanism involves consideration of the power relationships and dynamics between social movement organizations, communities, and the state. Power is the "ability to produce intended effects" (Russell 1938). Instead of viewing power as something one either possesses or does not possess (i.e., a characteristic of a specific actor), it is more useful to consider power as an as aspect of social relations (Emerson 1962). Gaventa's (1980) classic work on power and powerlessness illustrates the ways in

which power operates in the social world. In his work, Gaventa (1980) argues that power may operate in three distinct ways. In what he refers to as the pluralist approach, Gaventa argues that grievances may be recognized and aired by the aggrieved, decision-making processes are open, and leaders are perceived to be the voices of the people, not elites. In the second approach, "power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision-making process, but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues altogether" (Gaventa 1980:9). In this conceptualization of power, the agenda for political struggle is preset by those with power over others, rendering the aggrieved with no channel to pursue their goals. Finally, Gaventa argues that a third type of power has been neglected, and must be considered to understand his investigation of quiescence and rebellion in Central Appalachia. Here, powerholders exercise power by influencing the wants and perceptions of the powerless. In other words, with this type of power, political systems are able to prevent demands from either being made at all, or from becoming political issues. The mechanism through which this is possible is the appropriation of common social myths, symbols, and language, and using them to legitimate the status quo.[34]

Given the third type of power dynamics, it would follow that EJOs living in such areas must first become immune to the legitimation processes and second, must find ways to wield more power vis-à-vis the coal industry and the polity. Accordingly, each independent variable in my quantitative data analysis is linked in some way to this quest for more power. The aggregate race and gender makeup

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[34] Bell and York's (2010) research regarding ideology in the West Virginian coalfields illustrates this type of power well.

of EJOs suggests lack of access to institutional power due to a legacy of racism and sexism. Conversely, access to individuals such as professional lobbyists with the knowledge of how to "work the system" illustrates higher levels of institutional knowledge, and thus, institutional power. These power dynamics, in turn, inform the types of tactics to which EJOs have access and are likely to employ.

Power dynamics also underlie the patterns revealed in the qualitative data. Members of CMC perceived the coal industry to have high levels of power in their local community, but less power at the state level. As such, CMC activists pursued state-level political change (as opposed to municipal- or county-level initiatives) to fight mountaintop removal because it was in that institutional realm that they believed they had the most sway. CD activists, on the other hand, perceived the coal industry to hold enormous power over the entire state of West Virginia. As such, CD activists relied on other forms of power – collaborations and blocking mining activities with their own bodies – in order to fight MTR. CD activists knew they did not have a chance of taking on "Big Coal" (Goodell 2006) via institutional routes, so they opted for disruptive tactics instead.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As with all projects, this dissertation is not without its limitations. First, the response rate for the survey was somewhat low (35%), although it did fall within the range of average for organizational-level surveys (Dobbin and Kelly 2007). Second, the survey portion of this research measures only one aspect of the cultural context, i.e., Berry et al.'s 2010 measure of cultural ideology. Other quantitative research in the area of cultural opportunities has used a variety of

differing measures to capture cultural ideology, including magazine textual analysis (Faupel and Werum 2011), state-level public opinion polls (Soule and Olzak 2004), and media coverage (Gitlin 2003; Soule et al. 1999). Third, all of the contextual variables I use (i.e., government stability and ideology, legislative majority, the presence of a Democratic governor, and cultural ideology) are all measured at the state level. Collecting data regarding more localized political and cultural contexts would, of course, provide extremely useful information, but securing such data would be time- and resource-constraining. With readily available state-level information, the survey may not have been able to pick up the local political and cultural influences that may have helped shape EJO tactical choices. Finally, as Image 3.1 illustrates, roughly two-thirds of the EJOs that participated in the survey are located in the Eastern and Midwestern United States. To more accurately understand general trends across EJOs, future research should work to incorporate EJOs working in all 50 states.

Moreover, future research in the area of social movements should explicitly investigate power dynamics as an underlying mechanism of factors affecting tactical choices. Power manifests itself in different ways and disentangling these dynamics is a next step for researchers interested in social movement tactical choices. Similarly, researchers interested in public sociology might consider the ways in which EJOs (as well as other types of SMOs) may begin to address power imbalances in their communities.

SUMMARY

Several factors affect both EJOs' tactical choices and the processes through which those choices are made. My survey results indicate that factors internal to

EJOs, such as aggregate member demographics, organizational characteristics, and access to resources affect tactical choices more than factors external to EJOs (e.g., the political and cultural context in which they operate). Interview data, however, suggests that activists' perceptions of external factors play a large role in their organizations' tactical decision-making process. The EJO activists I interviewed were hyperaware of the community context in which they worked, and arranged their tactical activities based on these perceptions. Overall, these findings suggest that, although comprised of highly localized, mainly working-class minorities, EJOs operate rather similarly to previously-studied social movements.

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