

## **Abstract**

**THESIS:** Race, Place, and Hazardous Waste: Understanding the Linkages Between Discriminatory Housing Policies and Exposure to Hazardous Waste in Indianapolis

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Studies have strongly confirmed people of color and low-income individuals in the United States experience an unfair pollution burden. Most environmental justice research at the local level has focused on investigating the existence of exposure disparities. Spatial analyses are used to simply identify whether an unfair burden exists. It is less common to investigate how and why the disparities emerge. To the best of my knowledge, no empirical studies have examined discriminatory housing policies and their relationship to pollution burden in Indianapolis, Indiana. This study filled the gap. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate exposure disparities and determine whether discriminatory housing policies caused disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards.

A concurrent transformative mixed methods design was used to understand the relationship between housing discrimination and exposure disparities in communities of color and low-income communities. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, information was collected regarding environmental justice and housing discrimination in Indianapolis. An extensive literature review was undertaken to excavate historical forces that may have influenced residential mobility and pollution burden. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Indianapolis Environmental Justice Assembly to understand environmental justice in Indianapolis from the perspective of community organizers. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. A series of spatial analyses were conducted to investigate possible correlations between discriminatory housing policies and disproportionate exposure to hazardous waste in communities of color and low-income communities in Indianapolis. The analyses included a county-level investigation and a separate neighborhood-level investigation. The research design used a mixed-methods approach to apply historical context to quantitative data. The study confirmed discriminatory housing practices as causal factors of disproportionate pollution burden in Indianapolis.