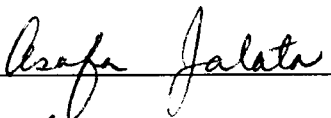
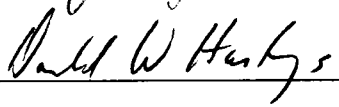


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Tamara L. Mix entitled "Environmental Racism by Design? The Case of the Scarborough Community." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Sociology.


Sherry Cable, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM BY DESIGN?
THE CASE OF THE SCARBORO COMMUNITY

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Tamara L. Mix
May 1998

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

in loving memory

to my mother

Linda Anne MacGregor Mix

who helped shape

the person I am today

and encouraged me to

pursue my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to so many people who have helped me bring this thesis to fruition. First, special thanks to the residents and activists in and around Scarborough who gave their time to speak with me as they struggled to understand what has happened in their community.

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ABSTRACT

Studies suggest that political and economic conditions played a significant role in the disproportionate environmental contamination of low income, minority communities. A history of racial discrimination erected the foundation for current environmental inequities. Local historical conditions must be analyzed to understand the siting and placement conditions leading to inequitable environmental degradation. I employ a historical political economy approach to examine the perceptions of a black community on environmental contamination. The impacts of institutional discrimination on siting decisions and the likelihood of environmental racism are explored. Scarboro is adjacent to the federal government's Oak Ridge Nuclear Reservation in East Tennessee. The community began as a cluster of hutments for workers who moved to the site for jobs offered by the Manhattan Project. In 1949, the all-black community was moved to a valley bordering the Y-12 facility. This plant was used in the production of fuel for both the atomic and hydrogen bombs and continues to be involved in weapons development. Scarboro is the closest community to any of the three production facilities. Findings indicate that a historical perspective is necessary in understanding the persistence of institutional discrimination and its impact on environmental conditions in minority communities.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: The Research Problem

Fences separate most of their backyards from the nuclear facility that lies merely one-quarter mile away from their homes. A low ridge provides a minimal natural barrier between the community of Scarboro and the federal weapons production facility responsible for powering the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. This community of 400 households is much like any other, nestled quietly in the rolling hills of East Tennessee, with one major distinction. It is an all black community isolated from the predominantly white City of Oak Ridge. The physical layout of the community is relatively unchanged from the original blueprints of the late 1940s when the community was first constructed. The houses are of two basic styles: family style duplexes and one family homes built of cements block. The original foundations of most residences were extended with additions intended to transform stark military houses into homes. Scarboro is bordered by churches, and the community gains strength and a sense of identity through worship. Community members gather in church several times a week both for worship and educational programs, extending and renewing neighborhood unity. Here, all of the neighbors know one another.

The community appears idyllic. But problems exist in this valley, problems invisible to the naked eye. Since the 1950s, some Scarboro residents have talked about the location of the community; Scarboro is the closest neighborhood to any of the three Manhattan Project plants. Residents raised health issues, questioning whether the fruits and vegetables from their gardens were safe to eat, whether the yards and streams were safe for their children's games. Rumors circulated for years that levels of cancer,

respiratory illness, and birth defects are abnormally high. To date, no firm data have been gathered.

The Y-12 facility, in whose shadow Scarboro lies, was initially used in the uranium enrichment process for the production of the atomic bomb. Y-12 uranium fueled the "Little Boy" bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. After World War II, other enrichment processes dominated, briefly leaving Y-12 without a mission. But, in January, 1950, President Truman ordered the Atomic Energy Commission to build the hydrogen bomb. Y-12 was designated as the site for lithium separation. Massive amounts of mercury were required to obtain usable lithium. Large fans presumably protected workers from mercury poisoning during the separation process, fans that likely directed airborne mercury vapors across the low ridge, over the fences, and into the Scarboro community.

In 1983, the federal government was forced to reveal that, between 1950 and 1970, three spills of over 100,000 pounds of mercury each occurred, in addition to numerous spills over 20,000 pounds. Altogether, over two million pounds of mercury were lost to the environment or were otherwise unrecorded. High levels of mercury contamination were found in East Fork Poplar Creek, long used by the facility as an industrial drainage ditch. The creek flows out of the Y-12 complex near Scarboro and approximately 22 tributary streams run from the ridge into the community. Given the proximity of the Y-12 facility to the Scarboro community and the known harmful effects of mercury on humans, residents' fears of significant contamination seem reasonable.

Health concerns were raised in the City of Oak Ridge, linking exposure to various toxic materials used in weapons production processes to illnesses such as cancer, chronic

fatigue syndrome, birth defects, and respiratory ailments. Plant workers and residents expressed concerns about health effects. In August, 1997, the *Nashville Tennessean* published a series of articles addressing health concerns in the Oak Ridge area. One of the main focuses of the series was the heightened incidence of respiratory illness in the Scarboro community: in a population of 550, sixteen children suffered from serious respiratory ailments. Parents attributed these problems to releases of various toxins from the Y-12 facility. In November, 1997, United States Senator Fred Thompson (R-TN) requested that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) study the relationship between toxic contamination and various ailments. Unexplained illnesses are not uncommon in the City of Oak Ridge, but such clusters as occurred in Scarboro were above the norm even for the city. The proximity of the all black community to the Y-12 facility prompts questions of environmental racism. Was the community sited with racist motives? Are residents suffering *disproportionate* contamination based on race?

Members of minority communities such as Scarboro frequently claim they are opportune areas for the siting of polluting industries and toxic waste disposal facilities due to residents' lack of political and economic power. Facility siting in such communities is especially prevalent in the southeastern United States, where racism continues to affect the economic and social conditions of minority communities (Bullard 1989, 1994, Capek 1993, Goldman 1996). African American, Hispanic, and Native American groups have been most affected by the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste sites and Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs) (Bullard 1990, 1993, 1994; Bryant 1993; Mohai and Bryant 1992). It is argued that a legacy of racism and economic and political powerlessness resulted in these communities becoming targets of polluting

industries, because such communities present the 'path of least resistance' to industry (Bullard 1994, 1989, Capek 1993, Mohai and Bryant 1992). Reduced land rent in low-income areas encourages industries by offering low land costs, also contributing to the selection of poorer areas for toxic facilities. Racism is intertwined with economic discrimination. Historically, minority communities developed in undesirable areas where land rent is lower compared to other areas.

The case of each community is different. Often noxious facilities are placed in established, predominantly minority areas. At other times, minority communities form near noxious facilities due to the availability of affordable housing. Consequently, a historical perspective is required to examine environmental racism, a perspective that examines political and economic conditions as well as structural and institutional barriers in analyzing factors associated with inequities in contamination.

I propose to examine environmental racism in Scarboro through a historical political economic perspective that ranges from the Manhattan Project's 1942 initial construction, the 1948-49 creation of the Scarboro community to 1998. Residents' perspectives on community history and local environmental contamination are presented to paint a comprehensive picture of the case of Scarboro.

In the next chapter, I review the literature on the political economy of race, contaminated communities, environmental racism, and institutional discrimination. I draw from this review to construct a framework for the analysis of historical conditions that led to decisions on the siting of the Scarboro community. This historical perspective on the political and economic forces dominating in the region provides the larger context for a subsequent discussion of environmental issues that the all black community

currently faces. I then offer conclusions and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

In this chapter I review two types of literature. First, I examine the political economy perspective to provide the framework for a discussion of the race relations that are associated with the capitalist economic system and that promote race and class inequalities. Second, I use the literature on contaminated communities and environmental injustices to provide the basis for a discussion of environmental racism. Finally, I elaborate the analytical focus of my study, offering several research questions that guide my data collection and interpretation.

Political Economy and Institutional Discrimination

The political economy perspective provides the basis for examining the economic conditions that have led to continued racism and discrimination. Although Marx emphasized class to the near exclusion of race, most contemporary political economists insist that race and class are historically intertwined in producing blacks' current socioeconomic positions. Throughout most capitalist social institutions, "relationships between race and class have combined to determine the general status position of blacks" (Franklin 1973:10). Minorities find themselves caught in a cycle of discriminatory practices embedded in capitalist political and economic structures, structures generated and/or reinforced by racist ideology. How did the structures arise?

The fundamental goal of capitalism is the accumulation of the greatest profit with the least amount of initial monetary output and costs. Capitalists benefit from racist ideology and practices because they promote divisive competition for jobs between workers. Racism is an integral part of capitalism:

As a theoretical construct, capitalism is conceivable without racism. But racism is historically rooted in the combined slave-capitalist system, and its persistence suggests that overcoming racism would require transcending capitalist society. The capitalist mode of production is rooted in and legitimates a hierarchical socio-economic structure. Racism, one extreme form of hierarchy, is woven in the fabric of the structure (Leiman 1993:3-5).

Not only are the capitalists responsible for the perpetuation of inequality, but the white worker as well. White workers derive benefits from their whiteness, establishing a group identity that linked them to those in the power structure. "Working class formation and the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the US white working class" (Roediger 1991:8). The white worker became just as responsible for the perpetuation of occupational inequalities as the ruling class. According to Roediger (1991:13) "Status and privilege conferred by race could be used to make up for alienating and exploitative class relationships." Competition between workers reduced solidarity and had the potential to force wages up and profits down. Even though perpetuation of inequality produced negative effects, white workers continued to benefit and therefore continued to support an unjust system as they defined and accepted their "class positions by fashioning identities as 'not slaves' and 'not 'blacks'.'" (Roediger 1991:13).

Racist political and economic institutions have promoted racial discrimination through such manifestations as slavery, the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws and institutional racism. Africans were captured and enslaved to provide their labor freely to the capitalist. The Union's victory in the Civil War granted blacks legal freedom and the Fourteenth amendment was enacted to ensure equality. But equality was denied with the acceptance of the "separate but equal" dictum authorized in the case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896. The decision in this case reinterpreted the Fourteenth amendment to

allow state mandated segregation. Jim Crow laws, which had been in place throughout most of the south since the reconstruction period, had the support of the Supreme Court with this edict. "Separate but equal" was practiced, limiting public access to facilities and education as well as political, social and economic parity. Facilities were separate, but *not* equal, as public funds were not evenly distributed.

Marable describes the Jim Crow era that reigned in the South until the 1960s:

Political activity challenging Jim Crow segregation and the system of caste and class rule upon which economy and social order was based was considered the most serious offense of all (1983:115).

During the early to mid 1900s, activists attempting to organize for equality or fair pay were quickly quieted. Many unions did not admit black members as they acted out the discrimination that provided benefits for the white worker. Denied not only equal pay, but also equal rights, black workers were frequently left no choice but to fill undesirable occupational roles. Blacks were often used as strikebreakers, causing additional friction and building solidarity amongst the white workers.

The Jim Crow system began disintegrating with the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education at Topeka*. But by that time, blacks were thoroughly and disproportionately entrenched in the permanent underclass demanded by capitalism and perpetuated by both the ruling class and the white worker. Oversupply of workers, job competition, and increased demand for production fueled economic growth, yet kept wages low. Job competition between the races limits workers' ability to organize for higher pay and improved working conditions. As Reich argues:

The greater racial inequality between black and white workers makes alliances between them more difficult, hindering the development of joint bargaining power against employers (1981:300).

Without a united front, no single group can successfully push for wage equality across the board. As whites derived specific benefits from their whiteness, it was unlikely that they would work to defeat a system that, although unequal, aided them and provided a sense of white solidarity. Conflict between the races in the workplace continues based on racist ideology and economic instability. Reich predicts: "racial inequality will be reproduced in a perfectly competitive capitalist economy because individual capitalists [and individuals] gain from it" (1981:165).

Racial inequalities in political and economic structures persist through institutional racial discrimination. Institutional discrimination refers to:

actions or practices carried out by members of dominant groups or their representatives which have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups (Feagin and Feagin 1978:20).

Institutional discrimination may be either direct or indirect. Direct institutional discrimination is aimed at intentionally harming or disadvantaging a group based on rules that are widely accepted and followed. Indirect institutional discrimination involves practices that are not *intended* to harm, but nonetheless have that effect because the practices are linked to those of other institutions in which direct discrimination occurs.

Thus, institutions work in concert to promote a "web of discrimination" (Feagin and Feagin 1978:35). This web is extremely complex and incorporates some of the most simple aspects of society. Kingsley Davis (1948) notes the influence of caste and stratification on social position. He links societal aspects such as religion, government, property, wealth, and labor as promoting a stratified system that limits social, political, and economic mobility. This incorporation of the most basic aspects of society illustrates how deeply stratification and thereby institutional discrimination have become ingrained

in psyche and practices. I will address three areas in which institutional discrimination persists; housing, education and employment, understanding that institutional discrimination permeates a broader scope.

Discrimination in political and economic institutions is pervasive in social institutions, particularly housing, as the cycle of discrimination is perpetuated. A person's residence partially determines the quality of education received. This education, in turn, influences the range of jobs for which a person is qualified and effects one's ability to rise occupationally and economically. Residential segregation is an important manifestation of institutionalized discrimination as it

involves more than simply the relationship of individuals to other individuals; it also involves the relationship of groups of individuals to political influence and economic resources. Segregation continues to play the same role it always has in American race relations - to isolate, disempower and oppress (Ford 1995: 449).

Despite laws to reduce inequity, housing discrimination continues as minority groups are directed away from certain areas or are specifically directed to minority communities. The consequence of this perpetuation of segregation is more injurious than merely the creation of race-specific communities. Minority neighborhoods generally tend to be lower income areas, lacking the resources to provide the quality of education that characterizes wealthier communities. Thus, minority students begin competition on an uneven playing field.

The practice of discrimination has extended from political and economic institutions, becoming rooted firmly in housing discrimination and everyday experience. This discrimination is no longer as overt as it had been in the past, but has changed to more subtle, yet just as harmful forms. Although individuals may not experience blatant

racist behaviors, as they had in previous years, racism and discrimination have become inherent in the methods used by the system and in the culture and norms of society.

The following section examines the increase in contaminated communities and connects cases throughout the nation to the concept of environmental injustice. Discrimination linked with race and class has also become involved in the placement of noxious facilities. This section will examine studies discussing the likelihood of disproportionate contamination based on these demographic characteristics and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these works.

Contaminated Communities and Environmental Injustices

Love Canal residents were shocked in 1978 to discover that the elementary school at the center of their community had been built on a chemical landfill. In 1953, after several decades of dumping in the landfill, Hooker Chemical Company sold it for one dollar to the State of New York. The deed included the company's disclaimer of responsibility for damages attributable to the landfill. Decades later, the nation looked on as the Love Canal story unraveled, bringing with it a new fear of the unknown. What seemed to be a safe neighborhood was transformed into a terrified community as members were evacuated from their homes, a close knit neighborhood was broken up, and children suffered lasting health affects.

Since the 1970s numerous cases of environmental contamination by toxic hazards were noted. The 1979 incident at Three Mile Island is the least of these disasters; a commercial nuclear reactor came within 60 minutes of a core meltdown (Walsh 1988). Communities across the nation confronted actual health threats from contaminants that are byproducts of production and potential health threats from proposed noxious

facilities.

Concomitant with the increased incidence of contaminated communities is the observation that these victimized communities are disproportionately black and hispanic. A Government Accounting Office study (1983) found racial inequity in decisions about the siting of noxious facilities. The next year the "Cerrell Report," (1984) was privately issued and sponsored by the California Waste Management Board. The report identified the demographic characteristics of neighborhoods least likely to resist the siting of noxious facilities: minority communities led the list. The report was subsequently leaked to the public; the observations suspecting environmental racism were confirmed.

Concerns about environmental racism were sharpened by the widely publicized findings of a study conducted for the United Church of Christ in 1987. Entitled "Toxic Wastes and Race: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Wastes," the document reports the appointed commission's conclusion that race is the single most significant predictor of the location of abandoned and currently operating commercial toxic waste sites in the country.

The United Church of Christ report generated an empirical response from researchers that continues to fuel a polemical debate over the existence of environmental racism. Bullard defines environmental racism as "any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or color" (1994: 98).

Many authors assert a strong connection between race and contamination, in conjunction with economic factors, political powerlessness, and a history of discrimination (Bullard 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995; Bullard and Wright 1990;

Bailey and Faupel 1992; Mohai and Bryant 1992; Gelobter 1992; Pulido 1996; and Capek 1993). Bullard was instrumental in developing the concept and definition of environmental racism. His independent studies, as well as those in conjunction with other authors, have set the tone for the study of disproportionate contamination in minority communities. By combining quantitative and qualitative analysis he has examined areas affected by this issue, referring to a history of political and economic powerlessness of minority communities and the willingness to accept environmental risks in return for jobs as major factors for the disproportionate siting.

Bailey and Faupel (1992) discussed disproportionate contamination through the use of extensive field research in understanding the siting of a landfill in a predominantly black area of Emelle, Alabama. This study provides strong evidence that race was an important factor in the decision to site the noxious facility in a predominantly black area due to political powerlessness. Mohai and Bryant (1992) provide an overview of 15 existing studies on environmental racism and incorporate their own study of the Detroit area. This study shows a definite connection between race and siting. Gelobter (1992) discusses the relationship between environmental regulation and the discriminatory outcomes of these practices. Although neither supporting nor denying the existence of environmental racism, he attempts to reconceptualize the ideas on which the concept is based. Capek (1993) lays out a strong environmental justice frame to view the case of the Carver Terrace Community. She uses the experiences and actions of this community to support the concept of environmental racism.

Conversely, authors contend that race is not a factor in decisions to site noxious facilities. Anderton et al (1994) discussed the issue of environmental racism in two

articles supported by a grant from Chemical Waste Management. They used census tract data to determine the area around Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facilities (TSDFs), and found the percentage of minority individuals in the TSDF area too small to be important. These studies also note that the makeup of TSDF areas may be a consequence of the siting, as more affluent constituents have the ability to "vote with their feet" thereby leaving undesirable areas and more workers move to the area for convenience purposes.

Been emphasizes a market force perspective in her analyses of environmental justice. In her two 1995 studies she provides a comparison with several other analyses that were done in an effort to establish the case that demographic shifts have occurred over time and that originally, facilities were not sited in minority areas. According to these studies market forces have caused low land rent and undesirable areas encouraging a shift in demographic characteristics in areas surrounding noxious facilities.

Been and Gupta (1997) expand on previous studies by building a stronger case for the influence of market forces on demographic areas surrounding noxious facilities. They provide a comparison, using census tract data, of demographic characteristics of tracts in which TSDFs are located at the time of siting and at the point of the research. The authors found that siting was not originally in minority neighborhoods. Neighborhoods had become predominantly minority over time. Hispanic and black communities were shown to be a significant predictor of facility presence in 1990, but not at the time of the siting decision.

Thus, many empirical inconsistencies characterize the literature on environmental racism. Foster (1993) provides an overview of some problems and criticisms of this

body of work. First, the literature contains no "theoretically sound articulation of the concept of environmental racism" (Foster 1993:730). That is, the literature does not make a clear and consistent distinction between attitude and behavior, recognizing that one does not necessarily determine the other. Racism is most often conceptually defined as an attitude -- prejudice -- and carries the connotation of intent. The corresponding behavior is referred to as discrimination. The absence of these distinctions promotes ambiguity in the literature and increases the likelihood of inconsistency in findings.

Second, the environmental racism literature is replete with inconsistencies in operational definitions of the concept of community. Inconsistency in the unit of analysis has promoted controversy about the existence of disproportionate contamination of minority neighborhoods. The United Church of Christ study employed zip code areas as proxies for communities. A few studies have examined environmental racism by comparing counties and neighborhoods. Most studies have used census tract data to define communities (Anderton et al 1994; Been 1995; Been and Gupta 1997).

Each operational definition is flawed. The use of zip codes does not allow for consistency over time, since the post office changes the areas each code covers with some frequency and at its own convenience (Been 1995; Been and Gupta 1997). These areas vary in population size and areas covered. Zip codes are defined as delivery zones, not as neighborhood units and therefore comparisons of these units by county fail to reflect actual communities as perceived by residents. Been (1995) points out that neighborhoods are typically too small to allow for adequate statistical analysis. Census tracts are widely used in longitudinal studies to measure demographic shifts over time (Anderton 1994; Been 1995; Been and Gupta 1997). These tracts are consistent in population size and

area. If population growth occurs, tracts can be aggregated or disaggregated. Boundaries are clearly defined and changes are noted from census to census. Although census tracts tend to be fairly consistent over time, noxious facilities are often located on the edges of the tracts with the consequence that contamination from a facility in one census tract often affects contiguous tracts without any toxic sites.

Third, the interaction of race and class muddies findings on environmental racism. Pulido (1996) suggests that the very term "environmental racism" was deliberately chosen to focus attention on race in the hope of pushing political hot buttons. She argues that, since the economic disparities and political weaknesses associated with contaminated communities are attributable solely to economic conditions, class is the better predictor. Anderton et al (1994, 1995) concur, arguing that siting decisions are based only on economic factors and corporate interests, which leave whites as likely as blacks to find themselves next to a polluting facility. Thus, market forces are alleged to be significant in the creation of contaminated communities, since low land costs encourage the development of poor communities next to noxious facilities, rather than noxious facilities being placed in minority communities with racist intentions (Been 1995; Been and Gupta 1997).

Race and class are inextricably linked in the discussion of disproportionate contamination. Mohai and Bryant state:

A question that is often raised is whether the racial bias in the distribution of environmental hazard is simply a function of poverty. That is, rather than race, per se, is it not poverty that affects the distribution of environmental hazards? And are not minorities disproportionately impacted because they are disproportionately poor? (1992: 164).

Environmental racism has been examined using both qualitative and quantitative

methodologies, yet no study has employed a historical perspective. Earlier studies focused on demographic variables. Some recent works examine demographic conditions at the time of the siting to compare them with those at the time of the study. But these studies have not adopted a historical case study approach to examine the conditions that led to contamination.

Analytical Focus of the Study

This study will take an historical political and economic perspective to examine the case of the Scarboro community located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. This approach will allow for an analysis of events leading up to the creation of the community and provide room for an examination of structural, cultural, economic and political factors that played a role in the community's placement. Institutional discrimination and racist ideology will be identified throughout the analysis providing a frame through which to identify connections with disproportionate contamination. A distinction will be made between attitude and behavior, as attitudes have been critical in forming behaviors that help to perpetuate institutional discrimination. The entrenchment of a capitalist ideal has helped to shape the history of political and economic structures leading to residential segregation and continued discrimination based on race.

The literature reviewed emphasizes the importance of race and class in the continued discrimination present in society. Factors within the political, economic and social structures have created a system by which minority individuals are often trapped in lower income brackets due to housing and educational inequalities. Discrimination ingrained in the system has perpetuated inequities in all aspects of society. The disproportionate contamination of minority communities is one of the outcomes of

inequitable practices that will be examined in this study. The contamination of minority communities is a complex product of political and economic forces.

The case of Scarboro has been impacted by a variety of institutional and systemic undertones. Scarboro is a black community in the predominantly white city of Oak Ridge. The community was created in 1949 and has remained relatively the same since that time. Weapons production has dominated the economic infrastructure of the area for the past fifty-five years. Environmental contamination from production processes since the 1940s has been documented and releases and contamination continue to the present time. Located one-quarter mile from the Y-12 facility, Scarboro has been exposed to environmental contaminants.

As the factors that created this community are complex, so are the issues that need to be addressed. This analysis will approach the issue with the use of the literature presented on political economy, institutional discrimination, contaminated communities and environmental racism. Community perceptions will be used to gain an understanding of historical factors that have had an impact on current conditions. This study will address the following questions. What are the perceptions of the community regarding the proximity of the Y-12 facility and the likelihood of contamination? Do residents believe that race impacted the decision to locate the neighborhood? How has the practice of institutional discrimination and the history of the area perpetuated the conditions of the Scarboro community and these perceptions? And, most importantly, do residents perceive that the case of Scarboro is indeed environmental racism?

CHAPTER III

Methods

Data sources for this project included: archival documents, in-depth interviews and participant observation. These three sources were combined to provide the clearest possible picture of the history of the Scarboro community and resident's perceptions of contamination.

Archival documents involved the use of local and regional newspapers, *The Oak Ridger*, *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, and *The Nashville Tennessean*. I also used texts and unclassified documents from the Department of Energy reading room and the Oak Ridge Reading Room of the Oak Ridge Public Library. These sources helped to establish a basic timeline of the city's development and a summary of historical information. This documentation was helpful in the formation of an interview schedule. Archival information such as minutes from community meetings, internal government memos, and correspondence provided a basic overview of particular incidents.

Although obtaining archival documentation was for the most part a simple task, I was unable to locate some potentially critical documentation. I filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request on the environmental impacts of the Y-12 facility on Scarboro residents, the decision-making process in the 1948-49 siting of the community, and recent attempts to monitor contaminants. The request was only partially filled and did not include information on the actual decision to site the community. I appealed the findings of the FOIA to gain access to the missing documentation. My request is still pending. Since I have been unable to attain these documents, it is likely that some bias has occurred due to missing pieces of information.

In-depth interviews were conducted in three waves. The first two waves occurred in 1994 -1995 and the third in 1997-1998. The first phase focused on activism and involved 30 unstructured interviews with community activists, local officials, DOE employees and subcontractors. The second wave comprised 50 individuals that represented the diversity of the community: individuals associated with the reservation, community members, whites and blacks, political leaders, individuals who believe they have health problems related to production from the facilities, and individuals who deny contamination (Cable et al. 1998).

I conducted the third phase of interviews with 25 individuals who once lived or are presently living in the all black community of Scarboro and several white activists involved in 1960s desegregation efforts or environmental issues. Participants were chosen through snowball sampling, described by Babbie as:

A procedure implemented by collecting data on the few members of the target population you can locate, and then asking those individuals to provide the information needed to locate other members of the population that they happen to know. Snowball refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects (1998:196).

Individuals who attended meetings or who were or are active in the community were included. All respondents were assured confidentiality. The interviews took place at a mutually agreed on location and lasted for one to three hours. Interviews were audiotaped to ensure accuracy. I transcribed the interviews.

The focus of these interviews concerned environmental racism, the history of racism in the area, and disproportionate contamination in the community. These interviews allowed for a dialogue to assess perceptions of contamination and to gain insight into the present community situation. In-depth interviews were used because of

the small size of the community. A survey would have limited the scope and nature of the questions. The loose construction allowed the interview to be tailored for a variety of individual experiences and yielded information most relevant to the study. A question was asked, an answer interpreted, and another question asked to receive a more direct response or to redirect the respondent's attention to information relevant to the research (Babbie 1998: 291).

The third method of data collection was participant observation. Recent public meetings on environmental contamination in Scarboro provided the opportunity to observe community involvement and interaction. These meetings were principally between community residents or activists and representatives of either the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the Department Of Energy (DOE). They consisted primarily of the presentation of information with only limited dialogue. Babbie warns that: "Anything that the participant observer does or does not do will have some effect on what is being observed; it is simply inevitable." An effort was made to keep my impact at a minimum while interacting with community members. This research tool allowed me to meet and interact with community members on a level other than that of an interviewer and also enabled me to view first-hand the dynamics between government agencies and the community members. Observation provided the opportunity for additional insights into the perceptions of a broader range of residents.

These three methods allowed for triangulation and the ability to check facts, thereby strengthening the study and reducing bias. Biases within individual sources can be corrected through the use of comparison, between both individuals and documents. Participant observation provided valuable insight into community perspectives on the

past and on present concerns.

Several limitations were found in the use of these methods. The first involved constraints with the archival documentation. This documentation was, for the most part, readily accessible with the exception of documents still classified by the US government. The classified information would have filled in necessary information regarding actual decisions made and perspectives held by the government and military. Therefore, perceptions of the individuals in power are lacking from this analysis. A second restriction was that due to the sensitive nature of the topic and recent media attention involving contamination of the community, some community members were reluctant to discuss certain issues having to do with perceptions of contamination. Several respondents had previously been interviewed by the media and were wary of providing too much information because they had been misquoted in the press. The use of a tape recorder often allayed these fears. Although the historical perspective can provide a more accurate assessment of institutional discrimination over time, a third limitation involved the memories of the respondents. Questioning required respondents to recall information from the past or stories that other people had told them. This reliance on remembrances from long ago increased error as memories are likely to be affected by current conditions and biases.

CHAPTER IV

Oak Ridge in Retrospect: The Project, The City, and the Scarboro Community

This section of the thesis provides an historical analysis of conditions impacting the contamination of the Scarboro community. I present an overview of relative conditions of southern segregation from slavery to Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order that shaped the creation of a segregated city - Oak Ridge. Emphasizing patterns of institutional discrimination. A description of the relocation of the black community follows, sketching the origins of the Scarboro community. I trace how inequalities persist in Oak Ridge. Finally, I tie occurrences in Oak Ridge to a larger historical political economic perspective which may impact continued institutional discrimination

Southern Segregation

Blacks were brought to the United States expressly for labor purposes, in the belief that, as a population, they could be easily controlled and would provide a strong labor force for a quickly growing southern economy. All activities of the enslaved workforce were tightly controlled. Existing groups and institutions within the slave culture were dismantled to promote social control. Families were broken up, religions and traditions destroyed, authorities within tribal cultures were stripped of their legitimacy, and individual identities were demeaned by slave traders and white landowners. Whites attempted to culturally assimilate slaves into the white culture by denying them opportunities to practice their native cultures. Any semblance of heritage or individual culture was systematically destroyed to create a loyal workforce (Leiman 1993). Laws were enacted that limited the opportunity for structural assimilation. Blacks were denied social and economic mobility, restricted from sharing the political and

economic benefits of white America. Slaves were treated as a commodity on the open market, to benefit plantation owners by providing cheap labor.

The destruction of native culture and the continual movement of slaves from plantation to plantation also helped to prevent the emergence of black social structures on the plantations that could facilitate group solidarity amongst the slaves. But slaves nevertheless resisted this control through both everyday actions and outright rebellion. Maroon communities formed by runaway slaves and their descendents were present in the forests and mountains of most southern states. Many who did not run away rebelled against white control by taking back some of their lost culture and by organizing insurrections.

The Civil War was a turning point, altering the system of institutionalized slavery in the antebellum south. During the war, several attempts were made to promote a more equal race structure. Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves became federal law at war's end in 1865, with ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.

During the Reconstruction era of 1865-77, the south was under strict Union control. The southern economy collapsed with the elimination of slave labor. Southern white elites attempted to reinstate the antebellum economic system by enacting the Black Codes, a series of statutes passed in 1865-66 to ensure a continued labor force for the plantations. According to Wilson (1976:436) "the Codes also restricted black movement, denied blacks political and legal rights, and in some states provided for segregation of certain public facilities." Black Codes were nullified by the passage of the 1866 Civil Rights Act which "conferred citizenship on the ex-slaves and specified that discriminatory acts against them were punishable by fine and or federal imprisonment"

(Wilson 1976: 436).

In 1877, the Union forces left the south. Local laws that had protected blacks' rights were unenforced. Jim Crow policies that continued to control blacks became the law of the South. Blacks were legally "free," but did not have any rights. For the most part, they were forced back to the plantations under conditions little improved over the antebellum south. In 1896, Jim Crow was endorsed by the United States government in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case. The court ruled that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment dealt with political equality and not social equality. Racial segregation was legally justified with the decision. Throughout the south a comprehensive series of Jim Crow laws were adopted.

Thus, race relations continued to be strongly influenced by a persistent slave mentality into the twentieth century. If blacks were not in the fields sharecropping for extremely low wages, they were working at jobs considered to be undesirable by white workers and were being paid low wages. Myrdal observes that "the vicious cycle of job restrictions, poverty and all that follows with it tends to fix the tradition that Negroes should be kept out of good jobs and held down in unskilled, dirty, or otherwise undesirable work" (1962: 391). Social contact between whites and blacks was limited; all social intercourse was rigidly constrained by "racial rules of etiquette." In rural areas whites and blacks often worked side by side; in urban areas, work groups more typically were segregated. Rural residences tended to be segregated. In urban areas, whites resided in houses on the main streets while blacks occupied homes in the alleyways between houses (Massey 1993).

Segregation and the perpetuation of inequality continued across the country in the

early 1900s. Inequalities were more overtly present in the south due to the existence of Jim Crow laws, but the north had done its fair share to disenfranchise the blacks as well. Black leadership emerged and organizations such as the NAACP, which began in 1909, spoke out against oppression. Blacks migrated to northern urban centers seeking better jobs and opportunities but often found little improvement. Technological advancements in farming and sharecropping as well as the downturn in the cotton industry left many southern rural blacks without employment, leading them to look in other sectors for work. The newly burgeoning war industry of the 1940s provided labor opportunities in the north, increasing the shift in the black population to northern cities. Discrimination persisted throughout most of the country as “separate but equal” ruled.

Facing world war in 1941, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order stating that “there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in the defense industries of Government because of race, creed or national origin” (Steele 1987:198). Would the Executive Order pave the way to greater equality for blacks? Or would the order fall under the weight of the Jim Crow laws?

The Creation of a Segregated City

Nestled in the rolling hills of East Tennessee, the city of Oak Ridge was created as one of three facilities of the Manhattan Project during World War II, in the US government’s effort to create the first atomic bomb. The area used by the project was initially the home of four small successful farming and mining communities purchased by the federal government in the name of the war effort. The area grew from rolling farmland to a bustling town virtually overnight as people came from all over the country to work on this top secret project.

Building the Project

The East Tennessee site was chosen for three reasons. First was the topography; each plant was located in its own valley. The narrow ridges placed the plants close enough together to promote communication among them, but far enough apart that an accident in one plant was unlikely to affect the others. Second, the recent introduction to the region of the federally owned Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provided the vast amounts of energy needed for production. Third, residents were considered to be unquestioning people who needed jobs so badly that they would not raise an argument. A current resident of Oak Ridge explained:

When they chose this place it was part of [the army's] criteria that these people were subservient - that they had been beaten down by TVA and by mining companies -- that the women were subservient and the women would not question them and that the people who were here were desperate to work and would therefore be compliant. The terminology that was used was subservient and compliant.

People were drawn from all over the United States to take jobs. No one knew exactly what they were going to do in the secret city, but jobs were scarce and these valleys in East Tennessee offered the promise of employment. Most in-migrants were young, single, looking for work in a depressed economy, and families whose husbands had been transferred by their corporations. Scientists were recruited from overseas and across the nation. The city grew quickly and with this growth came the need for laborers of all types.

Employment

With the massive influx of people the need arose for regular hard laborers to do construction, janitorial, and custodial work. Such positions were deemed "unacceptable"

for more educated whites. Blacks were recruited specifically to fill low-level jobs across the Reservation. The promise of wages was a strong incentive for blacks to leave their families in pursuit of employment. Some found the area to be full of opportunity, staying until the completion of the project; others lingered only a few weeks or months before returning to their homes. A Scarboro resident discussing her brother recalled:

He was a janitor. He came here in the 40s – at that time they was just building the plants up and they would send trains – people would just load up on trains. He read in the paper that there was a train coming and bringing peoples to Oak Ridge and he said that he caught the train – several of them did. A lot of peoples came here at that time. A lot of people went back and some didn't and he was one of the ones that stayed.

As long as the wages were good and the work was steady, a continual low-level workforce remained. One resident discussed her father:

My dad was a very uneducated person. He could barely write his name. I don't know how much schooling he had but it was very, very little. But he was a hard working person and he would work anywhere and everywhere. If he would hear of a job someplace he would go because he thought he could make a lot of money.

Blacks who came to Oak Ridge did menial labor. In the early years, only black males were allowed on the Reservation. Later, black females were permitted on the Reservation, to work in menial positions such as maids and housekeepers. According to a resident, blacks were:

The people who were the most expendable. Most of the blacks they brought here were not your educated people. They were people here to do janitorial things – they were like to be the rats of the earth to clean up. In the midst of cleaning up, nobody tells you what you're cleaning up. You might be wiping up some liquid – you don't know it was mercury.

As with all workers at the Reservation, blacks were not told what was going on at the plants. Many of them had janitorial positions around the facilities, in the hutments and

encampments. Janitorial workers in the plants were often called in to clean up spills of chemicals that were unknown to them or, when cleaning up at night, disposed of chemicals that were left over from work during the day. Around the housing areas, black janitors cleaned up after both white and black workers that had been in contaminated areas. Many of these individuals may have been in contact with chemicals, bringing them back to the housing areas where janitors would come into contact with them while cleaning bathrooms and washhouses. Due to the nature of their work, it is likely that blacks were exposed to more chemicals during the course of their daily activities than were most white workers.

Education

Education was a major factor in the recruitment of blacks to fill positions considered undesirable by the general white population. The educational system in the country operated under the "separate but equal" policy that severely limited educational opportunities for blacks as facilities did not provide the same education for blacks and whites. With the Great Depression of the 1930s, blacks desperately needed jobs and were willing to take any type of labor to provide for their families. Most blacks who moved to the area had a sixth grade or less education. Today some say that less educated blacks were sought because they were defined as less of a security risk. If laborers could not read, they were unlikely to steal or disclose vital information. In the rush to produce weapons, the government was often unable to perform security checks on all of the workers. By default, national security was protected by an illiterate and compliant work force that could not comprehend the information they saw and would not tend to ask questions about operations. One resident suggests that:

One of the things that they didn't think much about was the labor -- or the unskilled labor - those that you need to bring in to do the menial work. Then, because of the secrecy and they couldn't afford to do all of the screenings and those kinds of things -- they then made a deliberate effort to go get [workers] that was illiterate. Because they could be cleaning and have information in there. What does it mean? They can't take it out, because they can't read and write. They brought those in and didn't have to worry about housing or the best accommodations. That was the beginning of how they thought of bringing in the help. It was just a certain kind of mentality or a certain type of folks that they wanted to work. In Mississippi and Alabama there was a lot of illiterate folks. Instead of getting the Appalachians, they got the blacks. And then they could control them -- the slavery thing. They couldn't keep the Indians as slaves because they could slip off. To get the Appalachians who were illiterate -- they could go back there and tell where they were working at. So, getting that distance, it was a calculated thing. So they brought the blacks in.

Housing

The Reservation was initially planned to offer equal facilities for blacks and whites in keeping with Jim Crow customs. But, according to historical texts, the huge and rapid influx of people complicated such efforts and they were quickly abandoned. The belief prevailed that "Blacks were of low occupational levels anyway, and only deserved to live in the hutments. Reservation blacks seemed to prefer low quality hutment housing anyway" (Johnson and Jackson 1981:22). One of the most important reasons mentioned for continuing segregation was that if Oak Ridge did things too differently from the surrounding region, it would upset the local norms and culture and call attention to the secret efforts of the facilities. Therefore, segregation was maintained on the Reservation under the auspices of protecting national security. A current resident explained:

The federal government tried to do things right. They thought, since Oak Ridge was in the South, they did not want to stir up any trouble or call attention to the place. They kind of over did it. East Tennessee is not the Deep South. They could have gotten away with a much milder policy than they followed.

Another stated:

This place was owned and operated by the federal Government and it was airtight segregated.

Yet another noted:

We were more segregated than any other Southern city because we had been set up as a military base and -- praise the Army Corp of Engineers and the local management companies! They set us up as more segregated than were any of the major southern cities, which did have feathered edges to their segregation.

Segregation was an accepted lifestyle in Oak Ridge as local officials conformed to the normative Jim Crow conditions, despite Roosevelt's 1941 executive order.

Blacks were assigned to separate residential areas from whites. They were not allowed to bring their families and children with them. Living in small, cramped structures called hutments, blacks were separated from the white workers. A hutment was an open room 15 feet in diameter with a central heater and beds. A resident recalled:

It was just a little square building and it had four beds - one in each corner. If they needed more space they would put another bed on top, like a bunk bed.

Four men were assigned to each hutment. Restroom and washing facilities were community areas. Occupational status was a justification for locating blacks in the hutment area: "Had blacks been employed or even considered for higher level jobs, giving them claims to better housing, there would have been a serious housing problem, as the US Government could not continue the segregation" (Johnson and Jackson 1981:112). Therefore, keeping blacks in low status jobs benefited the government both in terms of housing and labor.

Rumors spread around the Reservation about the situation in the black hutment

areas. Several encampments were designated for black use around the Reservation. The largest of these hutment areas was called Scarboro village. These areas were considered to be unsafe, as gambling and carousing were pervasive. Security guards patrolled the hutments without regard for personal privacy. At one point, it was said that one murder a night occurred in the black hutment area (Johnson and Jackson 1981). These stories strengthened the already negative stereotypes circulating the Reservation about the black population.

When black women, although not children, were eventually allowed on the reservations, they were assigned to live in hutments as well. The rumor was that women were accepted on the Reservation to keep the black male workers happy and willing to work. White women had been allowed on the Reservation long before, as had white children. Black females were kept separately from black males in a hutment area called the "pen." The pen was locked at night and checked frequently by guards. A resident remembered:

My mom said she lived in a place they called "the Pen." They had guards and they couldn't even have their husbands there. They were treated differently from the white folks. They always had the worst kind of living quarters.

Another recalled her own experience:

When I come I stayed in the "pen." The police's headquarters was in the pen and all of the women had to stay in the pen. They called it the pen to keep the men back.

One resident expressed it frankly:

I don't know what made them decide to treat them like cows.

Black children were left at home with relatives when their mothers went to work

at the Reservation. One woman remembered being without her children:

I hated to leave my children. I had four children when I come up here. After I got here and got to working, the money was so much better than we were making back home.

Another recalled:

Blacks were not supposed to bring children during the war - children were not allowed. Husbands and wives were separated. Oh yeah. They were all in single units. One hutment for each. The wives were in separate hutments. So, they were separated - yes. Families were not encouraged and in many respects were not even allowed.

Black women were thrown off the Reservation if they became pregnant.

In the spring of 1944, Black workers with higher job status requested that family housing be made available to them, as families were slowly being allowed onto the Reservation. Instead of setting up a separate area, adjoining hutments were created and blacks were allowed to live in these on a first come, first serve basis. One resident notes:

For Black people, [the army] really wasn't prepared. The places where we lived weren't really prepared for no Black families. They only had a kitchenette, a little small living room and one bedroom. We all had to pile into that one room.

Many blacks nevertheless felt that the situation on the Reservation was better than elsewhere in the country. Most areas in the south were operating on a barely changed oppression system as norms and values about equity between the races had been little altered since Reconstruction. Although blacks were not getting equal pay for equal work on the Reservation, the pay scale was still better than elsewhere in the south. Working on the war project in an effort to save one's country instills a high level of patriotism. It is likely that this patriotism was a strong pull for blacks to stay, even under such poor conditions. One respondent noted:

They're proud of the fact that they gave 30, 40 years of their lives to defending their country and doing things for their country. And some of them couldn't -- even though they had the intelligence -- they couldn't rise above laborer positions, or sweeping floors and streets, while other people were making 8, 9 dollars an hour -- they were making 3 dollars and 4 dollars an hour. Yet, they did it and they feel proud of it.

Moving the Black Community

In 1945, the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the secret was out. The Reservation was opened in 1949, although the three plants remained fenced off. The opening of the gates was marked with celebrations attended by movie stars and famous politicians. Did the new openness lead to better conditions for black Oak Ridge?

Inadequate housing conditions within the hutment areas continued and frequent requests made by black residents to improve the situation went unheard. In 1944, the Colored Camp Council, comprised of individuals residing in the hutments, organized to represent black Reservation workers on housing and equity issues. They requested that either some homes be set aside for blacks or improvements be made on black housing. As with individual entreaties, this too did not improve the housing situation. The government's only response to this request was a complete investigation of the backgrounds of the Camp Council members (Johnson and Jackson 1981). But, in 1945, the government-controlled Central Facilities Advisory Council recommended that 350 housing units be made available to black families. This request was granted but applicants "were thoroughly screened to assure that the colored community would be a credit to Oak Ridge" (Johnson and Jackson 1981:173).

Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948, expressly stating that "there shall be equal opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color,

religion or national origin.” Broader than the 1941 Executive Order that merely covered equity in defense industries, the 1948 Order was intended to affect the military itself as well as military complexes such as Oak Ridge.

In 1948, the government began the plan to move the black community intact to a new location. According to DOE documents from that period, a committee was formed of black ministers and residents to plan the community, then called “The Negro Village” or Neighborhood 10. Letters were sent to these “leaders” of the community requesting their participation. From that base, a committee was formed for the government to use as a reference point in the planning of the community. It is unclear whether this group was truly representative of blacks living across the Reservation.

Conditions in the hutments were believed inappropriate for families in this rapidly growing community. It was deemed more suitable to create a community in which all of the blacks could reside, instead of their remaining in segregated pockets scattered throughout Oak Ridge. Government ordered military relocations of specific populations have occurred since the development of the nation. Native Americans were moved by the US Government and forcibly resettled on reservations. Resisters were treated harshly. Japanese Americans, seen as a threat during World War II, were relocated to internment camps in the middle and western portions of the United States; many who had owned property were unable to regain it at war's end.

It appears that blacks in Oak Ridge were gathered up and resettled to a new area under conditions strikingly similar to previous military relocations, but documentation of the decision is elusive. It seems that any living conditions were considered better than the conditions in the hutments. One resident recalled:

I think after the situation that they had lived in all these years, just the fact that they were going to have housing that was pretty normal housing and all and the families were going to be able, once again to live together.

The community was built in the Gamble Valley area, "a peripheral valley on the south west side of Oak Ridge enclosed on two sides by three hundred foot high ridges and on the third side by the city dump" (Peelle 1960:7). This valley had originally been set up as trailers for white workers. The whites were moved out of the area and relocated in better housing. The trailers were taken out with them. Blacks were moved to this area in 1949-50 and the area was renamed Scarboro.

When they started building the houses for the blacks it was still Gamble Valley. The name Gamble Valley presented a bad connotation because Gamble Valley was named after a white man whose name was Gamble. And whites used to live in that area. But when blacks moved into it and they called it Gamble Valley, the connotations were gambling and carousing went with it. So, Gamble Valley just wasn't a good name.

Housing in Scarboro consisted of 15 cemesto blockhouses, 143 frame duplexes and 7 dormitories. The cemesto (concrete made of cement and asbestos) style houses had two bedrooms and the houses were placed close together. The entire area had simple road construction, based on one main road that ran through the community. It was isolated from the rest of Oak Ridge, with no buildings, other neighborhoods, or stores around Scarboro. Located one quarter of a mile from the Y-12 facility, Scarboro was the closest community to any of the Manhattan project facilities. Of the geography and placement of the community, one resident explained:

Scarboro was a community in Oak Ridge, which was, at that time totally separated. Oak Ridge was the most segregated city, I guess you could say, in the nation when we came here, simply because all of the black people were in one community. By being a government-established town. It was quite unusual. The community was set up so that it was surrounded by the nuclear plant and mountains with one entrance in and the same entrance

out. There was no passing by Scarboro or going to Scarboro on the way to someplace else. You were always going directly to Scarboro.

On the segregation of the community one resident stated:

Oak Ridge was no different than any other southern town. I think that when the place was set up, even though there were people coming from all over the United States and even outside of the United States too, rather than this city taking on the mores of cities outside of the south, they just fell right in line with segregation. Here, blacks could only live in this one little area.

At least two options were presented as sites for the black neighborhood, although details vary by respondent. Some assert that the two choices were the East Village and Gamble Valley, an area that had originally been a trailer encampment for white Reservation workers. Others believe that the choice was between Gamble Valley and the Elza Gate area, the main wartime gate to the Reservation. Some respondents reported that several black leaders made the decision; others believed a single local black minister was responsible. One respondent noted:

When they finally realized that they were going to have to provide housing in a permanent location they were looking for an area to do it. They wanted to keep the races separate. They didn't want integrated housing. In order to do that, they were going to build the blacks in one area and the whites all around everywhere else. Talking to black ministers and so forth, they picked the Scarboro area.

Another resident remembered:

There was Reverend Simms, Reverend Fuller, and a Reverend Johnson -- Johnson lived in Knoxville, and Fuller and Simms lived here. But they just had to go along with the program. That was it - they went along with the program. So this was where they chose to put the black people - here in Gamble Valley. We wondered if the name Gamble didn't have something to do with it.

The siting of the Scarboro community reflected racial perceptions that had become ingrained within the Reservation mentality. It is unclear from documentation

who else was involved in the decision to site and how to create the black community.

Community members attribute the decision to several black ministers who were active in the community in the late 1940s, but no one is sure about how valued their input was.

Some others have even stated that it is likely that political pressure from other facets of the Reservation strongly influenced the decision that the black ministers made, that the decision may not have been their own. One community member, referring to the black ministers, expressed it in this way:

As I understand it they were trying to decide where [to put the community]. They talked to some black ministers that were here that came in and did not have any knowledge about what was going on and through a kind of a - I don't want to say brainwash - a kind of - maybe a little coercion - a lack of information were easily steered into making a selection of that kind - where it could be totally isolated.

Segregation was a primary consideration in the formation of the community.

Scarboro was isolated from the rest of Oak Ridge and was designed with only one way in and out. All Oak Ridge blacks resided in Scarboro. Referred to as "the ghetto" by Oak Ridgers living outside the community, the area was stigmatized as undesirable, which limited community economic and social activities. Residents were discriminated against, as one notes:

Oak Ridge was segregated from the time they set it up. The stigma is still there. If you tell someone you live in Scarboro - then you are looked at in a different way. They stop judging me then by who I am, my character, how I conduct myself, how I carry myself - no, you're from *Scarboro*.

Reasons for siting in the valley close to Y-12 have been mentioned. Most community members refer to the isolation of the neighborhood. One resident notes:

Scarboro community was set up to be isolated - for the simple reason that I understand in the earlier days - the black community was in Woodland and some other place and then they just transferred them all to that area and

basically there's only one way in and one way out. I term that as a control factor.

Others state that the community was put there because driveways and water and electrical hookups remained from the white trailer encampment. Another suggestion is that the siting decision involved land values. Residents have suggested that Gamble Valley was an option for the siting of the black community because the land was undesirable. An activist noted:

Maybe it was just a question of where. This was a lower class area anyway and maybe that is why they built it. Blacks are often labeled the lowest level areas in terms of attractiveness and so on. That may have been it. It was an undesirable area and they put the black community in a more undesirable area.

No information is available on the decision process for actually placing the community in Gamble Valley and it is unknown if blacks had input in the actual choice of siting. One minister presently in the community noted:

One story said the African Americans didn't have a choice – that they built these places and moved them in it. They didn't have a choice. I don't know the real story behind how they got here. If you talk to five people who were around here you'll probably hear five different stories. I don't know whether that is by design. Communication was a problem then, just like it is now. Well, some blacks are told one thing – some blacks are told another, some blacks are told something else – and you never know what happened.

Many residents believe that blacks were involved only to legitimize a decision already made. One community member expressed his opinion on the community's siting concisely when he said "Our black leaders sold us down the river."

The manner by which the community was established has ramifications for perpetuating racial discrimination. One resident notes:

This is the only government aided separate community in the world. This

is the only one where the government has had first hand into making sure a specific race of people are situated in a specific area of the community. The government has done that. They did that not only in the first initiative. They tried to continue to do that for a long period of time.

Another stated:

I think it is true about the government setup as keeping racism going. This town was born in secrecy – born in racism and raised in racism.

In the mid 1950s, community members were given the opportunity to buy their rental houses from the government. Houses were sold according to who had been the first owner. The first occupants of the homes were offered the first option to buy. Most families purchased their homes and added onto them as their families grew. But the cement or duplex frames remained despite additions. One resident recalls:

I've been living in this house ever since 1950. I moved here the 19th day of February 1950. I was the first person to move on this street. It was the first house that got ready. They had you pick out what house you want and when they got it ready they would call you. I was living right here when the government decided to sell them in 1957.

Another resident recalled that:

What they did then – the people that was living in these houses – that lived in them first – they had the first chance to buy them. The person that moved in later had a second chance. So all of the houses was taken up – all but a very few and then they had bid on the house.

People felt safe in the Scarboro community. One resident recalled:

It was a close knit community. Families and kids got along with each other. Economically – they were basically all the same economic bracket. You can probably see, everyone lived in the same basic type of housing. Most of the people worked at the reservation. As far as growing up – a very close knit community.

Desegregation

The struggle for desegregation in Oak Ridge was similar to efforts across the United States. Efforts to promote integration of schools preceded actions for access to public facilities as "separate but equal" education policies continued across the nation.

Schools

Oak Ridge was the first city in the state of Tennessee to complete integration in 1955, although it was not the first to begin integration. Black families in the neighboring city of Clinton had expressed concern in 1940 about their children's education, since their children were attending a Grade D school - the lowest evaluation a school in the system could rate. In 1950, five black students attempted to enroll in Clinton's Grade A school but were denied access by the Anderson County School Board based on the law of "separate but equal." Later that year, the students filed suit in US District Court against the Anderson County School Board (*McSwain vs. Anderson County Board of Education*). In 1952, the court ruled in favor of the school board, stating that Anderson County provided "separate but equal" facilities. Later in 1952, the students filed in the Court of Appeals. The court awaited the verdict of *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, pending in the US Supreme Court. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional. *McSwain vs. Anderson County Board of Education* was sent back in accordance with the decision. In May of 1955, Anderson County was ordered by the appeals court to enforce the decision with "reasonable expedience" and the date for integration was set for fall term 1956 (Herd 1995).

Oak Ridge was the first high school system in Tennessee to open to blacks in 1955, just after the Supreme Court's decision of the unconstitutionality of "separate but

equal.” Unlike Clinton, Oak Ridge voluntarily integrated soon after the decision, without the planning that had been put into the process in other areas of the country. Integration went fairly smoothly in comparison to Clinton, where the high school was bombed by outside agitators as a statement against the passage of the law. Several years later the junior and elementary levels allowed integration in Oak Ridge.

Public Facilities

Oak Ridge residents began to push for equal access to facilities in the area in the 1950s. As in other cities, blacks and whites joined in negotiations and direct actions for equal rights and the use of space. One resident recalled:

The atmosphere in Oak Ridge, I believe is unique. The struggles that we had were by no means a black struggle alone. We had white people at that time. Lots of the scientists in the labs and all that did not feel that the government had been really wise to set the community up like they did. So those people would walk picket lines, do whatever was necessary to see that we had the support we needed to change things in Oak Ridge.

Segregation was prevalent in restaurants, swimming pools, national parks, movie theaters, Laundromats and the plants. Organizations such as the Community Relations Council (CRC), the Oak Ridge Federation for Equal Public Services (ORFEPS) and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) were comprised of residents and formed to address equity issues. One activist noted:

Every inch of it was a fight. And we would try to make changes. There were no eating places, no barbershops, where blacks could go, couldn't even eat in the lunch counters at the 5 and 10s. Employment was a problem, the black laborers said that there was still plenty of segregation at the plant and told us about the segregated drinking fountains and bathrooms. So we would call in the plant managers who worked for Union Carbide and ask questions about them. They claimed that the policies were all open.

Efforts to desegregate usually started with negotiations and, based on the outcome

of these, gradually expanded to direct action including picketing and sit-ins. One resident recalled:

Our home became a kind of a headquarters for the civil rights movement in Oak Ridge. We had good participation from whites as well as blacks and what we did first was to try to negotiate with a restaurant owner, for instance, to try to get that owner to say that they would open their facilities to everyone. And when negotiations failed after several attempts, then your last resort would be the direct action of picketing. That was our means of direct action.

Activists tell of direct actions they organized to open the drive-in theater, the Snow White and Davis Brothers Cafeterias, the Multimatic Laundromat, barber shops and other facilities. On several occasions out of town Klan groups arrived in Oak Ridge to express their distaste for blacks asserting their rights. One activist recalled picketing at the Multimatic:

We tried by every means we could to get these people to open up. And when they would not open up then, the next step was to form a picket line. We would do some picketing of some restaurants here – we didn't do a lot but – one of the main places that we picketed was a Laundromat. We just felt like people should be able to wash their clothes wherever they wanted to. In the process of picketing the Laundromat the KKK came and showed their support for the owner of the Laundromat. We had a march down the turnpike with some of the prominent whites joining in. We confronted the KKK – we were on one side of the street and they were across the street at the Laundromat and we had a prayer vigil on our side. That developed into an all night vigil, where the picketers alternated staying all night to picket the place. And, finally, after a lot of picketing, a lot of negotiations still going on during that time, he finally opened the Laundromat. I think as I recall there was only one place in Oak Ridge that we were not able to get to open up and that was a skating rink. The owner just refused to open. We didn't do too much picketing but we made several attempts to get in and he never would allow us to get in.

Present Demographics and Discrimination

Overt housing and job discrimination continued in the Oak Ridge area through the early 1960s. Job discrimination prevailed as most of the people living in Scarboro worked

at the facilities and many of them specifically at Y-12.

In the early days almost everybody worked at one of the 3 plants. Almost everybody that lived in Scarboro worked at the plants and as time went on, all that changed and barely any people work there anymore that live in Scarboro.

Job advancement was slow and very few blacks were placed at the management level. Several residents were placed in positions below their education level and struggled to be promoted. Often these same people fought to have more blacks recruited to the area. One resident recalled:

Up until 1968 there were problems and then the federal government came and, as a part of affirmative action, said that this won't be tolerated anymore. There won't be certain job categories that minorities are excluded from anymore. It has to end.

Job discrimination was prevalent for women in the area. Many female residents of the Scarboro community wanted to work at the facilities but were denied the opportunity.

One resident recalled:

In the early days most of the black women worked as maids and there were strong restrictions on jobs that blacks could take in general. Then it kind of – as they say, opened up a bit and blacks could work in more areas. Then black women decided to work out at those facilities – those government facilities – in a large number of capacities. But Oak Ridge black women were not hired. They applied – they were turned down because they needed cheap maids in Oak Ridge and they would be deprived of their maids if Oak Ridge black women were hired in this way.

This discrimination caused a heavy toll on black families. As one resident recalled:

I can remember seeing the white community coming in and taking black moms – just domestic wives – housewives out of the community to go clean up their homes. You see this – cars coming in in the morning time – what they need to do is pick up the black ladies to do their domestic work for them. Moms had to take care of two homes. They had to take care of white individual's home when they were on vacation here and there and their kids – plus, come home and take care of their own kids. I can remember my mom, me being the oldest in the family, she would get

dinner started and I would finish it up because she was staying two weeks over at that house. At that time – hey did they help destroy families? In some cases, yes – I think black families are very strong and they learn to support and pull with each other.

A sense of security was prevalent in the area due to housing restrictions even though the limitations were not self imposed. Individuals raised families together and got to know their neighbors very well. Franklin's statement that "Blacks choose to be separated...the idea of living with your own kind - possibly in response to discrimination, providing safety in numbers" (1973:10) adequately reflects the perceptions of some of the community members. Essentially Scarboro was a safe space from a discriminatory and racist outside world.

Jim Crow laws shaped the social institutions and race relations of the south in the twentieth century. Segregation, inequality, and hardship characterized black lives. Throughout the decades, black leaders attempted in various ways to alleviate the oppressive conditions but without significant and meaningful federal support, their efforts were largely unsuccessful. Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order appeared to promise a turning point, intending to provide federal support by demanding an end to racial discrimination in employment practices by those industries contracted with the government to produce weapons and equipment for the war effort.

Implementation of the Executive Order failed totally, at least in Oak Ridge. Through construction companies, corporate managers, and the military, the federal government created a perfectly segregated town in a hybrid image of southern norms and military efficiency. Uneducated blacks were actively recruited in the south by the government to fill the jobs that were necessary for the war effort yet unappealing to

whites. In a virtual reenactment of the slavery era, black families were broken up and black neighbors were separated and transported to suit the needs of the white military "masters." The miserable hutments were little different from antebellum slave quarters in their primitiveness. Blacks remained in Oak Ridge despite such treatment because of the relatively higher wages and their sense of patriotism.

The intolerable housing conditions for blacks could not be justified past the emergency period of the war. The decision to provide better housing by relocating the entire black population is shrouded in rumors because facts are unavailable. FOIA requests for documents failed to produce materials that shed significant light on the decision to move Scarboro. Because voluminous wartime government documentation is accessible and because the documents often provide excruciating detail on seemingly trivial events, I have filed an appeal on the denial of my FOIA request. A few facts are, nevertheless, apparent: 1. Black community leaders were allowed some input on the move but only after selection had been narrowed to two sites. 2. In 1949-50, the entire black population of Oak Ridge was gathered from encampments around the area and placed in new and renovated family housing in the Gamble Valley site, next to the Y-12 plant. 3. Segregation was strictly enforced in the new community. 4. In the mid 1950s, many Scarboro residents took the opportunity to purchase their rental homes. 5. Desegregation processes were fairly smooth in Oak Ridge, both in the public schools and in local services.

With the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, newly arrived black families were given opportunities to live anywhere in Oak Ridge. Some left Scarboro and settled elsewhere in the Oak Ridge area. New blacks coming to the area often wanted to reside

in Scarboro, but were unable to find housing in the community.

The demographics of Scarboro have changed since the community was created. Unlike the first occupants of the community, thriving middle class families who worked predominantly at the Oak Ridge facilities, these new residents have different characteristics. Many of the people who originally lived in the community have since died, leaving their homes to their children. The community is comprised of two distinct groups – a graying retired population and a low-income single parent population. Single motherhood abounds and older residents lament that houses are not kept up as they used to be. The area has taken an economic downturn and residents complain of drugs and violence, fearing to go into their own streets after dark. Scarboro continues to be populated entirely by blacks. Presently, it is home to 49% of Oak Ridge blacks and has a population of approximately 550.

Tucked in the shadows of the Y-12 plant, the Scarboro community stands as a monument to the racial discrimination that structured it. The government discriminated against black workers from the outset of the project to control labor, to protect national security, and to conform to local norms. Overt discrimination became institutional discrimination that has continued to shape and characterize race relations in Oak Ridge. Did this institutional discrimination lay the groundwork for contamination of the black community? In the next chapter, I examine perceptions of environmental contamination in Scarboro.

CHAPTER V

The Legacy of Discrimination: Perceptions of Contamination

Since Y-12 was built in 1943 it has had several missions. First was its role in the uranium enrichment process fueling the atomic bomb. In the 1950s, Y-12's mission changed to contribute to the development of the hydrogen bomb; the plant was instrumental in the separation of lithium, which was used for fuel. Massive amounts of mercury were required to obtain usable lithium. Eisenhower authorized the use of a significant amount of mercury from the National Stockpile for use at the facility. The Colex process of lithium separation was found to be the most effective and was in active processing from 1955 to 1963. In the early years of Colex separation, concern was expressed about the medically recognized hazards of inhaling toxic mercury vapor. Although workers were supposedly protected from poisoning throughout the process, the effects of mercury on the surrounding environment are unclear. In 1983, the federal government was forced to reveal that, between 1950 and 1970, three spills of over 100,000 pounds of mercury occurred, in addition to numerous spills over 20,000 pounds. According to the 1977 Mercury Inventory Report, 2.4 million pounds of mercury were lost to the environment or otherwise unreported. More recent studies list the loss at 2 million pounds.

Y-12 had another mission that required the use of uranium. In 1957, Y-12's peak production year, more than five tons of uranium dust were discharged into the air (Munger 11/25/97). Y-12 is currently involved in the dismantling of nuclear warheads and is not in "active" production. Parts of Y-12 were declared a Superfund site. Aside from the potential for mercury and uranium contamination, it is difficult to determine

what else the Scarboro community may have been exposed due to its close proximity to the plant. Many of the residents have property that borders the fence line.

Since the mid 1980s Scarboro has been the focus of public DOE attention for potential contamination. DOE has held meetings on contamination in the community sporadically since that time. These meetings focused on uranium and mercury as possible contaminants related to production activities at Y-12.

In the 1980s, high levels of mercury contamination were found in East Fork Poplar Creek, long used as an industrial drainage ditch by the facility. This creek flows near the community, and comes from a similar source as twenty-two other tributaries that begin on Pine Ridge, the ridge separating Y-12 from Scarboro, and run through the community. The water table in the valley is very high and flooding occurs often, leaving standing water in some areas for days or even weeks. Many households have small creeks or ditches in their yards.

Although water is a likely pathway for contaminants, scientists have continued to argue over other pathways by which contamination may have entered the area, including through the air. Some stated that the ridge separating the two areas would have provided enough of a barrier to prevent the escape of contamination. Other scientists argued that breaks in the ridge would allow airflow to carry the contaminants into the valley, depending on weather conditions. In response to several public meetings and considerable discussion in the DOE, an air monitoring station (Station 46) was placed in a central location in the Scarboro community in 1986. Several news articles note a discrepancy between models intended to measure concentrations coming down on Scarboro and what the monitor is reading. Station 46's numbers are significantly lower

than projected estimates.

During the mid 1980s to 90s, the Scarboro community was cautioned against eating bottom-feeding fish from any body of water in the area. Some were also warned about growing gardens on their land. One community member had his vegetables checked and recalled:

I know at least 3 or 4 times over a period of years that someone from one of the plants stopped by to get vegetables from my garden right out here. I didn't get a report. I know one of the times he made a visit and I said, "What are you finding for your last batch of vegetables that you got from me?" He said, "Well, everything seems to be all right – we just want to stay on top of it." That was good enough for me.

Starting in July, 1997 a series of articles was published in *The Nashville Tennessean* discussing contamination in Oak Ridge linked with a legacy of weapons production. Several articles in the series discussed the high incidence of respiratory illness among children living in Scarboro. Sixteen children in the Scarboro community had been identified by the *Tennessean* reporter as having extreme respiratory ailments. The reporter suggested that these respiratory problems were linked to emissions from the Y-12 facility. The large number of sick children was brought to the attention of Senator Fred Thompson (R-TN) who urged the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to come into the area to conduct a health study on the young residents in November of 1997.

A committee called the Scarboro Community Environmental Justice Council (SCEJC), comprised of community members, activists, and NAACP members, was established in November of 1997 to represent the welfare of the community in discussions with the CDC. A health evaluation is being developed to gauge the potential for health risks in the area. Although the CDC was called in to study possible connections

between illness and the Y-12 facility, the proposed survey does not focus on potential contamination. This survey, which is in its preliminary stages at the time of this writing in April 1998, emphasizes dust, dirt and cockroaches as triggers of asthma and respiratory problems. Due to this emphasis, it seems unlikely that the issue of toxins in the environment will be fully addressed.

In conjunction with the CDC study, the DOE has established a sampling plan to measure levels of contamination in the Scarboro area. Key contaminants of interest are mercury and uranium. Sample points include areas along the ridgeline and windflow pattern, creeks, and specific areas of interest to community members. Planning for this study is currently in progress.

Perceptions of disproportionate contamination in the community vary. Some residents have suspected contamination in Scarboro since it was settled in Gamble Valley. Experiences with Y-12 have led many to believe that contamination may have occurred or is presently occurring. One resident recalled:

I think it is awful. I always did thought that because I remember one time some radiation, I don't know what year it was – but it was back in the 60s. They say that radiation got out up there. They had cars coming through the community with some kind of thing on top of the cars. I guess they was measuring radiation or whatever got out of there. But, I remember them coming through the community.

Another noted:

I've heard stories that there was so much released near the ridge area that the trees were heavily contaminated and they sent an emergency crew out and cut all the trees down that were contaminated and burned them right there on the spot. And the smoke and fumes propagated over to Scarboro. In fact it was so much smoke and fumes, the citizens wondered what was going on with all of the haze – it made a tremendous amount of haze. If you can imagine the trees were contaminated and then they were burned – just imagine the smoke that was going to come in as well. All the

particulates landed in the area. That was another way of covering up. We couldn't do anything about this. It was something that was done in-house to try to capture the problem. That was in one instance. There may be other instances where there may have been other releases and nothing was told to the citizens of Scarboro community. It was something that happened and they didn't feel it was necessary to pass the information on – there wasn't a need for them to know that. Out of sight out of mind – what [the community doesn't] know won't really hurt them per se.

Another recalled:

They used to have a big pond down there at Y-12 and the water would come out, run down. Well, when it rained, it just ran down through there. All the land's contaminated down through there. They've since moved that pond away from there. People here weren't saying too much about it. Nobody here talked about stuff like that.

One man who grew up in Scarboro remembered:

I recall that when we was kids out there in Scarboro – those creeks that were across the street from where we lived– that area used to smell peculiar. When the water sat for a long period of time, you could see film on top of it. You could see a rainbow. You knew there was something in the water, you just didn't know what it was. You could smell it – some chemical. We thought that it was nasty. We wouldn't play in it.

Several residents believe that talk of contamination is a recent myth intended to stigmatize the community. These same residents are willing to admit that the circumstances involving the siting are peculiar, but they want proof of contamination before they will state with certainty that there is a potential for contamination or siting intention. One couple that had once resided in Scarboro stated:

I don't think the community was initially set there because something was going to be going on that would affect that community. I don't think so. But I think that during the years with a lot of the kinds of things that were going on at they Y-12 plant and the way people have been testing those creeks and stuff like that – they have found deposits that were not safe – environmentally safe. I have a problem thinking that Scarboro is [more contaminated], of course they have put monitors up over there.

DOE has repeatedly stated that Y-12 is not in active production and therefore is

not releasing any contaminants. Statements by workers, residents, and the media contradict assertions of inactivity. Residents recall seeing emissions coming out of the stacks of the facility. One individual noted:

Because I worked in a group that does the stack sampling monitoring at Y-12 and I know that there is uranium that goes up the stacks. It goes up the stacks, now which way do it go? If it's out of the stack it follows the air current.

Community members believe that they have been misinformed in the past and there is a strong level of distrust of outsiders in this community. Residents believe that they have been abused both economically and politically. They note that the racism today appears different than before. This new racism is more subtle and not as blatant as it had been. Residents believe that they are stigmatized because they are the only black community in the area and the closest community to any of the DOE facilities. Their proximity to Y-12 has brought with it the perception of contamination making people hesitant to move to Scarboro. One resident, when talking about the community noted:

I guess the second thing that makes Scarboro kind of different is that they really distrust anyone from the outside. It is a very strong distrust. I had gotten that from some surprising sources. I'd met people that were born and raised there and we met in various places. We have done things together, worked in organizations and then certain occasions would come up where they would get into basically – they had this distrust - for people on the outside. Feeling that people have disabused them over the years and just having that distrust of people on the outside – those two things – they are the strongest there that I've seen anywhere.

The community seems split on faith in the government's ability to identify and solve the problem in their community. A range of beliefs exist on this subject. Many distrust outsiders based on past experiences, such as institutional and social discriminations linked to the legacy of racism in the area. Others believe that the DOE

will do only what they are required to do. A resident stated:

The government and the company will do what they are lawful bound to do. I feel like if there's any short terms things they can take, they will come and do it. I don't have the feeling that the government or Lockheed Martin will go out of their way to do anything. I think sometimes economics will push them to maybe take some shortcuts and that's the only way I can see it.

Another holds the government accountable, yet realizes its limitations:

I do know that the DOE has not always been the most forthright, with not only Scarboro community, with anybody. With the nature of their work there's been a lot of secrets. I certainly understand the necessity to do that – but I think now there are things that need to be looked at and I think there's a general distrust of the DOE – not only in Scarboro, all over and so I think they're in for some hard times. If it turns out that some of these studies are showing that they were responsible for this they need to step up to the plate and do whatever is appropriate to address it at this time.

In general the respondents believe that they have not been told the truth in the past and are expecting a struggle to discover the truth in the future. One resident replied:

The government will not tell you the truth. The government will not tell you the truth about nothing. The peoples that work for the government won't tell it. They're not going to tell it like it is.

The community is relatively silent on the issue of contamination. Resistance in this community has been limited to individuals and generally manifests itself in meeting attendance. Several factors are at the root of this. The first is that the demographics of the area are shifting to a relatively older population who believe that it is the job of the younger population to speak out. A second reason, as stated by residents, is that the community never gets a chance to organize because other forces come into the community and control the arena. One resident noted:

Before we can do anything there are other factions that come in to get the ball rolling – the churches. That did not give the community a chance to do anything. They started it. The majority of the community being older we

tend to stand back and let the younger people do as long as it looks like they're not going too far out.

Third, individuals who have spoken out on the issue of contamination have received retributions, therefore dissuading others to speak out. One resident noted:

People at work will try to discredit you. The first couple of times you fight back, but just like slavery, you give in.

Fourth, historical reasons such as strict governmental control, Q clearances, a single industry in the area, and a high level of patriotism for the war effort have worked in conjunction to limit grassroots organization. One activist discussed these factors:

There have been a number of attempts [to organize] and part of the reason I believe they haven't succeeded – number one - the fact that there is a stranglehold on this community because of everyone being dependent on a government funded industry for their livelihood. If anybody speaks out they do lose their jobs. There is no question about that. The other problem is that it is not just people that personally face retribution, but so do any family members. That in fact is one of the problems within Scarboro. The second thing is that you are dependent here on the person who is responsible for the pollution or on the industry responsible for the pollution to provide you with information about whether or not they've polluted. And even with that we can show that there are problems and indeed there have been releases. Even with this information- which I know is biased we can see that there are problems with this. They are the ones controlling the purse strings. There is no money for us to bring in independent technical assistance. The other thing is, there's a lot of suspicion in this community. Part of it goes back to the Q clearance issues that I think permeates the whole plant. I think it permeates a lot of action and how people do specific jobs.

Individuals in the larger Oak Ridge community are interpreting the low attendance rates at meetings as evidence that the community is unconcerned about the issue. One local representative who had once lived in Scarboro disagreed:

I don't think that's exactly true. I don't think we can take their silence, their not being present as an indicator of whether or not they're concerned. I think they're very concerned. When I talk to the people in the community one-on-one, they voice those concerns to me. I get telephone calls and all

that. It is just a matter of, I think, trust. I think that is really what it is.

Many community members believe that they do not have the technical knowledge to be a part of the meetings and do not attend out of frustration. One resident noted:

You can't understand that stuff when they go there. I've been there and they get to showing it up on the screen and this here and something or another and you don't know nothing about it. You haven't worked in it or nothing about that. You have to have a lot of chemistry and a lot of experience with that chemistry stuff to be able to understand that stuff. Otherwise there ain't no way to know what they're talking about. That way we can't win.

Another discussed the complexities of the health issues:

The whole health issue, I think is going to be a complicated one. It is going to take a lot on the ones of us that understand a little bit about it to educate the community on what really is going on and what's happening. I'm not really convinced that the people that need to know -- they all know. I think there's some that know more that it appears by their absence. I think also there are some people in the community who have a trust for one person or the other and as long as that person is there they feel that they're in good hands. I know that to be true from some of my past experiences with them.

Other residents are just tired of attending these meetings that seem to have no noticeable outcome. One resident noted:

I stopped going to the meetings myself. I was at one last fall. I hadn't been to another one since last Thursday night. I got fed up. Peoples would make like everything was okay. Which I know it wasn't -- in my mind it wasn't.

Although several residents have spoken publicly of the contamination in Scarboro, many have become resigned to what is happening to their community and are quite powerless. One resident stated:

I really don't think about it, because I figure whatever it is there I already have it and there's nothing that I can do about it. That's the way I feel.

Another respondent talked about hopelessness:

I think its apathy and I think some people say. "I'm not going to get

involved with this because they're not going to do anything - they're just going to whitewash it." They've lived in that community forever and will die when they have to die. It is like when people say. "We'll die from something." People feel as though they don't have a voice.

The prevailing question is whether or not the issues are going to be addressed by government agencies that continually make attempts to study the community. Residents want answers to their questions and are frustrated by the fact that they are not given any. Family members and friends have died from unknown causes. There remains an air of secrecy about activities at the facility and community members often do not have the expertise to go head to head with the government agencies. One resident stated:

A lot of people done died around here -- sick from that plant, but they ain't said nothing about it. They name it something else -- them doctors. They done give it a name and give you another name and it ain't nothing but that hot stuff.

Controversy has ensued across Oak Ridge about the presence of contamination due to the legacy of weapons production. Generally speaking, there is a differentiation of belief in contamination based on race. Black residents are more likely to connect health effects and environmental degradation with the activities of the facilities than their white counterparts. Generally, the Scarboro community members are very aware of the idea that black communities have been placed in undesirable locations across the nation and that it is likely that a similar situation occurred in Scarboro. One resident stated:

I am acquainted with that whites would put blacks on the other side of the track. I'm acquainted with that. That gave me to know that we were put over there intentionally.

Another said:

I think they stuck us right here. I think they stuck all the black people right next door to all the hot materials! People used to say that, everything, Y-12 [is] right over the hill, everything that come out...we catch it first.

Other Oak Ridgers believe it impossible that residents of Scarboro were sited close to Y-12 due to race reasons, stating that when the move occurred, no knowledge of potential health affects existed. A white Oak Ridger responded by saying:

I strongly doubt that there was a deliberate move, because in those days no one thought about...none of us considered the possibility that there were dangerous emissions from the plants... we really didn't. So, we didn't think about it for anybody. It's not credible in my mind that that was a motivation.

Residents have used popular epidemiology in their perceptions identifying a disproportionate amount of illnesses in the area. Respondents remark that they can go house by house through the neighborhood and note the maladies of the people who are currently living there or who had once lived there. One resident recalled:

And I told them that this place, I believe, is just really not healthy for humans to live because there – down at the end of this street 3 people in one house died of cancer. And down on Fisk – I just can't name the peoples that died here – that died with some form of cancer.

Another stated:

We do have quite a few people that have passed on and we're just wondering if some of these contaminants could have been a reason for their illnesses.

And yet another described:

The majority of widows in Scarboro, one time I counted them up – 40 something. The majority of widows, their husbands died of some for of cancer. Now, all of them didn't work at the plant. My husband didn't work at the plant. They lived here but they didn't work here. There is still people walking around in the community. A couple of people, their wives died.

Community members are seeing the impacts of Y-12 on their lives as streams that their children once played in are posted and perceptions of a disproportionate amount of

cancer occurrences are pervasive. Most are making the connection between their location at the bottom of the ridge from Y-12 and health affects. Others, who worked at the facilities in a more scientific capacity want proof of contamination and believe that other community members are jumping the gun by making any connections regarding contamination. The lack of trust present in the community has perpetuated perceptions of contamination. Most residents do not trust the government to tell them if something is wrong in their community. The oppression in the area has continued as residents are kept in the dark about what is affecting their friends and families. Individuals are not provided with the tools and information by which to hold the government accountable as tactics to maintain secrecy prevail.

On the notion of environmental racism, community members are for the most part uncertain. All of the respondents were familiar with the term although many of them were hesitant to make a clear statement as to intention of siting. One activist had a clearly defined opinion and stated:

Undoubtedly it is a clear-cut case of environmental racism. Where else do you have where the government has intentionally moved a specific group of people into a closed in area?

CHAPTER VI

Discussion and Conclusions

The issue of environmental racism in the Scarboro community is complex. It is apparent that structural and institutional discrimination have had a heavy hand in the development of the area and the perpetuation of norms and values leading to the continued separation of the community. Political economy, environmental racism and environmental equity issues will be used to frame this discussion. Historical information and community perspectives will be utilized to present a complete picture of the case of this community.

Political economic factors were important in bringing blacks to the Oak Ridge Reservation. Providing an economical source of labor, this population was easily controlled by use of the same techniques employed by slave owners in the antebellum south. The government chose to follow the norms of segregation prevalent in the south to avoid drawing attention to the top-secret facility. This decision to follow norms defied the 1941 Executive Order intended to promote equality and perpetuated an already unequal system. The economic and social implications of maintaining segregation provided a familiar structure and level of control as well as a large labor force that was not provided with adequate housing, access to family, or opportunity. Blacks were recruited because of a pervasive slave mentality. They would not ask questions and their lack of education made them less of a security risk. The system on the reservation ran smoothly because the government was able to take advantage of a subservient, uneducated labor force.

Information on the siting of the community can only be interpreted from the perspectives of the residents. Inability to gather government perspectives and

documentation involving the decision to site Scarboro limits the certainty of these arguments. A committee was elected and black ministers were involved, but it is difficult to determine if their concerns were taken into consideration in the decision making process. Isolation, existing construction, and low land rent could have been instrumental in making the Gamble Valley area ideal for siting. The proximity of the Y-12 facility to the valley contributed to lower land values, possibly making the land undesirable for any use other than the siting of a powerless community. Community perceptions tend to bear out these considerations and historical evidence shows that institutional discrimination had an important impact in the case of Scarboro.

Structural limitations have placed the blacks in their present position. Blacks were not allowed to consider housing in other areas of Oak Ridge until the mid 1960s. At that point, many younger families left the Scarboro neighborhood, but most families stayed. Scarboro was a comfortable area where families were raised and friends were made. But a mentality of inequality prevails throughout the Oak Ridge area and is possibly linked with the legacy of racism perpetuated by the government during the Manhattan Project. A stigma of drugs, violence, and environmental contamination plague the community, as residents say that they would not recommend the area to new families coming into Oak Ridge.

The proximity of the Y-12 facility to the Scarboro community makes the possibility of contamination from the legacy of weapons production likely. Individuals in the community have noticed a disproportionate amount of illness in the area. Oddities in the environment have been discovered such as strange odors, oversized vegetables, and areas in which no vegetation will grow. Twenty-two tributaries run from Pine Ridge in to

the community and flooding and run-off occurs frequently in the area, increasing the number of pathways by which contamination could enter the community.

Studies have been done by several government agencies and, according to their findings, the Scarboro area is not *disproportionately* polluted. Scientific models and levels of releases from Y-12 suggest that the risk for contamination in Scarboro is high. But community members receive contradictory information; secrecy about human health seems to be the utmost priority. Residents lack the technical capabilities to challenge studies that are often confusing and incomplete.

Most residents have given many faithful years to the US government through their employment at the DOE facilities. Patriotism is high here and, although residents express concern to each other, they rarely challenge the government. It appears as though community members do not consider economic factors as a deterrent to speaking out among themselves but, it is impossible to deny the role that economics plays.

Oak Ridge is a one-factory town. It is deeply rooted in weapons production and its sole source of survival is defense contracts. If individuals rock the boat too much, they believe that they risk putting the entire City of Oak Ridge in economic jeopardy. Because of possible repercussions from accusing the DOE or the US Government, individuals would rather bite their tongues than express fears and concerns that have been in the back of their minds for years. Scarboro community members are hesitant to place blame on the government, yet do not have a high level of faith in the government to determine what the problem is, inform the community, and take positive steps towards formulating a solution. This community has been studied time and time again but nothing has ever come of it.

The case of the Scarboro community is unlike any other. This community was created by a government aware of the implications of continued racism. As one community member noted – it was born in racism, raised in racism and this legacy continues to the present day. Scarboro residents do not know the facts on the hows and whys of the decision to site the community. Each resident has a different story to tell.

The case of Scarboro is a case of environmental racism. But, to look at it only in that way does not explore the myriad of factors that have led to this discrimination. Political, economic and structural conditions created conditions in the present. The Scarboro community is contaminated with legacy waste. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the community is *disproportionately* contaminated and studies are being conducted in order to determine this. Popular epidemiology and community perceptions have linked the high number of deaths in the area to contamination from the Y-12 facility. Residents believe that a problem with contamination and environmental health exists in Scarboro.

Class, race and economic factors are inherently linked to what has happened in this community. This is not merely a question of environmental racism as it had been defined in the past, but a case of environmental injustice and institutional discrimination. In order to fully define this instance, it may be best to say that this is a case of institutional environmental discrimination as it incorporates not just racism, but an entire institutional structure that continues to perpetuate inequality.

A historical political economic approach is effective in the analysis of complex cases such as Scarboro. This tool could be effectively put to use in studying other cases of environmental injustice as well. The use of this perspective provides insight that

cannot be gained through statistical analysis alone or the study of an area during only one specific time period. Studies assessing demographic characteristics at the time of the siting and at a specific research point have made an effort to understand temporal shifts, but do not effectively incorporate historical conditions leading to disproportionate contamination. Moving away from the discussion of when, where and how facilities are sited and shifting to issues of health and environmental contamination could enhance studies of environmental injustice. As the polemical debate rages on about siting and whether or not minority communities are being disproportionately affected by the siting of noxious facilities, contamination and health issues have been largely ignored. A shift towards a focus on environmental health and how contaminated communities respond and react could be beneficial to the field. The development of a stronger theoretical construct defining what is meant by environmental racism would also be beneficial. Environmental injustice is far larger than just racism, the broader impacts of institutional discrimination continue to persist and therefore perpetuate disproportionate contamination in minority communities.

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